

VFW Recognizes 2nd Lt. Elsie S. Ott

Ott participated in the first air evacuation of patients originating in Karachi and concluding at then-Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C.

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Today, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) recognizes Army Nurse Corps 2nd Lt. Elsie S. Ott.

Ott, a native of Smithtown, New York, attended Lenox Hill Hospital School of Nursing after completing high school. After a short stint in nursing at area hospitals, Ott joined the Army Nurse Corps in September 1941. Ott was commissioned to second lieutenant soon after and had multiple stateside assignments prior to deployment to Karachi, India.

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Army Nurse Corps 2nd Lt. Elsie S. Ott

While in India, Ott participated in the first air evacuation of patients originating in Karachi and concluding at then-Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. Ott had zero flying experience and had never flown before that mission.

Ott's plane left Karachi with five wounded personnel suffering from various injuries and illnesses Jan. 17, 1943. After stops along the way for refueling, the plane reached Washington nearly a week after its departure.

Ott's after action review was critical in the planning of future air evacuations. Two months after her first air evacuation, she received the U.S. Air Medal, the first given to a woman in the U.S. Army for her role during the evacuation flight.

Ott completed her military career in 1946 as a captain. She later died in 2006.

Ott is a shining example of a woman pioneer and true patriot to our great nation.

This is the first feature in a series of VFW articles to be published throughout March 2020, highlighting women veterans who have made outstanding contributions to our military and society.