

the hospital at Fort Stotsenberg. Despite their lack of readiness for war, the nurses plunged in with body, mind, and heart.

### DECEMBER 10, 1941 + DAY THREE

Cañacao Naval Hospital, near Manila

**PEGGY NASH AND THE OTHER NURSES AT** Cañacao Naval Hospital braced themselves, wondering if and when they would come under attack. As before, they were at lunch in their quarters near the hospital when the air-raid sirens blew. Peggy and the others carried their

food into the crawl space under the building. Balancing plates on their laps, they put up a good front, giggling and trading nervous quips. When the sirens stopped, silence reigned for long minutes. The nurses relaxed, thinking someone had neglected to give the all-clear signal.

Suddenly the roar of planes filled their ears, followed by blasts of bombs exploding. Anti-aircraft guns growled from the nearby navy yard. Peggy shuddered in silence as wave after wave of explosions shook the building above and the ground beneath them.

Several nurses mouthed prayers. One buried her head against her propped-up knees, fingering rosary beads in trembling hands. The bombardment lasted five minutes . . . ten . . . fifteen . . . a timeless monotony of pounding upon pounding.

After forty-five minutes of earsplitting explosions, the silence felt equally deafening. The nurses crept from their hiding place. Half a mile across Cañacao Bay, swelling clouds of smoke darkened the sky. Sporadic flames flared. Cavite Naval Shipyard was demolished.

They ran to the hospital, where casualties streamed in, Navy and civilian. Peggy saw both military and civilian wounded coming four or five in a car, some even on the roof. Patients arrived on splintered doors, dirty carpets, blankets, woven bamboo mats, and twisted corru-



Christmas at the U.S. Army nurses' quarters, Sternberg Hospital, Manila, 1940. Frances Nash is in the second row from the top, on the far right, with Ethel Thor in the row in front of her, also on the far right.





U.S. Cavite Naval Ship yard aflame after a Japanese air attack. Small-arms shells explode (left) and a torpedo-loaded barge (center) burns. December 10, 1941.

gated roofing. The entire hospital became an emergency ward, every doctor a surgeon. This left Peggy and the other nurses to administer needed medications without doctors' orders. Scattered two to a ward, they worked in tandem, one going down a row of wounded with a syringe of tetanus vaccine, the other following with morphine. As they finished with each row of wounded, they started on the next.

The stench of burning flesh nauseated Peggy, as did the sight of mangled bodies—oily, dirty, and bleeding; arms and legs at weird angles, some dangling by a shred, others only jagged stumps. As bodies left for the morgue, corpsmen lifted patients from the floor into beds without changing the linens. It couldn't be helped.

"It was amazing how cool the nurses were. I never thought I could be like that," Peggy said later. "The patients were two or three in a bed, and on chairs between beds. As we readied

patients for surgery, sometimes we came to a bed, and the patient was already dead."

"Could I have a glass of water?" a child asked, as Peggy walked by. She promised to bring it. "By the time I got back, he was dead. That just about killed me.

"The next time I looked out the window, it was dark, and there was fire all around, and the sky was red with flames and smoke. Manila was burning.

"I thought to myself, if the Japanese came and dropped another load, this suffering would all be over, mine included."

