

## **Merle Davall Interview**

305th Combat Engineer Battalion

*(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by David Vansickle)*

(MS Word Audio Transcript [NOT edited, just transcribed])

00:00:09 Speaker 1

The date is May 10th, Donna's Diner Merle Duvall, Aaron Jordan and David Vanson you're starting.

00:00:20 Speaker 1

What was your ranking army Sergeant?

00:00:26 Speaker 1

You fought in World War 2, right?

00:00:28 Speaker 2

Wait.

00:00:29 Speaker 3

I did.

00:00:33 Speaker 1

What were the years like between when and when did you serve? Yeah.

00:00:38 Speaker 3

Yeah.

00:00:40 Speaker 3

404045.

00:00:44 Speaker 3

In the combat that I'm talking about, I served in the service of 42 to 45. They come.

00:00:50 Speaker 1

So you were enlisted, or did you drive? Where did you live at the time?

00:01:00 Speaker 4

Yeah.

00:01:04

No, I don't want coffee.

00:01:07 Speaker 1

Did you get a piglet service like Army or Navy? They distract you right in that article. Do you recall the first day of your service? I was.

00:01:12 Speaker 3

You took what they gave.

00:01:13 Speaker 3

You.

00:01:21 Speaker 2

We're going for 3 1/2.

00:01:24 Speaker 3

Colorado.

00:01:28 Speaker 3

That's inducted and got the clothes and so forth.

00:01:33 Speaker 1

What was your boot camp like like?

00:01:38 Speaker 3

They tried to kill you. They're almost done.

00:01:43 Speaker 3

They know they can.

00:01:44 Speaker 3

Kill you. But they sure did work hard.

00:01:47 Speaker 5

How much is your?

00:01:50 Speaker 1

How are your feelings about getting trapped? Did you want?

00:01:52 Speaker 3

To yeah, I want it in live, but my mother.

00:01:58 Speaker 5

OK, I know what you're having a lot.

00:02:00 Speaker 3

And after that, when they dropped about the 20, which I was, I wasn't list, but my mother said, she said I'd have plenty of time to spending there anyway.

00:02:02 Speaker 5

Of guys, OK.

00:02:11 Speaker 3

So.

00:02:12 Speaker 3

I was glad.

00:02:12 Speaker 3

I listened to it.

00:02:14 Speaker 1

Where did you serve when you get?

00:02:16 Speaker 1

That over the year like.

00:02:19 Speaker 3

Oh, Atlanta at Omaha Beach.

00:02:22 Speaker 3

And the all through all four major battle live.

00:02:29

Relax.

00:02:32 Speaker 3

Land in Omaha Beach in.

00:02:37 Speaker 3

I'm not sure what day it was either late the evening of the 7th.

00:02:42 Speaker 3

Of.

00:02:43 Speaker 3

June or the 8th?

00:02:45 Speaker 3

I wasn't the first one to landed there. They they had it.

00:02:50 Speaker 3

Guy Lori united. Therefore I got there. Rough dead people all over.

00:02:53 Speaker 1

What was it like when you got there? Was it?

00:03:02 Speaker 3

Well, it's going well. Directions.

00:03:06 Speaker 3

Water receipts.

00:03:07 Speaker 1

How big was your unit?

00:03:10 Speaker 3

Division.

00:03:12 Speaker 1

20,000.

00:03:15 Speaker 1

You weren't a prisoner of the world, right?

00:03:16 Speaker 3

No, I didn't want to be either.

00:03:23 Speaker 1

Or couple of your most memorable, memorable, memorable experiences in the world.

00:03:32 Speaker 3

Ohh probably made the breakthrough. They gave us a bad time wearing our uniforms. We couldn't downturn for the American.

00:03:40

Right.

00:03:47 Speaker 3

Hello because you didn't know who you fighting with.

00:03:51 Speaker 3

Or what was rocking on everything turmoil.

00:03:59 Speaker 1

Did you?

00:04:02 Speaker 1

Did they give you any breaks?

00:04:03 Speaker 1

Like.

00:04:04 Speaker 1

Send you to England or anything like that. You're always over there.

00:04:06 Speaker 3

No.

00:04:08 Speaker 3

Over there till I gotta get.

00:04:10 Speaker 3

The 30th at 45.

00:04:13 Speaker 2

Did you get any R&R?

00:04:14 Speaker 6

But or is it? You're always on the.

00:04:17 Speaker 3

Always on the move.

