

Elizabeth Fitch

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The pages that follow constitute the transcript of an interview conducted as part of the Wilmette Public Library District's Oral History program, started in 1975 by a committee of the Friends of the Wilmette Public Library which has been chaired since its inception by Rhea Adler, a resident of the Village of Wilmette since 1932.

A copy of the tape on which this transcript is based is available for circulation, and may be obtained by checking with a Reference Librarian concerning circulation procedures.

This program would not have been possible without the cooperation of the many long-time residents of the Village interested in helping to preserve particulars of a fascinating past, and the patience, energy and effort of a small but dedicated group of interviewers, transcribers and typists who share the belief that the past is too important to be forgotten.

Richard E. Thompson  
Director

## ABSTRACT

Interviewee: Elizabeth Fitch

Interviewer: Rhea Adler

Date of interview: about 1984

Early history of both parental backgrounds prior to  
Wilmette in 1906

Childhood and schooling in Wilmette, New Trier, Wellesley and nursing degree at  
Walter Reed Hospital, Washington,  
D.C.

Summer spent in Labrador and Newfoundland with Grenfell Expedition at the  
same time Drs. Frederick and Katherine Brooks Merrifield were there (before  
their marriage)

Years spent in D.C. until sent to Austria in 1955 as Chief of Hospitals in various  
European areas

Return to U.S.A. and D.C. until retirement from Army Nurses Corps and Wilmette

Has continued to travel widely

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RA: What is your name?

EF: Elizabeth Fitch.

RA: And where do you live?

EF: Right here.

RA: And what is here? What's the address?

EF: 1033 Elmwood Avenue.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And originally this was North Avenue.

RA: Yes, you're right. This was North Avenue and it was unpaved.

EF: Oh, mud. Mud. And we had a mud basement, too — just a dry, of course.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: But that has been cemented and then I had — oh, some insulation put in the ceiling. I thought it would make the floors warmer, but it didn't.

RA: Didn't it?

EF: No.

RA: Well, your floors seem very warm and they're all hard wood, are they?

EF: Um — well, they're an oak.

RA: Yes.

EF: They are with the rugs here.

RA: Yes.

EF: But the kitchen is not warm and the breakfast porch in

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back.

RA: I see. Is there a basement under those?

EF: Yes, a full basement.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And a gas heater.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Gas and electricity. We had oil lamps when we came and the telephone has just been put in and it was one of those long things in the kitchen.

RA: That you had to ring?

EF: Yes.

RA: With a handle?

EF: Yes.

RA: With the handle that you rang for the number you wanted?

EF: Yes.

RA: Was there an operator at that time.

EF: Oh, yes.

RA: ....that you had to go through or did you..

EF: No, not at first. Then we added back stairs and that went up into the closet for that back bedroom.

RA: I see.

EF: And then this was open that porch and we had that enclosed and a toilet put in with a shower.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And then there was a bulkhead in back and that was all

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enclosed in back stairs. Then there was a doorway and steps down to the basement here and we closed that.

RA: Off the dining room?

EF: Yes.

RA: Tell me....

EF: One, two, three, four.

RA: You mentioned a bulkhead. What was under that bulkhead? Was it a cistern?

EF: No.

RA: With rain water?

EF: No. There were steps down to the basement.

RA: Oh, I see. I see. From an outside — you had an outside entrance to the basement?

EF: Yes. It's like the neighbors over there....

RA: Yes.

EF: ....that have that bulkhead.

RA: Yes. Some houses still do have them.

EF: Um hum.

RA: But those were prior to the 1900's usually or right around the turn of the century.

EF: Now I don't really know — this house was built around 1888 or something like that.

RA: I see. So it's almost a hundred years old.

EF: Yes. And it was originally a farmhouse.

RA: I see. Whose farm?

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EF: Well, we bought it from the Dunchee's.

RA: Dingee's?

EF: No. Dunchee.

RA: Dunchee?

EF: Studs Dunchee.

RA: Oh, that's a different name than I've heard. D U N C H E ?

EF: Double E, I think.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Esther Dunshee was very active....

RA: Oh, Dunshee. That's....

EF: Yes.

RA: Esther I knew.

EF: And when this - part of this house had Esther's room. That was this room right here.

RA: I see. For goodness sakes. That's very interesting.

EF: (Indistinct) of July 1899. So I am 82 now. I'll be 83 very shortly.

RA: I see. You — just before the 1900s - the turn of the century.

EF: Um hum.

RA: So....

EF: I was born in Chicago.

RA: You were born in Chicago. And how old were you when you came out here?

EF: Six.

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RA: You were six years old then?

EF: Um hum.

RA: And were you—how many siblings in your family?

EF: Two sisters and one brother and one sister was born up here.

RA: Oh yes.

EF: The rest of us were born in Chicago.

RA: I see. So there were three of you—five of you when you came out here in your family.

EF: Yes.

RA: Tell me about your father and mother. They were early participants...

EF: Yes

RA: ...in the community

EF: Yes. Mother was born December 24, 1873 in Newton, Massachusetts.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And then her father was killed in a train accident and an aunt stayed with them for a while and then moved to Framingham to her parents home and mother was the only child and the shock of grandfather's death just sort of unbalanced her. She was so possessive of mother. She didn't want mother to go to school. She couldn't stop at anybody's home...

RA: Ohhh.



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EF: ....after school. She couldn't go to a party unless Grandma went with her. Oh, it was pathetic and her Mother really straightened her out. And Mother was engaged to marry a Ralph Hausner. He was the son of neighbor's in Newton, Massachusetts and a fine man. Grandma wouldn't have anything like that so she took Mother to Europe - broke that up and Ralph Hausner went to Hawaii later on and he married and was apparently very happy.

RA: The Hausner name is a very old New England name.

EF: Yes, it is and they were a fine family. Grandma - Mother couldn't have done better, but uh uh. Well, that got broken up. Then Father's people - his Mother's people lived in Framingham also and he went to Annapolis and he went up to see his grandmother several times and, of course, all the girls just fell for this chap in uniform.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Oh, wow!

RA: A uniform ever. (Laughter)

EF: Yes. And his grandmother lived not too far from my Mother's mother - about three blocks. And they had a beautiful old - sort of a pinkish brick, it had been red, but it faded - house on Lincoln Street - 33 Lincoln Street — 32 Lincoln Street. Well, anyhow, it was a

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lovely old house and Aunt Angie lived there - my Grandmother's sister and, oh, she just loved to have people visit her and so my mother went East to see her mother. She took one of us one year and then-, oh, we always went over to see Aunt Angie. And then next door — well, it wasn't next door, it was about half a block away - her brother, Uncle Charlie Eames, lived there. And he married and had two sons and a daughter. One of the sons taught at Ithaca University - Botany and he went all around the world getting specimens and interviewing people and lecturing — a very interesting man. Herbert, the other son, was an engineer and he was stationed down here for a while in Illinois and then up in the Chicago campus. And he married! Genevieve Richardson, a Canadian girl, and a lovely girl.

RA: That's interesting. I have Richardson's....

EF: Um hum.

RA: ....in my family.

EF: Um. She was just delightful and they had two girls — Helen and Harriet. And they were pretty little things and lovely girls. Helen has died, but Harriet married a chap by the name of Hastings and they live out in San Diego.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: But they have no children. Oh, they were so beautiful - those girls — and their manners and speech — everything

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was just lovely. Their mother really brought them up beautifully. And she sewed quite well and they had beautiful clothes. Oh, my

RA: What about your father?

EF: My father was the son of Charles Comfort Fitch. He was born in Ohio and then they moved here with his father, Henry Fitch, and they had an opportunity to buy a — land at State and Madison, but he didn't want it. He wanted a farm.

RA: I see.

EF: So they went up to Ringwood, which is near Woodstock, and they had quite a good farm there. Oh - cattle, chickens, pigs and then they grew food for the family and....

RA: Now this is your Grandfather?

EF: That's my Grandfather's father - went up there first....

RA: I see.

EF: ....Henry Fitch and Grandpa went with him, but then he didn't like it up there. He wasn't about to be a farmer. He wanted to be a carpenter and he was a very good carpenter.

RA: Very much needed at that period of time.

EF: Yes.

RA: That would have been about what?

EF: Well, it was before the fire the Chicago fire.

RA: The 40's to 60's.

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EF: Yes.

