

**Katherine G. Denegar
Veteran**

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Interviewers**

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Q: What is your full name, date of birth, and place of birth?

KD: I was born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1916 and my name is Katherine Denegar.

Q: Okay. What was your education prior to entering the military service?

KD: I was a registered nurse and I also had a bachelor's degree in Psychology.

Q: Okay. Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

KD: Yes, I was working nights and I just couldn't believe it, it's like yesterday. You don't forget these things. We were all, of course, terribly excited when we got into the war and realized the damage that was done to our navy and yes I do remember it very well.

Q: Okay. Why did you enlist in the army nurse corps?

KD: Frankly I knew the army nurses went overseas and at that time I don't think the navy nurses did and I just liked the army.

Q: Where did you enlist?

KD: Youngstown, Ohio

Q: Did they send you anywhere for training even though you already had your degree?

KD: I had further training when we went to Fort Knox, Kentucky and then of course I had the usual training that they give you, in other words, the crawling on the ground, the whole thing even marching. I did a terrible job because I'm left handed and left footed and everything else but the second lieutenant passed me. I guess they were desperate.

Q: Did you receive any additional nurse training?

KD: We had basic training at the hospital, telling us you know how to do your work but you do it the army way and we understood it from that.

Q: You were made a second lieutenant?

KD: Yes

Q: Okay. Where were you stationed?

KD: Well the first thing after I left Fort Knox, Kentucky I went to Newton D. Baker hospital in Maryland, and that I think is mostly psychology. And unfortunately the major there wanted to keep me as a psychiatric nurse and I had never done it and she said well you have a bachelor in psychology you could do quite well. But I was put in the most mentally disturbed war. Which was a quite unhappy situation. You realize what war is like when you see these men coming back like that.

Q: So these were all men that the problems were caused by the war itself?

KD: As a result of the European theater mostly.

Q: Why did you find that so disturbing?

KD: I had never had psychology, all I had the study of the different diseases in psychology and to go into this most mentally disturbed war were I remember feeding a young Italian man and very strong looking and he said You're pretty but if I could get you I would kill you, I mean We had that sort of problem, and we had these catatonic patients that would stand for hours at a time and then rush and try to destroy their beds, that sort of thing. I read a lot of their histories that I found very interesting. This one particular man that was catatonic had been made to bury the dead in Europe and he just couldn't handle it. I also realized by reading all their histories, that some of them should have never been in the army but with the excitement of World War 2, if you could walk in you were taken.

Q: How long were you there?

KD: I complained, most of my friends had gone already overseas and I just didn't want to stay there and she said well we're going to give you first lieutenant and you can help us and I said I'm really not comfortable with this thing, I think I must have been 4 months, 3 months and I finally got headed for overseas.

Q: Where did you go overseas?

KD: Well of course we never knew where we were going but we ended up in Manila and the sad thing about that is that there were about 375 of us and we weren't welcomed. The major who was female came out said that on the way over there had been nurses that had been stealing the narcotics and there was Venereal disease and certainly conduct unbecoming an officer. That was are beginning in Manila.

Q: How long were you in the Philippines?

KD: I was in Manila just over night, then we were sent to Mindoro, and I understand the man coming from Lingayen Gulf had captured before they got to Manila and they set up in Mindoro, it was a jungle really, I never saw anything, just the jungle and the monkeys but they did set up an airfield and they did that

by taking metal tracks and they were able to fly the planes in of course and they had attacked the Japanese in Manila but that was before I got there.

Q: What kind of hospital was this?

KD: It was called a station hospital but it was really kind of like a lab. All it was a board that you could walk on and we had the beds with mosquito netting and just a canvas overhead and that was the type of thing we had.

Q: So it had open sides?

KD: Everything was open. We did not have any come in from the war. We had Yellow Fever, we had jungle rot, we had venereal disease, we had everything of that and malaria and dysentery.

Q: Was that your assignment while you were there the whole time or did you go somewhere else?

KD: Yes, later, much later we were sent on to Matangus (?), and right then they were beginning to get ready for the invasion of Japan and we were going to be the first ones going but fortunately there was the atomic bomb, two atomic bombs, and you have probably heard so many times the criticism of the atomic bombs, that the Japanese would have fought to the death and there would have been hundreds and hundreds of Americans killed and we knew that.

Q: So what was the reaction in your group when you heard about the atomic bombs?

KD: Delighted, delighted. Not only that so many of the men had been there for about 3 years and the fact that they weren't going to encounter I mean there was a good chance they'd get back to the states and no I heard nothing but a lesion over and I felt the same way but many times I heard people criticize but they were not in the war.

