

Robert Stubblefield Interview

305th Medical Battalion

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Janet McFarland, Lyrissa Perry)

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(MS Word transcript from audio)

00:00:03 Speaker 1

My name is Janet McFarland and I'm here with Lyrissa Perry, and we're here on the mall and we're doing veterans history. It's May 28th, 2004, and we're here with.

00:00:17 Speaker 2

Robert L Stubblefield, from now from Gloucester, Virginia.

00:00:23 Speaker 1

And where were you born?

00:00:24 Speaker 2

In where I live now, I left before World War 2 and I came back 40 years later to the farm and I was raised on.

00:00:35 Speaker 1

And what is your birthday?

00:00:37 Speaker 2

May the 10th, 1918.

00:00:40 Speaker 1

Were you enlisted or drafted into the service?

00:00:46 Speaker 2

Well, it's both. I thought I was going to be a 4F, so I volunteered for the draft to get out of it and I ended up that night in Fort Dix.

And then I and they gave me a chance to go home and I said heck with it. I'm in now. So I went down and they took us. Sent us to Camp Forest, Tennessee.

00:01:10 Speaker 2

And when they were making up the 80th Infantry Division and I had all my basic training with them. Then from there, we moved to Yuma, AZ for a desert maneuvers because we thought we were going to North Africa. And let's see after that.

They sent me to a medical technician school that William Beaumont Hospital in Fort Bliss or close to Fort Bliss. And after that he went back and I couldn't find my division. They had already moved to Fort Dix, so they put us on the train and sent us back. And we went over to England to place my

Company Medical Company 305th Medical Battalion went to a place called Knutsford, which I think is close to Birmingham. And we stayed there for a couple months and then they loaded us on LSTs or whatever. And I believe we landed at Omaha Beach, if I remember correctly. And there's still a lot of evidence of the June 6 when they invaded.

And from there we set for about a week among the hedge rows and then the next thing we moved in. We had the first battle for the division was the Argentina Falaise gap, and of course I'm a medic. I didn't do anything real heroic. I try to tell people what to do and I happen to think you know what I did mostly was load and unload ambulances. Occasionally we had to go into the battlefield and pick up.

One particular one that sticks in my mind was after we got to the Alsace-Lorraine. One Sunday morning, they said we need to get a bunch of us to go out in the field. They just had a battle and then with the Ridge in the field and we had to go over and look through all the wounded and find those that were alive and get them back to medical station.

The same time we had captured, overrun German medical station so we and the Germans were just working together. In other words, if they come to the German wounded, we let them take care because they could speak German and we couldn't.

And listen when I forgot where we went, what the next thing was. Oh, we ran out. That was the time that the 3rd Army ran out of fuel and food and we captured a German supply train, so we all ate Limburger cheese and ersatz coffee for a month, and they use the German gasoline to get... I don't remember how far before that ran out because we didn't run the supplies.

I don't remember anything really exciting after that. The memory, because a lot of the stuff is still a blur in my mind. What the heck? I know how, where I was. But I wonder how the heck I got there, because I live from day one day to the next.

And at the end of the war, we ended up in Austria and our division accepted the surrender of one German army. I forget what it was and that that was the end of it. And we had ended up with the division. Not personally, but the division ended up with 290 some days in contact with the enemy.

And then they send us back to the states. And I wanted to be macho at the time when, boy, I think of it now, thank God that. I think it must have been looking out for me because I never got a scratch. I lived through the whole thing and I remember on May the 6th. And when nothing we had the date that the finished. Anyway, I remember shaking hands with my buddy. I said thank God we made it.

And that's my story.

00:05:37 Speaker 1

You went in when?

00:05:40 Speaker 2

I'm trying to think. I believe it was October the 4th, or somewhere thereabouts I had just graduated from College 1942.

Yeah, maybe it was 42. I don't remember. Well, anyway, it was we were in training when the D-day.

And went and I had been in the service then for a year we were through all of our basic training, ready to go overseas.

00:06:19 Speaker 1

And then you when did you get out?

