

**Forgotten Women of the Forgotten War: Australian
Nurses in the Korean War, 1950–1956**

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I have always been fascinated by the experiences of military nurses. My maternal grandmother was conscripted to serve as a nurse in the German Army during World War Two. At the end of the war she moved to Australia as a displaced person and never returned to her home in Estonia. This thesis does not tell her story, but I owe my passion for the topic and the deep respect I feel for military nurses to Nan. I wish she could have been with us long enough to see the profound influence her life had on mine.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the first major study to explore Australia's military nursing contribution to the Korean War. Detailing the work and experiences of Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) and Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC) nurses, including their service in Japan and the post-armistice period, the thesis highlights the full extent of the Australian military nursing contribution to the war. The study traces the work and experiences of these nurses in Japan and Korea, ending with the diversity and complexity of their return to, and recognition, in Australia.

In examining the Korean War from the military nursing perspective, the thesis broadens the boundaries of the conflict revealing new insights into the history of Australian military nursing and the involvement of Australian forces in the Korean War. The significance of Japan as a site of war work and the contributions of Australian forces following the armistice are highlighted as major themes. The opportunities for cultural interaction are also explored through the relationships between Australian nurses and their British Commonwealth medical colleagues, United States and United Nations personnel, and the Japanese and Korean civilians with whom they had contact. Finally, the thesis reveals the Korean War era as a period of continuity and transition in the culture of military nursing. The RAAFNS and RAANC both developed as more career-orientated organisations during this period. Yet despite these changes strong connections with past military nursing traditions remained. These transitions and continuities are explored throughout the thesis.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Rebecca Fleming

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ABBREVIATIONS

AANS:	Australian Army Nursing Service
AAMWS:	Australian Army Medical Women's Service
AWAS:	Australian Women's Army Service
AGH:	Australian General Hospital
AIF:	Australian Imperial Force
AMF:	Australian Military Force
ARRC:	Associate Royal Red Cross
AWM:	Australian War Memorial
BCCZMU:	British Commonwealth Communications Zone Medical Unit
BCGH:	British Commonwealth General Hospital
BCFK:	British Commonwealth Force Korea
BCOF:	British Commonwealth Occupation Force
CCS:	Casualty Clearing Station
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency
CDS:	Casualty Dressing Station
CMF:	Citizen's Military Force
FDS:	Field Dressing Station
NA:	National Archives
NAA:	National Archives Australia
POW:	Prisoner of War
QAIMNS:	Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service
QARANC:	Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps

RAAFNS:	Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service
RAANC:	Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps
RAANS:	Royal Australian Army Nursing Service
RAF:	Royal Air Force
RN:	Royal Navy
RRC:	Royal Red Cross
RSL:	Returned Services League
TB:	Tuberculosis
USAF:	United States Air Force
USN:	United States Navy
VAD:	Voluntary Aid Detachment
VD:	Venereal Disease
WAC:	Women's Army Corps
WRAAC:	Women's Royal Australian Army Corps
WRAAF:	Women's Royal Australian Air Force
WRANS:	Women's Royal Australian Naval Service

CHAPTER ONE:

‘On the Periphery:’ Australian Military Nurses of the Korean War Era

The nurses of the Korean War occupy a highly ambiguous place in Australian history. As women they are often not seen to be primary participants in war and as veterans of what is commonly referred to as a ‘forgotten war’ they are in two senses ‘on the periphery’ of history.¹ This thesis seeks to redress this imbalance. In doing so it reveals that the lack of a detailed history of Australia’s Korean War nurses has obscured significant issues in the history of Australia’s participation in the Korean War and in military nursing history.

Looking at the Korean War through the lens of the nurses’ experiences, this thesis reveals a transitional and ambiguous war with blurred boundaries of time and location. It highlights the experience of serving in the Korean War as a cultural one, documenting the interactions between the women of this study, the Commonwealth and United Nations personnel with whom they worked, and the civilian Korean and Japanese populations with whom they had limited contact.

From a military nursing history perspective the thesis shows that the Korean War was in many ways a watershed for Australian military nursing. The shift in army nursing from a temporary service, the Royal Australian Army Nursing Service (RAANS), to a permanent corps, the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC), in 1951 signalled a shift to a more militarised and career-orientated

¹ Ruth Rae, *Scarlet Poppies: The Army Experience of Australian Nurses during World War One* (Burwood: The College of Nursing, 2004), 232.

organisation. The Korean War was also the first war in which sisters of the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) were responsible for large-scale medical air evacuations of casualties. At the same time there were also continuities with the past, which will be explored, particularly in regards to the views of the nurses who served, many of whom felt a strong connection with the past and the legacy of Australian military nursing.

The Korean War is a marginalised, if not forgotten war, in Australian history. Richard Trembath outlines three reasons for the marginalisation of the Korean War in Australia's popular memory of war, firstly, that the absence of television led to limited reporting and visual records of the war. Secondly, its place chronologically wedged between World War Two and the more controversial Vietnam War, and, thirdly, the lack of dramatic events for people to associate with the Korean War, such as the fall of Singapore, or the bombing of Pearl Harbour in World War Two.² A further reason for the marginalisation of the Korean War stems from the representation of the war in the official history. As Robert O'Neill made clear Korea 'did not directly threaten the security of Australia and its major allies.' Furthermore, he argued that 'Australia's involvement in the war was much more significant at the level of policy formation than at that of combat operations.'³ This emphasis on policy and the marginalising of combat operations may well have contributed to the peripheral place of the conflict in Australian military history. However, as Richard Trembath has poignantly noted, the operational side of the war had great significance for those who served, for them

² Richard Trembath, *A Different Sort of War: Australians in Korea 1950-53* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2005), 156–159.

³ Robert O'Neill, *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53: Volume 2 Combat Operations* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial and Australian Government Publishing Service, 1985), xv.

‘... the war was of personal value and a source of pride.’⁴ Trembath’s study provides valuable insight into the personal value of the war to the male participants. This thesis also provides insights into the personal value of the war to the nurses who cared for the Commonwealth troops in the forgotten war.

Of all the Australian participants in the Korean War, the RAANC and RAAFNS are arguably the ‘most forgotten of the forgotten war.’⁵ As will be highlighted in this chapter, most accounts of the Korean War mention nurses only very briefly, if at all. Furthermore only those who served in Korea are listed on the Nominal Roll of Australian Veterans of the Korean War, with 36 RAANC sisters and 21 RAAFNS sisters mentioned as serving between 1950 and 1956.⁶ The nominal roll does not list Australian military personnel who served in Japan only. Thus it excludes the women who served at the British Commonwealth General Hospital, the main hospital for Commonwealth casualties from the war, which was located in Japan. As a result, a significant number of nurses are excluded from the official record. Geographically distanced from the area of conflict, they were literally and figuratively on the periphery of the war and have remained so in the history to date.

One contribution this thesis makes is establishing a more accurate figure of the number of Australian nurses who participated in the Korean War, either in Japan or Korea. Using the British Commonwealth General Hospital Australian Army contingent war diaries held at the Australian War Memorial, a more

⁴ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 187.

⁵ Betty Lawrence (née Crocker), interview with Rob Linn, 22 May 2002, OH 644/7, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

⁶ Nominal Roll of Australian Veterans of the Korean War.
<http://www.koreanroll.gov.au/about.aspx> [Accessed 4 May 2009].

comprehensive list of the names of Australian nurses who served in Japan has been compiled (see Appendix A). Based on this list, the number of Australian Korean War nurses rises significantly, with 92 RAANC officers (trained sisters), 90 RAANC other ranks (female nursing assistants) and 21 RAAFNS Sisters, indicating that a total of 203 Australian nurses served in the Korean War between 1951 and 1956.⁷ This figure may not be complete as the records for the British Commonwealth General Hospital between 1950 and 1951 could not be located. Nevertheless, the nominal roll of Australian Korean War nurses compiled for this thesis is the most comprehensive record available to date.

These nurses are almost completely excluded from the historical record. Through an analysis of the current Korean War historiography, with a specific focus on Australian historiography, this chapter will argue that with a focus on politics and to a slightly lesser extent combat histories, the historiography, with the exception of Richard Trembath's excellent work *A Different Sort of War*, lacks in-depth studies of the social and cultural implications of the war.⁸ One of the implications of this lack of social and cultural history is an almost complete neglect of any analysis of Australian women's experiences, with the exception of a few key texts, which will be examined in the chapter.

Secondly, the chapter documents the historiography of Australian women, including nurses, in war. The chapter then provides a broad overview of Australia's participation in the Korean War and the significance of the transition

⁷ This figure is based on information gathered from the Nominal Roll of Australian Veterans of the Korean War, <http://koreanroll.gov.au> and, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, 1950-1956, AWM52, 11/2/45, Australian War Memorial (AWM), Canberra.

⁸ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*.

between the British Commonwealth Occupation Force and the Korean War period in Japan. Finally the methodology used for this thesis, which includes a combination of archival, oral and visual sources, will be outlined, along with an overview of the thesis chapters.

Placing Nurses in Australia's Korean War History

In order to understand the place of nurses in Australian military history, it is necessary to begin with an analysis of the 12-volume official history of World War One as the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) began in 1903 and World War One was the first war in which nurses of the Australian Army were involved. In the first volume of the official history, Bean makes clear that the role of the medical services is beyond the scope of his task. 'The medical arrangements of the campaign have been set forth with great care by the medical historian and no attempt will be made here to summarize the conclusions arrived at in his recent volume.'⁹ This decision is in itself interesting. The fact that the medical arrangements are documented in a separate series supports a dichotomy between fighting and medical care in military history, which places military nursing, and indeed all medical matters, on the periphery of military history. One chapter of Butler's official war history is devoted to the role of the AANS in the medical history series, but this is not until the third and final volume of the series, arguably further marginalising the role of the nurses.¹⁰

⁹ C.E.W. Bean, *The Story of ANZAC: From the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, Vol. 1 of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 5 ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1936), xiv, hereafter, Bean, *The Story of Anzac*.

¹⁰ A.G. Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914–1918* vol. 3, 2 ed. (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1943).

While it was not Bean's aim to cover the medical services in the official history, there are scattered references to nurses within the series. For example, within a section noting the positive qualities of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), nurses are mentioned favourably. Australian nurses, Bean wrote, 'were noted for the same resourcefulness and determination as the men.'¹¹ H.S. Gullet provides the greatest endorsement, detailing the work of the nurses at the No. 14 Australian General Hospital (AGH). 'No womanhood has ever presented a richer association of feminine tenderness and sheer capacity. They were true sisters to the fighting sons of Australian pioneers', he championed.¹² While certainly very positive, the comment reinforces traditional stereotypes of nursing and femininity.¹³ Gullet's statement also echoes an earlier comment by Bean in the first volume in which he notes the strain of the work endured by the nurses and the relations between them and the soldiers:

The Australian nursing sisters at No. 1 Australian General Hospital at Helipolis and No.2 at Mena slaved to such an extent that those of the wounded who knew them previously were shocked at the change which the strain had produced in them. There grew up between the Australian soldiers and the Australian nurses a comradeship which resembled nothing so much as the relation between brother and sister.¹⁴

This quote highlights a common theme in the series—when the nurses are mentioned it is in relation to the soldiers, their relationships with the men, or even the soldiers' perceptions of the nurses. In the quote above, we are not given an

¹¹ C.E.W. Bean, *The Australian Imperial Force in France During the Allied Offensive*, vol. 6 of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 13 ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942), 1078.

¹² H.S. Gullet, *The Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine 1914–1918*, vol. 7 of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 3 ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1936).

¹³ For an insightful discussion of the way in which war is divided into conceptual oppositions based on gender, such as 'home front/battlefront', see Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, 'Introduction: Warfare, History and Gender,' in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

¹⁴ Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, 571–572.

account of the work endured from the perspective of one of the nurses, but rather we are told of the change in their appearance as perceived by the soldiers. It is fair to argue then, that the nurses are not necessarily forgotten in the official history of World War One, but rather marginalised in the history, acting as silent supporting characters in the narrative of the Anzacs at war.

Chapter 11 of the third volume of the *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services*, is dedicated to the AANS. Butler states explicitly at the beginning of the chapter that rather than giving an account of the ‘experiences and adventures of Australian nurses in the First World War’ his aim is to ‘give a general picture of the participation of the nursing profession in the war.’¹⁵ He achieves this aim admirably, beginning with an account of the development of nursing in Australia, followed by the establishment of the AANS in 1903 and an outline of their experiences in the army including pay and allowances.¹⁶ Beyond the greater scope and detail, what separates Butler’s chapter from the scattered references to nursing in Bean’s series, is that the voices of the nurses are present. For example, four pages of the chapter are dedicated to an account by Sister James-Wallace of her experiences at No. 61 British Casualty Clearing Station (CCS) during an offensive in March 1918.¹⁷ While the medical series dedicates only a chapter in its third volume to a detailed account of the AANS, they are, at least in this chapter, the centre of the narrative. More recently Michael B. Tyquin outlines the work of the medical services during the Gallipoli campaign. Although Tyquin acknowledges the ‘extremely important’ contribution of Australian nurses

¹⁵ Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services*, 527.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 531–543.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 559–563.

during the war, he excludes their service from the scope of his study as ‘only a relatively small number of Australian nurses were employed near the front during the Gallipoli campaign (at Lemnos).’¹⁸ Their distance from the front lines seems a perennial problem in the recognition of the work of Australian nurses at war.

The official history of World War Two was broken into five separate series, devoted to army, navy, air, civil and medical. The final volume of the medical series dedicates an entire section to women in the army medical services and a chapter to the work of the RAAFNS nurses.¹⁹ This wide-ranging scope represents the greatest attempt to document the role and experiences of military nurses in an official history. The book carefully details the establishment and work of the RAAFNS. It also outlines the overseas service of the AANS, detailing their work in the Middle East, Malaya and within Australia.²⁰ The danger faced by nurses in these conflicts is demonstrated through an account of the nurses who became prisoners of war.²¹ This is further reinforced through narratives from a number of nurses, including an account by Sister Ellen Savage of the sinking of the Australian Hospital Ship *Centaur* off the Australian coast in 1943, and Senior Sister I.M. Smith’s story of her experience of an air raid while stationed in Darwin.²² Personal narratives such as these serve to place the nurses within the battlefield, thus breaking the home front/battlefront opposition often associated with women and war.²³

¹⁸ Michael B. Tyquin, *Gallipoli the Medical War: The Australian Army Medical Services in the Dardanelles Campaign of 1915* (Kensington NSW: UNSW Press, 1993), 154.

¹⁹ Allan S. Walker, *Medical Services of the R.A.N and the R.A.A.F* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 408–415 and 451–463.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 441–456.

²² *Ibid.*, 462–463 and 410.

²³ Damousi and Lake, ‘Introduction,’ 3.

In comparison to the official histories of World Wars One and Two, which both dedicated at least one volume to the work of the medical services, there is a surprising lack of detail on the nursing and medical services in the official Australian history of the Korean War. Only one chapter in the two-volume history is dedicated to the army medical services in Korea. Unlike the official histories for the earlier wars, which contained nurses' narratives, the few pages in the Korean War official history that reference the work of nurses contains no such account.²⁴ Yet Betty Crocker (now Lawrence) is referenced as the source of the authors' information on the topic.²⁵ The decision to paraphrase the information Betty Crocker provided, rather than include a direct quote of her account, serves to remove the nurses' voices which were so clearly audible in the earlier official histories. This is perhaps a stylistic choice, however given that the author, McIntyre, notes the paucity of records on the RAAF medical services it is surprising that he chose not to draw on oral histories to supplement the lack of official records. Indeed he does draw on two interviews with Korean War doctors, B.H. Gandevia and D.D. Beard, so he was clearly not opposed to the methodology.²⁶ Furthermore, McIntyre sought and received suggestions from Beard on the draft manuscript.²⁷ This collaboration was certainly valuable in ensuring Beard's views were accurately recorded, however it appears that Betty Crocker was not given the same opportunity to comment on the draft. The research notes for the chapter also contain information provided by RAAFNS

²⁴ Darryl McIntyre, 'Australian Army Medical Services in Korea,' in *Australia in the Korean War 1950–1953 Volume II: Combat Operations*, ed. Robert O'Neill (Canberra: The Australian War Memorial and The Australian Government Publishing Service), 1985, 571–572.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 572.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 570 and 575.

²⁷ Letter from Donald Beard to Darryl McIntyre, 7 June 1982, Official History, *Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O'Neill*, Official Historian. Australian Army – medical services, AWM89, J26, AWM, Canberra.

Sister Betty Docker, which detail the work of RAAFNS sisters on the ground in Iwakuni and Seoul and of their role as flight nurses.²⁸ McIntyre chose not to use this material in the final manuscript and as a result does not mention the role of the RAAFNS sisters as flight nurses. Despite more available information, the only mention of the role of RAAFNS sisters is of their work at the holding hospital at Iwakuni, where it is noted that the patients were ‘given appropriate interim treatment by the RAAF Nursing Service to enable them to continue to Kure by ambulance train.’²⁹ Thus, McIntyre fails to mention the most significant aspect of the RAAFNS sisters’ contribution—their work on the aeromedical evacuation flights.

McIntyre claims that ‘virtually all the files relating to the RAAF medical services in Korea and Japan have been destroyed.’³⁰ While there is certainly a paucity of material on the medical services in Korea and indeed significant gaps in the records, some records do exist and in fact the reports on the RAAF medical services in Korea are the most complete.³¹ These have been used extensively in this thesis. It is unclear why McIntyre was not aware of these reports but they certainly could have broadened his study had he consulted them. Another issue arising from McIntyre’s account of the nursing service is that he documents, incorrectly, that Betty Crocker served with the AANS.³² In fact the service had been granted the title ‘Royal’ in 1948, and became a ‘Corps’ in 1951.³³ This is

²⁸ ‘RAAFNS in Japan and Korea,’ Official History, Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O’Neill, Official Historian, AWM 89, J25, AWM, Canberra.

²⁹ Darryl McIntyre, ‘Australian Army Medical Services in Korea,’ 572.

³⁰ *Ibid.* See footnote 1, 570.

³¹ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 1 and Part 5, NAA Canberra.

³² McIntyre, ‘Australian Army Medical Services in Korea,’ see footnote 5, 572.

³³ Walker, *Medical Services*, 474.

perhaps a minor point, however it is indicative of McIntyre's failure to consult in detail any sources specific to the AANS or RAAFNS, or even Walker's official history of the medical services in World War Two which would have provided him with the information. The issue then, with official histories in general and the Korean official history specifically, is that they dedicate only a small section within the volumes to the work of military nurses, and as a result we gain only a glimpse of these stories. It is encouraging to note, however, that the award of the Associate of the Royal Red Cross (ARRC) to three RAANC sisters and one RAAFNS sister is acknowledged in Appendix F which details Australian decoration winners.³⁴

Australian Korean War Historiography

Looking at the broader historiography of Australia's participation in the Korean War, the same trend of omission unfortunately continued. The Korean War is best known for being forgotten.³⁵ In the introduction of *The Korean War 1950–53: A Fifty Year Retrospective*, the editors note, 'the Korean War was long regarded as a neglected or forgotten conflict...'³⁶ Yet, as Richard Trembath recently argued, there is a growing body of literature on Australia's participation in the conflict.³⁷ This literature will now be reviewed, highlighting the breadth of the field and the gaps which still remain. The first history to be published, in 1952, was a narrative account of a group of men of the 77th Squadron in Korea. In the foreword George

³⁴ The women listed are: Captain P.M. McCarthy, Senior Sister P.R. Scholz, Major D.V. Thompson and Captain H.J. Wilding. O'Neill, *Combat Operations*, 691.

³⁵ For example, the *Time-Life* publication on Australia's participation in Korea is entitled, *Korea the Forgotten War*, see John Hooker, *Korea the Forgotten War* (Sydney: Time-Life Books Australia, 1989).

³⁶ Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, eds., *The Korean War 1950–53: A Fifty Year Retrospective: The Chief of Army's Military History Conference* (Canberra: Army History Unit, Department of Defence, 2000).

³⁷ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, xiii.

Odgers argued the importance of such a social history. ‘Unless the individual experience of the men who do the fighting is told, no war can be well understood.’³⁸ In the following year Norman Bartlett published *With the Australians in Korea*. While this text had greater scope than Odgers’, with the first half of the book dedicated to a broad overview of the politics and battles, he also gave primacy to the narratives of 18 Australians involved in the war, although none are women. The emphasis Odgers and Bartlett placed on the importance of documenting the individual’s war is interesting considering the many histories which have since placed the emphasis firmly on Cold War politics.³⁹

The official Australian history of the Korean War is the best example of this emphasis on politics. The entire first volume of the history is dedicated to politics, the second to combat operations.⁴⁰ In his justification for this structure, O’Neill downplays Australia’s involvement in the war:

Australia’s involvement in the war was much more significant at the level of policy formulation than at that of combat operations. Australia’s commitment of contingents of all three services had no profound influence on the course of the war...⁴¹

³⁸ George Odgers, *Across the Parallel* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1953), ix.

³⁹ See for example, Michael Evans, ‘Australia’s War in Korea: Strategic Perspectives and Military Lessons,’ in *The Korean War 1950–53: A Fifty Year Retrospective*, 163–178; Gavan McCormack, *Cold War Hot War* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983); Ian McGibbon, ‘Anzaxis at War: Australia-New Zealand Relations During the Korean War,’ in *The Korean War 1950–1953: A Fifty Year Retrospective*, 27–41. Robert O’Neill, *Australia in the Korean War 1950–53 Strategy and Diplomacy*, (Canberra: The Australian War Memorial and the Australian Government Publishing Service, 1981).

⁴⁰ See O’Neill, *Strategy and Diplomacy*, and O’Neill, *Combat Operations*.

⁴¹ O’Neill, *Strategy and Diplomacy*, xv.

O'Neill was not the first to argue that Australia's place in the war was small, as Bartlett writing in 1953 made the same argument.⁴² While it has not been disputed that Australia did not play a decisive role in the Korean War, that two prominent historians of Australia's participation in the war highlighted this fact has perhaps contributed to the war failing 'to find a place in society's consciousness.'⁴³ Nevertheless, O'Neill's official history was thorough and detailed. The first volume carefully and systematically detailed the politics associated with the war from its origins to the armistice. The second volume also gave detailed accounts of combat operations of all three services. The failure of the history to give any detailed account of the work of the RAAFNS and RAANC nurses has already been noted.

In *Cold War Hot War*, Gavan McCormack also examined the political implications of the Korean War for Australia.⁴⁴ He argued that Australia's decision to commit ground troops to the conflict, before Britain, was an attempt to ingratiate itself to America, thus symbolising a move away from a Britain-centred defence policy to one more concerned about alignment with the United States.⁴⁵ Yet it is Australia's commitment of ground troops to the Korean War before Britain that continues to fascinate some Australian historians. In 2000, Michael Evans argued that this event was 'a watershed in Australian history in the sense that it marked the decline of the Anglo-Australian military connection and the maturing of the Australian-US bilateral relationship.'⁴⁶ Ian McGibbon also examined the issue, using it to highlight contemporary relations between Australia

⁴² Norman Bartlett, ed., *With the Australians in Korea* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial 1960).

⁴³ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 155.

⁴⁴ McCormack, *Cold War Hot War*.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁴⁶ Evans, 'Australia's War in Korea,' 175.

and New Zealand. McGibbon argued that the rush to beat Britain and each other to the announcement of the commitment of ground forces symbolised a rivalry which had been present since World War One.⁴⁷ He does qualify this statement, concluding that while the nations were politically competitive during war, the soldiers shared a ‘special bond.’⁴⁸ Considering the critical analysis that precedes it, this generalised statement is a somewhat jarring indication that celebratory military history continues to flourish. While Cold War politics seems to have been a favoured theme in Australia’s Korean War history, Peter Edwards has critiqued the argument that the Korean War symbolised a shift in diplomatic policy to the United States as a ‘facile assumption.’⁴⁹

The ambiguous nature of the war itself has also emerged as a prominent theme in the historiography. The Korean War is commonly understood to have begun on the morning of 25 June 1950, when North Korean Forces crossed the 38th parallel and began a large-scale invasion of the South in the hope of unifying the country under a communist regime led by Kim Il Sung. Such conventional accounts of the beginning of the Korean War tend to focus on only one side of the parallel, to the northern invading forces, and in these accounts the South are unprepared victims.⁵⁰ The origins of the war were in fact far more complex. Gavan McCormack dedicates a significant portion of his analysis of Australian involvement in the Korean War to the events between the division of Korea at the 38th parallel in 1945 and the outbreak of war in June 1950. McCormack

⁴⁷ McGibbon, ‘Anzaxis at War,’ 33.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁹ Peter Edwards, ‘The Post-1945 Conflicts: Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam,’ in *Australia Two Centuries of War and Peace*, eds. M. McKernan and M. Browne (Canberra: Australian War Memorial in association with Allen & Unwin 1988), 300.

⁵⁰ See for example, David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (London: MacMillan and Co, 1964), 3–7.

convincingly argues that ‘the character of the war cannot be understood without paying careful attention to its political and social roots, and to the revolutionary dynamic that was at work on the Korean peninsula from 1945.’⁵¹ In fact, he goes on to suggest that ‘from 1945 Korea entered a phase of conflict that was civil and revolutionary in character.’⁵² McCormack is not the only historian to point to the significance of the tensions. Bruce Cumings also argued that the Korean War began as a civil guerrilla war between North and South forces following the end of World War Two and reached its peak in 1949, at which time United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reports suggested that up to 6,000 guerrillas were active in the South.⁵³ Cumings argued that ‘the war that came in June 1950 followed on the guerrilla fighting and nine months of battles along the thirty-eighth parallel in 1949.’⁵⁴ Richard Trembath has further pointed to the role of international involvement in the period between 1945 and 1948, during which the unification of Korea, first agreed upon at Cairo in 1943, was sidelined by a ‘combination of social tensions and Cold War conflicts.’⁵⁵ When taking these factors into consideration the beginnings of the Korean War become far more ambiguous than it may at first appear. The Korean War officially began when North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel on 25 June 1950 and embarked on a rapid campaign, which culminated in the fall of Seoul on 28 June, with South Korea engaging the support of the United States and United Nations forces. Yet these histories make clear that when viewed within the broader context the

⁵¹ McCormack, *Cold War Hot War*, 60.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵³ Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: A Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997), 243.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁵⁵ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 4–5.

beginnings of the Korean War are very much connected to the earlier international tensions and civil guerrilla war.

While much of the history on Australia's participation in the Korean War is focused on politics, two battles have attracted some attention, the battle of Kapyong and the Battle of Maryang San. Bartlett dedicated a chapter of his history to the Battle of Kapyong.⁵⁶ Michael Evans has argued that these battles were the most significant for the Australian Regular Army in the twentieth century. He writes:

The third battalion's immortal moments in Korea came first at Kapyong in April 1951, and then at Maryang San in October 1951. These two battles were exceptional unit actions and represented the baptism of fire for an Australian Regular Army (ARA) that was barely four years old ... Both battles showed that the diggers of the Cold War could match the exploits of both the 1st and 2nd Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and that the Anzac tradition was in good hands.⁵⁷

Certainly this description is a good example of a highly celebratory military history, uncritically comparing the Korean War soldiers with the earlier 'diggers' to insert them into the 'Anzac tradition.' It also demonstrates an interest among historians in combat operations, and Kapyong and Maryang San as the favoured battles to document. Bob Breen wrote a book on each battle, drawing on oral histories of soldiers involved to create a historical narrative of the battles from beginning to end.⁵⁸ The Australian War Memorial has also chosen to highlight

⁵⁶ Bartlett, *With the Australians in Korea*, 90–106.

⁵⁷ Evans, 'Australia's War in Korea,' 171.

⁵⁸ Bob Breen, *The Battle of Kapyong* (Georges Heights: Headquarters Training Command, 1992); Bob Breen, *The Battle of Maryang San* (Balmoral: Headquarters Training Command, 1991).

Kapyong as a significant battle, with the Korean War section of the post-1945 gallery containing a diorama of the battle.⁵⁹

The focus on politics and battle histories took some attention away from the lives of the individual soldiers, which were such a prominent part of Odgers' and Bartlett's early studies. Veterans who shared their experiences through memoirs and personal accounts have redressed this lack of personal perspective to some extent. One memoir, by missionary Philip Crosbie, who had been a prisoner of war, was published soon after the war.⁶⁰ Crosbie's account of his time as a prisoner of war is the only detailed account of the experiences of Australian Korean War prisoners. It was not until 1993 that another memoir on the Korean War, Olwyn Green's *The Name's Still Charlie*, was published.⁶¹ In the memoir Green, the widow of Charlie Green who was killed in action, gives insight into the aftermath of battle on those left behind. The home front and the effects of death are often marginalised in the history of war, and as a result the grief of those who have lost loved ones is also marginalised. In addition to Green's memoir, which gives voice to this often obscured grief, Joy Damousi has detailed the lack of acknowledgment felt by Korean War families.⁶²

In 1996 Pears and Kirkland published a collection of narratives of Korean War veterans, including four RAANC and RAAFNS nurses as well as army, navy and

⁵⁹ Nigel Steel, 'Getting the Measure of Kapyong,' *Wartime* 39 (2007): 56–59.

⁶⁰ Philip Crosbie, *Pencilling Prisoner* (Melbourne: The Hawthorn Press, 1954).

⁶¹ Olwyn Green, *The Name's Still Charlie* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993).

⁶² Joy Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 42.

RAAF servicemen.⁶³ This substantial collection of vignettes offered insight into the diversity of experience during the war. Furthermore, the accounts also occasionally reveal the anger felt by veterans regarding the ‘forgotten’ nature of the conflict. This is perhaps most strongly articulated by a writer using the pseudonym ‘Snowy’ who concluded his narrative with the following:

Most Australians of the Korea War regard themselves as the forgotten veterans of a forgotten war. Like our gallant younger brothers and sisters and in some cases our sons and daughters who later fought in Vietnam, we never had a Welcome Home Parade. There was no such thing as a Counselling Service for those who suffered traumas. Any entitlements that we had from the Veterans’ Entitlement Act (the Old Repatriation Act) had to be justified and fought for, for years after our return. Many in high positions of the RSL saw us as newcomers. Until recently, 1995, no Federal government has believed that our 400 dead are worthy of a National Memorial in Canberra or to recognise our service with an Australian medal. They left that to the Brits or the United Nations. Forgotten veterans from a forgotten war. Maybe that is how it should be!!⁶⁴

As Snowy’s conclusion clearly illustrates, a significant aspect of the war story for Korean veterans is the return home and their perceptions of being forgotten. For the contributors perhaps the most significant contribution of the book is that it has given them the opportunity to remember and record their experiences.

Other recollections from veterans are framed in a more scholarly context. In 1999 Jack Gallaway published *The Last Call of the Bugle*, and this was followed in 2000 by Ben O’Dowd’s *In Valiant Company*.⁶⁵ Both books, written by Korean War veterans, were researched using archival sources, interviews with other veterans and limited secondary sources and contain some endnotes and an index.

⁶³ Maurie Pears and Fred Kirkland, (comps)., *Korea Remembered: the RAN, ARA, RAAF in the Korean War 1950–53* (Georges Heights: Doctrine Wing, Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 1996).

⁶⁴ Snowy, ‘To be a Soldier,’ in *Korea Remembered*, 183.

⁶⁵ Jack Gallaway, *The Last Call of the Bugle* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999); Ben O’Dowd, *In Valiant Company* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000).

However, they are largely narrative in tone and do not offer much substantial analytical insight. O'Dowd writes in the first person with a narrative tone and makes no claim to be writing military history, although in the foreword, Gallaway describes the book as 'military history at its best.'⁶⁶ Gallaway, on the other hand, used the third person thus distancing himself from the story and creating the tone of a history rather than memoir. O'Dowd, who wrote the foreword for Gallaway's book also commends the work as valuable military history in its own right:

There have been many attempts to chronicle the period covered by this book. Few of them have agreed on detail and some contain demonstrable nonsense. Over the years, many of the details in those accounts have been disputed by veterans relying on their recollections of events. Jack Gallaway has investigated disputed areas and endeavoured to set the record straight with arguments supported by hard evidence.⁶⁷

The point of the analysis of these texts is that they represent an interesting development in history, in which the participants seek not to simply retell their own experiences but to correct perceived errors in previous histories and give an 'insiders' military history.

In his article on post-1945 conflicts, Peter Edwards previewed the future movement of the field, predicting quite accurately the kind of history, which Richard Trembath has recently published. Edwards suggested that:

The central theme on which historians are likely to concentrate here is the way the traditions of Australians at war, largely shaped by the experiences of the first and second AIF, was adopted and adapted in rather different circumstances of these campaigns.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ O'Dowd, *In Valiant Company*, xii.

⁶⁷ Gallaway, *The Last Call of the Bugle*, xiv.

⁶⁸ Edwards, 'The Post-1945 Conflicts,' 303.

In 2005 Trembath's *A Different Sort of War* did just that.⁶⁹ It is the only real social and cultural history of Australian involvement in the Korean War, and it was much needed. While experiences of soldiers were outlined in narrative histories and memoirs until Trembath's study no-one had analysed these experiences through a theoretical lens. Trembath's study did this, analysing interviews and questionnaires of Korean War veterans to gain insight into their motivations to join, their experiences and their place within the tradition of the Anzac at war. Although Korea is often referred to as the 'Forgotten War,' Trembath's study is the only history to give detailed attention to the reasons for Korea's marginalisation in the collective memory.⁷⁰ Trembath's history begins to fill the gap of the lack of social histories of the Korean War, but the perceptions and experiences of Australian nurses who served in the Korean War are not explored to any great extent in the history.

Placing the Korean War in the Historiography of Australian Women and War

To the same extent that women are generally excluded from the Australian Korean War historiography, the Korean War is equally absent in the literature examining the contribution of Australian women in war. As this chapter will now demonstrate, there is a rich body of scholarship detailing the contributions of Australian women in war, but the work of Australian nurses in the Korean War is seriously neglected. In her analysis of the state of Australian war history Joan Beaumont suggested that feminist and social historians 'colonised' the field in the 1980s and 1990s exploring 'the gendered nature of war, and the reinforcement

⁶⁹ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

during wartime of traditional constructions of femininity, masculinity and sexuality.⁷¹ It is certainly true that these decades were a high point in feminist analysis of Australian women and war. Some early scholarship focused on recording the experiences of women in World Wars One and Two, with a particular focus on voluntary work.⁷² Writer and ex-Voluntary Aid (VA), Patsy Adam Smith made a significant contribution in scope, covering the experiences of women in the different services in both world wars.⁷³ Similarly Jan Bassett's anthology of women's war writing covered conflicts from the Boer War to the Gulf War.⁷⁴

The 1995 book *Gender and War* was a landmark text in the field, moving the analysis forward from studies of the experiences of women and war to the complexities of gender in war.⁷⁵ This book recognised that not only had women been cast in stereotyped roles in histories of war, but so too had men.⁷⁶ Through a collection of insightful articles the book explored the construction of masculinity and femininity during war. Through this collection the historiography moved beyond recording women's experiences, or even questioning the effect of the World Wars on women's liberation, to engaging with broader historical debates,

⁷¹ Joan Beaumont, 'The State of Australian History of War,' *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 121 (2003):166–67.

See, for example, Margaret Bevege, 'Some Reflections on Women's Experiences in North Queensland During World War II,' in *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, eds. Margaret Bevege, Margaret James, and Carmel Shute (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982): 99–110; Nance Kingston, 'My Experience in the AWAS During World War II,' in *Worth Her Salt*, 111–122; Carmel Shute, 'From Balaclavas to Bayonets: women's voluntary war work, 1939–41,' *Hecate* 6, no.1 (1980): 5–26. Melanie Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay: Australian Civilian Volunteers in War* (Walcha: Ohio Productions, 2002).

⁷³ Patsy Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia, 1984).

⁷⁴ Jan Bassett, *As We Wave You Goodbye: Australian Women and War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁷⁵ Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*.

⁷⁶ Another landmark text on masculinity and war is Alistair Thomson's, *Anzac Memories Living with the Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994). Joy Damousi's analysis of grief and war also broadened perspectives on masculinity and war by exploring soldiers' grief, a topic rarely explored. See Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath*.

including the construction of gender and sexuality and the role of memory in history.⁷⁷

A number of chapters in the book also took into account experiences of women during the Vietnam War, which had hitherto been largely neglected in favour of their experiences in World Wars One and Two.⁷⁸ The Korean War, however, was not covered in *Gender and War*, further confirming the forgotten nature of the war. Women therefore, have not only been on the periphery of Australian Korean War historiography, as veterans of the ‘forgotten war,’ they are also excluded from the literature detailing Australian women’s contributions to war. As this review of the literature will demonstrate, in spite of a strong body of feminist research detailing Australian women’s involvement in war, there are few texts which deal specifically with the role of Australian women in the Korean War.

The first detailed study examining the experiences of Australian nurses in the Korean War was Maxine Dahl’s unpublished 1997 Master of Nursing thesis. Dahl’s thesis examines the experiences of RAAFNS nurses who participated in Aeromedical Evacuations between Korea and Japan. Using a combination of archival research and oral histories Dahl identified eight themes in the nurses’ experiences. These included the extreme cold of Korea, the journey on the RAAF planes being the bridge to home for the soldiers, ‘caring for the boys,’ ‘caring as the basis of nursing care,’ ‘experiencing stark contrasts,’ ‘the dichotomy of

⁷⁷ See Kate Darian-Smith, ‘Remembering Romance: Memory, Gender and World War II,’ in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War* and Ruth Ford, ‘“Lesbians and Loose Women”: Female Sexuality and the Women’s Services During World War II,’ in *Gender and War*.

⁷⁸ See Anne Curthoys, ‘“Shut up, You Bourgeois Bitch”: Sexual Identity and Political Action in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement,’ in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*, 311–341; Robin Gerster, ‘A Bit of the Other: Touring Vietnam,’ in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*, 223–235.

nursing care,' 'the value of teamwork' and 'the importance of friendship.'⁷⁹ The study is useful in documenting the experiences of the nurses, however it does not analyse them to any great extent. It does not attempt to engage with how the themes identified in the nurses' narratives connect with broader historical debates about nursing and gender in war. For example, Dahl notes 'caring for the nurses meant more than just nursing, it also meant they fulfilled the traditional roles of mother, sister and friend.'⁸⁰ Yet she does not elaborate on the construction of these traditional roles.⁸¹ Dahl also limits her study to RAAFNS nurses, specifically those who spent time in Korea. This restricts the work considerably and excludes the experiences of a larger number of nurses who served with the RAANC, thus telling only part of the story.

In 2009, Dahl extended her contribution to the field with a PhD thesis documenting the work of RAAFNS flight nurses from the inception of the formal medical air evacuation teams in 1944, through to the Korean War armistice in 1953.⁸² In this work Dahl provided a strong analysis of the early development of the role of RAAFNS Sisters in war. The strength of the thesis is in the detailed and comprehensive descriptions of the air evacuation process and work carried out by the nurses. In the chapter detailing the Korean War, for example, Dahl methodically detailed the evacuation process and the duties undertaken by RAAFNS Sisters.⁸³ A further strength of the thesis was its scope in tracing the

⁷⁹ Maxine Dahl, 'Aeromedical Evacuation Nurses in the Korean War: Living through the Experience' (Master of Nursing Thesis, Deakin University, 1997).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸¹ For an excellent analysis of the ambiguities in the construction of military nurses in these roles see, Katie Holmes, 'Day Mothers and Night Sisters: World War I Nurses and Sexuality,' in Damousi and Lake, *Gender and War*, 43–59.

⁸² Maxine Dahl, 'Air Evacuation in War: The Role of RAAF Nurses Undertaking Air Evacuation of Casualties between 1943–1953'. (PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2009).

⁸³ Maxine Dahl, 'Air Evacuation in War,' 213–248.

development and changes in the RAAFNS during World War Two and the Korean War. As Dahl demonstrated, this was a highly significant period for the RAAFNS and one which is now well documented as a result of her research. The thesis was also analytically stronger than her earlier Master's thesis. Chapter ten engaged with the complexities of gender and recognition within the RAAF in the period.⁸⁴ Dahl's focus was on documenting the beginning of flight nursing as a specialist role and the lessons which might be drawn from these experiences for the nursing profession.⁸⁵ This thesis will build on Dahl's excellent foundations to explore the role and experience of Australian nurses more broadly, examining both the RAAFNS and RAANC contributions. Dahl's work appears to be the only academic study to date on the topic and remains unpublished.

In addition to Dahl's Master's and PhD theses, there are a number of general Australian military nursing histories which detail the role of Australian nurses in the Korean War within a broader study.⁸⁶ The first of these, written by Rupert Goodman and published in 1988, documented the history of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps from 1902 to 1988.⁸⁷ Within the book, one chapter detailed the establishment of the service; five chapters were dedicated to World War One, three to World War Two with one chapter dealing with the interwar years and the final chapter covering the period from 1946 to 1988. It is clear from such a structure that World War One is given priority in the text, with the Korean War

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 248–281.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁸⁶ These are, Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War* (Canberra: DVA, 2008); Rupert Goodman, *Our War Nurses: The History of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps 1902–1988* (Bowen Hills: Boolarong Publications, 1988); Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992); Gay Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service 1940–1990* (Metung: Nungurner Press, 1994); Richard Reid, *Just Wanted to Be There: Australian Service Nurses 1899–1999* (Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs, 1999).

⁸⁷ Goodman, *Our War Nurses*.

being largely buried as a post-1945 conflict. Within the final chapter, less than a page is dedicated to the Korean War with two accompanying photographs.⁸⁸ The description given briefly details the background to the Korean War, notes the medical conditions, including the use of helicopters in evacuations, and mentions the establishment of the British Commonwealth Z Medical Unit in Seoul in which Australian sisters served. The account lacks the depth given to the earlier wars and also fails to provide a nurses' perspective, or explain the absence of such a perspective. The sources used by Goodman to document nurses' participation in the Korean War are general histories of Australia's participation. He did not draw on oral histories of nurses who served, or other forms of documentary materials which may have provided a participant perspective in what is a fact-orientated account.

In contrast to Goodman's somewhat superficial account, Jan Bassett's history of Australian Army nursing included a chapter on the postwar period, with a section detailing the participation of the RAANC in the Korean War. The chapter drew on oral histories as well as army notes and archival materials to provide a more detailed perspective which is inclusive of the voices of those involved.⁸⁹ However, like Goodman, Bassett dedicated only a few pages to the Korean War within the book, which covered the history of the Australian Army nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War.

In 1999 Richard Reid produced a general history of Australian service nurses for the Department of Veterans' Affairs, covering both army and air force nursing

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 256–258.

⁸⁹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 182–184.

services.⁹⁰ The history made excellent use of the photographic materials available at the Australian War Memorial, but relied heavily on secondary sources, such as Halstead's history. The Korean War is also given short shrift in his history, with only three paragraphs and a few photographs dedicated to the topic.

The most recent history documenting the contribution of Australian women to war is Melanie Oppenheimer's *Australian Women and War*.⁹¹ Oppenheimer's study is the broadest in scope, covering the participation of Australian women in war from the Boer War until the modern era. The broad scope allowed Oppenheimer to illustrate the changing status of women in the military over the period. She also extended her scope beyond the battlefield to detail the often overlooked work of women in voluntary organisations on the home front. The history showcased a plethora of primary visual material, including photographs, paintings and posters and other ephemera in addition to oral history, memoirs and archival sources. While the book certainly made a significant contribution to the field, its wide-ranging scope prevented any detailed analysis of the Korean War, with only a few pages of the history dedicated to the topic.⁹² This pattern of larger portions of the histories to the World Wars, while grouping the post-1945 wars together, is not surprising and indeed inevitable given that they were larger conflicts involving far more participants than the post-1945 wars. However, as a result, the contribution of those who served in the Korean War has yet to be analysed in any depth, and the significance of that contribution difficult to assess.

⁹⁰ Reid, *Just Wanted to Be There*.

⁹¹ Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 183–185.

Gay Halstead's history of the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service is the exception to this pattern, dedicating an entire chapter within the book to the Korean War. This is because Halstead served as a RAAFNS Sister in Korea and thus includes her own memoirs in the chapter. Halstead's history of the RAAF Nursing Service, published two years after Bassett's, covered the history of the RAAFNS from 1940 to 1990.⁹³ It gives the most extensive account of nursing in the Korean War of any of the histories from the perspective of the RAAFNS sisters. This is no doubt because it covers a much shorter period, as there were no RAAFNS sisters in World War One, thus the war which tends to overshadow other conflicts is excluded from her study. A large component of the Korean War chapter includes a narrative from Halstead on her own experiences in the war. In that respect the book is a valuable primary, as well as secondary, source representing one of only two published accounts written by Australian Korean War nurses.⁹⁴ However, in common with all service histories, the book gave little insight into the interaction with the other services and does not provide analysis of the experiences it documents. While these histories acknowledge the participation of nurses in the Korean War, there is little room for the kind of elaboration and analysis evident in scholarship detailing individual conflicts.

Of the scholarship that details the work of Australian military nurses in individual conflicts, the most extensive and sophisticated analysis is that detailing the experiences of World War One nurses. Katie Holmes, for example, provided an insightful discursive analysis of the letters and diaries of a number of World War

⁹³ Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service*.

⁹⁴ The other published memoir is a short autobiography written by RAANC Sister Margaret (Peg) Webster which briefly documents her time in Korea. Gwen Grimmond and Margaret Elston Sealy Webster, *The Girl on the Five and a Halfpenny Stamp* (Port Macquarie: Port Macquarie and District Family History Society, 2006).

One sisters. Holmes argued that within their writing the nurses constructed their identity in relation to the soldiers as mothers or sisters, as a way of negotiating their ambiguous status as women on the battlefield. Interestingly, Holmes also suggested that the nurses ‘marginalised their own contribution to the war by elevating the status of their patients.’⁹⁵ More recently, Janet Butler built on Holmes’ work, analysing the diary of Sister Kit McNaughton through the lens of travel writing.⁹⁶ Butler deftly demonstrated how McNaughton created a ‘multifaceted’ identity in her diary, one that drew upon common understandings of femininity, but also that of the masculine Anzac legend.

Kirsty Harris has also made a strong contribution to the field with her work on Australian army nurses in World War One. In addition to her PhD thesis examining the work of army nurses in the war, Harris has also published a number of articles on the topic.⁹⁷ A particular strength of Harris’s work is the detailed and extensive archival research, which included a list of names of AANS members in her thesis and a discussion on the complexities of this research in a later article.⁹⁸ In all, Harris estimated that 2303 AANS members served overseas during the war, with an additional unconfirmed 195 nurses.⁹⁹ As noted earlier, Appendix A of this thesis follows Harris’ example in documenting the names of the 203 Australian nurses who served in Japan and Korea during the Korean War.

⁹⁵ Holmes, ‘Day Mothers and Night Sisters,’ 50.

⁹⁶ Janet Butler, ‘Journey into War: A Woman’s Diary,’ *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 127 (2006): 203–217.

⁹⁷ See, Kirsty Harris, ‘Not Just “Routine Nursing:” The Roles and Skills of the Australian Army Nursing Service During World War I,’ (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2006); Kirsty Harris, “‘Rubbery Figures:’ The Puzzle of the Number of AANS on Active Service in WW I,’ *Sabretache*, XLIX, no.1 (March 2008): 5–10; Kirsty Harris, ‘Red Reflections on the Sea: Australian Army Nurses Serving at Sea in World War I,’ *Journal of Australian Naval History* 6, no.2 (September 2009): 51–73.

⁹⁸ See Harris, ‘Not just “Routine Nursing” and Harris, “‘Rubbery Figures.’”

⁹⁹ Harris, “‘Rubbery Figures,’” 9.

In her book *Scarlet Poppies* Ruth Rae also documented the work of Australian nurses in World War One, deftly weaving their story within the broader narrative of Australia's participation in the war.¹⁰⁰ Of particular value is the documentation of the varied theatres in which the nurses served including Egypt, Gallipoli, France, Salonica, India and the pioneering transport nursing work carried out during the war. In addition to the significant contribution made by locating their detailing the varied nature of that work, the book also weaved in biographical narratives of nurses to give a sense of the experience and a strong voice to the nurses in the narrative.

In addition to scholarly articles, World War One nurses themselves contributed to the field with their own memoirs. As early as 1922 Sister Rose Kirkcaldie published an engaging memoir of her time as a World War One nurse.¹⁰¹ After a brief stint with the Australian Army, which took her only as far as the Pacific islands, Sister Kirkcaldie sailed to Britain to join the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) Reserve. Kirkcaldie's story is one of travel and adventure, one of the best articulations of which was her excitement at the first sighting of London—'We, who hailed far from the Motherland, had looked forward from childhood to the day when we should see this Mecca of the British world, and here we were at last!'¹⁰² However, it is also a story of nursing in war and the injuries suffered by casualties on the Gallipoli peninsula are documented in detail, as well as Kirkcaldie's impression of the bravery of the men.

¹⁰⁰ Rae, *Scarlet Poppies*.

¹⁰¹ R.A. Kirkcaldie, *In Gray and Scarlet* (Melbourne: Alexander McCubbin, 1922).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 45.

There were men with burns and flesh wounds beginning on the crown of their heads and finishing on the soles of their feet; men with limbs off; others, less fortunate, with limbs shattered beyond repair ... there were men shot through the abdomen; men shot through the chest; men scarred with ugly bayonet wounds ... No words of mine could tell of the bravery of these wonderful men — they seemed raised above all human standards — young gods to whom physical suffering was as naught.¹⁰³

A number of themes can be detected in Kirkcaldie's recollections. Two of the most obvious include the excitement of travelling overseas tempered by the horror of the injuries sustained by her many patients. The examples also demonstrate the power of such memoirs as primary sources, for example, through her invocation of London as 'Mecca' the reader gains an insight into Kirkcaldie's construction of her identity as a colonial British subject. In fact Kirkcaldie is not the only nurse to reflect upon her identity. Two other memoirs of World War One nurses also highlight their emerging Australian identity in the titles of their narratives. Mary Kent Hughes entitled her memoir *Matilda Waltzes with the Tommies*,¹⁰⁴ and Gertrude F. Moberly titled her collection of letters written to her husband-to-be, *Experiences of a "Dinki Di" R.R.C. Nurse*.¹⁰⁵

Eleven years after the publication of Kirkcaldie's book, May Tilton's memoir of her experiences nursing in World War One was published.¹⁰⁶ Like Kirkcaldie, Tilton structures her story beginning with enlistment and ending with the return home. Aside from their engaging tone, one of the great features of the memoirs is the greater depth of detail which can be gained of the war service of the particular nurse who wrote it. While an official history might mention the names of some

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁰⁴ Mary Kent Hughes, *Matilda Waltzes with the Tommies* (Melbourne: Ramsay Ware Publishing, 1943).

¹⁰⁵ Gertrude F. Moberly, *Experiences of A "Dinki Di" R.R.C. Nurse* (Glebe: Australasian Medical Publishing Company, 1933).

¹⁰⁶ May Tilton, *The Grey Battalion* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1933).

prominent nurses, through the memoirs the entire scope of the war service is detailed. So, in Tilton's memoir her service from enlistment, through the voyage overseas, nursing in Egypt, on a hospital ship, in England, France, Belgium and South Africa is documented in detail, as is her voyage home. This serves to highlight the breadth of service of a World War One nurse. Tilton's memoir is a rich primary source. One paragraph, which documented the difficulties of nursing traumatised soldiers, gives insight into the emotional toll such work can have on a nurse:

What these poor lads endured in Gallipoli was revealed in their incessant ravings. For thirteen hours a day they raved, while I worked and prayed for the courage and strength to tend them.¹⁰⁷

As well as memoirs, a number of collections of edited letters and diaries of Australian World War One nurses have also been produced. These provide the same personal connection as is evident in the memoirs.¹⁰⁸

In the field of biography, Melanie Oppenheimer's *Oceans of Love* provides another example of sophisticated analysis of the letters of a World War One nurse, in this case, Sister Narrelle Hobbes.¹⁰⁹ The history, written for a broad audience, is based on a collection of vivid letters written by Hobbes to her family. Based on these letters the story weaved by Oppenheimer gives insight into Hobbes' charismatic personality, as well as the treatment of nurses by the authorities. Perhaps most importantly a female perspective is presented of a war which is

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁸ See for example, Margaret Young, *'We are Here Too': The Diaries and Letters of Sister Olive L.C. Haynes November 1914 to February 1918* (Adelaide: Australian Down Syndrome Association, 1991) and Gertrude F. Moberly, *Experiences of a "Dinki Di" R.R.C. Nurse*.

¹⁰⁹ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love: Narrelle — An Australian Nurse in World War 1* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2006).

entrenched in Australia's collective memory as a masculine event. 'Narrelle became an observer of Empire, a female voice let loose on the world.'¹¹⁰ The intricate story of Narrelle's life narrated by Oppenheimer provides vivid detail of the female experience of World War One. The poignant ending, which details Narrelle's death on a hospital ship not far from Australian waters, highlights that Australian women also sacrificed their lives during their service.

There is a substantial body of literature examining the work of Australian nurses in World War Two.¹¹¹ Erica Millar examined the diary of World War Two nurse Beatrice Walden Hanmer through the lens of cultural script theory, a type of discourse analysis. In her article, Millar applies cultural script theory to the diary of a World War Two Australian nurse in order to illuminate how this nurse constructed her identity within the masculine environment of the battlefield. Her article deftly showed how women, in this case, Beatrice Walden Hanmer, have actively positioned themselves within the broader narrative of war, subverting the passive identity that is often thrust upon them. Millar argued that 'Beatrice's representation of service overseas suggests she enlisted in the AANS, in part, to align her wartime identity and participation with the "war narrative."¹¹² By the same token Millar highlights the common feminine 'cultural scripts' of romance and domesticity evident in Beatrice's diary, which Millar argued demonstrates that she 'oscillated between the identities of feminine civilian and masculine-combatant.'¹¹³ Her article reveals the capacity for nurses' identities to shift based

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹¹¹ See for example, Erica Millar, 'Carving a Feminine Space in a Masculine Environment: The Diary of an Australian Military Nurse,' *Lilith* 14 (2005): 41–51; Christina Twomey, 'Australian Nurse POWs Gender, War and Captivity,' *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 124 (2004): 255–274.

¹¹² Millar, 'Carving a Feminine Space,' 43.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 47.

on different experiences and dominant ‘cultural scripts’ with which they might identify.

A large proportion of the literature on the experiences of Australian nurses in World War Two focuses on the nurses who were taken prisoner of war by the Japanese. This was a standout event in the history of World War Two, particularly for military nursing as it was the first time that so many Australian nurses had been taken prisoner. Christina Twomey has examined the experiences of the Australian nurse POWs through the lenses of gender, war, nation, captivity and race, expertly contrasting the depiction of male and female prisoners by the media after their release.¹¹⁴ Her article argued that the visual images of the men show their emaciation, while the women are carefully posed recovering in hospital, the official photographs hiding the extent of their condition and emphasising their femininity.¹¹⁵ Twomey also examined the dichotomy between the public accounts of the nurses’ experiences and their personal testimony:

At the time of the nurse POWs’ release, the press had focused on the nurses’ gendered identity and on feminine vulnerability in wartime. Yet in the post-war years ex-POW nurses, women such as Betty Jeffrey and Vivian Bullwinkel, worked to rewrite their sacrifices as women’s contribution to the national war effort.¹¹⁶

Through her analysis of female prisoners of war Twomey highlights a common issue in the history of women and war: despite being taken prisoner during war, their experiences as prisoners of war were placed on the periphery, in favour of highlighting their vulnerability, femininity and homecoming.

¹¹⁴ Twomey, ‘Australian Nurse POWs Gender, War and Captivity.’

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 272.

Like World War One, World War Two also proved to be fertile ground for nurses' memoirs. In addition to the scholarly analysis provided by Twomey, a number of the nurses themselves, much like the male prisoners of war (POWs) of the Japanese, also wrote compelling narratives of their experiences.¹¹⁷ AANS Sisters Betty Jeffrey and Jessie Simons both published their memoirs in 1954, less than ten years after the end of the war.¹¹⁸ Although the nurses were both on the ill-fated *Vyner Brooke* and spent captivity in the same group, their stories are different. Jeffrey's memoir is written in diary form, based on the notes she was able to make in secret during captivity. Simons, on the other hand, noted that she supplemented her memories with those of her companions.¹¹⁹ A theme common to both Jeffrey's and Simons' accounts was the threat of sexual attack by the Japanese guards. Both books documented the 'Officers Club' incident in which the nurse captives were encouraged to 'entertain' the soldiers. Both accounts vehemently defend the honour of the nurses.¹²⁰ A third memoir written by Alice M. Bowman, details her experiences as a prisoner of war in Japan after being captured in Rabul.¹²¹ The memoirs of nurse prisoners of war stand out as the major narratives of nurses in World War Two and are valuable primary sources. They add a layer of depth and personal perspective which is missing in the various official histories. Written in an engaging style, they typical of the storytelling genre in which they fit. However, as memoirs they do not give broader historical

¹¹⁷ Two examples of male POWs memoirs include, Rohan Rivett, *Behind Bamboo: An Inside Story of the Japanese Prison Camps*, (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1946) and Russell Braddon, *The Naked Island*, (London: Werner Laurie, 1952).

¹¹⁸ Alice M. Bowman, *Not Now Tomorrow* (Bangalow: Daisy Press, 1996); Betty Jeffrey, *White Coolies* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1976); Jessie Elizabeth Simons, *While History Passed* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1954).

¹¹⁹ Simons, *While History Passed*, vii.

¹²⁰ Jeffrey, *White Coolies*, 30–33; Simons, *While History Passed*, 35–38.

¹²¹ Bowman, *Not Now Tomorrow*.

context or analysis. Nevertheless, as published primary sources memoirs are the foundation stone of military nursing historiography.

