

Chapter 05395 **1945**

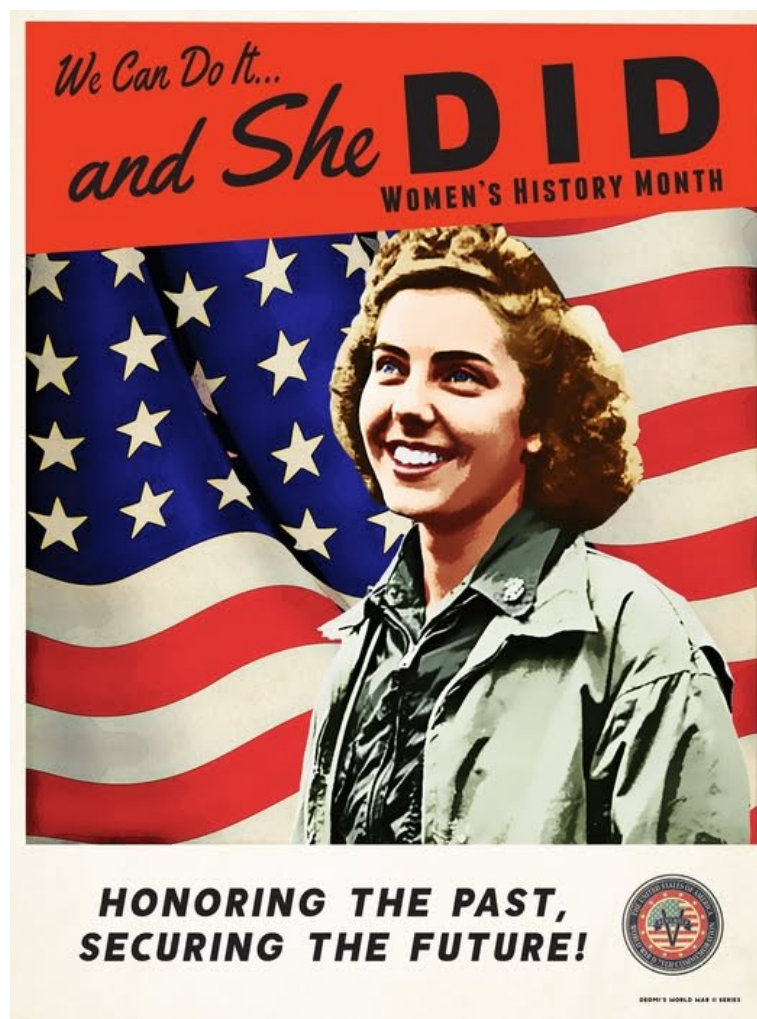
WW2 NURSE

(Not related)

JANE LOUISE 'CANDY' KENDEIGH

1922—1987 (65)

Iwo Jima



Also see video about Candy. 5/16/2025





GEORGE CLELL PIERCE (button 05190) was wounded at Iwo. Maybe he saw Candy and the other 11 nurses.

The Battle of **Iwo Jima**, from February 19 to March 26, 1945, was one of the most grueling battles during World War II. This small, volcanic island in the Pacific became the stage for an epic confrontation between the US Marine Corps and the Japanese Army. The ferocity of the fighting, the inhospitable terrain, and the sheer determination of both sides made Iwo Jima a defining moment in the War.

During this fierce fighting, the US military needed medical personnel on the battlefield to nurse those who were wounded and take care of their casualties to ensure victory. Thus, the first female Navy flight nurses program was created, and among that crew was the first female flight nurse to fly into an active combat zone in the Pacific Combat. The courageous twenty-two-year-old Ensign Jane “Candy” Kendeigh came on board.

Jane Louise Kendeigh was born in Henrietta, Ohio, on March 30th, 1922, and was raised on an apple orchard farm. As far as she could remember, she always wanted to help those in need and become a nurse.

She began her quest by graduating from the St. Luke School of Nursing in 1943 and joining the US Naval Nurse Corps shortly thereafter. Ultimately, she aimed to rescue wounded soldiers sent to distant lands during World War II. Her dream was to save those who were engaged in saving the nation.

She then became one of the twelve nurses who comprised the first group to volunteer for training as air evacuation flight nurses in the US Navy. Kendeigh and her fellow classmates were trained to treat patients at high altitudes and other critical medical situations unique to flying. They received training in plane crash procedures and field survival and even learned how to fight in hand-to-hand combat if needed.

During the water crash landing training, knowing how to swim wasn't enough to survive and pass the course. Flight nurses also had to demonstrate endurance, speed, and the ability to tow a victim for a specified distance.

A press release at that time would describe her as "one-hundred-eight pounds of green-eyed charm and efficiency." Kandeigh wasn't just tough; she was among the first Navy nurses to finish flight training and travel to the Pacific.

On January 22nd, 1945, Kandeigh and eleven other nurses were assigned to the one Squadron. Women were just starting to gain official military positions during this same time.

On March 6, 1945, Kendeigh's actions would go down in history. At 2:00 a.m., Ensign Kendeigh boarded a large C-47 in Guam headed for Iwo Jima. Also on the plane was US Navy photographer Lieutenant Gill Dewitt, tasked with documenting the first Navy nurse in action.

When the plane arrived at Iwo Jima, they discovered the airfield was under attack. The C-47 circled overhead, looking for a break in the fighting.

"We circled and circled the small island, watching the bursting shells beneath us like firecrackers on a fourth of July," Navy photographer Dewitt later said.

Finally, as the fighting started to slow down, the C-47 could land despite the enemy continuing to drop heavy mortar fire near the landing strip.

