

September 24, 2020

Northumberland Native Serves Thirty Years as U.S. Army Nurse

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, J. Gleim, Museum Curator)



Colonel Anna Antonicci (1928-2015) of Northumberland, PA wore this uniform during her career as a U.S. Army nurse. Known as a Mess Dress Uniform, Colonel Antonicci wore it for special evening occasions including semi-formal dinners, ceremonies, receptions, and celebrations.

Anna Antonicci graduated from high school in 1945 when the push for women to pursue nursing careers was strong, due to World War II. She joined the US Cadet Nurse Corps, a diploma program offered by the Public Health Service and was part of the last class to receive a diploma.

Despite some resistance from her family, Antonicci enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1951 and attended Medical Field Service School at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. She intended to stay for a year, hoping to broaden her perspective on life and expand her career opportunities. Inspired by the camaraderie of the Nurse Corps and the experience she had gained; she chose to remain on active duty until 1954. She was stationed at Camp Hakata, Sasebo, Japan.



Anna returned to school and completed Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Nursing degrees at Catholic University of America and Indiana University. She returned to active duty and served at posts throughout the United States including Fort Polk Louisiana, and despite initial reluctance to accept overseas service, the 98th General Hospital in Neubrucke, Germany. In 1969, during the Vietnam War, Anna served a one-year assignment at the 3rd Field Hospital, Saigon, Vietnam. Anna returned to Germany, where she served as Assistant Chief Nurse of the Mediterranean Command, European Medical Command. Her final assignment was at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington DC, where she served as Army Nurse Corps historian.

Throughout her 30 year career as a US Army nurse, first as a surgical nurse and later as a Nurse Administrator, Colonel Antonicci earned 11 decorations including the Army Commendation Medal, the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation with Palm.

She retired from duty in 1981 and spent her retirement years volunteering for the American Red Cross and the Catholic Church. Anna passed away in 2015 and was buried with full military honors in Sunbury, Pennsylvania.