Within her broader history of Australian women in war, Susanna De Vries also draws on oral histories and published accounts to recount a narrative of the experiences of nurses who were taken prisoner by the Japanese.¹²² The narrative is engaging and easily accessible to a broad audience and is also well researched. It seeks to place women within the realm of heroism in war, which has historically been reserved for male combatants. Certainly De Vries achieves this, noting countless examples of the strength and resilience of the nurses, as well as documenting the death of some nurses and the grief of their fellow captives. She also detailed their lives after the war. While bringing to light the experiences of these women is indisputably important, the narrative account gives little analytical insight into how the experiences of female prisoners might interact with Australian ideologies of war.

As a controversial war, Vietnam has also attracted the attention of scholars of Australian military nursing. Narelle Biedermann's work on nurses in the Vietnam War began with her PhD thesis, and following its completion she published a popular history on the same topic.¹²³ As it is a nursing thesis, Biedermann does not aim to engage with ideological or broader historical issues. She explained that 'essential concepts' of the thesis include 'the nurse's previous clinical experience and background and psychological and physiological responses to the

¹²² Susanna De Vries, *Heroic Australian Women in War* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2004), 199–253.

¹²³ Narelle Biedermann, 'The Nature of Nursing Work in War: Australian Army Nurses in the Vietnam War (1967-1971)'. (PhD thesis, James Cook University, 2001); Narelle Biedermann, *Tears on My Pillow: Australian Nurses in Vietnam* (Sydney: Random House, 2004).

environment.¹²⁴ This is clearly quite different from a historical study such as Millar's, which took as an essential concept the construction of identity.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, Biedermann's work adds to the field of military nursing history and through the publication of her subsequent book, *Tears on My Pillow* makes the narratives of the 17 nurses she interviewed available to a broader audience.¹²⁶

Lynn Hemmings has also published on the work of Vietnam nurses in the nursing journal *Nursing Inquiry*, however she engages with concepts of gender and identity which Biedermann largely ignores. In her study, Hemmings conducted interviews with 20 RAANC nurses, analyzing them through the lens of collective memory. She convincingly argued 'that the influence of collective memory and the legends of war and military nursing provided a structure that enabled the women to articulate their experiences in relation to public narratives and personal identities.'¹²⁷ In later chapters this thesis will demonstrate that the Korean War nurses drew on these same public narratives in their recollection of their experiences in war.

Siobhan McHugh's *Minefields and Miniskirts* drew on a rich collection of oral histories from nurses, journalists, entertainers and, significantly, wives of male veterans whose stories are often left unheard. McHugh weaved the histories together to create a sensitive and well-structured book, which deals with issues ranging from entertaining the troops to the difficulties faced by the wives of Vietnam War veterans after their return. One chapter is dedicated to the work of

¹²⁴ Biedermann, 'The Nature of Nursing Work in War,' 7.

¹²⁵ Millar, 'Carving a Feminine Space in a Masculine Environment.'

¹²⁶ Biedermann, *Tears on My Pillow*.

¹²⁷ Lynn Hemmings, 'Vietnam Memories: Australian Army Nurses, the Vietnam War and Oral History,' *Nursing Inquiry* 3, (1996): 141.

the nurses. Through her interviews McHugh gained a surprising depth of insight into the lives of the nurses in Vietnam. For example, she explored the reactions of the nurses to treating prisoners of war: Terrie Roche felt resentment at treating one of the Viet Cong women who she later discovered had killed a child. Colleen Mealy was frustrated to hear a prisoner was hanged a week after he had been treated.¹²⁸ McHugh's work is a powerful contribution to the field. It is a well-written and engaging history with popular appeal and as a result conveys the voices of the women to a broader audience. Indeed, the experiences of the women documented by McHugh gained further acknowledgment in a screenplay adaptation written by Terence O'Connell.¹²⁹

Gary McKay and Elizabeth Stewart have documented the little known contribution of Australian civilian medical teams to the Vietnam War.¹³⁰ This landmark book detailed the work of surgical teams, including nurses, drawn from hospitals across Australia who volunteered to work with the civilian population in Vietnam. The work moves the historiography of women in war beyond the sphere of military nursing to demonstrate the valuable contribution made by civilian medical teams to the lives of South Vietnamese civilians.

Unfortunately, despite the rich and growing body of material on the work of women from World War One through to Vietnam, the participation of nurses in the Korean War remains largely forgotten in the Australian historiography. An analysis of this literature has revealed an extensive focus on the World Wars, a

¹²⁸ Siobhan McHugh, *Minefields and Miniskirts: Australian Women and the Vietnam War* (South Melbourne: Lothian, 2005), 29.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 243–246.

¹³⁰ Gary McKay and Elizabeth Stewart, *With Healing Hands: The Untold Story of the Australian Civilian Surgical Teams in Vietnam* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009).

more limited number of accounts on Vietnam, and an almost complete silence on the Korean War. Of course Korea is not the only neglected conflict in this field. There are few studies on Malaya or other post-1945 conflicts with which Australia was involved. With this thesis' focus on Korea at least this gap will be filled.

International Korean War Historiography

Given the lack of scholarship on Australian Korean War nurses, it is worth exploring the status of nurses in the international historiography. Much as in the Australian historiography, the place of nurses in the broader historiography of the Korean War is limited at best. Histories which detail the international contributions to the war, such as William Stueck's *The Korean War: An International History* or Jeffery Grey's *The Commonwealth Armies in Korea*, focus on the politics of the war, which as was detailed earlier, is a common theme in Korean War scholarship.¹³¹ Such a focus leaves no space for discussion of the contribution of women to the war. The only international history to discuss the Australian contribution in depth is the multiple-volume South Korean official history. Although the South Korean history contains a number of detailed accounts of Australian participation, its analysis does not extend to the work of the British Commonwealth medical services.¹³² The exception is a brief mention of the work of the aeromedical evacuation teams in a section on the No. 30 RAAF

¹³¹ William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). Jeffrey Grey, *The Commonwealth Armies in Korea: An Alliance Study* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

¹³² The South Korean official history is structured in such a way that the contribution of each country is documented in its own section. The Australian contribution to the Korean War is contained in a section of volume two, Yu Man Kap, ed., *The History of the United Nations Forces in the Korean War, Volume II* (South Korea: The Republic of Korea, the Ministry of National Defense, 1973), 129–295.

Transport Unit in volume six, although the work of RAAFNS nurses is not specifically mentioned.¹³³ The history also includes a detailed section on the medical assistance in the Korean War.¹³⁴ However, this section only covers the nations whose assistance to the war was limited to their medical contribution, as a result only the work of the Danish, Italian, Norwegian and Swedish medical personnel is documented. The British Commonwealth, and by extension Australian, nurses are again invisible in the history. This lack of detailed information on the nursing contribution to the war is common to a number of national histories.

The focus of the British official history, covered in two volumes, concentrates on the political as well as military contributions of Britain to the Korean War. The scope of the history is quite broad, aiming to place the contribution of the British in an international context. Farrar-Hockley certainly achieves this aim and his thoroughly researched history provides an excellent analysis of the British military and political contribution, weaving in analysis of the interactions between US and Commonwealth nations where their actions impacted on the British. However, this history failed to make any mention of the work of British or Commonwealth nurses in Korea or Japan. In fact the only detailed reference to women at all in his history was an account by British entertainer Carole Carr, who performed for British troops in Korea, and even this narrative is delegated to an appendix.¹³⁵ Typical of many of the official histories, including the Australian

¹³³ Yu Man Kap, ed., *The History of the United Nations Forces in the Korean War, Volume VI* (The Republic of Korea: The Ministry of National Defense, 1977), 103.

¹³⁴ Yu Man Kap, ed., *The History of the United Nations Forces in the Korean War, Volume III* (The Republic of Korea: The Ministry of National Defense, 1974), 525–566.

¹³⁵ Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War: Volume I — A Distant Obligation* (London: HMSO, 1990), 450

one, the focus on military operations and politics excludes any analysis of the aftermath of battle and the work of medical teams. Any mention of medical support at all is made only in passing. For example, when discussing the British losses and wounded in a battle, it is noted that: ‘the latter [wounded] were patched up in the regimental aid post and carried off by ambulance to the advanced dressing station of 26 Field Ambulance.’¹³⁶ As with most military histories, once the subjects are taken off the battlefield their treatment and the work of those who treated them is no longer part of the story. The lack of any mention of British or other Commonwealth nurses is disappointing not only because their exclusion renders them invisible in the history of Britain’s participation in the Korean War, but because their story had the potential to add another layer to that history. Given the focus on Britain’s interaction with other Commonwealth units it is surprising that there is no analysis of the integrated British Commonwealth medical unit.

The official history of the Canadian army maintains a similar focus on administration and policy, while it does detail some of the combat operations of the Canadian army, there are only scattered references to the medical support services. These references are from an administrative or logistical point of view and there is no discussion of the contribution of nurses. For example, it is noted that in June 1951 ‘a Canadian contribution to the British Commonwealth Hospital arrived, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel J.E. Andrew.’¹³⁷ Although not an official history, John Melady’s study of Canada’s experience of the Korean War, *Korea: Canada’s Forgotten War*, includes an account of the medical

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹³⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and their Effects on the Defence Policy of Canada* (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1966), 135.

contribution.¹³⁸ Within this section of the history the experiences of Canadian nurse Major Flora Brohman are briefly recounted.¹³⁹ The title is also highlights that Korean War's reputation as the 'forgotten war' is not limited to Australia.

Like other Commonwealth histories of the war, the two-volume New Zealand official history has a similar focus on politics and combat operations. The role of nurses is also not explored in this history, although this appears to be because few New Zealand nurses were involved in the war. In volume two Ian McGibbon notes: 'There were also two members of the New Zealand Army Nursing Service aboard [the ship]—the only female New Zealand military personnel involved with the Korean campaign.'¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately McGibbon does not elaborate on *why* no New Zealand nurses were involved in the conflict.

The issue for most official histories is covering the extensive contribution of each respective country in a reasonably small space, often only two volumes. Detailing the combat operations and political implications inevitably takes priority to the exclusion of documenting the work of support services including the medical services and the nurses. The Australian official history dealt with this issue by including an appendix in its second volume covering the work of the medical services, although as was noted earlier, this appendix lacked the depth that is needed to provide a full picture of the work of Australian nurses in the Korean War. The United States took a broader approach in detailing its contribution to the war and dedicated a number of volumes to different aspects of the nation's

¹³⁸ John Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1983), 146–153.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁴⁰ Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War: Volume II Combat Operations* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1996), 198.

contribution. The two relevant here are the history of the United States Air Force's contribution and the volume dedicated to the work of the medical services.

Robert Futrell's history of the United States Air Force in Korea is an intricately detailed account covering the politics and operations of the air force. Unlike most military histories, within its broad scope the history also detailed the support roles played by the air force including transport, reconnaissance and medical evacuation. The section detailing the medical air evacuation of casualties largely covers the logistics of aeromedical operations both within Korea itself and between Korea and Japan, which were complicated by the fluid warfare in the early stages of the war and shared responsibilities with the army.¹⁴¹ Many of the positives of air evacuation are noted, including the momentous effects of the use of helicopters in evacuating casualties from the front line, which could often transport wounded men from the front to surgery 'within the hour.' According to the Eighth Army surgeon this life saving speed saved the lives of 'fully half' of the men who 'would have died if they had been moved by surface transport.'¹⁴² The work of United States Air Force nurses is also accounted for in this history. For example the work of the 801st Medical Air Evacuation Squadron is praised and the intense workload placed on the squadron during 1950 and 1951 is also noted: 'in the critical days of 1950 and 1951 the nurses and technicians often flew as many as three round trips a day and literally worked themselves to exhaustion.'¹⁴³ Unfortunately, the focus on detailing the logistics of the

¹⁴¹ Robert Frank Futrell, Brig. Gen, Lawson S. Moseley and Albert F. Simpson, *The United States Air Force in Korea 1950–1953* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1961), 543–553.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 549.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 551.

aeromedical evacuation process and the lack of personal accounts from those who participated, means there are few details of the day to day work of the air evacuation nurses and their voices remain silent.

The above analysis of a selection of the international historiography of the Korean War, with a particular focus on the United States and British Commonwealth nations, has revealed that Australia is not alone in placing its nurses on the periphery of the Korean War history. Like the Australian official history, most also limit their scope to the period up to the armistice, concluding the history at 1953 and make little mention of the work of those in Japan. Even the South Korean official history dedicated only a small portion of the multiple volume history to the post armistice period.¹⁴⁴

The international scholarship detailing the experiences of women in the Korean War, although more substantial than the Australian literature, is nevertheless somewhat limited. The strongest body of work on the participation of women in the Korean War comes from the United States and even this is fairly limited. The recently published, *A Defense Weapon Known to be of Value* is the most substantive account of the work of women who participated in the Korean War. The book is a valuable record of the service of American women in the Korean War and offers a detailed chapter on the work of the nurses.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the book documents the difficulties of remobilisation of the women's services encountered in the United States context. *Quiet Heroes* also provides a detailed

¹⁴⁴ See, chapter V, Yu Man Kap, ed., *The History of the United Nations Forces in the Korean War, Volume II*, 96–121.

¹⁴⁵ Linda Witt *et al.*, *A Defense Weapon Known to be of Value: Servicewomen of the Korean War Era* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005), 169–219.

account of the work of United States Navy nurses in the Korean War. Drawing on personal accounts and an impressive collection of photographic material the book documents the experiences of navy nurses based in Yokosuka, Japan and on the hospital ships, USS *Consolation*, *Repose*, and *Haven*.¹⁴⁶ These two publications ensure that the work of the American Korean War nurses is not completely excluded from the historiography.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the British context. The only work to date on British Korean War nurses is a recently published memoir written by Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) Sister Jillian McNair.¹⁴⁷ Drawn from the letters written home to her parents, the memoir provides a valuable personal account of service in Korea and Japan from the perspective of a British nurse. It also gives some insight into the interactions between staff at the integrated hospital, including Jillian's friendship with RAANC Sister Betty Crocker.¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately, McNair's memoir is the only account of the work of British nurses in the Korean War.

There is also very little scholarship on the work of Canadian nurses in the Korean War. Within her broader study on the work of Canadian military nursing, G.W.L. Nicholson briefly records the experiences of the Canadian Korean War nurses.¹⁴⁹ Nicholson outlined the work of the Canadian nurses in the British Commonwealth General Hospital (BCGH) in Kure, the British Commonwealth Communications

¹⁴⁶ Frances Omori, *Quiet Heroes: Navy Nurses of the Korean War 1950–1953 Far East Command* (St Paul, Minnesota: Smith House Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁷ E.J. McNair, *A British Army Nurse in the Korean War: Shadows of the Far Forgotten* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2007).

¹⁴⁸ McNair, *Shadows of the Far Forgotten*, 52.

¹⁴⁹ G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canada's Nursing Sisters* (Toronto: Samuel Stevens Hakkert & Company, 1975), 214–218.

Zone Medical Unit (BCCZMU) in Seoul and from Spring 1953 the No.25 Canadian Field Dressing Station (FDS) in Tokchong, 20 miles north of Seoul. The account draws on personal anecdotes from some of the women who served detailing the equipment shortages in Korea, the work carried out by the FDS during the exchange of prisoners of war in July 1953 and the work of Royal Canadian Air Force flight nurses in the medical air evacuation of Canadian prisoners of war from Japan to Canada. Nicholson's account of the participation of Canadian nurses is a valuable record of their contribution to the war. However, given that it is only part of a larger study, the lack of space dedicated to the topic precludes any depth of analysis. For example, no mention is made of the nurses' reactions to working as part of an integrated Commonwealth unit. There is clearly a need for further scholarship on the contributions of Canadian nurses to the Korean War. In fact, given the lack of detailed scholarship on the participation of British and Canadian nurses in the Korean War and the fact that they worked alongside the RAANC in the first integrated Commonwealth medical unit, a transnational or comparative history examining the work of all three services would be a valuable contribution to the historiography. Such a history is beyond the scope of this thesis; however it is research which would certainly be worth pursuing in the future. With the exception of the United States, it appears that Australia is not alone in ignoring Korean War nurses in the historiography.

Methodology

The above review of the literature has demonstrated that, with the exception of Dahl's unpublished theses, the experience of Australian nurses in the Korean War

has been systematically ignored in Australian military history. This thesis begins to redress this gap and to incorporate and extend the historiography on the war itself. The thesis also follows in the traditions of feminist historiography which aim to bring to light alternative viewpoints of historical events and in doing so highlights new understandings which are emerging on the nature and extent of the Korean War. Through an examination of the experiences of Australian nurses the thesis will broaden the view of Australian participation in the Korean War, extending it beyond the battlefield and political scene to reveal the significance of Japan as a place of war work, and highlighting the continued role of Australian forces following the 1953 armistice up until 1956. As a social history the thesis will also provide insight into the cultural dimensions of Korean War service. In doing so the thesis weaves together three different source materials: archival, oral and visual. As stand-alone sources these materials can only ever provide a partial picture, but combined they provide a richer texture of the experiences of Australian nurses who served in the Korean War.

The archival material used in this thesis was drawn largely from the Australian War Memorial (AWM), the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and the National Archives (NA) in Britain. The available official records are very limited in scope and contain significant gaps, which makes archival research difficult. Three collections of monthly medical reports form the major basis of archival research for this thesis. The most extensive records are the detailed and near complete set of RAAF Senior Medical Officer reports available at the NAA.¹⁵⁰ Other valuable records on which this thesis has drawn include a selection of

¹⁵⁰ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 1 and Part 5, NAA Canberra.

monthly hospital reports written by the Australian Matron of the BCGH, Kure that outline the monthly hospital activities of RAANC Officers and other ranks.¹⁵¹ Unfortunately while these reports are rich in detail, there are major gaps in the collection with the only available reports covering 1955 to 1956. They also only detail the work of RAANC officers and other ranks in Japan, at the BCGH and the Casualty Dressing Station (CDS) in Tokyo. However, reports sourced from the National Archives in Britain fill this gap providing detailed information on the establishment and monthly operations of the integrated hospital.

Until the compilation of the nominal roll carried out for this thesis (see Appendix A) the most significant gap in the archival record was the lack of a detailed list or in fact any accurate record of the number of Australian nurses who served in the Korean War. Perhaps one of the reasons the service of Australian nurses in the Korean War has been neglected for so long was due to the absence of a complete list of those who served. As discussed earlier, Harris detailed a similar problem for AANS Sisters who served in World War One, and her argument applies equally to Korean War era nurses. Harris argues that identifying individual AANS:

is important so that appropriate attribution came [sic] be made of their contribution. More nurses mean possibly more sources of information, and therefore more wartime experiences to tap. This is important information given the war became a watershed for Australian professional nurses.¹⁵²

Similar arguments can be made regarding the need for an accurate estimate of the number of nurses who served in the Korean War. As mentioned earlier, the

¹⁵¹ Monthly Report – Royal Australian Army Nursing Service, British Commonwealth General Hospital, Japan. December 1955 to March 1956, AWM114, 130/481/12/70, AWM, Canberra; Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, 1950-1956, AWM52, 11/2/45, Australian War Memorial (AWM), Canberra.

¹⁵² Harris, ““Rubbery Figures,” 5.

Korean War nominal roll lists only those who served in Korea, 32 RAANC and 21 RAAFNS women. The nominal roll compiled as part of the research for this thesis indicates that at least 203 Australian military nurses, including RAAFNS Sisters and RAANC Officers and other ranks, served in the Korean War in either Korea or Japan, or both. As the records prior to 1952 could not be located, this figure could be even higher. When those who served in Japan are counted, the contribution of Australian nurses to the Korean War is revealed as significantly higher than the official figures suggest.

With the exception of an unpublished manuscript written by RAANC Sister Barbara Probyn-Smith, which is drawn upon in this thesis, there are no available collections of letters or diaries written by Korean War era nurses.¹⁵³ Katie Holmes, who has explored the lives of Australian women of the 1920s and 1930s through their personal diaries, has noted the power of diaries for the historian.

Diaries, she writes that such materials:

bring into focus the dailiness of life and challenge the usual criteria of historical significance. Many are full of the smallest and largest details of a woman's life. They insist that the individual consciousness matters, thereby inverting traditional hierarchies of importance.¹⁵⁴

Given the power of diaries to document the everyday details of life, it is unfortunate that no diaries written by Korean War nurses are, as yet, available.

Diaries take time to write and as a result their writers, Holmes notes, were often

¹⁵³ Barbara Probyn-Smith, 'Sis' unpublished manuscript, PA Box 58, PA 01/144, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

¹⁵⁴ Katie Holmes, *Spaces in Her Day: Australian Women's Diaries 1920s-1930s* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), xii-xiii.

‘middle to upper class.’¹⁵⁵ Although some of the women in this thesis, particularly the trained sisters, could be classified as middle class, it is possible that they simply did not have the time to keep diaries while away at war. Other possibilities are that the diaries remain private, or that none of the nurses were interested in diary writing. In any case, it is unfortunate that rich personal accounts provided in diaries were not available for use in this study. The lack of these materials in the archives is balanced in the thesis by oral history sources which add insight, not only to the gaps in the official record, but also to the subjectivity of the women who served.

This thesis draws on interviews from nine women conducted by the author and an additional five interviews held at the Australian War Memorial and one from the State Library of South Australia.¹⁵⁶ In his groundbreaking book *Voices of the Past* Paul Thompson argued the historical value of oral histories lie in three strengths:

First ... it can and does provide significant and sometimes unique information from the past. Secondly, it can equally convey the individual and collective consciousness which is part and parcel of that very past ... the living humanity of oral sources gives them a third strength which is unique. For the reflective insights of retrospection are by no means always a disadvantage.¹⁵⁷

The past four decades have seen significant developments in the use of oral history as a methodology. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson have astutely traced the foundations of modern oral history from the 1950s up until the 1970s with its early focus on ‘history from below’ which focused on recording the voices of

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix B for biographical details on the lives of the women before their participation in the Korean War. Their lives following the war are the subject of chapter five.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, 148.

silenced groups, to more recent trends in oral history dating from the late 1970s to the present, which have used oral history more critically taking into account the complexities of public and private memory and subjectivity (of both interviewer and interviewee).¹⁵⁸ Alistair Thomson suggests oral history has undergone four crucial paradigm shifts since the 1970s including:

The postwar renaissance of memory as a source for ‘people’s history’; the development, from the late 1970s, of ‘post-positivist’ approaches to memory and subjectivity; a transformation in perceptions about the role of the oral historian as an interviewer and analyst from the late 1980s; and the digital revolution of the late 1990s and early 2000s.¹⁵⁹

The greatest achievement in the development of oral history methodology has been the recognition that the influence of memory and subjectivity on oral sources, once thought a weakness, are actually a unique strength of oral evidence. As Alessandro Portelli has noted oral sources, ‘tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.’¹⁶⁰ This thesis takes into account the developments in the field outlined by Thomson, it pays attention to post-positivist concerns, such as the role of subjectivity in history and includes analysis of the role of both public and private memory and the researcher in the construction of oral histories.

While the thesis addresses these complexities in the analysis of the oral histories the use of the interviews remains linked to the roots of oral history in its focus on telling the history of Australia’s involvement in the Korean War from the

¹⁵⁸ Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, ‘Critical Developments: Introduction,’ in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 2–3.

¹⁵⁹ Alistair Thomson, ‘Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History,’ *The Oral History Review* 34, no.1 (2006): 50.

¹⁶⁰ Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different,’ in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 36.

perspective of those whose voices have been largely silent. It has been argued that ‘every account from a female voice is potentially dissonant to existing histories.’¹⁶¹ Indeed, Joanna Bornat has argued that oral history is a powerful tool for accessing ‘personal experience, eye witness accounts and the memories of people whose perspectives might otherwise be ignored or neglected.’¹⁶² As this thesis will show, this is certainly the case with Australia’s Korean War history and the use of oral history is thus valuable for that reason alone. The accounts of the women interviewed provide an alternate voice to the Korean War historiography which has hitherto been dominated by male perspectives.

The interview technique used in this thesis is a combination of a single-issue testimony, with a focus on the women’s experiences of the Korean War and a life story interview.¹⁶³ The focus on the Korean War allows an in-depth exploration of the topic from the perspective of the women interviewed. The inclusion of a life story approach allows the thesis to explore the women’s lives before the war as well as assessing the impact of the war in their later lives.

As with many oral histories which focus on nursing, a feminist framework foregrounding gender as an analytic category is the primary framework for analysis in this thesis.¹⁶⁴ In addition, narrative theory is also drawn upon in the

¹⁶¹ Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson, ‘Introduction,’ in *Gender and Memory*, ed. Selma Leydesdorff, Luisa Passerini and Paul Thompson (New Brunswick: Oxford University Press, 1996), 12.

¹⁶² Joanna Bornat, ‘Reminiscence and Oral History: Parallel Universes or Shared Endeavour?’ In *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998): 457.

¹⁶³ Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson with Olivia Bennett and Nigel Cross, ‘Ways of Listening,’ in *The Oral History Reader*, 145-146.

¹⁶⁴ Geertje Boschma, Margaret Scaia, Nerrisa Bonifacio and Erica Roberts ‘Oral History Research,’ in *Capturing Nursing History: A Guide to Historical Methods and Research*, ed. Sandra B. Lewenson, Eleanor Krohn Hermann (New York: Springer Publications, 2008): 83.

analysis. Narrative theory acknowledges the role of memory, both personal and social, subjectivity and the specificities of language in oral history.¹⁶⁵ Mary Chamberlain has argued that narrative theory offers insight into the fact that ‘the individual is engaged in a continuous revision of the self.’¹⁶⁶ Indeed, using oral history and visual sources, the thesis will explore the changing ‘selves’ of those interviewed. Furthermore, narratives are constructed depending on the time and context of the interview and by the interviewers themselves, as the interview is a ‘dialogic’ process, which is inevitably influenced by the interviewer as well as the interviewee.¹⁶⁷ The focus of the interview, on the women’s Korean War experience, and the questions asked by the author inevitably influenced the conversation so that the narrative told can only ever be a partial narrative of their lives. Although broader questions were asked about their lives before and after the war, which provided insights that will be drawn on in the thesis, the focus remained on the Korean War period.

Perhaps the most significant use of narrative theory in this thesis is its value in showing the interaction between social and personal memory in the women’s narratives. Narrative interpretation is used in this thesis in order to ‘understand how the subjective, individual experiences of ordinary people are both shaped by and exemplars of larger social processes.’¹⁶⁸ The women certainly draw on their own personal memories in the interviews. The form and structure of the memories

¹⁶⁵ Mary Chamberlain, ‘Narrative Theory,’ in *Thinking About Oral History: Theories and Applications*, ed. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers and Rebecca Sharpless (Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press, 2008), 151–154

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁶⁸ Boschma, *op.cit.*, 88.

and which memories the women select are influenced by public memories.

Chamberlain explains,

While the personal narrative may be seen as the property of the individual, intrinsic to and defining of the individual, the plot that it follows and the themes that are woven through it may reflect and conform to the cultural narratives to which any one individual is exposed at any one time.¹⁶⁹

As this thesis will demonstrate, the women interviewed do indeed draw on cultural narratives in recounting their stories. The women draw on themes of heroism when discussing the soldiers they nursed, certainly a prominent cultural narrative and one drawn on by earlier generations of military nurses. The tendency to downplay their own contribution in favour of the 'boys' they nursed can also be linked to the narratives of earlier military nurses.

The third major source on which this thesis draws is visual. It engages with the personal photographs taken by the women in Japan and Korea and public images of the women taken by official photographers and held at the Australian War Memorial. Approximately 80 photographs, from six women's private collections were used in this thesis. The photographs were kept in albums, or occasionally boxes, tucked away in the home and brought out prior to, or during the course of, the interview. Few of the photographs were on public display in the home. The potential value of these photographs became increasingly apparent during the interview process. The women, when talking about their experiences, often referred to their photo albums during the conversation to make a point, or to enhance their descriptions. Indeed it seemed that the act of taking the photographs was itself an inherent part of their experience, particularly in Japan where there

¹⁶⁹ Chamberlain, *op.cit.*, 153.

were more opportunities for recreation and outings. It became clear that, like diaries or letters long acknowledged as valuable records of women's experiences in war, the snapshots taken by nurses at war serve as evidence of the aspects of war they wanted to record and those they chose to omit. Furthermore, research into the photographic collection of the Korean War at the Australian War Memorial revealed a further substantial collection of photographs of nurses in Japan and Korea. Faced then with a significant collection of private and public images a system was adopted to select and analyse the photographs.

Michael Lesy has outlined a system of photographic analysis which is particularly useful for this study. In selecting photographs for analysis, from sometimes quite large collections, he suggests that historians adopt the approach of a photographer, selecting images which are representative of a particular album or collection.¹⁷⁰ This representative approach was adopted when selecting which images to copy from each nurse's albums. Often there was more than one image of the same event or scene, so one representative image was chosen. The AWM collection was also considerably large so the same approach was adopted when selecting these images. Inevitably this is a subjective process but through adopting the representative sampling approach some historical rigour to the selection process was provided. The images selected will be presented in a series of visual narratives which will 'use single images as primary quotes much as scholarly essays use quoted excerpts to plead their case.'¹⁷¹ The photographs are used throughout the thesis in concert with oral histories and archival evidence. Additionally, the analysis of the photographs will reveal that the themes

¹⁷⁰ Michael Lesy, 'Visual Literacy,' *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 1, (2007): 146.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

represented in the nurses' snapshots are evidence of what the nurses chose to record, remember, and, more significantly, suppress of their experiences. In contrast, the official photographs will provide insight into the ways in which the representations of Australian Korean War nurses continued and broke from traditional representations of nurses in war.

In addition to examining the photographs as visual narratives, the analysis will take into consideration the relevant context for each image. When examining images as historical sources, it is necessary to consider the context of the image, that is who produced the image, when and for what purpose. As Robert Levine wrote: 'issues of attribution—time, place, bias, intentions, audience—apply to photographs as well as to written sources.'¹⁷² In the case of the public and private images to be examined in this thesis, the available context is quite detailed. The public photographs, drawn from the AWM collection, are classified as being part of an official series, taken by photographers employed by the Directorate of Public Relations. The place is documented, as is the date in most cases. The possible bias, intentions and audience for the images will be considered in the analysis. A number of the images are accompanied by the original captions, and in these cases the captions will be analysed alongside the image. The nurses, from whose collections the private photographs were copied, provided the context of where and when the photographs were taken. If they did not remember the exact date, an approximate date can be established based on their service records. As they were private images, they were not generally captioned, however occasionally notes were been written on the back and instances of these are noted

¹⁷² Robert Levine, *Images of History: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Latin American Photographs as Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 75.

in the thesis. The purpose and audience were in most cases private, although in some cases the private images have been made public, suggesting a changing audience over time. Their inclusion in the thesis also gives the photographs a more public forum.

It is also worth noting the descriptive value of the photographs. Photographs are inherently subjective and like other sources contain bias. As Rima Apple points out, the content of a photograph is dependent on the decisions of the photographers who ‘position cameras, select the frame (what to include and what to exclude), and even manipulate persons and things to produce a desired image.’¹⁷³ Yet despite this bias and subjectivity, images can provide valuable historical details often not available in traditional source materials. Indeed, the decisions on what is left out of the frame are often as significant as what is in the image. The bias of the photographer and how they frame the photograph can offer as much insight as silences in an oral history. Oral histories are invaluable in providing details of everyday life not recorded in archival sources such as reports or service records. However, memory is fallible and in the intervening years between the event and the recording of the history details can be lost. Photographs are useful as sources precisely because they provide such details. They provide evidence of the lived environment and everyday life. Photographs can also offer evidence of social conditions and relationships.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Rima Apple, ‘Image or Reality? Photographs in the History of Nursing,’ in *Images of Nurses: Perspectives from History, Art and Literature*, ed. Anne Hudson Jones (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 42.

¹⁷⁴ Levine, *Images of History*, x.

Annette Kuhn has effectively illustrated the relationship between cultural memory and photography.¹⁷⁵ Through a case study example in which a workshop participant describes a family photograph and his relationship to it—the photograph is of the participant as a young boy with his mother—Kuhn illustrates the value of photographs in eliciting deep understandings of personal and cultural memory. The photograph prompts the participant in Kuhn’s workshop to relate a detailed story of the experience of migration for his family, illustrating the connections between oral history, the photograph and memory. Photographs were used in a similar way in the research for this thesis. Kuhn points out that ‘family photographs can act as both ‘repositories of memory and as occasions for performances of memory.’¹⁷⁶ In the process of conducting oral history interviews for this thesis it was evident that for some of the women interviewed their photographs acted as cues for remembering, or influenced what was remembered. In some cases the women would seek out a photograph to clarify or illustrate a point, in others the photograph itself guided the memory and storytelling. Kuhn’s methodology also includes questions on the context of the photograph, when, where, why and by whom was the photograph taken and the audience for the photograph at the time it was taken and in its present context.¹⁷⁷ The analysis of the photographs used in this thesis will take into account these questions.

In drawing on oral accounts and private photographs, the thesis traces the personal experience of war for the women interviewed. For this reason, the thesis adopts the stylistic convention of using the women’s preferred Christian names as a way

¹⁷⁵ Annette Kuhn, ‘Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration,’ *Visual Studies* 22, no. 3 (December 2007).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 284.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 284.

of communicating this personal experience more effectively. The thesis also adopts the convention of using the nurses' maiden names, as this was the name they used during service. The exception is Nancy (Nan) Hummerston (née Holmes) as she was widowed at the time of service. Their full names, including married name and any post-nominal's are detailed in the biographies of those interviewed in Appendix B. The thesis also refers to Australian nurses collectively as nurses although the RAANC other ranks were actually nursing assistants and not trained nursing sisters. This has been done because the RAANC other ranks interviewed identified themselves as nurses, 'We weren't Sisters. We were nurses but we had sisters there.'¹⁷⁸ When referring to trained nursing sisters specifically the thesis makes the distinction using the term 'sisters.' When referring to the women who served in the RAANC and RAAFNS in the Korean War as a group, the term 'nurse' is used to be inclusive of both groups. All members of the RAANC and RAAFNS during the Korean War period were women; men were not admitted into the RAANC until 1972.¹⁷⁹ Male trained nurses were not eligible for appointment in the RAAF until 1977.¹⁸⁰

Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter one, (this chapter), has included the broad introduction, literature review and methodological approach. Chapter two examines the state of military nursing following World War Two and explores the ways in which the Korean War era signified both continuity and change in military nursing. In particular the chapter examines the growing

¹⁷⁸ Geraldine (Gerry) Roberts (now Fleming), interviewed by author, 31 May 2007, Sefton, NSW, tape in possession of author.

¹⁷⁹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 182.

¹⁸⁰ Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service*, 11.

emphasis on career development within the newly remobilised women's services most notably through recruitment campaigns. Chapter three focuses on the nature of nursing work in the Korean War and argues that the experience of nurses was diverse depending on location and time of service. The chapter also highlights their work as part of an integrated British Commonwealth medical team, and occasionally with United States medical units, which provided opportunities to gain an insight into different working cultures. Chapter four carries on the theme of cultural interaction and examines the relationships between Australian nurses and the British Commonwealth and other United Nations personnel with whom they worked and lived. The chapter also examines the interactions between the women and the Japanese and South Korean civilians with whom they engaged. This analysis is limited to the extent that only the perspectives of the Australian women are examined. Further research into the perspectives of Japanese and Korean civilians involved could give a broader understanding of these interactions. Finally, Chapter five explores the lives of the women after the Korean War. The chapter traces the diverse paths followed by the women. Some returned home to be married and as a result were required to resign their positions. Others continued their careers in nursing, either in the army or the civilian nursing sector. Chapter five also examines the politics of recognition and discusses the reasons for the exclusion of those who served in Japan. Finally, the processes of remembering and the multiple ways in which the women remember and construct their Korean War experiences is explored.

The primary contribution of this thesis is to extend the boundaries of what is considered the Korean War beyond discussions of the experiences of soldiers,

battles and politics, and to view the war from the perspective of the nursing staff stationed away from the front. This view of the Korean War exposes Japan as a significant place of war work, stretches the boundaries of the war beyond the armistice until 1956 and highlights the ways in which the war was also a cultural experience. Until now Australian nurses have been on the periphery of Australia's Korean War and military nursing history. This thesis will for the first time provide evidence for these important and rich stories.

CHAPTER TWO:

Continuing the Legacy

They came back and it was still very evident at the beginning of the Second World War that those women who had nursed in the First World War were something special and I think that helped them raise the status of civilian nursing ... But it was quite evident to us when we came into the army in the late 1930s and 40s that we had a great legacy from those women.¹

I think probably during the war, going to school from Liverpool to Parramatta on the train and I used to see army nurses in uniform and think weren't they fantastic and wasn't that marvellous.²

The two quotes that open this chapter illustrate the influence of earlier military nurses on the generations of Australian women who succeeded them. In the first quote, World War Two Sister Dulcie Thompson, who went on to become Deputy Matron of the British Commonwealth General Hospital (BCGH) in Japan during the Korean War, discusses the legacy of World War One sisters who returned to work in the civilian sector following the war. The second quote indicates that RAANC Sister Peg Nicholson (now Webster) felt influenced by a similar tradition of service upon encountering World War Two army sisters in her youth. Her admiration for these women in turn encouraged her enlistment during the Korean War. The quotes illustrate the interconnections in Australian military nursing history with the participation of one group of nurses in a war influencing the generation who follow to enlist and serve in successive wars.

¹ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett, 16 July 1987, SO1811, Australian War Memorial (AWM), Canberra.

² Margaret (Peg) Nicholson (now Webster) interview with Jan Bassett, 3 November 1986, SO1820, AWM, Canberra.

This chapter will explore the connections between past Australian military nurses and the Korean War women who followed them. The chapter focuses on enlistment and training and will highlight the continuities and transitions emerging within military nursing on the eve of the Korean War. It will show that in some ways the women's experiences of civilian nursing, enlistment and training and their motivations to join echoed, and were in some cases influenced by, those of earlier military nurses. However, there is also evidence of a profound shift in the culture of military nursing. The transition in army nursing from a service, the Royal Australian Army Nursing Service (RAANS), to a corps, the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC), in 1951 indicated a new focus on a professional and career-orientated military organisation. Military nursing was no longer restricted to the duration of a wartime emergency. An analysis of the recruitment campaigns of the era and some conditions of service will illustrate that military nursing was being promoted as a vocation in itself during peace as well as war.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the history of civilian and military nursing within Australia and the strong connections between the two spheres. It then details the nature of nursing and nurse training in the immediate post-World War Two years and the motivations of the women to become nurses and join the military. Finally, the chapter examines the transitions and continuities in military nursing in the period as evident in the recruitment and training of the Korean War nurses and their experiences of travelling to war. The chapter will show that many of the Korean War nurses connected themselves to a military nursing tradition—akin to the male-orientated Anzac tradition.

Australian Civilian and Military Nursing Traditions

There is an inextricable link between the histories of military and civilian nursing. The civilian sector provided the trained sisters who were to serve in military conflicts and these nurses often returned to the civilian sector bringing with them ideas and developments from the military nursing field. Matron-in-Chief of the Army Nursing Service, Colonel E.J. Bowe, had a keen sense of the history of the connections between army and civilian nursing in Australia. Speaking in 1960, at the 8th Annual Oration to the New South Wales Nursing College, Bowe elaborated on the link:

The history of nursing service in Australia is inseparably bound up with the history of the Army Nursing Service as many advances in the care of the sick throughout the ages have sprung from the need for caring for the sick and wounded in times of war and our present civilian services owes much to the early Army Nursing Pioneers.³

Bowe's belief in the connections between civilian and military nursing is particularly significant as she served as the Matron-in-Chief of the RAANC during the Korean War. In such a leadership role it is plausible that her views on these connections may have influenced the women in her charge. In addition to medical development, it has been argued that this link between the two spheres has historically been reinforced by a shared belief system.⁴ Certainly one of the most prominent shared beliefs is the influence of Florence Nightingale on the development of military and civilian nursing in Australia.

³ Colonel E.J. Bowe, 'The Story of Nursing in Australia Since Foundation Day,' (The New South Wales College of Nursing 8th Annual Oration, 8th September, 1960).

⁴ Heather Harper, "Ministering Angels": Australian Nurses and the Nightingale Image during World War II,' (paper presented at the Queensland Nursing History. One Day Conference *Queensland Nurses—At War and on the Home Front 1939–1945*, South Brisbane, Qld, Saturday 5 August 1995), 20.

Australian nurses were trained under a hospital-based system. This training was based on the Nightingale system brought to Australia by Florence Nightingale's envoy Lucy Osburn in 1868. The 'Nightingale ideal' of nursing remained an influential part of Australian nursing until the 1980s.⁵ The Nightingale system emphasised the importance of the hospital matron who would act as 'both a leader and an example to other nurses.'⁶ Formalised instruction was another significant feature of the system. Trainee nurses were expected to 'live in' with the aim of instilling discipline and 'moral qualities' in the women.⁷ The nursing system was also characterised by a strong hierarchy 'a system in which, as one proceeded higher and higher, more responsibility was granted.'⁸ The hierarchy was also marked by a system of 'professional etiquette' examples of which included:

standing upon entry into the dining room of the matron, sisters or midwifery students ... placing one's hands behind the back when addressing anyone more senior ... and never sitting in the presence of a standing senior member.⁹

This culture of hierarchy, prominent in the Nightingale system, can be linked to Nightingale's own military background.¹⁰

⁵ Judith Godden, *Lucy Osburn: A Lady Displaced* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2006), 278.

⁶ Lynette Russell, *From Nightingale to Now* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1990), 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸ Richard Trembath and Donna Hellier, *All Care and Responsibility: A History of Nursing in Victoria 1850–1930* (Melbourne: The Florence Nightingale Committee, Australian Victorian Branch, 1987), 28.

⁹ Wendy Madsen, 'Learning to be a Nurse: The Culture of Training in a Regional Queensland Hospital, 1930–1950,' *Transformations*, no 1, (September 2000): 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4. For further details on the life of Florence Nightingale see, among others, Mark Bostridge, *Florence Nightingale: The Woman and Her Legend* (London, New York: Viking, 2008); Hugh Small, *Florence Nightingale: Avenging Angel* (London: Constable, 1988).

A number of historians have noted the significance of Nightingale and her methods to Australian nursing history. At the beginning of her history, Lynette Russell explains the importance of Florence Nightingale to Australian nursing.

Although it would be a mistake to attribute all the nursing reforms of this period solely to the influence of Florence Nightingale, it remains true that she was the most influential of the nurse reformers.¹¹

Elizabeth Burchill also confirms the influential status of Nightingale noting that military medicine had been 'strictly male-orientated, until Florence Nightingale demonstrated to a grudging army administration that female nurses and proper conditions could achieve a remarkable recovery rate among sick and wounded soldiers in the field.' As a result of Nightingale's efforts, Burchill claims, 'modern nursing could almost be said to have been born on the battlefield.'¹² Judith Godden has detailed the influence of the Nightingale system on the hours of work in Australian nursing between 1868 and 1939.¹³ She argues that in shaping nursing as an appropriate profession for women, Nightingale linked the work to a philanthropic tradition, thus 'obscuring the essential nature of nursing as an occupation and a means of earning a living.'¹⁴ The focus on philanthropy, she argues, discouraged nurses to assert their rights as workers. More recently Godden detailed the life and influence of Lucy Osburn, Nightingale's envoy and the first Lady Superintendent in New South Wales.¹⁵

¹¹ Russell, *From Nightingale to Now*, 9.

¹² Elizabeth Burchill, *Australian Nurses since Nightingale 1860–1990* (Richmond, Vic: Spectrum, 1992), 170.

¹³ Judith Godden, "'For the Benefit of Mankind': Nightingale's Legacy and Hours of Work in Australian Nursing, 1868–1939," in *Nursing History and the Politics of Welfare* ed. Anne Marie Rafferty, Jane Robinson, and Ruth Elkan (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁵ Godden, *Lucy Osburn*.

While Nightingale and her methods were a significant feature of Australia's civilian nursing history, the connections between the civilian and military nursing spheres moved beyond the early connections with Florence Nightingale. Beginning with the Boer War the military drew on trained civilian nurses to fulfill its nursing commitments. These women in turn influenced the civilian sphere on their return home. For example, one of Australia's most well-known military nurses, Bangka Island massacre survivor and returned World War Two prisoner of war, Sister Vivian Bullwinkel, pursued a distinguished civilian career when she returned home. During the 1950s Bullwinkel nursed in London and undertook a diploma in nursing administration. On her return to Australia she worked as assistant matron at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Melbourne and then as director of nursing at Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital also in Victoria. Her influence on Australian civilian nursing following World War Two was profound.¹⁶

The example of Vivian Bullwinkel's civilian career following her return is illustrative of the influence military nurses had on the civilian sector in the years following the war. This was also true of the returned World War One nurses as Jan Bassett has argued:

Returned nurses who held senior positions in training and other hospitals influenced many of the young nurses who put their names down on the AANS reserve in the inter-war years and those who joined the AANS during the Second World War.¹⁷

¹⁶ Julie Finucane, 'Civilian Legacies of Military Nursing,' *Health and History* vol.6 no.2, (2004): 105.

¹⁷ Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 107.

Given the strong influence of earlier military nurses it is worth briefly outlining their contribution to previous wars.

The Boer War was the first time Australian military nurses participated in an overseas conflict. It has been estimated that in excess of 60 Australian nurses served in South Africa during the Boer War. In January 1900, a group of 14 women under the leadership of Matron Nellie Gould were the first nurses to serve as part of a government-sponsored contingent in the newly formed New South Wales Army Nursing Service Reserve. Other women either travelled to South Africa independently or through the support of patriotic community members in the private sector.¹⁸ Many of the experiences of these pioneer military nurses were to echo throughout the history of Australian military nursing. For example, once in South Africa, the women were separated and placed in British hospitals. Working under the British military system presented difficulties for the Australian nurses who, to the disdain of their British counterparts, took part in physical tasks such as bathing and moving the patients. Sisters in the British system did not normally carry out these duties.¹⁹ Such culture clashes were often experienced by Australian nurses in the wars which followed, including the Korean War. The motivations of the Boer War nurses, the desire for travel and adventure, were also felt by nurses in subsequent wars.²⁰ According to Bassett, the Boer War was a 'catalyst' although not the cause for the establishment of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) in 1902.²¹

¹⁸ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War* (Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2008), 4–7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 24.

World War One was the first opportunity for AANS Sisters to serve in war and they did so on a large scale and in varied locations and roles. During this war, AANS sisters worked on hospital ships, such as the *Gascon* evacuating patients from the Gallipoli peninsula. The workload was extremely high—more than 10,000 patients were transported from the peninsula on the *Gascon* in an eight-month period.²² AANS personnel worked in Australian General Hospitals (AGH) in various locations, including Cairo, Lemnos and Alexandria.²³ Australian nurses also served close to the front line at Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS) in France and Flanders on the Western Front. The work was dangerous, with the ever-present threat of ‘shelling, bombs and gas attacks.’²⁴ Australian sisters also served further away from the front lines in India and Salonika in Greece.²⁵

The early years of the war were fraught with administrative difficulty within the AANS, particularly due to the lack of seniority lists and a Matron-in-Chief.²⁶ These difficulties were alleviated to some extent in 1916 with the appointment of a Matron-in-Chief and the awarding of honorary rank to AANS Sisters, although unlike their Canadian counterparts they were not awarded equal pay.²⁷ The lack of equivalent pay continued to be a problem for the AANS and is reflective of their broader ambiguous status and the discrimination encountered by Australian nurses within the military.²⁸ Another administrative issue, which would become a persistent problem for the AANS, was the status of married sisters. The policy regarding the service of married women was inconsistent, with some remaining in

²² Oppenheimer *Australian Women and War*, 26.

²³ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 44.

²⁴ Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 29.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁶ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 33.

²⁷ Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 29.

²⁸ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 2.

the service once married and others being forced to resign and return to Australia.²⁹ Many of these problems that emerged in World War One were encountered by later generations of military nurses, including Korean War nurses. The exact number of AANS nurses who served overseas during World War One is unknown, although Kirsty Harris has recently estimated that as many as 2,498 Australian women may have served.³⁰ As was outlined in Chapter One, there were similar problems with estimating the numbers of RAANC women who served overseas as part of the Korean War.

Between 1939 and 1947, 3,477 AANS sisters served in World War Two.³¹ Like their World War One counterparts they served in a number of different locations including, Greece, Crete, Egypt, New Guinea, Morotai, Balikpapan, Jacquinot Bay, Bougainville, Singapore and in military hospitals across Australia and New Guinea.³² One of the most tragic episodes was the fate of the 65 women who attempted to escape Singapore on the *Vyner Brooke* in February 1942. Of those who left Singapore, 12 died at sea, 21 others were massacred on Bangka Island at the hands of the Japanese and those who survived became prisoners of war.³³

In addition to the AANS, Australian nurses also contributed to World War Two through service in the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) that was established in July 1940.³⁴ In February 1944, 15 RAAFNS sisters were

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 39–41.

³⁰ Kirsty Harris, “‘Rubbery Figures:’ The Puzzle of the Number of AANS on Active Service in WWI,” *Sabretache*, XLIX, (March 2008): 9.

³¹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 112.

³² Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 103–104.

³³ Christina Twomey, ‘Australian Nurse POWs Gender, War and Captivity,’ *Australian Historical Studies* 36, no. 124 (2004): 256.

³⁴ Gay Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service 1940–1990* (Metung: Nungurner Press, 1994), 3.

chosen to form part of the 1 Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit and were trained in medical air evacuation techniques. This elite unit was responsible for the evacuation of seriously wounded casualties from forward areas in Papua New Guinea back to the base hospital. The unit was expanded in April 1945, with ten additional sisters and then separated into two units. At the end of the war, RAAFNS sisters participated in the air evacuation of prisoners of war, including the Australian Army nurse prisoners from Sumatra. The units were disbanded in December 1945.³⁵ These RAAFNS sisters pioneered the medical air evacuation work, which was to be carried on by the Korean War sisters who followed them. The World War Two Medical Air Evacuation Unit was a specialist unit in which only a select group of sisters were trained in air evacuation procedures.³⁶ In total, the RAAFNS sisters who participated in medical air evacuations during World War Two evacuated an estimated 14,000 casualties from areas in New Guinea and Southeast Asia and 7,801 prisoners of war at the end of the war.³⁷ The RAAFNS sisters of the Korean War carried on this pioneering medical air evacuation work.

At the end of World War Two, the Australian Women's Auxiliary Services were demobilised. The first RAAFNS nurses were released from service in 1946, and a peacetime service was formed in 1948.³⁸ The demobilisation of the 2,434 AANS nurses began in 1945, a number of whom transferred to the interim army.³⁹ Members of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) were

³⁵ Nancy Scott Read, 'A History of the Royal Australian Air Force Medical Air Evacuation Unit,' Nancy Scott (Read) (Flying Officer, Medical Air Evacuation Unit, RAAF) Papers, PR89/018, AWM, Canberra.

³⁶ Halstead, *Story of the RAAFNS Nursing Service*, 207.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 178.

discharged in 1948.⁴⁰ It seemed that, with the war over, women could return to the domestic sphere. This mass demobilisation was in contrast to the United Kingdom and New Zealand, where both countries ‘retained their women’s services as part of the permanent peacetime services.’⁴¹ However, the Cold War and the outbreak of the Korean War prompted the urgent remobilisation of the three women’s services, which was approved on 13 July 1950.⁴²

This urgency is perhaps best conveyed by a letter from newly appointed Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) Director, Lieutenant-Colonel Kathleen Best to ex-members of the Australian Women’s Army Services (AWAS) and the Australian Army Medical Women’s Services (AAMWS). In the letter Best urged the retired women to consider joining the new service. In her appeal she made direct reference to the rhetoric being pushed by Prime Minister Robert Menzies. Best wrote ‘as you know, the Prime Minister has stated emphatically on a number of occasions that Australia’s defences must be fully prepared for war by the end of 1953. It is clear that it will be too late to begin to bridge the gaps in planning, administration and training of personnel once a war has begun.’⁴³ Furthermore, she highlighted the importance of women in these defence preparations:

For these reasons it is essential that the Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps be developed to a maximum state of efficiency as soon as possible. To do this it is necessary not only to enlist other ranks to replace men, but to appoint and re-train immediately a considerable number of women officers for Staff and WRAAC appointments.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 186.

⁴¹ Janette Bomford, *Soldiers of the Queen: Women in the Australian Army* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9

⁴³ Kathleen Best, letter to ex-AWAS and AMWAS, November 1951, Women’s Services—Employment of WRAAC (Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps) as Staff Officers, K1214/1, 241/1/016, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Melbourne.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Best had a vested interest in promoting the importance of women in the defence preparations, as she was in charge of the WRAAC. Nevertheless, the letter demonstrates that demobilisation was not a policy that could last long. With the emergence of a new threat— Korea—women were again needed in the military.

The threat of the Cold War and the Korean War also prompted the implementation of national service, but for males only. The subsequent formation of national service camps across Australia created an urgent need for nurses and nursing assistants to staff the Citizen Military Forces camp hospitals. The need was so urgent that some newly recruited RAANC other ranks missed preliminary training and were immediately placed in hospitals. As a minute paper stated:

The urgency of staffing Camp Hospitals raised for National Service requirements made it impracticable to detach personnel to attend a course in basic and nursing training at the RAAMC [Royal Australian Army Medical Corps] School of Army Health ... The necessity for early staffing made it necessary to post recruits for immediate duty and it is only at the present time that this procedure can be varied.⁴⁵

The urgency in the minute paper and in Best's letter indicates that the demobilisation of the women's services in the immediate post-war period caused problems when a new threat emerged. The Army was caught unprepared once women were again required in the services. In July 1950, a month after the commitment of troops to Korea, 'Cabinet approved the re-formation of the women's service.'⁴⁶ The creation of a permanent women's service was a

⁴⁵ Major-General D.G.M.S 'RAANC other ranks star grading,' June 1952, MT1131/1/2, A251/14/18, NAA, Melbourne.

⁴⁶ Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 186.

significant milestone and marked a period of transition in Australian military nursing. Nevertheless, the influence of the history of military nursing outlined above remained strong during the Korean War years.

Becoming Nurses

The civilian and military nursing history outlined above impacted on the women who were to serve as nurses in the Korean War. One way of demonstrating the extent of this impact is by examining the motivations and experiences of the women whose stories inform this thesis. To begin, this section will provide an overview of the nature of nursing training in the immediate post-World War Two years. Drawing on the lives of the women interviewed, the section will then explore the motivations of these women to become nurses. These stories also serve to introduce the women who play a central role in this thesis. They will paint a picture of a profession in transition in the immediate post-war years, in many ways constrained by traditional practices, but also developing through a growing emphasis on formal educational qualifications.

As outlined earlier, the connection with past nursing traditions began with their training, which during the 1950s was still modelled on the Florence Nightingale system. In order to become registered nursing sisters, nurses completed training programs in hospitals. Categories for registration, based on the training undertaken included, among others, general, psychiatric, midwifery and infant

welfare.⁴⁷ It was common among the women interviewed in this study for them to have pursued further training in areas including midwifery, infant welfare and infectious diseases following their initial general training. For example, after finishing high school, Dorothy Wheatley began her general nursing training at Balmain Hospital and went on to complete further training in midwifery and geriatric nursing. She recalled of her training: '[It was] hard but good. I was determined to finish and I did, so that was good.'⁴⁸ Dorothy's comment hints at the difficulty of nursing training and the challenges in retaining trainees. Russell Smith explains:

Nurses were required to undergo 3-5 years of training in hospitals ... Approximately one-third of those who commenced training failed to pursue a career in nursing — for a variety of reasons relating to aptitude, abilities, and various external and personal influences. Not the least of these was the 1950s ideal of marriage and child rearing — which was popular now that peace had returned ... hospitals had an explicit policy which discriminated against married women who were intent on pursuing nursing.⁴⁹

Shirley McEwen (now Bennetts) was one woman affected by such policies. Shirley had begun her nursing training but left before completing when she became engaged. However, the marriage did not take place and Shirley was unable to re-enrol in training. Shirley's experience illustrates the difficulties faced by women pursuing careers in this period. However, as will be discussed later, joining the RAANC as an other rank nursing assistant gave Shirley the opportunity to nurse again.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Russell G. Smith, *In Pursuit of Nursing Excellence: A History of the Royal College of Nursing, Australia 1949–1999* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999), 44.

⁴⁸ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author, Sydney, New South Wales, 7 January 2008, tape in possession of author.

⁴⁹ Smith, *In Pursuit of Nursing Excellence*, 45.

⁵⁰ Shirley McEwen (now Bennetts) interview with author, Innaloo, Western Australia, 29 November 2007, tape in possession of author.

While the profession had restricted opportunities for married women, there were also a number of educational opportunities for those who continued to nurse. Following her World War Two service, Dulcie Thompson pursued further education within the civilian sector. Prior to her re-enlistment in the RAANC in 1951, she took the opportunity to complete training in infant welfare and was awarded a Florence Nightingale Scholarship in 1947 to study at the Royal College of Nursing in London. She completed the course in July 1948 and stayed in London until February 1949.⁵¹ As much as civilian nursing remained linked to earlier traditions, Dulcie's experience highlights the significant changes that were also underway in the post-war years. There was a growing focus on broader professional development and postgraduate education in particular grew. For example, the College of Nursing sought recognition from the Nurses Registration Board for their postgraduate diploma courses, illustrating a growing focus on formal qualifications in the sector, which eventually moved to a university based model. The Board's response, that there was 'no provision' for them to formalise these qualifications, highlights the resistance to this transition among some in the profession.⁵² This transition to a greater focus on career development was mirrored in the military and will be explored later in this chapter and in chapters three and five.

