

CONSTRUCTING AND REMEMBERING A TEMPORARY ETHOS: NOSTALGIA'S FUNCTIONS IN A WOMAN VETERAN'S WORLD WAR II SCRAPBOOK

Dr. Cindy Damm McPeters

Visiting Assistant Professor, Wake Forest University, US

ABSTRACT

This article explores the construction and recollection of a temporary ethos in the World War II scrapbook of US Army nurse Shirley Van Brakle. It examines how nostalgia functions as a rhetorical tool that allows the scrapbook compiler to reveal multiple identities woven into a coherent narrative. Serving as a trigger for nostalgia, Van Brakle's memory text communicates her positioning within physical environments and human networks that establish her as daughter, nurse, friend, and colleague, while also conveying her transient identity as a professional in the US Army Nurse Corps at a time when women's military service was considered a brief but necessary expedience. Through ephemera and accompanying commentary, the scrapbook serves as a medium for documenting meaningful contributions and a sense of belonging while redeeming the memories of war through contrasting positive recollections, coinciding with the functions of nostalgia. This work highlights the intersection of gender, memory, and rhetoric, situating Van Brakle's experiences within the broader historical context of women's overlooked roles in World War II.

KEYWORDS: Ethos Construction, Memory and Identity, Nostalgia, Rhetorical Agency, Women in World War II.

I. INTRODUCTION

An early page of Shirley Van Brakle's World War II scrapbook reveals its age and fragility as removal of items has left gaps in the structure, holes near black ink that indicates where "Eric Easter candy" must have been. However, the ribbed ribbon in a faded shade of green, still tied into a bow, remains, having been flattened between the book's leaves. Explained by accompanying handwritten script in black ink that reads "St. Patrick's Party Colton Manor," the small bit of ephemera commemorates the album compiler's experience of participating in a holiday gathering, situating the woman at the New Jersey hotel, a location further depicted in a color print on the same page. The postcard image depicts a tall brick building, each of the four corners topped by an American flag, with print lettering identifying the structure as "Colton Manor, Pennsylvania Avenue, Atlantic City, NJ." Van Brakle noted, again in black script, "Quarters while in Atlantic City." These few tokens introduce the subject of the scrapbook within a specific physical location and hint at her participation within a larger community. Additional memorabilia on the same page confirms Van Brakle's military involvement.

At the bottom right, tilted as if placed haphazardly, is a small, rectangular envelope in a light brown color on which is printed "DIRECTIONS." With drawings of hands that visually illustrate the wording, the envelope reads, "Pass chain through hole in tag. Place end bead into coupling, as above," while Van Brakle explains the paper item with the written words, "Dog Chain Issue." The instructions indicate how to place the metal tag onto the ball chain, implying a recipient unfamiliar with arranging the accessory, a newly recruited member of the US military. Serving to situate Van Brakle within a social and physical milieu, these initial scrapbook entries and their accompanying captions introduce the US Army nurse, as they identify her within a community (one that sometimes celebrates special occasions with green ribbons), place her in an Atlantic City location (female recruits were frequently billeted in hotels and trained on women's college campuses), and within the specific workplace of military service (in which a dog tag serves as evidence of the wearer's membership). The visual and discursive rhetoric supporting Van Brakle's military ethos and its accompanying psychology of nostalgia are contextualized within the environment of war through her scrapbook.

II. NOSTALGIA'S FUNCTIONS

As narrator and protagonist of her own story, Van Brakle presents a memory text ripe with rhetorical implications. At one level, the scrapbook's overt purpose is to trigger "a sentimental

longing for a personally experienced and valued past.” However, beyond service as a mnemonic device generating nostalgia, the album is a site of multiple identities, where self and memory intersect, and where a woman accesses rhetorical agency. Not merely producing the emotion of nostalgia, the World War II scrapbook of US Army nurse Shirley Van Brakle relies on nostalgia’s functions to construct a professional military ethos: reliving past identities, recalling a sense of belonging, and reflecting on the meaningfulness of life, while also countering negative recollections with positive memories.

While Sedikides et al. suggest that their list of nostalgia’s characteristics is not exhaustive and that further exploration is needed, I have opted to incorporate only those which the scholars have overtly defined in examining how Van Brakle’s scrapbook reveals her existing identities as daughter, nursing student, and new Army recruit. From Matawan, NJ, Van Brakle enlisted in the US Army Nurse Corps in August 1943, having graduated in 1942 from Monmouth Memorial Hospital’s nursing training. After basic training in New York, she was stationed in New Jersey until she was shipped to England in April 1944 where she remained until November 1945. Van Brakle’s scrapbook is held in the Betty H. Carter Women Veterans Historical Project (WVHP) within the Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections & University Archives of the Walter Clinton Jackson Library of the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Alongside her other *ethē*, Van Brakle constructs and communicates her new—albeit temporary—military ethos by portraying herself and her connectedness within her military community and her purposeful work as a surgical nurse stationed in England.

