



National Museum of Health and Medicine

Otis Historical Archives

OHA 330.4 Tobias Collection

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Biographical Note: Grethe Lende was born August 23, 1909 in Granite Falls, Minnesota, the daughter of Olaus Lende and Christina Bakke Lende. Her father was born in Jaeren, Norway, and immigrated in the late nineteenth century to the United States. From a blacksmithing family in Norway, he joined the industrial revolution by operating a machine shop in which he designed and built cars as a side item. He was also involved in designing and implementing the first electrification of granite Falls. Bakke Lende was born in Minnesota of a Norwegian immigrant father, and a Swedish immigrant mother. She had a brother, Henry Lende, eleven years her senior.

Grethe Lende attended the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, commencing approximately 1927, where she majored in social work. Her first job on graduation, around 1931, was with the American Red Cross, which assigned her first to New Haven, Connecticut, then to Philadelphia, PA, before she began her tenure at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington.

She married George Tobias, an economist with the War Production Board on October 10th, 1936 on the roof of Walter Reed, family lore has it. Mr. Tobias' career would involve tenure in several other government departments in Washington through 1967.

Soon after the birth of her daughter, Johanna Karen Tobias, in autumn 1941, Ms. Tobias left the work force to attend to her baby and remained a homemaker until approximately 1953. Her son, Stephen L. Tobias, was born May 20, 1944.



Around 1953 Ms. Tobias took a job as a caseworker for the American Cancer Society in Washington. In 1955, she again left the work force as her husband was assigned for four years to Geneva, Switzerland with the U.S. diplomatic force, part of the U.S. permanent delegation to international organizations operating there. On return to Washington soon after 1959, Mrs. Tobias worked for several years in the admissions department of the Washington Home for Incurables.

She again left the labor force in about 1967, to accompany her husband to New Delhi, India, where he worked with the Ford Foundation as an economic adviser to the Indian government. The couple retired to Sarasota, Florida in 1973, where she remained until 1993 when she required skilled nursing care, for which she moved to Philadelphia where her son's family lived. Mrs. Tobias passed away in 1996.

Series/Scope and Content Note: This collection consists of twelve photographs from Grethe (Lende) Tobias's personal collection, depicting the uniform she wore as Red Cross medical social worker, additional Red Cross staff members, and the buildings and grounds of the Walter Reed Hospital and medical complex. Also included is a newspaper clipping of a photograph with Private Robert Firth and Nurse Grethe Lende aboard the steamboat City of Washington.

BOX AND CONTENT LIST

00001: Clipping—"Walter Reed Patients on Picnic, Crutches Don't Spoil His Fun"

00002: Photograph—"Red Cross Medical Social Worker Ready for Action, Happy Birthday Dad," 5/3/34

00003: Photograph—Walter Reed Hospital, 4/29/34

00004: Photograph—Red Cross Building, Walter Reed Hospital, 10/36

00005: Photograph—Red Cross Staff, Walter Reed General Hospital, 11/37

00006: Photograph—Red Cross House, n.d.

00007: Photograph—Walter Reed General Hospital, n.d.

00008: Photograph—Army Medical Center, Walter Reed, 3/38

00009: Photograph—"To Grethe, March, 26, 1946, Ruth Coon"

00010: Photograph—Portrait, Untitled, n.d.