The women interviewed for this study were attracted to a career in nursing for various reasons. Their motivations to enter the nursing profession varied from what might be considered reflective of a traditional ideology to motives relating to a desire to travel. In their history of nursing in Victoria, Trembath and Hellier

⁵¹ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

⁵² Nurses Registration Board of New South Wales, *History of the New South Wales Nurses Registration Board* (Sydney: Nurses Registration Board, 1989), 66.

identified a ‘nursing ideology’ which they suggest was ‘unchallenged’ prior to the 1920s. One facet of this ideology was ‘self-sacrifice and devotion to caring for others regardless of personal cost.’⁵³ Reflecting on her desire to nurse, Gerry Roberts (now Fleming) recalled that she was interested in nursing because she ‘wanted to help people.’⁵⁴ This motivation reflects the traditional nursing ideology identified by Trembath and Hellier. Nursing had certainly been seen as a traditional career choice for Australian women and had been one of the major fields of paid employment alongside teaching.⁵⁵ Dulcie Thompson’s decision to become a nurse was clearly influenced by these dominant career choices:

I didn’t like working in an office, [I decided to become a nurse] by default. I did think about teaching, but my sister [was a teacher] and I just didn’t feel like following in her footsteps all the time. She was eight years older than me and I had been a little overwhelmed by that. And I liked children. It wasn’t really so much the nursing, it was to be with people and particularly with children.⁵⁶

Dulcie’s reflective view of her reasons for becoming a nurse highlights the common (and restricted) opportunities available to women at the time: office work, teaching and nursing. Although, in hindsight, the choice may have been ‘default’ it will become clear in later chapters that Dulcie became a talented and passionate nurse who developed an impressive career as a military nursing leader. Although restricted in her choice of profession by the social conventions of the time, Dulcie and many other women of the era nevertheless became successful professionals. Reflecting on her desire to become a nurse, Peg Nicholson (now Webster) recalled, ‘I don’t really think anything else had ever occurred. No, I just

⁵³ Trembath and Hellier, *All Care and Responsibility*, 170.

⁵⁴ Geraldine (Gerry) Roberts (now Fleming), interview with author, Sefton, New South Wales, 31 May, 2007, tape in possession of author.

⁵⁵ Judith Godden, ‘A “lamentable failure”? The Founding of Nightingale Nursing in Australia, 1868–1884,’ *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no.117 (October 2001): 278. Marjorie Theobald and Donna Dwyer, ‘An Episode in Feminist Politics: The Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act, 1932–47,’ *Labour History* 76, (May 1999): 60.

⁵⁶ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

always wanted to and that was that.’⁵⁷ Although she is less reflective of her motivations, Peg’s memories on her decision to become a nurse also suggest that she did so because it was a common option for women, no other choice had ‘occurred’ to her, or perhaps women were not often encouraged to consider occupations beyond the three dominant professions.

Interviewees also offered reasons other than nursing as a ‘default’ vocation choice. Betty Crocker (now Lawrence) and Marjorie Ford had aspirations to attend university to study medicine but were unable to do so due to family circumstances. Instead both pursued nursing careers. Betty explained the barriers to her university study were not societal expectations, but rather were due to financial constraints:

My father had promised that he would support me going into medicine, he was in favour of that. But unfortunately there had been a drought, a very severe drought, for five years. And my father was the sort of person who if you couldn’t pay for anything you didn’t have it. He was terribly upset that he couldn’t send me to do medicine. And that was the year the war started... And, so I said well I’ll do nursing.⁵⁸

Betty’s story suggests that women of the period did consider alternative career options beyond the traditional choices and that some were encouraged to do so by their families. The conservatism of career choice in the years following World War Two was not universal. However, as Betty’s example also illustrates, nursing which at the time was vocational was a more affordable option for those who could not afford to pursue a university education. In Betty’s case, her decision to become a nurse was financial, rather than ideological.

⁵⁷ Peg Webster, interview with Jan Bassett.

⁵⁸ Betty Crocker, (now Lawrence), interview with author, West Beach, South Australia, 27 November 2007, tape in possession of author

For Dorothy Wheatley it was the opportunities for travel that enticed her to join the profession:

There was always the possibility of travel. And when you did travel you could always get a job no matter where you were, and you could get somewhere to live. Those were the main things. Those were the reasons I went. They weren't the reasons that I stayed though. The reason that I stayed was that I really liked it.⁵⁹

Catherine (Cathie) Daniel (now Thompson) was also attracted to the opportunities for travel offered by a nursing career, nursing in Western Australia, Darwin and Tennant Creek (both in the Northern Territory) before joining the RAAFNS while she was working at the Brisbane Children's Hospital.⁶⁰ Cathie's experiences confirm Dorothy's perceptions of nursing as a career that provided opportunities for travel. These opportunities for travel suggest that while nursing may have been a traditional career choice, it provided an avenue for independent travel not easily available to women. One other pertinent aspect of Dorothy's comment, is the distinction she makes between the reason she became a nurse and the reason she stayed, which she said simply was because she 'really liked it.' The comment is illustrative of the fact that motivations change over time. It is also important to remember that the motivations discussed are perhaps influenced by the women's views of their experiences in the profession in hindsight.

Nell Espie's decision to train as a nurse was influenced by the prevalence of manpower during World War Two. Manpower regulations were initiated in 1942 and involved a 'redirection of labour,' including women's labour, to paid

⁵⁹ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author.

⁶⁰ Catherine (Cathie) Daniel (now Thompson), interview with author, 7 August 2007, Coolamon, New South Wales, tape in possession of author.

employment to contribute to the war effort.⁶¹ Nell recalls that the presence of manpower and the anticipation World War Two might continue after she finished school influenced her decision to become a nurse, ‘thinking ahead I thought if the war’s still on when I finish I can join the forces as a nurse. Otherwise you were manpowered anywhere to do, to work.’⁶² Nell had wanted to work on the family farm but felt manpower would restrict this choice and she would be redirected to other employment. It was not unusual for women to be wary of manpower. Kate Darian-Smith has noted that ‘[m]any women feared and disliked the Manpower Directorate.’⁶³

Continuing the Legacy: The Korean War Nurses

As Darian-Smith has demonstrated, World War Two had a significant impact on those who stayed on the home front.⁶⁴ The women interviewed for this thesis were young adults or teenagers during World War Two and many believed that the war had a significant impact on their lives. As will now be illustrated, this impact and the influences of earlier generations of military nurses were primary motivations in their decision to join the military after becoming nurses.

In addition to prompting her to take up nursing as a way of avoiding manpower, Nell felt the influence of the war in her teenage years and particularly the presence of army and air force cadets at her high school. Thinking back on that time she

⁶¹ Michael McKernan, *All In! Fighting the War at Home*, 2nd ed. (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1995), 207–208.

⁶² Nell Espie, interview with author, Oatlands, Tasmania, 5 December 2007, tape in possession of author.

⁶³ Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990), 52–60.

⁶⁴ Nell Espie, interview with author.

reflected, 'I suppose it [World War Two] influenced that period of our lives.' The women interviewed for this thesis were all influenced to some degree by the large military presence on the home front during World War Two. Shirley and Cathie also recalled the influence of the war and particularly the presence of American troops in Australia.⁶⁵ Cathie made specific reference to the 'tension' between Australian soldiers and the Americans stationed in Australia during what she termed 'the real war.' This tension has also been noted by Michael McKernan who suggested that 'the level of tension grew as the importance of Americans to the safety of Australia diminished.'⁶⁶ Shirley had more specific memories of the presence of American troops growing up in Perth.

We had the different uniforms around the street. Then, and you were you know, accosted. They'd try to pick you up when you were on the way home from school, this sort of thing. Cause we were tall, not that I was, but you know they could see you were sort of fifteenish, fourteen something like that, try to pick you up.⁶⁷

Accounts of the relationships between Australian women and American servicemen at the time tended to view the women as willing participants wooed by the American servicemen.⁶⁸ Shirley's vignette contrasts with this view, suggesting that some girls, like Shirley who eventually married an Australian, were not impressed with American 'pick up' attempts. Perhaps the most significant influence of World War Two on the women of this study was the influence of the war on their decision to join the military during the Korean War. Indeed Peg Webster recalled being inspired to become a military nurse when she watched the World War Two servicewomen on the train in her teenage years:

⁶⁵ For a broader discussion of the presence of United States troops in Australia during World War Two see, McKernan, *All In*, 185–206.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁶⁷ Shirley McEwen, interview with author.

⁶⁸ See for example, Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 196; and McKernan, *All In*, 196–203.

I think probably during the war, going to school from Liverpool to Parramatta on the train and I used to see army nurses in uniform and think weren't they fantastic and wasn't that marvellous ... And then while I was at Heidelberg, one day walking along the corridor, there was an army section at Heidelberg, and the Major in Charge of the army section just stopped me and said, 'Sister how about joining the army for two years to go to Japan and Korea?' And he said, 'They're wanting two sisters within a fortnight.' And he said, 'Come and see me tomorrow.' So of course I rang my father that night and he thought this was silly not to do, or would have been a very silly thing not to do. So I went to see him the next day and two weeks later we were in Japan. We had been equipped and that seemed to me to, to solve the problem of these fantastic army nurses that I used to see in the train during the war.⁶⁹

Peg's narrative of her decision to join the RAANC highlights the influence of World War Two on her teenage years. The military were prominent in civilian life and Peg's narrative suggests that this prominence, seeing the army nurses on the train on the way to school, influenced her later career decision. The vignette also demonstrates the influence of military nursing on the civilian sector. Peg's recruitment into the RAANC was a direct result of working in close proximity to the 'army section' at Heidelberg. Her story highlights the role of word of mouth recruitment through the hospitals. It is also interesting to note that before making her decision Peg sought her father's opinion, if not approval. Whether this is a reflection of a more patriarchal period is debatable, but it seems Peg at least thought that, although she was an adult with a career, her father's opinion certainly held sway in her decision to join the RAANC.

A common element of Peg's recruitment story is the influence of military nurses in the civilian sector in the immediate post-war period. Many of the women the RAANC and RAAFNS nurses trained under were ex-Army nurses who had a high profile in the civilian nursing service following the war. For example, the 1945

⁶⁹ Peg Webster, interview with Jan Bassett.

graduation ceremony at the Queen's Memorial Infectious Diseases Hospital in Fairfield was attended by Matron M.I. Lang, Matron-in-Chief of the RAAF Nursing Service, who 'pinned hospital badges on to the uniforms of 19 trainees who had just completed their general training at Fairfield.'⁷⁰ As was noted earlier, following both World Wars many women who entered the civilian training system worked under ex-military nurses, and a number of the Korean War nurses commented on the influence of these veterans.

Marjorie Ford was directly influenced by an ex-Army nurse in her decision to join the RAANC. She originally had no interest in joining the Army, however while working at a hospital in Perth the Matron, who was an ex-Army nurse, encouraged her to join. As Marjorie later recalled:

... the person that was in charge of the hospital was ex-Army and they were recruiting people for the Korean War. And they were recruiting you see, and she approached me and I said 'Oh no ... I wouldn't have anything to do with anything like that.' Because I'd never come into contact with anything like that. I didn't, couldn't, understand it. But anyway she kept on and on at me and she said one of the reasons they were recruiting for the Korean War was because they wanted people, you know to go up to Japan and to go across to Korea from there. So I gave it some thought, and it was only for five years and I thought well if I can have a time limit, I'll try. So I joined the Army.⁷¹

There are two particularly interesting points to note in Marjorie's recollection of her decision to join the RAANC. Firstly, the influence of ex-Army sisters in the civilian hospitals is clear in Marjorie's story of the matron's persistence in encouraging her to join the RAANC. Finally, her comment that she 'couldn't understand' the Army suggests that although there was a strong connection

⁷⁰ 'Nurses' Graduation Ceremony,' *The Argus*, Friday 10 August 1945, NLA Australian Newspapers database, http://nla.gov.au/nla_news-page32708 [accessed 10 November 2009].

⁷¹ Marjorie Ford, interview with author, Melbourne, Victoria, 23 April 2008, tape in possession of author.

between the military and civilian nursing sectors, not all trained nurses felt the connection.

Perhaps those most aware of the connection and those most likely to be influenced in their career choices by ex-Army nurses, were those who trained or worked in Repatriation hospitals. Nell Espie worked at the Concord Repatriation Hospital shortly after she completed her training. Nell recalled fondly not only the Army sisters, who were still working at the hospital, but also her experiences with the returned soldiers:

I found it interesting looking after the old diggers. You know it was World War One [patients] as well as World War Two. So I learnt some of the tricks of old diggers ... They always had ways of gettin' around things. Anyway, they'd disappear from the ward and come back at night. But I quite enjoyed that session over there at the Repat, at Concord. The Army were there still. You know from World War Two, there were still some Army sisters at the big Concord wards. They were divided in half, you know the length of the ward, the Repat sisters were down one end and the army sisters were at the other end, looking after the forces.⁷²

While waiting to complete her midwifery exam, Nell also had the opportunity to meet an ex-World War One nurse who shared 'some interesting tales' and Nell enjoyed the opportunity to learn 'about the history of nursing.'⁷³ Reflecting on her reasons for joining the RAANC, she commented that she may have been influenced by these close connections, 'So whether that influenced me you know? Talking with those people, living with them.'⁷⁴ It seems from the prominence she gives the women and the veterans in her narrative of her early training that those experiences were an influence on her decision to later join the RAANC.

⁷² Nell Espie, interview with author.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Dulcie Thompson, who completed her training before World War Two, also felt the influence of an earlier generation of military nurses during her training. The following comment reflects the respect trainee civilian nurses had for returned military sisters.

...the Deputy Matron was Kathleen Waterhouse who'd been a First World War nurse, and was very proud of that fact. We were all aware that she had been. And always in Adelaide on Anzac Day, the First World War nurses always led the procession in white uniforms with red capes and white gloves, and we were always very proud to see our Deputy marching, as nurses. We were always very aware of the people in the nursing profession who had been First World War nurses.⁷⁵

As was evident in the opening quote of this chapter, there was a strong sense of a continued legacy in Dulcie's comments, an awareness of the connection between past military nurses and those of her generation. Dulcie joined the AANS during World War Two and was demobilised at the end of the war. Her motivations to rejoin the Army as a tutor sister when the RAANC was formed suggest that she may have wanted to help to carry on that legacy as well as seeing the opportunity for career development within the RAANC. Indeed, the recruitment campaigns of the women's services that will be explored later in this chapter signified a new era of military nursing, one with a greater focus on career within the services.

Although clearly significant, the influence of the military nursing tradition was not the only motivation cited by the nurses in their decision to join the RAANC or RAAFNS. In fact, in some ways, the women's motivations overlapped with those of the Australian soldiers who volunteered for service in Korea. In his analysis of the motivations of Australian soldiers who volunteered to serve in Korea, Richard

⁷⁵ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

Trembath identified five factors which were, ‘... the wish for adventure; career advancement; the belief that Communism needed to be repelled; the desire for secure employment; and something rather difficult to classify ... called “dislocation”.’⁷⁶ Some of these factors also influenced the Australian women who volunteered to serve as nurses in Korea. RAANC Sister Valma Keylar, for example, volunteered to join the RAANC because she wanted to participate in the war with her brother, who was a member of K Force. She also notes that she was ‘anticipating adventure’.⁷⁷ Pam Leahy also cited adventure as one of the motivating factors for her to join the RAAFNS, ‘I thought it would be exciting, challenging and a chance to make a contribution.’⁷⁸

Joining the RAANC or RAAFNS provided women with the opportunity for adventure within what was considered an acceptable role for women. For women in the 1950s, joining the RAANC or RAAFNS was one way in which they could pursue independent travel. Ros Pesman has argued that ‘in the 1950s and 1960s, there were only three acceptable reasons for leaving the nest: marriage, nursing and travelling overseas.’⁷⁹ Enlisting in the RAANC or RAAFNS in the hope of serving in Korea may well have been an opportunity for adventure, but it was adventure safely within traditional gender parameters. While the motive for adventure aligns with those of the K Force volunteers, gender expectations and ideologies of the period added a further layer to this motivation. The link between nurses’ motivations and those of the soldiers is not surprising. Jan Bassett traced

⁷⁶ Richard Trembath, *A Different Sort of War: Australians in Korea 1950–1953* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly, 2005), 97.

⁷⁷ Department of Veterans’ Affairs, *Korea biographies, Official Veteran Representatives: 50th anniversary 2001 Mission* (Canberra: DVA, 2001), 27.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁹ Ros Pesman, *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2

the motivations of World War Two nurses, comparing them to those of World War One soldiers and found considerable similarities. Like the World War One soldiers, Bassett's nurses cited, 'patriotism, sense of duty, spirit of adventure, and social pressure.'⁸⁰ The 'spirit of adventure' certainly remained a motivating factor for the Korean War era women. However, Korean War was not a world war and did not pose a direct threat to Australia, although it was part of the looming threat of the Cold War. Nevertheless, motivations linked to duty, patriotism and social pressure were far less influential than they had been during the world wars.

Another motivation that aligned with those of K Force volunteers, but set the women apart from their military nursing predecessors, was the opportunity for career advancement. Betty Lawrence was influenced by both a desire for career advancement within her profession and a family history of military service. As she related many years later:

I was on duty, on night duty, at Northfield, and I was having supper and reading a paper, reading the newspaper ... and I saw this little advertisement from the Defence Department calling for nurses, trained nurses, preferably with Accident and Emergency and Theatre qualifications, to join K Force. And at that time it was the end of the polio epidemic and I was just beginning to sort of think, 'What will I do now?' And I don't know whether it was because my father — I knew he'd been in the First World War but I hadn't heard much about it — or what, but I thought, 'Well, I've got the qualifications, I'll apply. I felt that I was the sort of person they were looking for, I thought I'd be useful, and that's how it happened.'⁸¹

In one sense Betty's motivations clearly align with those of the male K Force volunteers, in that she saw joining the RAANC to serve in Korea as an opportunity for career advancement and as a way of continuing the tradition of

⁸⁰ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 114.

⁸¹ Betty Lawrence (née Crocker), interview with Rob Linn, 22 May 2002, OH 644/7, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, State Library of South Australia.

family service. Yet, in another sense, there is something quite different in the career advancement sought by Betty compared to the young male officers of K Force. For a start, as an experienced and well-qualified nursing sister, Betty felt quite strongly that she could contribute sought after skills that were needed, she thought she would be 'useful.' Furthermore, she was seeking to advance her nursing career, not necessarily a career in the military. Nevertheless, Betty was, and remains, proud of the distinction between the AANS and the RAANC that she clearly perceived as being part of the Army, which she felt the AANS, as a service was not. As she stated 'Australian Army Nursing Services had no army rank, had no army discipline, no nothing. I mean it was just a service, it was, they were the same as though they were going to work in a hospital here, a civilian hospital here, but they were going to work in a military situation.'⁸² Betty's narrative of her decision to join the RAANC brings to light the unique position of the women who volunteered to serve with the RAANC. Joining the corps made them part of the Army, however in addition, most were also established, trained professionals in their own right. This suggests that the motivations of the RAANC and RAAFNS nurses were in many ways unique to their experiences as trained nurses and as women.

Nancy (Nan) Hummerston's decision to join the RAANC during the Korean War was particularly unique. Inspired by tales of her Grandfather's travels during war, Nan joined the AANS during the World War Two:

⁸² Betty Crocker interview with author.

I think because of my grandfather I never knew him, I was only, I don't think I was even two when he died. But the stories, he was in China and then they're in Afghanistan and South Africa. And I just wanted to join the Army. I enjoyed it.⁸³

This motivation for enlisting, a desire for travel, was common among male and female recruits at the time, as was evident in Dorothy's reflections. During her time in the AANS, Nan served in the British Commonwealth General Hospital in Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), where she met and fell in love with Australian soldier Captain Ken Hummerston. Nan and Ken married in Japan in what Nan recalled fondly as 'a very big wedding' in Tokyo.⁸⁴ Tragically, in October 1950, only six weeks after their wedding Ken was killed by a land mine in Korea.

After Ken's death, Nan decided to rejoin the RAANC for considerably different reasons than her original desire to travel. She missed the connection with her friends, as most of them were in the services, 'when you're in the service I think, most of your friends are probably more service people than civilian.' In relating her decision to rejoin the Army in order to go back to Japan, a poignant silence in Nan's account suggests it may have been one way of relieving her grief.

I wanted to go back to Japan, yes. Didn't know whether it was wise or not, but I preferred to do that then. And, well there was more action and I like theatre work, yeah. So that's where I preferred to go.⁸⁵

The comment that she 'didn't know whether it was wise' and the trailing off at the thought of remaining at home suggests that for Nan rejoining the Army was

⁸³ Nancy (Nan) Hummerston, interview with author, Launceston, Tasmania, 6 December 2007, tape in possession of author.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

one way of coping with the loss of her husband. She also chose to go back because she enjoyed the theatre work and felt there was ‘more action’ in overseas service.⁸⁶

When Cathie Danie joined the RAAFNS after the outbreak of the Korean War, she saw it as an opportunity to contribute to a war effort which she had missed out on doing during World War Two. Like Nell, Cathie had worked with returned soldiers in Albury during her training. She had applied to the AANS at the end of World War Two but ‘it was too near the end of the war and they weren’t interested in us at all.’⁸⁷ When she heard of the call for air evacuation nurses for the RAAFNS she took the opportunity and applied. ‘So then I suppose I’d forgotten all about it, then I was in Queensland at the children’s hospital and they were asking for staff for, Air Evac nurses, for Korea so, I thought “oh, this is it,” and away I went.’⁸⁸ Seeing Korea as another chance for service to make up for a missed opportunity was also a motivating factor for some of the male K Force volunteers.⁸⁹ Cathie’s motivation aligns closest to the ‘sense of duty’ mentioned by Bassett, but it was a residual sense of duty, left over from the missed opportunities at the end of World War Two.

The motivations of those interviewees who volunteered to serve with the RAANC or RAAFNS were varied. In some ways the women shared the motivations of the men who volunteered for K Force, they sought adventure, an opportunity to travel or career advancement but despite the similarities, the particular context in which

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 97.

the women lived added a unique perspective to their motivations. Most, with the exception of Shirley and Gerry, were trained nurses and many completed their training in hospitals with returned servicemen or trained under ex-military nurses. This experience influenced many who then took up the opportunity for military nursing when they saw it, or were explicitly encouraged to do so by superiors with military connections. For Betty the formation of the RAANC as a corps, as opposed to a service, attracted her attention as something which would be worthwhile joining as it was part of the Army. Unlike some of the veterans in Trembath's study, who displayed an 'antipathy towards communism' in giving their reasons for joining K Force, the women interviewed for this thesis did not discuss the threat of communism.⁹⁰ This may have been because, as nurses, the reasons behind the conflict were less significant to them than the casualties from that conflict, and the strong connection they felt with their patients will be explored in the next chapter. While the soldiers may have felt a need to justify, sometimes in hindsight, their presence as soldiers in Korea, the nurses had a politically neutral reason—being there to nurse the casualties—not to fight. The need for vindication, which haunts some of the memory narratives of the participants of Trembath's study, is absent in the nurses' narratives.

These women represent a new generation of military nurses who served in the Korean War. But there were also a large number of veterans from World War Two who went on to serve in Korea. A sample of this cohort includes RAAFNS Sister Helen Cleary who joined the RAAFNS on 15 November 1943 and served on Morotai and in Borneo and Singapore. She then went on to serve in Japan and

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.

Korea in 1952 and 1953.⁹¹ Sister Lucy Thelma Marshall also served during World War Two on medical evacuation transport flights, before serving in Japan and Korea.⁹² Senior Sister Phyllis Scholz, too, had served in New Guinea during World War Two prior to serving in Japan and Korea as a member of the RAAFNS.⁹³ C.J. McRae was appointed Matron-in-Chief of the RAAFNS on the 13 March 1951, and she had also had experience in World War Two serving in a number of RAAF hospitals in Australia, including Darwin as Principal Matron.⁹⁴ Dulcie Le-Rougetel was appointed as a Lieutenant in the RAANC on the 6 August 1952 at the age of 31. Although she had not previously served as a military nurse, Dulcie had had previous military experience as a WAAF during World War Two.⁹⁵ Service as military nurses in Korea thus attracted both experienced nursing sisters and a new generation of women, many of whom were too young to serve in the earlier conflict. The war for which they volunteered their service was a new kind of war, a limited conflict that would not extend beyond a single country and did not directly threaten Australia.

Analysis of the motivations of the women interviewed highlights both continuities and differences with past military nurses. In some ways, the women's motivations to join the military reflected continuities with the past, such as the desire to travel. A number of women were also directly influenced by ex-Army Sisters in their decisions to become military nurses. However, in some ways their reasons for

⁹¹ 'Brief on Nursing Career in RAAFNS,' Official History, Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O'Neill, Official Historian, AWM 89, J25, AWM, Canberra.

⁹² Untitled newspaper article, May 1955, RAAFNS [RAAF Nursing Service] Historical Events Photographs and News Items (scrap book) 1940-1964 Part 3, AWM137, 3/3, AWM, Canberra.

⁹³ Untitled newspaper article, circa 1953, RAAFNS Historical Events Photographs and News Items (scrap book) 1940-1964, Part 3, AWM137, 3/3, AWM, Canberra.

⁹⁴ 'Group Officer C.J. McRae,' Official History, Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O'Neill, Official Historian, AWM 89, J25, AWM, Canberra.

⁹⁵ Le-Rougetel, Dulcie Merle, B2458, F2306, NAA, Melbourne.

joining the military were quite distinct. The narratives of duty and service, that were common in the motivations of their predecessors, were not drawn upon by the Korean War women. Rather some, like Betty Crocker, saw the RAANC as an opportunity for professional career development. This was certainly a new motivating factor, one that was also promoted in the recruitment campaigns of the time.

Transition in the RAANC and RAAFNS

The recruitment campaigns of the era reveal an ambiguity in the representation of women in the military. Analyses of some examples from the period highlight two key themes—career development and the survival of traditional gender ideologies. The new focus on career development, combined with traditional gender ideologies, highlight the ambiguity of the period in which traditional gender ideologies worked alongside a new focus on career development in recruitment campaigns.

During the 1950s, the recruitment campaigns for the women's services adopted a new focus, not concentrating on service for a particular conflict but rather promoting long-term career prospects with the women's services. Career development was now promoted by the defence forces as a reason to join. This signalled a new era in military nursing in which a permanent nursing service could now be seen as a long-term career for women. The focus of the advertising and recruitment campaigns on career development also posed a challenge to dominant stereotypes of Australian women in the 1950s. Nineteen-fifties Australia has often been characterised as a conservative decade resistant to change particularly in

The women, the advertisement claims, are ‘ambitious, intelligent young women.’ The advertisement goes on to describe the potential for career development in the services, ‘The Women’s Royal Australian Naval Service, The Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps and The Women’s Royal Australian Air Force are the very best, and there are chances for rapid advancement, with commensurate increases in pay.’ Furthermore, the advertisement claims life in the services offers intelligent, ambitious women, ‘specialist training in a multitude of interesting occupations.’ This focus on career is a break from traditional recruitment campaigns of earlier wars. For example, a World War Two recruitment poster for the women’s services called for women to ‘Join us in a victory job.’¹⁰⁰ The change of focus in the recruitment campaigns, from the focus on duty in patriotism—contributing to the victory—to the emphasis on career opportunities highlights the new era in military nursing.

In concert with the focus on career opportunities, the theme of defence preparedness was also invoked in the ‘Three Smart Girls’ advertisement: ‘And, most important of all, you’ll be playing a vital part in Australia’s defence plans.’¹⁰¹ The comment illustrates that the recruitment campaigns for the women’s services were part of the broader defence recruitment for the Citizen Military Forces carried out in the period. The focus on defence also highlights another subtle, yet significant, difference with earlier recruitment campaigns. One World War Two recruitment campaign called for women to join for ‘victory,’ the new era recruitment poster calls for women to become part of ‘defence plans’ indicating no immediate threat.

¹⁰⁰ See Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 90.

¹⁰¹ Recruiting Women’s Service, B1552, 35, NAA, Melbourne.



Figure 2 – Women’s services recruitment poster, circa 1950.¹⁰²

As is evident from Figure 2, above, recruitment advertisements for the RAANC also emphasised career options. This advertisement targeted at recruiting other ranks placed an emphasis on the RAANC as offering a career for women. ‘There’s a satisfying, rewarding career for WOMEN in the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps.’¹⁰³ The emphasis on the word ‘women’ is designed to catch the female reader’s attention but it is also perhaps a suggestion that such opportunities are unusual for women. This is further reinforced by the line ‘Now you can enjoy attractive pay and excellent conditions’ suggesting that the opportunity to earn attractive pay and conditions was not available in the past, or had only been available to men. The RAANC was a newly formed corps, so it is not surprising that the recruitment campaign would highlight new opportunities.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, emphasis in the original.

However, the campaigns were also keen to emphasise a continuing legacy with the past. Another pamphlet produced in the 1950s aimed at recruiting trained nurses as officers in the corps, drew explicitly on the Australian military nursing history to invoke a sense of tradition. The pamphlet outlined the history of the AANS from service in the South African War through World Wars One and Two, up until the formation of the RAANC in 1951.¹⁰⁴

Finally, the RAANC recruitment campaigns are also distinct from other women's services such as the WRAAC, WRANS and WRAAF in that they were largely targeted to women who already had a career in nursing. The advertisement 'A Truly Worthwhile Career' pictured below in Figure 3, for example, draws upon this fact.

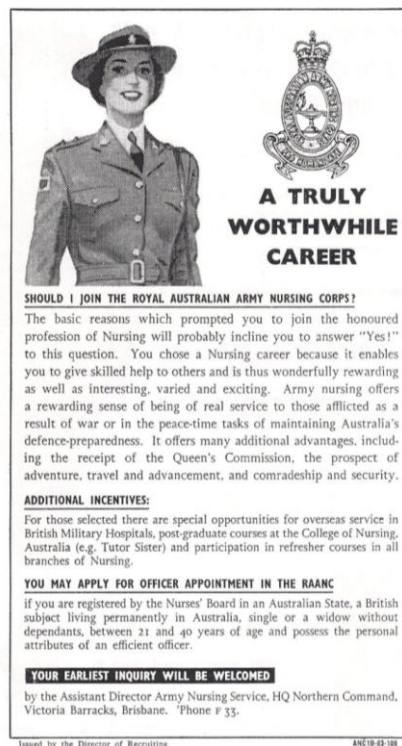


Figure 3 – Women's services recruitment poster, circa 1950.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Recruitment pamphlets, Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps, 1953–1971, N 356.92 AUS, National Library of Australia (NLA), Canberra.

¹⁰⁵ Recruiting Women's Service, B1552, 35, NAA, Melbourne.

It proposes that the same reasons that motivated nurses to join the profession applied to joining the RAANC.¹⁰⁶ The comment subtly draws on the ‘nursing ideology’ noted earlier in the chapter in particular the notion of ‘self-sacrifice and devotion to caring for others regardless of personal cost,’ with the implication that a career in the Army is *truly* worthwhile suggesting that caring for soldiers may be more noble a cause than civilian nursing.¹⁰⁷ Although it draws on these traditional nursing ideologies, the advertisement also promotes the career opportunities available for nurses in the Army including, ‘... special opportunities for overseas service in British Military Hospitals, postgraduate courses at the College of Nursing Australia (e.g. Tutor Sister) and participation in refresher courses in all branches of nursing.’¹⁰⁸

This focus on career in the recruitment campaigns suggests a new era for military nursing, yet the conditions of service in many ways reinforced traditional gender barriers. In order to qualify for appointment as an officer in the RAANC, women had to be ‘registered by the Nurses’ Board in an Australian state, a British subject living permanently in Australia, single or a widow without dependents, between 21 and 40 years of age and possess the personal attributes of an efficient officer.’¹⁰⁹ The ban on married women working remained in force, and any officers appointed were required to resign on marriage. This rule applied to the RAANC and the RAAFNS. Of course, this was not unique to the military—all

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Trembath and Hellier, *All Care and Responsibility*, 170.

¹⁰⁸ Recruiting Women’s Service, B1552, 35, NAA, Melbourne.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

female public servants of this era were required to resign on marriage.¹¹⁰ However, the policy did not apply to members of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps who were permitted to continue serving once married, although they were required to report their marriage to their Commanding Officer.¹¹¹ The decision to allow married members of the WRAAC to continue to serve represents a significant shift in the military ideology, however the continued restriction on married nurses serving highlights a continued conservatism in the RAANC.

Officers in the RAANC also had to be British subjects, excluding any of the newly arrived migrants who may have had nursing qualifications. What constituted the 'personal attributes of an efficient officer' was not elaborated upon, although the application form for enlistment in the RAANC took into consideration appearance, personality, power of expression and confidence.¹¹² The conditions for other ranks were slightly different. Non-British migrants were accepted 'complying with certain conditions.' The age limit for other ranks, however, was more restrictive; applicants had to be aged between 18 and 30.¹¹³ The recruitment advertisements signal a new emphasis on careers for women but, given the conditions, it was a career opportunity for only a select group, and only until they married. So, while the recruitment campaigns with their emphasis on career suggested a progressive attitude to women's career opportunities and role in the forces, this is tempered by the far more conservative conditions of service.

¹¹⁰ Marilyn Lake, *Getting equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 212.

¹¹¹ 'Introduction of Women's Services,' 23 September, 1952, Women's Services—Introduction of WRAAC (Women's Royal Australian Army Corps) as Staff Officers, K1214/1, 241/1/018, NAA, Perth.

¹¹² 'Applicant for Enlistment in RAANC,' McEwen, Shirley Yule, B2458, F57, NAA, Melbourne.

¹¹³ Recruiting for Women's Services, B1552, Item 35, NAA, Melbourne.

The policy of the services generally reflected the policies of the times and was ‘predominately carried over from World War II....’¹¹⁴ The women’s services were seen as a separate sphere to the regular army, and early policies were quick to emphasise this. Discipline of WRAAC members, for example, was in the most part to be handled by female officers. Female personnel were not considered to be a member of ‘the Corps of the Unit in which they are carried’ rather they remained ‘members of the WRAAC.’¹¹⁵ The different nature of this corps as a female corps was highlighted to male officers who, it was suggested, ‘must appreciate that there must be a basic difference in the treatment of women and men and that the control of a women’s Corps is more complex than that of a male Corps.’¹¹⁶ Women were also restricted in the roles in which they could be employed. Some approved employment included ‘bookbinder, caterer, clerk, driver, intelligence duty, issuer, kitchen-hand, librarian, operator, orderly, psychological coder and projectionist.’ In other employment categories, such as ‘film examining, printing and stationary services, photographer, equipment repair, survey and map production and printing,’ women could ‘act as assistants.’¹¹⁷ Women were also prevented from ‘serving intoxicating liquors in any Mess provided for male members of the AMF [Australian Military Forces].’¹¹⁸ Nor could they join army rifle clubs.¹¹⁹ Gender roles and the promotion of ‘ladylike

¹¹⁴ Bomford, *Soldiers of the Queen*, 18.

¹¹⁵ Military Board Memorandum, ‘Enlistment of Other Ranks in the Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps of the Australian Regular Army,’ 13 July 1951, Women’s Services—Employment of WRAACS (Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps), K1214/1, 241/1/08 Vol 1, NAA, Perth.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ ‘Categories of Employment,’ Women’s Services—Employment of WRAACS (Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps), K1214/1, 241/1/08, Vol 1, NAA, Perth.

¹¹⁸ Military Board Memorandum, ‘Employment of Members of Women’s Services,’ 13 August 1952, Women’s Services—Employment of WRAACS (Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps), K1214/1, 241/1/08, Vol 1 NAA, Perth.

¹¹⁹ Military Board Memorandum, ‘Rifle Clubs—Eligibility of Army Servicewomen,’ 6 September 1954, Women’s Services—Employment of WRAACS (Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps), K1214/1, 241/1/08, Vol 1, NAA, Perth.

behaviour' were reinforced in both the policies and training of the women's services.¹²⁰

The recruitment campaigns and conditions of employment for the women's services in the early 1950s highlight the era as one of transition and continuity in military nursing. The strong emphasis on career opportunities in the recruitment advertisements represents a shift away from the traditional promotion of supporting a war effort to a focus on promoting professional development opportunities for nurses who joined the military. More than representing an ideological shift in the military's perception of women, the emphasis on professional development was perhaps more likely a pragmatic approach to recruitment. Regarded as a distant war, which did not impact on Australia to any great extent, the Korean War did not call for the same war effort as had the World Wars. Furthermore, as the women's services were now permanent forces, recruits were no longer sought just for the duration of a war. The promotion of longer-term career opportunities available in the military addressed this new circumstance. These types of employment conditions are a further indication that many of the attitudes to women in the military had not changed significantly. This is particularly evident in the continued restrictions on married women joining and remaining in the military, in line with restrictions in other sectors in the period. Nevertheless, although not necessarily representing an ideological shift, the recruitment campaigns are certainly evidence of the early 1950s as a period of transition for Australian military nursing.

¹²⁰ Bomford, *Soldiers of the Queen*, 25.

Training

One of the major changes implemented as a result of the transition from a service to a corps, was a training course for newly enlisted RAANC members with a focus on military procedure. The RAAFNS sisters also participated in training before leaving for Korea, although it was less focused on military practices. This training was a significant part of the experience for the newly enlisted women and it is worth exploring in some detail as further evidence of the shift to a focus on career development within military nursing.

The 1950s was a defining decade for Australian military nursing with events which signalled a transition to a militarised culture, particularly within the RAANC. The shift from a service to a corps in February 1951 indicated an increased emphasis on military procedures and also included the incorporation of untrained nursing assistants, such as Geraldine (Gerry) Roberts (now Fleming) and Shirley McEwen (now Bennetts), as other ranks. As Jan Bassett explained, ‘the new Corps was to comprise both officers (trained nurses) and other ranks (nursing and ward orderlies).’¹²¹ This transition paralleled the same shift within the British military nursing organisation—the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARNAC)—which became a corps in February 1949 and also incorporated ‘other ranks’ into the corps. Neither the RAANC nor the QARNAC included male nursing officers. Indeed the RAANC did not admit its first male nursing officer until June 1972.¹²² Both RAANC officers and other ranks served in Japan during the Korean War.

¹²¹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 180.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 180.

The training for newly enlisted RAANC other ranks involved basic nursing training as well as military discipline. Subjects covered in the training included general information on military procedure with topics including, 'Explanation of Standing & Routine Orders' and 'Leave, Transfers & Discharges.' A 'Nursing' subject was also taught in which other ranks were trained in basic nursing care with topics covering information such as 'Ward Cleanliness,' 'Temperature, Pulse and Respiration,' 'Bedmaking,' 'Observation of Patient' and 'Feeding of Patients.'¹²³ Shirley fondly recalled her six weeks of training at Portsea in Victoria. Before joining the military, Shirley began civilian nursing training but had resigned before completing the course due to an engagement. The marriage did not take place and Shirley was unable to re-enrol in training, however joining the RAANC as an other rank gave her the opportunity to work as a nursing assistant. As a result of her earlier training, Shirley was familiar with many of the basic nursing care the other ranks were taught, but she recalled that she did not mind learning the information again:

I didn't mind redoing the training at all. I mean it was easy because I knew what I was doing and when it came to making beds and bandaging, the hospital way of course. I mean those things were just easy to me.¹²⁴

In addition to the basics of nursing, Shirley also recalled that the course required learning 'all the military codes and all the right things and the military style of life.'¹²⁵ RAANC officers undertook similar training with a military focus as well as information on the types of casualties, which might be expected in Korea. Betty Crocker recounted the details of this training:

¹²³ 'Initial Training—RAANC Ors C.M.F. Block Syllabus of Training—12 months,' Women's Services— Introduction of WRAAC (Women's Royal Australian Army Corps) as Staff Officers, K1214/1, 241/1/018, NAA, Perth.

¹²⁴ Shirley McEwen, interview with author.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

After training at the Army School of Health at Healesville studying the duties expected of an army officer—this included military discipline, military administration, military law, expected behaviour at military functions and of course parade ground drill and marching and in our own particular field the study of the type of casualties we could expect to be handling, training in procedures normally outside the range of civilian nurses such as suturing, intravenous transfusions, anaesthetic techniques, assessment and classification according to military rules of injuries and transportation of wounded. Flippantly we called this “Our Knife and Fork Course”—nevertheless it was all useful at a later date.¹²⁶

Like the other ranks, officers were instructed in military discipline and administration. It was this new focus on military procedure, which signalled a shift in the military nursing culture with a stronger emphasis on nurses adopting a military identity. There was certainly a tension with this dual identity of sister and officer and the military training was not always taken seriously as is evident in Betty’s comment referring to the training as ‘Our Knife and Fork Course.’

While the nurses were increasingly expected to adopt a military identity, there remained an ambiguity between their status as military personnel and as nurses. One example of this was the saluting regulation. In August 1951 a directive was issued indicating that all members of the women’s services, including the RAANC, were expected as part of the Australian Military Forces to salute officers with one exception, ‘that members of the RAANC will not salute when wearing indoor dress.’¹²⁷ The exception suggests that the identity of the women as military personnel remained complicated by their still separate identity as nurses. Like Betty, Nan Hummerston was also uncomfortable with the new emphasis on military procedure. She commented on the change:

¹²⁶ Letter, Betty Lawrence to Darryl McIntyre, April 4 1982, AWM 137, AWM, Canberra.

¹²⁷ ‘Saluting: Members of the RAANC and WRAAC,’ 9 August 1951, Women’s Services—Employment of WRAACS (Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps), K1214/1, 241/1/08, Vol 1, NAA, Perth.

We had to do officer training and salute. I didn't like all that. I used to avoid, looking busy, if there was a senior officer anywhere, have[ing] to salute. They do exactly the same as the men these days, in their training, yeah.¹²⁸

Nan and Betty's reflections on the focus on military procedure suggest two things. Firstly, that the identity of military nurses, specifically those in the RAANC, was in transition during this period. Secondly, the women did not necessarily openly embrace this transition. Nan's final comment regarding the current training for women in the military that '[t]hey do exactly the same as the men these days' indicates a perception that there should be a distinction between women and men in the military, or perhaps between nursing professionals and other members of the military. This view was also shared by Dulcie Thompson who as Deputy Matron of the BCGH in Kure may well have influenced other women's thinking on the matter. Dulcie believed the distinction between men and women's roles in war were significant and dated back to World War One:

It was before the days that you thought that you should behave the same way as the men. In fact, it was very much the opposite. I think we inherited this from the First World War sisters. That we were a centre of civilisation in a hard, manly world.¹²⁹

Although the incorporation of the RAANC into the Australian Military Forces signalled a move towards a more strictly military identity for military nurses, the change was not openly embraced. It is clear that some still appreciated the sentiment of being the 'centre of civilisation in a hard manly world.'

Dulcie viewed the move toward training women in the same fashion as men as undermining the role of women as a feminising influence in the war zone, which

¹²⁸ Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

¹²⁹ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Bassett.

she perceived as important. The new military policies were moving away from such perceptions but in this period of transition the identity of the nurses in war remained ambiguous even in official policy. One particular example of the ambiguity of the identity of military nurses from the official perspective, was the position taken on women when it came to the attention of Army Headquarters that some women of the RAANC and WRAAC were interested in joining rifle clubs. A statement was issued expressly forbidding members of the RAANC and WRAAC to join army rifle clubs or participate in army rifle training and strongly discouraging them from joining civil small arms clubs. The reasoning behind this policy was that ‘it is not considered to be either appropriate or necessary for members of the RAANC and WRAAC to learn to shoot or take part in any rifle shooting activities.’¹³⁰ This policy decision reflects a view of preserving the status of women as non-combatants in the military. Although the policy is clear, the following photograph suggests that some rifle training was provided to RAANC sisters prior to leaving for Korea.



Figure 4 - Warrant Officer 1 G.R. Gardiner instructs Sister Betty Crocker, Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC) (left), Sister M.M. Larkin (middle) and an unknown nurse during rifle training at the Army Camp before their departure for Korea. Woodside, Victoria, circa 1951.¹³¹

¹³⁰ ‘Rifle Clubs—Eligibility of Army Servicewomen,’ 6 September 1954, Women’s Services—Employment of WRAACS (Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps), K1214/1, 241/1/08, Vol 1, NAA, Perth.

¹³¹ P02044.001, AWM, Canberra.

The subjects of the image are three RAANC sisters, with Betty Crocker as the focus being instructed by Warrant Officer Gardiner. The image is clearly staged and should not necessarily be taken as 'typical' representation of RAANC training experiences or official expectations. There is no evidence to suggest that RAANC women were armed during the Korean War. The image then is probably what Robert Levine would label 'anachronistic'¹³² in that it is not representative of the broader representations of military nurses. Nevertheless, the composition of the shot and the presence of the Warrant Officer seem to suggest it might be a publicity photograph. If so, this suggests that the military wanted to promote a new image of the military nurse. This contrasts with the policies that later prevented WRAAC and RAANC women from participating in rifle training.

The training for RAAFNS also changed during the Korean War era. In World War Two only an elite group of women were trained in medical air evacuation duties, but following the remobilisation of the RAAFNS, the new training procedures incorporated air evacuation training for all recruits. Training included the following:

RAAF nurses go first to a service hospital, where they have a 3-week basic course. From there, they go to the RAAF School of Aviation Medicine for an aeromedical evacuation course, which includes a practical demonstration in air-sea rescue, dinghy drill, and actual training flights. They also have refresher courses in nursing procedures under nurse teachers.¹³³

¹³² Robert Levine, *Images of History: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Latin American Photographs as Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 78.

¹³³ Ethel J. Bowe and Charlotte McRae, 'Nursing in the Australian Military Services,' *The American Journal of Nursing* 58, no.3 (March 1958): 379.

The implementation of air evacuation training for all RAAFNS recruits indicated the expansion of their role, no doubt due to the success of the first two medical air evacuation units. Medical Air Evacuation training was no longer restricted to an elite group. Cathie Daniel remembered her training fondly recalling that there were ‘lots of laughs’ in the air sea rescue training component.¹³⁴

The analysis of the training carried out in the RAANC and RAAFNS during the early 1950s is further evidence of a transition in military nursing during the era. A stronger emphasis was placed on military training. The photograph of RAANC sisters undertaking rifle training also suggests a new image of nurses in the military was being cultivated, if not actually carried out. The RAAFNS also continued to expand their training during this period—the specialist air-evacuation training, which had begun during World War Two, continued during the Korean War era. Nevertheless, policies such as the restrictions on women joining rifle clubs suggest that traditional gendered views and roles persisted.

Travelling to War

This chapter has highlighted the Korean War era as one of transition and continuity in military nursing. One of the best illustrations of the continuities and differences in the era was in the experience of travelling to war. During the Boer War and World Wars One and Two the main method of transport to the areas of service was by ship. Therefore there was often a long time between leaving for war and arriving at the destination. Narrelle Hobbes’ journey to war is an

¹³⁴ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

excellent example of the long voyages undertaken by nurses during World War One. Narrelle travelled independently aboard the *Ballarat* to London, a journey that would take more than two months, in the hope of securing a position in the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS). After a month in London, Narrelle was accepted and travelled to Malta on board the *Mongolia*. Three months after leaving Sydney, Narrelle arrived in Malta for active service.¹³⁵

The journey to Japan for the nurses who served in the early years of BCOF was reminiscent of those of earlier nurses. Roma Donnelly described the leisurely journey on board the *Manunda* in March 1946:

The voyage for 170 passengers was pleasant, with the usual shipboard sporting contests, pictures, housie-housie, fancy dress ball and 'Crossing the Line' ceremony, but the frequent boat drills reminded them that the hazard of floating mines was still very real. The women were asked to volunteer for Japanese language classes ... and were given lectures on what they would wear in Japan, how they were to conduct themselves and what their duties would be.¹³⁶

The journey to Japan was long, for the most part leisurely and gave the nurses on board ample time to prepare for their duties in Japan.

By comparison, the journey to war-related zones for Korean War era, and those who followed, nurses was incredibly short, making the transition to from home to the military sphere startlingly quick. During the Korean War Australian military nurses, for the first time, travelled by plane to the area of conflict. They left Sydney via Qantas aircraft, arriving in Japan a few days later. RAANC Sister

¹³⁵ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love: Narrelle—An Australian Nurse in World War I* (Sydney: ABC, 2006), 38–53.

¹³⁶ Roma Donnelly, 'A Civilising Influence? Women in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan 1946–1952' (Masters thesis, Swinburne Institute of Technology, 1994), 52.

Betty Crocker's journey was typical. Betty left Sydney for Iwakuni, Japan on 28 March 1952, landing in Darwin, the last port of call in Australia, on 29 March and, following an overnight stay at Manila, landing in Iwakuni, Japan on 30 March.¹³⁷ Despite the journey being quite short in comparison to that endured by earlier nurses, Betty recalled that it was nonetheless a tiring experience:

What a journey it was flying to Japan in the '50s! After travelling from Melbourne to Sydney by train, spending a few days after being briefed by the Transport Officer, we reported to the Transport Officer at Mascot Airport at 1630 hours. I was supplied with my ticket and no passports required, even though we were in civilian dress, uniforms, *et cetera*, in the luggage. This was because we were travelling on a civilian Qantas 'plane, right? On board were soldiers joining regiments in Korea plus Japanese wool buyers, that was all that was on board. We left Sydney at 1800 hours on a very hot evening, travelled all night to Darwin, landed at Darwin, supplied with breakfast, reboarded and flew until 1700 hours to Manila.¹³⁸

After an overnight stay in a hotel, Betty and her group departed Manila the next morning and 'flew all day to Iwakuni in Southern Japan, then back to Kure Hospital by boat along the Inland Sea.'¹³⁹ The short, though tiring, journey was a very different one to that undertaken by earlier nurses. As Betty's itinerary demonstrates there was no time for the leisure activities which might have been undertaken on a longer sea voyage. The contrast between Betty's journey and those of the nurses on board the *Manunda* illustrates how quickly military life can change. The Korean War nurses experience set the scene for those who served in later conflicts, such as Vietnam, when Australian 'army and civilian medical teams were flown first class gearing up for war on champagne and strawberries,'

¹³⁷ Crocker, Betty Irene, B2458, F431, NAA, Melbourne.

¹³⁸ Betty Lawrence, interview with Rob Linn

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

an extravagance which was quickly contrasted by ‘the heat and dust of Saigon’ on arrival.¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, there were some similarities in the experiences of travelling to war. For many Korean War era nurses, travelling to Japan was their first experience of overseas travel. Like Narrelle Hobbes, who had not left New South Wales before leaving for London,¹⁴¹ the flight to Japan was the first overseas trip for Gerry Roberts who had not travelled outside Queensland before joining the RAANC.¹⁴² The stopover in Manila was a confronting introduction to civil unrest for many of the women, most of whom spent the night ensconced in their hotel rooms. Peg Nicholson (now Webster) recalled that

there was civil unrest as there has always been in Manila and the Qantas crew who were very fatherlike towards us looked after us very well and locked us in our rooms and took the keys and said we mustn’t go out unless they were there.¹⁴³

Marjorie Ford was more concerned with the armed men staying at the hotel than the civil unrest outside:

I can remember feeling absolutely terrified because all the men, at the hotel where we stopped there were a lot of men staying there, you know Army people, anyway going through and back and all that sort of thing to different places. And they all had guns. And I’d never seen anyone with a gun before.¹⁴⁴

On her way to London, Narrelle Hobbes had similar negative feelings about Cape Town, a port at which her ship stopped on the way to London. Cape Town, to

¹⁴⁰ Siobhan McHugh, *Minefields and Miniskirts: Australian Women and the Vietnam War* (South Melbourne: Lothian, 2005), 3.

¹⁴¹ Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love*, 38.

¹⁴² Gerry Roberts, interview with author.

¹⁴³ Peg Webster, interview with Jan Bassett.

¹⁴⁴ Marjorie Ford, interview with author.

Narrelle, was ‘sordid and dirty.’¹⁴⁵ Like Manila, Cape Town had a strong military presence with ‘hundreds of men in khaki uniforms.’¹⁴⁶ Of course Narrelle, on her longer voyage, had more than one stop on her way to London and her brief visit to Durban in South Africa, three weeks after leaving Australia, was an enjoyable one. It was her first opportunity for travel and she enjoyed a visit to the Museum and Art Gallery during her stay.¹⁴⁷ The adventure and tourism of war thus began on the voyage for World War One nurses like Narrelle, whereas the Korean War nurses would have to wait until they reached Japan to fully embrace their tourist passions.

Conclusion

Richard Trembath has noted that Korea ‘demonstrates continuities and dissimilarities’ with past conflicts.¹⁴⁸ This is certainly also the case for military nursing in the Korean War. The motivations of the Korean War nurses highlight not only their awareness and respect for the tradition of military nursing which preceded them, but also the continuities between those earlier nurses’ motivations and their own. Themes of travel and adventure emerge as motivations for Korean War era women and their predecessors to serve in war zones. However, new motivations also emerged during the Korean War. Just as K Force soldiers saw opportunities for career advancement, so too did the nurses. As Trembath notes, this focus on a military career was a motivating factor that was not present in earlier conflicts.¹⁴⁹ This new focus on career was also reflected in the women’s

¹⁴⁵ Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love*, 45.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁴⁸ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 115.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

services recruitment campaigns during the Korean War era, although the campaigns also invoked the legacy of military nursing.

The shift in the RAANC from a service to a corps in 1951 resulted in a stronger focus on military procedure and this was particularly reflected in the training courses that had a stronger focus on military training, requiring nurses to carry out military activities, such as marching, which had not been expected of them in earlier wars. This transition was met with some resistance among some nurses who remained attracted to the earlier gendered ideology of women as a ‘civilising influence’ in war. The RAAFNS also developed during the Korean War era. With the success of the small medical air evacuation units of World War Two, during the Korean War era all RAAFNS sisters trained in medical air evacuation duties. Finally, the experience of travelling to war was quite different for the Korean War era women who were, for the first time, flown to the area of service. This more immediate experience links them more closely with the nurses who followed than their predecessors. However, there were some continuities in travelling to war—apprehension when confronted with stopover locations with significantly different cultural and political contexts was felt as much by the Korean War women interviewed as those of earlier generations.

As the quotes that began this chapter illustrate, the nurses who served in Korea were acutely aware of the Australian military nursing tradition and felt proud to be continuing that tradition. They carried this nursing legacy into a new era of military nursing. However, as this and the following chapters will illustrate their experiences were in many ways different to those of their predecessors. The

Korean War nurses had entered a new era in military nursing and served, not in a World War, but in a regional conflict that had little direct impact on Australia. This more limited conflict created a new set of circumstances that particularly resulted in a shift in the promotion and perception of military nursing as a vocation rather than a temporary contribution to a war effort. The Korean War was an era of transition for Australian military nursing.

CHAPTER THREE

‘Exposed in Full Light:’

Nursing the ‘boys’ in Korea and Japan

Every soldier does at some time witness the wounding or slaying of another but it is only the medical and nursing services who see the total number of casualties especially in the operating theatre where all the horror of shattered human bodies is exposed in full light.¹

These poignant words, written by Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC) Sister Betty Crocker (now Lawrence) 30 years after her service in the Korean War, highlight an irony of military history. The human destruction of war is ‘exposed in full light’ under the bright lights of the operating table, yet this exposure and those who witness it are obscured in the shadows of military history. Australian military history typically details the battles, leaders, political implications and to some extent the participants and victims of war; but the story so often ends on the battlefield—the war wounds and those who treat them are invisible in the narrative.

This chapter will make the work of the Australian Korean War nurses visible. It will fill a gap in the historiography by documenting the work of the RAANC and Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) nurses and their interactions with the patients they treated. The chapter will argue that for the nurses the Korean War was a war with blurred boundaries. Geographically the

¹ Betty Lawrence letter to Darryl McIntyre, April 4 1982, Official History, Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O’Neill, Official Historian. Australian Army – medical services, AWM89, J26, AWM, Canberra.

area of war work was broader for Australian nurses who served not only in Korea, but also in Japan and in the case of the RAAFNS sisters in the air between Japan, Korea, Changi, Singapore and Australia. Their war work also extended beyond what is traditionally considered the Korean War period (1950–1953) and included an overlap with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces (BCOF) commitments in Japan as well as extending beyond the armistice until the last Australian nurses returned home in 1956. Finally, the chapter will establish the varied nature of the nurses' work and the ways in which their nursing experiences displayed continuities and discontinuities with previous military nursing experiences and with civilian nursing. In doing so the chapter will further highlight the Korean War as a transitional period for Australian military nursing.

Blurred Boundaries: Locations and Periods of Service

Korea, for the Australian women who served, was a war with blurred boundaries of time and location. Australian nurses served in multiple locations in Japan and Korea, including the British Commonwealth Communications Zone Medical Unit (BCCZMU) in Seoul, Korea; the British Commonwealth General Hospital (BCGH) in Kure, Japan; the Casualty Dressing Station in Tokyo; and on casualty air evacuation flights travelling between Korea, Japan, Singapore and Australia. The service time-span covered the transition between the BCOF and Korean War period from 1950 to 1952 with the official end of the occupation of Japan, and lasted until the last Australian nurses left in 1956. Thus a consideration of the participation of Australian nurses immediately extends the boundaries of the war, beyond Korea, to the support base in Japan and beyond the signing of the ceasefire agreement on 27 July 1953. Figure 5 shows the three main service

locations for Australian nurses—Seoul in South Korea and Iwakuni and Kure in Japan.