III. NOSTALGIA AND MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

In addressing Van Brakle’s nostalgic recall of her identities, I enlist Ryan et al.’s use of the term, *ethē*, to convey that the compiler’s identities are multiple, not mutually exclusive, and are centered in her situatedness within various social and physical settings. While Aristotle described a speaker’s identity—*ethos*—as emanating from “intelligence, good will, and good character,” he neglected variables impacting the credibility and authority of a rhetor—whether speaker, writer, or even scrapbook maker. Rather, *ethos* is not solely of an individual’s making and is rather a collaboration of rhetor, audience, and community. For example, a woman’s *ethos* in American society in the 1940s might be governed by factors beyond her intelligence and character and instead conditioned by expectations of femininity and associated with marriage and family care. Thus, a feminist ecological *ethē* blurs the lines of meaning between “custom” or “habit” and

“dwelling” and encompasses the identities Van Brakle’s shares with her scrapbook as a woman’s attempts to define herself beyond cultural and societal restrictions.

As Nedra Reynolds explains, “the rhetorical concept of ethos encompasses the individual agent as well as the location or position from which that person speaks or writes,” and so Van Brakle’s situatedness within specific groups (positions) and spaces (locations) conveys her *ethē*, even when she is in less “accustomed place[s]” like the US Army. Van Brakle’s multiple *ethē* — daughter, nursing student, surgical nurse, friend, tourist, co-worker, military service professional—as represented within her memory text, are the consequences of her situatedness among other people within specific communities and therefore align with nostalgia’s function of instigating a sense of belonging. In addressing multiple positions and locations, I emphasize the word “ecology” as the framework of human relationships that exist within the veteran’s varied environments by incorporating Lorraine Code’s conception of “habitats both physical and social where people endeavor to live well together.” The scrapbook provides evidence of Van Brakle’s physical and social ecologies that serve to explicate her multiple *ethē*, supporting nostalgia’s emphasis on social connectedness by situating her within a framework of human relationships that exist as her varied environments. Van Brakle combines nostalgia’s functions to engage the continuity of her identities and retain her social connectedness in prior communities as she documents her *ethē* through ephemera that relate each identity to its specific physical and social habitats. On an early page of her scrapbook, a newspaper clipping declares her an “Army nurse” and identifies her as the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Van Brakle of Keyport, NJ. The rhetorical authority of print journalism asserts and directly states two of Van Brakle’s identities, each associated with a particular site. The brief article, bearing the small headline “Lt. VanBrakle Transferred,” confirms not only that she is a daughter from Keyport and her military rank but also that she “has been transferred from the Fort Monmouth Hospital to Atlantic City.”

The tiny news brief signals Van Brakle’s siting in Keyport, in the US Army, at Fort Monmouth, and Atlantic City, even providing her new address at the Army’s 160th General Hospital. The link between her positionality as a woman, a daughter, and an Army nurse is documented through the single clipping that asserts her *ethē* and associated sites. These physical places link Van Brakle to human groups to which she belongs: her family, her fellow staff at the hospital where she trained, and her new military community. As Risa Applegarth explains, “*place* itself offers a crucial resource that rhetors can use strategically to signal their participation in particular communities.” Van Brakle records her existing ethos as a family member—daughter

and niece—through gathered and arranged ephemera within her album. Telegrams home, one addressed to her mother assuring family of her safe arrival in England and another asking to send money, reiterate the relationships already established by the newspaper clipping.

A gift card, signed, “To Shirley with Love and Best Wishes from Aunt Harriet,” again reinforces Van Brakle’s familial identities. With these assembled scraps of her life, the album maker instigates nostalgia and relives her past lives.

IV. SCRAPBOOK AS RHETORIC

Van Brakle’s *ethē* are tied to memory within the personal and vernacular genre of the scrapbook as representing her life experiences. While such albums might reflect aspirations (for example, plans for a dream house) or interests (a compilation of Broadway playbills, perhaps), when constructed as the material embodiment of an individual’s experiences, a scrapbook provides tangible evidence of *ethē*. The scrapbook serves as a site for self-revelations through the reconstruction of memories and life experiences with the rhetor as its protagonist. Van Brakle’s album illustrates nostalgia’s usual focus on the self as protagonist within social networks during significant life events, but as a scrapbook compiler, she relies on ready-made ephemera to cobble together the bits and pieces of her experiences.

The inexpensive nature of “throwaway printed paper artifacts—ticket stubs, advertising cards, candy wrappers, and became a part of everyday life” led even underprivileged individuals to site their identities, aspirations, and inspirations within the album’s pages as people from all socio-economic classes could acquire the ephemeral elements of a scrapbook, despite their relative “powerlessness.” Relying on such a readily accessible venue for commemoration and construction of her multiple *ethē*, the mere existence of Van Brakle’s album implies a desire to generate nostalgia as her scrapbook documents attempts in her present to recover the experiences of her past for her future self. Given the nature of scrapbooks as sites of memory as well as identity, the primary audience for Van Brakle’s album is her own future self, with the memory text serving to facilitate recall of her past experiences, likely triggering a “sentimental longing” for the places she went, the people she knew, and the person she was. Van Brakle’s “projected ‘self’” is the anticipated primary audience for her scrapbook. Because the scrapbook as a genre is material and personal, Van Brakle’s secondary audience would have to be present to physically turn its pages, possibly with the former Army nurse by the side of some friend or family member to interpret its visual rhetoric, the scrapbook creating yet another level of social connectedness beyond those interactions already portrayed within the nurse’s *ethos*-constructing past experiences.