RA: Because along about in there - around in the 40's was when that area — Lake County and McHenry County were settled.

EF: Yes. Well, this was a little later, I think. Anyway, Henry Fitch brought his produce down to Chicago and sold it and he had his money in his pocket and he dropped dead on South Water Street.

RA: For goodness sakes.

EF: Well, they found out who he was, but the money was gone.

RA: Oh.

EF: And....

RA: In those days, too?

EF: Yes. Well, he was buried up in the Ringwood Cemetery and then there are several other members of the family buried there, too. And....

RA: So there were Fitch's in the area for a very long time then?

EF: Yes. There were about seven brothers who came and one of two sisters. And there is a little Fitch Street in Chicago. It's only about two blocks long and maybe it has been changed by now. I don't know - anyhow, when my brother married, they got an apartment on Fitch Street just for...

RA: Fun.

EF: Just for fun.

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RA: But tell me about Father then. We left him out. He went to Annapolis.

EF: He graduated from the North Division High School and a public school — I don't remember the name of that one and then he won this assignment to Annapolis.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: He was so pleased because that was all for free.

RA: Yes.

EF: And they were very poor people. My Grandmother and Grandfather Fitch had this — well, it's called a sub — not a sub—basement — it's what they called a London basement. You went down a few steps and then there was this — and then inside and also upstairs, her sister had her apartment.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And she had the strangest bed. It was a big cabinet like this — with a mirror, a beautiful mirror — and then you put....

RA: Rolled it out?

EF: Yes. Well, that was a new one on us. Then there was another little bedroom and another bedroom and downstairs was a living room and a sort of a davenport here and several chairs. One chair I have yet — and then a pantry, then the kitchen and then what they called a summer kitchen in back.

RA: Oh, yes.

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EF: And that was where they stored things and ironing set up and all of that. Then there was up a few flights — a back door out into the back yard.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And that was an attractive back yard. Grandma always had pretty flowers and bushes around.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And....

RA: So your Father went to Annapolis from North Division High School.

EF: Yes.

RA: Because it was called North Division at one time.

EF: In those days it was.

RA: Yes.

EF: I don't know what it is now - if it's in existence.

RA: Well, that's right. They probably....

EF: Yes.

RA: ....don't have it any more.

EF: No. So....

RA: When do you think - what year did they come out here?

EF: Grandma and Grandpa?

RA: No, your Father and Mother.

EF: Oh.

RA: When you were six years old. That would have been 1906.

EF: Yes. 1905 and '06 they came to Wilmette.

RA: And did they live in this house?

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EF: No. They rented a house at 1228 Lake for a year while they were looking around to buy and then they bought this house. And they have enlarged it and, oh, improved it in many ways.

RA: Tell me about your Father and the Village because I happen to know he was very active.

EF: He was on the Board as an engineer.

RA: Oh, he had graduated from Annapolis in engineering then?

EF: Well, yes - and several others. I forget. And he was good at languages.

RA: Oh.

EF: He spoke German fluently because there were so many German people in the area where they lived.

RA: That's right.

EF: And then he studied French and he was over in Holland for a year representing a company and he learned the Holland Dutch.

RA: Now which one of the Dutch languages was that? There were — are.

EF: They're Flemish.

RA: Flemish?

EF: But - well, I forget where he stayed - well, anyhow....

RA: We're more interested in what he did here in Wilmette. He was....

EF: Yes. Now he was the one who had the first lights — street lights put in.

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RA: I see.

EF: Now, they....

RA: Were they electric?

EF: No. They were gas and the lamplighter came around.

RA: And how did he make his circuit of the Village?

EF: Well, he walked most of the time because we didn't have a car in those days.

RA: No, but how did you get around transportation in those days?

EF: Well, we walked. We walked over to the public schools here and then we did have tickets on the North Shore electric line, but we also walked up to New Trier quite frequently.

RA: Did you go to New Trier?

EF: Yes. I'm a graduate.

RA: You graduated from New Trier?

EF: Um hum.

RA: And how old was the school by the time you got to high school?

EF: Well, it was....

RA: Well established.

EF: It was well established — yes. There was just the one building - main building and over here was a gym and over here was the auditorium and the dining — the mess hall. And then in back there was a football, baseball - whatever they call it — field.



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RA: Um hum. Um hum.

EF: It's changed a lot since then.

RA: Oh, that gym became a library at one point, I believe....

EF: I don't know what they've done to it.

RA: . . . before they really built the new what is the new library in the middle of it.

EF: Yes.

RA: And then the auditorium has been changed, too. There's been many changes over the years.

EF: Very many changes and much enlarged.

RA: And the population has changed.

EF: Oh, baby boom.

RA: How was it when you went? How many people were in your classes?

EF: There were about 200, I think.

RA: In the whole high school?

EF: In the whole high school there were about 600.

RA: Oh, were there really? Two hundred to a class?

EF: Oh, no — two hundred in my year.

RA: I see.

EF: Oh, we had about 15 in each class.

RA: I see. Yes. So it had gotten to be a good sized high school by that time?

EF: It was a very good high school - well rated among the high schools in the country.

RA: And still is.

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EF: Oh, yes. And, oh, I had Miss Elizabeth Packer for Latin and a Mr. Harper for Math and a Mr. Kaylor.

RA: That's right.

EF: I can't remember what I had Mr. Kaylor for.

RA: Mr. Kaylor was a Science teacher, wasn't he?

EF: Yes. Chemistry, I think.

RA: That's right. And that's the senior Kaylor - not the one who later taught.

EF: No. And also there's another Harper, too.

RA: And which Harper was that? Was that J. Robb Harper?

EF: No.

RA: Or was it his brother?

EF: His brother was up there. J. Robb was here.

RA: That's right, but he had started up there I found out.

EF: Oh, did he?

RA: That's what - I taped Robb Harper last week.

EF: Oh.

RA: And he told me....

EF: Um hum.

RA: ....his father had started there.

EF: Yes. Well, Miss Birchard taught English and then I had Miss Ulrich for History and Miss Winton - there was something else. I forget now. Anyhow, they were excellent teachers.

RA: Did you have gym?

EF: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had a woman and a man for gym

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and we had Music - I had Music and Music Appreciation and Art.

RA: Was Dr. Small there when you were there?

EF: Yes.

RA: You had Latin from him then?

EF: Yes, as well as from Miss Packer and I also studied Greek with Dr. Small.

RA: Yes.

EF: But I didn't do very well with that and, let's see, after I was graduated from New Trier, I went to Wellsley and I had flu. And, oh, I was very sick with it.

RA: Oh.

EF: So I had — I was there for five years.

RA: Oh. You were graduated from Wellsley?

EF: Yes and then I went up later to the Grenfell Association Medical....

RA: Oh, tell me about that.

EF: Well, that was founded by this Dr. Wilfred T. Grenfell of England and he went over to the East coast of Newfoundland and also part of the East coast of Labrador. And he founded these schools and hospitals and nursing homes. Oh, he was just so active in building up this community.

RA: Tell me, were you on the same trip with Dr. Fred and Catherine Merrifield?

EF: Yes.

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RA: You were?

EF: I met them there.

RA: Oh.

EF: And then they were married later on when they came back.

RA: Yes. Yes.

EF: And Dr. Fred and another doctor, a dentist, came around the coast periodically to check on all of the people.

RA: I see.

EF: On their teeth and then there was a Dr. Fernald from the University of Philadelphia who went up there and he brought all kinds of seeds and little plants - little shrubs for the people to plant and eat.

RA: I see.

EF: They ate nothing but fish.

RA: I see.

EF: And they had scurvy and, oh, it was pitiful.

RA: Yes.

EF: But he was up there the summer before I was up there and those people were really busy - their little gardens. Now they had to fence them in because of the rabbits and....

RA: All the wildlife.

EF: Yes. And then they had chickens and I think he brought the chickens up there. And when I stayed with a local family they had one egg a day and they gave it to me. Well, when I found that out I decided no thank you, I

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didn't like eggs - pretended I didn't. So the little boy, Lawrence, got the egg.

RA: I see. -.

EF: And then there was a Grenfell ship that came from Nova Scotia — oh, once every two weeks or once a month, depending on the weather. It was called The Home and they would bring up anything that you wanted. You could ask them to bring up some oranges or bananas or all kinds of things.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And they would bring it the next trip and then you'd pay for it.

RA: I see. How long were you there?