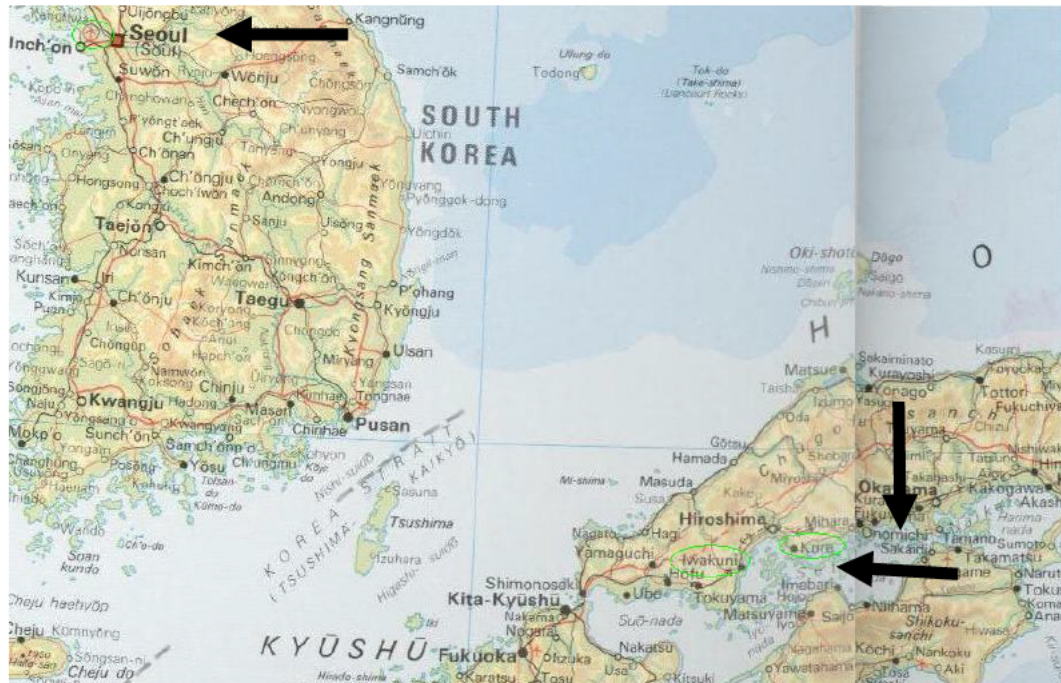


Figure 5 – Map showing Iwakuni and Kure, Japan and Seoul, South Korea.²

The beginning of the Korean War was complicated by the continued work of BCOF in Japan. Prior to the outbreak of the Korean War Australian forces, including Australian military nurses, were serving in Japan as part of the BCOF. Alongside Britain and New Zealand, Australia contributed to the allied occupation of Japan as part of the BCOF from 1946 until the ratification of the Japanese peace treaty in 1952.³ BCOF was charged with the task of ‘demilitarising and democratising’ the devastated Hiroshima prefecture in Japan.⁴ At its maximum strength the occupation forces were composed of ‘nearly 40,000 men’ including

² *The Angus and Robertson Atlas of the World* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 1992).

³ Robin Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine: Australia and the Occupation of Japan* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008), 3–5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

around 12,000 Australians.⁵ More than 500 wives and 600 children of Australian servicemen travelled to Japan, with an additional 150 children born in Japan during the occupation.⁶ In March 1946 Australian army nursing staff, including 33 Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) sisters, four Australian Army Medical Women's Services (AAMWS) officers and 54 AAMWS other ranks, arrived in Japan to care for the Australian BCOF contingent.⁷ The participation of Australian nurses in the BCOF peaked in 1948 with 55 AANS and 73 AAMWS serving in Japan.⁸ RAAF nurses also served during the BCOF period, initially working alongside British Royal Air Force (RAF) sisters in Bofu, and later at the RAAF hospital at Iwakuni, where they continued to work during the Korean War.⁹

Initially Australian Army nurses cared only for Australian troops and their families at the 130th Australian General Hospital (AGH) at Eta Jima and later Kure. In February 1949, 130 AGH combined with British and Canadian staff to form the BCGH in Kure.¹⁰ Nursing the BCOF troops involved cases ranging from respiratory tract infections and relapses in malaria, to accidents and a limited number of surgical cases.¹¹ Until February 1952, BCOF nursing also involved caring for the families of servicemen living in Japan.¹² This work involved 'medical examinations, immunisations, emergency dressings, record keeping and

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷ Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 178

⁸ Roma Donnelly, 'A Civilising Influence? Women in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan 1946–1952' (Masters thesis, Swinburne Institute of Technology, 1994), 61.

⁹ Gay Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service 1940–1990* (Metung, Victoria: Nungurner press, 1994), 272–280.

¹⁰ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 178.

¹¹ Donnelly, 'A Civilising Influence,' 57–58.

¹² 'Routine Orders,' 12 March 1952, Monthly Report, Jan to Dec 1952, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, 1950-1956, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

infant welfare advice...’¹³ Seriously ill patients were hospitalised in the Family Wing of the hospital.¹⁴ With the commitment of troops to Korea, the BCGH began nursing casualties from Korea in addition to their BCOF nursing duties. As a result, the boundaries between BCOF and Korean War service were considerably blurred during the years 1950 through 1952. As both an occupied region and the main support area for the Korean War forces, Japan was neither a place of war or peace.

The majority of Australian nurses who participated in the Korean War served with the Royal Australian Army Nursing Service (RAANS), becoming members of the RAANC when the service changed to a corps in 1951 as outlined in chapter two. At this time untrained nursing assistants, who were previously members of the AAMWS, became ‘other ranks’ joining the trained nursing sisters, who became officers, in the RAANC. All RAANC women were based at the BCGH in Kure, Japan. The hospital was largely responsible for caring for Korean War casualties but also continued to care for BCOF personnel, as it had done prior to the breakout of war in Korea, until the peace treaty with Japan was finalised in 1952 when BCOF was renamed the British Commonwealth Forces Korea (BCFK).

The support base for Australian forces, including the main hospital, was originally intended to be located in Korea, however, as Lieutenant-General Robertson, commander-in-chief of the British Commonwealth forces later explained, it was decided that it would be more practical to establish the support base in Japan:

¹³ Donnelly, ‘A Civilising Influence,’ 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

Due to the extremely crude conditions existing in Korea where the only areas available for locating the base were former rice paddy fields which had to be drained and through which roads had to be constructed and a large programme of building undertaken, consideration was given here to locating portion of the Base in Kure, Japan, where existing facilities held by the British Commonwealth Occupation Force could be made available without cost ... This decision resulted in the saving of certainly hundreds of thousands of pounds, and possibly millions, in works services in Korea.¹⁵

The implication of this decision was that the majority of Commonwealth nursing staff, including Australians, worked in the main hospital in Kure. As service in Japan was not regarded as active service, this rendered the status of their participation in the war ambiguous. This ambiguity of status had later implications for recognition. Those who served only in Japan were not considered to be on active service and were therefore not listed on the nominal roll or awarded the Korea Medal. The reasons for this inequity in recognition will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

The RAANC in Japan included trained nursing sisters as well as 'other rank' nursing assistants. They also worked with male Royal Australian Army Medical Corps orderlies and some civilian Japanese orderlies, whose position at the BCGH caused some controversy which will be discussed further in the next chapter. During the height of the Korean War, between 20 and 30 RAANC sisters and the same number of other rank nursing assistants served in Japan, bringing the total RAANC numbers to between 40 and 60 women.¹⁶ However, the numbers were reduced following the signing of the armistice on 27 July 1953, and by December 1954 only 14 RAANC officers and 21 other ranks were serving in the Kure

¹⁵ H.C.H. Robertson to Secretary Chiefs of Staff Committee, 31 October 1951, British Korea Medal, MP927/1, A81/1/187, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Melbourne.

¹⁶ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett, 16 July 1987, SO1811, AWM, Canberra.

hospital.¹⁷ By February 1956, a few months before its closure, only seven RAANC officers and seven other ranks remained in Kure.¹⁸

As the BCGH was an integrated unit, the RAANC women worked alongside approximately 50 British sisters, members of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC), and between six and eight Canadian sisters. Out of the three groups, the RAANC was the only contingent with female other ranks.¹⁹ In June 1952 the RAANC had the highest contingent of nursing staff in Japan, with 27 sisters and 36 nursing assistants (other ranks), compared with 35 QARANC sisters.²⁰ Although the BCGH was an integrated hospital, each contingent staffed their own wards in which they nursed any of the Commonwealth casualties, including Australian, British, Canadian and New Zealanders.²¹ The numbers of Australian nursing staff compared to the British and Canadian contribution highlight that, from a medical point of view at least, Australia's contribution to the Commonwealth Korean War force was quite significant.

Some RAANC sisters and other ranks were also allotted to the Casualty Dressing Station (CDS) in Tokyo. The CDS cared for personnel on leave, who were rarely

¹⁷ Monthly Report, January 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, 1950-1956, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁸ Monthly Report, Royal Australian Army Nursing Service, British Commonwealth General Hospital, Japan, February 1956, AWM114, 130/481/12/70, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁹ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

²⁰ Awards for non-operational service Japan RRC [Member of the Royal Red Cross] and ARRC [Associate of the Royal Red Cross] [Capt Helen J. Wilding; Maj. Dulcie V. Thompson], AWM119, 363, AWM, Canberra.

²¹ Margaret (Peg) Webster (née Nicholson), interview with Jan Bassett, 3 November 1986, SO1820, AWM, Canberra, ACT.

seriously ill, and was therefore lighter work.²² As it was largely an outpatient facility, those who worked at the CDS had more limited contact with patients. Rotations at the CDS were allocated from the pool of nurses working at the BCGH, so those who worked in Tokyo had also experienced working in Kure.

From September 1952, RAANC sisters were also stationed at the newly established BCCZMU in Seoul, Korea for periods of two to three months. The BCCZMU was located approximately 35 miles from the front. Like the BCGH in Kure, the BCCZMU was also an integrated unit in which two Australian sisters worked alongside two Canadian and two British sisters. The building in Seoul, housed in a former school, was constructed of a combination of brick and wood.²³ Conditions at the BCCZUM were far worse than those experienced in Japan. Dulcie Thompson, Deputy Matron of the BCGH in Japan, described the hospital as ‘reasonable. It wasn’t anything like you’d find in a modern hospital now, but for the time it wasn’t all that bad. It was a nice big building. Sometimes the heating didn’t work.’²⁴ The BCCZMU in Korea suffered far more primitive conditions. Initially the building had no running water or sheets for the patients’ beds.²⁵ By the time the Matron-in-Chief, Colonel E.J. Bowe arrived to inspect the facilities in May 1954 conditions had improved slightly, with running water installed on the ground floor but not the centre or top floors. Despite the improvements, Colonel Bowe referred to the conditions as ‘disturbing,’ but noted that although the building was ‘poorly equipped and the sisters are working at a

²² Colonel E.J. Bowe, ‘Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,’ RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

²⁵ Nell Espie, ‘Memories,’ Korean Veterans Australia <http://koreavets.tassie.net.au/espie.htm>, [accessed 31 July 2008].

disadvantage. They do their work cheerfully and are not complaining.²⁶ As noted in chapter one, only trained sisters were assigned to work at the BCCZMU in Korea. In all, 55 Australian nurses, 34 RAANC sisters and 21 RAAFNS sisters, were actually in the area of conflict during the Korean War.²⁷ All RAAFNS sisters who volunteered for Korean War service spent at least some time in Korea. No RAANC other ranks were stationed in Korea.

The Korean War was the first war in which Commonwealth forces were evacuated by air on a large scale for the majority of the war. RAAFNS sisters were stationed in Japan from the beginning of the war. The first evacuation of casualties by Qantas aircraft to Australia was on 8 July 1950, only weeks after the beginning of the war.²⁸ Air evacuation between Korea and Japan was first conducted by the United States Eighth Army, then from February 1951 Commonwealth casualties were evacuated through RAAF channels.²⁹ Although the Korean War was the first time RAAFNS sisters played a significant role in the Commonwealth casualty evacuation plans, it was not the first time RAAFNS sisters were involved in medical air evacuations. From 1944 until the end of the Second World War, RAAF sisters were involved in the air evacuation of more than 14,000 patients from areas in New Guinea and South-East Asia.³⁰ RAAFNS sisters then participated in the evacuation of prisoners of war (POWs), including the return of the AANS nurses who had been POWs.³¹ Like their Army nursing

²⁶ Colonel E.J. Bowe, 'Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,' RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.

²⁷ Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Nominal Roll of Australian Veterans of the Korean War', http://www.koreanroll.gov.au/search_advanced.aspx [accessed 25 June 2007].

²⁸ Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service*, 283.

²⁹ Maxine Dahl, 'Air Evacuation in War: The role of RAAF Nurses Undertaking Air Evacuation of Casualties between 1943–1953' (PhD thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2009), 217.

³⁰ Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service*, 224.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 267.

colleagues, RAAFNS sisters were also in Japan during the BCOF period, first stationed in Bofu then Iwakuni, which remained their base during the Korean War.³² The success of these early evacuations set the precedent for the significant contribution of RAAFNS sisters in Korea. Their important air evacuation work continued during the Vietnam War.

From late 1952 RAAFNS sisters were also stationed at the BCCZMU in Korea. In September 1952 the decision was made to detach one of the six sisters based in Japan to a RAAF evacuation ward in the newly opened BCCZMU. The rationale was that the move would ‘tend to turn the air evacuation flight into a unit approximating to that for which it was originally intended.’³³ The first RAAFNS sister was posted to the BCCZMU in November 1952.³⁴ In January 1953 the number of RAAFNS sisters detached to Korea was increased to two, with four sisters remaining at the Iwakuni base in Japan.³⁵ In February 1954 with armistice agreements in place ‘personnel requirements [were] reviewed,’ resulting in a reduction of RAAFNS personnel to three sisters in Japan and one in Korea.³⁶ Although reduced in number, the RAAFNS continued to undertake their medical evacuation duties until July 1956 when the last two RAAFNS sisters left Japan.³⁷

In all, RAAFNS sisters assisted in the evacuation of 14,924 casualties between

³² *Ibid.*, 270–281.

³³ Monthly Medical Report for Month of September 1952, A705, 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA, Canberra.

³⁴ Report of S.M.O. 91 Wing for Month of November 1952, Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA Canberra.

³⁵ Report of S.M.O. 91 Wing for Month of December 1952, Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA Canberra.

³⁶ Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing for month of February 1954, Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 1, NAA Canberra.

³⁷ Report of Medical Section of R.A.A.F. Transport Flight for Month of June 1956, Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 1, NAA Canberra.

Korea and Japan, 884 casualties between Japan and Australia and 1,806 casualties between Japan and the United Kingdom.³⁸

The work of RAAFNS and RAANC nurses highlights the complexities of the post-armistice period. Although the end of the Korean War is generally cited as 27 July 1953, the date the armistice was signed, Australian nurses continued to serve until 1956.³⁹ While technically accurate, as the work of the nurses illustrates, the tendency to refer to 1953 as the end of the Korean War obscures the continuing work of those who remained behind on duty until 1956. The last two RAAFNS sisters left Japan on 9 July 1956.⁴⁰ The RAANC sisters were the last group of nursing sisters to leave the BCGH in Kure, with the final RAANC report submitted in May 1956.⁴¹

As an analysis of admission figures reveals, nursing work was reduced after the signing of the armistice. A comparison of the admission figures at the BCCZMU in different years shows that although the numbers of admissions fell after the armistice, they nevertheless remained substantial. In December 1952, 736 patients were admitted to the BCCZMU, and on average 128 patients were in the hospital at any one time. The average stay in hospital for those not evacuated to Japan was 11 days with those evacuated staying an average of 3.7 days. In total 212 casualties were evacuated from the BCCZMU in December 1952, with 12

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ E.M. Johnston, 'Medical and Dental Arrangements – RAAF Transport Flight (Japan),' 24 July 1956, Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 1, NAA Canberra.

⁴¹ Monthly Report – Royal Australian Army Nursing Service, British Commonwealth General Hospital, Japan. May 1956, AWM114, 130/481/12/70, AWM, Canberra.

evacuations taking place throughout the month.⁴² In March 1953, a total of 398 patients were admitted to the BCCZMU. On average 89 patients were in the hospital at any one time. The average stay in hospital for those evacuated and those not evacuated to Japan was seven days. In total 124 patients were evacuated from the BCCZMU to Japan, with six evacuations taking place.⁴³ By February 1954 the number of casualties admitted to the BCCZMU had fallen to 299. On average there were 111 patients in the hospital at any one time. The average stay for those evacuated was six days, ten for those not evacuated to Japan. In all 122 patients were evacuated from the BCCZMU to Japan, with ten evacuations taking place.⁴⁴ This evidence demonstrates that while the number of casualties admitted and evacuated certainly fell between December 1952 and February 1954 there was still a significant number of Commonwealth casualties in the post-armistice period.

The medical evidence indicates that the post-armistice period did not signal an end to Commonwealth casualties as the boundary between war and peacekeeping activities is more blurry from the medical perspective. Although the number of monthly admissions dropped significantly, the average number of patients in the hospital on any given day remained fairly steady. While the Korean War may have technically ended with the signing of the armistice, troops continued to be admitted and the work of Australian nurses continued until 1956.

⁴² Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, December 1952, WO281/898, 377994, the National Archives, Kew, England.

⁴³ Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, March 1953, WO281/898, 377994, the National Archives, Kew, England.

⁴⁴ Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, February 1954, WO281/898, 377994, the National Archives, Kew, England.

An examination of the locations and periods of service of Australian nurses highlights that for these women the war stretched beyond the traditional boundaries of the Korean War to include extensive war work outside of the area of conflict, in Japan, and beyond the signing of the armistice. The work of Australian nurses was extended to include work at the BCGH and CDS in Japan and for the RAAFNS sisters in the air between Korea, Japan and Australia. From the nursing perspective, Japan was both a place of work and recreation. Examining the war from this perspective also highlights the complexities of the post-armistice period which, as the analysis of the admission statistics shows, did not simply end with the signing of the armistice.

Nursing Work

The work carried out by Australian nurses who served in the Korean War differed in some ways from their civilian duties. This was particularly the case for RAAFNS who undertook air evacuation duties. The work also varied significantly depending on their service and role. This section will outline the nature of the nursing work carried out by the RAAFNS and RAANC nurses in Japan and Korea. It will outline the primacy of work in the nurses service experiences, the similarities and differences of the work to that carried out in the civilian sector and the diversity in the work performed during the Korean War.

Labour historian Nathan Wise has argued that histories of military service have seriously neglected the experiences of work in war. Wise argues that military histories have tended to ‘treat men in the armed forces as “soldiers,” rather than as

“men doing a job.”⁴⁵ Wise’s article, and the PhD on which it was based, opens up an entirely new view of the military experience of working class Australian men in World War One.⁴⁶ Through the lenses of labour history and work theory Wise demonstrates that work was an integral part of the war experience. For example, Wise points to the extensive manual work carried out on the Gallipoli Peninsula which included digging trenches and collecting water from near the beach and carrying it to the frontline.⁴⁷ Further, he argues that the diary entries of World War One soldiers illustrate a continuity in work practices which suggests strong links between the world of war and their civilian lives.⁴⁸

Although the men to which Wise refers had significantly different backgrounds and experiences to those of the Korean War nurses, who were mostly middle-class professionals serving in an entirely different war and away from the frontline, there is relevance to Wise’s perspective. As it was for the men in Wise’s study, work was also a central aspect of the nursing experience in the Korean War. When referring to their experiences the women used the term ‘worked’ more often than ‘served.’ For example, when Dorothy Wheatley spoke of her initial posting in Japan she said, ‘Well firstly I worked at the Brit Com field hospital in Kure.’⁴⁹ Nursing work was a primary part of the experience. Their identity as nursing professionals and the continuities between their civilian and military nursing duties mirror the continuities in the soldiers lives identified by Wise. The use of

⁴⁵ Nathan Wise, ‘The Lost Labour Force: Working-Class Approaches to Military Service During the Great War,’ *Labour History*, 93 (November 2007): 173. See also Nathan Wise, ‘A Working Man’s Hell: Working class men’s experiences with work in the Australian imperial force during the Great War’ (PhD thesis, UNSW, 2007).

⁴⁶ Wise, ‘A Working Man’s Hell,’ 356.

⁴⁷ Wise, ‘The Lost Labour Force,’ 168.

⁴⁸ Wise, ‘A Working Man’s Hell,’ 356.

⁴⁹ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author, Sydney, NSW, 7 January 2008, tape in possession of author.

the term 'worked' also avoids the military connotations associated with the term 'served.'

Although there were certainly differences between the civilian nursing sector and the nursing work carried out in Japan and Korea, much of the work itself did reflect tasks common in the civilian sector. When asked if the work was different to what she had experienced in Australia, RAANC Sister Marjorie Ford responded:

Well no not really. Because people were sick, or had injuries or something like that and you would treat them the same as you would treat anywhere else. Except that some of the injuries were really bad injuries. And some of the boys, they were very nice boys and they were missing their home and their families and all that sort of thing.⁵⁰

In Marjorie's view the difference lay in the type of injuries nursed, not the actual work itself. The shifts worked by the nurses also largely mirrored those of the civilian sector. Gerry Roberts recalled that nightshift at the BCGH, the shift she most often worked, was 'ten till seven' which was a standard shift.⁵¹ Gerry recalled, however, that if casualties came in, nurses were sometimes required to stay on to help during the day, or broken shifts were worked so adequate staff was available to handle the higher workload.⁵² Although trained nursing staff were officers when referring to the nurses with whom they worked, the women

⁵⁰ Marjorie Ford, interview with author, Melbourne, Victoria, 23 April 2008, tape in possession of author.

⁵¹ Geraldine (Gerry) Roberts (now Fleming), interview with author, Sefton, NSW, 31 May 2007, tape in possession of author.

⁵² *Ibid.*

continued to use the civilian nursing title of ‘Sister.’ Gerry, for example, mentioned working with a ‘Sister Wilson’ and ‘Sister O’Neill.’⁵³

In contrast to Marjorie’s views, RAANC Sister Peg Nicholson believed nursing in the army was ‘entirely different’ to working in a civilian hospital:

Civilian [nursing work] so much of it is you’re nursing the elderly. And you’re nursing perhaps a lot of advanced disease, or you’re nursing elective surgery where patients have waited for surgery that was needed. Whereas army nursing seemed to me it was, repeating myself, young, fit, men who, who out of the blue have had a trauma or medically not well. But no, in my mind, entirely different.⁵⁴

For Peg military nursing was different to civilian nursing because the patients were young and fit, and suffered sudden trauma as opposed to the patients in the civilian hospital who suffered either from ‘advanced diseases’ or other anticipated surgery. Although military nursing involved working with seriously wounded casualties, for Peg, the nursing work itself was more rewarding because the patients could recover quickly. As she later recalled:

before this [being wounded] had happened [the patients] were all very fit and very strong young men so that it was, it was mostly very rewarding nursing because the vast majority who had lasted to hospital survived and did extremely well because they were so fit and strong.⁵⁵

Although they were both RAANC sisters who had similar experiences serving in Korea and Japan, Marjorie’s and Peg’s views are quite distinct. In Marjorie’s eyes the work was little different to that experienced in the civilian sector, whereas Peg viewed military nursing as an ‘entirely different’ and, in fact, a more rewarding

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Peg Webster (née Nicholson), interview with Jan Bassett.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

experience. Perhaps the two views come together in the agreement that the distinction was the patients and injuries, not the work itself. Although the nursing work itself was no different to what they had been trained to do in the civilian sector, the casualties nursed, the workload and the duties varied considerably. An exploration of these differences adds greater texture to our understanding of the experience of nursing in the Korean War.

As was noted in chapter two, Betty Crocker (now Lawrence) recognised the continuities between civilian and military nursing work in the past but believed the link ended when the army nursing service became a corps:

Australian Army Nursing Services had no army rank, had no army discipline, no nothing. I mean it was just a service, it was, they were the same as though they were going to work in a hospital here, a civilian hospital here, but they were going to work in a military situation.⁵⁶

In Betty's view the role of the AANS sisters in earlier wars had been entirely related to their nursing work and essentially the same as working in a civilian hospital. They were simply 'going to work' in a military setting. For Betty, this changed when the service became a corps and adopted a more military focus. Nevertheless, Betty does not suggest the work was substantially different to that carried out in the civilian sector, rather her point is that the working environment was more militarised which enhanced the status of the work for her.

Nathan Wise has argued that the work carried out by soldiers in World War One differed significantly depending on location. Digging was a major task for those at

⁵⁶ Betty Crocker (now Lawrence), interview with author, West Beach, South Australia, 27 November 2007, tape in possession of author.

Gallipoli, while on the Western Front removing and setting up wire was a frequently mentioned task.⁵⁷ The nature of the work and the workload also differed for nurses according to location. As the BCGH in Kure, Japan was the main base for the medical treatment of casualties throughout the war, the workload could be high. Peg Nicholson recalled:

But it was very hard and heavy work on duty, and we worked very hard ... The convoys, bringing the wounded from Korea would inevitably arrive at 6 o'clock in the evening so that if you were due to go off say at 7 o'clock you would be there until the whole convoy were in, which might have been midnight.⁵⁸

Dulcie Thompson, who had served with the AANS during World War Two, also recalled the workload at the BCGH in Kure being comparatively heavy and the casualties largely worse than those she had experienced in most of her earlier war service, as there was a more continuous flow of casualties coming into Japan than she had experienced during the previous war.⁵⁹ The workload depended on the number of casualties being nursed and certainly varied throughout the period. As Peg explained, workloads peaked with the arrival of convoys of casualties, which meant any nurses due to go off duty generally stayed until the casualties were settled in the hospital.

The workload was also affected by the number of casualties which varied. For example, in January 1952 during the Korean War the number of beds occupied in the general wing peaked at 466.⁶⁰ In contrast, by January 1955 the daily average

⁵⁷ Wise, 'A Working Man's Hell,' 118.

⁵⁸ Peg Webster, interview Bassett.

⁵⁹ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Bassett.

⁶⁰ Monthly Report RAANC Officers, January 1952, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

of beds occupied was down to 220.⁶¹ Although lower than in January 1952, this was still a reasonably high admission rate considering it occurred during the post-armistice phase. In fact, the continued workload associated with this number of patients highlights that war work extended for the nurses beyond the armistice. The number of admissions eventually declined, and by January 1956 the daily average beds occupied was down to 48.⁶² However, the last report in May 1956 indicates that six major and 39 minor surgeries were performed. Indicating that work for the nurses continued up until the last RAANC personnel left Japan.⁶³

The nature of the work undertaken by Australian women at the BCGH also differed depending on the women's roles in the hospital. As noted in chapter one, the nurses serving in Japan included officers, trained nursing sisters and other ranks—nursing orderlies. The other ranks, including Shirley and Gerry, carried out different tasks to those of the officers who were trained nursing sisters. For instance, RAANC Sister Betty Crocker, who also worked in theatre, recalled being closely involved in surgery, handing instruments to the surgeons and occasionally completing the final suturing if the surgeons were 'busy with something more serious.'⁶⁴ In contrast, RAANC other rank Gerry Roberts recalled one of her tasks as a theatre assistant was to count the swabs taken out of the patient following an operation to ensure none had been left inside the patient.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Monthly Report RAANC Officers, January 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

⁶² Monthly Report RAANC BCGH Japan January 1956, AWM 114, 130/481/12/70, AWM, Canberra.

⁶³ Monthly Report RAANC BCGH Japan May 1956, AWM 114, 130/481/12/70, AWM, Canberra.

⁶⁴ Betty Lawrence, interview with Robb Linn, 22 May 2002, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, OH644/7, State Library of South Australia.

⁶⁵ Gerry Roberts, interview with author.

The role of the female other ranks in the hospital was not new and had in fact developed from the Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) who acted as unpaid nursing orderlies during World War One. As Melanie Oppenheimer described:

VAs scrubbed floors, swept and dusted wards, cleaned bathrooms, sorted linen, rolled bandages, cleaned bedpans, and washed patients. They also took on other general duties such as cooking, making and serving tea etc.⁶⁶

The other ranks at the BCGH carried out similar duties. When the Australian Army Medical Women's Services (AAMWS) was formed in December 1942 most of the initial recruits were drawn from a pool of VADs.⁶⁷

In 1951 the AAMWS were absorbed into the RAANC, becoming the 'other ranks'. Thus, the role of the other rank nursing assistants at the BCGH continued the tradition of service of untrained female nursing orderlies that had begun with the VADs, in World War One and continued with the AAMWS in World War Two, and was then continued by the RAANC other ranks. It seems that the links between these services were so close that one RAANC sister actually confused the organisations when referring to the staffing of the Tokyo Casualty Dressing Station (CDS), 'there were only two sisters, both Australian again and we had some AAMWS, VADs did we call them? Three, three I think.'⁶⁸

Duties assigned to RAANC women at the BCGH occasionally extended beyond the ward. The British Commonwealth sisters working at the BCGH were

⁶⁶ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VAs: A History of the VAD Movement in New South Wales* (Walcha: Ohio Productions, 1999), xxii.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶⁸ Peg Webster, interview with Jan Bassett.

assigned, on a monthly rotational basis, to work on the ambulance train. RAANC other ranks were also rostered onto convoy duty, to assist the sister in charge, who could be British, Canadian or Australian. The ambulance train 'consisted of one hospital-type coach, which when in operation was attached to the mainline train running between Kure and Iwakuni.'⁶⁹ RAANC Sister Nora Hayles was assigned to convoy duty and recalled that the journey between Iwakuni and Kure was quite long:

From Kure to Iwakuni, it was about fifty miles, it might've been more I think. And it was, oh it used to take us, couple hours I suppose. I used to leave about seven o'clock in the morning, and I could get home anytime, from five o'clock afterwards, on ... And then sometimes I'd get back to Kure and they'd say, you've gotta go back tonight.⁷⁰

The nursing work on the hospital train was similar to that carried out by the RAAFNS sisters on the air evacuation flights, which will be discussed in greater depth shortly, and essentially involved ensuring the smooth transition of the evacuation process and the comfort of the patients. Nevertheless, with seriously wounded stretcher cases, the work sometimes involved making serious medical decisions. Nora remembered one critically injured patient in particular.

He had a gunshot wound. I don't know whether it went in the front or came out the back or vice versa but he had quite a big wound in his chest. And we discovered that he, if he had a drink it all came out on his dressing you see. So anyhow I said, right, you can't have anymore to drink. So he went straight up.⁷¹

Given the patient's critical condition, Nora decided that he should be taken off the train early and taken 'straight up' to the hospital before the other patients were

⁶⁹ E.J. McNair, *Shadows of the Far Forgotten: A British Army Nurse in the Korean War* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2007), 1.

⁷⁰ Nora Trethewie (née Hayles), interview with Jan Bassett, 23 May 1987, S01809, AWM, Canberra.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

unloaded. Their work, therefore, required the sisters to closely observe patients and make important medical decisions that could save lives.

In contrast another less critical duty assigned to sisters at the BCGH was Mess Officer which involved daily management of the Officers' Mess, on three-month rotations.⁷² During her time as Mess Officer, RAANC Sister Nell Espie organised a number of functions including 'weddings and ah, you know, all sorts of parties, dinners and things and we had to organise the cooks and menus and everything, the whole works. I felt quite a caterer by the time I left there.'⁷³ Marjorie Ford was also allocated duty as the Mess Officer for three months and recalled finding the task rather daunting.

Once a quarter they used to appoint one of the members of the contingent to be in charge of the mess. And one horrible time they appointed me! And you did it for three months. And that means that you run the whole place you see, you run the mess, you know. You had 86 nursing sisters, there's people coming in and out from overseas, odd people coming in and out and I thought, Oh God, what am I gonna do?⁷⁴

Marjorie and Nell eventually got a handle on their unexpected duties and also enjoyed working with the Japanese cooks who also worked in the mess (these relationships will be discussed further in chapter four). While the women were certainly capable of performing this unusual task, one which they would not have been expected to perform in the civilian sector, it does raise questions as to why trained nursing sisters, whose skills would have been better used in the hospital,

⁷² Nell Espie, interview with author, Oatlands Tasmania, 5 December 2007, tape in possession of author.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Marjorie Ford, interview with author, Melbourne, Victoria, 23 April 2008, tape in possession of author.

were allocated such duties. The task of 'mess officer' was certainly not in their job description.

The duties were likely allocated to the nursing sisters because they were women. In earlier wars, such roles were allocated to members of the women's services, however no such women were stationed in Japan. The Federal Government made the decision in 1945 that no members of the women's services, with the exception of nurses and medical staff, were to serve in the BCOF in Japan.⁷⁵ This decision carried through to the Korean War period. One of the implications of the decision was the use of trained nursing staff for duties which would have been more appropriately assigned to other members of the women's services, such as the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC). In fact it is unclear why the tasks were not given to the other ranks rather than the trained nursing sisters. Perhaps the reason lies in the hierarchy. Sisters had rank and were therefore perhaps perceived as having the authority to run the mess. The Australian government position on preventing other members of the women's services serving in Japan, let alone Korea, contrasted with the United States policy. In 1952 the United States Department of Defense resisted sending women (other than nurses) to Korea, but with the demand on their services, the United States Army eventually allowed three members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) into Korea in December 1952.⁷⁶ Although the United States Army showed the same reluctance as the Australian government, they eventually recognised the valuable and necessary contribution women could make in Korea, something the

⁷⁵ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War* (Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2008), 178.

⁷⁶ Linda Witt *et al.*, *'A Defense Weapon Known to be of Value': Servicewomen of the Korean War Era* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005), 222.

Australian government did not. Such obstinate refusal to recognise the need for the women's services in Japan suggests a failure to see the inappropriateness of having trained nursing sisters performing unrelated general duties.

From mid-September 1952, RAANC sisters were stationed at the BCCZMU in Seoul, Korea. This was an entirely different nursing work experience. The BCCZMU was established to function as 'an Air Head Holding Unit and to hold minor ill' who might be expected to recover quickly and did not need surgery. Such patients could be cared for in short periods and then returned to their units. Patients, therefore, never stayed with the BCCZMU for long periods of time.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the number of admissions was high, with 631 patients admitted in the month of November 1952. In that month, the hospital only held an average of 149 casualties at any one time, with the patients staying an average of 5.8 days in hospital.⁷⁸ This is compared to an average stay of at least one month for patients at the BCGH in Kure.⁷⁹

The nursing work at the BCCZMU in Seoul was restricted by limited equipment, as already discussed, and the lack of facilities or staff to perform surgery. The aim of the nursing work carried out at the BCCZMU was perhaps best described as 'advanced first aid ... [which] enable[d] the patient to arrive at Kure in a fit state to undergo orthodox surgical treatment' such as debridement of wounds and

⁷⁷ Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, September 1952, WO281/898, 377994, National Archives, Kew, England.

⁷⁸ Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, November 1952, WO281/898, 377994, National Archives, Kew, England.

⁷⁹ Nell Espie, interview with author.

suturing.⁸⁰ As Betty Crocker later outlined, the implication of the limited facilities, and the fact that the hospital was intended to function only as a transit hospital, restricted the work nursing sisters could perform:

And all we could do for them was just general care, tender loving care. We had no facilities for surgery, no personnel for surgery, and very, very little equipment. Equipment was very, very basic.⁸¹

The BCCZMU was not the place of primary nursing care, rather the BCGH in Japan took on this role. It is somewhat of an irony then that the major nursing and medical care for the Korean War was carried out at the BCGH in Japan, yet only those sisters who served in Korea itself are counted on the nominal roll. As a result, the arguably more significant nursing work connected to the war, the surgery and extended care, are both obscured and invalidated due to the location of the main hospital outside the war zone and country.

The ambiguity of Japan as a place of war work is perhaps best illustrated by the following image of RAANC Sister Mary Ann Becker collecting her pay in Korea.

⁸⁰ Betty Lawrence, letter to Darryl McIntyre Official History, Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O'Neill, Official Historian. Australian Army – medical services, AWM89, J26, AWM, Canberra.

⁸¹ Betty Lawrence, interview with Rob Linn.



Figure 6 – RAANC Sister Mary Ann Becker in Korea, 1954.⁸²

The image is valuable evidence of the presence of Australian nurses in Korea and of the conditions in which they worked. However, the original caption for the image also serves to highlight the constructed divide between Korea as a war zone and Japan as an area for recreation.

Staff Sergeant James Thomas (Jim) Howard of the 102nd Australian Field Cash Office, is paying Australian Army nurse ...Lieutenant Mary Ann Becker. Sister Becker is one of the few Australians on the staff of the 25th Canadian Field Dressing Station, one of the main forward hospitals in the Commonwealth Division in Korea. Sister Becker, who comes from Balmoral, Qld, has been in the Far East for nine months of her 18 month's engagement with the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC). Except for the past three months, she has been stationed in Japan. While there she developed a taste for the Japanese hobby of breeding goldfish...⁸³

The photograph was taken by official war photographer Donald Meldrum. The photograph and accompanying caption suggest that Meldrum wanted to highlight the work of Becker, close to the front and show her as a participant in the war. The caption points out that she was 'one of the few Australians' stationed in 'one

⁸² Donald Meldrum, Korea, June 1954, MELJ0153, AWM, Canberra.

⁸³ Donald Meldrum, Korea, June 1954, MELJ0153, AWM, Canberra.

of the main forward hospitals in the Commonwealth Division Korea.’ Through the image and the caption Meldrum sought to show Becker as a primary participant in the war. In contrast, the caption goes on to discuss her time in Japan where it is noted she had spent the majority of her service. But rather than discussing the nursing work she carried out in Japan, the caption describes her recreational activities, that she had ‘developed a taste for the Japanese hobby of goldfish breeding.’ Japan is constructed as a place of recreation for Becker, in contrast to the paid nursing work carried out in Korea, it is after all an image of her receiving her pay.

Japan was a place of recreation for the Commonwealth soldiers as well as the nurses. As chapter four will argue, a tourist subjectivity which reflects this aspect of the experience can be detected in their personal narratives and photographs. However, as this chapter has also demonstrated, Japan was also a place of work. The positioning of Japan as recreational, as the above caption does, obscures the extent of war work carried out in Japan.

The discussion of the different locations in which the RAANC sisters and other ranks served highlights the diversity of the experience of nursing in the Korean War. This diversity is even more apparent when the experiences of RAAFNS sisters are taken into account. RAAFNS sisters spent the majority of their service stationed at a RAAF holding hospital at Iwakuni in southern Japan. From this base they participated in medical air evacuations, escorting Commonwealth casualties between Korea and Japan, Japan and Australia, through Manila and Darwin and later through Guam and Port Moresby and occasionally Japan to Changi, where

they handed over British patients to British nursing sisters.⁸⁴ The number of RAAFNS sisters stationed in Japan and detached to Korea also varied throughout the Korean War. Like their RAANC counterparts, RAAFNS sisters were based in Japan during the BCOF period with four sisters caring for BCOF personnel in the RAAF hospital. With the outbreak of the Korean War the RAAFNS took on the responsibility for evacuating casualties from Japan to Australia, with the first such evacuation on 8 July 1950, very early in the war.⁸⁵ During the Korean War period six RAAFNS sisters were usually stationed in Japan, working on either air evacuations or in the wards. Commonwealth casualties were evacuated from Korea through American channels until January 1951 when the RAAFNS took over the responsibility for evacuating Commonwealth casualties out of Korea.⁸⁶

The nursing experience of RAAFNS sisters was significantly different to that of the RAANC nurses. At the Iwakuni RAAF holding hospital RAAFNS sisters carried out limited nursing work as they cared for casualties temporarily, often for only a few hours, until they were transferred to Kure by train accompanied by either a British, Canadian or Australian army nursing sister. At the holding hospital the RAAFNS sisters washed and fed the patients, attended to their dressings and administered any medication they needed.⁸⁷ Their contact with the patients was transitional, the main priority being to facilitate the evacuation process. RAAFNS Sister Cathie Daniel (now Thompson) explained the process:

⁸⁴ Patricia Oliver, 'Blue Capes,' in *Korea Remembered*, ed. Maurie Pears and Fred Kirkland (Georges Heights: Doctrine Wing Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 2002), 387.

⁸⁵ Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service*, 283.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁸⁷ Catherine (Cathie) Daniel (now Thompson), interview with author, Coolamon, New South Wales, 7 August 2007, tape in possession of author.

Change the dressings and make them comfortable and give them, meals and a lot of them needed to be fed and things like that and then the train would take them back down. It was a lot of shuffling around really because they'd come from an aeroplane onto an ambulance and then from the ambulance up to the [hospital]. But they were always washed and showered—not showered—but they'd be sponged and washed and dressings done and hot drinks and that's where the Japanese orderlies, workers helped feed them and you know helped. So it was a very good working arrangement really. Once they'd gone back down onto the train, we'd come back, clean up, make sure everything was right and more or less you were off duty. But the one that flew didn't have to do any of that basic, she was finished as soon as she handed over.⁸⁸

The nursing work carried out by the RAAFNS sisters on duty included basic nursing care, such as feeding and sponging the patients. As Cathie further explained, the 'big aim was to get them back on the train to go back to the Army hospital' in Kure for the required surgery.⁸⁹

Although the contact was more limited, the nursing work at the holding hospital in Iwakuni was similar to that carried out in the RAANC hospital. It was in the casualty evacuation work that the RAAFNS sisters participated in an entirely different nursing experience. RAAFNS sisters worked on DC3 Dakota aircraft. These planes were equipped to carry '24 litter patients or 27 ambulant patients' usually carrying a combination of both.⁹⁰ The Dakotas flew between the base in Iwakuni, Japan and Kimpo airbase near Seoul in Korea where the casualties were picked up. The flight between Iwakuni and Kimpo took between three to four hours. A RAAFNS sister and a male medical orderly accompanied all flights.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ N.M. Kater, 'Air Evacuation of Casualties in the Korean War.' *The Medical Journal of Australia*, (July 1953): 95.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 95

RAAFNS Sister Patricia Oliver participated in 55 Korean aeromedical evacuations and ‘logged a total of 684 hours flying time’ between 1951 and 1953.⁹² In her account of her service in the war Oliver described in detail a typical day on aeromedical evacuation duty, before the opening of the BCCZMU. It is worth quoting at length:

A quick breakfast at the hospital, a Jeep ride to the strip, check the blankets and other equipment on the aircraft for take-off at 0430 hours, for say, on this occasion, Kimpo (K14). In winter the outside air temperature during the flight at 8000 feet or whatever would reach minus many degrees centigrade. The cabin temperature in these unlined Dakotas was freezing, to say the least ... [On arrival in Korea] [t]he wounded were brought down from the MASHs and were held in a hut by the strip. I would do a round with the US Army doctor. If fit enough, the patients were loaded aboard the aircraft for the return trip to Iwakuni. There were certain dangers in transporting wounded in freezing conditions in unpressurised aeroplanes; also questions such as secondary shock had to be considered. The condition of the patients was never ideal for evacuation but it was considered preferable to return them to Japan rather than have them remain in Korea any longer ... In the normal course of events, with reasonable traffic conditions on the ground and in the air, we would arrive back at Iwakuni sometime early in the afternoon.⁹³

The description of a ‘typical’ air evacuation flight reveals the specialist skills the RAAFNS sisters were required to have and the difficult conditions under which they worked. Not only were the Dakotas cold in winter, they were also hot in summer, prompting the casualty air evacuation team at one point to request sheets, as the blankets were too hot for the patients.⁹⁴ Although the RAANC sisters worked in intense cold at the BCCZMU, the RAAFNS sisters experienced extreme cold and heat in the unpressurised Dakota aircraft, both on the flight to Korea and while performing their nursing duties on the return flight. With limited

⁹² Oliver, ‘Blue Capes,’ 385–388.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 387–388.

⁹⁴ Casualty Air Evacuation Flight Medical Unit, BCCZMU, Report of July 1953, Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA Canberra.

facilities they were required to anticipate complications in their patients including ‘secondary shock.’ There was no medical officer on board the evacuation flights. The responsibility for the welfare of the patients in transit rested entirely on the RAAFNS sister. She also had final say on whether a patient was fit to fly, and according to RAAFNS Sister Cathie Daniel, the medical staff including the doctor on the ground in Korea, respected that decision. ‘You know, those early days, if you weren’t happy they took your word for it. If you felt that [the patient] wasn’t well enough to go they didn’t query it and that.’⁹⁵

In addition to accompanying patients on transit between Korea and Japan, the RAAFNS sisters also carried out escort duties between Japan and Australia, escorting Australian patients home. RAAFNS sisters would also occasionally accompany British patients as far as Singapore, where they would then hand over to British nursing sisters and enjoy some leave on the British base in Singapore.⁹⁶ The flights to Australia were run fortnightly through Qantas. Travelling conditions on the long flight were described as ‘adequate’ with the 27 to 30 hours flying time ‘tiring even for healthy individuals.’⁹⁷ Escort duty to Australia was long, exhausting work and unlike anything that the nurses performed in the civilian sector. This specialist nursing work was significantly different to that carried out by RAANC sisters and to the military nursing work of previous wars, with the exception of the RAAFNS sisters mentioned earlier who had participated in medical air evacuations towards the end of World War Two.

⁹⁵ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ ‘No. 91 Composite Wing Monthly Medical Report for Month of August 1952,’ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Reports – SMO [Senior Medical Officer], British Commonwealth Forces Korea, A705, 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA Canberra.

US flight nursing sisters also carried out medical air evacuations, with flying hours that averaged in excess of 300 a month in the early years of the war.⁹⁸ US flight sisters were also involved in the evacuation of 3,925 patients on the 5 December 1951, which was the 'Korean War's largest single-day medical airlift.'⁹⁹ The Australian air evacuation workload was less rigorous as there were fewer British Commonwealth casualties. Nevertheless RAAFNS sisters played an invaluable role in the medical treatment of British Commonwealth casualties in a work environment which was unlike anything they had experienced in the civilian sector.

For RAAFNS Sister Cathie Daniel the air evacuation work gave her nursing work an added purpose. In addition to caring and medical tasks, she felt her role on the medical air evacuation flights was particularly special, because she was playing a part in getting the casualties 'a little bit nearer to home.'

I can remember ... my feeling was to get them back to Japan, and then, that seemed to be number one and then get them back to Australia or back to England, because we were looking after a lot of the English. I think that, probably my biggest thing was, particularly once I was stationed, we set up the holding station at Kimpo airbase sort of thing, that was where you, you had the really, really sick ones. Then you had the ones that were bursting to get back. I sort of felt we were achieving something at that holding place.¹⁰⁰

There is a clear sense of pride in Cathie's reflections of her war work. She says that she felt they were 'achieving something' in acting as the bridge to home for the men they evacuated. Although not stationed near the frontline, Cathie nevertheless felt she was making a significant contribution to the war effort and the wellbeing of the soldiers.

⁹⁸ Witt et al., *'A Defense Weapon Known to Be of Value,'* 181.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁰⁰ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

Indeed the work of the nursing sisters in the Korean War exemplifies that significant war work is often carried out away from the front, not necessarily on the frontline. Nevertheless, those stationed at the BCCZMU from 1952 were in some danger, with air raid precautions in place. On 8 June 1953 the unit's war diary records that an 'Air raid sounded 2245 hrs heard bombs dropped in vicinity of this hospital unit. No casualties admitted. All clear 1130hrs.'¹⁰¹ The procedure during an air raid involved moving patients onto the floors, which was difficult given the hospital was under blackout conditions.¹⁰² Participation in air evacuation flights was also not without risk. No Australian nurses were killed in the Korean War, however the United States Air Force did suffer female casualties, losing three flight nurses on medical air evacuation flights.¹⁰³

One major event in which the RAAFNS sisters were closely involved was the evacuation of prisoners of war known as 'Operation Little Switch.' The handover began in April 1953 and was followed after the signing of the ceasefire by 'Operation Big Switch' during which the remaining POWs were exchanged between August and September 1953. RAAFNS Sister Gay Bury recalled that there was 'great excitement' when the first POWs were released, but recalled her encounter with the first group of POWs at the 121 US Evacuation hospital in Korea as a 'thoroughly eerie experience.'¹⁰⁴ Gay elaborated on the experience:

¹⁰¹ Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, June 1953, WO281/898, 377994, National Archives, Kew, England.

¹⁰² Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, December 1952, WO281/898, 377994, National Archives, Kew, England.

¹⁰³ Witt *et al.*, 'A Defense Weapon Known to Be of Value,' 218.

¹⁰⁴ Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service*, 307.

The ward was full of men, some lying on stretchers, some sitting and a few strolling about but, curiously enough, all had the same facial expression that reminded me of sleepwalkers; their eyes completely devoid of emotion. Only a few were on the thin side and these were suffering from various illnesses. The majority had obviously been given clean clothes and fattened up for the occasion.¹⁰⁵

Gay's reflections on the 'eerie' experience of meeting the POWs illustrates that while many of the day-to-day duties in a military hospital might be easily compared with the civilian sector, certain aspects of the work performed by Korean War nurses, including meeting recently released POWs, was unique to military nursing. A total of 12,757 United Nations casualties were repatriated from North Korea in this period.¹⁰⁶ The RAAFNS sisters were responsible for escorting British Commonwealth POWs back to Japan. In all they escorted 945 Commonwealth POWs from Korea to Japan.¹⁰⁷

Unlike their RAAFNS colleagues, RAANC women did not usually witness the POW evacuations. One exception to this was when RAANC Sister Nell Espie, who was stationed in Korea at the time, had the opportunity to witness one such handover. Watching the POWs cross the bridge across the parallel from North Korea she recalled seeing an expression of 'disbelief' on their faces.¹⁰⁸ Although she was not allowed to interact with the returned prisoners, it was a moment that she has never forgotten. Nursing personnel were not the only women involved in the event, in fact the opportunity for Nell to witness the handover was due to her friendship with a female Australian Red Cross worker. The Red Cross Field Force had sent field representatives to Korea, 'where they visited hospitals, distributed

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 307–308.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 217–218.

¹⁰⁷ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing, September 1953, A705 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁰⁸ Nell Espie, interview with author.

papers and magazines and handed comforts to the men.’¹⁰⁹ They were also involved in the POW handover.

The role of Australian nurses in the handover was emphasised quite strongly in the official images. The photographs shown below are samples from a collection of images taken on 21 April 1953, only the second day of ‘Operation Little Switch.’ The photographs document the role of RAAFNS sisters in escorting the Commonwealth POWs from Korea to Japan.



Figure 7 - Seoul (Yong Don P’ho) South Korea. 1953-04-21. RAAF Nursing Sister Cath Daniel talking to fighter pilot 2nd Lieutenant Reg Gasson of the South African Air Force who had the toes amputated from his right foot while a prisoner in North Korea. 2nd Lieutenant Gasson is one of the first group of prisoners of war to be exchanged.¹¹⁰



Figure 8 – Iwakuni, Japan. 1953-04-21. RAAF Nursing Sister Cath Daniel leaving the aircraft after the flight from Korea to Japan carrying a group of the first prisoners of war to be exchanged.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 103.

¹¹⁰ JK0718, AWM, Canberra.

¹¹¹ JK0720, AWM Canberra.



Figure 9 - Iwakuni, Japan. 1953-04-21. RAAF Senior Sister Helen Cleary gives an egg flip to one of the first group of prisoners of war to be exchanged.¹¹²

Figures 7 and 8 highlight the contribution of Sister Cathie Daniel. Figure 7 shows her with 2nd Lieutenant Reg Gasson, a fighter pilot with the South African Air Force, who was part of the first group of exchanged POWs. Figure 8 shows Cathie emerging from the aircraft following the evacuation. Finally, Figure 9 shows RAAFNS Sister Helen Cleary handing an ‘egg flip’ to a POW at the holding hospital at Iwakuni.¹¹³

The technical nature of the medical air evacuation work, and the efficiency with which the RAAFNS sisters had to move patients through the holding hospital at Iwakuni, is lost in the photographs. The nurses were represented in their traditional caring role in these images, ‘angels of mercy’ nursing the men back to health after their treatment at the hands of the enemy. Nevertheless, the fact that

¹¹² JK0722, AWM, Canberra.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, see caption.

the women are photographed suggests that the photographers took the significance of their role into account as they are part of the story of the return of the POWs.

Visually the photographs reflect themes of continuity and transition. Figures 9 and 10 show Sister Cathie Daniel in the relatively new role of air evacuation flight nurse. She is dressed in pants and a shirt, without the traditional veil and uniform, so the image emphasises the different role adopted by RAAFNS sisters. In contrast, Figure 11 is a more traditional image of a military nurse in uniform.

Despite the diverse duties the nurses performed, their experiences were linked by a common element—the patients they nursed. The men were a primary feature of many of the women's narratives. Through the medical evacuation procedure, Commonwealth casualties had contact first with RAAFNS sisters who accompanied them to Iwakuni and prepared them for transport to Kure. At Iwakuni casualties were handed over to an Army nursing sister to be transported by train to the BCGH in Kure where the patients would be cared for by Commonwealth Army nursing sisters, including RAANC sisters. Therefore, the RAAFNS had brief contact with all the Commonwealth patients whom the RAANC sisters eventually nursed in Kure. As they spent more time with the patients, the RAANC women formed closer attachments to their patients. From 1952 casualties first had contact with Army nursing sisters at the BCCZMU before being transported to Japan accompanied by RAAFNS sisters. Thus, despite the varied nature of service they shared an experience of nursing the same casualties.

This section has illustrated the complexities of the work performed by RAANC and RAAFNS women during the Korean War. An examination and comparison of the duties performed by the RAANC at the BCGH in Kure and the BCCZMU in Seoul has shown Japan as the centre of war work for the nurses, in spite of the fact that only those who served in Korea were counted as being on active service. A comparison of the duties of RAANC officers (sisters) and other ranks (nursing assistants) highlighted continuity in the work of other ranks with their predecessors in earlier wars, the AAMWS and the VADs. It also demonstrated the diversity in the work performed by Australian women at the BCGH. This diversity has been further reinforced through an exploration of the work of RAANC sisters at the BCCZMU and the unique contribution of RAAFNS sisters and in particular their work on air evacuation flights between Japan, Korea and Australia. Nathan Wise's examination of the work of World War One soldiers highlighted the continuities between work in the civilian and military worlds.¹¹⁴ The discussion of the nursing work has also shown such similarities as well as some tasks which were unique to war work. However, just as the frontline presented completely foreign challenges to the soldiers, nursing the wounds of those injured in combat made the experience of military nursing equally distinct from the nurses' civilian lives.

Continuities: Nursing the 'boys'

One element that made military nursing work different to nursing in the civilian sector and linked the RAANC and RAAFNS women, not only with each other, but also with military nurses of earlier generations, was their relationship with the

¹¹⁴ Wise, 'A Working Man's Hell,' 356.

wounded men. This section will highlight the ways in which these relationships demonstrate continuities with those between the nurses and patients of earlier wars. The nurses' accounts of their patients demonstrate the centrality of these men to their experience of war. While soldiers may recall the enemy, landscape and weapons, for the nurses the patients and their wounds are the central narrative of their stories. This tendency to prioritise the patients' stories over their own highlights the continuities with earlier generations of nurses, while other themes in their narratives, such as their fondness for the British patients, will reveal the particular context of nursing in the Korean War.

The RAANC sisters and nursing assistants who worked at Kure participated in the major surgery and spent the most time with the casualties. Patients could remain on the wards for weeks at a time and for some serious cases, months. As a result the RAANC sisters and nurses who worked in Japan were the most likely to personally connect with the patients. RAANC other rank nurse Gerry Roberts recalled specialling, for a number of weeks, a severely injured English patient whose skull had been crushed in a jeep accident.¹¹⁵ He remained in hospital for some months before eventually being medically evacuated home to England. Unfortunately throughout the time he spent in Kure the patient did not make a full recovery, and in Gerry's memory he 'was never any good.'¹¹⁶ Gerry was so moved by the patient she wrote to his family but was disappointed to never receive a response as she said she 'would have liked to have known what had happened, you know what type of life he had afterwards.'¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ 'Specialling' is a term used in the nursing profession to describe one-to-one patient care.

¹¹⁶ Gerry Roberts, interview with author.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The desire to communicate with the families of the soldiers they cared for was not unique to Korean War nurses. This was commonplace in earlier wars. World War One Sister Alice Kitchen, for example, wrote to the families of the men who had died in her care and would occasionally receive sad, but grateful replies.¹¹⁸ Working on the wards provided an opportunity to form personal connections with the patients which were often lost following the war. Yet the experience was not common to all RAANC personnel serving at the BCGH. For most of the time at BCGH Sister Nan (Nancy) Hummerston worked as a theatre sister and as a result did not get to know many of the patients personally. As she wore a face mask in theatre and the patients were under anaesthetic, their faces also covered, few opportunities for interaction presented themselves.¹¹⁹

One topic which ran through many of the nurses' narratives was the plight of the young British conscripts. Betty Hunt-Smith explained that while she had a fondness for the Australian soldiers 'because they were my countrymen' the 'British boys' made a particular impact on her 'because they were conscripts.'¹²⁰ It was the combination of youth and compulsory national service which affected the nurses. Shirley McEwen (now Bennetts) recalled being particularly vocal on the issue:

I used to feel very strongly that the Australians I knew were volunteers, or regular Army, the English were national service boys who were sent out. And you know when you get eighteen year olds in with some horrific wounds. I used to get on a bit of a soapbox about it. I couldn't change it. I couldn't fix it. But I could sound off about it. And we all did. We felt it quite strongly most of us.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Susanna De Vries, *Heroic Australian Women in War: Astonishing tales of Bravery from Gallipoli to Kokoda* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2004), 116.

¹¹⁹ Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

¹²⁰ Betty Hunt-Smith, interview with Bill Bunbury, 26 November 1998, S01910, AWM, Canberra.

¹²¹ Shirley Bennetts, interview with Bill Bunbury, 1998, S01904, AWM, Canberra, ACT.

Nursing the British conscripts prompted strong political sentiments for Shirley which would preview the fierce conscription debates of the Vietnam era. The issue of the British conscripts was raised more frequently, not just by Shirley but by other participants in the study, than other political issues such as justifications for the war itself, which concerned the Australian soldiers.¹²² For the nurses the hospital was their frontline and the British conscripts were sympathetic victims of the war. The connection with the British patients distinguishes the Korean War era women from their World War One and World War Two predecessors who tended to favour Australian patients, as they generally only nursed Australian men. World War One Australian Sister Narrelle Hobbes worked in the Queen Alexandria's Imperial Military Nursing Service and as a result nursed mainly British patients. Nevertheless, in her letters home she expressed a fondness for the Australian patients she encountered and would 'gently "lecture" her family about the virtues of the Australian men.'¹²³ The Korean War nurses were equally fond of the Australian soldiers, however Shirley's vignette indicates that, due to the conscription issue, the nurses had a particular fondness for the British patients.