V. HISTORICAL AND RHETORICAL CONTEXT

Van Brakle's military ethos was transitory and has been historically overlooked, so the rhetorical power she finds in the scrapbook acknowledges her ability to reclaim her past experiences as meaningful. She documents her short-lived military ethos, nostalgically recognizing a continuity of identity when time and space are transcended through her memory text: her identity as a US Army Nurse Corps nurse, an ethos that she is permitted to return to through its construction within her album, alongside additional functions of nostalgia, allowing her to re-collect her own sense of belonging as well as the importance of her wartime contributions—particularly when women's military roles were deemed exigent but provisional. By the start of World War II, American cultural doxa still maintained that “a woman's place” was in the home, and efforts were made to reassure the public that women's engagement in male-dominated work would be brief.

As Michelle Smith explains, “...women's wartime work was depicted as a temporary emergency measure grounded in a heteronormative view of women as men's helpmates and a counterfactual image of war workers as predominantly white, middle-class women whose conventional femininity remained intact.” Their military ethē were expected to last no longer than the duration of the war. Moreover, despite the start of active recruitment of women in auxiliary and service branches of the US Army, Navy, and Coast Guard in 1942, and the Marines in 1943, women's participation was often reduced to “freeing a man to fight” and is generally overlooked in dominant retellings of World War II. However, historian Joanna Bourke asserts women's stories are more than neglected: “Female veterans were not ‘repressed from the collective memory,’ but were excised from the record ...,” because traditional war stories portray brave men protecting their helpless women. Inclusion of women's wartime efforts detracts from such narratives, and so, “not only have women been written out of military history, but all military functions unrelated to heroic combat or usually performed by women receive scant attention.” Despite the failure of others to recognize value in the existence and contributions of “ordinary” women in times of military conflict, Van Brakle and others like her managed to fashion remnants of their lives into memory texts that reveal details of their ethos and their historical contexts, accessing rhetorical agency through a personal, narrative genre intended for later recall, so that such scrapbook compilers might nostalgically “enjoy” reminiscence of their wartime selves and the contributions they made to the war effort.

Despite official language and social mores dictating that women's tours of duty in the male-dominated military would be brief, Van Brakle's military ethos lives on through her scrapbook.

Van Brakle manages to construct and communicate who she was without introduction—the only photographs of her within the album are contained in newspaper clipping. As Patricia B. Buckler and C. Kay Leeper indicate, such an album compiler “realized herself by composing herself through the scrapbook.” So, instead of physical depictions, the Army nurse composes herself by re-collecting her maps, newspaper clippings, ticket stubs and cards—many of which bear dates and name specific locations—representing her experiences and, through the functions of nostalgia, constructs and communicates a professional ethos that transcends its temporariness by siting herself performing significant duties within her military network, while ultimately redeeming the turmoil of war with positive remembrances of her family, friends, and colleagues in the specific spaces associated with her *ethē* during World War II.

VI. SUBSTANTIATING IDENTITY THROUGH NOSTALGIA

Through her scrapbook, Van Brakle’s collects memorabilia for the future instigation of nostalgia, relying on the functions of the psychological sensation as she remembers her wartime identity, revives her sense of belonging, and reestablishes the meaningfulness of her military role—while ultimately providing bittersweet memories of her World War II experiences. Her military ethos is confirmed and nostalgically relived through varied bits of ephemera. An envelope postmarked March 1944, bearing a “Win the War” 3-cent stamp, is addressed to “Lt. Shirley Van Brakle A.N.C. at Station Hospital, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey,” but that address is struck out in pencil, and a handwritten note to the side reads, “160th General Hosp Atlantic City, NJ.” The paper document substantiates Van Brakle’s military status while also attesting to her transfer to a new location, which in turn continues to affirm her identity as a military nurse in wartime; her location informing her ethos, her ethos strengthening location. Following her transfer to England, Van Brakle’s scrapbook continues to facilitate the nostalgic remembrance of her past lived identity as a member of the US Army Nurse Corps. With a piece of cloth medical tape, she adhered to the cream-colored page of her album a small clump of raw wool. In handwritten black script, the accompanying note reads, “sheeps [*sic*] wool from sheep somewhere in England.”

