Dorothy Dale Thomas was an Air Force nurse who served stateside in the troop carrier command under Captain Kelly. She graduated from nursing school in September 1942 and enlisted in Austin in April of 1943. Dorothy entered as a Second Lieutenant and was discharged two years and eight months later, in December of 1945, as a Captain.

She had many interesting stories to tell. One was that she had a doctor tell her that he would not have her as a nurse. Dorothy told him he was right—he would not have her for a nurse because she felt that he was not much of a doctor. She also told of two officers who had gone AWOL a couple of times, so the commanding officer said the next time it happened, the nurse on duty would be responsible. One night, Dorothy had to pull night duty, and when she went in for bed check the officers were not there. She found them in the day room and got them back to bed. One of them went to sleep and the other one got up again. Later she found him in the day room, this time passed out, where he had hidden some liquor. She got someone to help her get him back to bed, but he woke up and she had to chase him around the hospital. The next morning, she had to tell the commanding officer. She informed him her job was not to chase drunks around the hospital, but to take care of those who needed her. That evening the officers were in a private room.

One other thing Dorothy told me about was her fear of being followed as she was walking down the hallway, because she felt someone behind her and she didn’t know what was going to happen. It turned out to be one of the patients who could not sleep.

Q: Previous occupation?
A: I was working in a first aid station.

Q: How and why did you join the service?
A: I wanted to. I was making surgical packs when I heard of the war and told my fellow nurses that I was going to join.

Q: Describe the local enlistment or draft process with which you were involved.
A: It has been so long I can’t remember, except where they told me I was to weigh 105 but I only weighed 100. The Captain who was giving me my physical told me to tell them I was excited and worried about joining and that I had lost the weight because of that.

Q: At the time, did you feel the 1940 draft was necessary and fair?
A: Yes, I did.

Q: Describe the circumstances in which you first heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor.
A: We were listening to the radio while making surgical packs.

Q: Where did you train as a recruit?
A: I was just put straight in and after a time, when we had gotten a new C.O., we went through training (drills and exercises).

Q: At what posts were you stationed during your stateside service?
A: I started in Fort Bristom, Texas and was later sent to Fort Laurengen-Maxton, North Carolina.

Q: What was your opinion of the weapons you saw or used in the service?
A: Did not use any in the states.
Q: What were your opinions of the equipment, clothing, and rations you were issued?
A: The meals were provided. I didn’t like the first blue uniforms, but then we switched to O.P. and tan uniforms. Most had theirs professionally made.

Q: What did you think of the quality of leadership while you were in the service?
A: I thought it was good.

Q: Describe instances of particularly good or bad leadership?
A: The good was that I learned to work with the doctors. The bad was that there were a couple of doctors that I outranked and I did not like the way they took care of their patients, because they did not treat them as patients.

Q: Who were the “real” leaders—officers, noncoms, or enlisted men?
A: The officers.

Q: What did you think of the discipline at the time?
A: It was more or less moderate.

Q: What forms of off-duty recreation were common?
A: We would go to the officers club or to a movie, but we mostly stayed in the nurses’ quarters.

Q: What songs were popular during your military service?
A: Songs by Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, and other big bands.

Q: What military slang words or phrases were popular during your military service?
A: I can’t remember—it has been 50 years.

Q: Did you note any instances of ethnic, racial or religious discrimination?
A: No.

Q: Did you want to stay stateside, or did you want to go overseas?
A: Yes, I wanted to go overseas, but I didn’t weigh enough and only one could go over, so a friend of mine, who was a flight nurse, went. I went with her to get her things together. She was stationed in London.

Q: Were the two of you able to stay in touch?
A: Yes, she was in London during the first bombing.

Q: What factors contributed to a decline in morale?
A: A commanding officer was transferred to the unit and was unhappy about it, so she transferred three others and myself who had been stationed at the same place since the beginning. We all ended up in different places.

Q: What enemy propaganda, if any, did you see or hear?
A: None.

Q: What did you think of wartime civilian newspaper, magazine or radio coverage of the war and of your unit?
A: It was good. I think everybody came together.

Q: Did you receive and read news publications such as Stars and Stripes or your unit newspaper?
A: No.

Q: Did you ever participate in cooperative operations with a sister service?
A: No.
Q: Describe a “typical” day in your unit.
A: One night while I was on duty, one boy came in and there was a terrible thunderstorm. It took five men to hold him down while I gave him a shot to calm him down. He had gone crazy because he thought it was bombs going off. I had to take care of men with malaria, one officer had jungle rot and we (the nurses) had to paint him red from head to toe. I would help clean the unit up and get it ready for inspection.

Q: What were your reactions and those of your unit to VE Day?
A: We were all happy.

Q: What were your reactions and those of your unit to VJ Day?
A: We were all happy.

Q: Describe any rumors you heard about the Atomic Bomb before its use.
A: I didn’t hear anything about it. I didn’t even know it existed.

Q: What was your opinion in August 1945, on the use of the Atomic Bomb?
A: After what the Japs did to Pearl Harbor, I think they deserved it.

Q: Has that opinion since changed? If so, how?
A: No, it has not.

Q: What awards and decorations did you receive?
A: I can’t remember.

Q: What does the G.I. Bill mean to you?
A: It's good for those who needed an education, and it helped me to get the house I'm living in.

Q: What were your expectations of civilian life upon leaving the service?
A: I wanted to leave North Carolina, but I wished I would have stayed in the service and retired. I enjoyed the service because I got to travel a lot along the east coast when were were not busy.

Q: With whom do you feel most comfortable discussing your wartime experiences? Why?
A: Omaha, who is one of my friends, because we shared some of the same experiences. Also we would remember about the times we served with the help of Desert Storm.

Q: World War II was a significant national experience. What, if anything, did it teach you about America and Americans?
A: I learned that Americans were for America and they they would pull together and do their part.