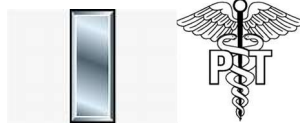


Myrl Jean Hughes

U.S. Army
1st Lieutenant Physical Therapy Nurse



Excerpt from *Natural Born Heroes*

Myrl Jean was treating routine illnesses in the South Pacific since her arrival in New Guinea in June 1944. However, with the invasion of Leyte in the Philippines on October 20, 1944, the hospital got its first rush of casualties in early November....Myrl Jean as a physical therapist, took care of orthopedic and leg amputee cases. Arm amputees were not sent to her hospital. If the orthopedic cases made good progress, they would be sent back to their units. If not, they and the (leg) amputees were sent back to the states after they were stabilized. The hospital did not supply prosthetics, so the amputees went back to the states for these devices....

New Guinea often was 130 degrees during the war. Myrl Jean remembers the specially made chocolate bars that wouldn't melt. She brought some home with her after the war and discovered they couldn't be eaten because they so hard. She also remembered one soldier whose leg was packed in ice. The other guys in the ward would store their beers next to his leg, making him the most popular guy on the ward.

Myrl Jean wore slacks rather than the dress uniforms worn in the states. She was allowed to date men and enjoyed going aboard visiting Navy ships, where the food was better than the Army food. Bob Hope and Jack Benny both put on USO shows on New Guinea. Myrl enjoyed both shows but noted that Jack Benny's were more raunchy than Bob Hope's.

Lew Ayres, the movie star and original *Doctor Kildare* character, was conscientious objector. He was assigned as a chaplain's assistant in New Guinea and played the organ for services. One of Myrl Jean's friends got married there and Myrl Jean sang at her wedding (while) Lew Ayres played the organ.... Myrl Jean was playing baseball when the Japanese surrender was announced. (Her) hospital was reassigned to Japan at the end of 1945. They first went to the Philippines, where they stayed for a month. During this time, Myrl Jean received orders back to the states and left the service. Pp105-6.