Her use of the readily available tape supports her ethos as a nurse, and the bit of wool further sites her overseas for her military duty. Van Brakle’s scrapbook continues to adhere to nostalgia’s functions as her sense of belonging within various communities supports her ethos construction. A handwritten letter from a family friend, dated August 28, 1944, describes the baby clothing given to the writer by Van Brakle’s mother from the Baptist rummage sale. In keeping

the Army nurse abreast of local events, the note indicates that while she is distant from her hometown, she maintains the ethē associated with her stateside community. The correspondent further cites an article about Van Brakle that appeared in the *Matawan Journal*, writing “we all enjoyed reading about your good time in England, and hope you have more fun while you are there. Your mother told me about some of your work in the hospital. It must be hard and trying on the nurses’ nerves but I guess you are all good sports. Only wish I were ...” The letter communicates Van Brakle’s association with friends and family in her civilian location at home in New Jersey and her community of fellow nurses in her work site in England. While revealing Van Brakle’s existing ethē as friend and daughter, the communication also cements her military ethos and conveys that she maintains multiple social ecologies despite the distance. While nostalgia functions to provide Van Brakle a sense of belonging with the military hospital community and to reminisce on the value of her work within that community, her re-collection within the scrapbook relies on those same characteristics to further construct her military nursing ethos. Containing bits and scraps of her past experiences, Van Brakle’s album constructs her professional identity by establishing her belonging within the networks of patients and medical colleagues of the 160th General Hospital. Numerous invitations, ticket stubs, and notes written by her co-workers imply the camaraderie she experienced in her work environment and site her within a network of military professionals and patients. Identifying a piece of fabric in green camouflage with four lines of horizontal stitching, Van Brakle writes in black script, “‘Parachute’ from a patient.” The gift of the small material memento represents the kinds of interactions the nurse might have experienced through her professional endeavors, strengthening the inference that Van Brakle maintained a network of acquaintances and friends with whom she belonged. On the same album page, is another handwritten note, reading, “Lt. Van Brakle, All instruments oiled and dried” and is signed by “Cpl James Gregory Raymond Caffrey JB.” This time a co-worker, identifying the Army nurse by rank and name, assures Van Brakle that the necessary operating room equipment has been prepared; however, he does so by unnecessarily but playfully writing out his entire name, implying a relaxed working relationship, even though Van Brakle was the supervising nurse for the thoracic surgery unit.

A few pages later, an unfolded brown paper bag contains a similar handwritten note: “Lt. Van Brakle/ These gloves are dry inside & outside” and is signed by several military co-workers. With each instance Van Brakle’s military ethos is bolstered through a sense of belonging within the professional workplace of the US Army hospital. Through the networks of human relationships

that constitute her ecologies during professional service, the scrapbook maker further establishes her own identity as a working member of the US military during World War II. However, the hospital's ecological network existed as a social environment as well, one which further identifies Lt. Van Brakle. Camaraderie was not always work-related, as the human milieu within which Van Brakle belongs supports her ethos as a professional military nurse through scrapbook. For example, the memory text contains a printed "Thanksgiving Greeting," a drawing of a turkey in brown and red in the beige card's center, from the "US Army Hosp. Plant 4152 England 1944." Opening to a list of items on the menu for the 1944 gathering, the notice's inclusion in the album depicts the community within which Van Brakle worked and celebrated holidays.

Years after her wartime service, Van Brakle might recall the meal of roast turkey, giblet gravy, and sage dressing fondly and long for the camaraderie she re-collects through her scrapbook. Additionally, an invitation to a wedding at the hospital on Saturday, April 14, 1945, with a reception to follow at the "160th General Hospital Officer's Club," is addressed to Van Brakle. Such invitations and cards not only serve to prompt nostalgia, but their existence further fortifies Van Brakle's ethos as a member of her military community, a site where she could feel she belonged because she was included in its social gatherings. Ticket stubs further confirm Van Brakle's place within her social setting. A red rectangular card with a stamped number reads, "American Red Cross Queen's Club / Christmas Party Town Hall / Tuesday, December 19th, 1945."

Small lettering at the card's bottom indicates that the admission ticket must be shown at the door and that no guests would be admitted after 10 p.m. While readers can assume Van Brakle's attendance prior to the door closing, her military identity is further represented by the actual invitation to the event, indicating her participation in the overseas community of US military and Red Cross personnel. Once again, her professional ethos is supported by her siting in England and is confirmed through her inclusion in the surrounding social milieu, a place where she belonged and was identified. Among the album's various socially oriented bits and pieces are several Valentine's Day cards received from friends and potential male suitors. One appears to be a homemade note, a red heart pierced by an arrow with cut-outs of two doves, on which the sender has written his name, preceded by his rank. In addition to her many handcrafted and commercially printed greeting cards from family and friends, Van Brakle received numerous hand-drawn images.

