UCF Veterans Legacy Program

Jane “Jennie” Margaret Gadde (1888 – 1963)

https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu/biographies/bpnc/B42-2-17-F.html

Jane “Jennie” Margaret Gadde was born on August 17, 1888 in Michigan. Her father was from Sweden, and her mother was from Norway. Her father worked as a foreman for an ice yard. Before refrigerators, ice yards stored large blocks of ice to sell to businesses and families that needed a block of ice to keep food cool in their icebox. Later, when the family moved to Wisconsin, her father worked as a foreman at a lumber mill. Her mother raised Jane, the second oldest and her three sisters.

Jane attended a professional school named the Ferris Institute Big Rapids, MI, something that was not common for women at this time. She earned a degree in shorthand, which is a writing technique that uses symbols and abbreviations to record oral information. It is commonly used by court reporters and secretaries to record meetings accurately and quickly. She graduated in 1907 and used these skills at a job with a building contractor in Michigan. After a few years, she moved to Chicago, IL to pursue a nursing career, graduating in 1915.

In 1918, she enlisted in the US Army Nursing Corps (ANC), shortly after the US entered World War I. At this time, the US military needed nurses. When the US entered the war in 1917, it had only 403 active duty nurses, but by the end of the war, in November 1918, more than 20,000 women, including Gadde, served in the ANC. Before shipping out to France in November 1918, Gadde trained in Camp Mead, MD with a psychiatric unit. Even though the war was over, she still served there for eight months just south of the French front lines, where much of the fighting had occurred. She helped soldiers with what the medical profession called Shell Shock at the time, and what we now call Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many soldiers struggled with the trauma of war, and received treatment before returning to the US.

Gadde returned to the US in July of 1919, and received an honorable discharge, or release from service after completing her assignment. Her service reinforced the notion of patriotic women as mothers and wives who cared for their families. Her career also represented the idea of the new women who had professional training and independence.

Gadde used her training and experience to work in a public hospital in Chicago for twenty three years after returning to the US from France. When the US entered World War II, Gadde joined the service again in 1942. She worked in the Gorgas

Hospital in the Panama Canal Zone, treating patients for tropical diseases like yellow fever. She returned to the US in 1947, receiving a second honorable discharge.

After World War II, Gadde settled in St. Petersburg, FL, where she remained active in the community and her career. She volunteered for the Jana A. Delano American Legion Post #122. The American Legion is a Veterans service organization founded after World War I. Post #122 is one of the only posts named after a nurse. The American Legion, founded to advocate for Veterans, recognized nurses as Veterans when the US military and other organizations did not acknowledge status or their history in the military. Dedicated to her Post, Gadde held many leadership roles. She celebrated fifty years of service in 1958, a huge accomplishment. She also participated in the Panama Canal Society in Florida in the 1950s and visited the Canal Zone in 1956 and 1960.

Jane Margaret Gadde passed away in 1963 in St. Petersburg, FL at the age of seventy-five. She is buried in Bay Pines National Cemetery, in Row 2, Plot 17. Gadde represented a generation of women who took on new roles in the military and helped to advance opportunities and recognition for those who served their country.

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