EF: About seven weeks. My school was six weeks and I stayed a little longer cause I wanted to go up the Labrador coast.

RA: I see. What period of time in your growth was this? Was it after you finished college?

EF: Yes, but before I went to school of nursing.

RA: Oh, I see.

EF: Well, there was a little nursing station at this port of call and Margaret Meister was the nurse from — she was from Detroit and she had a little local assistant. And, oh, she was very good. She would go down the coast for two or three days and look at all of the people and maybe help deliver a baby or that and then she would come

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up the coast — oh, after a week or two and give us, the summer teachers, any pointers that....

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And then there was a Parson Richards of the Church of England and, oh, was he a saint. Oh, everybody just adored him. And they would come from miles up the coast down to him to be married.

RA: I see.

EF: Or up - anyway....

RA: From miles around.

EF: Oh, yes.

RA: Just like in our pioneer days.

EF: That's right. And then there was another girl, Sara Stockard, from Vassar who was about four or five miles up the line from me. And one time Sara came down and she said, "Do you know how to deliver a baby?" I said, "Well, no." My mother had told me the facts of life and all of that, but - well, it seems that there was a woman in her little community who was going to have a baby and she wanted the "teacher miss" to deliver the baby.

RA: Oh.

EF: She didn't want any of the local people and there were no midwives or anything like that in those days, but the local people were pretty good.

RA: Yes. Many people did that as a specialty I understand.

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EF: Yes, but no, this woman wanted the teacher miss. That was Sara Stockard. So Sara came down to me and we had quite a visit. Then we walked down to Margaret Meister's little hospital there. Margaret wasn't there, but we got her book and we read it and we saw the pictures and we thought well, we'll just have to make do. So back we went and back she went and the food was very skimpy so the family used to send me packages now and then and I would share them with the....

RA: Family.

EF: ....the local family with whom I lived and, oh say - and then we could order from his home.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And oranges were the biggest treat.

RA: I could believe.

EF: Ohhh.

RA: They were even a big treat in the early days.

EF: In here - yes, but they had never seen an orange until I ordered some from the home and, oh say, was that all rights And I taught school in the church that was a general building.

RA: Yes.

EF: They had school and church and county meetings and weddings and everything in there. And I had everyone on up and if it was a good day and the parents went out

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to fish or to gather the fish on the - even the babies would be - so I had a little sandbox for some of the children and then I had all the way from first grade on up and it was rather difficult to get things across to them because they had not been really prepared. There had been several other summer teachers there.

RA: Now was summer all of the schooling they had just in three months?

EF: Um hum. That's all. And they were pretty bright children and they remembered and if it started to rain and you had - they had to go out and get the fish, everybody went out of the schoolroom. Just took right — I was just....

RA: Just like the country schools here that used to quit.

EF: Yes.

RA: . . . when the crops needed to be harvested.

EF: That's right. Well, here I was left with the babies. So I took the babies home and I went over to see what was going on. I found out and that was their means of livelihood - the fish.

RA: The fish. Did they cure them and sell them?

EF: Yes. They cured them in salt and they had plenty of salt. (Indistinct) come back home from the expedition.

EF: In Labrador?

RA: Yes.

EF: I came home about the latter part of August.

RA: I see.



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EF: And then I wanted to go right into training at the nurses' school because when I was up there I was so ignorant of what to do. I had had first aid courses, but that didn't prepare me for bringing these fishhooks that got caught in their hands and, oh, they had body lice and head lice and everything. And the only time they could wash was when they went into the water and that was salt.

RA: So where did you go to nursing school then?

EF: I went to Walter Reed — the army school of nursing.

RA: Oh, you went directly there?

EF: Yes. I thought I would go to Johns Hopkins at first, but - oh, that interviewer, I didn't like her at all.

RA: A personality clash.

EF: Well, now — rather, but, you see, when she found out I was a Wellesley graduate - oh, she would take me right in. Regardless of me, it was the degree.

RA: Yes.

EF: And I didn't like that. Well, father was stationed in Washington at that time.

RA: He was still in service then?

EF: Well, off and on he was.

RA: I see.

EF: He got called back.

RA: I see.

EF: Or he volunteered rather and he had been out to Walter

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Reed because one of the men was a classmate of his....

RA: I see.

EF: .. ..at Annapolis and so he went out there and he said, "Well, why don't you go there?" He said, "They have an excellent school of nursing."

RA: Um hum.

EF: So I applied. No trouble, but when I went to take my initial physical up at Fort Sheridan there was a Dr. Duval and I had all kinds of body bites from those lice and things up there and he said, "Oh, I guess you've been down to the beach, have you?" Well, I didn't say anything.

RA: You didn't tell him you'd been to Labrador?

EF: Well, I did later, but I was sort of embarrassed with all of these body.

RA: Yes.

EF: Well, I had my initial physical and passed it so I went to Walter Reed and we had to take enough money with us for a return trip home if we didn't pass it.

RA: I see.

EF: Well, I passed all right and by that time I was all cleared up with those funny spots and so I stayed right there and we were on a Civil Service status in those days and we had excellent instructors. Most of them were doctors and then I had four months over at St. Elizabeth's in psychiatric training.

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RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Psychiatric experience - and then six months at Philadelphia General - three months for obstetrics and three months for pediatrics.

RA: Oh.

EF: You see, we didn't have enough at Walter Reed to cover the standard.

RA: I see.

EF: So that we did.

RA: That was a most unusual training for that — that was all prior to World War I? No?

EF: No, that was....

RA: We were in the war, were we? Was it about that time?

EF: No, I forget.

RA: You were six when you came here.

EF: Yes.

RA: It was after World War I?

EF: Well, it was in the 20's.

RA: Oh, in the 20's. Yes.

EF: Yes — because I finished at Wellesley in 1922, but I had to stay extra because of flu.

RA: Um hum.

EF: So I finished in '30 — in '23.

RA: Yes.

EF: And my sister also finished in the same class.

RA: In the same class?

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EF: Yes — my sister, Rebecca.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And, let me see, what next?

RA: Rebecca was the one who worked at Hollister Press.

EF: Yes — for years.

RA: Yes.

EF: And then she was over in the Glenview Announcements....

RA: I see.

EF: . . . for a prior time. Yes.

RA: And her hobby was photography?

EF: She was an excellent photographer.

RA: We have many of her pictures....

EF: Yes.

RA: . . . at the Wilmette Library.

EF: And also she collected those little toothpick holders.

RA: Oh, did she? Oh, for goodness sakes.

EF: Yes.

RA: You do have a collection.

EF: Those were hers.

RA: And you - is that lustre up there? It's silver, isn't it?

EF: It's silver. And I collect snuff boxes.

RA: Oh.

EF: And I have....

RA: Oh, yes. I see the case. Yes indeed.

EF: And then, of course, I collect the books on family history

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EF: and the town history in which they lived.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And I have one or two from England.

RA: I see.

EF: But I haven't been able to get very many there.

RA: Well, they hang on to it's like their paintings and pictures. We have very few Winslows....

EF: Ohhhh.

RA: and things in this country because they are not let out of the country and when you go to their estate, you can see why....

EF: Ohhhh.

RA: . . . because so many of them are in individual hands.

EF: Oh, yes.

RA: But now, tell me, you're getting out of Walter Reed?

EF: Then I taught nursing at the East Orange Homeopathic Hospital for a year and a half.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And I enjoyed that and do you know, not too long ago, I had a letter from one of my students.

RA: For goodness sakes.

EF: It seems that she knew I had gone back into the army and somehow or other, she found my address....

RA: Oh.

EF: ...and wrote to me and I was so pleased.

RA: I can imagine.

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EF: And then later I had letters from several of her classmates. And then I went back into the army after I taught at East Orange. And also while there I went to Columbia night school.

RA: Oh, did you?

EF: Two nights a week for a while and then three nights a week.

RA: What did you take at Columbia?

EF: Psychiatry and local history, I think it was.

RA: Oh, yes. And then?

EF: I went back into the army.

RA: You went back and this....

EF: At Walter Reed.

RA: I see.

EF: And - oh, I felt like I was going home.

RA: I can believe it.

EF: Um hum.

RA: Now you're back in the army?

EF: Yes — at Walter Reed.

RA: Teaching?

EF: No.

RA: No.

EF: I was in charge of the officer's section which was Ward (indistinct) and then was Ward Two. They were patients who were up and could go to the mess hall. General Pershing was on my ward.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 28

RA: How interesting.

