

**Shirley Donna DeVoe  
Veteran**

**Michael Russert and Wayne Clarke  
Interviewers**

**New York State military museum,  
February 21, 2006**

**MM:** Military Museum

**SD:** Shirley DeVoe

**This is a home interview, Buffalo New York, 21st of February 2006. It is approximately 2:30 pm. Interviewers are Wayne Clarke and Mike Russert.**

MM: Could you give me your full name date of birth and place of birth please.

SD: Shirley Donna DeVoe. Place of birth was Albany New York and the date of birth is 24 September 1918.

MM: What was your educational background prior to entering military service?

SD: I had an RN from (unclear) memorial hospital school of nursing and a BS degree in nursing from the University at Buffalo.

MM: Do you remember where you were, how you heard and your reaction about Pearl Harbor?

SD: Yes I was sitting in my living room writing Christmas cards.

MM: How did you hear it, on the radio?

SD: Yeah

MM: Do you remember having a reaction to this?

SD: Not particularly, no I didn't. I think more what my reaction was that the young man I was engaged to, when he was called into service and was killed in a plane crash. That made me more conscious than I was before that date.

MM: He was in the Air Force prior to the beginning?

SD: He graduated in forty one from college and he was in that Fall. Just before Pearl Harbor.

MM: Why did you make a decision to join the Army nurses board?

SD: That was it. Because he was killed and that made it very personal then. So as soon I completed my applications at my job I went on active duty.

MM: Did you go for additional training at all when you went into the Army?

SD: No, at that time they didn't have any conformers I went directly in. Now a few months after I was on active duty, then they decided that we should have basic training. So, the doctor who was in charge of my base said he would ask if he would get the same people back if he sent them, and they said no. That he couldn't count on that. So he said never mind I'll do it here. We had our basic training right on our post and we had a lot of extra things within that.

MM: How was the basic training do you think it was adequate?

SD: For me yes, because i didn't have shooting guns and things like that

MM: So there was a lot of marching and drawing?

SD: and (unclear). We went to camouflage school and things of that sort.

MM: Did you do any overnight camping?

SD: No, we didn't have that, but that was alright.

MM: Now I forgot to ask, when did you go into service?

SD: I went in July of 1943

MM: Where was your assignment?

SD: The first assignment was at an airfield, which was then part of the army. The air corps was a separate entity and it was stationed just outside of Tallahassee Florida. I was there for 18 months.

MM: What were some of your duties while you were there?

SD: Well I had patience. Ya know, I'd have young men injured, or who were ill, or other things of that nature. We did one time have a bad accident where a whole truck load of young men were in it and we had something like 28 people who came in. This was just a small hospital, but they did a very good job with getting everything lined up and followed through. By the time the last patient was emitted they were running there to check him over and lie him up and the first patients had already had x rayed and lab work and things of that sort.

MM: So this is a general hospital?

SD: No it is stationed, 150 Benson.

MM: Now what do you mean by a station hospital?

SD: A little hospital for like a small air station and general hospitals were mainly overseas.

MM: How many did you have on your staff?

SD: We had like 13 nurses and I don't know how many doctors. I was there as I said for 18 months and then I was transferred to Camp Roberts in California to their station hospital which was considerably bigger.

MM: Were your duties there very similar?

SD: Yes, very similar and I was there for 9 months, then I was shipped over to the Philippines.

MM: Were you promoted to a first lieutenant?

SD: A first lieutenant when I got to California. Then as I said I went to the Philippines. By the time we got really settled down in the Philippines the war was over, so we had the nice opportunity from moving from base to base and helping close down hospitals and send our boys home.

MM: Did you run into a lot of patients that had been in captivity?

SD: No I never had any that I remember. I wasn't over there too long, for just about 6 months in the end.

MM: Now did you have any problems with Malaria or any kind of comparable diseases?

SD: No, I was fortunate I guess. I had patients who had some of those problems. I was lucky enough to escape everything.

MM: Now how did you treat them? What type of treatments did they receive?

SD: Oh dear, you're asking me to go back 60 years or more and I really don't remember. As a matter of fact some of them had that problem.

MM: Were any of the patients in the hospital from battlefield wounds at all?

SD: Oh yes some of them had battle wounds but a lot of them were just ill from Malaria and Dengue fever.

MM: What was equipment like that you had? Was it pretty modern and up to date?

