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Interview with Herbert Chisholm

Herbert Chisholm

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview VHP #003
CHISHOLM, Herbert**

CHISHOLM, Herbert

Drafted: 1942 July 1 – 1946 January

Interviewed: March 6, 2004

Interviewer: Erin Robinson

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Length: 00:43:07

Abstract: In his March 6, 2004 interview with Erin Robinson, Herbert Chisholm recalls stories of his time in the Army in Africa and Europe during WWII. Chisholm recalls life as a black soldier and living conditions for all soldiers. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Engineer, bridges, Anjuna Beach, Italy, African American Soldier, Food, Battle, Draft

Interview Session (March 6, 2004): Digital File

Time Keywords

00:00:00 *Start of Interview/Interviewer's Introduction*

00:00:52 *Question:* What war and branch of service? *Answer:* WWII. Army engineer.

00:01:10 *Question:* Rank? *Answer:* T-Sergeant.

00:01:14 *Question:* Where did you serve? *Answer:* North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany.

00:01:28 *Question:* Enlist or drafted? *Answer:* Drafted.

00:01:41 *Question:* How old when drafted? *Answer:* 18 years old.

00:01:50 *Question:* What did you do before you were drafted? *Answer:* Worked for the Rock Hill utility department.

00:02:10 *Question:* Who did you leave behind? *Answer:* Wife, mother, father, and five brothers in the army at the same time.

- 00:02:30 *Question:* Where did you go first? *Answer:* Fort Jackson, Columbia. Fort Benning, Georgia to get the uniform. Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for six weeks of Basic Training. Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Fort Dixon, New Jersey. New York, New York got on a ship to go to North Africa – 20 days by boat. Casabalanca. Algeria. Italy – Naples Invasion. Rains all the time, so soldiers stayed put. Rome. France. Germany. Soldiers trying to build a bridge across the Rhine River – cables would break, bridge destroyed. HC talks about the weather and how it hindered movement.
- 00:08:35 *Question:* Basic Training? *Answer:* Engineers had to learn how to build and destroy bridges. HC talks about the logistics of destroying a bridge. HC talks about spies and ammunition. Fighting Germany and Russia.
- 00:17:25 *Question:* Was your regiment all black? *Answer:* At first it was. HC talks about being in Italy where both black and white soldiers served together.
- 00:19:25 *Question:* Make any friends? *Answer:* Trying to get back home, but the regiment was all a soldier had. When soldiers got back home, they separated. Most of the soldiers in HC's regiment were from Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama – and most of them stayed abroad, because living conditions were better. There was no one from Rock Hill in HC's regiment.
- 00:24:00 **[no question]** HC talks about Queen Mary. Landing in North Africa.
- 00:27:50 *Question:* Most interesting place? *Answer:* Anjuna Beach in Italy. “You could have smelled death all the time.” They don't bury the men who die on the frontlines, just the ones that were hurt and taken to the hospital. Can't find the dead soldiers in the snow. Mass graves. Soldiers carried their own body bags. Soldiers used the body bags as mattress covers. Soldiers never had a good time, because they were sleep deprived and exposed to the elements.
- 00:32:00 **[no question]** HC describes the day of a soldier.
- 00:32:40 *Question:* Food like? *Answer:* Canned foods – biscuits, bacon, navy beans, and spam. HC doesn't eat spam to this day. Where soldiers ate. Coffee. Rations. Soldiers rarely got a hot meal.
- 00:36:35 **[no question]** HC describes the weather. In the summer, the clouds were so low you could touch the sky.
- 00:39:40 *Question:* When did you come home? *Answer:* 6 months after the war ended in 1945. HC stayed abroad a whole year before coming back.
- 00:40:23 *Question:* What did you do when you came home? *Answer:* Went to Friendship

Junior College for two years.

00:40:50 *Question:* What work? *Answer:* Went back to the same department in utilities. Had two children. Sunday school teacher, deacon, and minister. Crawford Baptist Church.

00:43:07 *End of interview*