The types of injuries suffered by the casualties varied, but overall they were, according to one RAANC sister, 'shocking ... Faces blown out, guts blown out, limbs blown off.'¹²⁴ Barbara Probyn Smith's more detailed description of the wounds suffered by casualties also highlights the disturbing nature of the wounds treated:

¹²² See Richard Trembath, *A Different Sort of War* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly, 2005), 140.

¹²³ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love: Narrelle—An Australian Nurse in World War I* (Sydney: ABC, 2006), 125.

¹²⁴ Nancy (Nan) Hummerston, interview with author, Launceston, Tasmania, 6 December 2007, tape in possession of author.

We treated thousands of casualties—sometimes those incoming Medical Convoys of sick and wounded seemed never ending. All manner of wounds we treated—ghastly explosive wounds—mines, grenade, shelling, mortar, bomb blast, gunshot, all kinds, the bullet, the bayonet wounds, and those horrific destroying burns and blast wounds—the crush wounds, the frost bite from the devastatingly cold Siberian winters with the inevitable mass gangrene. And the accompanying ravaging sickness from gross, cross infection.¹²⁵

Although all wounds were distressing, the injuries that stood out as particularly traumatic for many of the nurses were burns. Burns were particularly common in the Korean War due to the extreme cold on the Korean peninsula. One of the major reasons for the high incidence of burns was the explosion of improvised heating devices that the men created to combat the freezing conditions.¹²⁶ Many of the nurses commented on the devastating burns that they encountered when treating Korean War casualties. Perdita McCarthy described the severity of these injuries most effectively:

The real horrors of the Korean War were ‘brought home’ to me when I was allocated for duty in the burns ward of the Britcom Hospital in Kure ... Sadly, a number did die. Many were bandaged from head to foot, with only slits for their eyes and mouths, and were obviously in great pain, which we attempted to alleviate with whatever pain killers were available at the time.¹²⁷

Although she worked in Korea, Perdita highlighted her time working with the burns patients at the BCGH in Kure where she encountered ‘the real horrors’ of the Korean War. That the ‘horrors’ of the Korean War could be revealed in Japan so far removed from the front, is contrary to the traditional view of the war. In this way viewing the war from the medical perspective extends our understanding of

¹²⁵ Barbara Probyn Smith, ‘Sis’ unpublished manuscript, PA Box 58 01/144, State Library of Victoria.

¹²⁶ Betty Lawrence (née Crocker), interview with Rob Linn.

¹²⁷ Perdita McCarthy, ‘Lamp Ladies,’ in *Korea Remembered*, ed. Maurie Pears and Fred Kirkland (Georges Heights: Doctrine Wing Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 2002), 360.

the level of the trauma of war which by no means ends on the battlefield. Indeed RAANC other rank nurse Shirley McEwen, who nursed a number of burns patients in Japan, perceptively noted that in addition to the physical injury the burns had the potential to have ‘a big psychological effect’ on the patients.¹²⁸ The extent to which nursing seriously-injured patients had a traumatic effect on the nursing staff is difficult to ascertain, although RAANC other rank Gerry Roberts recalled that specialising one critically injured patient was ‘getting me down in the end.’¹²⁹

The issue of coping with the trauma of nursing critically injured casualties is one example of the continuities in the experiences of the Korean War nurses with those of other wars. When RAANC Sister Dulcie Thompson, who was Deputy Matron in charge of the Australian contingent at the BCGH in Kure, discussed how she and the nurses ‘coped’ with the trauma of nursing severely injured patients she suggested there was an element of disassociation involved:

I think there just is a time when you really are outside yourself. It’s like lots of other instances, there are times in life when you really do take second place. And that is the real you, it’s a strange feeling. That is what you are doing and you seem to have left a part of yourself aside.¹³⁰

Another strategy Dulcie implemented, as Deputy Matron, was to limit the time nurses spent with the burns patients as she felt ‘it was too much strain for the nurses to be with them for long periods.’¹³¹ Personally, Dulcie recalled that she

¹²⁸ Shirley Bennetts, interview with Bill Bunbury.

¹²⁹ Gerry Roberts (now Fleming), interview with author, Sefton, NSW, 31 May 2007, tape in possession of author.

¹³⁰ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

found her nursing training more traumatic, but felt that once she had finished her training she was better equipped to deal with difficult situations:

I think I found it much harder when I was training but having come to sick and dying children when I was training, it gave me a great deal of trauma. But you come to terms with that, at that stage in your [career] and I think afterwards it's the knowing what to do that is. If you get into a situation where you don't know what to do, or you are unable to do what you know should be done that is the traumatic situation.¹³²

In Dulcie's view, the process of becoming a professional nursing sister involved coping with trauma through disassociation. Furthermore, her view reflects an ideology of professional nursing which does not allow emotional fragility. Trained sisters are expected to cope with trauma as part of their professionalism. This view of the importance of disassociation for military nurses continued into the Vietnam War.¹³³

Another theme, which links the Korean War nurses with Australian military nurses of earlier wars, is the tendency for the women to prioritise in their personal narratives the experiences of the men they nursed in favour of their own feelings and experiences. Katie Holmes has argued that when discussing their patients in letters and diaries, the World War One nurses in her study 'heroised and sentimentalised them.'¹³⁴ This is also true of some of the Korean War nurses. Barbara Probyn Smith, whose unpublished manuscript 'Sis,' documents her experiences of nursing with the RAANC in the Korean War, dedicates much of

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Narelle Biedermann, *Tears on My Pillow* (Random House: Sydney, 2004), 103.

¹³⁴ Katie Holmes, 'Day Mothers and Night Sisters: World War I Nurses and Sexuality,' in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 46.

her manuscript to vignettes of the soldiers she nursed. One such vignette, ‘I remember you’ began with a focus on a burns patient:

You burns wounded—you with the terrible cries and screams as your horrific pain would break through the analgesic barrier. So brave you all tried to be as the constant, seemingly never ending treatment relentlessly tried that courage.¹³⁵

In many ways the focus on the soldiers suggests she could only define her experience of the Korean War in relation to the soldiers she nursed. This can be linked to the ambiguity of women on the battlefield. So Katie Holmes has argued that nurses in war occupied a ‘predominately masculine world’ thus making their status ambiguous.¹³⁶ Connecting their stories with the masculine experience may be one way women negotiate a space for their story in the broader masculine narrative of war. As the majority of the Korean War nurses’ time in Japan and Korea was spent nursing soldiers, the predominance of the men in their stories is simply a reflection of the amount of time the nurses spent with them. It is also reflective of the experience of military nurses in other conflicts.

Like the military nurses who preceded them, the Korean War nurses also had a tendency to refer to their patients as ‘boys.’¹³⁷ With the World War One nurses, Katie Holmes argued that ‘one of the most dominant ways nurses represented their patients was as ‘boys’ or ‘lads.’ In turn they represented themselves as their mothers. It was a way of defining a relationship.’¹³⁸ Although a number of interviewees for this study referred to their patients as ‘boys,’ RAANC Sister Marjorie Ford perhaps captured this spirit best when she commented fondly, ‘So

¹³⁵ Barbara Probyn Smith, ‘Sis’ unpublished manuscript, PA Box 58 01/144, State Library of Victoria.

¹³⁶ Holmes, ‘Day Mothers and Night Sisters,’ 46.

¹³⁷ See for example, Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love*, 89.

¹³⁸ Holmes, ‘Day Mothers and Night Sisters,’ 46.

anyway, lovely boys they were. Lovely young men. If you would've been the mother you would have been proud of them.'¹³⁹ Marjorie not only referred to her patients as 'boys' but she also explicitly adopted a maternal subjectivity when speaking of them. The nurses were generally older than their patients, but usually not old enough to be their mothers. The following image of Shirley McEwen, particularly the pose she adopts, suggests the same maternal subjectivity.



Figure 10 - Shirley McEwen, BCGH Kure Japan, circa 1952.¹⁴⁰

Shirley is standing in uniform on a ward at the BCGH in Japan with two recovering French Canadian patients, her hands gently resting on the beds. The stance is obviously posed but it is also somewhat protective, as she is standing slightly ahead of the men resting in their beds. Indeed one soldier attributed a maternal role to Shirley, telling her 'you remind me of my mother.'¹⁴¹ It is difficult to make any firm arguments about subjectivity based on a posed photograph. However, the posing of the photograph, with Shirley as the dominant figure, standing in the centre and the soldiers in more vulnerable positions lying

¹³⁹ Marjorie Ford, interview with author.

¹⁴⁰ Shirley McEwen collection.

¹⁴¹ Shirley Bennetts, interview with Bill Bunbury.

on their beds, inverts the ‘normal’ power relations between the genders in war. It is a strong visual representation of the ambiguous place of military nurses in the ‘masculine world of war.’¹⁴² The photo illustrates the power of the nurses in the hospital context. In the broader context of war women are on the periphery, but in the hospital they become the more dominant figures. This shift in power relations, which could be interpreted as emasculating, may explain why nurses and hospitals are so often absent from military discourse.

In contrast, many of the official photographs of nurses in Japan and Korea reflected traditional representations of nurses as ‘angels of mercy’ or the ‘feminine glamorous nurse.’¹⁴³ The following four images show RAANC and RAAFNS sisters and an other rank nurse with their patients.



Figure 11 - Private B. G. (Knobby) Tranter, a wounded soldier of the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR), and Lowanna, NSW, chats with Captain Perdita M. (Mac) McCarthy of Mt Isa, Qld, at the Britcom Medical Unit at Seoul. Captain McCarthy is matron of the hospital.¹⁴⁴



Figure 12 - Kure, Japan. 12 May 1955. A novel experience for Nurse Marjorie Orr of Brisbane, Qld, for her patient, Corporal Ted Smith of Hawthorn, Vic, is also on the staff of the hospital.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Katie Holmes, ‘Day Mothers and Night Sisters,’ 45.

¹⁴³ Heather Harper, ‘“Ministering Angels:” Australian Nurses and the Nightingale Image during World War II,’ Queensland Nursing History, One Day Conference *Queensland Nurses—At War and on the Home Front 1939–1945*, Saturday 5 August 1995, South Brisbane, 20.

¹⁴⁴ HOBJ4454, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁴⁵ HOBJ5724, AWM, Canberra.



Figure 13 - Iwakuni, Japan. 1953-08-06. Senior RAAF Nursing Sister Helen Cleary (Right) and Sister Pam Leahy (left) see to the comfort of a recently exchanged prisoner of war in the RAAF hospital Iwakuni. ¹⁴⁶



Figure 14 - Kure, Japan. 1954-12. British Officers in Ward 11, British Commonwealth General Hospital. The ward, which has few vacant beds, is staffed by Australians. Nurse F1/133 Private V. J. Bell is talking to a patient. ¹⁴⁷

Although the photographs in Figures 11 to 14 were taken at different times, in different locations, and by different photographers, there is a striking similarity in the way in which the nurses are pictured in the images. The overarching narrative portrayed through these photographs of nurses on the ward is caring for their boys. Their femininity tends to be emphasised over their professional activities. In all of the images the women are not looking at the camera, rather their eyes are downcast, focusing on the patient. This positions them as passive in the photograph, not engaging directly with the camera's gaze. Nevertheless, as in Figure 10, the women's dominance in the hospital setting is evident in the images. The photographs reflect the nursing experiences identified by the women interviewed for this thesis. The women are photographed with their patients, and the significance of the relationship between the nurses and the men they nursed is

¹⁴⁶ JK0959, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁴⁷ 107822, AWM, Canberra.

emphasised. The photographs depict the women as carers and companions, roles which had traditionally been associated with women and with which nurses like Shirley certainly identified. In depicting the nurses undertaking similar tasks, the photographs also disguise the diversity of their roles. Figures 11 and 12 show a RAANC officer and 'other rank' respectively, but the distinction in their rank and their role in the hospital is not clear.

Positioning the nurses in traditional roles, the official images served to reinforce gender boundaries in war. For example, the photograph in Figures 11 and 12 were taken by Phillip Hobson, who served as an Army public relations photographer in Japan and Korea during the Korean War.¹⁴⁸ It has been suggested that the Australian public was the intended audience for Hobson's photographs, distributed through newspaper and magazine circulation and with this in mind Hobson pictured soldiers 'in ways that emphasised their stoicism and industriousness.'¹⁴⁹ If Hobson's convention was to picture the soldiers in these particular ways, it seems he also chose to emphasise the women he photographed as caring and feminine. In both cases in highlighting particular traits for public consumption, soldiers as stoic and industrious and nurses as caring and feminine, gender stereotypes are reinforced and other aspects of the roles are obscured.

In addition to adopting a maternal subjectivity, some of the nurses could be quite protective of the reputations of their 'boys' as patients. In addition to battle injuries and severe burns, venereal disease (VD) was a common illness among the

¹⁴⁸ Australian War Memorial, 'Phillip Hobson,' in *Contact: Photographs and the Modern Experience of War*. <http://www.awm.gov.au/publications/contact/phillip-hobson.asp>. [accessed 6 February 2009].

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

BCOF troops and the Korean War soldiers, as it had been in earlier wars. Robin Gerster noted the public scandal in Australia caused by the 'vaulting rates of venereal disease in the Australian contingent' during the BCOF period.¹⁵⁰ The RAAF medical reports were particularly concerned with the spread and treatment of VD and reported the number of cases each month. In June 1952, to combat the increase, a detailed statement was issued on the various types of VD and the appropriate treatments. While VD was certainly a significant issue for medical personnel, it was also a taboo subject. While working at the CDS in Tokyo, Peg Nicholson prepared for the upcoming visit of an official's wife by assigning each patient an illness. She was relieved to discover the Minister's wife was 'very discrete and just said how nice to see you and do get better soon.'¹⁵¹ This suggests that perhaps the Minister's wife was aware that some illnesses may have been 'sensitive' subjects.

Although it was prevalent, the nurses did not treat patients with VD. This task was largely assigned to the male nursing orderlies. This decision may well have been made to protect the modesty of the afflicted patients, however the RAANC Matron-in-Chief's report seems to suggest other factors may have been in play. 'In view of the incidence of alcoholics, and of 'special' patients, it is considered that it is essential to have a male orderly coverage for (24) twenty-four hours a day.'¹⁵² There is an implied safety concern in the need to maintain 24-hour male orderly coverage, due to the alcoholics and 'special' patients, 'special' being a euphemism for VD. This suggests a traditional view of women

¹⁵⁰ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, 18.

¹⁵¹ Peg Webster, interview with Bassett.

¹⁵² Colonel E.J. Bowe, 'Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,' RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.

as needing to be protected from an unseemly illness. As Mary Spongberg has illustrated, the nineteenth century link between femininity, middle-class women and morality relied on the perception of the sexual purity of women.¹⁵³

In addition to staffing VD wards, male orderlies also worked alongside RAANC and RAAFNS nurses in other duties. Air evacuation trained Royal Air Force orderlies assisted RAAF nurses on flights.¹⁵⁴ As well as working on the wards at the BCGH and BCCZMU, male orderlies also worked alongside nurses on hospital trains between Iwakuni and Kure.¹⁵⁵ Australian military nurses had worked alongside orderlies in earlier conflicts. The working relationship, according to Dulcie Thompson, who worked with orderlies in both the Second World War and Korea, varied ‘depending on the situation and the personalities of the people.’¹⁵⁶

The discussion of the relationships between the nurses and their ‘boys’ has highlighted much continuity between the experiences of the Korean War nurses and those of the military nurses who served in previous wars. Their relationships with the men and the centrality of the patients in their narratives highlighted the continuities in the experience with that of nurses in earlier wars. The relationships between patients and the nurses and the role of nurses as companions and carers were also themes drawn upon in official photographs.

¹⁵³ Mary Spongberg, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse* (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 9.

¹⁵⁴ Dahl, ‘Air evacuation in war,’ 222.

¹⁵⁵ Nora Trethewie, interview with Bassett.

¹⁵⁶ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

Transitions

Although there were often continuities in the experience, there were some aspects of nursing in the Korean War which signalled a transition in military nursing. The shift to a corps prompted a different working culture with a stronger emphasis on military hierarchy which formalised distinctions between the other ranks and officers. There was also an increased focus on training and professional development which had not been evident in earlier conflicts.

One example of this changing culture was the creation of a formalised hierarchical system within the RAANC between the trained sisters as officers and the untrained other rank nursing assistants. The shift from a service to a corps, which took place in 1951, during the Korean War, prompted a different kind of working culture than the Australian nurses had experienced as a service, one which had a stronger emphasis on military procedure. As noted earlier in the chapter, the nursing assistants were previously part of the AAMWS and the earlier VADs. The AAMWS were disbanded and became the 'other ranks' of the RAANC. Dulcie Thompson, as an officer in charge of the Australian Army nurses in Japan felt this new regularisation of the nursing assistants position as 'other ranks' lead to some social difficulties and 'a lot of heartache.'¹⁵⁷ That there was a distinction between nursing assistants and trained sisters was not unusual, as the nursing training system was itself highly hierarchical. Additionally, in earlier wars the untrained nurses had previously been separated into their own service, first as unpaid voluntary aids, then as members of the AAMWS. The incorporation of the

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

untrained nurses into the RAANC is indicative of the complexities of this transitional period. Despite the fact that the female nursing assistants were now included in the same service as the trained sisters, they remained segregated by the military hierarchy.

One way in which the hierarchy was enforced was through living arrangements. RAANC other ranks had separate mess facilities and living quarters. Officers were housed in 24 single rooms, while the other ranks sleeping quarters had 12 single and 12 double rooms. Officers each had one Japanese house girl to every two women, and one house girl to every four other ranks.¹⁵⁸ When on duty, other ranks were assigned the task of preparing the evening meal for the sisters on duty. The other rank nurses would then eat their meals in the other ranks' mess.¹⁵⁹ This segregation was problematic because there were so few women living in Japan overall. Separating the women through rank served to further fragment the group.

The relationship between the RAANC officers and other ranks is difficult to assess, but we can glean information through sources such as private photographs. The following photograph, from RAANC other rank Gerry Robert's private collection, is a snapshot of a moment between Gerry and RAANC Sister Mackey on a ward at the BCGH.

¹⁵⁸ Colonel E.J. Bowe, 'Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,' RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.

¹⁵⁹ Gerry Roberts, interview with author.



Figure 15 - Gerry Roberts (left) with RAANC Sister Mackey on the ward at the BCGH, Kure, Japan, circa 1953-1955.¹⁶⁰

In this image there is a notable difference in the uniform worn by Gerry (on the left), who was an ‘other rank’ nursing assistant and the RAANC nursing sister (on the right). While the dress appears similar, the veil worn by Gerry is noticeably shorter and smaller than that worn by the sister, it even appears to have less starch! This is one form of evidence of the hierarchy within the RAANC at the time. The shorter veil indicated an untrained nursing assistant, or other rank, while the longer veil was reserved for the sisters, trained registered nurses and officers. Thus, the hierarchy was distinguishable through the uniform. This was not the first time uniforms had been used to distinguish hierarchy in Australian military nursing. Before World War Two the uniforms of the Red Cross VAs were changed from white to blue ‘in order to prevent confusion’ between trained nursing sisters and the VAs.¹⁶¹ This representation of nursing hierarchy through uniforms is also consistent with Rima Apple’s findings in her study of images of nurses in the United States. Apple argues that in the photographs she examined

¹⁶⁰ Gerry Roberts, collection.

¹⁶¹ Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VAs*, 71.

the 'women's different uniforms and their positions relative to the patient and physicians' could reveal 'the hierarchical structure of the nursing staff.'¹⁶² While the hierarchy was becoming more formalised through the use of rank, this evidence indicates consistency with earlier military nursing traditions such as the representation of hierarchy through uniforms.

Photographs also have the potential to reveal relationships between the subjects of an image.¹⁶³ The image of Gerry Roberts and Sister Mackey reveals evidence of the hierarchy in the RAANC as represented by the uniform but also gives some indications of relationships within that hierarchy. It appears that the sister is gently persuading Gerry to be photographed. Gerry's smile and their body language suggest a friendship between the two women. This kind of evidence of interaction and relationships within the RAANC is not readily available through other sources. Official reports may note a general collegiality between staff but the intimate details are lost. The evidence of intimacy provided by photographs may well be subjective and hence a potential hazard in historical research, but in images such as the one above, the insight provided into the relationship between the two women is information that cannot be readily attained through other sources. In addition to revealing insights into the relationship between the two women, the image also contains concrete evidence of the equipment used in the wards. In this photograph a patient's bed is clearly visible. From the image it is clear that the beds used were metal, single beds and that sheets and blankets were

¹⁶² Rima Apple, 'Image or Reality? Photographs in the History of Nursing,' in *Images of Nurses: Perspectives from History, Art and Literature*, ed. Anne Hudson Jones (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 51.

¹⁶³ Robert Levine, *Images of History: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Latin American Photographs as Documents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), x.

used as bedding. Such descriptive details help to enhance our understanding of the everyday life of the patients and nurses in Japan.

According to Dulcie Thompson, relationships between the Australian sisters and other ranks were 'on the whole very good.' However, as noted earlier, the change to a corps meant the distinction in rank between officers and other ranks was enforced, making it more difficult for the two groups to interact off the wards.¹⁶⁴ The sisters, who were officers, interviewed for the thesis did not speak in any depth about the other rank nurses they encountered and this silence in itself an indication of the limited relationship between the two groups of women.

The change from a service to a corps not only promoted a more formalised hierarchy but a new focus on professionalism within the RAANC. As was outlined in chapter two, the newly formed RAANC focused its recruiting efforts on promoting itself as a long-term career opportunity for women, encouraging women to join the RAANC for a career and not simply to support a war effort. The new focus on career development led to an increased interest in encouraging professional development within the RAANC for the officers and other rank nursing assistants. One opportunity the incorporation of the two groups provided was the supervision of other ranks by the nursing sisters who were the officers of the group. Betty Crocker recalled with pride her role as the officer in charge of four other ranks on the journey to Japan, referring to them as 'my crew.'¹⁶⁵ Shirley McEwen was one of the other ranks in Betty's charge. The following

¹⁶⁴ Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

¹⁶⁵ Betty Crocker, interview with author.

photograph, from Shirley's collection, shows Shirley and the other nurses, alongside Betty and Matron Bowe. It was taken prior to leaving for Japan.



Figure 16 – Shirley McEwen (front left), Betty Crocker (front right), Matron Bowe (front centre), with RAANC other ranks prior to departure for Japan, circa 1952.¹⁶⁶

The focus on training other ranks in Japan was particularly strong. A number of professional development initiatives were implemented at the BCGH in Kure, ranging from lectures and educational visits to broader work opportunities. One example of this was the opportunity to work as an assistant in theatre. In her 1954 report Colonel Bowie noted the value of such an opportunity. 'At present one officer and one other rank RAANC are included in the theatre team in order to gain more experience and training in this highly specialised work. This is a very satisfactory arrangement.'¹⁶⁷ Gerry Roberts was one other rank who spent time in the theatre. The following image, one of her personal photographs, shows her (the centre subject) keenly observing an operation.

¹⁶⁶ Shirley McEwen collection.

¹⁶⁷ Colonel E.J. Bowe, 'Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,' RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.



Figure 17 – Operating theatre, Kure, Japan, circa 1953-1955.¹⁶⁸

It is interesting to note that Gerry and the other observers are the focus of this photograph, suggesting perhaps that the observation itself was of interest to the photographer, not the operation. It is also possible that the operation was too graphic to be photographed. The experience was significant to Gerry, who pointed out in our conversation about the image the swabs on the rack in the background of the photograph which, as mentioned earlier, she was required to count at the end of the operation. The task itself, counting swabs, was not particularly specialist, but observing and participating in theatre work was nevertheless a valuable learning experience.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, RAANC Sister Betty Crocker also worked in theatre. Betty recalled that the high theatre workload meant that occasionally a theatre sister was given extra responsibilities, which allowed her to develop specialist skills:

And because there was such a shortage of doctors, the operating theatre in Japan had four tables in a row, one room, four tables in a row, and the senior surgeons—

¹⁶⁸ Gerry Roberts, collection.

there were two senior surgeons—used to go from one table to the other, and sometimes they were so busy with something more serious they would leave the theatre sister to do the final suturing, which was something you never did in civilian life ... So you really became not just the theatre sister, you became more or less an assistant surgeon, you had no choice, you just had to do those things. And you had to do a lot of things that you had never done before.¹⁶⁹

For Betty, working in theatre gave her the opportunity to learn and practice new skills which she would not have carried out in a civilian theatre.

RAANC other ranks were also given formal training by RAANC sisters such as Captain Elms who carried out training based on cases being nursed in the wards. Nurses were also ‘taken in small groups’ to observe the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission unit in Hiroshima.¹⁷⁰ It seems that this training opportunity was reciprocal as in July 1955 Captain Elms showed a group of Japanese trainee nurses around the BCGH.¹⁷¹ The training of other ranks had the dual benefit of enhancing the teaching skills of the RAANC officers, such as Captain Elms, who conducted the training. The opportunities for knowledge sharing across cultures will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Service in Japan clearly provided learning opportunities for nursing assistants and sisters that were not generally available in the civilian sector. The stronger emphasis on training in the RAANC was also evident back in Australia. The shift to a more military culture prompted the introduction of basic training and indoctrination courses for new recruits. In turn, sister tutors were appointed from within the RAANC to carry out the training.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ Betty Lawrence, interview with Linn.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Monthly Report, RAANC NCOs & OR,’ 5 September 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁷¹ ‘Monthly Report, RAANC Officers,’ 9 August 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁷² History of the AANS 1939–1945, MT 1131/1/2, A290/2/40, NAA, Melbourne.

The RAANC was also keen to have the other ranks nursing assistant skills recognised in civilian hospitals. In pursuit of this aim, certificates were issued which would ‘provide members with some tangible proof of their employment efficiency which may be used in seeking civilian employment after discharge from the Army.’¹⁷³ The training certificates were recognised by the Victorian, Western Australian and Tasmanian health departments ‘entitling the holder to enrolment as a Qualified Nursing Aide’ in civilian hospitals.¹⁷⁴ The policy of training and professional development appeared to have positive effects for a number of other ranks who applied for an early discharge in order to pursue nursing as a career. In September 1955, RAANC other ranks Privates Devine, Healey and Cooper and Corporal Kelly all requested permission to be released early in order to enter nurse training school. After some consideration the RAANC took a positive view of such requests and allowed the discharge of other ranks ‘prior to the completion of their engagement to take up nursing training provided the member can produce satisfactory evidence that her application for training at a civil nursing school has been accepted.’ The reasoning behind this decision was simple:

As the Army’s only source of supply for officers of the RAANC is from the civil nursing pool, it is considered desirable to assist in the build up of this pool where possible and to encourage ex-RAANC other ranks, who take up nursing, to rejoin the RAANC as an officer after graduation.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ ‘Qualification Certificates for Nursing Orderlies RAANC – ARA,’ 30 December 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Query re question of discharge of OR personnel of RAANC so they may enter civilian hospitals, July 1953, MP927/1, A251/5/54, NAA, Melbourne.

The focus on training the RAANC other ranks exemplifies the transition of the RAANC in the Korean War period. As the first war for the newly formed corps, the Korean War provided opportunities to put in practice the new career orientated focus of the RAANC. Military nursing was no longer a primarily patriotic war effort, it was becoming a career.

For the RAAFNS, on the other hand, the Korean War was the first conflict in which RAAFNS sisters participated in air evacuations throughout the conflict. Sister Pat Leeming, who served with the RAAFNS in Korea and Japan from November 1951 to March 1953, logged 684 flying hours during her service. These hours were 'typical of other sisters working during that period.'¹⁷⁶ The Senior Medical Officer of the 91 Composite Wing was so impressed with the training potential of this experience he recommended a higher turnover of sisters:

In view of the experience gained in medical air evacuation in this theatre, it is recommended that the present twelve-month tour for members of the RAAFNS be reduced to enable a greater turnover. A tour of nine months is tentatively suggested.¹⁷⁷

It is not clear whether this recommendation was adopted, however the comment does suggest that the Korean War provided sisters in the RAAFNS similar professional development opportunities to those of the RAANC.

There is also evidence to suggest that RAAFNS sisters were assigned significant responsibility in the absence of a Medical Officer. In January 1955 the Senior Medical Officer of the RAAF medical wing left Japan and the medical care of the

¹⁷⁶ Patricia Oliver, 'Blue Capes,' 387.

¹⁷⁷ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing, November 1952, A705 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA, Canberra.

wing was transferred to the United States Navy medical authorities. As a result of this decision it was recommended that:

the R.A.A.F. medical section should retain its identity and all patients will first be interviewed by the sisters. Those patients with minor illnesses will be treated by the sisters without reference to the Americans. All others will be seen by U.S. doctors.¹⁷⁸

The departure of the Australian Medical Officer, and the desire to maintain some of the wing's identity, allowed the RAAFNS sisters some independence in their nursing duties. The opportunity to treat minor illnesses without reference to the medical officer was a responsibility that was not as readily available in the civilian sector. It is unlikely that this decision was made in order to enhance the professional development opportunities of the RAAFNS sisters, rather it seems to have been made in the interests of keeping some degree of control over the medical treatment of the RAAF personnel.

Maxine Dahl has documented one instance in which a RAAF sister took the opportunity to work well outside the traditional boundaries of military nursing. On at least five separate occasions during August 1950 Sister Joan Mills acted as co-pilot in C47 aircraft for her then boyfriend (and later husband) F/Lt Dave Hitchins on flights between Iwakuni and Korea. This informal role was 'a notable example of a nurse moving outside of her quite strictly regulated role to become an aircrew member on operational sorties.'¹⁷⁹ This certainly could not be counted as formal

¹⁷⁸ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing, December 1954, A705 132/2/866 Part 1, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁷⁹ Dahl, 'Air Evacuation in War,' 216–217.

professional development, but certainly suggests that RAAF sisters serving in Korea benefited from their close relationship with RAAF air crew.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the nursing work of the RAANC and RAAFNS women who served in the Korean War and in doing so provides a new insight into forgotten aspects of a 'forgotten war.' A broader picture of Australia's participation in the Korean War is revealed through the nursing perspective, and Japan emerges as a place of significance in Australia's Korean War history. The chapter has revealed the blurred boundaries of the war for the Australian nurses as well as their ambiguous status as participants. These blurred boundaries included the crossover with the BCOF period, and the ambiguity of the status of those stationed in Japan. By examining the medical work of nurses, which continued after the signing of the truce in 1953, highlights the fact that the participation of Australian forces did not end until 1956. An analysis of the work carried out by Australian nurses in Japan and Korea also reveals the diverse nature of their experiences. The nursing work performed differed significantly, particularly depending on location, service, and for the RAANC women their status as either officers or other rank nursing assistants. The RAAFNS sisters played a vital role in the evacuation of Commonwealth casualties, which could not have been successfully completed without them. However, as a result, they spent little time with the casualties. The RAANC sisters and other ranks serving in Japan performed more long-term nursing work, overseeing the recovery of patients from surgery until they were well enough to be transported home. Analysis of the nursing work performed in Japan and Korea also highlighted continuities between

civilian nursing and the nursing work performed in earlier wars. The relationships with their patients also linked the Korean War nurses with their earlier military nursing counterparts. The tendency to refer to the patients as ‘boys’, for example, and emphasise the courage and strength of their patients was a trait which can be linked to their World War One and World War Two predecessors.

Although there were certainly continuities with earlier military nursing experiences, this chapter has provided evidence to suggest that the Korean War also signified a transitional era for military nursing. As chapter two demonstrated, with the change to a corps in 1951 the RAANC re-packaged itself as a career option for Australian nurses. No longer was military nursing a temporary opportunity to contribute to a specific war effort, it was becoming a career in itself. The Korean War provided a number of opportunities for professional development. This was particularly the case for the RAANC other ranks. The Korean War was also the first large-scale fly-in, fly-out war and as a result the RAAFNS sisters gained extensive medical evacuation experience. Furthermore, the final section of the chapter demonstrates that despite these changes, official photographers tended to portray the women in traditional ways as ‘angels of mercy’ rather than as skilled professionals. Having examined the complexities of work in Korea and Japan this thesis will now turn to an analysis of the cultural dimensions of Korean War service for Australian nurses.

CHAPTER FOUR:
‘A Different World’:
Cultural Interactions in Japan and Korea

‘[The] army’s a different world I think. Or [the] services, is a different world to civilian life.’¹

Reflecting on her time in Japan during both the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) and Korean War periods, Nancy (Nan) Hummerston described life in the army as being ‘a different world to civilian life.’² The differences and similarities between nursing work in the civilian and military worlds were examined in the previous chapter. This chapter seeks to explore other ways in which the military and civilian spheres differed from life in Australia. The major distinction between life in Australia and Japan and Korea was that service in Japan and Korea was a profoundly new cultural experience for the women interviewed. From the restrictions and regulations of life in the services, the interactions with personnel from other Commonwealth nations in an integrated unit, the opportunity to act as tourists in off duty time, to the limited contact with Japanese and Korean civilians, the nurses were confronted with what was in many ways a ‘different world.’ For many, like Betty Hunt Smith, the experience of living and working in this different world was dramatically different to her earlier life experiences, ‘[it was] an eye opener ... I saw how people really have to work,

¹ Nancy (Nan) Hummerston, interview with author, 6 December, 2007, Launceston, Tasmania, tape in possession of author.

² *Ibid.*

and I think it changed my life.’³ This chapter will explore the ways in which daily interactions with people from various cultures was potentially life changing for Australian nurses during the Korean War period.

The confrontation with new cultures was not unusual for Australian military nurses serving overseas and the parallels between the Korean War nurses’ experience and that of earlier nurses will also be explored in this chapter. Examining these parallels and differences serves to place the experiences of Korean War nurses in the broader context of Australian military nursing history. In doing so a clearer picture of the traditions of service, common elements of experience and developments in Australian military nursing history will be elucidated. This chapter also seeks to extend the knowledge of the broad Australian experience of the Korean War. While there is a growing body of literature on the Korean War, as outlined in chapter one, only a few texts detail the cultural interactions between Australian personnel and the Japanese. The focus in these studies however, tends to be from a male perspective and they are also mostly limited in scope to the BCOF era and do not include Korea. For example, Carolyne Carter and Robin Gerster both provide strong cultural and social analysis of the cultural interactions of BCOF personnel with the Japanese, however their analysis does not extend to the Korean War period and thus excludes any account of the interactions with Korean civilians.⁴ This chapter

³ Betty Hunt Smith, interview with Bill Bunbury, 26 November 1998, S01910, Australian War Memorial (AWM), Canberra.

⁴ Carolyne Carter, ‘Between War and Peace: The Experience of Occupation for Members of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, 1945-1952’ (PhD thesis, Australian Defence Force Academy, 2002). Robin Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine: Australia and the Occupation of Japan* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008). Richard Trembath has also provided an analysis of the cultural experience of the Korean War, see particularly chapter five, Richard Trembath, *A Different Sort of War: Australians in Korea 1950-53* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2005), 117-144. For a female perspective of the BCOF experience see, Roma Donnelly, ‘A Civilising Influence?’

extends that focus, to an analysis of the cultural experience of life in the Korean War from a female perspective. It includes an examination of the interactions not only with Japanese and Korean civilians but also between the Australian nurses and other Commonwealth and United States personnel.

The chapter will first detail the women's reactions to military life and its rules and regulations, followed by an analysis of their off duty time, including their social activities and experience as 'tourists' on leave. It will then examine the interactions between Australian nurses and their British Commonwealth and United States counterparts. Finally, the chapter will turn to a discussion of the limited contact between Australian nurses and the Japanese and Korean civilian population.

Rules and Regulations

As members of the military in a foreign country the women of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC), and the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) lived a highly monitored and regulated life. Although the military rules they encountered were new to them, the strict hierarchy of the military was something with which most had already become familiar in their civilian nursing careers. As discussed in chapter two, the civilian nursing service during this period promoted a hierarchical culture which was mirrored in the military hierarchy. The world of hierarchy, rank and observation was therefore not new to the women who had been trained in this system, although it may have

Women in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan 1946-1952' (Masters thesis, Swinburne Institute of Technology, 1994).

been new to some of the untrained other rank nursing assistants who had not experienced the civilian training system. Nevertheless, despite the similarities, life in Japan and certainly Korea, military nursing was more restricted than the civilian world of nursing.

One example of the restrictions placed on the nurses was that off duty behaviour of the nurses was closely monitored. In order to leave the hospital grounds nurses were required to sign in and out, and for extended travel obtain a leave pass.⁵ During their civilian training nurses were required to 'live in', so having their day to day lives monitored was not unlike civilian conditions. However, there were further restrictive elements which the women had not experienced in Australia. One such restriction was the requirement that while outside the hospital grounds RAANC women were required to wear their 'walking out' uniform. This irritated some of the nurses, as it was less comfortable than civilian clothes. RAANC Sister Nell Espie recalled that, 'we always had to wear our uniform when we were on leave, which was a bit of a nuisance.'⁶ By 1955 these restrictions were relaxed and RAANC Sisters were allowed to wear civilian clothes on leave, but other ranks were additionally required to carry an 'authority to wear civilian clothes' form.⁷

Other regulations related to eating the local food. Dorothy Wheatley recalled a labelling system in which local restaurants were rated either A, B or C. It was

⁵ Gerry Roberts (now Fleming), interview with author, Sefton, New South Wales, 31 May 2007 tape in possession of author.

⁶ Nell Espie, interview with author, Oatlands, Tasmania, 5 December 2007, tape in possession of author.

⁷ Capt H F Dore, 'Routine Orders Part I,' 24 August, 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra

recommended that Commonwealth personnel only eat at 'A' restaurants, as the others were considered a health risk.⁸ These restrictions were instituted during the BCOF era as a result of the acute food shortages in Japan and the risk of disease from the use of human excreta as fertiliser. The water supply was also heavily chlorinated due to pollution.⁹ A number of the nurses, who served throughout the BCOF and Korean War periods commented on these food restrictions. Both RAANC Sister Georgina Robinson who served in Japan in the BCOF period and Dorothy Wheatley who served later in the war mentioned the issue.¹⁰ Whether it was the case or not it seems that the dominant view of the health restrictions was that much of the fresh food was unsafe to eat.

In most cases these regulations monitored rather than restricted the movements of nurses in Japan, but those who served in Korea found their movements more openly restricted. Japan was not an area of active combat, but Korea, at least until 27 July 1953 was a different matter. As a result the movements of RAANC and RAAFNS Sisters who served in Korea were severely restricted. In order to leave the British Commonwealth Communications Zone Medical Unit (BCCZMU) compound, sisters were required to have an armed male escort. This was a continuation of a policy which was common in the Australian military. For example, during World War Two sisters serving in Morotai 'were only allowed out of the hospital area in groups of at least seven with seven armed escorts,

⁸ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author, 7 January 2008 Sydney, New South Wales, tape in possession of author.

⁹ Donnelly, 'A Civilising Influence,' 20-21.

¹⁰ Georgina Robinson, interview with author, 24 April 2008, Melbourne, Victoria, tape in possession of author. Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author.

because of the presence of Japanese.’¹¹ Sisters in earlier wars had faced similar restrictions. For example, World War One Sister Narrelle Hobbes commented to her family on the frustration at the restrictions placed upon nurses, claiming that with all the rules imposed she ‘might just as well be in a convent.’¹² The restrictions were also not unique to Commonwealth women, with US nurses in Korea also required to have an escort.¹³ Blackouts, transport problems and long duty rosters made leaving the compound for social activities difficult.¹⁴ However, occasionally the nurses found ways around these restrictions, as Marjorie Ford explained:

We weren’t allowed to go out without an escort. We couldn’t go down the street or anything, because we were female. So we used to find out who was going, what blokes were going on leave, station yourself at the front gate and say ‘I’m going out with you.’ And they’d say, ‘well get lost when we get down the street.’¹⁵

As women, the nurses were officially more restrained but as this comment suggests they did not necessarily always accept the restrictions. Although leaving the compound was difficult there were opportunities. As detailed in chapter three, Nell Espie was given special permission to witness a Prisoner of War handover.¹⁶ RAAFNS Sister Nathalie Oldham recalled that while opportunities to socialise in Korea were ‘rare’ she was invited to the Officers Club at the United States (US)

¹¹ Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing From the Boer War to the Gulf War*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), 170.

¹² Melanie Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love: Narrelle – An Australian Nurse in World War I* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2006), 114.

¹³ Linda Witt *et al.*, ‘A Defense Weapon Known to be of Value:’ *Servicewomen of the Korean War Era* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005), 211.

¹⁴ Nathalie Wittmann, ‘Wot’s Up, Doc?’ in *Korea Remembered*, ed. Maurie Pears and Fred Kirkland (Georges Heights: Doctrine Wing Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 2002), 392.

¹⁵ Marjorie Ford, interview with author, 23 April 2008, Melbourne, tape in possession of author.

¹⁶ Nell Espie, interview with author.

121 Evacuation Hospital in Seoul ‘on a couple of occasions.’¹⁷ After the armistice there was slightly more freedom of movement, and a number of the nurses volunteered their time working with the South Korean community, and these interactions will be outlined later in this chapter. Overall, however life in Japan and Korea while on military service for the RAAFNS and RAANC nurses was far more restricted than in civilian life.

In addition to observing their movements the monthly and annual administrative reports written by the Australian Matron of the BCGH and sent to the RAANC Matron in Chief (which detailed hospital admissions and staff activities) suggest that the personal lives of the nurses were also monitored closely. For example, the February 1955 monthly report for the RAANC other ranks recorded that ‘Pte Roberts, G.C, has announced her engagement to A/B of HMAS *Shoalhaven*.’¹⁸ Matron in Chief E.J. Bowe’s 1954 report of her official visit to Japan and Korea was particularly complementary of the RAANC supervising Officers whom she noted, ‘take a personal interest in the welfare of the girls both on and off duty.’¹⁹ The Australian Matron of the British Commonwealth General Hospital in Kure was required to complete Annual Officers Reports on the nurses in her charge. These reports assessed the professional capabilities of the nurses, including among others, ‘response to pressure, judgement, knowledge of the work, paperwork and leadership.’ The reports also assessed ‘appearance’ which while an acceptable professional standard, suggests that the personal was connected to the professional. The appearance of one officer was described as ‘slightly

¹⁷ Wittmann, ‘Wot’s Up, Doc,’ 392.

¹⁸ T Cunningham, ‘Monthly Report: RAANC NCOs & Ors,’ 8 February 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra

¹⁹ Colonel E.J. Bowe, ‘Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,’ RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.

flamboyant.²⁰ Other reports noted the social attributes of the officers, describing one officer as having a ‘naturally forthright manner ... tempered with good humour.’²¹ In another report the nursing officer in question was critiqued for familiarity, ‘impulsive and a little thoughtless, will be a more useful officer when she learns to distinguish between friendliness and familiarity.’²² RAANC Sister Dorothy Wheatley’s naturally introverted personality also attracted comment in an Annual Report, ‘... though naturally rather retiring in social life - she willingly does her share.’²³ The comment suggests that the off-duty time of the women was actively observed by their supervising officers. Furthermore, the comment ‘she willingly does her share’ implies that the nurses were to some extent obligated to participate in social activities. These social obligations will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The extent to which the women were aware of these personal judgements is unclear. No mention of the reports were made in their interviews to the author, suggesting they were unaware of them or had forgotten in the intervening years. However there is some evidence to indicate that they may have been aware of the comments which were made about them in their individual Annual Reports. Some years later Nell, in a 1964 Annual Report, was criticised for being too ‘severe’ with her subordinates. By this stage Nell was a career army nurse and was not only aware of the critique but was given the opportunity to respond. Her response

²⁰ ‘Annual Confidential Report- Officers,’ 30 June 1954, Probyn Smith, B.A, B2458, F159, NAA, Melbourne.

²¹ ‘Annual Confidential Report- Officers,’ 30 June 1954, Le-Rougetel, Dulcie M, B2458, F2306, NAA, Melbourne.

²² ‘Annual Confidential Report- Officers,’ June 1953, Hawker, Beryle, B2458, F38, NAA, Melbourne.

²³ ‘Annual Confidential Report- Officers,’ 30 June 1955, Wheatley, Dorothy, B2458, F2420, NAA, Melbourne.

cited the 'tradition of the corps' and its high standards which she felt should be maintained even at the cost of some friction. 'While maintaining this standard one perhaps cannot avoid some friction, especially in the circumstances mentioned, when managing subordinates.'²⁴ Nell was not only aware of the criticism, she was capable of challenging it and did so convincingly.

Another aspect of military life which was beginning to be enforced during the Korean War was the requirement that nurses participate in parade marches. As noted in chapter two, nurses who joined the RAANC were required to undertake a training course which included instruction on parade marches. However, Nell, who joined the army just prior to the transition to a corps, had not participated in the military training and recalled that many of her RAANC colleagues in Japan were equally unfamiliar with the procedure. This apparently baffled the more military orientated Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) Sisters, 'Because the QA's couldn't understand us you know. We'd have to go on parade, we wouldn't know what to do.'²⁵ In fact, in Nell's memory the RAANC women were so averse to parade marches, when called upon to participate in an Anzac Day parade march organised by the British they 'wiggled out of that' receiving orders to be elsewhere on the grounds in order to avoid the march.²⁶ Nell's account suggests that the transition to a more military focus within the RAANC was not a completely smooth process.

²⁴ 'Annual Confidential Report- Officers,' 31 July 1964, Nell Espie, B2458, F64, NAA, Melbourne.

²⁵ Nell Espie, interview with author.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

The regulations and monitoring of their personal lives in Korea and to a lesser extent in Japan, was a new experience for the nurses interviewed. Although the civilian nursing sector was similarly hierarchical the women had not experienced such close observation and governance of their personal lives. These restrictions were consistent with those which had been placed upon earlier generations of military nurses, as such the culture shock experienced by the Korean War nurses reflected continuities with the past.

Social Life

Social life in Japan and Korea was far more contained than civilian life. The available social circle for the women was limited to military personnel and often segregated by rank. Further, to some extent social life in Japan and Korea was also shaped by military directives and formally organised events. As detailed earlier, the RAANC reports indicate that there was, to some extent, an expectation for the women to participate in social activities in their off-duty time, especially entertaining visiting dignitaries. The underlying ideology behind this requirement stemmed from the, largely unsuccessful, anti-fraternisation policy which strongly discouraged BCOF and subsequently British Commonwealth Forces Korea (BCFK) troops interacting with the civilian population. Australian women serving in Japan were expected to be a 'civilising influence' on the men and a deterrent for interactions with Japanese women 'who were often represented as an unwholesome, immoral attraction.'²⁷ The Australian women were therefore expected to attend dances and socialise with their troops.²⁸ This expectation

²⁷ Carter, 'Between War and Peace,' 239.

²⁸ Donnelly, 'A Civilising Influence,' 131.

continued into the Korean War period. Although not specifically ordered to attend social events, notices of these events often strongly encouraged attendance. For example, the March 1952 announcement of the BCOF versus BCFK football final stated, 'All ranks of BritCom General Hospital not actually on duty are expected to be present to support their team.'²⁹ Other requests for participation were less strongly worded. The announcement of an all ranks dance to be held in the British Other Ranks dining hall on Friday 27 June 1952 to which female other ranks and nursing officers were invited noted 'Everybody is requested to make every effort to be at the dance.'³⁰ While not explicitly ordered to participate in social events this evidence suggests that nurses were strongly encouraged to devote some of their off duty time to unit activities. Thus, their 'free time' was not always free.

These social obligations were not new to women serving in the male dominated world of war. Patsy Adam-Smith, for example, noted the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS) serving in Port Moresby during World War Two, 'were naturally popular with the troops. A special club was built at Port Moresby; there and elsewhere they could go swimming, picnicking and dancing.'³¹ The Red Cross Voluntary Aides who assisted in the repatriation of prisoners of war on board the *Glory* also accepted social duties as part of their role, interacting with 'men who had not seen a European woman for years.'³²

²⁹ 'Routine Orders,' 12 March 1952, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

³⁰ 'Routine Orders,' 25 June 1952, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

³¹ Patsy Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1996), 145

³² Melanie Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay: Australian Civilian Volunteers in War* (Walcha: Ohio Productions, 2002), 201.

Some of the formally organised events for those stationed in Kure included activities such as Bingo every Thursday night at the Kure Officers Club, movies screened on the wards every few nights and concert parties.³³ Carolyne Carter has noted the authorities' belief that the presence of British Commonwealth women in Japan 'would normalise the artificial military environment and provide a comforting reminder of home for troops stationed in an alien country.'³⁴ It is perhaps an irony that given their presence was expected to counteract the 'artificial' life, women themselves occasionally noted the 'artificiality' of life in Japan. In her memoirs of her time as a nurse in the Korean War, British Sister Jilly McNair recalled that many of the social events in both Kure and Seoul were characterised by excessive drinking. Reflecting on this trend she said, '... at the time it made me wonder whether the habit of seemingly drowning one's sorrows was due not only to the continuous war but also partly to the artificiality of life whilst on Active Service.'³⁵ For Jillian the higher proportion of drinking was one example of 'artificiality' of life in the service. RAANC Sister Dorothy Wheatley also commented that many of the social events at Officers Club's involved drinking, which did not appeal to her:

There was a fair bit of drinking going on. I don't necessarily mean drunkenness by that but there was a fair bit of drinking going on and it was in a social setting like we'd go to a pub in Australia now. It was you know, similar to that. But that didn't appeal to me.³⁶

³³ War Diary, Jan 1952, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

³⁴ Carter, 'Between War and Peace,' 238.

³⁵ E.J. McNair, *Shadows of the Far Forgotten: A British Army Nurse in the Korean War* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2007), 172.

³⁶ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author.

For Dorothy, the amount of social drinking was not any different to that she had experienced in Australia, but as someone who did not drink it limited her social options. The following photograph of RAANC Sisters gathered in the mess one evening suggests drinking was also a feature of informal social gatherings.



Figure 18 - RAANC officers in the mess, Kure, Japan.³⁷

The frequency of events, the social pressure placed on the women to attend the events and the seemingly higher proportion of drinking contributed to an artificial social environment which sometimes differed from that experienced in civilian life.

Despite the potential ‘artificiality’ of the social events, the personal narratives and private photographs suggest that quite a few of the nurses enjoyed the social aspects of life especially in Japan. Many of the private photograph collections of the nurses interviewed for this study contained images of social gatherings. Two such images can be seen on the following page.

³⁷ Nell Espie collection, 1952-1954.



Figure 19 - Gerry Roberts with Neville Fleming, Kure, Japan.³⁸



Figure 20 – Nell Espie, preparing for a fancy dress party, Kure, Japan.³⁹

Figure 19 shows RAANC other rank nursing assistant Gerry Roberts at a social gathering with Royal Australian Navy seaman Neville Fleming (whom she later married). In figure 20, RAANC Sister Nell Espie poses for the camera as she prepares for a night out at a fancy dress party dressed as a ‘Japanese schoolgirl.’ Both women appear happy to pose for the camera which suggests that they were willing participants in the social activities and genuinely happy. Nell’s costume is very detailed suggesting she went to some effort to prepare for the party. The fact that the snapshots remain in their collections is further evidence that the women enjoyed the experience and kept the snapshots as reminders of their time in Japan.

³⁸ Gerry Roberts collection, circa 1954.

³⁹ Nell Espie collection, circa 1952-1954.

The personal narratives also indicate that many nurses enjoyed the social atmosphere in Japan. RAANC Sister Nan Hummerston recalled that formal functions often provided an opportunity to meet high ranking members of society. One cocktail function she attended was in honour of visiting Prime Minister Robert Menzies.⁴⁰ RAAFNS Sister Cathie Daniel (now Thompson) recalled that social life at Iwakuni was enjoyable but perhaps less formal than the RAANC social activities. ‘Socially, it was very much a scrounge sometimes, someone would get on music and dance, just sit and talk, sometimes the air crew just wanted to, you know, just sit around and chat and talk.’⁴¹ The photograph below was taken at one such informal gathering.



Figure 21 - Cathie with two RAAF officers, enjoying records after dinner in mess.⁴²

For Cathie the informality of the social life, the opportunity to ‘just sit and talk’ was a chance to debrief. This was particularly the case when talking with the older DC3 pilots who had served in World War Two. As Cathy said:

⁴⁰ Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

⁴¹ Catherine (Cathie) Daniel (now Thompson), interview with author, 7 August 2007, Coolamon, NSW, tape in possession of author.

⁴² Cathie Daniel collection, circa 1952.

They were the ones that you could sit round and talk to, people like that you know you just sit and talk, and that, so that was very good feeling and I think it was very good for them too, it cut both ways. Because they loved to tell you about their families back home and things like that. And you know if you were upset about the kids, younger people, getting killed or anything they'd sort of comfort you there and talk to you about that. So it was a wonderful experience really.⁴³

It was also one way of being connected with the daily events in Korea she continued:

[T]he flying people were coming in and out ... every night when you went over to dinner, you know, there'd be the news would come back from Korea as to what has happened who was hurt, who wasn't hurt and everything. And you sort of depended on each other.⁴⁴

The comradeship of eating at the mess, which was used by the British, Australians and the Americans (who despite having their own mess tent enjoyed visiting the Commonwealth mess) appealed to Cathie. The informal social gatherings were an important part of everyday life in Japan. Cathie referred to this strong informal comradeship as being part of an overall spirit of 'teamwork' which she felt permeated her experience in Japan and Korea.⁴⁵ The theme of teamwork came up frequently, not only in Cathie's narrative, but in other discussions of the integrated hospitals in Korea and Japan.

Even with such comradeship it seems even informal gatherings were to some extent influenced by rank. RAANC other ranks and Officers lived in separate quarters and had their own mess, suggesting few opportunities for interaction outside the wards and work time.⁴⁶ When discussing her social group Gerry

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Geraldine (Gerry) Roberts (now Fleming), interview with author, Sefton, New South Wales, 31 May 2007, tape in possession of author.

Roberts recalled that she associated mostly with Australian girls, because there ‘were no British or Canadian nurses ... they were all Sisters.’⁴⁷ It seems that due to the influence of rank on social interaction RAANC other ranks had fewer opportunities for social interaction with British and Canadian women because their nursing orderly counterparts were male. Nevertheless, like the officers, other ranks also enjoyed social gatherings, such as the Christmas party held in the other ranks mess, pictured below.



Figure 22 - Other ranks Christmas gathering, Kure, Japan.⁴⁸

Gerry recalled the Christmas dinner fondly and had saved a menu for the evening as a keepsake. The menu detailed dinner included fried fish, roast duckling, roast potatoes, Christmas pudding, wine trifle and fresh fruit.⁴⁹ Gerry’s photograph and memories from the day suggest that the other ranks also enjoyed active social lives.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Gerry Roberts collection, circa 1955.

⁴⁹ Gerry Roberts, interview with author.

As is often the case with photographs many of the events the women chose to record through photographs were organised gatherings, such as the Christmas dinner or dance photographs in Gerry's collection. However, Gerry's collection also included more spontaneous images, recording daily life in Japan. Two examples can be seen below.



Figure 23 - Gerry standing outside other ranks quarters.⁵⁰



Figure 24 - RAANC nurse Private L. Book ('Bookie') standing outside the theatre, Kure, Japan.⁵¹

Both photographs record everyday life in the hospital grounds in Kure. When speaking about the photographs Gerry specifically mentioned the frozen pond in the background of figure 24. A native Queenslander, for Gerry the snow and ice of the Japanese winter was noteworthy, the climate itself representing a different

⁵⁰ Gerry Roberts collection circa 1953-1955.

⁵¹ Gerry Roberts collection, circa 1953-1954.

world for her. Figure 23, showing Gerry during a warmer season, dressed in jeans and with bare feet illustrates a more casual moment in the grounds at Kure.

The accounts of the women interviewed indicate that in their off duty hours many enjoyed an active social life. Social gatherings, including dances and other more informal activities feature strongly in the many of the nurses' photo albums and oral histories. To some extent the frequency of these activities was a result of their social obligations as the 'civilising influence' for the men stationed in Japan. Nevertheless, the prevalence of photographs of social gatherings and the fondness with which they recall their social lives demonstrates the significance of these social activities in the experience. Korea, even after the armistice, did not offer the same recreational opportunities. As was demonstrated in chapter three, Japan was a place of war work for the nurses, however as the images and stories told by the nurses have shown, as an area outside the warzone life in Japan in off-duty hours offered many social activities.

Touring Japan

The nurses' social lives were largely contained within service circles. Leisure time, however, did provide opportunities to become tourists. In his account of the BCOF personnel in Japan Robin Gerster noted:

Studded with tourist snapshots of 'exotic' Japan and anecdotes about the strange and surprising aspects of Japanese life, personal narratives by Australian Occupationnaires look, and often read, like travel books.⁵²

⁵² Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, 182.

The anecdotes and snapshots of Australian Korean War era nurses serving in Japan also reflect the 'tourist' subjectivity. Japan's place in the Korean War is most often associated with recreation. This thesis has already demonstrated that Japan was a place of work for the Australian nurses, but like the soldiers the nurses did have periods of leave in Japan and their recreational activities were an important part of this experience.

As with of the nurses and soldiers who served in earlier wars, overseas war service gave Australian women an opportunity to travel overseas, which they might not have otherwise done. Although a number had travelled interstate, none of the women interviewed, with the exception of Dulcie Thompson who had served overseas during World War Two, had travelled overseas prior to leaving for Japan. Shirley McEwen had never travelled outside of Western Australia before embarking for Japan, as she astutely noted overseas travel was not as common in that period, 'People didn't travel as much as they do now, you know young people buzz off here, there and everywhere.'⁵³ While Shirley may be exaggerating the travel opportunities of the current generation to some extent, the point is certainly relevant. Overseas air travel was certainly less accessible and far more expensive than it is today and the Korean War was the first time Australian military personnel travelled to war via aircraft rather than ship. In fact, Nan Hummerston, who first served with BCOF in 1946 travelled by hospital ship to Japan, stopping first in New Guinea, a journey that took approximately ten days.⁵⁴ The opportunity presented for overseas air travel was then, as Shirley recalls, 'a

⁵³ Shirley McEwen (now Bennetts), interview with author, Innaloo, Western Australia, 29 November 2007.