One cartoon drawing, colored in blue and red pencil, features a woman with nursing hat and

caduceus with doves flying above, surrounded by stars; to the lower right is a cartoonish man in US Army attire with red hearts; the thought bubble above his head reads, “GOSH! Sigh!” On the left is penciled, “I reach for you like I reach for a star.” Van Brakle has labeled in her own hand, again in black print, “Caffery.” Whatever the Army nurse’s feelings about her fellow Army worker’s attentions, she chose to include his admiring artwork in her memory text, a drawing that depicts her within her nursing uniform, documenting her military ethos. Amid several pages of Valentine’s greetings is a mimeographed pink card announcing a dance, a heart and arrow design with “1945” and “160th” on its cover. Opened, the page on the left lists the “Dance Program / Dances,” each numbered, including “Free Draw,” “The Queen of Hearts,” and “Dealers Choice,” indicating a poker-playing theme for the event.

Titled “Dance Program / Partners,” the right side of the card offers some guidance alongside the dances on the left, with “Your Valentine Partner” typed on the blank. However, several other lines are blank so that Van Brakle’s dance partners’ names might be written in. Most names are illegible or written only with initials like “RAP,” but they indicate that the US Army nurse enjoyed social aspects of her military position, providing her with a community that reinforces her military ethos. Another occasion— “in celebration of one year of overseas service”—is announced by a typed paper, decorated with a drawing of an island and featuring humorous menu items such as “Pineapple a la Dole,” “Maise Sans Cob, and “Jima Java,” that invites Van Brakle to the hospital’s “Officers’ Mess” for the party. The invitation suggests that Van Brakle and her co-workers found fun where they could make it despite the long hours and dangers of wartime work in England.

The hospital gatherings, holiday dinners, and other events likely improved morale for Americans in service in England, creating camaraderie through togetherness and belonging that supported their identities as military personnel stationed far from home. Even having returned to the United States, Van Brakle remained a member—albeit distant—of her military community, tracing her sense of belonging from England back to her hometown in New Jersey. The front of a holiday greeting card depicts a snowy cottage scene and reads “Merrie Christmas in England” but is signed by several of her former comrades who apparently sent the messages to Van Brakle after her departure. Among the handwritten comments is one that reads: “Dear Shirley – if I were clever or original this note could be a masterpiece—but in my own simple way let me say that the “Nut Hut” and Hutmates are real swell—and have made one gal a happy Xmas 1944 in E.T.O. Best of everything for your future—Ginny.” Ginny, Millie, Else, and Bernie wrote and signed brief individual notes to Van Brakle, recognizing her place among them, reinvigorating a sense of

belonging for the absent lieutenant. Such tangible documentation of her situatedness within her military community—among her “Hutmates”—reinforces her professional ethos as a member of their group.

The professional and social network, resurrected through Van Brakle’s memory text, conveys nostalgic reassurances of belonging and acceptance while she existed as a military nurse. Contributing to a sense of nostalgia for the significance of her wartime life, Van Brakle’s scrapbook documents her service as chief operating room nurse for thoracic surgery while stationed with the US Army in England from 1944-45. In addition to unofficial and handwritten notes and messages, multiple documents and articles assert the value and significance of her work, further confirming her ethos as a respected contributor to the Allied war effort; lists of patients and treatments attest to the duties Van Brakle performed and the kinds of work she supervised. The tentative operating schedule for the “Chest Unit of the 160th General Hospital” lists surgeries planned for the week of Oct. 30, 1944, identifying patient names, dates, times, and surgeons scheduled to operate. Listing twenty-three thoracic surgeries, the page also notes the types of operations, from “drainage of abscess chest wall” to “removal of 30 cal. bullet-from sup.pulm.sulcus,” were beginning at 0800 hours with an additional three to four surgeries for each day of the week. As chief nurse for her surgical unit, Van Brakle may have physically participated in many of the listed surgeries and, at the least, would be considered supervisor of the assisting nursing staff and likely in charge of many aspects of the operating room environment. Another typed page titled “Chest Surgery” and dated June 10, 1944, lists the necessary surgical instruments for “Rib Resection Empyema” further supporting Van Brakle’s life-and-death responsibilities.

An additional note at the bottom of the list, reading, “May want large rubber tubing for drains, safety pins, tonsil suction, iodoform packing,” implies medical knowledge of surgical concerns that might arise in the operating room, confirming Van Brakle’s expertise, and therefore, her ethos, as a member of the US Army Nurse Corps. Identifying the tools of her trade, these lists not only authenticate her ethos but also indicate the value of her contributions in that work. As Van Brakle might turn the pages of her scrapbook to instigate a sense of nostalgia, the album further documents additional aspects of her military identity by citing her specific and valuable participation during the war effort, paralleling nostalgia’s function to support a sense of significance. Relying on the rhetorical authority of military hierarchy, Van Brakle asserts her identity as a member of the military facility’s medical staff in a typed letter addressed to “All members of the 160th General Hospital.” Colonel Leonard D.

