

# Army Nurse Mildred Manning: An 'Angel' POW With A Job To Do

by NPR STAFF May 31, 2013

<http://www.npr.org/2013/05/31/181991061/army-nurse-mildred-manning-an-angel-pow-with-a-job-to-do>

*Sixteen million men and women served in uniform during World War II. Today, 1.2 million are still alive, but hundreds of those vets are dying every day. In honor of Memorial Day, NPR's All Things Considered is remembering some of the veterans who died this year.*

There were no "typical" tours of duty in World War II, but U.S. Army nurse Mildred Dalton Manning's was particularly extraordinary. Manning, along with six dozen other nurses, was held captive by the Japanese for almost three years. The group became known as the "Angels of Bataan and Corregidor."

Manning died in March in New Jersey. She was 98.

A native of Georgia, Manning was serving in the Philippines when war broke out. In 1942, after treating wounded soldiers in the jungles of Bataan and in an underground hospital on the island of Corregidor, she was taken captive during heavy bombing by the Japanese.

"She was very, very reluctant to talk about it most of my life," says her son, James Manning. "I would say the last five years of her life she started talking about it."

With the help of a granddaughter, Mildred Manning eventually videotaped memories of her Manila detention. She said conditions there were tolerable at first, but got worse later. "The last year when we were in there, when the Japanese began to lose the war, they ... wouldn't let anybody go outside, and they wouldn't let anybody bring anything inside. So that was the year we starved to death," Manning said.

Some nurses got sick and lost their hair, or in Manning's case, her teeth.

*Sixteen million men and women served in uniform during World War II. Today, 1.2 million are still alive, but hundreds of those vets are dying every day. In honor of Memorial Day, NPR's All Things Considered is remembering some of the veterans who died this year.*

There were no "typical" tours of duty in World War II, but U.S. Army nurse Mildred Dalton Manning's was particularly extraordinary. Manning, along with six dozen other nurses, was held captive by the Japanese for almost three years. The group became known as the "Angels of Bataan and Corregidor."

In 1945, American tanks rammed through the gates of the facility where the women were being held and liberated the camp.

"I got out, and there [were] all these American soldiers," Manning recalled. "I thought I'd go nuts. Everybody was about to go nuts. I found me a soldier from Georgia and hugged him. That's the first thing I did!"

Manning never liked large crowds and dark places after the war. And her son says she always kept a stash of food at home. But otherwise, he says, she refused to let the experience prevent her from leading a full life when she returned from the war.

"She came out of it appreciating the little things in life, like a bar of soap or a hot bath. And she said she didn't really feel bitter," James Manning says of his mother. "She was a nurse and she had a job to do." "Manning never liked large crowds and dark places after the war. And her son says she always kept a stash of food at home. But otherwise, he says, she refused to let the experience prevent her from leading a full life when she returned from the war."

"She came out of it appreciating the little things in life, like a bar of soap or a hot bath. And she said she didn't really feel bitter," James Manning says of his mother. "She was a nurse and she had a job to do."



Mildred Manning, then Mildred Dalton, was serving as a U.S. Army nurse in the Philippines when she was taken prisoner by Japanese forces in 1942.



Manning in 1945. She and dozens of other nurses were freed by U.S. forces earlier that year. U.S. Army Signal Corps