⁵⁴ Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

whole new experience.’⁵⁵ Although not technically tourists or travellers, as Carolyne Carter has noted of the BCOF personnel, they were military personnel in an occupied area which influenced their relationship with the land and its people. And like the BCOF personnel the women often adopted the attitudes of tourists when on leave.⁵⁶

Leave entitlements for those serving in Japan were quite generous and allowed for opportunities to act as tourists outside the hospital grounds. Personnel in Japan were allocated six days rest and recreation leave, 24 days recreation leave per year and one and a half days per month completed service in Japan war service leave, ‘usually taken as pay in lieu.’⁵⁷ Given the fact that Japan was not counted as active service in any other context, it is interesting to note that war service leave was allocated to personnel serving in the area. The regulations on leave in Japan, even as late as 1955, were quite stringent. Applications to visit leave centres had to be applied for ‘at least 7 days prior to commencement of leave’ and leave passes had to be carried ‘for the whole period of leave.’⁵⁸ Given these restrictions leave was fairly well monitored and nurses tended to visit the main tourist areas which had leave centres. The three areas which the women visited most frequently were Kawana, Miyajima, and Hiroshima.

RAANC Sister Peg Nicholson enjoyed the leave she had in Japan and particularly remembered staying in the opulent hotel at Kawana:

⁵⁵ Shirley McEwen, interview with author.

⁵⁶ Carolyne Carter, ‘Between War and Peace,’ 316.

⁵⁷ ‘Routine Orders Part I,’ 24 August 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, 1950-1956, AWM52, 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

I can remember in the eighteen months before I went to Tokyo I certainly had two splendid leaves, both in leave centres that had been leave centres during the Occupation. And though the peace treaty was ratified in 1951... these leave facilities were kept on because of Korea and because of extra people being there. And there was a hotel on a small island down in the inland sea at a place called ... Doesn't matter can't remember. On a small island and that was idyllic and beautiful. And it was a leave hotel for all ranks, it wasn't just officers leave, it was for all ranks and it was marvellous where everybody had a rest for a weekend, or a week or however much leave you managed to have. And there was another place at Kawana which now I understand is a fabulously expensive place to go, but it was again a wonderful hotel with its own golf course, and so on.⁵⁹

Peg constructs her experience on Kawana and another island, which may have been Miyajima, in terms of leave and 'rest' rather than recreation. Nevertheless, she appreciated the 'tourist' aspects of the hotel which she notes is now 'a fabulously expensive place to go.' The Kawana hotel was exciting for the BCOF personnel precisely because it offered this prestige, to all ranks as Peg points out, which most would not normally have access to.⁶⁰ Shirley McEwen also enjoyed leave at the hotel in Kawana and remembered that it was 'a wonderful place and a [it had] beautiful pool except it was too cold at the time.'⁶¹ Shirley was so impressed by the decadence of the hotel she took a photograph of the dining room, which remains a highlight of her Japanese photo collection.

⁵⁹ Peg Webster (née Nicholson), interview with Jan Bassett, 3 November 1986, SO1820, AWM, Canberra.

⁶⁰ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, 150.

⁶¹ Shirley Bennetts interview with Bill Bunbury, 1998, SO1904, AWM, Canberra.



Figure 25 – Dining room, Kawana Hotel, Japan.⁶²

In fact, the photograph of the dining room illustrates that although the Kawana hotel was certainly exotic in its opulence it also represented a familiarity with which the BCOF and then BCFK personnel could be comfortable. The table settings illustrate the European style of the dining room. There is nothing to suggest the hotel is Japanese. This was not the result of an Occupation revamp, as the Kawana had been originally built to reflect a European resort. The Kawana hotel was redeveloped in 1936 by Baron Kishichiro Okura and had survived the war. The design was ‘originally modelled on an English country estate.’⁶³ The European design of the hotel would have provided a sense of familiarity and at the same time a level of opulence with which the women were unfamiliar.

Another favoured place for leave was Miyajima, an island on the inland sea. The beauty of the island captured the attention of many of the Australian nurses and was mentioned in a number of personal narratives.⁶⁴ RAANC other rank Gerry

⁶² Shirley Bennetts collection, circa 1952.

⁶³ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, 149.

⁶⁴ Nan Hummerston, interview with author. Nora Trethewie, interview with Jan Bassett, 25 May 1987, SO1809, AWM, Canberra.

Roberts was particularly captivated by the magic of Miyajima. This was evident in both her personal narrative and the extensive collection of ‘snapshots’ of Miyajima in her photo album. Three such photographs can be seen below.



Figure 26 – Floating Tori shrine, Miyajima, Japan.⁶⁵



Figure 27 – RAANC other rank nurse, Claire Vidler, Miyajima, Japan.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Gerry Roberts collection, circa 1953-1955.

⁶⁶ Gerry Roberts collection, circa 1953-1955.



Figure 28 – Gerry with two other RAANC nurses at Miyajima.⁶⁷

The images of both Miyajima and Kawana certainly typify tourist snapshots and strongly suggest that one identity adopted by the nurses during their time in Japan was as that of a tourist. The concept of the military nurse as tourist has been raised by June Georges and Susan Benedict have expanded on John Urry's concept of the 'tourist gaze,' examining the 'tourist gaze' as one of the ways in which women 'look at war.'⁶⁸ Butler also identified themes of travel and tourism in the letters and diaries of Australian nurses who participated in earlier conflicts.⁶⁹ The concept of the soldier as tourist was first explored by Richard White who argued that the opportunity for travel was a significant aspect in the service of World War One soldiers. Furthermore, White argued that a distinct tourist stance can be identified in the soldier's letters and diaries, a stance which perhaps provided them with an opportunity for temporary detachment from the horrors of war.⁷⁰ It is possible that, like White's soldiers, the Korean War nurses adopted the stance

⁶⁷ Gerry Roberts collection circa 1953-1955.

⁶⁸ Jane Georges and Susan Benedict, 'Nursing Gaze of the Eastern Front in World War II: A Feminist Narrative Analysis,' *Advances in Nursing Science* 31, no.2 (2008):125. The concept of a 'tourist gaze' was first explored by John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990).

⁶⁹ Janet Butler, 'Journey into War,' *Australian Historical Studies*, 127 (2006): 203-17.

⁷⁰ Richard White, 'The Soldier as Tourist: The Australian Experience of the Great War,' *Kunapipi* 18, no.2/3 (1996):125.

of a tourist as a way of detaching from the painful experience of nursing seriously wounded casualties of war. In their recreation time they adopted the gaze of a tourist, photographing iconic scenes and recreational time with fellow travellers.

Yet while the oral histories and photographs certainly support the assertion of a tourist's subjectivity, the experience was not entirely superficial, as is often implied with the 'tourist' label. Gerry was just as captivated by the culture and mythology of Miyajima as she was by its beauty. In particular she made a point of explaining the cultural significance of the island. Discussing Miyajima in her personal narrative she noted that it 'was a sacred island' and went on to explain that it had been used as a base for the Japanese Kamikaze pilots before their missions in World War Two and that 'nobody was allowed to die on that island.'⁷¹

Figure 26, a photograph of the famous Tori shrine also suggests Gerry was interested in the cultural aspects of the island. For Gerry the cultural significance of Miyajima was at least as important to her as its value as a place of relaxation and enjoyment. Gerry was not alone in her admiration of Miyajima. Many BCOF troops were also impressed by the shrines and natural beauty of the island, which adhered to Australian expectations of 'exotic' Japan.⁷²

Hiroshima, which is geographically quite close to Kure, was another place which most nurses visited. Robin Gerster has detailed the BCOF personnel's fascination with Hiroshima which became a 'tourist attraction.'⁷³ The Korean War era nurses also participated in the 'tourism' of Hiroshima, with most visiting the city and buying souvenirs. Nell Espie recalled:

⁷¹ Gerry Roberts, interview with author.

⁷² Carolyne Carter, 'Between War and Peace,' 321.

⁷³ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, 187.

by the time we got there it was set up as a tourist thing. And it was quite a, it was quite interesting you know. They had photographs and specimens, you know victims and things. It was a bit gruesome in parts but it was interesting.⁷⁴

One such item bought by Gerry Roberts was the following postcard which remains in her collection today showing before and after images of the city.

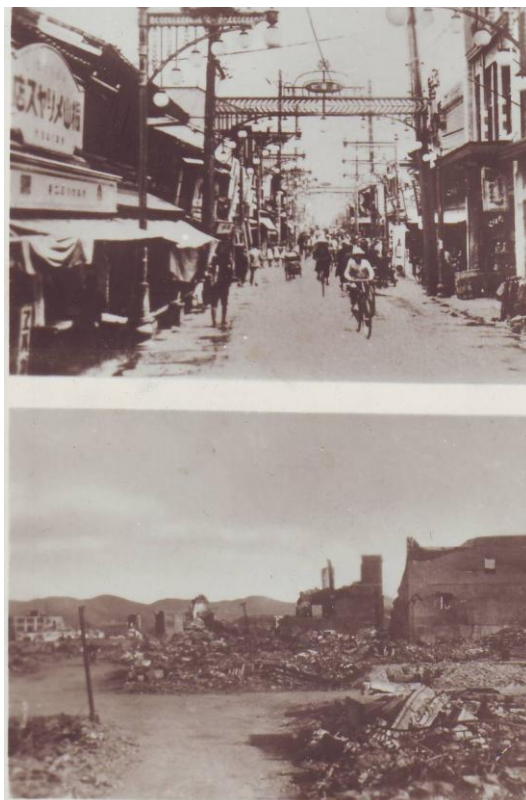


Figure 29 – Postcard of Hiroshima, Japan before and after bomb.⁷⁵

Although it could certainly be classed as a souvenir and thus positions Gerry as a tourist, the image was also a way for her to preserve the memory of the visit to a place of such destruction. When asked if she had visited Hiroshima, her first response was to mention that she had a photograph, suggesting perhaps that she could best convey the experience through an image rather than words. As Robert Gerster has astutely noted, “Indescribable” is a common adjective applied by

⁷⁴ Nell Espie, interview with author.

⁷⁵ Gerry Roberts collection circa 1953-1955.

observers to the atomic damage ... the bombings seemed beyond representation as well as comprehension.⁷⁶ Gerry spoke only briefly about the visit, preferring to show the photograph as a way of conveying what she had seen and to some extent her emotions without having to speak in depth about it. When asked to further elaborate on her feelings when visiting Hiroshima, Gerry revealed that seeing the destruction gave her new insight into what had previously been an abstract event:

It was just like when did it happen forty five, well I was fifteen and to me it was the end of the war and you know it was that. But it was an eye opener when you got there to see the devastation of it all.⁷⁷

The loss and destruction caused by the atomic bomb became immediately apparent to her, even after the extensive rebuilding which had taken place in Japan in the intervening years.

As is evident in Gerry's reflections, visiting a site of such destruction was complicated by the connection with the end of World War Two. Many Australians believed that dropping the bomb was the only way to end the war and this led to conflicted feelings.⁷⁸ RAANC Sister Peg Nicholson reflected in more detail on her visit to the site:

... of course by 1951 there were high rise buildings beginning and the area around the town hall which they've kept as a shrine was left, in a devastated condition, state what have you. It was awesome it was very frightening I thought to me it was very frightening it was very thought provoking. It was again I think that I certainly thought about the POWs who had been in Nagasaki say when the atom bomb had been dropped in Nagasaki and I remember thinking that, what a terrible thing to happen yet at the same time it finished the war. And I think every

⁷⁶ Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, 197.

⁷⁷ Gerry Roberts, interview.

⁷⁸ Robin Gerster has outlined the conflicted feelings of the BCOF personnel on this matter, see *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, 193-196.

thinking person has wondered since. But in retrospect it's easy, if they hadn't dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima would the arms race be where it is today? But at the time I remember, I think I felt that it was a terrible thing to have happened but that it had finished the war.⁷⁹

Peg's evocative vignette conveys the raw emotion that was provoked when visiting the site so soon after the event. The conflicted feelings are evident in the range of descriptive words she uses such as 'awesome,' 'frightening' and 'thought provoking.' Furthermore she considered the plight of the Prisoners of War (POWs) who had been in Nagasaki, the site of the second atomic bomb. Peg discusses the issues more deeply than Gerry and is more willing to openly think aloud about the repercussions of the bomb, particularly on the subsequent arms race, but like Gerry she returns to a reflection of the tension between the 'terrible' destruction of the bomb which ended the war. Visiting Hiroshima did not seem to relieve this tension for Gerry and Peg, and if anything seeing the ruins first hand heightened the tension, making the abstract effects of the bomb frighteningly concrete.

Those who visited Hiroshima saw what most Australians of their era never did. They witnessed the other side of the coin, the world which had been destroyed so theirs could survive. This was no ordinary tourist destination. Hiroshima is now a city of peace, but for those who visited it so soon after World War Two the city remained haunted by the war. In the years since the city has continued to develop as a tourist site, it is an example of what might be termed an early version of 'trauma tourism.'⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Peg Webster, interview with Jan Bassett.

⁸⁰ James Trimarco and Molly Hurley Depret have discussed the trauma tourism associated with Ground Zero following 9/11, including the selling of souvenirs. James Trimarco and Molly Hurley

Although there was little recreation time in Korea and few opportunities to ‘tour’ the war ravaged land some women did see glimpses of the destruction beyond the hospital compound. RAAFNS Sister Cathie Daniel recounted one such moment, in which she attended a church service in a partially destroyed church in Seoul on Christmas Eve:

And I remember Christmas night, the church the Seoul church was actually bombed, had been partly destroyed but, a section of it was still standing and they had a midnight service for any you know. And that was incredible and there was the pulpit, what I can a pulpit, and then sort of half was missing on that side, and had this midnight service. And I can remember coming down the steps and the snow was falling down. But it was just something, being Christmas Eve, it was something like you’d read about.⁸¹

There is a strange paradox in this vignette between the destruction and beauty of the church. The scene Cathie paints is majestic, it carries the tone of a fairytale. In the midst of destruction Cathie paints a postcard scene, and the vignette strongly suggests a ‘tourist gaze.’ This is not to suggest that Cathie had no empathy for those affected by the war. Her narratives relating to the casualties are evidence that she was well aware of the effects of war. Perhaps rather, it is another example of the ‘averted gaze’ to which Georges and Benedict refer, noticing the beauty of the scene may have helped her to cope with the implications of the destruction.

Richard White, in his analysis of travel writing in the 1950s, noted a distinction between those who were perceived as tourists and the superior traveller. Tourists, he argues, were ‘... by the process of definition, more likely to be women, or

Depret, ‘Wounded Nation, Broken Time,’ in *The Selling of 9/11: How a National Tragedy Became a Commodity*, ed. Dana Heller (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 27-53.

⁸¹ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

socially inferior, ignorant or provincial ...' Furthermore he suggests the presence of travelling women in the 1950s were a powerful resistance to this hierarchy.⁸² The RAANC and RAAFNS women might be classed as tourists, or 'military tourists' rather than travellers. They did not engage extensively with the culture and did not tend to travel beyond the leave centres which were located in 'tourist' areas. But this point is perhaps, moot. Tourists or not, what the photographs and personal narratives reveal is an independent point of view. The women actively recorded their experiences and subjectivity by photographing what they saw. In light of this independence, it is revealing then to delve into some of the official images of nurses 'touring' Japan and Korea. The particular collection to be examined, taken by official photographer Phillip Hobson in April 1955 seeks not only to entrench a perception of the women as 'tourists' but also to construct their male companions as knowledgeable guides and perhaps even bodyguards protecting the Western women from the Japanese 'other.'

⁸² Richard White, 'The Retreat from Adventure: Popular Travel Writing in the 1950s,' *Australian Historical Studies* 28, no.109 (1997): 91.



Figure 30 – Nurses Private (Pte) Gladys Devine of Kyogle, NSW and Pte Rona Cooper of Earlville, Qld, on leave in Tokyo are escorted around the city by Korean veteran Corporal Andy Ingram, Royal Australian Regiment, of Cabramatta, NSW ... In the background is the entrance to the famous Kabuki Za theatre.⁸³



Figure 31 - Nurses Private (Pte) Gladys Devine of Kyogle, NSW and Pte Rona Cooper of Earlville, Qld, on leave in Tokyo are escorted around the city by Korean veteran Corporal Andy Ingram ... They are seen here in the heart of the Ginza district.⁸⁴

Figures 30 and 31 show RAANC nurses sightseeing in Japan. The captions detail that the photographs are of RAANC nurses Private Gladys Devine and Private Rona Cooper being ‘escorted around the city by Korean veteran Corporal Andy Ingram.’⁸⁵ The wording of the caption, which emphasises Corporal Ingram’s role as guide, mirrors the composition of the images. The male veteran is positioned in the centre, slightly ahead of the nurses in figure 30, quite clearly suggesting he is leading the women. Corporal Ingram is at the centre of the image in figure 31 with the nurses to his side, also suggesting he is guiding them. Both the caption and the images position the women as tourists on leave, being guided by the more experienced male expert. Their identity as tourists is further reinforced by the

⁸³ HOBJ5738, circa April 1955, AWM, Canberra.

⁸⁴ HOBJ5740, circa April 1955, AWM, Canberra.

⁸⁵ HOBJ5737, circa April 1955, AWM, Canberra.

setting. Figure 30 shows the group in front of ‘the famous Kabuki Za theatre’, while in figure 31 they are ‘in the heart of the Ginza district.’

Given that the backgrounds for the images are tourist spots it seems likely that the photographs were taken to show the nurses sightseeing while on leave. This is not to suggest that such images are inaccurate representations of the experiences of RAANC nurses in Japan. They did sightsee while on leave and being a tourist was certainly one of their identities. Australians had been tourists in Japan since the beginning of the Occupation period, and the nurses certainly continued this tradition.⁸⁶ They also connected with an earlier tradition of Australian travel to Japan dating back to the nineteenth century.⁸⁷ However by positioning the male veteran as guide the photographs do reinforce the tourist/traveller dichotomy identified by White, as well as the traditional hierarchies of gender within the military in which women were required to have a male escort.

The photographs from the nurses collections and their recollections of travelling in Japan and to a lesser extent Korea highlight the ‘tourist gaze’ adopted by the nurse in their off duty time. This subjectivity links them with earlier generations of military personnel and travellers to Japan. They did not engage to any great extent with Japanese or Korean culture, marking them as tourists on leave, rather than ‘travellers.’ This lack of engagement with the culture is not surprising given the restrictions and regulations on their daily lives which were discussed earlier.

⁸⁶ Robin Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine*, 176.

⁸⁷ Paul Jones and Vera Mackie, ‘Introduction’ in *Relationships: Japan and Australia 1870s -1950s*, ed. Paul Jones and Vera Mackie (Melbourne: History Department, The University of Melbourne, 2001), 3.

Working Across Cultures

During the Korean War, Australian nurses were required to work in units composed of different Commonwealth services. Australian nurses occasionally worked alongside nurses of other nationalities, particularly the British, during earlier wars. Often they were seconded from their own Australian units, and occasionally they joined up through the British military nursing service. Kirsty Harris has estimated that only 800 of the approximately 2700 AANS who served during World War One did so in purely Australian units.⁸⁸ The Korean War was nevertheless a unique situation for Australian military nurses. The distinction is not in the experience of working with different working cultures, as indeed there are continuities between the experiences of the Korean War nurses and those of earlier generations. Rather, Korea was the first war in which all Australian nurses who served did so in an integrated British Commonwealth unit. Australian nurses were no longer working for the British, but with them, in an integrated team which also included Canadian medical personnel. As a United Nations war with a focus on collective action, Korea also gave some Australian nurses the opportunity to closely observe the work of US medical personnel, an opportunity which was not readily available in earlier wars.

The numbers of Australian and British Sisters working at the BCGH at any one time were comparable, and in fact there was a higher proportion of Australian women as the Australian contribution consisted of female officers and other ranks,

⁸⁸ Kirsty Harris, 'Red Rag to a British Bull? Australian Trained Nurses Working with British Nurses During World War One,' in *Exploring the British World: Identity, Cultural Production, Institutions*, ed. Kate Darian Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, Kiera Lindsey and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: RMIT Publishing, 2004), 126.

whereas the British contingent had no female other ranks. For example, in June 1952 the BCGH was staffed by 27 RAANC officers and 36 RAANC other ranks, compared with 35 QARANC officers and no female British other ranks.⁸⁹ In comparison, the RAAFNS Sisters stationed in Japan were based at Iwakuni which, while also an integrated Commonwealth unit, had a higher proportion of US personnel. The breakdown of personnel at the 91 Composite Wing at Iwakuni in September 1953, for example, was 1782 United States Air Force (USAF) personnel, 1028 United States Navy (USN) personnel against 590 British Commonwealth personnel. The breakdown of the British Commonwealth personnel was 352 RAAF, 147 Royal Air Force (RAF), 18 Australian Military Forces (AMF), 51 Royal Navy (RN) and 5 Canadian personnel.⁹⁰

The higher number of United States personnel on the Iwakuni airbase meant RAAFNS Sisters had more day to day contact with United States personnel than RAANC nurses. Cathie recalled enjoying social gatherings with United States and British personnel, usually held at the US or British Commonwealth Officers mess:

We were friendly with Americans. They had American Red Cross women. There were two stationed in Japan, delightful people. So, we'd often go across [to their mess] too. Lots of interchanging with Americans and Australians and the British.⁹¹

Although they did not work as closely with the American teams, RAANC nurses occasionally had valuable contact with United States medical professionals. For

⁸⁹ Awards for non-operational service Japan RRC [Member of the Royal Red Cross] and ARRC [Associate of the Royal Red Cross] – [Capt Helene J Wilding; Maj Dulcie V Thompson], AWM 119, 363, AWM, Canberra.

⁹⁰ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing, September 1953, A705 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA, Canberra.

⁹¹ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

Betty Crocker, the most valuable experience was visiting a United States hospital ship to learn about the new stryker frames which were being used to nurse burns patients. As Betty explained, the frame allowed patients to be moved without causing too much pain:

If you had say a huge burn where a lot of the body was burnt you could strap these people onto this frame. It was like a bed without a mattress, to look at. And you could put the straps in a place where they weren't burnt, where there was no burn. So you've got this body strapped onto this strap and you never have to move them to do any dressing, you just turn it over.⁹²

Gerry Roberts and Nora Hayles were also impressed with the American stryker beds that were used for nursing critically injured patients.⁹³ Australian nurses were not alone in their admiration of the American device, British surgeon J.C. Watts described the stryker frame, which he first saw at a United States hospital in Tokyo during the Korean War, as 'the acme of simplicity.'⁹⁴ The multinational nature of the medical contributions to the war gave British Commonwealth medical professionals an opportunity to learn about new medical equipment and techniques they may not have otherwise seen.

The fact that Korea was the first war in which Canadian, British and Australian medical staff came together as an integrated unit related to the overall nature of the campaign as a United Nations' collective action. As noted by Stueck, Korea was the only conflict 'in the entire Cold War in which the United Nations acted in an official capacity to defend a state under military attack.'⁹⁵ Although despite this collective action, Stueck suggests that calculated estimates of 'national advantage'

⁹² Betty Crocker (now Lawrence), interview with author, West Beach, South Australia, 27 November 2007, tape in possession of author.

⁹³ Gerry Roberts, interview with author. Nora Trethewie, interview with Jan Bassett.

⁹⁴ J.C. Watts, *Surgeon at War* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1955), 146.

⁹⁵ William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 368-369.

were more likely than motivating factors for those who participated over the espoused United Nations ideal of ‘collective security.’⁹⁶ Nevertheless, it appears that the both contemporary reports and memories of those who served both place a strong emphasis on teamwork and co-operation, reinforcing a discourse of collective action.

The February 1953 BCCZMU report outlined the challenges and benefits of a composite unit. The report emphasised that the success of the unit depended upon ‘co-operation’ and that a composite unit had the potential to thrive on its differences. It said, ‘There is great complementary effect of a variety of skills, backgrounds and experience and team work can be easily developed.’⁹⁷ The theme of teamwork and co-operation echoed throughout the reports. The BCCZMU Matron’s report noted the high morale amongst nursing staff due to a team approach to problem solving. ‘As in any unit, many problems have been encountered. Working together to overcome these has given everyone a feeling of satisfaction, and the morale of the unit has remained extremely high.’⁹⁸

Similarly, when discussing the experience of working as part of an integrated team, Australian women most often sought to emphasise the spirit of teamwork they believed characterised the work environment. Regarding the professional relationships between the doctors, nurses and orderlies when working in Korea and Japan, RAANC Sister Peg Nicholson recalled:

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁹⁷ Britcom Comms Zone Med Unit War Diary, Feb 1953, WO 281/899, National Archives, Kew, England.

⁹⁸ ‘Nursing in Korea,’ Britcom Cmms Zone Med Unit War Diary, November 1952, WO 281/898, National Archives, Kew, England.

I would have said that it was exemplary. It was a whole team effort ... No it was fantastic and it was a great, there was, I felt a great co-operation. Again probably because we were all young and strong and fit and well and life was precious and it, to me, in my memory was really so much better than a civilian hospital where there were jealousies and there was none of that there, it all seemed to be very harmonious.⁹⁹

For Peg, working in the context of a military hospital actually facilitated greater co-operation than she had experienced in the civilian sector. Peg's view of the strong sense of teamwork highlights the success of the integrated medical teams. Indeed working as part of an integrated force provided opportunities for collaborations across working cultures and a sharing of knowledge which had hitherto not been experienced on such a large scale. In spite of this significance these cultural exchanges have not been analysed or written about in any depth in the Australian historiography of the war. This thesis gives a glimpse into the value of the cross cultural medical teams from the Australian military nursing perspective.

The same theme of teamwork ran throughout personal narratives of RAAFNS sisters. This results in a collective view of the working experience as almost completely positive. RAAFNS Sister Patricia Leeming (now Oliver) recalled, '... never a cross word passed between the RAAF sisters; the teamwork was outstanding...'¹⁰⁰ It is unlikely that no disagreements ever occurred in a setting that would certainly have had moments of high pressure and tension, however the comment is evidence of the collective memory of 'teamwork' which is clear in both oral histories and official reports. Cathie Daniel also made a point to emphasise the teamwork was strong not just among the RAAFNS sisters but

⁹⁹ Peg Nicholson, interview with Jan Bassett.

¹⁰⁰ Patricia Oliver, 'Blue Capes,' in *Korea Remembered*, ed. Maurie Pears and Fred Kirkland (Georges Heights: Doctrine Wing Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 2002), 398

across staff and nationalities, ‘...[in] all my experience, I found and all the other girls would have found the same, teamwork. Right down to the Japanese staff.’¹⁰¹

Like the RAANC women, the personal narratives of RAAFNS Sisters also testify to a strong sense of teamwork and co-operation amongst the army and air force contingents.

One example of such co-operation was the sharing of medical facilities on the Air Force base at Iwakuni. The Australian Senior Medical Officer stationed in Iwakuni explained the congeniality of the relationship:

6418th Medical Group (U.S.A.F.) continue to operate a 20-bed dispensary with out-patient facilities in the hospital building, including pathological, radiological, and emergency surgery facilities. These latter are made available to this section at no charge. Relationship with the 6418th Medical Group is most cordial and their co-operation could not be greater.¹⁰²

The report suggests a strong working relationship between Australian and United States Air Force medical contingents, with the United States Air Force medical team sharing its facilities. The RAAFNS Sisters who worked in Korea staffed a medical evacuation ward at the BCCZMU and therefore worked and lived under the same conditions as the RAANC Sisters. As noted earlier, the Iwakuni base also had a higher proportion of Australian personnel to British. The RAAF reports indicate a high morale on this multinational base, again emphasising the importance of teamwork.

Even with many minor disturbances the morale of the Squadron continues to be high. This has been achieved by close teamwork between the aircrew and ground

¹⁰¹ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

¹⁰² Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing, June 1953, A705 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA, Canberra.

staff, whereby is promoted the feeling of functioning as a collective unit and not as an individual.¹⁰³

The report does not elaborate on what these ‘many minor disturbances’ to the Squadron morale entailed. Similarly, the August 1953 medical officers report also notes high morale ‘in the face of local difficulties’ but does not explain the nature of those difficulties.¹⁰⁴ As with the nurses’ recollections, the official discourse on morale emphasises teamwork and positive relationships over any negative feelings, further reinforcing the positive collective view. Whilst clearly dominant, this view is occasionally challenged by accounts of specific incidents some of which will now be explored.

There is some evidence in official reports to suggest that integrated units occasionally posed challenges to morale. For example, the BCCZMU unit report outlined strategies for maintaining high morale in the unit, suggesting that there were occasional frictions between the different nationality groups within the unit. One strategy outlined was the importance of minimising ‘national pride.’ Another, perhaps related rule was that any component given ‘a gift of beer or funds to purchase beer ... puts on a party to which all components were invited.’¹⁰⁵ Presumably this rule was intended to minimise jealousies and maintain a team atmosphere. Nevertheless, the use of the term ‘component’ and the fact that special supplies were occasionally provided suggests distinct divisions were sometimes made beyond the collective team atmosphere.

¹⁰³ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing, May 1953, A705 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁰⁴ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing, August 1953, A705 132/2/866 Part 5, NAA, Canberra.

¹⁰⁵ Britcom Comms Zone Med Unit War Diary, Feb 1953, WO 281/899, National Archives, Kew, England

Accounts of difficulties encountered on a day to day basis often related to the tensions associated with working amongst different nursing cultures. The personal narratives of the RAANC Sisters in particular point to an occasional clash of nursing cultures between the British and Australian nursing staff. RAANC Sister Nell Espie recalled that the British had a more traditional attitude to nursing than their Australian counterparts. As she said, ‘in many ways, they still had a lot of old Florence Nightingale ideas around the wards you know.’¹⁰⁶ One particular example of this for Nell was the practice of using ‘bath books’ which required nursing staff to sign patients into a designated book when they were taken for showers. The more practically orientated Australians were frustrated by the bureaucracy of the procedure. ‘[It] used to drive us up the wall, because we never worried about getting the bath book signed when the patients [laughs] we’d just get them off to the shower, so they could go there. Or we’d wash them there.’¹⁰⁷ RAANC Sister Nora Hayles although careful not to stereotype the British Sisters also re-counted a story in which an English Sister adhered to rules in spite of the logic of a situation:

They had a different, different to us. Now for instance I can remember one ward the Sister had taken her day off and there was an English Sister there and had a patient who had put in for a leave pass. He was on a strict diet mind you, and he’d asked for a *day’s* leave pass. And I said you better get the Major to either cancel his diet or cancel his pass. ‘Oh’ she said, ‘Oh no I couldn’t ask him that.’ And I said ‘But why?’ ‘Oh, no.’ You see they, I don’t say they’re all like that, but this one, oh no she couldn’t ask them to change anything.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Nell Espie, interview with author.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Nora Trethewie, interview with Jan Bassett.

To Nora, it was obvious that given a day's leave pass the patient may well be inclined to disregard his diet and she felt comfortable in informing the Major of her opinion. In contrast the English sister did not want to engage with authority.

Nora also felt that the British looked down on the Australian sisters as 'colonials.' Nora recounted a story she had heard from another Australian sister, the sister had overheard a group of British Sisters commenting, upon seeing that there was no clock in the Officers Mess, that the Australians were 'clockless and clueless.'¹⁰⁹ The accuracy of the story cannot be confirmed, however Nora's retelling is certainly evidence of Australian perceptions of the British attitude. In addition to her perception of a British attitude of superiority, Nora also recalled feeling an affinity with the Canadian Sisters because they were also 'colonials.'¹¹⁰

The perceptions of the British as more rule orientated and inflexible, with a negative view of Australians, echoes comments made by Australian sisters of earlier conflicts, particularly World War One. Sister Narrelle Hobbes who worked alongside the British in World War One often voiced frustration in her diary about the British sisters and their 'bally rules.'¹¹¹ Kirsty Harris has also noted that during World War One, although some Australian matrons felt the discipline of the British system might be beneficial for Australian sisters, 'most ward nurses felt that the obsession with "minor military matters" made life unnecessarily difficult for both groups.'¹¹² Harris has also noted that British nurses initially

¹⁰⁹ Nora Hayles, interview with Jan Bassett.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love*.

¹¹² Harris, 'Red Rag to a British Bull,' 135.

‘regarded their colonial cousins with some disdain’¹¹³ although soon came to respect the Australians for their skills. The Australians positioned themselves in their narratives as independent thinkers in contrast to the rule orientated British.

It appears that although the teamwork was strong amongst the Commonwealth personnel there were minor cultural differences which needed to be minimised. One way of minimising these differences in the integrated hospital was by separating the sisters into their own wards which allowed for teamwork within cultural limits. Sisters from each nation, Canada, Britain and Australia, staffed their own wards, working under a medical specialist of a different nationality. Australian surgeon Neville Davis, who served in both the BCGH in Japan and the BCCZMU in Korea, explained the rationale behind this decision:

Where possible, the wards have been worked on the integrated system, namely, that the specialist is of a different country from the sisters maintaining the ward. There are many reasons for this. Perhaps the most important is to reduce the amount of international discord which inevitably arises in an integrated unit. One wishes to avoid a situation where an individual or a ward is criticized because it is Australian (or British or Canadian). An integrated ward is judged on its merits, and no “red herring” of a particular nationality is brought into the discussion.¹¹⁴

The patients were not segregated though and each ward admitted all Commonwealth casualties, regardless of nationality. Reflecting on the situation Peg Nicholson felt that it was ‘probably just as well because the Australians do things their way, and the Canadians do things their way and the British girls did things their way. And I think that was probably absolutely right.’¹¹⁵ The wards at the BCCZMU were also segregated to some extent with the two RAANC sisters

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹¹⁴ Neville C. Davis, ‘Surgical Aspects of the Korean War March, 1951 to February 1952,’ *The Medical Journal of Australia* 2, no. 11 (September 1952): 372.

¹¹⁵ Peg Nicholson, interview with Jan Bassett.

taking charge of the surgical and officers wards on the ground floor of the BCCZMU. The two RAAFNS sisters working at the BCCZMU also staffed their own medical ward working with Royal Air Force personnel.¹¹⁶ Although the wards were segregated Australian army Sisters were occasionally detached to work on other wards if there was a staff shortage.¹¹⁷ However, there were few specific references to working with the Canadian Sisters. Nell recalled that the Canadians were rarely short staffed so RAANC sisters generally did not work in the Canadian ward at the BCGH.¹¹⁸ However, as discussed briefly in chapter three, a number of Australian RAAFNS and RAANC sisters, however, were involved in what might be termed cultural work exchanges, which they were temporarily detached to work in a US or Canadian unit.

Although the nursing Sisters were segregated into different wards and as a result did not work frequently with other Commonwealth Sisters, they did work with other Commonwealth medical personnel, including doctors and surgeons on a day-to-day basis. RAANC Sister Betty Crocker spent most of her time in Japan as a theatre sister, working as part of a British Commonwealth surgical team. This initially proved difficult, 'Each country names the instruments differently, that was the first thing. And I did have a little language problem with the anaesthetist. He was a French-Canadian and he had very small command of the English language.'¹¹⁹ However, working with the same people, on similar operations the surgical team 'very quickly got so used to each other' and were soon able to

¹¹⁶ Colonel E.J. Bowe, 'Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,' RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55 NAA, Melbourne.

¹¹⁷ Nell Espie, interview with author.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Betty Lawrence, interview by Rob Linn, 22 May 2002, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, OH644/7, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

communicate effectively.¹²⁰ RAANC Sister Marjorie Ford also had experience working with British Commonwealth medical personnel in her work on the wards. Marjorie recalled one particular incident with a Scottish surgeon which reflected differences between the medical cultures:

I hadn't been there very long, and met this doctor, this young doctor, and we did a hospital round and he said to me ... 'Would you make an appointment for me to take those, for that patient to have his sutures taken out.' And I said, 'Well what do I have to make an appointment for?' And he said 'Because the man needs his sutures taken out.' And I said, well, I said, 'You don't have to do it' I said, 'I can do it.' Well he said, 'Of course you can't.' He said, 'You're the nurse and I'm the doctor.' And I said, 'Well I happen to be an Aussie one.' Cause you see what he didn't know and I didn't know was that the British girls weren't allowed to take them out, but we did. I didn't know they weren't allowed and he didn't know that we were.¹²¹

This narrative again constructs the Australian Sisters as more practical and less constrained by hierarchical rules. They were also expected, in their own country to do tasks generally the province of doctors in Britain.

In spite of cultural differences friendships were often formed between Commonwealth medical personnel. RAANC Sister Dulcie Thompson who held the position of Deputy Matron in charge of the Australian contingent at the BCGH in Kure believes that this was the case for most of the Sisters.

All of us made some very good friends. There were some things that they did differently. There were some attitudes that we didn't share, but they didn't really upset the general working of the unit. In personalities we, as I was saying there were some quite strong friendships made....¹²²

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Marjorie Ford, interview with author.

¹²² Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett.

At least one example of such friendships is evident in British Nursing Sister Jilly McNair's memoir, which features a number of references to her friendship with RAANC Sister Betty Crocker. One such example recounted by McNair is her participation, with Betty, in the forces dramatic society known as the 'Green Room Club.' The women joined the club and together took part in a production of *The Tinsel Duchess*.¹²³ McNair also recounts details of an outing to the Coronation Sports day with RAAFNS Sister Gay Bury and Jess, another British nurse, whilst stationed in Korea.¹²⁴ All in all the relationship between the Commonwealth sisters can be assessed as friendly. Both the personal narratives and archival evidence consistently refer to a strong spirit of teamwork. Combining the different medical cultures was certainly a challenge, as the oral evidence attests, but it was one which was handled effectively.

In fact, working across medical cultures was seen as learning opportunity. These opportunities were explored in two ways, through visits to other hospitals and in what might be termed cultural work exchanges, in which Australian Sisters were detached to other units for a period of time. These opportunities were available to a range of RAANC women from other ranks to the Matron in Chief. On her 1954 tour of Korea and Japan, Matron in Chief of the RAANC E.J. Bowe visited both Canadian and United States units in Korea. In her visit to the 150 bed 25 Canadian Field Dressing Station (FDS) Matron Bowe noted her approval of the 'most attractive medical unit.' The visits to the US 45 Haemorrhagic Unit and the US 121 General Hospital, both proved to be particularly educational for the Matron in Chief especially in regard to nursing treatments:

¹²³ McNair, *Shadows of the Far Forgotten*, 70.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

From a nursing point of view I found these two medical establishments most interesting and much of the information I gained will be of value in the future – e.g. nursing treatments of Heanorrhagic [sic] Fever patients and the treatment of Burns.¹²⁵

Visiting the United States hospitals offered the chance for the head of the RAANC to observe new treatments which could be used in the future. This was advantageous for the developing nursing corps with its new focus on training and career development which was outlined in the earlier chapter. Indeed, opportunities for learning from visits to United States units were also extended to the RAANC other rank nursing assistants. In June 1955, arrangements were made for two other ranks stationed at the Casualty Dressing Station (CDS) in Tokyo to visit the Tokyo Army Hospital, a large United States hospital, for one afternoon per week.¹²⁶ There is also evidence to suggest that RAAF personnel capitalised on the opportunity to learn new techniques from the United States Air Force. The 1954 RAAF Senior Medical Officers report included a sample of the ‘latest type emergency burns dressing in use by American Forces in Korea “Compress and Bandage, Gauze Field – Sterile.”’¹²⁷ Given the high numbers of burns patients encountered during the war such new treatments would have been highly sought after.

Evidence also suggests that there were occasional opportunities for more formal cross cultural knowledge exchanges. In October 1953 the one Medical Officer

¹²⁵ Colonel E.J. Bowe, ‘Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,’ RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.

¹²⁶ ‘RAANC NCO and OR Monthly Report,’ June 1955, Britcom [British Commonwealth Base] General Hospital, Army Component, AWM52 11/2/45, AWM, Canberra.

¹²⁷ Medical Attendance Hospital Report, Monthly Report of Senior Medical Officer No.91 (Composite) Wing, February 1954, A705 132/2/866 Part 1, NAA, Canberra.

from the BCCZMU attended the 38 Parallel Medical meeting.¹²⁸ The 38th Parallel Medical Society meetings ‘were attended by physicians from all United Nations in the field.’¹²⁹ This chance for sharing knowledge is an aspect of the United Nations force which is rarely explored in the Korean War historiography. Yet, as this evidence suggests, the collective nature of the response to the war clearly provided the valuable opportunity for professional development and knowledge exchange among the medical personnel who served. This chance for professional development was an unexpected positive outcome of the war.

In addition to visits, some Australian sisters were also occasionally detached to work in other units for periods of their Korean War service. During her service in Korea, RAANC Sister Dorothy Wheatley served for a period at the American 121 Evacuation Hospital in Seoul. For Dorothy, working with the Americans revealed a distinct difference between the Australian and US nursing cultures. As she recalled ‘having had an opportunity to work with the Americans, we had to do a lot of thinking about the way they operated because they operate quite differently.’¹³⁰ The difference, for Dorothy, related to the treatment of patients as well as the nursing styles. In relation to treatment procedures Dorothy recalled that patients were more often treated with antibiotics and blood transfusions following surgery:

¹²⁸ Britcom Comms Zone Med Unit War Diary, October 1953, WO 281/899, National Archives, Kew, England.

¹²⁹ Colonel Frank E. Hagman, MC, ‘The Role of the Professional Consultant,’ in *Medical Science Publication No. 4, Recent Advances in Medicine and Surgery Based on Professional Medical Experiences in Japan and Korea 1950-1953, vol. 2, Conference Proceedings, 19-30 April 1954* <http://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/korea/recad2/ch1-2.htm> [accessed 29 August 2009].

¹³⁰ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author.

one difference that I did notice over there, people that went to operating theatres when they came back from the operating theatres if they didn't have a blood transfusion or a drip in you'd think they were too far gone to worry about because everybody there [had one].¹³¹

In addition to different treatment procedures Dorothy felt the training received by United States sisters differed significantly to Australian training at the time:

They certainly were better educated than we were at that time. So they were very likely to get into very high tech things. Whereas we didn't do that. We nursed. And I think we believed that good nursing saves patients. And good medicine does too.¹³²

In Dorothy's view the United States sisters were more highly skilled and knowledgeable in regard to the medicine than Australian sisters who she considered more skilled in 'bedside nursing.'¹³³ This experience working in the US 121 Evacuation Hospital alongside United States sisters had a strong influence on Dorothy who was later influential in the move from hospital based training to university training for Australian sisters. Her role in this educational change will be discussed in chapter five.

While stationed in Korea, RAANC Sister Marjorie Ford volunteered her time on her rostered days off to work with the Canadian Field Dressing Station, 80 miles North of the BCCZMU. Closer to the front and working under tents was a different experience to working at the BCCZMU building:

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

it was very well done you know they had everything. But they were under tentage. They could pack up and leave in twenty four hours. But they had, they had wards and outpatients and all sorts of things.¹³⁴

Working with the Canadians, Marjorie was able to see how a mobile hospital unit worked in Korea, something which few Australian sisters had the chance to experience. She was also detached to the US hospital in Tokyo for a short period to ‘observe’ the running of the hospital.¹³⁵ Though she could not recall her exact observations Marjorie did recall that the hospital was a ‘marvellously run hospital’ and was also well equipped, ‘they had everything.’¹³⁶

RAAFNS Sister Nathalie Oldham, who was detached for a brief period of her service to work alongside United States Air Force sisters, also found the United States component to be better equipped:

During my first two weeks with the 801st, I performed medical air evacuation duties in C54s on four missions to Korea and found their methods to be just like ours but was most conscious of the abundance of facilities and equipment at their disposal.¹³⁷

Like, Marjorie, Nathalie was impressed with the well-equipped United States unit. The detachment to the United States component also allowed Nathalie to work closer to the front than most RAAFNS sisters experienced. She accompanied flight nurses performing ‘on-call medical evacuation services to forward strips and tactical airfields.’¹³⁸ During her detachment Nathalie also visited the United States hospital ship *Repose* which was anchored at Inchon Harbour. She was

¹³⁴ Marjorie Ford, interview with author.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Wittmann, ‘Wot’s Up, Doc,’ 391.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.

impressed by the hospital ship ‘... mainly because of its simple and complete representation of a large base hospital with professionally efficient wards and abundant facilities.’¹³⁹ The multinational nature of the Korean War forces provided the chance for some RAANC and RAAFNS Sisters to participate actively in different nursing cultures for short periods of time. As discussed in chapter three, these cultural work exchanges enhanced the training opportunities for military nurses which were developing during this period.

Interactions with Japanese Civilians

In addition to working as part of a multinational force, service in Japan also involved interactions with the civilian population. The views developed by the nurses of the Japanese civilians they encountered were largely positive although there were exceptions to this, as well as variations within the positive perceptions. In her examination of the participation of Australian women in the British Occupation of Japan, Roma Donnelly noted that although the Australian women felt an ‘antipathy towards the Japanese men’ a ‘mutual respect and liking soon developed between the Australians and the female domestic workers, known as housegirls, one of whom was allocated to every two women.’¹⁴⁰ The available evidence suggests that the Korean War era women had a very similar relationship with the civilian population in Japan. RAANC Sister Nan Hummerston who served in both the BCOF and Korean War periods echoed this sentiment in her own reflections on the Japanese population: ‘We liked the women, we didn’t like

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 391.

¹⁴⁰ Roma Donnelly, ‘The Forgotten Women: Women in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, 1946-1956,’ in *Relationships: Japan and Australia, 1870s-1950s*, ed. Vera Mackie and Paul Jones (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, Department of History, 2001), 199.

the men.’¹⁴¹ Given the overlap of the BCOF and BCFK periods it is not surprising that the interactions with the Japanese population were largely similar.

One particular example of the shared sentiments of BCOF and BCFK personnel in Japan was the common perception of the Japanese as ‘industrious.’ Oates noted amongst the BCOF troops ‘... growing admiration for the steady progress in national reconstruction...’¹⁴² A number of the RAANC nurses shared this admiration for the ‘industriousness’ of the Japanese mentioning it specifically in their personal narratives. RAANC Sister Dorothy Wheatley recalled one specific event which demonstrated to her how effective the Japanese were at re-building:

even though they were devastated by what had happened during the Second World War, they very quickly got back on their feet. For instance, there was a picture theatre not very far from where I was in Kure. It had burned to the ground. There’s a lot of burning that goes on in Japan because there are a lot of, it’s a lot of wooden structure. But they had, they had that theatre up and going within a week. They’d rebuilt it. They were very industrious people.¹⁴³

RAANC Sister Betty Hunt Smith, who noted that she was ‘a great admirer of the Japanese,’ was particularly impressed by the ‘hard working’ nature of the Japanese people she encountered:

And I found that yes the Japanese really, they were such hard working people they were wonderful the way they were trying so desperately to pull their land together and pull themselves together. It was wonderful I thought.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

¹⁴² Les Oates, ‘The Australian Experience of the Occupation, 1946 to 1952,’ in *Changing Histories: Australia and Japan*, ed. Paul Jones and Pam Oliver (Monash: Monash Asia Institute, 2001), 76.

¹⁴³ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author.

¹⁴⁴ Betty Hunt Smith, interview with Bill Bunbury.

This view of the Japanese as 'industrious' or 'hardworking' was certainly a positive one, although in some ways it replaced old wartime stereotypes with new ones. As Christine DeMatos has argued, the contact Australian women had with the Japanese during the BCOF and BCFK periods challenged the 'stereotypical cultural constructs' that had been promoted during the war, and on their return to Australia the women acted as 'a vanguard of changed attitudes towards the Japanese in post-war Australia.'¹⁴⁵ Certainly this view of the Japanese as industrious is an example of the newly formed positive opinions which many of the nurses took back to Australia when they returned. That they developed this particular view is not surprising. The experience of living in Japan in a period of re-construction would have easily led to a perception of its people as hard working. But as with any generalised perception, it also served to homogenise the civilian population. Thus the view of the overall civilian population, while positive, was superficial. The women were, as DeMatos has suggested, bringing home new perceptions of the Japanese civilians, which challenged wartime stereotypes, but in doing so they were contributing to the creation of a new stereotype. This is not to suggest of course that the Japanese were not industrious, rather that the view was somewhat superficial because it was a generalisation. The limited depth of the relationship between Australian women and the Japanese civilians was no doubt due to the fraternisation restrictions which were implemented in the BCOF era. As Donnelly explained, this restricted contact meant that most women 'saw only the physical Japan and little of its people and

¹⁴⁵ Christine De Matos, 'A Very Gendered Occupation: Australian Women as "Conquerors" and "Liberators"' (paper, University of Wollongong Faculty of Arts, 2007, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1186&context=artspapers> [accessed 31 August 2009]: 9.

customs.’¹⁴⁶ As a result, the closest relationships the nurses had with the Japanese people were usually with those who worked at the hospital.

RAANC Sister Marjorie Ford recalled working closely with Japanese staff when she was temporarily assigned to mess duty. As discussed in chapter three, as a trained nursing sister this task, which involved supervising the catering for the Officers mess, was considerably different to her usual duties and as a result she found it a ‘bit overwhelming.’¹⁴⁷ In spite of feeling daunted by this unusual assignment, the support of the Japanese staff in the mess made Marjorie’s task easier. As she described ‘... we had a wonderful Japanese staff, knew everything. Might have been hard to talk to, but they knew everything you know. And the wonderful Japanese, the Japanese cooks were marvellous, you know.’¹⁴⁸ Marjorie’s experience working closely on a day to day basis with the Japanese cooks allowed her to form a closer relationship with some of the Japanese civilians. Rather than having the Japanese civilian work for her, such as was the case with the domestic workers who will be discussed shortly, Marjorie worked with the Japanese mess staff and her comments reflect a respect for their abilities. RAAFNS Sister Cathie Daniel also had a positive view of the Japanese civilians whom she worked alongside on the composite base at Iwakuni. Cathie considered the Japanese civilians who were part of the ‘team’ on the base:

We had Japanese working on the airbase and we had them working as orderlies, you know not as orderlies but as cleaners, we had them in the kitchens, we had them in our houses and they were very, very there was never any tension or anything. But, when they went off the base, they all lived off the base they might have wanted to kill us for that matter, but there was not, you know. Actually on that base I don’t ever remember any problems with the Japanese working there or

¹⁴⁶ Donnelly, ‘A Civilising Influence,’ 136.

¹⁴⁷ Marjorie Ford, interview with author.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

with any of the different service personnel. You know that was quite an experience I think, to have that situation.¹⁴⁹

Cathie's experience of working with the Japanese civilians was a positive one, and she notes that there was 'never any tension or anything.'¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, her comment also suggests she did reflect on the fact that they were working alongside former enemies. Although her overall view of the Japanese civilians she worked alongside was positive and she felt that this was impressive, given the 'situation,' there is some uncertainty in her comments about the relationship. This is most evident in her reflection that although co-operative on the base, once off the base 'they might have wanted to kill us.'¹⁵¹ Given the overall context of the comment it is unlikely that Cathie actually believed this was the case, rather the comment reflects the uncertainty and ambiguity in relationships with former enemies and an occupied people. Additionally it seems there is no sense that Cathie engaged on an individual level with the civilians who worked on the base. Her comment is very general and makes no specific mention of individuals. In this way the civilians are portrayed as an homogenous group who are employed largely to carry out unskilled labour.

RAANC Sister Joan Crouch, who had served in World War Two, had more explicit reservations about working alongside former enemies. Her reflections clearly convey her mixed feelings about the situation:

I can't say that and I still have memories of what they did [in World War Two] and especially to our sisters, and especially the ones in Singapore ... But workwise

¹⁴⁹ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

they were very very good to work in the wards with and they were very good, very conscientious cleaners and so on.¹⁵²

The tension between feelings over earlier war atrocities and the positive experience of working with Japanese civilians is one example of the complexity of the relationship between the Australian nurses and the Japanese civilian population.

While the overall view held by the Australian nurses of the capabilities of Japanese workers in the hospital was quite positive, one particular debate over staffing suggests the official view was far less trusting. In 1952 a dispute erupted regarding the proposed replacement of European nursing orderlies at the BCGH in Japan with Japanese orderlies. Although it was regarded as ‘settled policy ... that that maximum use should be made of JAPANESE labour to save EUROPEAN military manpower’ objections were raised that such policy might be detrimental to the patients and the hospital.¹⁵³ In addition to an argument that a large number of European staff were needed in the hospital to act as reinforcements for the Korean forces it was suggested that a higher portion of Japanese orderlies would endanger patient welfare. The objection argued, that particularly due to language difficulties, the ‘standard of treatment and comfort of the patient would be lowered and so prolong his period of recovery. In certain cases it might imperil the patient’s recovery and even his life.’¹⁵⁴ The outcome of the dispute is unclear, however the fact that it occurred seems to be evidence of distrust in the

¹⁵² Joan Crouch, interview with Angie Michaelis, 24 February 1989, Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁵³ Integrated Establishments – BCFK British Commonwealth General Hospital, MP927/1, A96/4/17, NAA Melbourne.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

capabilities of the Japanese at the official level. Japanese orderlies were only seen as valuable in providing menial labour.

Another layer of the complexity of the relationships between the nurses and the Japanese women they encountered related to the Australian status as occupiers. This was most evident in the relationship between the Australia nurses and the domestic workers employed to clean their quarters. For both the RAANC and RAAFNS women, the closest relationships they had with the Japanese civilian population was with the women employed to carry out daily domestic duties in their quarters. The 'house girls' as they were commonly known had daily contact with the nurses, carrying out all their domestic duties. These domestic workers were assigned on a one to two ratio for officers and one to four for other ranks.¹⁵⁵

Christine deMatos has highlighted the complexities of the relationships between BCOF women and the domestic workers employed to clean their quarters. Not only were these relationships mediated by the politics of occupation and race, gender also played a significant role. Unlike the male BCOF participants, who tended to construct their relationships with Japanese women in sexual terms, the BCOF women saw the 'house girls' as representative of social status.¹⁵⁶ DeMatos has astutely outlined the complexities of the relationship:

The use of domestic workers was one tangible, daily practice where the Australian woman as occupier could visibly construct an asymmetrical relationship with the female (or male) occupied – a space where she could exert power over other women (and men) and enjoy a privileged, high-status lifestyle that she could never have accessed in Australia.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Colonel E.J. Bowe, 'Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,' RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.

¹⁵⁶ Christine De Matos, 'A Very Gendered Occupation,' 6

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6

This was particularly the case for the wives of BCOF servicemen, many of whom enjoyed the opportunity to adopt the life of a ‘Victorian lady’ in which their domestic chores were carried out by the domestic workers whom they often referred to as ‘servants.’¹⁵⁸ The relationship was arguably slightly different for the nurses who worked during BCOF and BCFK (Japanese domestic workers continued to be employed in the BCFK period) as, although their domestic chores were carried out by the Japanese workers, working in the hospital did not afford the same leisure lifestyle as experienced by the BCOF wives. The term ‘house girl’ itself is an interesting example of the patriarchal relationship. Many of the ‘house girls’ were actually older women, the tendency to refer to them as ‘girls’ is reflective of a patriarchal view of an occupied people. As DeMatos has argued this construction of the woman as ‘girl’ contradicted the BCOF policies of emancipation and ‘constructed and named the unequal relationship between the occupier and occupied within the domestic or private sphere of the Occupation.’¹⁵⁹ The relationship between the Korean War era nurses and their assigned ‘house girls’ varied in interesting ways. The personal narratives and photographs highlight differing relationships which varied from ambivalence to something perhaps close to friendship between the Australian and Japanese women.

RAANC Sister Betty Crocker was the most ambivalent in her reflections on the domestic worker employed in her quarters. Discussing her quarters, Betty recalled, ‘No we all had single rooms. And we had a maid. I mean it sounds very

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

luxurious doesn't it?' It is telling that the first mention of the 'maid' as Betty refers to her is combined with a description of the living quarters, as part of the living conditions, rather than in terms of interaction with another person. When asked to elaborate on the role of the 'maid' Betty responded simply, 'She just did whatever, had to make the bed and all that.'¹⁶⁰ The comment serves to minimise the work done by the Japanese domestic worker, who significantly remains unnamed in Betty's narrative. The presence of the domestic worker relieved Betty of the domestic drudgery but did not provide an opportunity for meaningful social interaction in her case. RAANC Sister Dorothy Wheatley also referred to the domestic worker employed in her quarters in terms of a hierarchical servant/master paradigm, but she was more reflective of the situation than Betty:

And we were very well looked after with help. You know, I think we were each given a person to look after our washing and ironing. It was unusual from my point of view. I found it difficult to get used to. But when you leave your washing in a certain spot and they pick it up and they, it's like a laundry and it comes back and it's all done. You quickly become used to that.¹⁶¹

Dorothy's comment suggests that the women were not always comfortable with the constructed relationship between themselves and the Japanese women, particularly having someone complete their household chores for them. Dorothy recalled that the situation was 'difficult to get used to.'¹⁶² The nurses may have had more trouble embracing the experience than the BCOF wives, given that they were themselves workers in Japan and often performed such domestic work themselves on the wards. Nevertheless, as Dorothy's comment indicates, they did eventually become 'used to' their domestic chores being completed. RAANC Sister Nell Espie's recollection was similar to Dorothy's in that she recalled

¹⁶⁰ Betty Crocker, interview with author.

¹⁶¹ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

becoming 'lazy' because all her domestic chores were completed for her.¹⁶³ Despite the inherent inequities within these relationships, the jobs were certainly valuable to the Japanese women as the work provided financial support for Japanese families struggling following the destruction of the war.