SD: Well for that time it wasn't too bad. We didn't do too bad we had fold our own four by four bandages to sterilize them and things of that nature that took time. I can't think of anything else special to tell you about it.

MM: What were the relations like between the doctors and the nurses?

SD: Fine professional, we worked together and took care of our people together. I think we were both thinking that together we were going to get these boys well and get them home.

MM: Now did you ever get to see any USO shows?

SD: Yes I saw one when I was in the Philippines but I don't remember who was in it.

MM: Now how were the conditions in the Philippines as compared to the other hospitals you had been in, in the states?

SD: Well in the Philippines the hospital was cement flooring and then they had bamboo sidings that started about three feet up and went to about 6 feet up and a roof. So housekeeping was very interesting you'd just throw buckets of water on the floor and sweep it out the sides. I think there are some pictures in there of those.

MM: Did you ever have problems with critters getting into the hospital like snakes or lizards or spiders?

SD: No I think they are more afraid of us than we are of them. That wasn't a problem. In the nurse's quarters of course we had to set up similar to that. We had to set up mosquito nets up.

MM: What types of buildings did you live in?

SD: Small (unclear) what their called.

MM: Did you ever have any of the local Philippine people working in the hospital too?

SD: Yes , well the Philippine people too worked in our nurses quarters and did our laundry for us and things like that.

MM: Now what kind of food was served in these hospitals in the Philippines? Did you have your own kitchens and so on and your own books and mess halls?

SD: I think so. I've kind of forgotten what we had actually but it was food from home and it was safe to have.

MM: Did you eat any of the native food at all?

SD: No

MM: Now when did you return to the states?

SD: I returned in January of '46 and then I went to Fort Dix New Jersey until June and then I came home.

MM: Now i see you stayed in the reserves until 1978, why did you decide to stay in the reserves?

SD: Well at the time when I came home my father was very ill and that was the reason I got out when I did. Well when they asked about the reserve program in '48 I think it was, I was still on active duty at that point and they were going to close everything off. They put out a letter or something to us and asked us what we would like to do, and if we wished to we could continue in the reserve program. I had friends who had already decided to do this. When I wrote back to them about this I asked them what I would have to do to become a captain because at the time I got out they told me I would stay four more months I could get my captaincy. So I wrote and I told them what I had been doing educationally and professionally since then and I got direct promotion back to captain. I had a friend who was getting in this reserve program, the active (unclear). They were looking for a captain to be chief nurse so she talked me into going to a meeting and that's where I met all these fine people. Some of whom I still know and I joined and was chief nurse of that unit until I retired.

MM: Now where was that unit?

SD: Here in Buffalo and we'd go up to port from up near Watertown, one year we went out to the one in Massachusetts, we went down to New Jersey, and then we went down to that general hospital in Pennsylvania once.

MM: Now what was the unit that you were in here?

SD: It was general hospital. First it was a field hospital or something and then it became a general hospital.

MM: Did you go to any other bases in the United States at all through training?

SD: No we didn't, it was all done strictly in active duty. We ran hospitals and took care of the people who were there.

MM: So you have just general nursing duties throughout these, now as chief nurse what were your duties?

SD: Well just to see that there were people scheduled to go on at the right time for different people.

MM: How many nurses did you have working under you?

SD: I think about 10.

MM: Now you worked I see also at the VA hospital here in Buffalo?

SD: Yeah, and I worked there at the VA hospital for 24 years.

MM: Were your duties there very similar there?

SD: I was supervisor, I did some teaching for a while and then in the last few years I was worked out of chief nurses office and did work and research and things of that nature.

MM: Were you ever able to use the GI Bill at all?

SD: No I didn't, well I did go back to school for a while and then I dropped out and then later on I got a full tuition scholarship to complete my masters degree.

MM: Was that through the University at Buffalo also?

SD: No it was through some special program and I got money to live on and my tuition paid. So that is why I am doing what I'm doing for UB now.

MM: What are you doing for the University at Buffalo?

SD: I have three things that I am doing. One is I give a prize every graduation in communications. The other one is in my mother's name and my name and it's for nurses to take special programs. The third one is for research.

MM: So you provide money for these things?

SD: Yeah and they will get more from my will.

MM: Now how do you think your time in the service affected or changed your life?

SD: I don't know if its particularly changed it but it certainly was an important part of my life.

MM: In what ways?

SD: Well, just the time element, and then as I say I have friends that I have today who were in it. Some cases the men are gone and I know their wives and so that makes a difference too.

