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OHA 151.5 Eisenhower Collection

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Biographical Information: Anna Mae V. McCabe Hays was born on 16 February 1920 in Buffalo, New York to parents who both were Salvation Army officers. Religion, music, and a spirit of service were guiding lights in the McCabe household. The nature of the elder McCabes' calling required that the family of five move several times and settle in a number of locations in western New York state and eastern Pennsylvania over the years. After graduating from high school, Hays attended the Allentown General Hospital School of Nursing and graduated with a diploma in nursing in 1941.

When approached by a representative of the 20th General Hospital, the University of Pennsylvania unit, a sense of duty and patriotic fervor inspired Hays to join the Army Nurse Corps. She came on active duty early in 1942 and traveled by train with her unit to a staging area, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. There the unit's nurses worked mornings in the station hospital, drilled and studied military subjects in the afternoons, and socialized in the evenings. In January 1943, Hays' unit proceeded to Ledo, Assam, India, 1,000 miles above Calcutta at the beginning of the famous Ledo Road which cut through the jungles into Burma. She remained there for 2 1/2 years and subsequently returned to the states on leave. While she was home on leave, World War II ended. After the war, Hays served as an operating room nurse and later as a head nurse at Tilton General Hospital at Fort Dix, New Jersey; as obstetrics supervisor at Valley Forge General Hospital in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania; and as head nurse of the outpatient clinic at Fort Myer, Virginia. In the summer of 1950, Hays traveled with the 4th Field Hospital to Inchon, Korea, landing shortly after MacArthur's invasion at Inchon. During both of her combat tours in World War II and the Korean War, Hays spent part of her off duty time assisting chaplains by playing a field pump



organ for weddings and church services, often on the front lines. After receiving enough points to leave Korea during her seven month combat tour, Hays transferred to Tokyo Army Hospital and spent a year there as a management nurse in the comptroller's office.

For her next assignment, she returned to Pennsylvania to be obstetric-pediatric supervisor at the U.S. Army Hospital, Indiantown Gap. Her subsequent assignment as a student in the Nursing Service Administration Course at MFSS, Fort Sam Houston Texas was followed by three years' duty at Walter Reed General Hospital. During that time, Hays served as a private duty nurse for President Dwight D. Eisenhower for about 30 days when he suffered an ileitis attack in 1956. Hays married in 1956 but became a widow in 1962. In 1957, she matriculated at Teachers' College, Columbia University and in 1958 was awarded a bachelor's degree in nursing education. Her next assignment was as Head Nurse of the Nuclear Medicine and Radioisotope Clinic at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR). A return trip to Korea in 1960 as chief nurse of the 11th Evacuation Hospital in Pusan, another tour at Walter Reed General Hospital, and a short assignment in the Office of the Surgeon General as Colonel Harper's Special Assistant preceded her selection as Assistant Chief of the Army Nurse Corps from 1963 to 1966. In 1968, Hays earned her master of science in nursing degree from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. From 1967 until 1971 she served as the thirteenth Chief of the Army Nurse Corps.

On 11 June 1970, Colonel Anna Mae Hays was promoted to the grade of general and became the first woman in the United States Armed Forces to wear the insignia of a brigadier general. The Army Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland, and the Secretary of the Army, Stanley C. Resor, officiated at the ceremony. The Army Surgeon General, Hal B. Jennings, pinned the stars on Hays' uniform. The former Corps Chiefs of the Corps, Colonels Ruby F. Bryant, Inez Haynes, and Mildred I. Clark, attended the ceremony. Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower, a number of the members of Congress, DACOWITS officials, an assemblage of civilian and military nursing leaders, and Hays' brother and sister also were present. The new general's remarks following the promotion acknowledged her indebtedness to a host of benefactors. She expressed her view that the stars "reflect[ed] the dedicated, selfless, and often heroic efforts of Army nurses throughout the world since 1901 in time of peace and war." She quoted Albert Einstein's words, "I must remind myself a hundred times each day that what I am I owe to the lives of other men, . . . and that I must exert myself in order that I may give in the same manner that I receive," as her philosophy of service to her country.

A global wave of publicity in national and international broadcast and print media, variously positive, negative, and/or humorous, heralded the Army's action and Hays' achievement. A political cartoonist sketched two enlisted men sitting in a bar. One quipped to the other, "Well, we've got everything, Sarge--the atomic bomb, guided missiles, the M-16 rifle, and now two lady generals." Hays received over a thousand pieces of correspondence acknowledging her promotion, some of which were quite amusing. For instance, a missive from Germany "was addressed to Mrs. Brigade General Anna Mae Hays, Chief of the Feminine Army Sanitary Corps." On one occasion, General William Westmoreland's wife, Kitsy, remarked to Hays, "I wish you would get married again." When Hays inquired why, Westmoreland responded, "I want some man to learn what it's like to be married to a general."



On 31 August 1971, the Army Chief of Staff General William C. Westmoreland, officiated at Hays' retirement from the Army, awarded her with the Distinguished Service Medal, and hosted a reception in her honor at the Pentagon. She took up residence in her home in Arlington, Virginia. Additionally for many years, Hays spent four to five months annually in Marbella, Spain. In retirement, she maintained some involvement in Army Nurse Corps affairs but added other activities and interests in professional circles, hometown issues, her condominium association, and an array of retiree groups.⁴ Brigadier General Anna Mae McCabe Hays led the Army Nurse Corps through one of its most stressful eras. She did so with grace and wisdom.

(Source of biographical background above: "The Army Nurse Corps Association, Biographies of the Superintendents and Chiefs of the ANC," <http://e-anca.org/bios/Hays.htm>; and "U.S. Army Medical Department Office of Medical History, Embracing the Past: First Chief, Army Nurse Corps Turns 90! Brigadier General Anna Mae V. McCabe Hays," <http://history.amedd.army.mil/HaysBio/HayesBio.html>)

Series/Scope and Content Note: This collection contains material related to President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Walter Reed Hospital, including his treatment there for ileitis in 1956. The items were donated by Brigadier General Anna Mae Hays, who helped care for Eisenhower as a nurse during Eisenhower's visit. Additional memorabilia items donated by Hays are part of the NMHM's historical collections, and include the pillow and pillow case used by Eisenhower while in hospital, a diagram of Eisenhower's operation drawn by Major General Leonard D. Heaton, a wire suture removed from the incision, First Brigadier General stars worn by Eisenhower (and given to Hays), the Army Nurse Corps cap and personal watch worn by the donor while nursing Eisenhower, a set of playing cards given to Hays by Eisenhower, and a silver engraved cigarette box designed by Eisenhower for Hays. These items were exhibited at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in September 2002.

BOX AND CONTENT LIST

- 00001: Photograph—Eisenhower Visiting Wounded, n.d.
- 00002: Letter—Dwight Eisenhower to Major General S.B. Hays, 7/14/56
- 00003: Letter of Appreciation—Surgeon General S.B. Hayes , re: Eisenhower's Medical Care
- 00004: Letter—Dwight D. Eisenhower to Cpt. Anna Mae V. McCabe, 7/14/56
- 00005: Clipping—"Eisenhowers Thank 71 For Helping at Hospital," n.d.
- 00006: Pencil Sketch, Diagram of Eisenhower's Operation by Maj. General Leonard D. Heaton, n.d.
- 00007: General Orders No. 19 Announcing Death of Dwight D. Eisenhower, 3/28/69
- 00008: Letter From Maria Eisenhower to Anna Mae Hayes, 9/18/75