Other narratives reveal a more personal interest in the Japanese people. RAANC Sister Nan Hummerston spoke fondly of her 'house girl' using her name specifically, 'I had a marvellous girl Musaka.'¹⁶⁴ The comment, particularly the use of the word 'girl' in relation to a woman who may well have been older than Nan, does contain a colonialist patriarchal tone which implies ownership, which DeMatos has noted was characteristic of the BCOF women's discussions.¹⁶⁵ However, the fact that Nan recalls and uses the woman's name suggests some respect towards the domestic workers, or at least towards this particular woman. In addition to memories of the 'house girls,' two women interviewed for this study had photographs of their 'house girls' in their personal collections.

¹⁶³ Nell Espie, interview with author.

¹⁶⁴ Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

¹⁶⁵ Christine De Matos, 'A Very Gendered Occupation,' 7.



**Figure 32 – Japanese House-girl, Kure ,
Japan¹⁶⁶**



**Figure 33 – Pam Scholz with Japanese
House-girls and their families.¹⁶⁷**

The above photographs were part of the private photo albums of a RAANC and a RAAFNS Sister. Figure 32 is an image taken by RAANC Sister Nell Espie in Japan. The image is of Nell's 'house girl' standing in front of the RAANC quarters in Kure. Figure 33 was taken by RAAFNS Sister Cathie Daniel of fellow Sister Pam Scholz with their 'house girls' and their families. According to Cathie, Sister Scholz held the party for the house girls and their families before she returned to Australia. Both images suggest the Sisters wanted to remember the women. However, figure 32 appears to be a more detached image. The woman in the photograph seems happy, though perhaps a little uncomfortable to be posing for the camera. The women and their families in figure 33 seem slightly more at ease. But it is the setting of the two images which reveal the most about the relationships between the nursing Sisters and the Japanese women. Figure 32 shows the domestic worker, in uniform, in front of the house which contextualises her as a worker.

¹⁶⁶ Nell Espie collection, circa, 1952-1954.

¹⁶⁷ Cathie Daniel collection, circa 1952.

Figure 33 is a more ambiguous image. The photograph was taken at a farewell party held for the RAAFNS Sister pictured. The other subjects in the photograph are the domestic worker assigned to the house and her family. The image is clearly social and the gesture of the RAAFNS Sister placing her arm around the 'housegirl' suggests a sense of friendship, or at least some familiarity, between two. Yet there is also some evidence of formality in the photograph. The RAAFNS Sister is in uniform and many of the Japanese women are wearing kimonos, perhaps suggesting the event was somewhat formal, although it could also be evidence of a moment of cultural exchange. The participation of the families at the farewell and in the photograph also suggests a real warmth and friendship between the women. Both images, and in particular figure 33, indicate that the nurses had more than a superficial connection with the Japanese women employed as domestic workers, and that the presence of the images in their photo albums so many years later is evidence of a desire to remember these connections and an appreciation of the friendship.

Interactions with Korean Civilians

For the nurses stationed in Korea there were far fewer opportunities to interact with Korean civilians. Up until the armistice in 1953 the nurses who worked at the BCCZMU were restricted to the base and as a result saw little of Korea or its people. As a result few of the personal narratives detail interactions with the Korean people. Korean civilians were employed at the BCCZMU, however little is mentioned in official reports on these people, besides the numbers on staff. For

example the November 1952 report lists 44 Korean employees.¹⁶⁸ One exception to this is the November 1952 BCCZMU Matron's report which, among other things, details the work of Korean house-girls at the hospital. It is worth quoting this section at length as it gives an insight into the official attitude towards the Korean population employed at the base:

Two Korean house-girls are employed to look after the quarters and do the laundry. Training them has been a problem, as they are not very fond of work, and are quite unaccustomed to western ways. When the first pair of curtains was made, they were bewildered, but were sure that they should go on the bed. After some discussion, they used one as a bed spread, and placed the other between the sheets. One of the house-girls sometimes comes to work in a long velvet skirt, and a little satin jacket. In this costume she is allergic to any menial labour, and likes to stand around where she can be admired.¹⁶⁹

The tone of the report is certainly judgemental, and makes a point of deriding the Korean women employed at the hospital. It also uses the same term used for Japanese domestic workers, 'house-girls,' for the women employed on the base, implying little distinction between the two groups. The comments indicate an unnecessarily negative and superficial attitude to the Korean women employed on the base. Interestingly, the same story is recounted almost verbatim in a book detailing Canadian nurses' experiences in the war.¹⁷⁰ This is evidence that the story was not specifically a reflection of Australian attitudes towards the Korean women, rather an indication of broader Commonwealth perceptions. The fact that the story is told in an almost identical fashion in both Canadian and Australian accounts also suggests mythic qualities.

¹⁶⁸ Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, November 1952, WO281/898, 377994, National Archives, Kew, England.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canada's Nursing Sisters* (Toronto: Samuel Stevens Harkkert & Company, 1975), 215.

Not all Australian women adopted such an attitude. One exception to this is RAANC Sister Marjorie Ford, who was stationed in Korea in 1954, following the armistice. Marjorie did not speak extensively about the local people she encountered whilst serving in Korea, however her photographic collection of her time serving in the Korean War did contain a number of images of Korean civilians. A sample of three of these images can be seen below.



Figure 324 – Korean civilian in a local village.¹⁷¹



Figure 335 – Korean civilians gathering water in a local village.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ M Ford collection, circa, 1953-1955.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*



Figure 346 – ‘A Korean method of carriage.’¹⁷³

All three images are anthropological in style, recording the people that Marjorie met and their daily activities. In some ways they may also be viewed as examples of the ‘tourist gaze’ outlined earlier, in that Marjorie set out to record the village because it was distinctly different from her life in Australia. The style of figure 34, for example, the single woman standing diminutively in front of a dwelling is very similar to figure 32, Nell’s image of her ‘house girl.’ Both images reveal little about their subject, but suggest the photographer wished to record the particular context in which they had met the women. The purpose of figure 35 seems to be to record the daily activities of the civilians, it also seems to be highlighting the well, which perhaps was a reason for taking the image. Figure 36 is particularly interesting given that the back of the photograph was inscribed with the caption ‘a Korean method of carriage’.¹⁷⁴ There is a hint of orientalism in such a caption. Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said is, ‘a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”’.¹⁷⁵ The photograph is a record of

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, original caption.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 2.

difference, and seeks to highlight the dissimilarity between ‘Western’ culture and Korean culture that is further reinforced by the caption. All three images reveal a significant amount about the life and environment of their subjects, as well as the photographers’ interest in recording the cultural differences she observed.

The photographs suggest Nell was interested in the lives of the Korean civilians, although she had few opportunities to interact with them. RAANC Sister Barbara Probyn Smith was deeply interested in the plight of the South Korean population. In her memoir of her Korean War service Probyn Smith also included a distressing vignette which highlights the trauma the war caused for the civilian population:

One still time in Korea, from a hill we saw a group of refugees plodding so slowly on to somewhere. Through the field glasses I picked out a young child wrapped in rags, trudging through the snow, the ice, the mud – I saw that on the child’s back was another clump of loose rags inadequately covering something. I saw the ‘something’ was a tiny babe, the little eyes were still partially open – unseeing eyes in that frozen face, that little dead face.¹⁷⁶

This moving vignette perhaps also gives some insight into why few of the nurses spoke of their experiences with the Korean civilians. Witnessing the trauma caused by the war on the Korean population and having little opportunity to help was difficult for the nurses. Elsewhere in her memoir Barbara points this out ‘... we could do little for them. For security reasons it was forbidden for us to approach them. The memory of the sight of those War-bashed people, those other victims, still fills me with such incredible sadness.’¹⁷⁷ RAANC Sister Betty Crocker also recalled the difficulty she felt in not being able to treat Korean

¹⁷⁶ Probyn Smith, Barbara, ‘Sis,’ unpublished manuscript, PA Box 58, 01/144, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

‘wounded children’ she saw, ‘because they were not in the military category... .’ She noted that it was ‘very difficult for a nurse to ignore such suffering... .’¹⁷⁸ Although there was often little the nurses could do to help the civilians they encountered, there were occasional opportunities to contribute to the local community in Korea after the armistice.

As was evident in both Barbara and Betty’s narratives the plight of the Korean children particularly moved the Commonwealth nurses. During her service in Korea, British Sister Jilly McNair visited a ‘Myung Jin,’ a Korean Orphanage, in Seoul.¹⁷⁹ McNair, who bought chocolate bars and small gifts for the children before visiting the orphanage, recalled feeling inadequate about the level of assistance she was able to provide.¹⁸⁰ The narrative also details the support provided to that particular orphanage, which was severely damaged during the war, ‘At our BC Z MU we tried to help Myung Jin in Seoul as much as was possible.’¹⁸¹ One example of this support was supplying the orphanage with ‘stores.’¹⁸² The BCCZMU War Diary also provides evidence that it contributed to supporting the Korean orphans. On Christmas Day in December 1953 the War Diary records, ‘Korean Orphans gave a concert in NAAFI Unit Canteen for Staff and patients followed by lunch for the Korean Orphans.’¹⁸³ The British Commonwealth medical staff were not alone in their contributions to South Korean orphanages. In the early fluid stages of the war US flight Sisters were

¹⁷⁸ Betty Lawrence to Darryl McIntyre, April 4 1982 Official History, Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O’Neill, Official Historian. Australian Army – medical services, AWM89, J26, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁷⁹ E.J. McNair, *Shadows of the Far Forgotten*, 188-190.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁸³ Britcom Cmns Zone Med Unit War Diary, December 1953, WO281/899, National Archives, Kew, England.

involved in a mass evacuation 'of a thousand Korean War orphans, in fourteen aircraft from Kimpo to the United States via Japan.'¹⁸⁴ Numerous Australian voluntary organisations also provided support to the millions of displaced Korean civilians.¹⁸⁵

In addition to helping the Korean children, RAANC nurses occasionally spent their off duty hours volunteering at a British Red Cross operated TB (tuberculosis) hospital in Korea. Marjorie Ford recalled,

the British Red Cross had this place down the coast and often on our days off we'd go down there ... we'd work down there for our days off. So we didn't really have any days off, because we used to go down there and work.¹⁸⁶

This voluntary work was indicative of the compassion of the RAANC Sisters and their desire to help the civilians affected by the war. Like most voluntary work this is a hidden contribution to the war, not listed in official reports. There is also evidence that contributions were made to the local community in Japan. In March 1956, as the BCFK forces were preparing to return to Australia the RAANC other ranks contributed 33 pounds, from their remaining mess funds to the 'Garden of Light Orphanage.'¹⁸⁷ Although it seems that they did not have the same voluntary work opportunities at this orphanage.

¹⁸⁴ Linda Witt, et.al, "*A Defense Weapon Known to be of Value*," 195.

¹⁸⁵ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War* (Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2008), 183.

¹⁸⁶ Marjorie Ford, interview with author.

¹⁸⁷ Monthly Report RAANC BCGH Japan, May 1956, AWM14, 130/481/12/70, AWM, Canberra.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Japan and Korea were, in many ways, different worlds for the RAANC and RAAFNS women who were stationed there. Living in Japan and Korea offered opportunities to interact and learn from people from different cultures, not only other United Nations personnel but also, to a more limited extent, South Korean and Japanese civilians. As well as being foreign countries the world was also mediated by the military with far more regulations and restrictions than that experienced by civilian nurses in Australia.

This chapter has demonstrated a hitherto unexamined aspect of the nature of working as part of a Commonwealth team within a United Nations force. As part of a composite force both the RAANC and RAAFNS women were exposed to different nursing cultures. For some, this exposure reinforced their appreciation of the Australian system, which they believed allowed more opportunities for independent nursing than the British system. Working with the United States forces, in contrast, often prompted the women to reflect on how well equipped the United States medical teams were in comparison. For Dorothy, the experience working with United States nurses completely changed her perspective on the Australian civilian training system.

Working alongside civilians also prompted varied viewpoints, which again serves to highlight that there was no singular experience of nursing in the Korean War. Some nurses were ambivalent about the civilians they encountered, others gained a new respect for the people. A number of women admired the Japanese people for their industrious nature, and were particularly influenced by the resilience of

the Japanese particularly after seeing the destruction of Hiroshima first hand. For some, living in Japan provided an opportunity for sympathy for a former enemy that many at home could not muster. Most women were also sympathetic to the plight of the South Korean civilians, which contrasts strongly with the judgemental view of Korean house-girls outlined in the Matron's report.¹⁸⁸ Living in Japan and Korea during the Korean War for better or worse, gave the women new perspectives on nursing, culture, war, destruction and life. As with earlier generations of military nurses, life in Japan and Korea was profoundly different to their lives at home. Nevertheless, the photographs and oral histories suggest the women, for the most part, enjoyed these new experiences which have made a lasting impression on their lives. The next chapter will assess the impact of the Korean War on the lives of the nurses, through the themes return, recognition and remembering.

¹⁸⁸ Betty Hunt Smith, interview with Bill Bunbury.

CHAPTER FIVE

‘The Lone Poppy in the Field:’

Return, Recognition and Remembering

I was the only one here, so there was nobody here. Many who had joined after had all moved away and the reserve girls, we didn't know them. And there was no sort of group or anything. I was sort of the lone poppy in the field.¹

Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC) other rank nursing assistant Shirley McEwen was one of the many women discharged from the RAANC on marriage. On her return to Perth she married her fiancée whose proposal she had received in the mail while stationed at Kure. Living on the west coast of Australia, Shirley felt disconnected and isolated from the veteran community. As an other rank nursing assistant who had served with the Korean forces, she felt she did not belong to any group. She had not served in World War Two, so had little in common with the Australian Army Medical Women's Services (AAMWS) nursing assistants. Most of the RAANC other ranks she had served with in Japan did not live in Western Australia. The only other RAANC other ranks in the west were members of the Citizen's Military Forces (CMF). These 'reserve girls,' as Shirley refers to them, also had little in common with her, as they did not serve overseas. As a result, Shirley's identity as a returned nurse was ambiguous and her support networks limited.

Shirley's story of returning home reveals themes, such as the ambiguity of the status of the returned nurses as veterans and the isolation some felt on returning

¹ Shirley McEwen (now Bennetts), interview with author, Innaloo, Western Australia, 29 November 2007, tape in possession of author.

home, which were common to other Korean War nurses. These issues will be explored in this chapter. Like their experiences during the war, the women's lives when they returned home were characterised by diversity and shared experiences. Although many returned to pursue significantly different lives, they were connected by their ambiguous position as veterans of the war. This chapter will explore the lives of the women after their return from the war through three themes: return, recognition and remembering.

The theme of return will highlight the diversity of experiences, which ranged from raising families to lifelong careers in the Army. A key theme of this thesis has been the continuities in experience with earlier generations of nurses and this chapter will show that the experiences of returning home did, in some cases, mirror those of earlier nurses. However, it will also illustrate the new opportunities that were opening up for the Korean War nurses who wished to pursue military careers back in Australia.

The theme of recognition will examine the ambiguous status of Australia's Korean War nurses and in particular those who served in Japan. The exclusion of these women from the nominal roll and the debates surrounding their entitlements will also be explored. At the same time the chapter will highlight the increasing public recognition of the Korean War and to a far more limited extent, the Australian military nurses who served. This will illustrate that although the Korean War is becoming a less forgotten war, the female participants remain in the shadows of history. Finally through the theme of remembering, the chapter

will conclude the thesis by exploring the memories and reflections of the women themselves.

Return

One of the conditions of engagement for members of the Australian women's services, including the RAANC and RAAFNS was that married women were 'not to be appointed or enlisted' and those serving were discharged on marriage.² The rule caused serious retention rate issues for the women's services, which was noted by the RAANC Matron-in-Chief on her visit to Japan in 1954. 'One feature among the RAANC is the wastage because of marriage' she wrote. 'This, of course, is not a solvable problem. It is mentioned only because of the high incidence.'³ The low retention rate due to marriage was not a new issue for the RAANC. In fact, during World War Two the policy was overturned in order to retain women who married. In 1944 married nurses were prevented from resigning.⁴ The policy was reversed in August 1945 to comply with the standard rules of the day, so during the Korean War the discharge on marriage rule was official policy. That the RAANC recognised the retention problems associated with the discharge on marriage rule but felt it was not a 'solvable problem,' is indicative of the persistence of the ideology of the period which constructed married women as best suited to the home. As a result of this ideology, the RAANC and RAAFNS lost many talented and experienced nursing sisters. For example, RAAFNS records indicate that at least 11 of the 21 RAAFNS sisters

² Memorandum, 29 August 1950, Pay and Allowances – Women's Services, MP927/1, A247/1/38, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Melbourne.

³ Colonel E.J. Bowe, 'Visit to Japan Korea and Hong Kong 26 April to 31 May 1954,' RAANC Clothing in Korea, MP927, A61/1/55, NAA, Melbourne.

⁴ Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing From the Boer War to the Gulf War* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), 172.

who served in Korea were eventually discharged on marriage.⁵ Not only did this rule result in the women's services losing valuable members, it also signalled an abrupt end to military nursing careers for women who were forced to choose between their personal and professional lives. Of course such discrimination was a feature of the era and was not limited to the military. As Marilyn Lake has argued, 'equal pay and equal opportunity were elusive goals' for the majority of women workers in this period.⁶ For instance married teachers in Victoria were also prevented from working during this period with the implementation of the 1889 *Public Service Amendment Act* which placed a ban on married women working. The ban on Victorian women teaching was repealed, following the activist work of a group of women teachers, in 1956.⁷ The bar on married women working in the Commonwealth Public Service was also lifted in 1966, following the extensive activism of Australian feminists.⁸ The RAANC unfortunately took considerably longer. The regulation was not changed until 1970.⁹

Both the RAANC other rank nursing assistants interviewed for this study were discharged on marriage, leaving Japan to marry their respective fiancées. Shirley McEwen returned home to Perth after receiving a proposal in the mail. Gerry Roberts met Royal Australian Navy sailor Neville Fleming in Japan and after a brief five-month courtship returned to Australia to marry him.¹⁰ Shirley's and

⁵ 'Royal Australian Air Force Numerical Register of Enlistments Pay Ledger Section,' Historical information and general development of the RAAF Nursing Service - Nominal Roll 1940-1952, original and carbon copy, AWM 137, 2/5, Australian War Memorial (AWM), Canberra.

⁶ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 212.

⁷ Donna Dwyer, 'Justice at Last?: The Temporary Teachers Club and the *Teaching Service (Married Women) Act 1956*,' *Labour History* no. 91 (November 2006): 152.

⁸ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 212.

⁹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 192.

¹⁰ Geraldine (Gerry) Roberts (now Fleming), interview with author, Sefton, New South Wales, 31 May 2007, tape in possession of author.

Gerry's narratives of these events do not suggest that these were unhappy events in their lives. Rather they were happy occasions tinged with some sadness at having to leave behind a nursing career. Shirley described these mixed feelings, 'But no, I was very happy to be coming home. Although I was sad that I was going to miss out on a lot of the nursing work. I enjoyed being a nurse.'¹¹ Gerry's wedding photograph, figure 37, provides an illustration of the dichotomy created by the marriage rule between male and female service personnel.



Figure 357 Gerry and her husband Neville Fleming at their wedding, Queensland, 1955.¹²

Her husband is in uniform in the photograph, thus making it clear that he is both the groom and a sailor. Gerry, on the other hand, is wearing traditional bridal attire. Her background as a member of the RAANC is not in any way evident. Her identity as a military nurse is subsumed by the new identity as bride and then wife and mother.

¹¹ Shirley McEwen, interview with author.

¹² Gerry Roberts collection.

Nancy (Nan) Hummerston, pictured below on her wedding day, had the same experience.

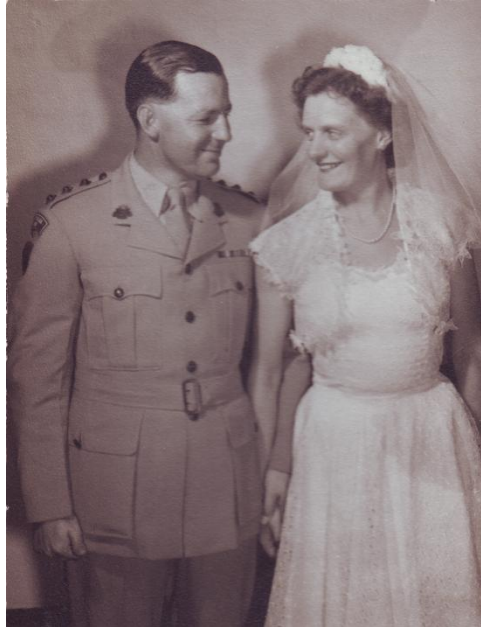


Figure 38 – Ken and Nan Hummerston on their wedding day, Japan, 1950.¹³

Nan also married a serviceman. While working in Japan as a nursing sister in the RAANS during the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) period, Nan met and married Captain Ken Hummerston, who was Aide de Camp to BCOF Commander-in-Chief then Lieutenant-General Robertson. The wedding was held in Japan in August 1950 and reported on in BCOF newspaper *Japan News*.¹⁴ Nan recalled that it was a ‘very big wedding’ and guests included ‘embassy people’ and Lieutenant – General Sir Horace Robertson who gave the couple a ‘beautiful wood chest.’¹⁵ There was clearly a strong military presence at the wedding. Nevertheless, like Gerry, Nan dressed in a traditional bridal gown

¹³ Nan Hummerston collection.

¹⁴ *Japan News*, August 22, 1950, 3.

¹⁵ Nancy (Nan) Hummerston, interview with author, Launceston, Tasmania, 6 December 2007, tape in possession of author.

and is unrecognisable as a RAANS sister. Her husband, like Neville, clearly has a dual identity as a soldier and groom. That the women wore traditional bridal gowns was not surprising. It would have been highly unusual for the bride to wear a service uniform or anything other than the traditional attire and by the time of their weddings they had been discharged anyway. The images, rather than demonstrating a difference, highlight the apparent ease of reabsorbing women into mainstream traditions following their discharge. In spite of the career-focused RAANC recruitment campaigns outlined in chapter two, service in the military remained transitory. It was a limited career which filled the period between school and marriage. Those who did pursue long army careers, such as Nell Espie, did not marry. The photos are also symbolic of their shift from military nurses to civilian wives.

Following her wedding, Nan remained at Kure in family quarters, thus changing her position in BCOF from military nurse to wife. Tragically her marriage was short-lived as her husband was killed in Korea seven weeks after their wedding.¹⁶ As a widow, she later rejoined the RAANC to serve again as a military nursing sister. Nan's identity changed from military nurse, to wife, then widow and once again to military nurse.

The story of Shirley Bennetts' life, after returning home, illustrates that, although the discharge on marriage rule prevented her from paid caring work, there were alternative ways to contribute. After returning home and beginning married life, Shirley initially felt lost without the focus of paid work:

¹⁶ *Japan News*, October 6, 1950, 4.

So we got married we went away for a few days and then came back and just got on with life. He went back to work and of course you couldn't work when you were married then so, I don't know, I suppose I filled the time in.¹⁷

The pauses and unfinished sentences in Shirley's comment echo the difficulty she had with losing the opportunity to work once married. Yet, in the years that followed, Shirley found a way to contribute beyond the sphere of paid work, using voluntary work to satisfy her desire to participate in caring work. Shirley joined the Red Cross working at the Repatriation General Hospital, Hollywood in Western Australia:

After I joined Red Cross, I used to work down at Hollywood hospital at the wards, helping out. You know the blood banks and things like that down there. And I used to work doing that. And then I used to work at Blood Bank, helping out there in the clinic. And actually everything after that was like with Red Cross I did all sorts of things.¹⁸

This is not the stereotypical 'Lady Bountiful' act of volunteering of a middle-class, middle-aged woman helping those less fortunate. Although it may have been construed as such by some second-wave feminists who believed such unpaid caring work was 'simply an extension of women's domestic labour,' a way of keeping women occupied with domestic tasks so they would not challenge the dominate power structure.¹⁹ Perhaps, but Shirley's case also suggests that volunteering was a way of continuing to pursue an interest in the nursing field in spite of the marriage rule. Though unpaid, to Shirley it was nevertheless an opportunity to 'work' and use the skills she had developed in her paid career. In

¹⁷ Shirley McEwen, interview with author.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Volunteering: Why We Can't Survive Without It* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), 21–22.

1950s Australia volunteering was the only avenue for a married nurse to continue caring, if not nursing, work.

Although it was certainly common, marriage was not the only reason women chose to leave military nursing. After returning from Japan, RAANC Sister Nora Hayles worked at a camp hospital at Puckapunyal caring for national servicemen. The nursing work was quite different from that she had undertaken in Japan. Nora recalled that 'it was mostly medical, very, there wasn't much surgical work done there.'²⁰ The lack of surgical work apparently influenced Nora's decision to leave the Army, saying simply that she left because 'there wasn't the work to do.'²¹ Nora thrived on military nursing work during war but nursing in the camp hospitals was more routine and did not involve the surgical work that characterised military nursing on active service. Therefore, although military nursing was increasingly being promoted as a long-term career during this period, Nora maintained a more traditional association of military nursing with war and did not choose to continue her military nursing career in the Australian camp hospitals during peacetime.

After the death of her husband, Nan Hummerston rejoined the RAANC and returned to Japan. She resigned for the second time in order to return to Australia to support her sick uncle. Nan recalled that she did consider rejoining for a third time but decided against it:

²⁰ Nora Trethewie (née Hayles), interview with Jan Bassett, 23 May 1987, S01809, AWM, Canberra.

²¹ *Ibid.*

I could have gone back a third time. I thought, I didn't want to go to some little Army outpost, you know. I didn't, I wouldn't want to go down to Puckapunyal or some of those very uninspiring ... I did a short time there and I thought no. But it was, you were only looking after boys who had bad throat infections and different things like that. That's not very exciting nursing.²²

Both accounts suggest that the nurses were interested in 'war work' or trauma nursing, with the more routine medical nursing duties associated with camp hospitals not sustaining their interest.

Others like RAANC Sister Marjorie Ford tired of the travelling associated with military life. Marjorie recalled that after completing her five-year engagement with the RAANC she had 'had enough' of travelling and wanted to 'stay put.'²³ Marjorie did indeed 'stay put' spending the majority of her civilian nursing career working at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne.²⁴

RAANC Sister Dorothy Wheatley also left military nursing in order to pursue a career in the civilian nursing sector. Dorothy's experiences working with the US sisters during the Korean War changed her perspective on nursing education and as a result, when she returned home, Dorothy recalls that she 'thought about this education question.'²⁵ While still in the Army, Dorothy completed a Diploma in Education at the Royal College of Nursing, Australia, then went on to work at the School of Army Health at Healesville, Victoria. After 10 years with the RAANC, Dorothy decided it was time to move on as she 'wanted to do other things.'²⁶ After leaving the RAANC, Dorothy met up with a former colleague who offered

²² Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

²³ Marjorie Ford, interview with author, 23 April 2008, Melbourne, tape in possession of author.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author, Sydney, New South Wales, 7 January 2008, tape in possession of author.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

her a position as a 'nurse educator' at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in Perth. Through working at the hospital, for the next 25 years, Dorothy had the opportunity to pursue her passion for nursing education. Dorothy recalls her time at the hospital with a great sense of achievement:

It was a good hospital, she stuck to her word and she allowed me to do what I wanted to do with the educational system there, and that was good. And during that time I did a Diploma of Nursing Administration. And then I did another, I thought I'd do something else, I did a Bachelor of Applied Science at Curtin University at Perth. The hospital allowed me to do that on a part-time basis, so I did a full-time degree course in three years as well as doing my job. So that was a hard grind but however. But I was very heavily involved in the transfer of nursing education from hospitals to universities what we wanted ultimately to do was to change the hospital over to university status. And we did that.²⁷

Dorothy retired when the last hospital-based school ended. Dorothy's nursing career from the Korean War onwards was therefore focused on nursing education, and in particular transforming the Australian hospital-based system to the university-based system that she had admired when working with American nurses during the war. Although she did not remain in the Army, Dorothy's experiences in the Korean War were clearly influential in her later nursing career.

Not all of the Korean War era nurses left the Army. RAANC Sister Nell Espie was one woman who decided to continue her career in the military. After joining the RAANC in July 1951 and serving with the RAANC in Japan and Korea, from July 1952 until April 1954, Nell built a successful military nursing career, serving in Vietnam then culminating her service with an appointment as Lieutenant-

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Colonel and Matron-in-Chief of the RAANC in January 1971.²⁸ Reflecting on her decision to stay in the Army Nell recalled,

Well, I decided I had to make up me mind whether I should stay or what. I enjoyed it so much, I enjoyed looking after the diggers, they're good patients. So I thought well I might as well sign up ... I just stayed and did my time.

Nell began by saying that she stayed on because she enjoyed the work, but as she elaborated on her reasons for staying, it became clear that her continued commitment to the RAANC was connected to the traditions of military nursing and respect for the patients. Caring for the 'diggers,' in war or peace sustained her interest in a military nursing career. There is a sense of service in her recollections, 'I just stayed and did my time' which suggests identification with the earlier traditions of military nursing. The 'sense of duty' that Bassett suggests was a motivating factor for World War Two sisters to join the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS), is echoed in Nell's decision to stay in the Army on her return.²⁹ Although she may have also appreciated the professional opportunities a military nursing career afforded her, it is the tradition of service, and in particular service to the diggers that was most prominent in her narrative. For Nell, her military nursing career connected her to a tradition of military nursing of which she was particularly proud. In response to an Annual Review in 1964, Nell elaborated on her commitment to the RAANC:

As a member of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps, I am well aware of the traditions of the Corps that have been handed down to the present members, and I feel the standards which we endeavour to maintain cannot be too high.³⁰

²⁸ Espie, Nellie Jane, B2458, F64, NAA, Melbourne.

²⁹ Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, 114.

³⁰ Espie, Nellie Jane, B2458, F64, NAA, Melbourne.

Thus, Nell perceived her military nursing career as being part of a continuum, connected not only to the conflicts in which she served, but also to the military nursing tradition. Although Nell clearly felt a strong connection to the Australian military nursing tradition, her lifelong military career actually marks a distinct separation from those traditions. Prior to the Korean War, military nurses served only for the duration of the conflict. The creation of the RAANC in 1951 and the new emphasis on career within the RAANC was a major shift in the conception of the role of Australian military nurses. Nell, therefore, was one of the first career military nurses. Nell was not the only Korean War nurse to reach such high ranks in the Australian Army. Fellow Korean War nurse, Brigadier Perdita McCarthy, who also served in Papua New Guinea and BCOF was ‘the first Australian army nurse to be promoted to the rank of Brigadier.’³¹

Nell was not the only career military nurse who served during the Korean War. A number of the RAAFNS sisters who eventually rose to the position of Matron-in-Chief served in the Korean War. RAAFNS Sister Charlotte Joan McRae was Matron-in-Chief of the RAAFNS for the duration of the Korean War, holding the position until her retirement in 1967. In her capacity as Matron-in-Chief, McRae visited the British Commonwealth General Hospital (BCGH) in Japan and British Commonwealth Communications Zone Medical Unit (BCCZMU) in Korea. She was not only a significant figure because of her role as Matron-in-Chief

³¹ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War* (Canberra: DVA, 2008), 189.

throughout the conflict, but she was also the first woman to ‘receive a permanent commission’ in 1952.³²

Sister Helen Cleary joined the RAAFNS in 1943 and was one of the earliest members involved in medical air evacuation duties, serving in New Guinea, Borneo and Singapore in the evacuation of returning prisoners of war as well as teaching the first Australian post-war medical air evacuation course. From 1952 until mid-1953 she was the senior sister at Iwakuni. After the Korean War, she continued a career in the RAAFNS reaching the position of Matron-in-Chief in 1967 and retiring from that position and the RAAFNS in 1969.³³ RAAFNS Sisters Betty Docker and Betty Edwards, who also rose to the position of Matron-in-Chief, had also served in Japan and Korea.³⁴ These examples illustrate the Korean War and the 1950s in particular as significant turning points in Australia’s military nursing history in which military nursing service became a viable career for women rather than only a contribution to a specific war effort. Although this signified a new era for Australian military nursing, the earlier volunteer traditions remained significant to those who served, as Nell’s earlier narrative illustrates.

The return home from the Korean War was a diverse experience for the women who served, ranging from marriage and domesticity, to civilian nursing careers and lifelong military nursing careers. Again, the Korean War era nurses eschew simple categorisation. Although their lives had each been affected in some way by the Korean War, few ever returned to Korea or Japan. This is not to say that there

³² Gay Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service, 1940–1990* (Metung: Nungurner Press, 1994), 376.

³³ *Ibid.*, 381–384.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 385–402.

were not opportunities to return to South Korea, in fact there have been a number of organised ‘pilgrimages’ there for Australian veterans organised by South Korea, ‘a host anxious to acknowledge the Australian contribution to the United Nations force as something worthwhile in its own right...’³⁵ Such visits are not just available to Australians. As a member of the British Korean Veterans Association, Jillian McNair took up the opportunity to return to South Korea on a visit sponsored by the Korean Veterans’ Association.³⁶ For some women, a return trip to Korea held no particular interest. RAAFNS Sister Cathie Daniel expressed no particular desire to revisit Korea although she said she ‘wouldn’t mind going back to Japan, to see the changes there.’³⁷ In fact, on her return to Australia she was more interested in travelling to Canada in order to reconnect with the Canadians she had met in Japan and Korea. After enjoying work with a number of Canadian medical staff Cathie decided to work in Canada following her discharge from the Army, as she had ‘tons of contacts to find work in Canada.’³⁸ Unfortunately, her father fell ill and she was forced to cancel her plans. Cathie did finally travel to Canada in 1981 with her sister and another friend and was able to make contact with a Canadian Red Cross worker she had met during the war.

Of the nurses interviewed for this study, only two women, RAANC Sisters Betty Hunt-Smith and Nan Hummerston described their participation in a trip to South Korea. There are no available records to indicate how many Australian nurses participated in these organised events, or were invited to participate for that

³⁵ Richard Trembath, *A Different Sort of War Australians in Korea 1950-1953* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly, 2005), 177.

³⁶ E.J. McNair, *A British Army Nurse in the Korean War: Shadows of the Far Forgotten* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2007), 218.

³⁷ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

matter. Betty Hunt-Smith participated in a re-visit to Korea in 1989. Like Nan, Betty's husband was a Korean veteran and, like Nan, Betty did not serve in Korea.³⁹ It seems possible that the women were invited on the visits because of their husbands' service, not their own. For Betty the beauty of Korea was a highlight of her trip: 'It's such a beautiful place you know, it's really wonderful.'⁴⁰

Nan Hummerston participated in 'several trips to Korea' including visiting the 38th parallel and the Pusan (Busan) Cemetery.⁴¹ Visiting Korea Nan was both a returning veteran and a widow. She recalled that during her visit the South Korean people were extremely apologetic about the death of her husband:

Of course they all knew that Ken had been killed there and they used to make me feel as though they, you know they were responsible. I said, you weren't even born. I said the older men yes, but not you people. I said you can't be blamed for that. You can't. I said you just can't be blamed. You know it was one of those terrible tragedies of war. But, they were extremely and they'd say so sorry, they used to, it almost embarrassed me.⁴²

Nan, perhaps more than any other woman in this study, remained the most connected to Korea, although she did not actually serve there herself. The above vignette highlights that this connection is at least as much associated with her status as a war widow than as a returned nurse. As she had not served in Korea herself, the significance of the place was linked more to her husband's service, than to her own. The vignette also highlights that although she suffered the greatest personal loss as a result of the war, she bears no ill will towards the South Korean people. In fact, reflecting on her visits to Korea she recalled, 'But I like

³⁹ Betty Hunt-Smith, interview with Bill Bunbury, 26 November 1998, S01910, AWM, Canberra.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Korea, beautiful country. You know in the spring with all the Cherry Blossom and it's immaculate, you see.'⁴³

Of all Nan's revisits to South Korea, the most poignant was certainly her last. In 2008, aged 91, Nan passed away. Her last wish was to be buried alongside Ken at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery in Pusan (Busan). This wish was fulfilled by Colin Berryman, an Australian Korean War veteran, who carried her ashes to South Korea on a re-visit in April 2010. After a brief burial ceremony, Nan's ashes were placed alongside Ken's grave, last rites were read and the couple reunited after 68 years.⁴⁴

Recognition

One aspect of re-visit tours to Korea was the South Korean government's extensive recognition program which involved, among other activities, ceremonies and the issuing of Ambassadors for Peace Medals to those participating in the tours.⁴⁵ On one revisit tour Nan was proud to receive one such medal. Receiving this medal was significant to her, enough so that she brought out a photograph of the event during our interview. The medal commemorated her contribution to the Korean War, not her husband's. It was also particularly significant because, unlike some other forms of commemoration which will be discussed shortly, her service in Japan was acknowledged as making a valuable contribution to the Korean War effort. The significance for Nan is further evidenced by the following photograph which remains part of her collection. The

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Mark Dodd, 'Last wish fulfilled in wartime love story,' *The Australian*, 15 April 2010.

⁴⁵ See Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 176.

photograph further highlights the distinction of recognition, with Nan proudly receiving a medal from a South Korean government official. The Australian Government has not given her such recognition.



Figure 39 Nan Hummerston receiving a Korean peace medal, South Korea, 1991.⁴⁶

Although she did not participate in a revisit program, RAAFNS Sister Nathalie Oldham experienced a similar sense of pride when she received recognition on a more personal level from a South Korean couple she met in Australia:

Five children later, while my husband was serving in Vietnam, I returned to nursing as an infant health sister in the ACT and was consulted by a young Korean couple with a baby. The husband was enrolled at the Australian National University. When he said that they came from Seoul, I remarked that I had served there as a nurse during the Korean War. He rose from his seat, bowed deeply and said “Thank you Ma’am.” About a fortnight later, they visited again and he presented me with a small, exquisite, hand-woven trinket basket, which I treasure. Despite the passage of over four decades, the Koreans have not forgotten the service and sacrifice given by Australians.⁴⁷

Although Nathalie experienced recognition from only one South Korean couple on a very personal level, as opposed to the official ceremony Nan participated in,

⁴⁶ Nan Hummerston collection.

⁴⁷ Nathalie Wittmann, ‘Wot’s Up, Doc?’ in *Korea Remembered*, ed. Maurie Pears and Fred Kirkland (Georges Heights: Doctrine Wing Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 2002), 393.

both women were clearly touched by the recognition they received from South Korean people. Recognition from the Australian Government was a more ambiguous process.

Recognition from the Australian Government for Australian veterans of the Korean War was a slow process for which the Korean Veterans' Associations of Australia tirelessly lobbied. The Australian Active Service Medal 1945 to 1975 with the Korea clasp was not issued until 1997 and the Australian National Korean Memorial on Anzac Parade, Canberra was only unveiled in 2000. That the process took so long only served to reinforce veterans' perceptions of Korea as the forgotten war. As Trembath has stated, the eventual recognition in turn began to mediate this feeling.⁴⁸ Those who served in Korea following the armistice have also recently gained recognition, with the approval of the Australian General Service Medal for those who served in Korea between 28 July 1953 and 19 April 1956 (the post-armistice period).⁴⁹ Although the RAANC and RAAFNS women who served in Korea are covered in the conditions for the above awards, broader recognition for the Korean War nurses was complicated by a number of other factors.

The first issues over recognition of the service of Australian nurses emerged during the war and were not only related to recognition in the commemorative sense, but also to the lack of appropriate compensation for the work they performed. The issue of flying pay for the RAAFNS sisters stationed in Japan, all of whom undertook air evacuation duties to and from Korea of up to 80 hours per

⁴⁸ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 178-179.

⁴⁹ Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, no. S 20, Wednesday 3 March, 2010.

month, was first raised in May 1952. Given that they had specialist training and were 'virtually members of the crew' it was argued that RAAFNS sisters on air evacuation duties should receive 3/- flying pay per day. The male pilots received flying pay. The nurses, who worked under the same conditions in the same aircraft, did not. The argument put forward was quite compelling:

They are responsible for both the actual care of the sick and wounded during flight, and advice to the Captain on such matters as desirable altitude limitations having regard to the medical condition of their patients. It is therefore considered that they should receive some recognition for the additional duties.⁵⁰

Initially it seemed that recognition may have been awarded, with an Air Board Minute recording on 6 June 1952 'in principle' support to the recommendations.⁵¹

However, once the proposal reached the Department of Treasury, support for the recommendations faded. In its response, the Department of Treasury argued that flying pay should not be awarded as nurses 'could not be regarded as members of the crews of the M.A.E.T.U. aircraft to the same extent as pilots, navigators etc.' Furthermore it was suggested that awarding flying pay would separate flying duties from other nursing duties, placing air evacuation duties 'at a premium.' Finally it was argued that other members, such as 'nursing orderlies' or 'photographers,' might also make claims for flying pay if nurses were awarded the same flying status as aircrew.⁵² D.R. Chapman, Group Captain of the No. 91 Composite Wing at Iwakuni, made one final appeal for the RAAFNS sisters, arguing that in flight the women are 'subjected to extremes of climatic

⁵⁰ 'Air Board Agendum Number 12323,' 26 May 1952, DPS [Director of Personnel Services], RAAF Nursing Service, Proposal for Aircrew Status and/or Flying Pay, A705, 161/1/2582, NAA, Canberra.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² H.C. Newman, to Secretary, Department of Air, 28 August 1952, DPS [Director of Personnel Services], RAAF Nursing Service, Proposal for Aircrew Status and/or Flying Pay, A705, 161/1/2582, NAA, Canberra.

conditions,' their duties were arduous, they are 'subjected to the same flying hazards as the aircrew with whom they fly' and that in their 12-month tours of duty RAAFNS sisters 'fly between 500 and 800 hours.'⁵³ In spite of almost a year's worth of lobbying, on 23 January 1953 RAAF Headquarters, Iwakuni was advised that the request for flying pay was 'for various reasons' not approved.⁵⁴ The arguments for flying pay were compelling, nevertheless the RAAFNS sisters were denied the additional compensation. The decision highlights that the specialist work carried out by RAAFNS sisters in the Korean War was not recognised at the time. Of course, the issue reflects the broader inequities faced by women. In the civilian sphere too, trade union women and other women's organisations lobbied industrial courts and parliaments for equal pay.⁵⁵

This lack of recognition for the RAAFNS sisters stands in contrast to the RAAFNS perceptions of the status of United States Air Force nursing sisters. RAAFNS Sister Nathalie Oldham had the opportunity to work alongside US Air Force Nursing Service sisters during her tour of duty, and noticed a sharp difference in the conditions of service:

Their *modus operandi* [her emphasis] in the medical air evacuation role differed little from ours but in other ways they enjoyed far superior conditions of service than us and it was difficult not to envy them. Their pay-for-rank equated with the men's pay and they received generous flying pay. Nor were they called upon to perform routine hospital duties as we were...By contrast, our junior sisters earned less than corporal medical orderlies.⁵⁶

⁵³ D.R. Chapman to Secretary, 3 January 1953, DPS [Director of Personnel Services], RAAF Nursing Service, Proposal for Aircrew Status and/or Flying Pay, A705, 161/1/2582, NAA, Canberra.

⁵⁴ Wing Commander for Air Member for Personnel to Headquarters Iwakuni, 23 January 1953, DPS [Director of Personnel Services], RAAF Nursing Service, Proposal for Aircrew Status and/or Flying Pay, A705, 161/1/2582, NAA, Canberra.

⁵⁵ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 212.

⁵⁶ Wittmann, 'Wot's Up, Doc,' 391.

Whether this was actually the case could not be verified, but certainly the comment is evidence of Nathalie's perception that United States sisters worked under more favourable conditions. The flying pay that was denied Australian sisters was awarded to United States Air Force sisters. They also received pay equal to that received by aircrew men and their specialist skills were recognised in that they were not required to perform routine hospital nursing work in addition to their flying duties, as Australian sisters were. The contrast with the United States Air Force conditions for sisters served to further highlight to Nathalie the inequities experienced by RAAFNS sisters whose work was clearly undervalued. Of course this undervaluing of women's work was typical of the time. That the junior RAAFNS sisters 'earned less than corporal medical orderlies' was seen as highly inequitable given the extensive training even junior nursing sisters had undergone to qualify as sisters. This kind of lack of recognition related specifically to the nursing staff suggests that Australian nursing participants of the 'forgotten war' were in fact given less recognition than their male counterparts and in that sense they were doubly forgotten. The flying pay discrepancy particularly illustrates the ambiguity of the status of Australian nurses during the Korean War, who in this case were categorised as auxiliary participants in spite of being essential members of the medical air evacuation crew.

The RAANC nurses faced similar recognition issues, particularly those women who were stationed at BCGH in Japan. As discussed at the beginning of this thesis, the establishment of the main support facilities for the Korean War, including the BCGH, in Japan led to a division of recognition between those

stationed in Korea and those stationed in Japan. One example of this division was the conditions under which the British Korean Medal was to be awarded. Lieutenant-General Sir Horace Robertson, Commander-in-Chief of the British Commonwealth Forces in Japan and Korea brought this issue to the attention of the Army Headquarters of each of the Commonwealth contingents. Robertson argued that the conditions for the award should be changed so that

all members of the British Commonwealth Forces stationed in Japan and Korea who are certified by the British Commonwealth Command as belonging to a unit the major portion of whose activities are directly in support of the Korean operations.⁵⁷

In support of this argument Robertson put forward that the decision he had made to move the main base from Korea to Japan had provided ‘a very sound and safe organization completely in step with the United Nations command who have all along used Japan as their Main Base.’ He argued that although the decision had been positive, particularly in light of the ‘saving of probably some millions of pounds in works services in Korea,’ it had unfairly disadvantaged the opportunity for ‘some thousands of personnel who might otherwise have been in Korea and entitled to the Medal.’⁵⁸

Robertson was essentially arguing for a broader understanding of what constitutes war service, that is, service which makes a major contribution to the war effort. The response from the Navy and Army officials reflected the traditional understanding of war service stating that ‘the principle of limiting eligibility to those who serve in the battle area is sound.’ The Air Force, in contrast supported

⁵⁷ H.C.H. Robertson, to Secretary Chief's of Staff Committee, 31 October 1951, British Korea Medal, MP927/1, A81/1/187, NAA, Melbourne.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Robertson.⁵⁹ Like the situation with the RAAFNS flying pay, a comparison with United States circumstances once again reflects poorly on Australia's recognition efforts. Robertson noted, the US Forces receive the 'United States of America War Medal whether they are in Japan or Korea as long as they are contributing to the Korean operations.'⁶⁰ The debate regarding the awarding of the British Korea Medal concluded in May 1953 with the decision that as the conditions 'specifically excluded' Japan no further consideration would be given to the matter.⁶¹ Although this decision affected all army personnel stationed only in Japan, it was particularly pertinent to the RAANC other ranks who did not have the opportunity to serve in Korea.

This narrow definition of operational service has persisted. The recognition divide between Korea and Japan has had further implications. In addition to the restrictions relating to the awarding of the British Korea medal, those who served in Japan are also excluded from the Nominal Roll of Australian Veterans of the Korean War, produced by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. This has further served to render the RAANC women who served in Japan almost entirely invisible in the official record. The Nominal Roll was actually quite inclusive as the following definition of who was included illustrates:

The Nominal Roll contains the service details of some 17000 individuals who served with Australia's defence forces in Korea, or in the waters adjacent to Korea, during the conflict and after the ceasefire, between 27 June 1950 to 19 April 1956. Those listed include approximately 5700 members of the Royal

⁵⁹ P.A. MacBride to Minister for Defence, 5 February 1952, British Korea Medal, MP927/1, A81/1/187, NAA, Melbourne.

⁶⁰ H.C.H. Robertson, to Secretary Chief's of Staff Committee, 31 October 1951, British Korea Medal, MP927/1, A81/1/187, NAA, Melbourne.

⁶¹ Secretary, Department of Defence to Secretary, Department of the Army, 27 May 1953, British Korea Medal, MP927/1, A81/1/187, NAA, Melbourne.

Australian Navy (RAN), 10800 from the Australian Army, and 1200 members of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).⁶²

The roll extends beyond 1953 to include the post armistice period. It also includes civilian personnel who served in Korea, such as philanthropic volunteers. However, the roll upholds the exclusion of participants who served in Japan only. Beyond depriving members who served in Japan of recognition, the exclusion renders these people invisible in the official record, making it very difficult to include their service. The exclusion of these women from the Nominal Roll also implies that they did not play a significant role in Australia's contribution to the Korean War. This thesis has clearly demonstrated that such an assumption is inaccurate. The nursing work carried out by these women in Japan was an invaluable part of the Commonwealth contribution to the Korean War.

The Nominal Roll inclusions were based on the definition of operational service in Korea as set out in the *Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986* (VEA).⁶³ The 2003 Clarke Report, which was commissioned to review veterans' entitlements, upheld the distinction between service in Japan and Korea. In response to submissions, the report specifically dealt with the issue of service in Kure as part of the British Commonwealth Forces Korea (BCFK), which directly affects RAANC nurses. The report concluded that service at BCFK Headquarters in Kure, 'was not warlike service and should not provide access to qualifying service benefits under the VEA.'⁶⁴ So in addition to a lack of recognition, those who served in Kure are

⁶² Nominal Roll of Australian Veterans of the Korean War, 'About,' <http://www.koreanroll.gov.au/about.aspx> [accessed 16 September 2009].

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ John Clarke, Doug Riding and David Rosalky, 'Report of the Review of Veterans' Entitlements,' January

also denied service benefits. This decision was based on the criteria for ‘warlike service’ adopted by the committee. These criteria is limited to service ‘related to the pursuit of military objectives involved tasks for which the use of lethal force was authorised or required and was under a level of threat at which there would be an expectation of casualties.’⁶⁵ The underlying issue with such a definition is that it is ultimately biased against medical personnel, who are not expected to use force, and are often positioned away from areas of danger in order to protect the casualties. Finally, the nursing of casualties is rarely considered a ‘military objective’ though it is an inevitable necessity. This definition of war service is outdated and needs reconsideration. In September 2008 the Labor Government announced a review of the Clarke Report, calling for submissions on recommendations ‘that were not acted upon by the previous government.’⁶⁶ Unfortunately, as the Clarke Report did not make any new recommendations regarding the BCFK personnel in Kure, their work remains unacknowledged. Admittedly a line must be drawn under who receives compensation for war service. Ultimately those who do not serve in what is deemed the ‘war zone,’ will be excluded. However, there is no reason why compensation and commemoration needs to be so closely linked. The exclusion of Australian personnel who served in Japan is based on legislation which governs compensation. As the roll is primarily a commemorative tool, as well as a valuable resource for researchers, its connection with compensation legislation is unnecessary and far too restrictive. The nominal roll of Australian Korean War nurses compiled for this thesis (see

2003, http://www.dva.gov.au/pensions_and_compensation/pensions_and_rates/clarke_review/Documents/ch13_15.pdf [accessed 10 November 2009]: 307.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁶⁶ Minister for Veterans’ Affairs, the Honourable Alan Griffin, Media Release, ‘Government Kicks off Clarke Review— Nuclear Veterans and BCOF a Priority,’ 9 September 2008, http://www.dva.gov.au/pensions_and_compensation/pensions_and_rates/clarke_review/Documents/va088.pdf [accessed 16 September 2009].

Appendix A) remedies this issue for the nurses. However, an unknown number of male personnel, who served only in Japan, remain invisible due to the restrictive criteria applied to the Nominal Roll.

The examples of the RAAFNS flying pay debate, the British Korea Medal award conditions and the specific exclusion of BCFK veterans who served in Kure, as evident in both the Nominal Roll and the Clarke report, illustrate that Australia's Korean War nurses have suffered considerable setbacks with regard to recognition both at the time of service and in the years that followed. In contrast, the nursing community has been more active in recognising the achievements of Australia's Korean War nurses and a number of nurses have received specific recognition for their service. One of the most prestigious medals awarded to Australian military nurses were the British Royal Red Cross awards. The criteria for the award focused on nursing contributions and were not restricted to rank or nationality.

Two RAANC sisters received the prestigious Associate Member of the Order of the Royal Red Cross (ARRC) awards specifically for their service during the Korean War. Captain Helene Wilding was awarded the ARRC in June 1953 for her service during the BCOF period and the early stages of the Korean War. The recommendation for the award not only highlighted her efforts during the BCOF period but also emphasised the importance of her contribution during the early stages of the Korean War:

During the early months of the campaign in KOREA (until the arrival of 29 B.G.H in December 1950) she was fully taxed to meet the demands of the situation. Later she worked harmoniously with the Theatre Sisters of 29 B.G.H.,

maintaining the same high standard of efficiency until her return to AUSTRALIA in May 1952.⁶⁷

RAANC Sister Dulcie Thompson was also awarded an ARRC in January 1954 for her work as Deputy Matron of the BCGH in Kure. The recommendation made for her award not only praised her nursing abilities but also the efforts she made to maintain good relations across the nationalities of the composite force.

Major THOMPSON's nursing skill and devotion in the interests of all patients under her supervision have been of the highest order. Untiring in her efforts, ever conscious of the needs of battle casualties and sick from all parts of the Commonwealth, she has displayed an outstandingly high sense of devotion to duty. She has won the confidence of all members of the staff subordinate to her by her personal example. Numerous patients of all components of the British Commonwealth Forces KOREA have expressed gratitude for the detailed nursing care and attention which have resulted from Major THOMPSON's organisation. The Matrons of the United Kingdom Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps and the Canadian Nursing Service have unanimously praised the unstinted loyalty and cooperation which Major THOMPSON has always displayed towards their respective Nursing Services, and helped to produce fully integrated efficient and harmoniously working British Commonwealth nursing facilities. Major THOMPSON's nursing skill and efficiency have, in my opinion, been outstanding.⁶⁸

The recommendations and subsequent awards are evidence that, although the work of Australia's Korean War nurses has not been extensively acknowledged in the broader context, it was certainly recognised by those who worked with the women. A number of other Korean War era nurses also received RRC decorations for their services to military nursing including RAAFNS Sisters Charlotte McRae,

⁶⁷ Awards for non-operational service Japan RRC [Member of the Royal Red Cross] and ARRC [Associate of the Royal Red Cross] — [Capt Helene J. Wilding; Maj Dulcie V. Thompson], AWM119, 363, AWM, Canberra.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Helen Cleary, Betty Docker and RAANC Sisters Perdita McCarthy and Nell Espie.⁶⁹

A number of Korean War era nurses have also received the Order of Australia Medal (OAM), however in most instances the medal was awarded for contributions to the community, rather than for their war service. RAANC Sister Nell Espie was the only Korean War era nurse to receive an OAM specifically for her contribution to the RAANC with the citation for the 1992 OAM reading ‘In recognition of service to veterans and nursing.’⁷⁰ Others were awarded an OAM for their contributions to the community on their return. Cathie Daniel and Betty Crocker were both recognised for their caring work in local, regional communities. Cathie was awarded an OAM in January 2006, ‘For service to the community of Coolamon through a range of aged care, social welfare and health related organisations.’⁷¹ Betty Crocker’s decades of work as a nurse practitioner alongside her husband, who was the general practitioner in the rural community of Red Cliffs, Victoria was also acknowledged with an OAM.⁷² The citation for RAANC Sister Nan Hummerston’s 1989 OAM read simply, ‘For service to the community.’⁷³ Nan elaborated on the reasons for the award, noting that it was for her work with war widows. ‘It was with the war widows, I’ve worked for years. I

⁶⁹ ‘Royal Red Cross,’ Faith, Hope, Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours 1901–1989, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/rrc.html> [accessed 18 September 2009].

⁷⁰ Australian Government, *It’s an Honour*, ‘Espie, Nellie Jane,’ http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour_roll/search.cfm?aus_award_id=873319&search_type=advanced&showInd=true [accessed 18 September 2009].

⁷¹ Australian Government, *It’s an Honour*, ‘Thompson, Catherine Bernadette,’ http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour_roll/search.cfm?aus_award_id=1131917&search_type=simple&showInd=true [accessed 18 September 2009].

⁷² Australian Government, *It’s an Honour*, ‘Lawrence, Betty Irene,’ http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour_roll/search.cfm?aus_award_id=876338&search_type=simple&showInd=true [accessed 18 September 2009].

⁷³ Australian Government, *It’s an Honour*, ‘Hummerston, Nancy Millicent,’ http://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/honour_roll/search.cfm?aus_award_id=876393&search_type=simple&showInd=true [accessed 18 September, 2009].

did a, helped with a big raffle in Melbourne and I did three months of selling tickets. And, I've been just involved with the war widows for years.'⁷⁴ Although both married Cathie and Betty continued their caring work in regional communities. Betty pursued a varied and challenging career as a rural nurse practitioner alongside her husband in their rural practice, including delivering four babies on occasions when her husband was absent.⁷⁵ Moving beyond her own grief as a war widow, Nan contributed to the war widow community, the OAM acknowledging that service. The awards illustrate the rich contributions these women have made to the community following their Korean War service. These stories of life and recognition after the war highlight something military history often obscures, life continues after war service and taking the entire life story into account gives a far more complex insight into the overall experience of war which, as has been demonstrated, sometimes influences later life.

The recognition received by the women tended to be specifically from the nursing community or related to the local community service performed on return from the Korean War. As women and veterans of a 'forgotten war' they fell between two groups which have traditionally not received a great deal of recognition: Korean War veterans and military nurses. The lack of recognition for these specific groups was perhaps best symbolised by the noticeable gap on Anzac parade in Canberra, the last two spaces of which were filled by the Korean War

⁷⁴ Nan Hummerston, interview with author.

⁷⁵ Betty Crocker (now Lawrence), interview with author, 27 November 2007, West Beach, South Australia, tape in possession of author.

Memorial in 1996 and the Australian Military Nurses Memorial in 1999, both pictured below.⁷⁶



Figure 40 - Australian Service Nurses Memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra, 2008.⁷⁷



Figure 41 - Australian National Korean War Memorial, Anzac Parade, Canberra, 2008.⁷⁸

The final establishment of these memorials represents an encouraging shift towards remembering these ‘forgotten’ groups. The creation of the Australian Service Nurses Memorial was a significant step given that monuments have traditionally been built to ‘memorialise heroic manhood’ and in the Australian landscape in particular to memorialise the achievements of men in war.⁷⁹ Yet by the same token, the creation of a separate memorial in some ways reinforces the peripheral view of women in war as making a contribution separate to the main war effort as auxiliary participants. The place of women in war is again ambiguous, separated from a specific conflict they are recognised as a homogenous group. This is not entirely problematic, as the nurses participating in

⁷⁶ K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999), 410.