Heaton shares his pride and gratitude for their efforts, noting “From the time we marched down the Boardwalk on our way to the Brigatine Bivouac to the present, I have never once ceased to be proud of the organization,” describing the 160th as “one of the finest units in the E.T.O. [European Theater of Operations].” The commanding officer continues by noting that the hospital’s success is owed to “cooperation, hard work and sincerity of purpose on the part of the entire organization.” The typed correspondence not only confirms Van Brakle’s ethos as a contributing member of the hospital staff but implies her participation in the unit’s accomplishments. Additional scrapbook artifacts also attest to Van Brakle’s promotions, her improvement in rank serving as recognition for her wartime contributions. She completed a military-issued “Notice of Change of Address” card, dated April 5, 1944, indicating her rank as “2nd Lt.” but a later news article captions her photo with lieutenant, indicating her rise in status. In addition to professional promotions, Van Brakle’s scrapbook confirms her military ethos through additional artifacts representing the meaningfulness of her life experiences. In a variety of formats, several documents attest to Van Brakle’s important role in life-saving heart surgeries; one typed version is titled, “Army Surgeons Can Now Save Soldiers Shot through the Heart.” The reporter names the surgery’s patient-soldier, the major acting as his surgeon, the anesthetist and—critical to the construction of her military identity—Van Brakle herself. The document reads, “Meanwhile, Second Lt. Shirley Van Brakle, of Keyport, N.J., was getting into her sterilized gown, cap, mask, and rubber gloves and preparing the instruments.” In addition to the story’s dateline of “Western England, Feb. 24,” the single statement places Van Brakle at her military duty station, tasked with significant responsibilities, while also affirming her hometown location. Through multiple layers of rhetorical power, the paper unfolds to reveal Van Brakle’s existing identity while also abetting the construction of her new wartime ethos, all while confirming the value and meaningfulness of her work.

While the typewritten version of the article notes “By Wireless to the Herald Tribune,” another item confirms its publication in yet another periodical, this time with emphasis on Van Brakle’s participation. Headlined “Shot Thru Heart’ No Longer Fatal – Keyport Nurse Figures in Magazine Article on Surgery of Heart,” the clipping comes from a New Jersey newspaper. Citing the writer of the original article, the *Asbury Park Sunday Press* repeats the critical statement sharing the local woman’s role in life-saving surgeries for military patients as well as an Army major’s statement about the roles of the nursing staff: “these girls are as efficient as veteran doctors.” While his words diminish the women’s value, calling them girls and comparing their skills to male surgeons, the text demonstrates the value of the medial work conducted by Van

Brakle and others on the hospital staff. Within the context of her scrapbook such items authenticate Van Brakle's military responsibilities and her associated "temporary" identity, nostalgically reminding her of a particularly "valued past." The words of the print authority, repeated through several publications, substantiate Van Brakle's professional ethos and her contributions to improved, life-saving healthcare, encouraging recognition of the significance and meaningfulness of the rhetor's own life.

VII. NOSTALGIA AND REDEMPTIVE MEMORY

In establishing her military ethos, Van Brakle's scrapbook serves also to redeem the more gruesome memories of war as kind of bittersweet re-collection. As Sedikides et al. suggest, countering negative conditions with more positive reminiscences generates "redemption, a narrative pattern" that moves remembrance from an "undesirable state" to "a positive or more desirable state." Confronted by war's loss of life, physical destruction, and related hardships, Van Brakle's memory text documents her attendance at plays, souvenir purchases, friendships, and hints at romantic relationships, emphasizing the affordances of wartime work and travel, while also revealing details of injuries, surgeries, and even visual imagery of bombing debris. Losses and death are detailed through several newspaper clippings, conveying Van Brakle's existence within various communities and therefore her multiple ethē, reflecting her siting in New Jersey and in military ecologies. An article, topped with a head-and-shoulders photograph of a young man in uniform, is headlined "Morganville Youth Dies Of Injuries," and shares the news of a local man's wartime death. Identified as "a graduate of Matawan High School," Raymond Charles Brown had enlisted in the US Navy in December 1942 and was 21 years old.

According to another article in the scrapbook, Van Brakle's family had relocated from Matawan to Keyport, NJ, so they likely were familiar with the late sailor, also from Monmouth County. The inclusion of this excerpt reveals the individual loss of life caused by war but also connects Van Brakle to the location of her hometown and to another member of the US military. While expressing the costs of battle, the article is positioned on the same page with another newspaper clipping featuring the nurses of Monmouth Memorial Hospital planting roses and another naming the hospital's forty-eight nurses who "have qualified for admission to the armed forces of the United States," Van Brakle listed among them. The news stories relate negative memories of the loss of a former classmate with a redemptive element from the past as the nurses volunteer to help.

