

I AM ST. HELENA HOSPITAL

Tom DeWitt: The Lone Male

Tom Dewitt, RN, is a nurse in the Cath Lab. He started work at St. Helena Hospital in September of 1978, and was one of only four male nurses here at that time. He recalls that his starting wage was \$6.50 per hour.

Tom says he always knew he would go into the medical field. His education began at Cal State Hayward, where he received a B.A. degree in Chemistry. He then decided on the nursing profession and attended Chabot College, where he was once again outnumbered by women, and was the only male in the program.



When it was time to choose a place to settle down, Tom and his wife, Christine, decided to leave the urban area of Hayward and relocate to the country. They often visited Christine's sister in Calistoga, and decided to make Deer Park their home. Now married for 33 years, Tom and Christine have two grown sons, David and Michael.

Tom began his career at SHH in Med/Surg, later moving on to Monitored Care. He remembers, "We had a centralized nursing station at that time." He also worked as a team leader and charge nurse on the 5th floor. In 1980 he moved on to Surgery, in what was then called "the new wing", stayed for 12 years, and in 1992, he moved to the Cath Lab.

When asked about interesting cases he has worked on, Tom remembers a patient from Mexico who had neurofibromatosis, or what is commonly called "Elephantitis." Physicians from Stanford University Medical Center worked with SHH physicians and Tom says a great improvement was made in the man's appearance. Another case that was memorable for Tom was an organ harvest on a young local man who had passed away. A St. Helena Hospital cardiac surgeon worked along with medical staff from UCSF to carry out the parents' wishes, and Tom was visibly moved when he told the story.

In his time off, Tom enjoys cooking, building anything, gardening and playing golf. He's also an avid reader, and he and Christine love to visit the coast and go to Cambria.

Tom says he has "been through four or five presidents since I started here," and has always found the administration and his co-workers easy to work with. He smiles when he says, "The people that work here are exceptional. You don't find that everywhere you go. It's a good reason to stay."