00:04:20 Speaker 1

Where did?

00:04:22 Speaker 1

How did that?

00:04:22 Speaker 1

Happen like you got hit, you said.

00:04:24 Speaker 2

Good morning.

00:04:29 Speaker 3

But we thought it was, in fact it ended the 8th of May and I.

00:04:33 Speaker 3

Haven't hit the April the 30th.

00:04:41 Speaker 3

We haven't hit much any resistance.

00:04:45 Speaker 3

Some too nuts up on the hill and got over this shocking water down there.

00:04:50 Speaker 3

And.

00:04:52 Speaker 3

Pushing right in front of me and got me right.

00:04:54 Speaker 3

Here in the job.

00:04:56 Speaker 3

With John knocked out 14.

00:05:01 Speaker 3

The hospital afterwards over with putting in the hospital or I would invite it.

00:05:07 Speaker 1

But you had to spend the end of the war and your husband.

00:05:10 Speaker 3

Right.

00:05:14 Speaker 3

It rained France and turned it back to France.

00:05:19 Speaker 3

Danny Glover.

00:05:22 Speaker 3

Call Dingle office.

00:05:28

One minute.

00:05:29 Speaker 1

How did you stay in touch with your family? Did you write?

00:05:32 Speaker 3

Right.

00:05:34 Speaker 3

I have no phone calls or anything like that.

00:05:37 Speaker 3

And time will take you.

00:05:40 Speaker 3

Week 2 weeks to get a letter crossed.

00:05:44

Is there any?

00:05:46 Speaker 1

What was the food?

00:05:46 Speaker 1

Like.

00:05:50 Speaker 3

Not too good. OK, right. So see what we could take out of June house.

00:06:01 Speaker 3

Finds Bates.

00:06:02 Speaker 5

So.

00:06:03 Speaker 3

Still, the hands of the Germans.

00:06:06 Speaker 6

Better work than seeing.

00:06:10 Speaker 3

And we have pretty good.

00:06:13 Speaker 1

Did they give you a lot of supplies when you?

00:06:14 Speaker 1

Started or they just?

00:06:18 Speaker 3

It will.

00:06:22 Speaker 4

You know.

00:06:25 Speaker 3

Every time we got a chance, get ambulation and lower themselves down with ammunition. Battlers. Let's get heavy and everyone is going to get any more.

00:06:36 Speaker 1

Did you have a lot of stress?

00:06:39 Speaker 1

Anything like that? Or were you just kind of free going through the whole?

00:06:43 Speaker 3

Well.

00:06:45 Speaker 3

It's stressed to a certain extent, but I when I went overseas I had the idea I was going.

00:06:50 Speaker 3

To come back.

00:06:52 Speaker 3

But they were not a.

00:06:52 Speaker 3

Bit.

00:06:58 Speaker 1

Was there something special there for good luck?

00:07:02 Speaker 3

No.



00:07:03 Speaker 1

No.

00:07:06 Speaker 1

How did you entertain yourselves when you were over there? Did you? Was there any entertainment that you wouldn't seen or anything like?

00:07:12 Speaker 1

That.

00:07:18 Speaker 3

Fighting 3 regiments, one resident being reserved, which is just.

00:07:25 Speaker 3

Behind every line, they shift more baby.

00:07:28 Speaker 3

That was us. The only rest we got. But we're in the reserve, which didn't didn't last very short time.

00:07:38 Speaker 1

Did you get any lever they didn't give?

00:07:41 Speaker 1

You any leave?

00:07:45 Speaker 1

What countries did you travel through while you?

00:07:47 Speaker 3

Were in the service France, Belgium, Luxembourg.

00:07:55 Speaker 4

The gas line.

00:07:59 Speaker 3

Slovakia.

00:08:05 Speaker 1

Can you remember any humorous or unusual events while you were?

00:08:09 Speaker 3

Over there, just 20 below 0, it's 18 inches.

00:08:13 Speaker 3

Not really, I didn't. Did not froze today.

00:08:21 Speaker 3

Sleep not 24 outside 24 hours a day.

00:08:22 Speaker 6

I've seen I've seen.

00:08:25 Speaker 3

No connection whatever.

00:08:27 Speaker 1

Was there any pranks being pulled goofing around?

00:08:35 Speaker 3

I know a lot of night patrol working.

00:08:38 Speaker 3

Guys always joking. Well, I don't come back. You don't need to pay for that \$5 that you owe me or whatever. You don't like that they didn't come back.