While church bulletins on the scrapbook's pages suggest Van Brakle's religious affiliations, several additional clippings share news regarding the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Matawan who had enlisted as a chaplain in the US Army, again associating Van Brakle's multiple ethē with her place of origin and with another local member of the military. Included in the May 13, 1945, edition of the *Asbury Park Sunday Press (The Shore Press)*, the story stems from a letter Rev. Garrett E. Detwiler sent home and details his visit to an unnamed concentration camp. The article shares horrors of a first-hand account of such a camp, including Detwiler's comments to his wife that "“You would not believe it possible for a person to be so thin and still alive ...”" Exposing the further destruction of war, the news story again links Van Brakle with her hometown and the Army chaplain who likely served her home congregation. However, on the same page is a "Happy Easter" card that opens to reveal the menu for the hospital unit's holiday dinner. While roast chicken and "old fashioned brown gravy" could not redress the horrors of war, the continuing celebration of "ordinary" events during a global conflict implies nostalgia's redemptive function, softening recollections of the past but also representing Van Brakle's ethē, while maintaining connections to New Jersey as well as to the activities of her military duty station. Few of the scrapbook's elements reflect the redemptive function of nostalgia as the "Welcome!" paper provided to US service personnel upon their arrival in England. Featuring a message from Winston Churchill, the newspaper includes numerous articles related to wartime events, including articles headlined with "U.S. Drive On 150-Mile Front In New Guinea Invasion" and "Nazis Isolate Sweden." However, a note alongside a large headshot photograph of the British Prime Minister, bearing his signature, counters the headlines:

“To each American soldier who has left home to join the great forces now gathering in this island, I send a message of greeting and welcome. Wherever you may go in our country you will be among friends. Our fighting men look upon you as comrades and brothers in arms. Welcome to you while you are with us: and when the time comes we will go forward together and carry the good cause to final victory”.

While the communication omits the role of women in wartime, the impression of hospitality and camaraderie is delivered directly, suggesting that Van Brakle, a member of the US military, would be met positively by English citizens. Juxtaposing the news of war with a hearty welcome, the existence of the tabloid in her album also intimates the travel necessitated by Van Brakle's military service along with its redemptive features. The welcoming paper includes an article titled "Places That Like to Be Visited," urging American visitors to sightsee in defiance of "the Luftwaffe's

vandalism and vain efforts to intimidate the people in these famous towns” before listing communities of historical significance.

A second piece on the same page encourages a visit to London which “requires more than furlough for sight-seeing” and shares that “There’s Still a Lot of It Standing” in its headline. Coupling the dangers and destruction of war with positive and encouraging messages symbolizes the value of contradictory sensations in the creation of nostalgia. The scrapbook’s inclusion of this broadsheet situates Van Brakle in England amid memories that might be negative, but which can also be liberating in the knowledge that she both survived the dangers and recognized new travel opportunities, further substantiating her military role.

Travel was a necessity of wartime service and sometimes even a benefit of enlistment. Additional ephemera suggests that Van Brakle did in fact heed the urgings of the tabloid by occasionally acting as tourist while in England, acquiring her yet another temporary ethos. As Sedikides et al. suggest, the resulting affect might be considered bittersweet. A numbered red ticket admits the “bearer to New Museum and Gardens” for the admission cost of a sixpence to Shakespeare’s Birthplace Trust; above the ticket on the yellowed page is a small, light blue brochure, that opens with a welcome notice to “all members serving in the Forces of the United Nations,” reminding scrapbook viewers that American military personnel were in England for a specific purpose.

Along with a receipt, dated September 29, 1944, for the Royal Hotel, Woburn Place, Russell Square, London, these mementos reveal Van Brakle’s tourist identity, an ethos enabled only because she was also a member of the US military; her selves are woven not just by her physical embodiment but by positionality and one another—housed within her scrapbook. Her military work enabled her to visit other sites, documented by artifacts within her scrapbook. A printed card featuring a drawing of the structure attests to her admittance to John Knox’s house on High Street in Edinburgh, “the only Pre-Reformation Dwelling-House in Edinburgh now preserving its original architectural feature.” Van Brakle may have obtained the business card for Cowan Tailoring Co., “Tartan Specialists,” located on South Bridge Street during the same visit, as the printing suggests, “Our Export Department is at your service. We do hope you will enjoy your furlough in Edinburgh.”

Additional items, like the sheep’s wool, a small, now-empty envelope that had contained French and Italian money, a bookmark from Holy Trinity Church, and another tiny, sealed envelope identified in black script as “English flowers,” serve as evidence that Van Brakle cherished the value of her travels, seeking to commemorate them within her scrapbook, recollected

memories that not only redeem the more frightening aspects of her wartime journeys but also serve to establish her ethos as a tourist, a position available because of her military identity. As if her ethē as daughter, nurse, friend, colleague, and tourist were not enough, Van Brakle’s scrapbook also proves her to be a kind of informal wartime reporter, further demonstrating nostalgia’s function to liberate negative past events through remembrance of more uplifting recollections. A newspaper column, topped by a nursing portrait photo captioned as “Lt. Shirley VanBrakle [*sic*],” reveals the Army nurse’s description of a royal visitor in a letter to her mother. By sharing details of the hospital visit made by the “most cordial” Queen Mother Mary of England, Van Brakle serves as an eyewitness for the folks at home. The newspaper article quotes Van Brakle’s description of Queen Mary’s attire, including “long sleeves and a high neck” and “a lovely sapphire blue brooch,” but also notes the nurse’s receipt of Queen Mary’s signature “which she has sent home for her scrapbook.” Reporting on the royal inspection of the hospital, Van Brakle noted that the Queen Mother stayed for tea at the Officers Club and had been escorted in her “ancient Rolls Royce” by military police. The same article goes on to note that Van Brakle and several other nurses have visited a “lovely old abbey,” enjoying formal rose gardens and purchasing “a candlestick and snuffer of Sheffield plate and a cup and saucer of Worcester china.”