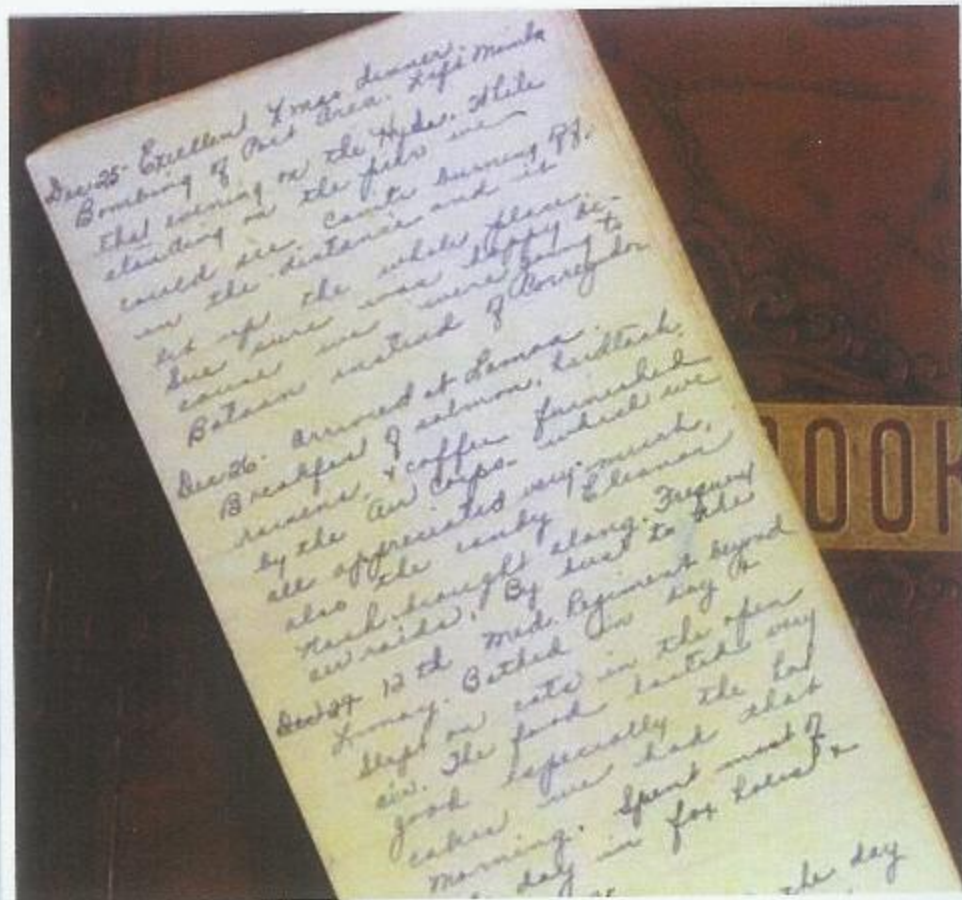
On an errand to the operating room, Peggy saw doctors operating on every table, on the floor, and even the steps. "It was like a nightmare in there, but I couldn't stop to help because I had to get back to the ward. We worked into the night. Corpses filled the morgue. There was no time for fear."



Right: Army Nurse Ethel Thor's diary entry for Christmas 1941, the evening she evacuated Manila for the Bataan Peninsula.

Opposite top: Army nurses worked twenty-hour shifts caring for casualties on Bataan Peninsula, Philippine Islands.

Opposite bottom: The wounded at a medical station in Bataan. Serious cases on litters were transported to Hospital No. 1, where they received a smear test for gangrene bacteria, treatment for shock, and surgery if needed. One of the men pictured is delirious, possibly from sunstroke.



expected a convoy of U.S. ships filled with soldiers, weapons, and supplies to rescue them “at least by tomorrow.”

But the next day Japanese air raids on Mariveles Harbor at the tip of the Bataan Peninsula sent more than two hundred patients to Hospital No. 1. When Frances Nash arrived to oversee the operating room’s eight tables, scores of wounded men waited their turn for surgery. “Anything the ambulances could pick up still living was brought to us,” said Frances.

“Despite the confusion, Frances was supervising with an eagle eye,” said Dr. Weinstein. “Our nurses drove themselves as if beset by devils until their neatly starched uniforms were crumpled, sweat-soaked rags. Frances

especially was a dynamo, driving the medics with her lashing tongue until they cursed her sullenly under their breaths—not openly, because they were sure they’d get the back of her hand.”

Despite her colorful language, those Frances Nash supervised soon discovered she was a softie inside—kind, sympathetic, and understanding.

On December 28 President Roosevelt broadcast a speech to the Philippines. “I give to the people of the Philippines my solemn pledge that their freedom will be redeemed and their independence established and protected,” he said. “The entire resources, in men and in material, of the United States stand behind that pledge.”





Hattie Brantley did not hear the president's speech on the radio. Hospital No. 1's eighteen wards overflowed with casualties from the front lines. "I'd get down on my knees, finally not even bothering to arise, but crawling to the next cot," Hattie said.

Every ward was a surgical ward. Hattie and the other ward nurses' main duty was to give morphine shots for pain relief. "The needles had to be sharpened on a piece of stone. Then you boiled the needle and you put a morphine tablet in the glass syringe and dumped in the water that you used to boil the needle to dissolve the morphine."

Hattie didn't have a moment to think of home or family. As a girl, she had been particularly close to her father, a truck farmer. She hadn't wanted her mother's life as a farm wife with half a dozen kids pulling at her skirt while



she washed and cleaned and hoed the garden. But she had wanted a horse. After earning her nursing degree, she figured that an army cavalry unit was her best bet to climb in the saddle. Hattie signed up, never dreaming she'd end up on a battlefield in a hospital where the nurses' station was a wooden crate turned on end.

At night, under blackout conditions due to