00:08:46 Speaker 1

To it. Did you take a lot of photographs, photographs while?

00:08:50 Speaker 3

I did that.

00:08:55 Speaker 1

What did you think of the officers or fellow soldiers? Or did you like him?

00:09:00 Speaker 3

Yeah, they're good. Well, general patents over there and he broke the officers first battle.

00:09:13 Speaker 3

His officer had to lead that push, he said so.

00:09:18 Speaker 3

Offer or non company for him you land.

00:09:23 Speaker 3

That's how come I got hit, I got front.

00:09:26 Speaker 4

Down here.

00:09:28 Speaker 3

Sell that improve.

00:09:30

Everything else.

00:09:31 Speaker 1

Could you keep a journal of any kind?

00:09:37 Speaker 3

While I were kept what little I had in my head with too much.

00:09:42 Speaker 1

Do you recall the last day of your service? Yeah. Like when you got out, went home.

00:09:44 Speaker 3

Last day I didn't realize that.

00:09:52 Speaker 3

I just sadly doing when they had this piece of paper and said.

00:09:58 Speaker 3

It.

00:09:58 Speaker 3

Does.

00:10:00 Speaker 1

Where were you when they ended you?

00:10:06 Speaker 3

Come in on.

00:10:06 Speaker 3

The.

00:10:09 Speaker 3

Ship and took a footprint in the desert and then just turned me there.

00:10:14 Speaker 1

What did you do when you got out?

00:10:16 Speaker 1

Like the week after you got.

00:10:17 Speaker 6

Alright.

00:10:18 Speaker 3

What's still alive? Married seeing in Paris, AR. They bring her up here.

00:10:27 Speaker 1

Did you go back to school, college or anything?

00:10:30 Speaker 3

Not after I got out. I was in the army. I went to Texas A&M and to New Mexico and MA.

00:10:39 Speaker 3

But then they.

00:10:39 Speaker 3

Don't.

00:10:41 Speaker 3

They needed cannon fodder, so they don't know whether that sent us over.

00:10:45 Speaker 3

Come back.

00:10:47 Speaker 5

Well.

00:10:47 Speaker 1

Did you make any close friends while you're in the service? Did you make any friends in the service?

Like close friends? She kept up with?

00:10:55 Speaker 3

Yeah, I still one guy. I still write to.

00:11:03 Speaker 3

Goodnight rammed around a lot of the service and I didn't couldn't load up any outfit make.

00:11:09 Speaker 3

Real things for it.

00:11:11 Speaker 3

And in combat, there's always changing so.

00:11:16 Speaker 1

Did you join any veteran organizations like?

00:11:21 Speaker 3

We have to.

00:11:22

Are you?

00:11:24 Speaker 3

Yeah, I floated back over here like that when it rains for a while, they went in construction and end up not. I still live out in the country.

00:11:28 Speaker 1

What do you do for a career after you?

00:11:30 Speaker 1

You got out.

00:11:30 Speaker 1

Of the service.

00:11:40 Speaker 1

My grandfather told me that you drove a school bus when he was a kid.

00:11:44 Speaker 3

Right I did.

00:11:49 Speaker 3

Who's your daddy?

00:11:54 Speaker 1

That's what he's telling me the other night, yeah.

00:12:00 Speaker 1

Did your own military experience influence your thinking about or about military in general?

00:12:04

Hey dear.

00:12:07

Hi.

00:12:11 Speaker 3

Yeah, no way. But now I'm going to blow my own son alone. Not know that I didn't leave Vietnam because I didn't know what was doing over there. Well, two we thought we knew what?

00:12:21 Speaker 3

We were doing over there.

00:12:24 Speaker 3

So I kind of guessed it. I didn't think it did, no.

00:12:26 Speaker 1

How did it?

00:12:28 Speaker 1

Affect your life being in? Did it change you?

00:12:31 Speaker 1

At all or.

00:12:33 Speaker 3

I said it did.

00:12:35 Speaker 3

Wow, look alive.

00:12:38 Speaker 3

I don't know. She knows better than I.

00:12:39 Speaker 3

Did I guess?

00:12:42 Speaker 1

So how many battles?

00:12:43 Speaker 1

Where are you?

00:12:44 Speaker 3

The four major battle that's not.

00:12:48 Speaker 3

That's silver star. It's totally bravery.

00:12:52 Speaker 3

Bunch of malarkey. I was trying to save the life.

