

King, Avery P. Interview pt 2, 8-3-95

[Speaker 1]

It's a terribly painful thing because the pleura has a lot of pain fibers in it and sometimes a simple shot through the chest without any serious damage and it's a terribly painful wound and so what got me to a lot was I used to sit there and block them and I'd start at the top and hit the rib and then right underneath the rib is where the nerve is I just put a novocaine in and just start marching down the ribs and these guys had been in terrible pain and of course they had given a lot of morphine on the way back you know evacuating they're all in good shape as far as the blood pressure and all that stuff but they were terribly painful and as I walked down the back pretty soon I would go right over like the morphine would get him and he'd just head first right into the ground a couple of wounds because the pain was relieved they were gone see and that was that was one of the things that I did that I was very appreciative of most of it was just uh debriding and getting the clothes off them and uh finding where the wounds were getting them x-rayed to see if they had to have x-rays if they were bellies why we always x-rayed them see if we could find where the bullet was or where to go there it was that kind of stuff the neurosurgery we didn't have to neurosurgeon neurosurgery injuries to the brain and so forth uh those individuals are usually pretty stable as far as blood pressure and all you don't have to worry with them so they sent them right on back to the evac or the general hospital because where there was a neurosurgeon we didn't have to fool with them but we had their bellies in the chest because those had to be worked on right off and um I did some of that we did the colostomies most of the time to bypass the colon and get the thing out um um

[Speaker 2]

were most of the people that you saw um relatively recently wounded or oh yes

[Speaker 1]

the bellies and chest would be probably there well of course when we were down there around binafra when the mules were around it would probably be six hours but other than that they were they were probably just an hour and a half or two hours at the most but I just think you

[Speaker 2]

just what you said six hours on the back of the mule with the belly oh yeah it'd be awful yeah

[Speaker 1]

um I don't know that they put them on a mule I remember how they did that anyway they maybe a litter between litter I think a litter they had they used to have wheel litters and stuff like that they had I don't remember just exactly how that happened because what happened is a lot of times they would bring them to a to a trailhead and then they'd put them in an ambulance so when they actually came to us they were riding in an ambulance so I never saw how they actually got we used to see the mules out there all the time running around but I didn't know how they transferred them and I'm sure they transferred them as quickly as possible to a vehicle the jeeps they used a lot because they would put them across the front of the jeep across the back you know they could carry four stretchers on that

[Speaker 2]

probably there wouldn't be much that could surprise you in a trauma center oh no I don't

[Speaker 1]

think so I don't think anybody around here you know of course automobile accidents and stuff but I got some of that at Fort Bragg but no I don't strange things happened we had a an officer who was driving down the road the jeep and an 88 hit right under the jeep completely destroyed the vehicle it was I saw the vehicle it was completely destroyed didn't even have a lick on it didn't have a mark didn't have a and and the colonel said you're going to give him a purple eye I said hell yes I'm going to give him a purple eye if we're just shock if nothing else but he said he looked we had to look him over that was really the honest thing and see if he had any he said I don't think there's anything on me anywhere then in contradiction let me tell you the other thing we're standing in a building I wasn't there this but this is a story that was told to me and this is when I was with the artillery battalion and they were all standing in there and they were and the shells were landing in near our battalion position and they were all standing there watching it and see what was going on because there was nothing coming near there and all of a sudden this guy slumps and drops everybody looked at what's the matter with joe here anyway is he just fainted or what from what so they look him up and god he was dead and so that's what I got into they brought him down and I looked him all over and I couldn't find a thing what the hell's going on so I so I said well the only thing we can do is send him back and I'll request him to do a post because I said we don't have any idea what he went well I got the report back a piece of shrapnel went in just the eye his eye and got and cut his brains then inside and it was he had a little ecchymosis of his eye but nothing so I mean you know there's the contrast of yeah a shell going around right destroying the vehicle and the guy and another one standing there so you never know how things go now when the um you didn't end up in the pacific no no I got on the ship and um uh we uh set sail from uh leghorn labrano and we were going to the panama canal and on our way to the pacific and we had already gotten some preliminary things we were going to be I was with a medical battalion we had we were going to support a certain corps you know it was going to the shore and they had more or less already decided where we were going to go ashore and we were probably uh two days three days out from the canal I don't really remember exactly to that when they dropped the atomic bomb and then of course uh within a day or two they dropped it when we mid-ocean and then we still went on and then they the vj day came and they diverted us to newport news and you have never seen this and then he held me screaming on his ship the way we turned newport news so when anybody starts talking to me about how horrible it was that we dropped the atomic bomb I don't have any sympathy with them they don't have any idea of what they're talking about I always say to them which which is worse to die from the artillery shell to die from the atomic bomb which is which which one would which is which do you think is worse it didn't make a damn bit of difference sorry for the japanese but the japanese were not sorry for us you know they I still uh have a I don't know I have a bias that I can't get rid of um an awful lot of veterans right and uh I don't know the same way uh a couple of times we went on a cruise ship one day and I was just sitting at a table or something and uh the german was going on me back and forth and all of a sudden I realized my hair stood straight up on the end because if we heard any german going on it was bad news and the same way with it with the japanese uh december 7th um I don't remember the year but anyway it was we went to hawaii the football game over there you remember

