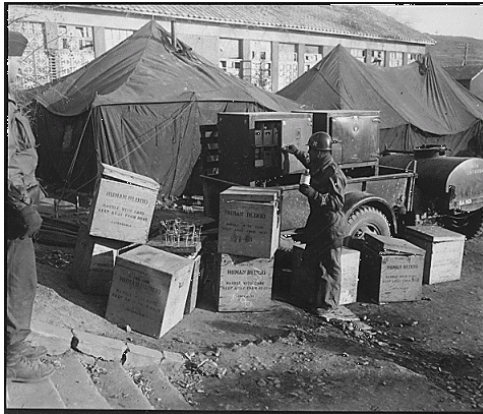




The United States used MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) units to treat injured people during the Korean War.

Because the MASH units were mobile tents, they could be moved from place to place.

This image depicts the tents of a MASH unit during the Korean War. The U.S. Army has provided a description for the [events depicted in this photo](#):

Withdrawal of blood from storage for use at 8076th Army Surgical Hospital, Kuna-ri, Korea, November 1950.

MASH units were made famous by the popular CBS television series, "M*A*S*H." That series was based on a book, about the 8055th MASH Unit, called *MASH: A Novel About Three Army Doctors* by Dr. H. Richard Hornberger writing as Richard Hooker.

This photo, from Korean War-Educator.org, depicts an aerial view of the 8055th:



Hornberger was the model for Hawkeye Pierce, played by Alan Alda (in the television series) and by Donald Sutherland (in the film version of "M*A*S*H"). He is depicted in this photo, in front of his "SWAMP," during his tour of duty with the 8055th:



The MASH Unit shown in the picture at the top of this page—the 8076th—also played a role in the real stories behind the TV program. Cathy McDonough, who was first sent to Korea as part of the Army Nurse Corp in 1950, originally served with the 8076th. She met (and later married) a MASH doctor, Dale Drake, and they both served with the 8055th beginning in 1951.



Was life in the fictional M*A*S*H unit anything like the real world of unit 8055 (where "arterial repair was first performed" in a Korean-based MASH tent)? The Drakes, starting with Dale, fill us in with the details:

The movie copied the original situation pretty closely. The operating room and the jocularly. You had to laugh about something because there was a lot of serious business, a lot of unhappiness and sorrow and death.

What characterized the fighting in Korea was that you would have a period of a week or 10 days when nothing much was happening, then there would be a push. When you had a push, there would suddenly be a mass of casualties that would just overwhelm us.

What does "a mass of casualties" mean, in this context? Dr. Milton Weinberg, also of MASH 8055, answers that question: When the fighting was intense, "as many as 1,000 casualties a day."

Beyond the pain of so many casualties were the difficult and primitive working conditions. Operating tables were usually nothing more than stretchers fitted over carpenter sawhorses.

Another MASH surgeon, Dr. Mel Horwitz (who appears, with the Drakes, in the documentary "The Real MASH"), kept a diary about his work in Korea. His stories about the young men whose lives he saved are filled with empathy and sorrow. One day he helped to amputate both legs of an 18-year-old:

In the fog of his shock and medication, he still doesn't realize what has happened. Tomorrow we have to tell him. ... I hope there will be someone to love this boy some day, that he will have the strength and courage to get artificial limbs and walk—or in a wheel chair—live some sort of life—not die slowly over the next decades. (We Will Not be Strangers: Korean War Letters Between a M.A.S.H. Surgeon and His Wife, edited by Dorothy G. Horwitz, at page 113.)

Dr. Harold Secor, who also served with MASH 8055, recalls the trauma of life in Korea:

As a doctor, I had known death and dying stateside. But not on this scale. I guess we were all upset that all these young men were being injured and killed.

Once Dr. Drake worked 24 straight hours, with a dentist, as he and his colleague tried to repair the face of a young man who'd been massively injured in combat.

The Drakes related many of their experiences to Gene Reynolds, the co-creator of the TV show (which aired between 1972 and 1983). One of their stories may have been the inspiration for Maxwell Klinger (the notorious cross-dresser).

Dr. Hall, a quiet man who typically never socialized with anyone, showed-up at a Halloween party wearing a slinky dress, a platinum wig and makeup—all "gifts" his wife had sent—which reminded people of Marilyn

Monroe. No one could believe it was the same quiet and professional doctor! No one could believe he would willingly pose for a picture.



Cathy Drake remembers how shocked she was:

Nobody had costumes except for him. It was unbelievable. It was just so out of character for him.

Was there a real-life nurse who was the inspiration for head nurse "Hot Lips" Houlihan? Yes ... and her name is Ruth Dixon. How about "Trapper John" McIntyre? Yes, again ... and his name is Dr. Jim Dickson.

When Cathy and Dale returned to the States, after completing their Korean tours of duty, they married in June of 1953. Sixty years later, they recalled their experience for Tim Evans who published his story in the July 1, 2013 issue of USA Today.

Numerous episodes of M*A*S*H are available for online viewing. This embedded link, to YouTube, features a clip from Season 11, episode 2, which first aired on November 1, 1982. David Ogden Stiers appears as Major Charles Winchester treating a Marine played by George Wendt.

Credits:

Image of the 8076th MASH unit, online via U.S. Army Medical Department, Office of Medical History.

Quotes from Dr. Dale and Cathy Drake, online via the "USA Today" article, by Tim Evans, referenced in the story above. Photos of the Drakes, courtesy the Drake Family and online via USA Today.

Dr. H. Richard Hornberger died, of leukemia, in 1997. His image is copyrighted, the Hornberger Estate, all rights reserved. It is provided here as fair use for educational purposes.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MASH-Units-and-the-Creation-of-the-TV-Show-M-A-S-H)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MASH-Units-and-the-Creation-of-the-TV-Show-M-A-S-H>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/MASH-Units-and-the-Creation-of-the-TV-Show-M-A-S-H>

Media Stream



MASH - Dr. Hall Dressed as a Woman

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MASH 8055 Unit

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>



MASH - Dale and Cathy Drake

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>



MASH - Dr. Hornberger, Author of MASH

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MASH Units and the Creation of the TV Show M*A*S*H

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