⁷⁷ Rebecca Fleming collection.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Marilyn Lake, ‘Monuments of manhood and colonial dependence: The Cult of Anzac as Compensation,’ in *Memory, Monuments and Museums: The Past in the Present*, eds. Marilyn Lake (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press and The Australian Academy of the Humanities, 2006), 45.

this study certainly identified with earlier military nursing traditions and are proud to be located within those traditions. Nevertheless there are specificities of experience associated with each conflict which are obscured by such generalist recognition.

Although the experiences of military nurses have often been acknowledged separately from broader recognition of the war in which they participated this is not always the case. RAAFNS Sister Lucy Marshall was recognised both by the nursing fraternity and in her local community war memorial for her service in the Korean War. Within the nursing community Lucy Marshall was the first RAAFNS sister to receive the Florence Nightingale Medal which, at the time, was the ‘highest world nursing award.’⁸⁰ She was awarded the medal in recognition of her ‘outstanding wartime service in World War Two and in Japan and Korea.’⁸¹ The following image shows the medal presentation, with Lucy smiling in uniform as she receives the award.

⁸⁰ Australian Red Cross *Activities* August/September 1955, 28.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*



Figure 362 - Portrait of Lady Brooks, wife of the Governor of Victoria, Sir Dallas Brooks presenting Senior Sister Lucy Thelma Marshall RAAF (right) with the Florence Nightingale medal, an award of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Sister Marshall, originally of Sydney was awarded the prestigious medal for her work with the RAAF Nursing Service during the Second World War, Japan and Korea. She was attached to RAAF Base Point Cook at the time of her award.⁸²

Receiving the award was no doubt a proud moment for Lucy Marshall and her expression in the photograph seems to confirm this. Forty five years later, in 2000, Lucy Marshall's contribution to the Korean War was also acknowledged with a plaque on the newly established war memorial in her local community.



Figure 373 Plaque dedicated to Lucy Marshall. Korean War Memorial, Alexandra Headland, Queensland.⁸³

⁸²P02859.001, May 1955, AWM, Canberra.

⁸³ Frances Windolf collection, 16 May 2008.

Unfortunately, as the plaque indicates, Lucy did not live to see the memorial, but her contribution was nonetheless acknowledged alongside the male Korean War veterans of the community.⁸⁴ The Korean War Memorial at Alexandra Headland on Queensland's Sunshine Coast is an example of a more inclusive memorial, one which moves beyond acknowledging the male contribution to war. As well as the plaque for Lucy Marshall, the war memorial also displays the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps insignia alongside the RAAF, Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Commonwealth Military Forces insignias.



Figure 44 – RAANC Insignia, Korean War Memorial, Alexandra Headland, Queensland.⁸⁵

The Alexandra Headland memorial also acknowledges the entire period of service for Australians in Korea, both the period of ‘active service’ from 1950 to 1953 and the ‘peacekeeping’ period 1953 to 1956.

⁸⁴ Inglis has noted that from World War Two women have been increasingly included on memorials, Inglis, *Sacred Places*, 365.

⁸⁵ Frances Windolf collection, 16 May 2008.



Figure 385 – Plaque, Korean War Memorial, Alexandra Headland, Queensland.⁸⁶

This is just one example of a community war memorial that acknowledges the service of Australia's nurses. The considerable research it would take to ascertain how common such acknowledgement is within community war memorials is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Another, more prominent, example of public acknowledgement of the service of Australia's Korean War nurses, which emerged during the research for this thesis, was the opening of the Australian War Memorial's 'Conflicts 1945 to Today' gallery in 2008. This gallery includes a display on the Australian nurses which showcases a RAANC officer's uniform and a RAAFNS sister's medical kit carried on air evacuation flights. Though recognition for Korean War veterans in general and the women specifically took time, it seems in recent years that the veterans of the 'forgotten war' are increasingly being publicly recognised. Although, as Oppenheimer has pointed out, the Korean War nurses are not given a prominent position in the gallery. She argues that the choice of a display case is 'inherently safe' in comparison to the more interactive items in the gallery.⁸⁷ The

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Review of *Conflicts 1945 to Today*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra,' *History Australia* 5 no. 3, (2008): 84.2.

Korean War nurses, while acknowledged in the gallery, are quite literally on its periphery.

Remembering

Despite this increase in public recognition, the sense of being ‘forgotten’ remains strong in some of the nurse’s memories. Trembath has astutely examined the perceptions of returned soldiers and a number of his conclusions are mirrored in the reflections of the Korean War nurses. The first overlap of views is in the perception that the war was neglected or forgotten at the time.⁸⁸ Wives of servicemen serving in Korea also felt this lack of recognition. June White, whose husband served in the RAAF in Japan and Korea noted that ‘Korea was little publicised in day to day living.’⁸⁹ Betty Hunt-Smith recalled her brother’s warning that Korea was an unacknowledged war:

And at the time, when I joined the army in 1951, my brother worked on the *Herald Sun* in Melbourne. And he said to me, ‘You’re mad, you know this is the war that no one wants to know about.’ He said ‘We don’t ever print news about it in the paper. It’s just, it’s not a popular war.’ And although I knew what was going on, I found that there was very, the men themselves knew why they were there, that they were fighting communism and they were there for the United Nations.⁹⁰

The comment reflects the common theme of forgetting that runs through many of Trembath’s soldiers’ memories. The vignette, however, also reflects a perspective which was unique to the nurses: their tendency to feature the men in their recollections, sometimes over their own experiences. Betty notes that while the

⁸⁸ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 153.

⁸⁹ Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, 183.

⁹⁰ Betty Hunt-Smith, interview with Bill Bunbury, 26 November 1998, S01910, AWM, Canberra

public may not have shown an interest in the war ‘the men themselves knew why they were there’ and that their cause was a just one ‘they were fighting communism and they were there for the United Nations.’⁹¹

Trembath has also noted a tendency among returned soldiers to compare the public recognition of Korea with that of Vietnam, with the ‘majority opinion that Vietnam veterans had it worse.’⁹² Returned RAANC Sister Peg Webster not only agreed with this view, but went as far as suggesting that the reception was positive. ‘I felt people were very interested and I really also felt that people were very proud that Australians were involved. I think the Vietnam reaction was entirely different.’⁹³ Peg elaborates, suggesting that Vietnam was a more difficult war:

Mind you I think Vietnam must have been so much more appalling than Korea really. Because it was such, such a terrible, terrible. The civil, the civilian population was so much more involved weren’t they? In Vietnam than they were in [Korea].⁹⁴

Trembath has suggested that one of the reasons Korea has been a ‘forgotten war’ is due to its close proximity chronologically to World War Two and Vietnam which, as a result, marginalises Korea in the collective memory.⁹⁵ It seems this effect was not limited to the collective memory. Although Cathie Daniel served only in the Korean War with the RAAFNS, World War Two and Vietnam remain standouts in her memory. At one point in our conversation Cathie mentioned the

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 158.

⁹³ Margaret (Peg) Webster (née Nicholson), interview with Jan Bassett, 3 November 1986, S01820, AWM, Canberra,

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 159.

presence of American troops in Australia during what she referred to as the ‘real war’ when asked to clarify what she meant by the statement Cathie responded:

I called World War Two the real war [laughs]. I suppose to me it just, it was, Korea was, and then of course you had terrible Vietnam I shudder when I think of that, they were real wars too. But I felt the World War Two, I suppose I was only younger then and you sort of felt that that was, for some unknown I sort of called that the real war. But there certainly the real war in Korea and then Vietnam must have been a terrible place. The after effects of Vietnam.⁹⁶

Although Cathie is quick to point out that Korea was a ‘real war’ her response reveals the influence of World War Two on her life, she notes that being ‘younger’ World War Two had a strong influence on her. Cathie explains that although she referred to the World War Two as the ‘real’ war she does believe Korea was a ‘real’ war. She then drifts to a comparison of Korea with Vietnam which she suggests ‘must have been a terrible place.’ Even in the memory of a participant, Korea is obscured by the larger-scale World War Two and the more controversial Vietnam War.

In contrast to Cathie, Betty Crocker was passionate about the lack of recognition for Korean veterans and for the returned nurses in particular. Her story, which has the hint of a well-rehearsed narrative, places an emphasis not only on the lack of recognition for returned nurses, but also her specific feelings of isolation:

We became known as the most forgotten of the forgotten war, and it was very distressing when we returned because there were no facilities for counselling, nothing for us to get over what we had experienced. I was in a very particular situation, because, being a theatre sister and also being the only Australian in a surgical team, I did not have connection with the sisters who were working in the hospital and I didn’t have the same rapport with them. So I did not have anyone

⁹⁶ Cathie Daniel, interview with author.

back in Australia — well, certainly as I had married and gone to an isolated area — I didn't have anybody to talk to about it, and have until now hardly mentioned it. For two reasons: I didn't have anybody to talk to about [it], and I also had the feeling that, if I did talk to people about it, they wouldn't believe it. So I wrote it instead in my diary.⁹⁷

The vignette moves from the general lack of recognition to Betty's specific feelings of isolation on return. Her feeling of isolation is complicated by living in a rural location for many years. Nevertheless, in the years following the war, Betty has been one of the most vocal of the returned nurses in calling for recognition.

Shortly after her return home, Betty sought official recognition of her service, sending to the Central Army Records Office an application for 'the United Nations and Korean campaign medals.'⁹⁸ The medals were forwarded to her in November of that year.⁹⁹ The strongest example of her campaign for recognition occurred in 1982 following the completion of the first volume of Robert O'Neill's official history of the Korean War. Betty wrote to O'Neill to convey her disappointment at the lack of information in the history on the participation of Australian nursing sisters:

I am conscious of the fact that when researching & compiling such a tome it is inevitable that some details are overlooked, but I was a little disappointed that the handful of Australian Nursing sisters, less than 10, who participated on the Korean mainland & in the air did not rate a mention anywhere, not even on Page 462 under Medical Units.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Betty Lawrence (née Crocker), interview with Rob Linn, 22 May 2002, OH 644/7, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, State Library of South Australia, Adelaide.

⁹⁸ Betty Crocker to Central Army Records Office, 7 September 1953, Crocker, Betty, B2458, F431, NAA, Melbourne.

⁹⁹ Colonel, Central Army Records Office to Betty Crocker, 5 November 1953, Crocker, Betty, B2458, F431, NAA, Melbourne.

¹⁰⁰ Betty Lawrence to Robert O'Neil, 14 March 1982, Official History, Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O'Neill, Official Historian. Australian Army – medical services, AWM89, J26, AWM, Canberra.

Betty went on to detail the role of the BCCZMU, the evacuation process and the multinational nature of the hospital as well as noting that she had included photographs. She concluded with the hope that ‘Maybe [in] Volume II we few nursing officers will receive some mention.’¹⁰¹ Within a few weeks of this letter, Betty’s comments were followed up by Australian War Memorial historian Darryl McIntyre who assured Betty that he was ‘most interested’ in her comments given that he was tasked with ‘compiling an appendix on medical services for Australian forces in Korea’ for the second volume.¹⁰² McIntyre requested further information on Betty’s experiences asking for information on ‘your role/duties, problems faced, accomplishments, lessons learnt etc.’¹⁰³ The information Betty provided did indeed feature in McIntyre’s work and as a result the official history is one toned, with only Betty’s voice and experience featured.¹⁰⁴ The complexity of experience is lost as a result. Nevertheless, without Betty’s contribution the nurses may well have been excluded entirely.

Few others sought recognition in the same manner, although Gay Bury (now Halstead) documented her and other RAAFNS sisters’ experiences in her broader history of the RAAFNS Nursing Service.¹⁰⁵ Barbara Probyn-Smith also recorded her memories in manuscript form, although unfortunately this remains

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Darryl McIntyre to Betty Lawrence, 26 March 1982, Official History, Australia in the Korean War: Records of Robert O’Neill, Official Historian. Australian Army – medical services, AWM89, J26, AWM, Canberra.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ McIntyre, Darryl. ‘Australian Army Medical Services in Korea,’ in *Australia in the Korean War 1950-1953 Volume II*, ed. Robert O’Neill (Canberra: The Australian War Memorial and the Australian Government Publishing Service, 1985), 572.

¹⁰⁵ Halstead, *Story of the RAAF Nursing Service, 1940-1990*.

unpublished.¹⁰⁶ Like Betty and indeed many other Korean War veterans, Barbara was also a passionate advocate of acknowledgement for those who served in Korea. In an address to the Korean Veterans Association (Melbourne) given in 1996, Barbara made these feelings clear:

... it makes me angry, disgusted, that here in Australia we – who served at that war – are often pushed aside or ignored. The war itself, and our service there is forgotten or under rated. All this usually by those would be pundits of war, the ‘no hands on’ the ‘never weres’ for what ever [sic] their weak or self serving motives may be. For us – it is an insult! It is a contempt! And I, like you men, do not allow anyone to trivialise, decry or denigrate, deny or dismiss, the great service we gave there, at the Korean War.¹⁰⁷

The raw emotion felt by the Korean War veterans who perceived their war as forgotten is painfully clear in Barbara’s concluding remarks.

Barbara clearly identifies with the broader group of Australian Korean War veterans and was passionate about their recognition as a group. However, as a nurse Barbara also voiced concerns that the nurses may be excluded from such recognition, her concerns were clearly articulated in a letter to the designer of the National Korean War Memorial, who had requested information from Korean veterans on their experiences. Barbara provided an overview of her experiences and concluded her letter with the hope that the nurses would be included:

So with all of this I do hope you will include we Nursing people with our men, on the Nat. Korean War Memorial (We would hate to be left out.). I do feel that the Mil. Nursing Sisters should, of course, be symbolised by showing their care and protection.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Barbara Probyn-Smith, ‘Sis,’ unpublished manuscript, PA Box 58, 01/144, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Probyn-Smith, Speech given to Korean Veterans Association, 29 September 1996, PA Box 58, 01/144, State Library of Victoria.

¹⁰⁸ Barbara Probyn-Smith to the Chairman Design Brief Review, November 1996, PA Box 58, 01/144, State Library of Victoria.

Unfortunately Barbara's suggestion was not adopted and the National Korean War Memorial was ultimately designed in a way that did not reflect the female contribution to the war.

In contrast to Betty, Gay and Barbara, other returned nurses did not speak about or seek to actively record their memories of the war. In fact, during our interviews, a number of the women either minimised their experiences, or made comments that suggested they did not believe anyone would be interested. Shirley McEwen recalled that she did not speak extensively about her experiences in Japan during the war.

Only to family, not even to family really. Occasionally, you know you might tell something but no. I mean yes, I have always been sociable and talk to all the others but it was such a different time when I went to when they went. So no, I've just said you know, I was up in Japan during the Korean War and that what was it, sort of thing. Because the whole of Australia was involved during the war, World War Two. And everybody was either going overseas, or losing casualties here. And it was a different war, Korea, it was a United Nations thing but still very different. And it was something the whole of Australia wasn't involved in. So a lot of civilians and certainly of my age wouldn't have known or understood anything about it. So, yes, it was a very different war.¹⁰⁹

Due to the ambiguity of the war, particularly in contrast to World War Two, Shirley perceived that people would not be interested in her memories, so she did not openly share them with people unless asked directly, limiting the details to her location, 'because there wasn't the interest in it.'¹¹⁰ Dorothy Wheatley also responded that she only spoke about her experiences 'if people ask' and in her experience she found that those interested were usually nurses, 'there's not a lot of interest in the community. Unless they happen to be nurses and want to know

¹⁰⁹ Shirley McEwen, interview with author.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

specific things and they're usually quite specific in what they want to know.'¹¹¹

For Shirley and Dorothy the opportunities to share their memories were limited by the perceived lack of interest in the community.

For others, like Gerry Roberts, returning home was an opportunity to move on to a new stage of life, remembering the experience was not a priority:

See none of us talked about it, you know. Even when we came home, we never talked about it. We came home, got married and we went on with our lives and put it behind us as much as we could, you know. Yeah.¹¹²

The comment is poignant, tinged with a sadness that suggests the experience of nursing the soldiers was painful for Gerry, something she wished to put 'behind' her rather than relive through remembering. The silence around the experience may be connected to the lack of recognition. The Korean War nurses, with the exception of a few, are not a vocal group. Their private memories are largely silent in the public sphere and because of this silence it seems that they are less likely to speak about their experiences. Their stories remain largely untold, the war from their perspective unseen. The research for this thesis has revealed more of the hidden stories than have previously been known and in doing so has allowed multiple voices to highlight the diverse nature of the collective Korean War experience. An unexpected, but valuable, outcome of the research has been the opportunity to highlight unseen images from private collections, such as the one below.

¹¹¹ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author.

¹¹² Gerry Roberts, interview with author.



Figure 396 - Gerry in front of the other ranks Mess, Kure, Japan, circa 1953–1955.¹¹³

Figure 46 is valuable not only because it is one of many unseen images of the Australian experience of the Korean War but also because the image, alongside other images in Gerry's collection, reveals a changing identity. Two other photographs in Gerry's album provide further insight into her identity as a servicewoman. Figures 47 and 48 are studio portraits taken of Gerry in her service uniforms.

¹¹³ Gerry Roberts collection.



Figure 407 – ‘Stepping out’ uniform¹¹⁴



Figure 418 – Nursing uniform¹¹⁵

Peter Burke has emphasised the value of portraits as historical sources.

Whether they are painted or photographic, what portraits record is not social reality so much as social illusions, not ordinary life but special performances. But for this very reason, they offer priceless evidence to anyone interested in the history of changing hopes, values or mentalities'.¹¹⁶

Figures 47 and 48 are studio portraits of Gerry in uniform and are evidence of her identification as a servicewoman and military nurse. She is pictured in her military nursing uniform, with veil, and her service uniform. The images thus reflect a dual identity as servicewoman and military nurse. This is interesting in light of the identity that emerged in the oral history. Gerry also did not initially join the Returned Services League (RSL) when she returned home, ‘I left that all behind me once I got married and come [*sic*] home, you know.’¹¹⁷ However, when her husband passed away and a member of the RSL told her they needed members she

¹¹⁴ Gerry Fleming collection, Australia, circa 1953.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing* (London: Reaktin, 2001), 28.

¹¹⁷ Gerry Roberts, interview with author.

joined. Nevertheless, she joined as an act of community support and to take her husband's place, rather than because of her own identification as a veteran. The studio portrait and oral history combined are evidence of Gerry's changing identity. The photograph provides evidence of a special performance—Gerry in her RAANC uniform, showing a clear identity as a servicewoman. The oral history reveals that in the years that followed Gerry no longer chose to identify as a servicewoman. She put her war service behind her and became a wife and mother who did not, it seems, identify as a veteran of the Korean War. This is perhaps not surprising given that the lack of recognition for those who served, particularly in Japan. This raises questions about how women such as Gerry, who are excluded from history, can reconcile their memories and identities as unacknowledged participants of the Korean War.

One way of doing this was through identification with the earlier military nursing tradition.¹¹⁸ As has been noted throughout the thesis, most nurses were keenly aware of military nursing traditions and often mentioned nurses from earlier conflicts in our conversations. One particular extract from RAANC Sister Barbara Probyn-Smith's manuscript conveys the feeling well:

Australia has always sent her war nurses to the very battle areas of all of her wars. For it is a fact, well proven over the century that in war time the military forward field hospitals and medical centres function more efficiently with professional, highly trained, surgically skilled female nurses. So, with that edict firmly in mind, Australia, much to our delight, sent us to our forward hospitals in Korea as well as to the base hospitals in Japan.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Trembath has also noted that many Korean War soldiers also identified with earlier military traditions, Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, 185.

¹¹⁹ Barbara Probyn-Smith, 'Sis,' unpublished manuscript, PA Box 58, 01/144, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

Although the recognition for nurses returning from Korea was limited, some were able to reconcile their experiences and memories by seeing themselves as part of a continuum of Australian military nursing history.

Shirley McEwen's identity as a returned nurse was one of the most ambiguous of the women interviewed. Unlike Gerry, who wanted to move on with her life, Shirley continued to associate with the returned nursing community but more in a support role than as a returned nurse. One vignette, which particularly conveyed this, was Shirley's account of her Anzac Day activities. Rather than marching herself, Shirley waited at Anzac House in Perth for the World War Two sisters to return from the march:

I felt they needed the recognition because they were in the big war. You know World War Two. And what I could do for them was take their handbags, make sure everything went well, be ready to make the cups of tea when they came back and have food on the table and this sort of thing. I felt my role was there as caring for them, looking after them, you know. As I say they were away during that war.¹²⁰

Shirley marginalised her own status as a returned nurse in order to care for the World War Two sisters whom she perceived as more deserving of recognition because they were away during the 'big war.' Shirley did join the Returned Sisters Sub-branch of the RSL and was serving as secretary at the time of the interview, suggesting that she does identify as a returned nurse. Nevertheless, it seems that her interest in this organisation is also to do with supporting the World War Two sisters:

¹²⁰ Shirley McEwen, interview with author.

So I did the minutes of the first meeting in March, '99 and I'm still doing it. So, I enjoy it. I mean they're wonderful women. And to speak to some of them and find out where they were and what they did. I just respect them so much. But you know, I enjoy doing it.¹²¹

Again, the emphasis is not on her experiences or identity as a returned nurse, but rather the opportunity to interact with the World War Two sisters for whom she has so much respect. The ambiguity of Shirley's status as a returned nurse was two-fold, she was not a trained nursing sister and so fell below the trained sisters in the nursing hierarchy and she returned from a war which has been overshadowed in history.

Not all of the Korean War women felt disconnected from the broader veteran community. Nell Espie made major contributions to the RAANC Association, serving as National President from 1990 to 1994 and becoming a life member in 1997, and to the RSL of which she has been a member for more than 50 years. She has also served as treasurer and President of the Tasmanian branch.¹²² Dorothy Wheatley was particularly impressed with the health services she receives through the Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card program.¹²³ Dorothy's perceptions of the RSL were however less positive. Although she clearly identifies as a veteran, she chose not to join the RSL. Elaborating on the reason for this Dorothy said, 'Because I think that they are, in the main, a lot of old fogies and they don't always act in the best interests of the people that they should be, I think. Yeah, there's not a lot of nurses, or serving personnel I

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Department of Premier and Cabinet, 'Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women – Nellie Jane (Nell) Espie AM' http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/cdd/women/leadership/tasmanian_honour_roll_of_women/in_ductees/nellie_jane_nell_espie_am [accessed 8 March, 2010].

¹²³ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author.

think.¹²⁴ The RSL, to Dorothy, is a dated and exclusive organisation that does not include nurses. Nell's active participation in the RSL is probably due to her life-long career in the military that gave her closer associations with the veteran community. Dorothy, in comparison, who had longer associations with the civilian nursing education community, was President of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation and has 'always been actively involved in trade unionism.'¹²⁵

The Australian nurses who served in the Korean War have made little impact in the nation's collective memory of war. Recognition of their service has been slow and limited. Even in the personal memories of some women, World War Two overshadows Korea. For some, like Gerry, the experience was something to be forgotten so she could move on with her life, yet others like Betty Crocker have sought to make their memories public in the hope that the contribution might be acknowledged. Yet, whether they have chosen to publicly or privately remember and reflect on their military nursing experience, for many it was one that they acknowledge changed their lives. For Shirley, seeing the effects of war first-hand through nursing the casualties completely altered her view of war:

I think growing up, during the war, I thought to go and fight for your country was a very brave heroic wonderful thing, but by the time I got up there and saw what it was, I didn't think it was quite so good. Seeing these young men. Seeing the injuries, the burns, the amputations, from treading on landmines. And I just thought, *what a waste*, of young men.¹²⁶

The propaganda of World War Two and ideals of heroism which had been prominent on the home front, quickly dissolved for Shirley once she nursed the

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Shirley Bennetts (née McEwen), interview with Bill Bunbury, 1998, S01904, AWM, Canberra.

injured first-hand. Her eloquent reflections on the change of attitude highlight a view common among returned nurses, war is a 'waste.'

For Betty Hunt-Smith it was the exposure to a new culture, rather than the nursing work particularly, which gave her a new perspective:

Well I always say, when I left Sydney I knew nothing really. I mean I was a New South Wales girl and to go to an Asian country I think was the greatest eye opener, absolutely wonderful. I saw how people really have to work, and I think it changed my life.¹²⁷

These two reflections highlight the multidimensional nature of Australian nurses experiences during the Korean War. As has been demonstrated in this thesis the experiences were varied depending on location, time of service and role, but the reflections also demonstrate that what the nurses choose to remember and which aspects of the experience influenced their lives was equally varied. For Shirley nursing casualties gave her new insight into the effects of war, while Betty Hunt-Smith was influenced by living in a very different culture.

Conclusion

The accounts of the women outlined in this thesis have demonstrated that the experience of nursing in the Korean War was varied. This was equally true of their lives after returning home. Some women continued with careers in the military, others pursued civilian nursing careers. Many married and were subsequently discharged from the Army, an indication of the ideology of the period, but even for those who married, life after the war did not necessarily

¹²⁷ Betty Hunt-Smith, interview with Bill Bunbury.

conform to expectations. Shirley continued to pursue caring work through the voluntary sector, neatly skirting the marriage rule by carrying out unpaid labour. Betty Crocker carried out a challenging nursing career alongside her general practitioner husband in her role as rural nurse practitioner. Gerry married and did not pursue career interests preferring to put her nursing work and military experience behind her.

Recognition is an issue that is always at the heart of any tale of the ‘forgotten war’ and this is not lost on the women. Betty Crocker is the most keenly aware of this and her memories are tinged with distress at having been neglected in the public memory, ‘We became known as the most forgotten of the forgotten war.’¹²⁸ As the Korean War itself gathers more public recognition these ‘forgotten women’ are increasingly receiving some recognition, but on a smaller scale. Military nursing has never featured strongly in the Anzac mythology and when acknowledged they tend to be recognised as a homogenous group such as they are with the Australian Service Nurses Memorial on Anzac parade the significant differences between conflicts lost in such broad recognition. As the nurses memories and reflections have testified their identity is somewhere in between Korean veterans and returned nurses. In the process of remembering they often either connect themselves with the earlier military nursing traditions or as members of the forgotten war.

¹²⁸ Betty Lawrence, interview with Rob Linn.

CONCLUSION

*And we cared for them – To the best of our ability. We treated their horrific wounds, those terrible wounds, and their devastating sicknesses. But sometimes the wounds and sicknesses would overpower them, and we could do no more. So where possible, we held your brave men, your brave boys, when they died – And we grieved for them. As did you. They are not forgotten, not by us. Like you, we shall always remember them.*¹

Barbara Probyn-Smith spoke these poignant words at a gathering of the annual Korea Veterans Association of Australia, commemoration ceremony in Melbourne. The sentiment is reflective of the common theme in nurses' narratives which has been highlighted in this thesis, the tendency for the nurses to prioritise the experience of the 'boys' over their own. Barbara seeks to reassure her audience that the contribution of the Australian men who served, and in particular those who died, will not be forgotten. This thesis has sought to ensure that those who cared for the men are also remembered.

The foundation concern of this thesis has been to explore the contributions and experiences of Australia's military nurses to the Korean War as to date they have been neglected in the historiography. Through researching, documenting and analysing these contributions and experiences, the thesis has offered new insights into the history of Australian military nursing, the history of Australia's contribution to the Korean War and the ongoing and diverse impact that the war had on the women interviewed. The thesis also examined the cross-cultural experiences of the nurses in their work, domestic and leisure environments and the

¹ Barbara Probyn-Smith, 'Sis' unpublished manuscript, PA Box 58, PA 01/144, State Library of Victoria.

ways in which those experiences fit within broader literature about Australians abroad, especially Australian military personnel.

The thesis began with an overview of the historiography of Australian involvement in the Korean War and Australian military nursing history. An analysis of this literature highlighted that the work of Australian Korean War nurses has been profoundly neglected. Major themes which emerged in the literature reviewed, including the Korean War, and the nurses in particular, as ‘forgotten,’ the legacy felt by successive generations of Australian military nurses and the marginalisation of Japan in the Australian Korean War story, became key themes throughout the thesis. The value of the list of names compiled in Appendix A was also discussed. The nominal roll of Australian Korean War nurses lists those who served in Japan as well as Korea and for the first time adds the names of these forgotten nurses to the historical record.

Two major themes throughout the thesis, transitions and continuities, were strongly illustrated in the analysis of the recruitment campaigns and motivations of the nurses to join the military. A number of the nurses interviewed often invoked the legacy of Australian military nursing as a motivation for enlisting, indicating a sense of tradition and continuity with earlier generations of military nurses. Many also spoke of the desire for travel, a theme which linked them with past military nurses and their male Korean War counterparts. In contrast, the recruitment campaigns of the era demonstrated a new focus on career development, which indicated a period of transition in military nursing. This transition was also evidenced by the change from the Royal Australian Army

Nursing Service (RAANS) to the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC) in 1951. This shift signified a new focus on a career-orientated military nursing service, with women joining the RAANS or the RAANC for a career, rather than to assist in a war effort.

An analysis of the Korean War through the lens of Australian military nursing highlights the ambiguous nature of the war. The participation of Australian nurses stretched beyond the commonly understood boundaries of the war to include service in Japan and in the post-armistice period. The Korean War also provided an opportunity for Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service sisters to continue to develop their role in air evacuation work which had begun during World War One. While the Korean War era offered new challenges, in particular a stronger emphasis on training and professional development, many aspects of nursing in the war demonstrated continuities with past military nursing experiences. The relationship between the nurses and their 'boys' certainly indicated continuities with the past. The particular fondness for British patients was unique to the Korean War and due to the fact that the British soldiers were often young conscripts. For the first time Australian Army nurses worked alongside British and Canadian nursing staff in an integrated British Commonwealth hospital. Overall, the integrated establishment was a success, as highlighted by the emphasis on successful teamwork in many of the nurses' narratives, however, the relationships with British sisters occasionally reflected continuities with the past. Analysis of official photographs throughout this period also highlighted transitions and continuities in official representations of military nursing work.

Looking beyond the experiences of work, the thesis examined the recreational lives of the women in Japan and Korea. Again, continuities with the experiences of nurses in the past were evident in the restrictions and regulations placed upon the nurses in their free time. In many ways the Korean War was a different world for the military nurses who served, living with more stringent military rules and regulations, exploring foreign landscapes and meeting Korean and Japanese civilians. Yet, at the same time, the worlds they encountered were very much like those that earlier military nurses encountered—merely geographically different. The experiences of interacting with new cultures, military and foreign, very much represented continuities with the experiences of World War One and Two nurses.

Finally, the thesis explored the themes of return, recognition and remembering. An outline of the lives of the nurses after their return highlighted the diversity of this experience. Some nurses returned home to marry and begin families, others continued their careers in the civilian sector, while women such as Nell Espie made a career of Army nursing. Nevertheless, a common element in the story of return was the sense of being forgotten. An analysis of this lack of recognition illustrated the persistence of a narrow view of warfare in Australia's recognition of service. The example of the nominal roll which excludes those who served in Japan and subsequently writes them out of history is the clearest example of the consequences of such views. In contrast, the South Korean government's revisit program was particularly respected by the two nurses who participated in it. The thesis concluded with the memories of the nurses and their reflections on the significance of the Korean War on their lives. Hopefully the thesis has also made

clear the significance of the women's lives on Australia's participation in the Korean War.

There are, of course, limitations to the thesis. The work of other Australian medical personnel, including the doctors, surgeons and male orderlies who were often stationed closer to the frontline have not been explored in this thesis and their story has yet to be told in any depth elsewhere. Further research detailing the experiences of other Australian medical personnel, beyond those of the nurses, would be valuable. As this thesis has highlighted, the Australian nurses worked in an integrated team of Commonwealth medical personnel. Therefore, there is great potential for a transnational or comparative history of the Commonwealth experience of nursing in the Korean War, detailing the combined experience of the Canadian, British and Australian nursing staff. This thesis has provided a stepping stone on which a more detailed picture of the combined Commonwealth medical contribution to the Korean War might be created. Nurses tend to be on the periphery of history and the Australian Korean War nurses are no exception. In exploring the experience of these women on the periphery, this thesis has demonstrated the benefits of broadening the boundaries of what is considered 'war work,' given new insights into Australian participation in the Korean War and added a long-neglected chapter to the history of Australian military nursing.

APPENDIX A:

Nominal Roll of Australian Korean War Nurses¹

RAANC Officers

Name	Service	Rank	Service Number	Location of service
Adams, K.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/150	Japan
Bailey, M.L*	RAANC	Lieutenant	NFX700220	Japan
Bartlett, O.L*	RAANC	Lieutenant	QFX700078	Japan
Baxter, T.A*	RAANC	Captain	F6/17	Japan
Becker, Mary Ann	RAANC	Captain	F1/178	Japan and Korea
Benney, D.D*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/484	Japan
Bool (Cutler), Kathleen Theresa	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/75	Japan and Korea
Bouly, N*	RAANC	Captain	SFX700044	Japan
Carter, Ruth Ellen	RAANC	Lieutenant	F6/8	Japan and Korea
Caterson, G.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant T/Captain	F2/3	Japan
Cavanagh, C.E*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/7	Japan
Coleman, J.B*	RAANC	Lieutenant	VFX700193	Japan
Connolly (Gravener), M.G.	RAANC	Lieutenant	TFX9469	Japan
Cox, R.P*	RAANC	Captain	F3/6	Japan
Crocker (Lawrence), Betty	RAANC	Lieutenant	F4/31	Japan and Korea
Crouch, Joan	RAANC	Captain	F2/5	Japan and Korea

¹ Nominal Roll collated from the Korean War Nominal Roll and BritCom. General Hospital War Diary AWM 11/2/45 1950–1956. *Indicates not listed on Korean War Nominal Roll. The AWM was unable to locate records from 1950 to 1951. The list is therefore not complete.

Cunningham (Lergessner), Teresa Marion	RAANC	Major	F2/197	Japan and Korea
Cutler, K.T*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/75	Japan
Dowling, Evelyn Joan	RAANC	Captain	F3/168	Japan and Korea
Duggan, M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	WFX700092	Japan
Earwaker (Waddington), Elizabeth	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/177	Japan and Korea
Edwards, L.H*	RAANC	Major (Matron RAANS)	VFX45577	Japan
Elms, J*	RAANC	Captain	F1/2	Japan
Espie, Nellie Jane	RAANC	Lieutenant	F6/4	Japan and Korea
Firth, A.E*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F6/64	Japan
Ford, Marjorie Lilian	RAANC	Lieutenant	F5/86	Japan and Korea
Francis, J.K*	RAANC	T/Major	VX700339	Japan
Guilfoyle, B.M*	RAANC	Captain	F1/1	Japan
Hayles, Nora*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F6/1	Japan
Harrison, P.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/72	Japan
Hawker (Perkins), Beryle	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/8	Japan and Korea
Haynes, Marjory Louise	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/61	Japan and Korea
Hurley, E.J*	RAANC	Lieutenant	NFX700218	Japan
Ims, O.A*	RAANC	Lieutenant	VFX111241	Japan
Ingram, Joan Teresa	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2270	Japan and Korea
Irvine, J.A*	RAANC	Lieutenant T/Captain	F4/1	Japan
Jarvis (Spry), Daphne Yvonne	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/195	Japan and Korea

Johns, I.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F5/10	Japan
Joyce, Mary Isabelle	RAANC	Lieutenant	F6/10	Japan and Korea
Judd, C.A*	RAANC	Captain, AAMWS	SFX15102	Japan
Kelleher, Anne	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/117	Japan and Korea
Keyler, Valma Lillian	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/70	Japan and Korea
King, B*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/114	Japan
Kinane, T.A*	RAANC	Captain	F5/1	Japan
Klingberg (Gerrard), Phyllis Patricia	RAANC	Lieutenant	F4/36	Japan and Korea
Lakin (Mawson), Maxine Moiria	RAANC	Lieutenant	F4/37	Japan and Korea
Larson, M.T*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F6/9	Japan
Lay, Mavis Jean	RAANC	Lieutenant	VFX121878	Japan and Korea
Lee, H.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	NFX700228	Japan
Leedman, P.J*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F5/15	Japan
Le Rougetel (Collatz), Dulcie Merle	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/306	Japan and Korea
Long, Thora Jean	RAANC	Captain	F1/63	Japan and Korea
Lynas, U.F*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/90	Japan
Lyon, E.W*	RAANC	Lieutenant, T/Captain	QFX40137	Japan
MacDonald, G.M.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F4/3	Japan
MacDonald, A.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/8	Japan
Mackey (Summerhayes), Nesta Pauline	RAANC	Lieutenant	F6/34	Japan and Korea
Mallett, F.C*	RAANC	Lieutenant	WFX700091	Japan

Marmont, H.A*	RAANC	Lieutenant	NFX165749	Japan
Martlett, C.L*	RAANC			Japan
Marshall, M.E*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/9	Japan
McCarthy, Perdita Marjorie	RAANC	Captain	F2/2	Japan and Korea
McCaskill, Marie Elizabeth	RAANC	Lieutenant	F4/40	Japan and Korea
McClelland, E*	RAANC	Lieutenant	SFX700045	Japan
McColl, E.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/156	Japan
McConnell, A.B*	RAANC	Lieutenant	QFX700083	Japan
McKissock, P.M.R*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F5/83	Japan
McIntyre, J.M*	RAANC	Lieutenant	NFX700219	Japan
Mills, H*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F4/2	Japan
Milsom, R.B*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F6/2	Japan
Moulton, C.C*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/4	Japan
Nicholson (Webster), Margaret Elston	RAANC	Lieutenant	VFX700192	Japan and Korea
O'Neill, Jean	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/189	Japan and Korea
Peel (Gray), Joyce Lillian	RAANC	Lieutenant	F/2406	Japan and Korea
Powell, Hazel Mildred	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/134	Japan Korea
Probyn-Smith, Barbara Ann	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/59	Japan and Korea
Ransom, M.J*	RAANC	Lieutenant	TFX700005	Japan
Rees, E.J*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F5/131	Japan

Roney, M.O*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/442	Japan
Schultz, S.A*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/7	Japan
Smith, T.A*	RAANC	Captain	F1/155	Japan
Spackman, A.V.A*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/9	Japan
Spence, M.A*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/60	Japan
Steen (Wright), Margaret Letitia	RAANC	Major	F1/174	Japan
Stevens (O'Dowd), Marie Ruth	RAANC	Lieutenant	F1/118	Japan
Stock, J*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/10	Japan
Thompson, Dulcie Vera	RAANC	Major (Matron AMF component)	F3/131	Japan and Korea
Veitch, J*	RAANC	Major, (Matron AMF component)	F5/9	Japan
Webb, A.C*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/416	Japan
Wheatley, Dorothy	RAANC	Lieutenant	F2/420	Japan and Korea
Wilding, H.J*	RAANC	Lieutenant	F3/3	Japan
Wolfe, E*	RAANC	Lieutenant	VFX700133	Japan

RAANC other ranks

Name	Service	Rank	Service Number	Location of service
Aird, J*	RAANC	Private	F3/305	Japan
Allen, T	RAANC	Sergeant	SFX84646	Japan
Baker, E.M*	RAANC	Private	QFX700098	Japan
Bawden, E.M*	RAANC	Private	F4/4	Japan

Bell, V.J*	RAANC	Private	F1/133	Japan
Benson-Inglis, F.H*	RAANC	Sergeant	F2/177	Japan
Book, L*	RAANC	Private	F2/154	Japan
Browne, D.E*	RAANC	Sergeant	F5/5	Japan
Bury, D.F*	RAANC	Private	F1/200	Japan
Butler, J.N*	RAANC	Private	F5/2	Japan
Butters, S.L*	RAANC	Private	F2/11	Japan
Cairns, E.R*	RAANC	Private	F1/91	Japan
Carter, E*	RAANC	Private 1 Star	F5/6	Japan
Connolly, P.D*	RAANC	Private	F3/64	Japan
Cooper, R.G*	RAANC	Private	F1/175	Japan
Denny, I*	RAANC	T/Sgt	NFX77205	Japan
Devine, O.G*	RAANC	Private	F1/153	Japan
Dafter, N.C*	RAANC	Private	F3/133	Japan
Edmunds, E.L*	RAANC	T/Sgt	F1/6	Japan
Evans, M.E*	RAANC	Private	F5/76	Japan
Gallagher, R.E*	RAANC	T/Corporal	QFX64364	Japan
Hall, K*	RAANC	Private, 1 star	F2/14	Japan
Hansen, M.M*	RAANC	Private	F5/111	Japan
Healey, P.J*	RAANC	Private	F3/386	Japan
Henley, F.W*	RAANC	Private	F1/40	Japan
Hethorn, M.I*	RAANC	Private	QFX700099	Japan
Hoffman, E.V*	RAANC	Private	NFX139173	Japan
Hogarth, B.M.E*	RAANC	Private	F3/12	Japan

Holman, J.V	RAANC	Private	F5/53	Japan
Hush, E.G*	RAANC	Private	F2/358	Japan
Hussey, T.A*	RAANC	Private	F5/4	Japan
Hyland, V.O*	RAANC	Private	F1/263	Japan
Irwin, G.M*	RAANC	Private	F2/16	Japan
Jealous, E.R*	RAANC	Private	QFX700097	Japan
Keir, M.C*	RAANC	Sergeant	NFX202526	Japan
Kelly, V.G*	RAANC	Private	F2/148	Japan
Kinna, E.V*	RAANC	Private	VF518135	Japan
Law, A.J*	RAANC	Private	F3/50	Japan
Light, B*	RAANC	Private	F5/208	Japan
Lone, E.M*	RAANC	Private	F1/39	Japan
MacLeod, E.M*	RAANC	Private	F2/150	Japan
Madigan, M.H*	RAANC	Private	F4/147	Japan
Maxwell, B.E.A*	RAANC	Sergeant	F5/49	Japan
McCormack, H.M*	RAANC	Private	WFX700121	Japan
McElligott, E.F*	RAANC	Corporal	F1/169	Japan
McEwen, Shirley Y	RAANC	Private	F5/7	Japan
McGrath, M.C*	RAANC	Private	F3/49	Japan
McKenna, J*	RAANC	Corporal	F/228	Japan
McKinnon, V.D*	RAANC	Private	F2/15	Japan
McLeod, S.L*	RAANC	Private	F4/12	Japan
McLeod, E.N*	RAANC	Private	F2/130	Japan
McNab, P.F*	RAANC	Private	F5/8	Japan

Moxham, B.M*	RAANC	Private	F2/18	Japan
Moxon, I*	RAANC	Corporal	VFX128226	Japan
Myers, C.C*	RAANC	Private	F2/20	Japan
Newey, H.I*	RAANC	Private	F1/201	Japan
O'Connor, C.C*	RAANC	Private	F4/5	Japan
Orr, M.K*	RAANC	Private	F1/143	Japan
Palmer, A.M*	RAANC	Private	F3/75	Japan
Parbs, M.C*	RAANC	Private	F4/141/	Japan
Platton, N*	RAANC	Private	WFX700119	Japan
Porter, S.J*	RAANC	Corporal	F1/8	Japan
Quirk, D.M*	RAANC	Private	F1/36	Japan
Read, L.F*	RAANC	Private	F3/384	Japan
Roberts, G.C*	RAANC	Private	F1/147	Japan
Rust, N.I*	RAANC	Private	F3/233	Japan
Sadler, B.M*	RAANC	Private	F5/169	Japan
Sandy, A.I*	RAANC	Private	VFX700226	Japan
Schlieff, J*	RAANC	Private	F1/262	Japan
Silk, Q*	RAANC	Private	F1/12	Japan
Speering, E.M*	RAANC	Private	F3/66	Japan
Stackpool, N.N*	RAANC	T/Corporal	F4/20	Japan
Stewart, T.M*	RAANC	Private	F2/36	Japan
Sullivan, K.O*	RAANC	Corporal	NFX178419	Japan
Taylor, F.H*	RAANC	Private	F1/140	Japan
Teague, L.E*	RAANC	Private	F5/77	Japan

Tieman, M.C*	RAANC	Private	F3/306	Japan
Vidler, C*	RAANC	Private	F1/145	Japan
Waite, E.D*	RAANC	Private	SF84735	Japan
Walsh, J.M*	RAANC	Private	F1/49	Japan
Wells, J*	RAANC	Private	SFX700072	Japan
White, V*	RAANC	Private	F2/257	Japan
Wickham, J*	RAANC	Private	NFX700703	Japan
Wilkins, D.M*	RAANC	Private	F4/154	Japan
Windley, D.L	RAANC	Private	VFX700301	Japan
Wood, V.J*	RAANC	T/Corporal	F5/135	Japan
Woodrow, M.F*	RAANC	Private	QFX700100	Japan
Worthington, E.J *	RAANC	Private 1 star	F1/11	Japan
Zeims, J.E*	RAANC	Private	WFX700120	Japan

RAAFNS

Name	Service	Rank	Service Number	Location of service
Bengough (McGann), Joan Margaret	RAAFNS	Sister	N34062	Japan and Korea
Blair (Edgerton), Helen Forsyth	RAAFNS	Sister	N35542	Japan and Korea
Rule, (Boland), Lucy Eyrie	RAAFNS	Senior Sister	N11483	Japan and Korea
Booth, Ella Maud	RAAFNS	Sister	N24156	Japan and Korea
Bury (Halstead), Grace	RAAFNS	Sister	N35304	Japan and Korea
Salter (Carmody), Anita Mary (Joy)	RAAFNS	Sister	N5913	Japan and Korea
Catchlove, Mavis Estelle	RAAFNS	Sister	N22235	Japan and Korea
Scholz (Chaplin), Phyllis Reta	RAAFNS	Sister	N33303	Japan and Korea
Cleary, Agnes Theresa	RAAFNS	Senior Sister	N11482	Japan and Korea
Cleary, Helen Agnes	RAAFNS	Senior Sister	N4452	Japan and Korea
Daniel (Thompson), Catherine Bernadette	RAAFNS	Sister	N12427	Japan and Korea
Docker, Betty Bristow	RAAFNS	Senior Sister	N39572	Japan and Korea
Feil (Lambert), Eunice Lillian	RAAFNS	Sister	N11484	Japan and Korea
Jarrett, Thelma Edith (Lorraine)	RAAFNS	Sister	N11973	Japan and Korea
Marshall (Maley), Lucy Thelma	RAAFNS	Sister	N22231	Japan and Korea

Monger, Muriel Annie	RAAFNS	Sister	N23041	Japan and Korea
Morgan (Thompson), Ethel Livingstone	RAAFNS	Senior Sister	N5910	Japan and Korea
Oldham (Wittmann), Natalie Mary	RAAFNS	Sister	N35859	Japan and Korea
Washington (Radford), Betty Fay	RAAFNS	Senior Sister	N11486	Japan and Korea
Tansey (Tindall), Irene Patricia	RAAFNS	Sister	N23622	Japan and Korea
Wilson, Mabel Meers	RAAFNS	Sister	N11969	Japan and Korea

Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (Female) Medical Officer

Name	Service	Rank	Service Number	Location of service
Finney, J	RAAMC	Captain (Medical Officer)	F3/423	Japan and Korea

APPENDIX B:

Biographies

Betty Crocker (Lawrence) OAM, was born on 3 June 1925 in Waikerie, South Australia. She grew up in the rural Riverland area of South Australia and attended school the local primary school. Betty then moved to Adelaide to live with her paternal grandmother so that she could attend Adelaide High School. After finishing high school, Betty aspired to study medicine, however as there were no scholarships available and her father was unable to support her due to a difficult five years on the land, she decided to begin nursing training in 1941. Directed by Manpower, Betty completed her general training at Broken Hill Hospital, New South Wales. She then completed postgraduate qualifications in accident and emergency, also at Broken Hill, followed by midwifery at Crown Street Maternity Hospital in Sydney, infant and child welfare at Torrens House in Adelaide. She finally undertook an infectious diseases course at Northfield Infectious Diseases Hospital also in Adelaide. After working as sister-in-charge of two polio wards at Northfield, Betty enlisted in the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps on 30 July 1951.¹

Catherine (Cathie) Daniel (Thompson) OAM was born on the 26 January 1922. Catherine (Cathie) grew up in Albury, New South Wales, the youngest of seven children. She completed her nursing training at Albury Hospital, then completed midwifery training in Melbourne. She wanted to join the Australian Army Nursing Service, but as World War Two had ended when she applied, she was not able to join. She had had experiences nursing returned soldiers at Albury Hospital and had wanted to join because of those experiences. Before eventually joining the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service, after the outbreak of the Korean War, Cathie had a wide variety of nursing experiences; including working in

¹ Betty Lawrence, interview with Rob Linn, 22 May 2002, State Library of South Australia, J.D. Somerville Oral History Collection, OH644/7. Crocker, Betty Irene, B2458, F431, NAA, Melbourne.

Western Australia, Darwin, Tennant Creek and Bonegilla Immigration Centre and finally at the Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane, Queensland.²

Nellie Espie OAM, RRC was born on 25 February 1924 at York Plains, Tasmania, one of five girls. She grew up on the 400-acre family farm. Nell attended the local state school in York Plains and moved to Hobart with her sister to complete her high school education. Nell began her nursing training in 1942 at the Royal Hobart Hospital, completed her midwifery certificate at King George Hospital in Sydney, New South Wales and a child health certificate in Hobart. Before joining the RAANC, on 29 June 1951, Nell worked in Summer Hill and at the Concord Repatriation Hospital in Sydney.³

Marjorie Ford was born on 20 May 1918. She was the eldest child of her family that included two brothers and a younger male cousin. Marjorie grew up in South Melbourne, Victoria and attended Albert Park School until she was 15 years old. She left school to look after her family and her mother who had become ill. Prior to leaving school, Marjorie had desired to study medicine, but was unable to do so due to her family responsibilities. Sadly, her mother passed away when she was 19 and Marjorie continued to care for her father and her 'boys,' while working in a shop to help support the family. When her brothers and cousin grew older and started their adult lives, Marjorie decided to begin her nursing training in her late twenties, which was quite unusual for that period. She completed her three years' training at the Queen Victoria Hospital in Melbourne, living in as was required, but going home on weekends to continue to care for her family. After her training, she continued as a staff nurse at the Queen Victoria for a year, during which time two of her 'boys' had joined the forces and the third had applied to do so, but was not accepted due to high blood pressure. Marjorie then went to Sydney to complete obstetrics training and worked in a private hospital. She then returned to Melbourne to complete her training, undertaking a child welfare certificate. After this she nursed for a time in Perth. It was while nursing in Perth that she was

² Cathierine (Cathie) Daniel (now Thompson), interview with author, 7 August 2007, Coolamon, NSW, tape in possession of author.

³ Espie, Nell, B2458 F64, NAA, Melbourne. Nell Espie, interview with author, Oatlands, Tasmania, 5 December, 2007, tape in possession of author.

encouraged by the Matron to join the RAANC. At the age of 33 she enlisted as a Lieutenant on 15 May 1953, for an initial engagement of four years.⁴

Nancy Millicent (Holmes) Hummerston OAM grew up in Tasmania, one of six children. When she finished high school she moved to Victoria to begin her nursing training at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Following her initial training, she completed her midwifery qualification and then worked on the staff of the Royal Melbourne Hospital. In 1944 Nancy joined the Australian Army Nursing Service serving at Heidelberg and Bonegilla before being selected, in March 1946, as one of the first nurses to serve in Japan as part of the Occupation Forces. While serving in Japan, Nancy met and married Ken Hummerston and resigned her commission upon marriage. Sadly, Ken was tragically killed just six weeks after their wedding. Nancy rejoined the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps and again served in Japan during the Korean War period.⁵

Shirley McEwen (Bennetts) was born in Perth, Western Australia on 22 November 1929, one of three girls. She attended Perth Girls High School and after finishing school trained in shorthand and worked in an office. However, dissatisfied with that and other office work she tried, Shirley decided to train to become a nurse and began her training at the Royal Perth Hospital. However, while completing the course Shirley became engaged to be married so discontinued her training. Unfortunately the engagement fell through. Unable to restart her training as this was not allowed at the time, Shirley took up work as a nursing assistant at a maternity hospital in Fremantle. It was while working at this hospital that a friend suggested she apply to join the newly formed Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps. After an interview at Swan Barracks, Shirley enlisted as an other rank nursing orderly on 27 June 1951.⁶

Margaret (Peg) Nicholson (Webster) was born in Sydney, New South Wales on 16 January 1927. One of five children, she was raised in Liverpool and attended

⁴ Marjorie Ford, interview with author, Melbourne, Victoria, 23 April 2008, tape in possession of author. Ford, Marjorie L. B2458, F586. NAA, Melbourne

⁵ Nancy Hummerston, interview with author, Launceston, Tasmania, 6 December 2007.

⁶ Shirley McEwen (now Bennetts), interview with author, Innaloo, Western Australia, 29 November 2007, tape in possession of author. McEwen, SY, B2458, F57, NAA, Melbourne.

school in Liverpool and then Parramatta High School. After completing high school, Peg began nursing training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 1945. At the completion of her four years' general training, she completed midwifery at King George V Memorial Hospital, Camperdown. While working at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, Melbourne, Victoria, Peg was recruited into the RAANC and enlisted on 11 July 1951.⁷

Barbara Probyn-Smith was born on 22 June 1929 in Dover, Kent, England.⁸ She was raised in Southport, Queensland. Barbara completed her four years' general training at Brisbane General Hospital, followed by 'extra training in intensive surgical care, OP. Theatre work, and advanced Casualty and Aid care.'⁹ She also completed training in tropical medicine at Cairns Base Hospital. She enlisted in the RAANC on 24 September 1951. After completing the RAANC Indoctrination Course she emplaned for Japan on 8 March 1952, serving in Japan, then Korea one year later, in March 1953.¹⁰

Geraldine Roberts (Fleming) was born on 8 March 1930 in Ipswich, Queensland. Prior to enlistment as an other rank in the RAANC, Geraldine had worked as a laundress, but wanted to become a nurse, or nursing assistant as she was not a trained nurse. She saw an advertisement for the RAANC in the paper and decided to apply to join. She was appointed to the RAANC on 20 June 1952, aged 23 years, for a period four years. On enlistment Geraldine completed training at Healesville School of Army Health in Victoria and was selected for posting to Japan, embarking from Sydney on 18 August 1953.¹¹

Dulcie Thompson ARRC was born on the 17 January 1911, one of four children. She attended local public schools in Adelaide, South Australia. For her final two years of schooling she attended Adelaide High School. After working briefly in a

⁷ Gwen Grimmond and Margaret (Peg) Elston Sealy Webster, *The Girl on the Five and a Halfpenny Stamp* (Port Macquarie: Port Macquarie and District Family History Society, 2006). Nicholson, Margaret E. NAA B2458, VFX 700192, NAA, Melbourne.

⁸ Nominal Roll of Australian Veterans of the Korean War, <http://www.koreanroll.gov.au/veteran.aspx?id=1212792> [accessed 2nd April 2009].

⁹ Barbara Probyn-Smith, unpublished manuscript, State Library of Victoria, PA Box 58, 01/144.

¹⁰ Probyn-Smith, B.A., National Archives of Australia, Melbourne, B2458, F159.

¹¹ Gerry Roberts (now Fleming), interview with author, Sefton, NSW, 31 May 2007, tape in possession of author. Roberts, Geraldine, B2458, F1/147, NAA, Melbourne.

newspaper office, Dulcie began nursing training at the age of 19 at the Adelaide Children's Hospital. After completing her training and throughout the 1930s, she undertook a mixture of hospital and private nursing, in homes or specialising in hospitals. She specialised in nursing children and also completed infectious diseases training.

With feelings that war may be imminent, Dulcie and her fellow nurses joined the AANS reserve list. Following a trip to India in which she acted as a private nurse for an Australian family and with World War Two in progress, Dulcie returned to Australia and enlisted in the AANS on 13 September 1940. During her time in the AANS in World War Two, Dulcie served in the Middle East and served with the 2/3 CCS [Casualty Clearing Station] and the 6th AGH [Australian General Hospital] in Gaza. Dulcie also served in New Guinea. At the end of World War Two, Dulcie was demobilised. Back in the civilian sector she took the opportunity to complete further training in infant welfare and was awarded a Florence Nightingale Scholarship in 1947 to study at the Royal College of Nursing in London, England. She completed the course in July 1948 and stayed in London until February 1949. She rejoined the newly formed RAANC in December 1951 with the rank of Major.¹²

Dorothy Wheatley was born on 12 August 1928. She grew up in Balmain and Surry Hills in Sydney's inner west and was educated at Cleveland Street and Sydney Girls high school, New South Wales. Her childhood was somewhat disjointed following the death of her mother when she was eleven, after which she stayed with a number of different relatives. After completing high school, Dorothy decided to become a nurse as the opportunities for travel enticed her to join the profession. She completed her general training at Balmain Hospital, then obtained a midwifery certificate and completed further training in geriatric nursing. After hearing of the establishment of the Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps (RAANC), Dorothy applied to join as the fact that the nursing corps had become part of the regular Army appealed to her. However, she also had applied for an Infant Welfare training position in New Zealand. Her plan was to accept

¹² Dulcie Thompson, interview with Jan Bassett, 16 July 1987, S01811, AWM, Canberra. Thompson, Dulcie Vera, B2458, F3131, NAA, Melbourne.

whichever position was offered first. The RAANC accepted her application first and she enlisted on 27 May 1953 for an initial engagement of five years. Dorothy was 24 and 9 months on enlistment.¹³

¹³ Dorothy Wheatley, interview with author, 7 January 2008, Sydney, New South Wales, tape in possession of author. Wheatley, Dorothy, B2458, F2420, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Canberra.

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