that and uh december 7th occurred on sunday and we took a boat and went out to the uh was it the ship there the arizona and the thing that just appalled me was that 75 percent of the people on that ship are japanese all of them in fact when they made the announcements you know they made it in english and they made it in japanese and then we got on shore and I looked down there and I saw that 1200 people down there in their water can't help but to be a little bit

[Speaker 2]

so worried yeah I know it's um some things for I mean I was I was only 11 when the war ended but I I sort of began to come of age in it and I think for those of you who were actively involved in it and those of us who were just a little younger we we think of that period

[Speaker 1]

very differently and we always will well uh for some reason or other I've had a lot of association with um the veterans who uh were in the baton death march the chief of urology at letterman I went that thing there was Jack Schwartz and he was in the baton death march and Dana Nance I don't know whether you've probably heard of him because uh he was here in Oak Ridge you know surgeon and then Anna Nance's wife was he was on the city council they were very active he was in that too and uh oh I I think four or five or maybe half a dozen I've known intimately and the the uh treatment of those people was probably the worst of anything that has ever been and I don't care how many Japanese complain or anything else they had been on that thing they were kicked they were booted they were done everything to actually shot they shot down and uh it was just a brutal affair all the way and uh if you watch that movie and uh with Alex uh yeah where he was in the bridge on the river the bridge over the river quiet oh that is that that they say that that's just absolutely true right on the money right on the money very brutal treatment and uh you know and now in Japan they they won't acknowledge any of that stuff and they say you know the Korean women are bitching because they use them as whores and everything else they did a lot of very bad bad things I interviewed a fellow who was on the

[Speaker 2]

Clarence Daniel who lives up in La Follette area that way and when the interview ended I said you you must have built up a very great hatred for the Japanese so I said how long did it last and said until today oh I'll tell you I don't uh I haven't uh

[Speaker 1]

I haven't been able to to agree uh Germans we had um some atrocities done but um but we had some American properties I mean uh those things happen those things happen they had some American line ups and Germans and I don't know what they're in the mountains there caught them and executed them I was told that again I didn't know about that they tended that tended to happen soon

[Speaker 2]

if you captured SS yeah I know somebody from the third infantry from now on they didn't take an SS prisoner did you yeah I understand that some of that went on

[Speaker 1]

we had um uh before I went back to the hospital you and I still with a field artillery we were up in the pole valley there and um the the artillery is a scream anyway they don't get any hand-to-hand fighting they just sit way back with these big guns and shoot and then somebody else will shoot back and there's a lot of casualties involved but they don't get any hand-to-hand fighting so they don't know anything about that so anyway um we had a two-way radio on that thing and the call came over they called they were looking for me because um there was a group of SS that's what they said I don't know I didn't know enough to know about it in this building in north and this is in the pole valley that hadn't surrendered yet and it was one of our platoon commanders anyway and so he wanted that he was going to capture him colonel mcbride he said no you don't he says you don't know enough about infantry tactics to do anything he said you wait till I get there and so and he called on me he said you better get there too because everyone an ambulance in my case anybody gets hurt so I roared down the damn highway it was a beautiful road down there and it was this beautiful pink italian house I still see it now and it and so um the story was the italian said because there was about 20 SS troops in there and of course the italian was scared to death and he was all jumping all over the place it was hard to make heads or tails out of it but anyway there were germans in there and they were going to fight so um the colonel said okay he said we're artillery men so we'll do artillery up a 155 howitzer so they wheel up this thing this 155 howitzer and I'm god this is probably 50 yards 100 yards away this is point blank range what the hell are you going to do and so he said okay open the breech what are you going to do you look down the barrel he said oh god I never thought of that you look down the barrel so he put he said okay he said uh let's bring up one of the bring up a shell he said and leave the carrying ring in you know they carry the shell they have it screwed in the top and they carry it with a thing you know bring the carrying ring up and so they're around and put a fuse in it and they'll put a fuse in it so he said put that shell in there and he said you fire it that goddamn thing fired and I'll tell you you heard going in so he was all that carrying thing was all making a hell of a noise and it hit that house and everybody put their hands up he said that's the way an artillery man takes