EF: But I didn't take care of him. He had special nurses.

RA: I see.

EF: And General George Marshall came out to see him regularly and — oh, that General Marshall was really special.

RA: Now was this after World War II?

EF: It was in the 20's.

RA: In the 20's? All right. So it was before - long before. All right.

EF: And then I went on maneuvers down in Louisiana. That was preparatory for war.

RA: I see.

EF: And we had the blue army here and the red army here and we were supposed to fight, fight and fight, but we didn't do any serious fighting. And, of course, we had no guns or ammunition of any kind. That was all pretend.

RA: Now were you taking the place of - the part of the nurse in this or were you.

EF: Yes - the nurse. Yes, yes. And then we had some doctors, too, and some of the administrative people and this town of Alexandria was a delightful little town.

RA: Oh, it's a beautiful town.

EF: And - oh, they had the best places to eat and so every once in a while we would go there to eat because our mess hall was - it was very good, but it was a bit monotonous so we would go in there and then they also had good pastry shops and grocery

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 29

stores and we used to buy things and have our little fun there. Then I had an automobile at that time and we went over to Natchez to see those beautiful homes.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: (Indistinct) homes and we used to go over there and the people got to know us quite well because we went frequently.

RA: I see.

EF: And they had very good eating places there, but not too many because they were such good cooks themselves.

RA: That's right.

EF: And then outside of town there was a man who had goats and he had goats in his house and they called it Goat Castle. They were lovely goats all right, but we didn't appreciate that very much so we only went out there once or twice. When I was on duty one of the other girls who had a license to drive would take my car.

RA: Yes.

EF: ....and she would go. Then we went down to New Orleans several times and, well, we drove from Walter Reed and went down through — oh, some of those lovely gardens and all and then we went on up.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And a Dr. Gustadius went with us.

RA: I see.

EF: Catherine Josselyn and Dr. Gustadius and I. And Dr.



Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 30

Gustadius took turns driving so we could make better time.

RA: Better time.

EF: Um hum. And we lived in shacks....

RA: When you were in the army.

EF: Yes. Well, in Alexandria - the south side of Alexandria.

RA: I see.

EF: And the bathroom was as long as this house and there were about four or five stools there and no bathtub. There were showers and there was no privacy. If you went in there and wanted to sit on the toilet and anybody else came in - why, they could....

RA: There weren't booths then? They were just open.

EF: Yes, they were open. And there were four of us who lived in that building. Dorcas Avery and I lived over here and Gem Bletch and Kay Jollice lived over here. And this was all just open.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: No furniture to speak of. There were a few things.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And then the other girls - there were about 20 of us - they had various little shacks along.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And we used to get together and go in to a movie now and then. It was a very interesting little town and the people there were so cordial. Oh, they would ask us — oh, please come to luncheon — please, we would

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 31

like to make a cake and send it to you. They were just so.

RA: Gracious.

EF: ... gracious and they wanted us to enjoy our tour there.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And we did. Then we all went back to our respective stations and — let's see.

RA: May we come back to your father in Wilmette and his part that he played? You said he was on the Board.

EF: Yes.

RA: Did not he hold an office for the Village, too?

EF: Yes, he did. In fact, he held several offices, but I forget what they were. PA He was Clerk at one time, was he not?

EF: Voting.

RA: Yes. He had charge of all the voting.

EF: Yes, he did.

RA: Since we're going to have an election on Tuesday.

EF: Oh, and I've got to get there - crook or hook.

RA: That's right. Well, I'm sure there are people that are driving, aren't there?

EF: Well, this girl across the street, Clara Stetter, will take me over.

RA: Oh, Clara Stetter.

EF: But maybe they vote in another place.

RA: I see.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 32

EF: If so, June Miller over here will take me....

RA: I see.

EF: .. .because we will be voting in the same place.

RA: Oh, yes. I see. Where do you vote this time? They changed so many of the voting places.

EF: I don't know.

RA: You're in precinct what?

EF: Well, that I don't know either.

RA: Well, let's talk about your father instead of the election. Tell me about Mr. Claude Fitch. Well, then he went back into the army. He was not physically qualified to go back into the navy. He had a lot arthritis.

RA: I see. –

EF: So he went into Washington in the Ordinance Department.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And he stayed there about a year after the war was over and Mother went down to see him periodically, but she did not move down there.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And he stayed with a cousin.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And then he took the trolley, I guess, back to the offices and these cousins were very good to him and the buildings were all right, but they were not air conditioned in those days and they were cold in winter and hot in summer and his arthritis got worse and his back was bent - ohhh. So

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 33

finally he was retired and he came home and he was just home. He wasn't....

RA: He wasn't active at all?

EF: No - he wasn't well enough to do much of anything.

RA: I see.

EF: And we had somebody to help take care of him at times and finally he got so he could come downstairs. He was upstairs in this and then he was on a soft diet and that was easy. No problem there. –

RA: Um hum.

EF: And then we had a cousin stay with us to help Mother and then she had to go home because her parents needed her so we had a girl who was sort of a practical nurse. She was very good - this Frances Meyer Long.

RA: Was she a local woman?

EF: No. Well, yes - Chicago. She was very good and took care of Father very well. And then she was off duty one day and Father was back in this bedroom. Mother had taken up his luncheon and brought it down. She sat there while he ate it and brought it down and then she went up to rearrange his pillows and that. He was dead. And this was Sunday - try and get a doctor. Well, we did and....

RA: What doctor was in town at that time or were there many of them?

EF: There were many of them, but I forget who was on call on

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 34

Sunday, but he came anyhow. And I was away at that time so I got called home. I was out in Brigham City, Utah.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: So I — Beck called me and said that Father had just died and so I had to go to the Red Cross to get permission to come home.

RA: I see. You were with the Red Cross out there?

EF: No, I wasn't, but I had to go there for permission

RA: I see.

EF: . . . . to leave and they wired here to this Red Cross office and Jean Ten Broeck was working there at the time.

RA: Oh.

EF: And so she said, "Oh, yes. I know he has just died." And of course, I got permission to come right now. Well, they took me over where I could get the plane and the weather was so bad we landed down in Indianapolis and there was a young chap there, a young soldier, who had just come back from overseas in the Pacific some place and he wanted to get home. He'd been gone three years. So we were sitting together waiting for a flight back to Chicago and he was telling me his story so I kind of adopted him. And when I was called up to go, I said, "Now this is my friend. He has to go with me." So they let him come.

RA: Good.

EF: And - oh, he was so grateful. He sent me a box of candy

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 35

afterwards and for about three years afterwards he'd send me a Christmas card. I haven't heard from him since. Well, then I was stationed three places on the West coast just a short time — six months in one and....

RA: Where on the West coast?

EF: One place was near Santa Barbara.

RA: Oh, that's a lovely place to be stationed in.

EF: Yes. And another place was down near Los Angeles.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And another place was up — Vancouver Barracks. It was just over the line in Washington State.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And - oh, I enjoyed those very much. Then those stations kept closing. So then I went to Brigham City, Utah.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And I used to go into their genealogies. Now the originals....

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: . . . were buried some place in Utah.

RA: In a granite hill.

EF: Yes - because they didn't want the originals to be bombed....

RA: That's right. They still are.

EF: . . . but they had copies. I guess they still are.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 36

RA: Everything's on microfilm I understand and all the original things....

EF: Are still there.

RA: ....are in what they call the Granite Mountain. There was an article in Smithsonian recently about the Granite Mountain.

EF: Oh, was there?

RA: Yes.

EF: Um hum. Well, anyhow

RA: That's where you got interested in

EF: No.

RA: No?

EF: No. I became interested in family history and genealogy from my Grandfather Fitch. We went over and sat on the steps of the Newberry Library and there was this little Washington Park here - very little — and there was a soap box. And these people would get up and rant.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Any language.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: So Grandpa wanted me to see that. He thought that was something worth seeing and after this one had talked himself out, he said, "Well, I'd like you to come into the Newberry Library." He said, "I know one of the girls in the Family History Room and I'd like you to meet her." So....

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 37

RA: Could that have been Ellen Chase?

EF: I have no idea.

RA: Um hum.

EF: This was - oh dear, I don't remember.

RA: Well, Ellen Chase is gone there now, but she was there for many, many, many years.

EF: Maybe so.