00:06:25 Speaker 2

In December, I guess the December, the 44, I believe.

00:06:31 Speaker 1

And back to the German medic group that you sort of captured, so to speak. Did you work with them? Did they just use your hospital tent or did they have?

00:06:41 Speaker 2

Oh, we all worked together. Matter of fact, they were using whatever they had and they used what we had? We had and to keep them from being prisoners of war because the injuries them were sometimes you get a little angry when people are shooting at you. We put medical tags on them after we got through, you know, and send them back with the wounded. So they got they got to another hospital all the you know that that were not only just medics, but there were doctors as well.

00:07:10 Speaker 1

So what you did? Because the German wounded were evacuated to our hospitals.

00:07:18 Speaker 2

Some of them were, yeah. If they I don't know how they separated and mastered that I'm currently they can't ended up in German hospital.

If you put them the wards in combat, the wounded was a wounded and see at that time medics wore the big Geneva cross on the helmets and most of the old German Wehrmacht respected that because of their figure. If he shot them then they might need them too. They wouldn't like in the Pacific. Some of the dudes that I've talked to in the Pacific, they didn't respect the medics and you didn't dare let them know your medic because they like to kill the medics first.

At least the old the German Wehrmacht would just.

00:08:08 Speaker 1

They respected the fact that you were a medic.

00:08:11 Speaker 2

Most of them, unless they were going to recruits.

00:08:14 Speaker 1

And so then when you gave the Germans their medic badge, then they got back to the hospital with the wounded.

Yeah. Yeah. Everybody, as far as we were concerned, a wounded was a wounded. We didn't worry about that.

I do remember one particular instance that comes to my mind. We found two German soldiers on the side that had been had really severe stomach wounds and we'd been told don't give a stomach wound water. And I might remember the guy with the thing is still sticking with the guy was pleading for wasser, wasser - water and I said no.

00:08:55 Speaker 2

I was trying to tell him no, no, he said. Don't take water.

I don't know if he ever understood.

00:09:04 Speaker 1

I guess that would have been a challenge in the sense of going back into a battlefield because there would be the Germans that wouldn't understand what you're saying. So it was a challenge to help people.

00:09:15 Speaker 2

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Most of the time, they're very few I never tended to. Very few German soldiers, most of them were American. Well, the one of the ones I saw were the dead ones and somebody the Germans had already. Paramedics had already picked theirs up.

Another instance, if you want to know a story that sticks in my mind. See, I can't remember having the sequence of some of this. But American tank came up and they had used their armor piercing shell and they had a pierced, pierced the turret and they bounced around and killed one of the members of the tank unit and they say come medics come here. So I remember going down and getting the guy and the and the other medics were up on the turret and they were pulling him and the blood dripping down on me.

I hadn't thought about that in a long time, but and I can't, I can't think of any other.

They're going out at night and doing the battle of the bulge. And wading through the water up to the waist, I think that was what when we had before they had the snowstorm and getting completely wet from the waist down. One night of carrying the litters out.

Then then, during, during, during the Battle of the Bulls, as they call it, you know, the Ardennes Offensive, all the snowstorms. And that that was deep snow and...

Let's say. I don't remember any of them particular instance, what these things pop in your mind when you start talking.

00:11:08 Speaker 1

That's true. So what are your thoughts about the memorial and the Memorial Day celebration?

00:11:16 Speaker 2

I think it's about time. I went. You know, when they started this. I'm a what they call a lifetime charter member. I've been donating to and I wondered, trying to rationalize why we didn't never had one before. But I guess the whole country was involved and we when we got home, the main thing we were looking for was either get an education or a job.

But anyway, it's time I think I've said I looked at it through. I haven't ever really seen it yet. I saw it a couple about a month ago when they first took the plywood down, looked through the chain link fence.

00:11:56 Speaker 1

Or you have to go down and.

00:11:57 Speaker 2

Yeah. Oh, I'll see you tomorrow. I have my tickets.

00:12:00 Speaker 1

Well, that sounds good.