[Speaker 2]

oh I gotta kick out a lot to be said for that yep so did you you stayed in the military for a while after the war yes I stayed I got my training in

[Speaker 1]

the military when I got back we had our leave and uh 30 day a 60 day and there's a 90 day leave I guess it was saw your wife yeah I was up in Vermont and uh then I uh you had a chance to see your wife before you shipped out to the Pacific or no no I was going direct yeah yeah no we went back I went to Newport News and then I went home through Camp Devins and got 90 day leave and then I got my orders to go to Fort Benning so I went to Fort Benning and I uh all I can think of the word is that I retired the outfit in other words I had to fill out all the forms and all that stuff to disorganize this but medical battalion which I've been in and then um I was trying they sent me from Fort Benning to Fort Bragg and I was in the head because I was regular army they put me in the headquarters of the uh army their third army headquarters in Fort Bragg beautiful office and everything else I was a major then I think and a guy with nothing to do and I I just I just died and I tell I finally I told somebody that I said jeez I gotta find something to do here and while they were having me write disaster plans or something else I was you know just busy work so finally I got them to let me go over the dispensary and I went over there and worked some over there and then I

had applied for professional training and then I got assigned to William Beaumont in urology and I was interested in that and we were down there did you have to do a variety of urological work no I hadn't been interested in it since I was when I was interning in Fort Sam I had a little South African he was a lieutenant colonel colonel he was who was a was an outstanding well-known national urologist and he was he's a funny little guy Vermouten his name was Dutch you know Vincent Vermouten and uh I was very fortunate because my wife got a job driving a truck in the motor pool you know over at the Fort at Fort Sam Houston and uh we didn't have a whole lot of money I was only making about 60 or 80 dollars a month and they're taking most of that for laundry so I didn't have any money so she got a job driving a truck and she had to get to work at I think it was 6 30 or 7 something so we only had one car so that meant I went to fix that well this Wolverine was kind of a thing about early morning being there early and getting on every day when he showed up I was already there and all these other interns hell they were drifting in at 8 30 or 9 or something else I never did tell him why I was there but uh god I just he just thought I was a whirlwind and he let me do all kind of procedures all kind of things and I just was interested in it and it really sparked my interest and then when I went to after the war I went to William Beaumont I was down there I had a nice guy there that was the chief of service and I worked there for about a year and a half and then I got in a formal residency program at Wetterman and that's where Jack Schwartz was he was the battalion Jack had been one of the doctors that took care of the people in the battalion and boy it was interesting because I used to be with him a lot and these people were you know that he knew and they all stopped by to see Dr. Schwartz you know they wanted to see him because they'd all want to talk with him about this that happened and that had happened and all that stuff so I saw a lot of those people we even had General Wayne right there you know for a while he had a amenic abscess of the liver you know something he had a really disastrous time but he finally survived it he had a tough tough road oh he did he was just skinny bones just I never saw anybody his arms were just about that big around him and uh it uh it was as I say uh those Japanese are not very kind that's when we got to the uh we got ready to go over there that's one of the things that we did we were handed a 45 and we had to take our familiarization course and passage you know with 45 but uh that's another thing I should tell you I never was very interested in I was always glad that I didn't have to shoot at anybody I didn't particularly somewhere in my background or something or other I got the feeling I don't want to do that and I don't know exactly why but one day at the yeah the artillery thing they said doc you want to go up to the forward observatory today and I said sure I'd like to come see what you all do so we we go up at night you see and then you stay all day because you don't move at all during the day so sure enough I went up with him at night and we went up on this side hill and wasn't really there was a fence there was a little trench drawn in there and not very much you know had the big spy glasses and all that stuff it was very quiet that day so there wasn't anybody else and so this was a state because you couldn't go back until night so it got kind of boring up there and so uh somebody said geez I just saw somebody go in that house over there you know and it was a big house sitting out in the field so this lieutenant said well doc let's see how you are at shooting I said what do you mean see how I am at shooting and he said uh yeah he said let me let you do the shooting here and I said well what do I do he said well uh he said I'll give you the coordinates and he had the map there and uh he said uh you you figure out what you want to do here until I he helped me along with the figure anything else so we call back and said okay one round and so uh call back and then these artillery people are so funny on the way say that's a so you sit there and