RA: She and Joe Wolf are both gone.

EF: Yes. Well, now this was a young girl....

RA: I see.

EF: . . . .who was an assistant.

RA: I see.

EF: And she lived near Grandpa and Grandpa - she lived on LaSalle Street. They lived on Elm.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And that interested me - started getting me interested in family history because she had a handful of books that she was going to put on the card there to be....

RA: Used.

EF: No, they were to be filed.

RA: Oh, I see. New books - I mean new to them - that they acquired - acquisitioned.

EF: Yes - I guess so. They were very interesting books and Grandpa said, "Well, now they have some Fitch records here. They have some Adams records here. They have Eames records here." And I thought — well, say this



Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 38

must be quite a library.

RA: Well, it was and it is.

EF: It's still. Well, that started my interest and then when I was finishing out at Fort Riley I took the Sunday New York Times and in there was this article on Goodspeeds.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: ... in Boston. So I thought well, say, so I sent for their catalog and ever since then Mother and Father and then Mother later used to give us birthday money. So that went into the books on family history and town history and I have about a hundred and fifty.

RA: For heaven's sakes.

EF: Now they're not all books. Some of them are pamphlets. This little — is a pamphlet on Cutler genealogy.

RA: Oh, yes. Do you have Cutlers in your family?

EF: Yes.

RA: Are - you're not related to the Cutlers that were here in town?

EF: No. No. This goes back to 1606 when James Cutler, born in England 1606, died in Lexington, Massachusetts - settled in Washington, married and so forth and so on.

RA: Yes.

EF: That I haven't checked with my book as yet. When I've checked them, I put them over here and.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: ... in that bookcase.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 39

RA: I see.

EF: And - well, as I say, I had about a hundred and fifty, but they're not all books. Many of them are pamphlets.

RA: Are pamphlets. Yes. Some of the pamphlets though I have put in hard covers. Newberry does that....

EF: Yes.

RA: ... .to pamphlets and some that have been down there that I have acquired.

EF: Yes.

RA: ... I've done this to.

EF: Well, then I had - when I was stationed - when I was teaching nursing in East Orange there was a Silas Hetting Fitch who was a patient.

RA: I see.

EF: So I went up - I said, "Ohhh. My name is Elizabeth Fitch." And he said, "Well, we'll have to get together because I would like your family back - tied up with what I had done." And he had a marvelous - it's about that thick — of — that he had been writing. He was a lawyer in New York and he was very active for quite a while and then he became old and arthritic and he wasn't able to do as much as he had prior. So he used to go over to these - to the - to the New York Public Library, the genealogy section.

RA: They had a very good - they have a very good one.

EF: Yes. And he copied and copied and I had the records over

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 40

here because he lent them to me and I came home and Beck and Mary Martin each had a typewriter and, say, did they copy. Ohhhh.

RA: Now today you can put it in a xerox machine.

EF: Yes. Well, I don't know whether I knew about that, but anyhow I....

RA: Well, it probably didn't exist then.

EF: Yes. Anyhow, I copied it all and then I sent it back to a girl to take it over to Mr. Fitch because he, at that time, was at home.

RA: I see.

EF: And — oh, he was an interesting man and his wife was just lovely. And when I went back later - oh, you must come to dinner. Well, Sunday would be the only day. Well, fine with them. Then there was a Catherine Cook - a Dr. Cook's daughter - who was at Wellsley with me.

RA: Oh.

EF: And that was very pleasant. Then a friend of Mother's was living in South Orange so I went over to see them several times and they were just lovely. And then I lived in a hospital up on the top floor. There were two rooms with a bath and then the lab was over here and all, but there was a Hilda Rankin who lived in the other room and she was a laboratory technician.

RA: Oh, yes. —

EF: But we used to go to New York every once in a while to

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 41

see a play or go to some place to eat or just take a trip around New York or — then I went over to Connecticut to see the Fitch place.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Norwalk. South Norwalk, Connecticut and she went with me and we had quite a good trip. We went several times and I had a camera those times, but the camera didn't do very well.

RA: Oh.

EF: It was my fault, but I have pictures of them anyhow.

RA: You've just recently taken a trip, haven't you?

EF: Yes. Last August I went to London on an ancestor hunt.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: It was sponsored by the University of Ohio and this Joy Moulton was one of our assistant — one of our guides and Dr. James Bell of....

RA: New England Historical and Geneological Society.

EF: And, say, that's a wonderful place, too.

RA: Yes, it is.

EF: I have been there many times.

RA: Yes.

EF: And when we were all gathering in Boston to take off to go to London, Dr. Bell came over and he said, "Say, I know you, Elizabeth Fitch." And then - he's a very interesting man.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 42

RA: Yes, I have met Dr. Bell. He's talked down at - well, you heard him at Newberry, didn't you or did you?

EF: No, I missed it.

RA: Oh.

EF: I don't know where I was and I didn't collect - anyhow, say, he stayed at the Cambridge and Oxford House in London. It's a very exclusive place.

RA: Oh.

EF: The rest of us stayed at a hotel - just a — it was a very good hotel, but - oh, this Mary Martin and I - Mary Martin Engel and I had....

RA: You know Mary Martin Engel? I've been trying to tape her.

EF: She's not here right now. She'll be back in about two weeks.

RA: I see.

EF: She's in California.

RA: Well, you tell her that you did a tape for us and then maybe we can....

EF: Yes. All right. Well, we went down to pay the bill and Mary and I used to get some ice and a pitcher of water and some ice cubes..

RA: We are continuing Miss Fitch's tour of duty with the U.S. army. She has talked about her assignments within the continental United States up to now. From here on she will talk about her assignments beyond the continental

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 43

United States.

EF: Which was in Austria and I went to Fort Kilmer, New Jersey to await a ship to take me over to Austria and I had to wait quite a while because I was assigned to go by ship. If I had been assigned to go by air, I could have' gone very quickly

RA: Um hum.

EF: ....but I had to wait there about two weeks, I think, and then the ship took us over and it was a U.S. Army troop ship.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And that took quite a while.

RA: Now this was what year?

EF: '53.

RA: Um hum. The war was over?

EF: Yes. The war was over and I was to be assigned as chief of the army nurses in Austria and Italy.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: It was the army of occupation then. The war was all over and we stopped at Naples and then outside the harbor of Rome to let off some people there and then at Legorno was where we were — that was the end of our trip on the ship. Then we went up to Salzburg and went to a distribution unit.

RA: Oh, yes.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 44

EF: And I had already been assigned so I didn't have to stay very long and then I was taken out to Camp Truscott which was about — oh, three or four miles out of Salzburg towards the German line.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And we had excellent quarters. We all had a little suite. You opened a door and here was a little hallway and a bathroom complete with tub and shower and everything and then a bedroom with a wardrobe and a dresser and a bed and a little rug and then a living room. And the living room had a desk and a davenport and several chairs and you had to provide your own pictures or anything of that nature or anything....

RA: Oh, yes. The artistic touches.

EF: Yes. And there were two windows in the living room — one in the bathroom and one in the bedroom and on a clear day you could look out and see this beautiful mountain over the line in Germany.

RA: Ohhh.

EF: It was just beautiful.

RA: Snow capped? Was it snow capped?

EF: Sometimes.

RA: Sometimes.

EF: Then there was a bus that went about every hour into Salzburg so that we could go in on our off duty time.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 45

RA: That's a beautiful city, isn't it?

EF: Ohhh. Well, my office was in the surgeon's office at Camp Truscott and I was also chief of the hospital....

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: ... .at Truscott and then of the army nurses in Linz and Vienna and for a short time in Trieste and then in Legorno and one at the Embassy in Rome.

RA: Oh, say, you had to move around between them all?

EF: Yes — four times a year I had to go to Vienna. Wasn't that terrible?

RA: Oh, wasn't that awful?

EF: Yes.

RA: That beautiful city.

EF: And then once a year I had to go to Salzburg for the chief nurses' conferences.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: That was too bad, too.

RA: Oh, I bet you had fun. (Laughter)

EF: And, of course, I would meet all the other nurses I knew at that meeting....

RA: Yes.

EF: ....and — oh, we'd have such a good time. We had lectures and conferences and all and then afterwards we were on our own to - oh, see the city and party a bit and sometimes just to rest up from all the activities.

RA: Oh, yes. Now, tell me, who were occupying the hospitals



Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 46

at that time?

