

*William S. Middleton Memorial
Veterans Hospital and Clinics*

HALL OF HEROES INDUCTION CEREMONY



Lt. Marcia Gates



**June 12, 2024
11:00 a.m.**

**William S. Middleton Memorial
Veterans Hospital and Clinics
welcome our Veterans,
their family members
and caregivers.**

HALL OF HEROES

INDUCTION CEREMONY

June 12, 2024

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| Welcome | Wendy Wyman |
| Presentation of Colors | American Legion Post 59 Color Guard Stoughton, WI |
| National Anthem | Ann Buchwald |
| Invocation | Chaplain Victoria Fishel |
| Hall of Heroes History | Wendy Wyman |
| Greetings | Christine Kleckner Executive Director |
| Biography | Melissa Bowersock |
| Bronze Star | Fred Fry |
| Formal Induction | Wendy Wyman |
| Closing | Wendy Wyman |

A **hero** is a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements or noble acts of valor.

While all the Veterans that come to William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital and Clinics demonstrated sacrifice on behalf of our country, there are some who stand out for especially heroic actions during their service.

Our Hall of Heroes honors these brave Veterans.

“Nothing else you will do in your lives will mean so much to so many.”

Lt. Marcia Gates, born 1915 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, lived a life marked by outstanding bravery in the face of great adversity while she served as a nurse during World War II. She graduated from Cambridge High School in 1934 and later from the Milwaukee School of Nursing. Gates worked at two Milwaukee hospitals before joining the U.S. Army Nursing Corps in February 1941.

Her initial duty assignment was at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where she made friends and met her future husband, Lt. Phillip Hartman. In the autumn of 1941, Gates was transferred to the Philippines, where she began working at Fort McKinley's hospital near Manila. Her letters home to her mother described off-duty excursions and social engagements while cooking and cleaning were handled by local Filipinos. This island paradise was soon shattered by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

As the war intensified, Gates and other military nurses retreated with U.S. forces to the Bataan Peninsula and later to Corregidor Island. The nurses provided medical care under constant artillery attacks and increasingly harsh conditions. Gates carried medical supplies in a wheelbarrow and slept on a bamboo bed while working to treat wounded troops in the overcrowded Malinta Tunnels.

In May 1942, after months of fierce fighting, Corregidor fell to the Japanese, and Gates, along with 65 other nurses, was taken prisoner. She spent 33 months as a POW at an internment camp near Manila, where conditions deteriorated as the war progressed. The nurses, dubbed the "Angels of Bataan," continued to care for fellow internees despite severe shortages of food

and medicine. Gates contracted dengue fever and developed beriberi, losing significant weight while continuing to nurse sick civilians.

Liberation came on February 4, 1945. Gen. Douglas MacArthur visited the nurses to honor their bravery. Gates returned to the United States, where she and her fellow nurses received Bronze Star medals through a presidential citation and were promoted a rank.

She continued to serve in the Army until the end of the war but never redeployed, despite requesting foreign duty stations. As a civilian nurse with the Air Force, Gates was posted to Japan where she worked in a children's hospital even as she struggled with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Gates eventually returned to Wisconsin in 1954 and continued working in the public health community, including with the Janesville Wisconsin Health Department, until her death on June 25, 1970, from cancer, a condition that first emerged during her internment.

Lt. Marcia Gates' legacy as an "Angel of Bataan" is commemorated not just today through our Hall of Heroes but also at a Veterans Affairs assisted living facility in Union Grove, named Gates Hall in her honor.

Excerpts from a live interview with Lt. Marcia Gates on the "Those Who Serve" WTMJ-WMFM radio show from March 13, 1945.

"...The casualties from the Bataan fighting started to arrive almost immediately and before long we were forced to extend our hospital out into the jungle, placing the cots right out in the open air with nothing but mosquito nets for protection..."

"...And finally, we did evacuate the hospital. We were taken down

to the dock at Mariveles to wait for a boat which would take us over to the Corregidor... The Japanese bombed and strafed our small boat as we crossed, but luckily, they were very poor marksmen, so we made it safely..."

"...As soon as we arrived on the Rock, we went to work in the tunnel caring for the wounded. They had a complete hospital setup underground where it was safe from the shelling and bombing..."

"...But it was a hopeless fight, and finally word was sent around that Gen. Wainwright was going to surrender. We were told to stay in the tunnel and await orders from the Japanese..."

"...We stayed in the tunnel until July. Then word came that we were to be shipped out. By that time, we didn't care much where we were going so long as it was in the open air and not underground. They loaded us all in a boat with the wounded in the hold and the nurses on deck, and at that point a complete change came over their attitude. They refused to let us go down to see the wounded, or even speak to them from then on..."

"...We assumed, of course, that we should stay together and were horribly shocked when we saw the trucks carrying the wounded heading towards Bilibid while we continued on in the direction of Santo Tomas. Those boys hadn't had any attention since the night before and we knew how badly they needed us. We could have wept, but I guess we were beyond weeping by that time..."

"...You all know how badly nurses are needed on the battlefronts, but nothing that anyone could tell you would picture the real urgency of that need. All I can say is that I'm going back and that I hope, in fact, I'd like to ask very sincerely, in the name of our fighting men, that you registered nurses of Wisconsin join the Army Nurse Corps and come along. Nothing else you will do in your lives will mean so much to so many."



VA

U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

***To fulfill President Lincoln's promise
to care for those who have served
in our nation's military and for their families,
caregivers and survivors.***