00:12:57 Speaker 1

How did you? How did you get over to Europe? Did they fly you or?

00:13:01 Speaker 2

No.

00:13:02 Speaker 3

Who? Mary and 20,000 troops on one boat. Queen Mary's a big old boat.

00:13:11 Speaker 3

Town, New York and landed at Sasco, Scotland.

00:13:15 Speaker 3

And to the train on.

00:13:16 Speaker 3

Down to.

00:13:17 Speaker 3

Manchester, England and then from there we went to Southampton and that all boats went out and set the oceans for four days, waiting to land in France.

00:13:30 Speaker 1

What kind of metals did?

00:13:31 Speaker 1

You get from being over there.

00:13:34 Speaker 3

Well, I got Silver star, Purple Heart battle for every battle I said before.

00:13:43 Speaker 3

I guess that's body.

00:13:45 Speaker 4

They're.

00:13:49

Would you consider yourself?

00:13:50 Speaker 2

A hero? No, really. My commendation.

00:13:51 Speaker 3

No, I'm just trying to stay alive.

00:14:00 Speaker 3

Charles, what I say 12 men's lives, but I don't worry about those 12 men.

00:14:05 Speaker 3

I was worried about.

00:14:08 Speaker 3

Which in a roundabout way.

00:14:11 Speaker 3

I did.

00:14:19 Speaker 3

They don't have enemy lines.

00:14:23 Speaker 3

That's not mines, and they do that. It's working out some mine that parallel the front of the machine that last we had 12. We have three boys as a combat engineer.

00:14:38 Speaker 5

Why?

00:14:43 Speaker 4

Getting warm out there and sacrifice.

00:14:44 Speaker 3

I thought he had that machine gun be ramped down my throat when he started shooting, as in the lead, but he did. He started. You guys have never been hit. Combat, never been shot at.

00:15:01 Speaker 4

Shrimp.



00:15:01 Speaker 3

They pull that through.

00:15:04 Speaker 5

Well, no, not anymore.

00:15:07 Speaker 1

So did you sustain any other injuries?

00:15:15 Speaker 3

And say that was the bomb March.

00:15:18 Speaker 3

That's probably a good deal for a month. It's hard talking to people.

00:15:19 Speaker 5

And.

00:15:24 Speaker 5

OK, whatever. How much money did they give you after?

00:15:31 Speaker 1

You get out.

00:15:33 Speaker 3

For \$300.10 dollars.

00:15:40 Speaker 1

Thank you. Get a lot more than that.

00:15:43 Speaker 3

Things work here is expensive then.

00:15:48 Speaker 3

Well, I got patriotic from November. There was that.

00:15:53 Speaker 5

Yeah.

00:15:54 Speaker 3

But they didn't come through a bit at all over the Arkansas.

00:15:56 Speaker 3

But.

00:15:57 Speaker 3

I can't remember sure, but I think it was 30 some odd dollars they paid.

00:16:00 Speaker 3

Me for traveling.

00:16:03 Speaker 3

I'd say there's a lot cheaper than overseas, 18 months.

00:16:05 Speaker 1

How long were you over there?

00:16:12 Speaker 1

Did you ever regret being over there?

00:16:18 Speaker 3

Come close to you.

00:16:19 Speaker 3

Lord, I like these somewhere else.

00:16:23 Speaker 3

No, not really. I had a job to do. Tried.

00:16:25 Speaker 3

To do it so.

00:16:27 Speaker 1

Was anybody else in your family?

00:16:29 Speaker 1

In World War 2.

00:16:31 Speaker 3

Little brother was when he went in, just as.

00:16:32 Speaker 3

The war ended.

00:16:38 Speaker 1

Do you have any questions?

00:16:43 Speaker 2

Any other stories you'd like to?

00:16:46

Share with us.

00:16:50 Speaker 6

Well, trying to think.

00:16:57 Speaker 3

There's so many of them that I don't.

00:16:58 Speaker 3

Know where to start.

00:16:59 Speaker 6

Oh, yeah. Exciting. It's great time.

00:17:08 Speaker 3

Anytime anybody didn't come back say they weren't scared. I take their life. I was scared. Scared.

00:17:15 Speaker 3

Fairly much so. When people trying to kill you.

00:17:20 Speaker 3

And Hartley, that's what I disliked.

00:17:23 Speaker 5

I guess.

00:17:24 Speaker 3

They they're back there 5 miles and shoot there, doing nothing about it. I got hit by the four bar trailer. It's not long rain about 1/2 miles apart. They'll shoot.