EF: The American hospitals were all staffed by American people.

RA: And the patients?

EF: The patients were nearly all Americans. If there were any emergencies in Germany or all, they were taken right in, of course, and given the best of care and then transferred to a German hospital later on.

RA: I see.

EF: But we had quite a few hospitals there and when - on our off duty time, several of the nurses had automobiles so I went with several of them and - oh, we went all over Austria and down to Venice and in different sections of Germany and along the Danube - ohhh

RA: Ohhh.

EF: And we saw all those castles of King Ludwig and went through quite a few of them and then the Passion show wasn't — it's every ten years, but there was one in Tiersee in Austria which was - oh, about an hour's drive or maybe longer.

RA: That's Tiersee — not Tergense?

EF: No — Tiersee.

RA: Tiersee?

EF: TIERSEE.

RA: I see.

EF: They had a Passion show there that people said was every

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 47

bit as good as the one at Oberarnmergau.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: So I went with some people of - several times and saw that - ohhh, it was breathtaking really.

RA: I'm sure.

EF: And it was practically all day long. You had to go early and take a sandwich if you wanted something for a little break in the morning and then you could go out to luncheon and take another little break in the afternoon and then you would get home about six or seven o'clock.

RA: Oh, that was a long day.

EF: Well, it — yes....

RA: You'd be exhausted.

EF: Yes. It was very similar to Oberanimergau.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Several people had seen the Oberammergau one and they had seen this one also and they said that it was just the same.

RA: Um hum.

EF: Well, we had a recreation center and I cannot think of the name of it. It was quite a palace really and belonged to - was it Bertha Von Crook?

RA: They did confiscate all the Von Crook property I know that.

EF: And this was one of them. It wasn't a castle with turrets and all.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 48

RA: No.

EF: It was just a very large manor house.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And we had that as a recreation center.

RA: Oh.

EF: We could go over there and if you wanted to stay more than a meal or two, you had to arrange.

RA: Um hum,

EF: ... .for a bed.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And - oh, the beds - feather beds. (Laughter) Wow And feather puffs on top and feather pillows. You just got very down in them.

RA: You would. You're such a tiny person.

EF: And they always had a beautiful log fire in the living room.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And then we had a cook there. He was just an army cook, but - ohhh, he could cook really the most fantastic things and with that gourmet touch.

RA: Yes.

EF: And we used to just enjoy going over there for the meals, but it was beautiful country and good skiing country.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: So quite a few people went over for that. It wasn't like the Swiss skis ski slopes and all of that.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 49

RA: No - they're more gradual.

EF: Yes, but they were very good.

RA: Well, after all Tyrol is....

EF: Yes.

RA: ...right there and is considered....

EF: Yes. Let's see — that was our recreation center. Then when I went to Vienna, I used to plan to go when they changed the Guard.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: You see, that was — it was divided by four countries - France, England, the United States....

RA: France, England, United States and Austria - was it?

EF: Yes. Um hum. France, England, United States and Austria. And every three months there was a changing of the Guard....

RA: I see.

EF: ...of the different countries and that was quite a ceremony and they had troops marching and bands playing and - oh, and then there would be cocktail parties and dances afterwards and dinners and — very, very special. And each country was host at one time.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: ....and then the next one so that — and when the Russians had it, they always had Vodka and nobody liked Vodka.

RA: Oh, so the Russians were in on it. Then the four are somewhat....

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 50

EF: Well, you see, it was partly Russia around there.

RA: That's right and still is....

EF: Yes.

RA: ....and they still have a camp there where people from Russia escape to. I know we visited....

EF: Yes.

RA: . . . .when I was there.

EF: Um hum. Well, the nurses there had a small hospital and the chief nurse was also the anesthetist and there were six nurses all told and three doctors and some enlisted men. It was a very neat little hospital.

RA: These were USA?

EF: And also I planned to go over for the opera season. The opera had been badly bombed....

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: ....but they had operas anyway so I went over to several of those and then also in Salzburg we had.

RA: Beautiful music.

EF: Yes, at the Mozartium and that....

RA: Yes.

EF: And then there were always so many sights to see and interesting places to go to eat.

RA: Um hum.

EF: Ohhh, my.

RA: Yes.

EF: And the same in Salzburg. We tried to make them all, but

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 51

we didn't quite, but we had the Ostericerhof Hotel which was the largest hotel. That was the OH as we called it.

RA: Yes.

EF: And....

RA: We stayed there.

EF: Um hum. Well, I stayed there the first night that I got there.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And then went right out to Salzburg but we used to go in quite frequently - oh, for a meal or something or other and also I had several friends who lived at the hotel.

RA: Um hum.

EF: Well....

RA: Was that occupied mainly by the American personnel at that time?

EF: Yes, but it had - it also had several of the Austrian people. For instance, the man at the desk was Austrian and he had been there when it was under Austrian control and he could get anything for us.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: He could get tickets for the opera, for the marionettes - anything. He just knew - well, he'd been there for years, you know, and all we had to do would be to ask him — Franz was his name — ask him if he would get us some tickets for some special night. "Yes, mam. Stop in tomorrow." So

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 52

we'd stop in tomorrow....

RA: Um hum.

EF: .. .and pick them up.

RA: Um hum.

EF: Sure as - and then we loved to shop. Ohhh....

RA: Was there much to be had in the shops at that time?

EF: Yes.

RA: They continued in Austria, too?

EF: Quite a bit of good shopping - leather....

RA: Yes. –

EF: . . .and that fine needlepoint. I have some lovely bags that I got of those.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And then all of the men got their lederhosen, you know.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And then we had dances to be taught this shoeplata - which you - (Meow Meow) - hello, Mr. Patter. It was when you stood on one leg and hit the bottom of your other foot and you did it to a rhythm.

RA: Oh.

EF: And sometimes to music — sometimes just to the accompaniment of a violin or something.

RA: Oh, yes. Now was that a sort of a take-off of a native dance?

EF: Yes. And we were taught by native people.

RA: I see.

Elizabeth Fitch, cont. 53

EF: And I wasn't very good. I don't know why. I was just so clumsy, but some of the men were very good. Then we were very short of nurses for a while so we had some civilian Austrian nurses help us. In the meantime, three of the doctors came to stay in our quarters — one the obstetrician, another the surgeon and another a medical man and that kind of livened our quarters.... Um hum. ..quite a bit. We had an excellent big living room and then a kitchen where we could do our own cooking if we wanted to.

RA: I see.

EF: And we had commissary privileges so we could go over and get what food we wanted to. That was quite a distance, but there was a bus going over there or some of the people who had cars would take us.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Now look here, what are you up to?

RA: How long were you stationed in Austria?

EF: Three years.

RA: Three years?

EF: And I went down to Trieste once while we had nurses there.

RA: And that was under the allied....

EF: For a short time.

RA: Yes.

EF: Then those nurses came up to stay with us and then several



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of them were due to go home and several stayed with us and several went to Germany. And then I went to Venice several times - ohhh, that was lovely.

RA: Beautiful city, isn't it?

EF: Yes. And then I went to Switzerland several times and I bought a lovely watch there.

RA: Where in Switzerland did you go?

EF: About six different places. —

RA: Zurich?

EF: Zurich and Montreux and then there's a little section that speaks its own language. It's a southern part.

RA: Well, there's an Italian part up....

EF: An Italian part and a French part and a German part. Then there's this other little section there that has a language of its own and we went there one time. We were driving and we wanted to know where we could stop for a bite to eat. They didn't speak English.

RA: (Laugh) This is....

EF: Well, we found a place and we got a menu and we couldn't even read the menu, but we guessed by the sections that these were appetizers and this was the main....

RA: Entree.

EF: ... .entree and then the salads and the desserts. So we'd point to one and somebody else would point to another and we would be very anxious to see what came, (Laughter) but the food was delicious.

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RA: Yes, they are good cooks.

EF: Yes. Well, then — oh, let's see - when I went to Linz we had a station hospital there....

RA: That's back in Austria? —

EF: Yes. On the way were the Lipizzaner horses.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: So the nurses at Linz always accused me of coming over to see them just as an excuse to stop and see the horses going and coming.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And — oh, those horses were just beautiful.

RA: Now this wasn't the young ones that you — cause they're farther south, I believe.

EF: No.

RA: These were the pure adults.

EF: Well, these were all of them.