MM: I was going to ask you about this, you sent this and we got this. Why did you put that collection together? It's a collection of poems.

SD: I did this at the time just because it was interesting for me to do.

MM: Now when did you do that?

SD: I did the poetry collection when I was on active duty and some of it I wrote and some friends of mine wrote, some were in the Army Times. I had it in a little notebook and I had it sitting over there and one time when my nephew Gary stayed once here he found it and asked if he could borrow it. So i said sure and this is what he did for me.

MM: Now what is that on the cover? What's so special about that drawing on the cover?

SD: This was done by a patient.

MM: Do you know what time, what year that was done approximately?

SD: Let's see that was done in Tallahassee Florida in about '44.

MM: Now you had some photographs to show us? Or a photograph anyhow to show us?

SD: (she holds up the photos)

MM: Do you want to tell us when those were taken?

SD: This was taken when I graduated nursing school and this was taken when I was in the Army out in Camp Roberts California.

MM: Do you want to describe what we have here?

SD: This one the victory medal goes on the back and the patches are Army Air Force

MM: There's an Army Air Force patch over there.

SD: Third armed forces gave her their (unclear) that one in the middle. That one is second service command, this is Air Force and this first patch is court area reserved duty. (pointing) Night service command, second court, second lieutenant, first lieutenant, captain, major and lieutenant colonel.

MM: What is this bracelet here?

SD: That is just the identification bracelet. These are my dog tags and this was the unit citation and that is what they called the ruptured duck. This is my insignia that went on my nurses uniform.

MM: Can you tell us something about that?

SD: Souvenir the gold gater the 29th of December '45 and mistress civilian. This was in Brazil, this was the boat that I came home on from the Philippines.

MM: How did you go over to the Philippines?

SD: I went over on the Evangeline a boat.

MM: And then you came back on?

SD: On the Brazil this was the big boat. The other one was a little one.

MM: Were there any other photographs? There were so many and a lot of really interesting ones. Where was this hospital?

SD: That was (unclear) Tallahassee

MM: This was the one that had 150 beds you said?

SD: Something like that, it was small.

MM: This is the professional staff?

SD: This is the professional staff and that is the enlisted men.

MM: Down in Florida Tallahassee?

SD: Right

MM: Now did you get much time off in the Philippines? To do any sightseeing or anything like that?

SD: I think it was something like half a day a month. We worked 12 hour duty.

MM: 12 hours on 12 hours off? Seven days a week basically right?

SD: Right. When i was down in (unclear) field we worked 12 hour shifts. Half day a week and one day off a month.

MM: Could you tell us what that is?

SD: That was a New York State medal for merit.

MM: Want to talk about it?

SD: Wayne was a very nice man I met down in Tallahassee Florida.

MM: Now what was his full name?

SD: Wayne Swanberry. He came from Nanticoke north eastern part of Pennsylvania and you know when you're that far away from home as I was down in Florida and he paid for my neighboring state as a good friend. He and one other young man and I seemed to hit it off very well and we went on a lot together, you know out to dinner, dancing, and things of that sort. Wayne was a very special young man and we got pretty close the two of us but we decided when he was going to be going overseas that we wouldn't get anything more than that. But we did agree that we would get together after the war was over, so he did keep in touch all the time that he was overseas.

MM: Was he in Europe?

SD: He went Europe yes. He was in one of the flight groups that went out of Great Britain and in July of '44 he was lost over France and subsequently was recovered and is killed, he's buried over in France. Sense we promised we would get together after the war I couldn't go to be with him but I did go and see his parents in Nanticoke and they kept in touch with me as long as they were both alive.

MM: Now what rank was he?

SD: Well by the time that he was killed he was a captain.

MM: Now was he a fighter pilot?

SD: Fighter Pilot yeah, he was one of the people that on the day that we invaded Northern France he was what they call a skip bounding pilot. He was one of the first ones over so I turned on the radio when it came over the quarters for lunch and heard him being interviewed over the radio. Then subsequently I got one of those special letters a V mail from him and his comments were he said he got a front seat in the big show. So my other nephew down in Pennsylvania, he's the brother of the one who did the book for me. He has been very interested and he has been following me up and he's gotten in touch with quite a few of the men who were with Wayne and he is coming up this Spring bringing me pictures. But after those two tragedies right, I was happy to just be me and on my own.

MM: Yes, that's two gentlemen that ended up being killed

MM: Thank you for adding that story