00:17:46 Speaker 3

But I will go again.

00:17:50 Speaker 3

That's too way too old now, but.

00:17:51 Speaker 7

Yeah, especially come after me. No.

00:17:58 Speaker 1

So did they actually come to your house and or was it just like a letter?

00:18:02 Speaker 3

Letter. I got a letter as your friends and neighbors have chosen you to represent them in the coming conflict. Oh, I got good friends and neighbors setting off.

00:18:15 Speaker 6

What do you think about draft Dodgers?

00:18:20 Speaker 3

It depends on the circumstances. Some of these complex will that, as I said, like.

00:18:31

Now.

00:18:33 Speaker 3

What are they doing over there? You have no business over there.

00:18:38 Speaker 3

But we didn't have me Rap God to speak of in World War 2.

00:18:46 Speaker 3

Well, I I think you you should perform your duty.

00:18:53 Speaker 3

I'm glad I did. There's times I'd like to bend out of it.

00:18:57 Speaker 3

That's good.

00:19:02 Speaker 3

It didn't come that way.

00:19:05 Speaker 1

I think as some people see it as a, they made a threat on us and we were there too, but they didn't do nothing to us in Vietnam. So yeah, I mean really.

00:19:12 Speaker 3

Right. Yeah, they they World War 2 dead bombed Hawaii.

00:19:21 Speaker 3

So we had been something we was trying to.

00:19:24 Speaker 3

Protect it.

00:19:25 Speaker 3

Right.

00:19:31

121.

00:19:33 Speaker 4

Shopping.

00:19:34 Speaker 2

Was do you remember your first day at boot camp? You remember what?

00:19:38 Speaker 6

It was like.

00:19:39

Yeah.

00:19:40 Speaker 3

Actually in camp, so yeah.

00:19:43 Speaker 2

Really.

00:19:45 Speaker 3

That Little Rock AR we got in there about 2:00 in the morning, 5:00 was out about half done calisthenics, which we didn't. I knew we went on the hike.

00:19:58 Speaker 2

Really.

00:19:59 Speaker 3

You know, that's why I swore that he's trying.

00:20:01 Speaker 3

To kill us.

00:20:03 Speaker 1

What was your regiment's name?

00:20:06 Speaker 3

8th Entry Division 305 engineer comeback.

00:20:15 Speaker 1

So you were 22 by the time you got 21. When you got out of the service.

00:20:22 Speaker 3

No, I know that I was 22 days. I would have been 24. Is that right?

00:20:36 Speaker 3

I got out the 27th November 1935. I would now my youngest son and.

00:20:39 Speaker 1

Would you like to go back over there just to see?

00:20:47 Speaker 3

His mother went over there. I was there, I was back in the.

00:20:50 Speaker 3

Hurry.

00:20:52 Speaker 3

Around 70, I don't want to go and I do many.

00:20:55 Speaker 3

Bad memories with.

00:20:56 Speaker 3

Them. But now, now I'm too old.

00:21:04 Speaker 1

I don't have any more questions.

00:21:10 Speaker 3

Yeah. Well, American people really went together. That's when the woman start working.

00:21:13 Speaker 4

Is there anything else you'd?

00:21:14 Speaker 6

Like to.

00:21:14 Speaker 6

Add.

00:21:28 Speaker 3

They took over the factories and everything else.

00:21:30 Speaker 1

Did.

00:21:31 Speaker 1

Did your wife work at that time?

00:21:35 Speaker 3

So we worked the Memphis aircraft in Oklahoma City.

00:21:41 Speaker 3

She didn't realize here because she followed me around.

00:21:45 Speaker 3

To New Jersey, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and New York.

00:21:50 Speaker 4

Just get something five years.

00:22:05 Speaker 3

Took us six days to get over there.

00:22:10 Speaker 3

Sailing by ourselves, we didn't have an escort.

00:22:13 Speaker 3

And slowly it was too fast that they couldn't.

00:22:16 Speaker 3

Couldn't catch us.

00:22:19 Speaker 3

And they change clothes every 7 minutes. You look at the lake and see what worried me and pulls what the Terminal 9 are found something that.

00:22:40 Speaker 5

Ohh, some cocktail sauce.

00:22:45

Well.

00:22:46 Speaker 1

I think that's.

00:22:47 Speaker 1

All we have and yeah, it will.

00:22:48 Speaker 3

That's all you have for those.