RA: All — well, they have two farms as I understand it.

EF: They did at one time and I think they still have now.

RA: Yes, they have gone back to the two.

EF: But.

RA: One's down near the Czech border, I believe.

EF: Yes. Well, I nearly always stopped....

RA: Oh, they are so beautiful.

EF: I could go in an official car on anything like that.

RA: Oh, how wonderful.

EF: So we would always stop and see the horses and take them

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a couple of apples or something and then I'd stop on the way back and the girls at Linz just said, "Un uh. I know why you came to see us."

RA: (Laughter)

EF: But it just happened that they were there and you know how come they got there? General Patton.

RA: That's right. I was waiting for you to tell how he saved them.

EF: Yes. I think he telephoned or cabled to the Surgeon General's office in Washington that he wanted a certain Sergeant who was at Fort Riley....

RA: I see.

EF: ...because he said that sergeant could smell a horse a mile off. So the Surgeon General sent him over and, sure enough — you see, the Russians had those.

RA: Well, did they get them or did they— did he secure them ahead of the Russians? He....

EF: No, the Russians got them before we got there.

RA: Oh, I didn't realize that.

EF: And they had the mares in one place and the stallions in another and this sergeant really could smell the horses. And before the Russians knew about it, we had them all collected into Austria. and....

RA: Where they belonged.

EF: Yes, and - oh, were the Russians upset, but they didn't dare make any diplomatic or political.

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RA: Yes.

EF: . . . meaning to it because - well.

RA: Well, the Germans had tried to get to them first. Didn't....

EF: Yes.

RA: Wasn't that the way it was?

EF: Yes, that's true.

RA: And then the Russians must have....

EF: And the Russians finally got them, but we got them from the Russians and they were in Austria between Linz and Salzburg in a well guarded camp.

RA: I see. —

EF: And you could go and give them an apple, but you could not go in that area.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: You could give them an apple as they came to....

RA: To you.

EF: Yes and - oh, they all came. You had to take a lot of apples.

RA: I believe it.

EF: And they liked carrots, too.

RA: Oh, sure.

EF: I thought - well, only rabbits liked carrots, but....

RA: Oh, no.

EF: . . . oh, no. Well, let me see — we had another place where a lot of ammunition was buried.

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RA: Oh, yes. Do you remember what that was — the town?

EF: No. We weren't allowed to know.

RA: Oh, I see, but it was in Austria?

EF: It was in Austria and they were buried in caves.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And that was special ammunition in case of a war.

RA: I see.

EF: So I went over there one time and then I had an Austrian friend, Suzanne Von Wittich, and she took me over around that area one time. Solbad Hall was the name of the place and — oh, that was a lovely little town.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And then on another trip — not with Suzanne, but another time — we went to Gmunden and another.

RA: That was a gorgeous old university town.

EF: Yes. And some of our American students were there because they had two years of medical.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: They couldn't get into the medical colleges and universities in the States so they....

RA: Even at that time?

EF: Yes. And then there was that other place where the falls came right down in the middle of town. Oh, I can't think of the name of that town. Oh, it wasn't Gmunden. There's a book of Salzburg — no, here it is. Oh, dear. I was there. We had a month a year and one time we came over from the

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States and we met in Corsica and stayed there a little while and then took a bus trip along southern France and up to part of Austria and Germany and all the way to Denmark and Sweden.

RA: Oh.

EF: And along the Gota Canal and then she went home from Norway.

RA: I see.

EF: And I went back and stopped in Finland and back in Denmark again and then flew back to Salzburg from there. then on another vacation one of the nurses in the Surgeon Generals office in Washington came over and we had tickets on the Victoria side to see the Queen....

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: .. .the present Queen going in to be crowned.

RA: Oh.

EF: And then we stayed a little while to see when she came out. Then we couldn't get rooms there - just crowded - so we had come over from Holland for the day and then went back to Holland and then another time she came over and we went up to Scotland. She is of Scottish descent.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And I have some Scottish ancestry, too.

RA: So do I.

EF: What is yours?

RA: I'm - well, I have quite a bit. I have Lamont which is

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one of the old, old clans and Campbell's....

EF: Oh, well....

RA: .. .and the Hamilton's.

EF: Oh, well, mine is Monroe and McKinstry.

RA: Oh, McKinstry?

EF: McKinstry was north Irish for a while and then they went over to Scotland and then they went back....

RA: To Ulster.

EF: .. .to Kerrick Fergus where they were supposed to get a ship for the states, but they had to wait a whole year. In the meantime, they had a boy - a William McKinstry. Finally the ship came and they came to Boston and then they finally settled in that area and the Monroes — I visited them several times at Fall's Castle and that is on the east side of Scotland beyond Inverness and up and we stayed at this National Hotel which was a lovely hotel.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And then the Lord of Hector - Sir Hector Monroe - entertained us some and they were living in the castle at that time and they took us all around, but after we left, they lived in one of the smaller houses. It was too hard to heat and keep the castle going.

RA: And they're so expensive to maintain these days.

EF: Oh, yes.

RA: Few people can.

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EF: I couldn't find the name of that...

RA: Tell me, then how long was your — three years you said.

EF: Yes.

RA: ...you stayed. And when you came back then, did you come back here to Wilmette or....

EF: No. I went to Walter Reed for my retirement physical and all of that....

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: ....but I was allowed to come home for a week and then go back.

RA: I see.

EF: Oh, it took about a week to get all those physicals and reports and everything.

RA: Um hum.

EF: And then that was it.

RA: And what year was that?

EF: '65 - I think.

RA: I thought you told me 1955.

EF: Yes. And when I came home I was lost. I didn't have to get up to go any place. I could come down any time I wanted for breakfast. For about two weeks I was just kind of in a daze.

RA: Well I can imagine.

EF: And then I came to all right. What was the name of that?

RA: When you came back your sister Becky was still alive - was she not?



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EF: yes. Ardclach - I think that was the name of that place that had the — 163.

RA: The falls?

EF: Yes. I'm not sure, but — oh, that was beautiful. Right in the center of town.

RA: I can imagine. Tell me, had Wilmette changed any in the years you'd been away?

EF: Not too much — no. You see, most of the time I was in the States and when I had my month off, I came home.

RA: I see. So you kept up with the Bells?

EF: Yes. I did go — when I was on the West coast I went up to see my sister a few times. She lived in Seattle.

RA: Yes.

EF: And then once I was in the southern part and I went to see my brother, who lived in the Los Angeles area...

RI': Oh, yes.

EF: ....and his family.

RA: Your sister still lives in Seattle, does she not?

EF: Yes and my brother still lives in.. well? that was this past June....

RA: Yes.

EF: ....but I visited them when I could-and then when I was in the Los Angeles area — down there there was the Rose parade so I managed to go to that and my brother took me early around where they were making all of these....

RA: Isn't that a sight to see?

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EF: Ohhh.

RA: We have been to the Rose Bowl game and the parade.

EF: Yes.

RA: And I have cousins in Pasadena, too, and so that....

EF: Yes.

RA: ... we were to see them....

EF: Um hum.

RA: ... prepare the floats.

EF: Yes.

RA: And then the day after — the clean up is....

EF: Oh, the mess.

RA: The mess is something, but then within twenty-four hours they have it cleaned up so that nobody knows that anything happened. What have you done in Wilmette since you've been back? What have been your interests?

EF: Well, I go to the Methodist Church and I go to the sewing room there and I enjoy that. It meets every other Tuesday.

RA: Oh, yes. —

EF: And we make garments — mostly for children or afghans for veterans in the Veteran's Hospital.

RA: I see.

EF: And then we stuff animals and we all collect our old stockings....

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: ... so that they cut them up and stuff the animals with them and then the quilts are made by stages and then they're tied — the last one - and they're about a dozen

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of us there and we all bring a sandwich.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And somebody maybe brings some cookies or a cake and then they make coffee or tea and we have a little luncheon break and then they go back to work and it usually — oh, it starts around 10:30 and we usually finish around 2:30.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: And - oh, then....

RA: You have a lot of intellectual interests also.

EF: Well, I don't know if they're really intellectual interests.

RA: Well, you belong to several organizations.

EF: Yes, I do. I belong to several patriotic organizations - Colonial Women and the OAR is a Washington chapter.

RA: Oh, a Washington chapter. Which one?

EF: Colonel John Washington chapter.

RA: I see. That's interesting. Do you go here - any time?

