

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Buddy Boudreaux

COLLECTION: 4700.1138

IDENTIFICATION: Longtime Baton Rouge resident, served with the Army Air Corps in North Africa and Italy during World War II, popular jazz musician

INTERVIEWER: J. Noah Rost

SERIES: Military

INTERVIEW DATES: April 11, 1999

FOCUS DATES: 1941-1945

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1664, Side A

Born in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, on December 27, 1917 to Edward Boudreaux, Senior and Rena Landry; father worked for Standard Oil, mother worked in post office, became a housewife after marriage; his three brothers; his four sons and their professions; parents moved to Baton Rouge when he was six months old; attended Baton Rouge public schools and the University of California, Berkeley, after serving in World War II; worked for Exxon in Baton Rouge for forty years; he is a professional musician; "I told them when I went to work, I would not stop playing my music"; he heads the Buddy Lee Orchestra; first hearing about Pearl Harbor; his and other's reactions to the news; drafted and attended boot camp, Army Administration School, and Overseas Replacement Training Center; boot camp was no problem for him because he was in shape; part of boot camp was in Tent City (a basic training camp in St. Petersburg, Florida); typical day at boot camp; no problem with discipline because he was raised to respect authority; people went AWOL from boot camp; had to watch out for coral snakes at Tent City; first assignment with Army Air Corps in Casablanca, Morocco, June 1943; first time overseas was strange; went from Casablanca to Constantine, Algeria, then to Tunisia; little interaction with Arabs in North Africa, French Moroccans were nice; played with a seven-piece band in clubs and USO shows; his commanding officer (CO) would tag along to gigs; funny story about bringing the CO to the mess hall for breakfast after hours; he was assigned to be cadre for Roosevelt's son but it fell through; wound up attached to the Twentieth Replacement Battalion, then assigned to Adjutant General's Department; story about crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa into Italy on a ship full of aviation gasoline; Naples harbor blown up while they sat offshore thinking the Germans were about to bomb them; learning 50 years later that German forces were destroying the harbor as they retreated to prevent allied forces from docking; eventually got into Naples and camped outside Cassino, Italy; American and German bombers flying overhead constantly; German forces in Monte Cassino Monastery, wheeling 88 millimeter guns in and out of caves; he was assigned to train non-combat persons to lead pack mules loaded with ammunition; he and his CO were responsible for cutting orders for infantrymen to go to the

front lines; "I lost a lot of friends. I'm mindful of how fortunate I was and what contribution they made"; Italian people were happy, treated U.S. soldiers well; memory of riding in a boxcar with forty men for six days and nights eating only "cold can beans"; he got dysentery and spent a month in the hospital; interaction with British troops in North Africa; guarding gasoline drums one night, thought he was being attacked when drums started popping from temperature change; competition between British and U.S. troops was "at the top"; Italy campaign was a mistake, too hard to fight "from the bottom of the boot up"; competition between Patton and Montgomery; in Italy when V-E-Day came; back in the States by early June 1945;

Tape 1664, Side B

In Italy after V-E- Day, drinking alcohol and wine out of five-gallon gas cans; surprised when it snowed in North Africa; extreme temperature changes; seeing scorpions during the day then sleeping on the ground at night; "I was fortunate in not having anything more to worry about than that"; back in the U.S., training to fight in the Pacific theater; while on leave, Japan surrendered and he got a telegram to report for discharge; veterans reporting for discharge getting a pitch from a PFC to join the reserves, "it just turned us off"; happy with Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb on Japan "it was either lose a lot of American Lives or to do that number."

TAPES: 1 (T1664)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 52 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 36 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence (3 pages), Information on interviewee from Jazz.com, Information on basic training camp in St. Petersburg, Florida (2 pages)

RESTRICTIONS: None