

2nd Lt. MARJORIE GERTRUDE MORROW
80th anniversary of her death
Feb. 7 1944, Anzio

At the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery rest 7,845 young brave Soldiers and 3,095 are listed in the Tablets of the Missing. American men and women. The Cemetery is so carefully kept, maintained and respected. It is silent and peaceful.

There is a relief carving representing a fallen soldier being carried by his guardian angel.

Many have thought of nurses as angels during the bloodiest days of the war. One was certainly 2nd Lt. Marjorie G. Morrow. At the side of the suffering til the very moment she was killed.

Marjorie was born May 17 1916 in Algona, Iowa, to Methodist parents. They lived on a farm in Union Township before moving to S. Harlen Street in Algona City. It is possible that Majorie decided to dedicate her life to nursing at a very early age. Her mother Bessie became seriously ill and died when Marjorie was only 16 years old.

She attended the Iowa Methodist School of Nursing and stayed at the Iowa State College Campus, Hughes Hall (today, Friley Hall) Nurses' Home, in Ames.

She enlisted in 1942 and joined the Army Nurse Corps, 95th Evacuation Hospital.

Her first assignment overseas was in North Africa, to set up a hospital. Later she would be sent to Italy, crossing the Mediteranean on board HMHS "Newfoundland" a British hospital ship and arrived off the coast of Paestum, Sept 12. But the German Luftwaffe was raiding the area constantly until it hit the HMHS Newfoundland on Sept. 13, 1943. It soon cought fire. Many of

the British and American on board lost their life or were severely wounded. Marjorie survived and was rescued by the St. Andrew, also a British Hospital ship and taken to Bizerte, Tunisia where she was treated for a handful of days at the hospital there.

In such circumstances people must discover skills and energy, reactivity and courage that were unknown to them before. This is certainly the case with Marjorie who, after having experienced the explosions on the ship and the loss of fellow nurses and others on board, survived all this –both physically and mentally- to the point that on Sept 22 there she was again, with the 95th Evacuation Hospital sailing to Salerno, Italy.

During the war evacuation hospitals such as the 95th were set up in tents, most of the time. Huge red crosses were well evident on both sides of the tents' roofs for aerial identification from altitudes. And an aerial view of an evacuation hospital would often look somewhat like a gigantic checkerboard, for its geometric precision. The hospital operates under tents: cloth wards where Soldiers are treated. Cloth: it is quite easy to imagine that to a wounded Soldier taken in for care, in those desperate circumstances, those cloth walls felt as solid as those of a fortress.

The war was raging with all that it causes: people being killed, wounded, having shocks, entire cities torn apart leaving thousands of homeless and displaced people. Kids becoming orphans on a daily basis. Every day during the war is a synonym of this. And often, in addition to this terror, the weather conditions could be far from acceptable, with all the tough consequences that follow.

As the nazis were being defeated by the Allied Troops in Italy the front would move north. Hospitals would too. Marjorie's unit set up a hospital in Paestum, then they moved north of Salerno then by Naples and Capua. By the end of January 1944 the hospital was set up in the Anzio area, an area that will become known as "Hell's Half Acre". They were taking in wounded soldiers by the hundreds, so many in deperate conditions. Bombings were non stop.

On January 22 1944 the Anzio landing began. It was a massive military operation. The battles in this area were fierce and went on for months. Marjorie and all the personnel at the Hospital multiplied their efforts to save as many lives they possibly could in these terrifying conditions. The wounds the soldiers would get were so severe, once they were taken into the hospital little could be done to them yet, doctors and nurses were there, treating them and often giving hope and accompanying the dying with mercy and care.

Nothing in the war is normal, including time. A night under attack seems to last forever, an afternoon off for a walk too short. Making the most of moments when the weapons fell silent must have been a precious resource that Marjorie was able to develop. Her tireless efforts were a blessing to all and had a tremendous meaning for the wounded. Not 28 years old yet, she had already faced unthinkable situations.

As the 6th month of her service began, the scenario was more and more terrifying. On Feb 7th a group of German bombers hit the 95th Evacuation Hospital causing huge damage to its tents. Throughout the bombing the personnel continued working. Many died, many were wounded.

Marjorie was among the wounded. Conditions were desperate. February 7 was her last day on this Earth. 80 years ago.

With her that day 1st Lt. Blanche F. Sigman (aged 36), Chief Nurse, and 1st Lt. Carrie T. Sheetz (aged 42), Assistant Chief Nurse were also killed

She rests at the Sicily Rome American Cemetery. Awarded the Purple Heart.

Marjorie, you are not forgotten. Thank you for your sacrifice.