Although the article’s newspaper is not identified in the clipping, the story documents Van Brakle’s ethē as news source and souvenir collector and as a woman who plans in her present for her future self’s nostalgia—all while liberating memories of war through the encouraging remembrances of a royal visit and the physical mementos of her travels. Despite the enjoyment of tourist-style activities and events, the scrapbook’s artifacts serve as reminders that Van Brakle’s work took place in a war zone. While she might have enjoyed the musical show performed at the New Theatre Oxford, the program Van Brakle preserved and personalized with illegible pencil marks also serves as a reminder of potential dangers. On the lower left of the open bulletin, below the list of the first seven acts, is a cautionary note that reads:

“Warning of an AIR RAID will be given by a RED electric sign at the side of stage, ALL CLEAR will be similarly shown in GREEN. Patrons are advised to remain in the Theatre, but if for any reason they wish to leave should do so in a quiet and orderly manner”.

The need for such an admonition indicates that, despite the pleasure of entertainment, Van Brakle and her friends were in peril. Another message, below a list of the final four acts and centered on the yellow document’s right side, is a small, boxed notice, suggesting contributions to the “New

Theatre ‘Cigarette Fund’ for our Boys in Hospital” be made in the collection boxes located in the theater’s lounges and bars. The reminder about injured soldiers further alludes to the risks of war and reiterates Van Brakle’s military ethos, one that exists because soldiers in combat were hazarding injury and even death. While allowing for the dangers of wartime work and including evidence of injured soldiers and other damage of war, Van Brakle’s scrapbook functions to redeem experiences of war, leaving her with potentially mixed affect.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In aligning with several of nostalgia’s functions—continuity of self, belonging in society, and personal significance—Van Brakle’s scrapbook serves to trigger nostalgic recollections of her past experiences while relying on those same functions to construct her military ethos. Not only does the rhetorical genre allow the former Army nurse to relive past ethē as daughter, student, and friend, but through expressions of belonging and meaningfulness of those lives, she conveys a military ethos that also serves to redeem memories of war. Without relying on photographs of herself, Van Brakle’s rhetorical strategy of documenting her ethos declares that she was there, that she participated in service, and that her efforts should not be forgotten. Although “military women’s work is overlooked or rhetorically undercut,” Van Brakle’s scrapbook acts as a “gesture toward the past” one that acts to retain those lived experiences for later nostalgic use, as a kind of “meaningful antecedent” that in fact suggests her past was truly “memorable.” In generating nostalgia for her past identities, Van Brakle disturbs existing narratives of war by sharing her own story, her rhetorical agency accessed through the tangible and personal archive of her scrapbook.

IX. REFERENCES

- I. Applegarth, R. (2011). Genre, location, and Mary Austin's ethos. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 41(1), 41-63.
- II. Bourke, J. (2004). ‘Remembering’ War. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 39(4), 473-485.
- III. Buckler, P. P., & Leeper, C. K. (1991). An antebellum woman's scrapbook as autobiographical composition. *Journal of American Culture*, 14(1), 1-8.
- IV. Code, L. (2006). *Ecological thinking: The politics of epistemic location*. Oxford University Press.
- V. De Pauw, L. G. (2000). *Battle cries and lullabies: Women in war from prehistory to the present*. University of Oklahoma Press.

- VI. Garvey, E. G. (2012). *Writing with scissors: American scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- VII. Gold, D., & Enoch, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Women at work: Rhetorics of gender and labor*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- VIII. Gruhzt-Hoyt, O. (1995). *They Also Served: American Women in World War II*. Carol Publishing Corporation.
- IX. Helfand, J. (2008). *Scrapbooks: An American History. (No Title)*.
- X. Katriel, T., & Farrell, T. (1991). Scrapbooks as cultural texts: An American art of memory. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 11(1), 1-17.
- XI. Reynolds, N. (1993). Ethos as location: New sites for understanding discursive authority. *Rhetoric Review*, 11(2), 325-338.
- XII. Sedikides, C., Wildschut, T., Arndt, J., & Routledge, C. (2008). Nostalgia: Past, present, and future. *Current directions in psychological science*, 17(5), 304-307.
- XIII. Tucker, S., Ott, K., & Buckler, P. (Eds.). (2006). *The scrapbook in American life*. Temple University Press.
- XIV. Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., Arndt, J., & Routledge, C. (2006). Nostalgia: content, triggers, functions. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 91(5), 975.
- XV. Zhou, X., Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., Shi, K., & Feng, C. (2012). Nostalgia: The gift that keeps on giving. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(1), 39-50.