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Interview with Herbert Chisholm

Herbert Chisholm

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Abstract: In his March 6, 2004 interview with Erin Robinson, Herbert Chisholm recollects 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

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.

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.

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.

[no question] HC talks about Queen Mary. Landing in North Africa.

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.

[no question] HC describes the day of a soldier.


[no question] HC describes the weather. In the summer, the clouds were so low you could touch the sky.

Question: When did you come home? Answer: 6 months after the war ended in 1945. HC stayed abroad a whole year before coming back.

Question: What did you do when you came home? Answer: Went to Friendship
Herbert Chisholm (VHP # 003)

Junior College for two years.


00:43:07  *End of interview*