

A Photograph of Miss Barbara Duffy World War II Nursing

The Archives and Special Collections at the University of Connecticut's Thomas J. Dodd Research Center is wide and diverse with rich Connecticut state history, including a look into nursing's past. A photograph of Miss Barbara Duffy is preserved in the Dodd Center today. She is shown wearing official World War II Army Nurse Corps uniform. The picture is old and darkly colored, demonstrating the wear of time's touch.



Barbara Duffy was born March 18, 1919 in Nashua, New Hampshire. She studied at the St. Joseph School of Nursing in her home state. As a young army nurse, second lieutenant Miss Duffy was one of eighty-two women sent to Honolulu in 1941 following the Japanese attacks on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. In the wake of death and destruction, the determined twenty-two year old nurse cared for the hundreds of injured in the attacks at Tripler Army Hospital. Excerpted from "The Army Nurse Corps in World War II: Early Operations in the Pacific": "Army and Navy

nurses and medics (enlisted men trained as orderlies) worked side by side with civilian nurses and doctors. As a steady stream of seriously wounded servicemen continued to arrive through the early afternoon, appalling shortages of medical supplies became apparent. Army doctrine kept medical supplies under lock and key, and bureaucratic delays prevented the immediate

replacement of quickly used up stocks. Working under tremendous pressure, medical personnel faced shortages of instruments, suture material, and sterile supplies. Doctors performing major surgery passed scissors back and forth from one table to another. Doctors and nurses used cleaning rags as face masks and operated without gloves.” Duffy described the environment: “It was tense, not knowing if you were going to be attacked again... we were really restricted where we could go.” Eventually, she met and married her husband, Cornelius Duffy, who was sent to battle in Europe. The couple raised five children together following the war. Even after she completed her service in the army, Duffy remained a nurse, working at Norwalk Hospital for thirty-two years until her retirement in the year 1991.

To hear more about her experience at Pearl Harbor, watch the one-on-one interview with the late army nurse: <http://veteranvoicesofpittsburgh.com/barbara-duffy-army/>

To read more about her personal and professional life, visit:

<http://westport.dailyvoice.com/news/barbara-l-duffy-wwii-nurse/405998/>

To read her obituary, visit: <http://westport.dailyvoice.com/news/barbara-l-duffy-wwii-nurse/405998/>

The photograph of Miss Duffy embodies the essence and power of feminine grace and the military’s persistent strength and courage. Duffy looks proud as a nurse in uniform, not only representing herself as a nurse, but as a servant of the people, all



united by war. As an Army Nurse, Duffy worked under some of the most extreme conditions the nursing field can offer. Duffy represented a new class of women and a new class of nurses.

Excerpted from “The Army Nurse Corps in World War II”:

“More than 59,000 American nurses served in the Army Nurse Corps during World War II. Nurses worked closer to the front lines than they ever had before. Within the "chain of evacuation" established by the Army Medical Department during the war, nurses served under fire in field hospitals and evacuation hospitals, on hospital trains and hospital ships, and as flight nurses on medical transport planes. The skill and dedication of these nurses contributed to the extremely low post-injury mortality rate among American military forces in every theater of the war. Overall, fewer than 4 percent of the American soldiers who received medical care in the field or underwent evacuation died from wounds or disease.”

To read more about Army Nursing, visit: <http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/72-14/72-14.htm>

References:

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