Q: Do you remember where you were and what your memory was when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt?

KD: Yes, I was near Washington at the time and of course we felt terrible that he couldn't even make it through most of this war, yes I do remember.

Q: Do you recall your reaction or any ones there about Douglas MacArthur or the thoughts about him?

KD: Yes, just that he was this tremendous general particularly the way he acted in Tokyo but I didn't like some of the things I had heard, there was an awful lot of criticism in Manila about him, that he was an arrogant, egotistical type of man and that of course when he came back he returned I understand that he walked through the water twice to make sure there were pictures. Yes, there was a lot of criticism with him for a long time and I think Eisenhower had been with him for a while I don't think they got along that well.

Q: When did you return to the States?

KD: Not to long after the war, we still had 50,000 Japanese up in Bagio (?) or Yamashiro, however you prefer to pronounce it and he fought, I guess he thought he was going to fight till the end and the Japanese always did it that way. But they finally concurred them and I can remember he was brought down to Manila we were still around because we were told we could go down and visit if we wanted I had no feeling of going down to see a man I knew would be executed even though we had a very poor opinion of the Japanese, we had them around the area cleaning up and they never looked at us. But we had the German prisoners, they were used in the wards, they were having a grand time, they were trying desperately to learn English, they were wonderful.

Q: This was in the United States?

KD: No, from the time we got to Fort Knox, Kentucky they were already there, there were a lot of prisoners there. Very few Japanese but quite a lot of the Germans that had come from the European theatre.

Q: So they were used in the wards?

KD: They were used in the wards, yes, they were also used where they make the foods, but cleaning the area, and of course it was immaculate.

Q: I noticed you said something about making a wedding dress out of a parachute.

KD: There was something about the war, you didn't have to be beautiful all you had to do was be a woman and be there, and there were some romances, I myself didn't approve of them because I was afraid in the excitement of the war they weren't going to last, but I always did a lot of sewing and crafts, so making use of the old parachutes, I rigged up a couple good outfits.

Q: Do you have any other memories that you want to share?

KD: Yes, there was one that I thought was quite funny, when we got to Tanguis (?), the big ships that the American navy were in, we occasionally got an invitation for dinner, well that was quite a chore because you had to get in a little boat and then you had to get close to the big ship and then you had to grab onto the ropes and that is difficult, because when you do you go up against the ship and it's hard to move. My friend in front of me and she got part way and says she can't make it and I told her not to fall on me and to keep going, she got a little farther and she says she can't go anymore because she wet her pants, I told her I'd be right behind her, so when we got up there we met the captain and were like Siamese twins because I never left her side. It struck me funny.

Q: Did you ever make use of a GI bill at all?

KD: Yes, I did, when I came back, like I said I had my bachelors but I intended to work with a doctor and handle his clinic, he had a big clinic, and I did not know the technology, medical technology part and he said well I'll teach you but I said no I prefer to learn. I wanted to come as close to New York as I could get and I ended up in Albany at the Vendor Laboratory and I graduated with a degree in medical technology which took me a year because I had the rest of it already. But I got that through the army, I was very pleased.

Q: Were you ever offered the 52-20 club?

KD: No.

Q: Did you ever join veteran's groups?

KD: Oh don't start me. When I came here I was married to a veteran who long since died 1973 and he had been a captain and almost called back to the Korean war again and fortunately he had high blood pressure and didn't get in he had 5 years of it and I said well I want to join so I went over to the local one and they said you cannot join as a veteran you have to be an axillary so I said forget it. I felt I had earned a place there but of course it's been changed since then. And that was the end of that.

Q: Did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was with you in service?

KD: For a while I did with one, that was an unusual thing, I had met a very nice woman, a nurse, not from Youngstown but from Warren, and she never dated but she dated a guy before she went, well turned out she was pregnant so the army sent her back from the Philippines to I think Jefferson in California or something and they made arrangements that they would inform her people that she was there but not because of that reason. The army did quite a bit of that type of thing and I saw her later but really I guess I never went back to Ohio, only on visits and I found New York my home.

Q: How do you think your time in the service affected your life?

KD: I think when I came back I can remember being on that ship, I felt we had so much, so much over here and so much poverty everywhere else, of course I've never been overseas before and I think I'm more compassionate I believe and being a nurse you have to have a lot of that. I think it did change my life and it also made me change in my thinking on more. One soldier dead is one too many.

Q: Okay thank you very much.