Upon landing, Kendeigh exited the plane and quickly made her way to a field hospital as mortars exploded all around her. She and the medics prepared sixteen wounded soldiers for the return flight. "We took the worst, the ones that could not wait. Others would later be evacuated on hospital ships," Kendeigh told reporters.

Finally, the C-47 was back in the air, and the pilot asked Kendeigh if she'd been scared. "I don't remember being frightened while we were on the ground," Kendeigh responded,

"There wasn't time to think about anything except getting these wounded men on board. But now we are safe; in the air again, I find my knees are shaking, so I can hardly stand up."



Ensign Jane Kendeigh

In that fateful mission, **Jane Kandeigh** became the first flight nurse to land in an active combat zone, and Journalist Gil Dewitt was with her to record it. He was right in position to take an infamous photograph of her in action treating the wounded. She later became known as the most whistled-at nurse in the Pacific. The photo of her nursing wounded soldiers made the front page of newspapers nationwide.

However, instead of celebrating her accomplishment and straying from her mission, Kandeigh rolled up her sleeves and returned to work. For the next two weeks, Kandeigh and her fellow nurses would fly in and out of Iwo Jima, evacuating nearly twenty-four hundred severely injured US Marines and soldiers back to relative safety.

Thanks to the care of nurses like Kandeigh, only forty-six died en route to the hospital. After the end of World War II, flight nurses stayed on hand to retrieve freed prisoners of War after their war-time confinement.

Barbara Miller Finch, a worker correspondent who once traveled with Kandeigh on the same plane, recalled watching her work. "Kandeigh first acquainted herself with the needs of each case and spoke to each man, building a rapport with them. She made a mental chart of the condition of each of the twenty wounded men on that flight, which she perfectly recited to me as I asked about their condition," Finch added.

In another particular instance highlighting her attentiveness to her patients, a young US Marine, William Wykoff, was lying on a stretcher in the hospital, dazed and in poor health. As he lay on the stretcher, he suddenly saw flashing lights popping in front of him.



“I tried to jump off the stretcher. I thought it was another attack until I heard this woman's voice. I was so shocked to hear a woman's voice in the middle of all this death and destruction. That woman was Ensign Kandeigh, who told me, ‘Don't worry, Marine, you are safe; it's only those pesky Navy photographers.’ Wykoff wasn't exactly sure where he was, and his vision was hampered by his injuries. He said, “I only knew I was on **Iwo Jima**, but then there she was, an angel in fatigues beside me, and it lifted my spirits.”

Kandeigh took care of Wykoff that day, and during that mission, she worked tirelessly for fifteen days straight until all of her patients were safely transported to ambulances in Guam.

Back at home in the US, Kendeigh was becoming a bit of a media sensation. When she left Iwo Jima, she returned to the US and helped with the critical War bond drive. Her heart, however, was with her work back in the Pacific, and she asked to go back.

On April 7, 1945, she was among the first flight nurses to fly into Okinawa, Japan. She made a total of six flights to Okinawa, rescuing and evacuating the soldiers on that small island once again and carving out a new piece of history.

Lieutenant General Kuribayashi would say about the fighting at Iwo Jima, “America's productive powers are beyond our imagination. Japan has started a War with a formidable enemy, and we must brace ourselves accordingly.” Kuribayashi earlier recognized that the Japanese military could not hold Iwo Jima against the American onslaught.

"The raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next five hundred years." — James Forrestal, Secretary of the US Navy 1944

Jane Kendeigh survived the War and returned home. As so many in the Greatest Generation would do, she set aside the horrors of what she'd seen and did her best to resume a regular life. She couldn't forget the faces of all those she treated, though, and was proud of her time in the military.

Kandeigh later married US Navy Lieutenant Robert Cheverton, an air evacuation pilot. They wedded on Valentine's Day, 1946, in San Marino, California. The couple had three daughters, and Kandeigh continued to work as a nurse, but this time at a doctor's office in San Diego.

On February 22, 1986, Kandeigh and her family were invited to an Iwo Jima reunion. To her surprise, Kandeigh was asked to come on the stage. A man was brought out to her on a stretcher, reenacting what occurred over forty years earlier.

Initially thinking the man on the stretcher was just an actor, Kandeigh looked down and was shocked. The man was US Marine Sergeant William Wykoff, the young man disturbed by the photographer's flashbulbs.

For Wykoff, it would indeed be the first time he could see one of his angels in fatigues as, according to a San Diego Union-Tribune article, he couldn't see her that first day as his vision was impaired by a grenade blast. Sadly, Sergeant William Wykoff would pass away only two years later in 1998.

When asked by a reporter at the reunion about her feelings about the lack of recognition the Navy Nurses received during World War II, Kandeigh responded, “Our rewards are the warm smiles, a slow nod of appreciation, a gesture, a word—accolades that are greater and more heart-warming than any medal or commendation.”

At only 65, **Jane Kendeigh** sadly passed away on 7/19/1987, in San Diego, California. Her heroic deeds and patriotism will never be forgotten. Her service remains the epitome of the courage, tenacity, and sacrifice of the women who served during World War II. Her role was no less challenging and harrowing than thousands of others, yet every bit as heroic.

Today, the incredible accounts of the brave women of Iwo Jima and Okinawa remain a minor footnote in military history; these women never achieved any medals for their service, let alone much notoriety. God bless the brave flight nurses who gave their all!







Candy caring for a patient during a flight from Iwo Jima.



Candy was the **1940 Valedictorian** at her Henrietta Ohio high school.