EF: Well....

RA: To any of the organization meetings?

EF: No, unless I'm invited to the ones here and I did belong - I really - it was quite amusing how I happened to belong to the OAR. The mother of a patient of mine at Walter Reed — a young man — I had taken him out — no, I was out to see if he was ready to come back in and his mother was there, a Mrs. Stansfield. And she said, "Do you

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belong to the DAR?" I said, "No, but I am eligible." And she said, "Give me your papers." Well, I didn't have any papers, but an aunt had them — my Grandmother Fitch's sister. So I sent home and asked Mother if she could get me those records and so when they came was in like that. She just got me in in nothing flat.

RA: That isn't true today. You - it's very difficult. I've just been a registrar and now Jane Alexander is in my place and....

EF: Ohhh.

RA: ....between the two of us we....

EF: Isn't she a lovely person?

RA: Isn't she.

EF: He is my lawyer.

RA: Yes, I guess I know that, but they're great people.

EF: Oh, they really are.

RA: Contributed a great deal to this community.

EF: Yes, they have and do you know that one of his ancestors is Sir William Alexander?

RA: Well, I do know she's done a book on the two Alexander families and....

EF: She's been working on that for some time.

RA: Well, I introduced her to genealogy. She wanted to go to Newberry and her cousin, Priscilla - we - oh, what's her — I can't think of her name now — Jordan. She's Priscilla Jordan now, but....

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EF: I don't know her.

RA: ....she was married to Jane's cousin.

EF: Oh.

RA: And she stopped me in the Jewel one day and said, "Will you take Jane to Newberry? I understand you go every week." So I took her and she's so quick on the trigger....

EF: Oh, yes.

RA: ....that all I had to do was turn her loose in the Library.

EF: I have been there, too. My Grandfather Fitch took me there one time. There was this little Washington Park right in front of it.

RA: Yes. There still is.

EF: And there used to be a — oh, it was nothing but an orange crate and people could get up and rant.

RA: Then they went to stepladders.

EF: Yes. Well, he took me over to see that one time - just to hear it. We couldn't understand a word he said, but it was really — oh, he....

RA: Oh, yes. He liked to....

EF: Well, then he said, "Now I know a young lady - she lives "Right near us - who is in the genealogy section here." They were sitting on the steps of the Newberry Library so we went up and — oh, she was so charming and she said, "Now let me take you around the genealogy section here."

RA: Was that Ellen Chase by any chance?

EF: No.

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RA: No?

EF: I can't remember her name, but she lived on LaSalle and East Elm there.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Well, anyhow, that started me and so I used to go down there and you should see my book of genealogy — families. I have over a thousand names.

RA: I can believe it.

EF: Now some of them are duplicates because I'm descended from that Thomasens - the one who got me into the DAR - five times and from a brother once or twice.

RA: Marriage of cousins, you mean?

EF: Yes.

RA: Intermarried. This you see so much of back in....

EF: Well, they couldn't help it. There wasn't....

RA: ... the sixteenth — seventeenth century.

EF: Yes.

RA: Yes. Here in this country.

EF: And they're several other organizations that I belonged to - the Mayflower Society.

RA: You too?

EF: Um hum.

RA: So do I.

EF: Who was your ancestor?

RA: I had three of them.

EF: Whoa.

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RA: Richard Warren....

EF: Peggy Drake has Richard Warren.

RA: Yes, I know she does and John Alden.

EF: Whoa.

RA: Who doesn't have John and Priscilla and the Mullins?

EF: No, I don't. I have Edward Doty.

RA: And I have Peter Brown.

EF: Oh, say.

RA: So it's actually seven....

EF: Um hum.

RA: ... . when you figure - because the Mullins and the Aldens all count four....

EF: Well, I just have the one and he was a rascal. He was the first one to get drunk.

RA: Who was it?

EF: Edward Doty.

RA: Oh, yes, but he was - he also was responsible for my - William Snow came to be - he was put out for his passage, you know. He was seventeen at the time, but his passage was paid by his working seven years....

EF: Um hum.

RA: . . . .for Doty.

EF: Yes. Well,. Doty had also served an indenture.

RA: Yes. Yes.

EF: Johns Hopkins – Johns...

RA: Not Johns Hopkins, but Hopkins. Yes.

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EF: Yes, but anyhow, he worked off his indenture.

RA: Yes.

EF: And then he - I don't know who he had this fight - he was the first one to have a real fight, but I don't know who he was fighting.

RA: Well, you know John Alden was put in prison in Boston.

EF: Yes.

RA: So these are the things that....

EF: Well, he finally straightened up and he married apparently a very lovely girl by the name of - last name of Sherman. I forget her first name and so here we are.

RA: Yes, here we are. Well, everybody has something in their background.

EF: Yes. And then Peggy Drake is trying to get me into this Descendents — Women Descendents of Colonial Governors.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: There's a Governor Thomas Fitch of Connecticut.

RA: I see.

EF: So she's working on that and she's working on also Billington - her neighbor.

RA: Oh. I didn't realize that Peggy did that. I will have to.

EF: She does it, more or less, unofficially. She's not a registered....

RA: I see.

EF: But she's very good.



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RA: Oh - oh, I know she is.

EF: Oh - everything she does....

RA: Is very well done, yes.

EF: Beautifully well done.

RA: I - she's going to speak to Skokie Valley Chapter DAR. You'll have to come and hear her in February. She's....

EF: Whoa.

RA: So....

EF: Right now they're trying to sell their house.

RA: That's what she told me — she was getting it ready to sell.

EF: Well, I went over the other day and it was a mess. She had been opening everything and dumping them out and deciding what she was going to keep and what she was going to throw away or give away and....

RA: Let's wind this up - this tape us. It's still going....

EF: Oh.

RA: ....so let's finish it up and then we'll chat. Tell me - what else do I want to ask you?

EF: Let's see, my vacations were lovely.

RA: And then you came back to Wilmette and you've been in Wilmette ever since '65 except for the trips you've made.

EF: Yes. And I've made quite a few trips to England and one trip with a friend to Portugal and another trip with this same friend to Corsica and then the one all the way up to

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Norway.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: Then in this country I spent quite a few Christmases in Hawaii. I have a nephew who lives there.

RA: Oh, how nice. Whereabouts in Hawaii?

EF: Oh, I....

RA : In Oahu?

EF: Yes, it's on Oahu, but it's on beyond Diamond Head.

RA: I see — out in one of the suburbs. They're so....

EF: Well, not really, but almost.

RA: Almost. Um hum.

EF: And he and his wife both work in the University and they have one little girl who goes to (Indistinct) and she's the darlingest....

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: ....intelligent little girl. Well, then I spent a couple of vacations in Shortlands with Lillian.

RA: Your sister?

EF: Yes, but most of the time I was home.

RA: Um hum. Um hum.

EF: And then I had an opportunity - this Colonel Robert Hill of Fort Riley asked me to be his chief nurse when we were forming to go to — oh, World War II....

RA: Um hum. Um hum.

EF: . . . but I turned him down and I could have kicked myself now. He went to England.

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RA: Ohhh.

EF: Ohhh.

RA: (Laughter)

EF: And then I was here around in the States in different — in different posts and - oh, some I liked and some I didn't....

RA: Um hum.

EF: ....but, I....

RA: You kept busy in other words.

EF: Well, yes.

EF: I did. And since I've been home my Mother died - shortly after I got home and then Beck died in 1970 so I'm living here pretty much by myself except three pets. I have a sassy little Yorkshire terrier out in the kitchen....

RA: Yes.

EF: .. .and two kitty cats. I don't know where they are. One of them is around.

RA: Well, one's been around — yes.

EF: Yes.

RA: And the Yorkshire terrier I saw peeking at me when I was at the door — around the corner.

EF: Yes — and she has to stay in the kitchen because she is not housebroken.

RA: I see.

EF: Dr. Terry says it's very difficult to housebreak these....

RA: Yorkshires.

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EF: ...little small dogs.

RA: Oh, yes.

EF: So, anyhow, she stays out there except when she's outdoors or goes for a walk.

RA: Well, I think we'll wind this up and I'm Rhea Adler....

EF: Yes.

RA: ...interviewing Elizabeth Fitch on Elmwood Avenue in Wilmette....

EF: Yes.

RA: ... for Wilmette Public Library.

EF: All right.

(End of tape.)