wait and wait and wait I didn't even hear the damn thing just say hello and it hit in the field behind the house so he said all right now doc said you figure out how many yards that was and he said uh now you want to fire another round but he said you want to be sure you're short this time either hit it or be short so we figured out the slide rule going on the same okay on the way I said sure enough the damn thing landed in the field sure now he says you got him bracketed and I said what do you mean bracketed he said you've got one long and one short he said now you can figure out where it is so uh he we figured out with the slide rule and they all said that's what you want so and I said I said what do I do now he said well you call back and you say for the Italian fire for effect so I picked up the phone fire battalion fire for effect of course they all knew it was me and they could tell my voice out of it Jesus and that house just went boom it was gone and I always say that was the only time that I I didn't need anybody I don't know if there's anybody in or not but somebody said they had seen somebody go in it so that I don't know to this day whether I actually but that that was a very interesting thing because uh in the future after that you know when you're on the other end here one long one short oh wait a minute where's the next one going to be careful how long did you stay in the service I stayed in uh a total of 14 years 15 years I got my training at Letterman and then I finished up in Augusta Georgia University of Georgia and um then I went to Fort Bragg and I always say that here I had three years of residency in urology strictly urology most places they require you to have a year of general surgery before you go into urology because it's a surgical specialist well I didn't have that but I had the three years of urology I went to Fort Bragg and I walked in and Colonel Ball was there and and he looked at me and he said um you wonder how much general surgery I had I said well I hadn't had too much but I've done some overseas one thing he said well he said you're going to do urology it's a hobby here he said you are a general surgeon and man I tell you they put me to work in general surgery I I uh everybody says in the army you know I never the big cry is we didn't get to do anything we didn't do anything God they worked my ass off that's what you did everything oh we said we had a lot of hernias I used to have a standard diet of four hernias in the morning every morning and uh then I was on call sometimes every third night and we had the right age for it happened I've done as many as four appendectomies on three consecutive nights on call I didn't get up in the morning and do a surgery for hernias and um beside the trauma we had a lot of that but of course I used to I didn't have much to do we had a good orthopedic service so if there's any fractures involved in it why the orthopedic service took care of it we had a good neurosurgeon so if it was a head injury and they have to worry about that and um so but oh I did a lot of surgery at Fort Bragg there were a lot of it and that was there three years and then I went to Panama to Gorgas and uh hospital in Panama and there I did just urology and it was a very active very active service we had people Americans from all over South America would fly there you know to get medical care they didn't like the South Americans and then we had a lot of stuff off the ships and uh we were in the canal zone almost three years and then that's when my dear wife who was a school teacher we had one that was 10 years old and one was eight years old she didn't think we were getting very good schooling and so um and then on top of that I came back up here flew up here went to the Surgeon General's because I want to find out what they were going to do with me because I knew my my tour of duty was getting over with down there and I always remembered that I got in there and I knew this guy because he'd been a surgical resident Letterman and it had they'd busted him out because they didn't think he was a surgeon but anyway he was sitting up there as the personnel director in the Surgeon General's office he said let me get your 201 file and I was remember they had an

endless chain the damn thing came down from out of the ceiling or something somewhere he opened it up and he said uh you uh didn't go to Korea I said no and uh you didn't go somewhere else I forgot I said no he said have you been to the command and general staff school I said no I've been in hospitals all of them well he says uh you're gonna have to go to field he said you're gonna have to go to field service school you're gonna have to go to the command general staff school and he said if anything happens he said boy you're gonna be number one because you there's only I think five percent of the regular army medical corps that didn't go to Korea so I took that all in and I went back down the canal zone and I said this is the time we go they hadn't been able to resign up until then but that at that time we could I said I don't first of all I don't want to I don't want to be under the gun to go anywhere and the second is you're not happy with that I said I'm sure I can make a living so um uh I resigned and came from there here yeah I was going to go to the University of Georgia because the guy that I had trained under down there wanted me to come there as an assistant in teaching and I was almost set to go but I just didn't I don't know I just didn't like the idea the University of Georgia was in those days was Georgia was not the best place in the world and I didn't like Augusta and uh so uh looking through the books my wife came upon Oak Ridge as a good school system yes so that's where we wound up Colonel Ball who had been with at Fort Bragg had been out of the army and he was here in practice and he wrote me a letter and he said he thought that the urologist I forget his name Murray was an alcoholic they just busted him off his staff so there was no there was a vacancy here so I came here and we have been very fortunate we had four kids go through the school system and three got advanced degrees and as I always say three of them at least are making more money than I ever did I got a lawyer that's in the 300,000 can you imagine that she's she's in line female she's in line to be uh general counsel for State Farm but she she was a hard worker she went to the University of Chicago she went to University of Chicago Law School all premium stuff all the way through so here you have

[Speaker 3]

following is a voiceover commentary done by Dr. King of videotape of film which he took while on military service in Italy