

## **RG-50.493.0052**

### **Summary**

Melvin Darden, an African-American liberator of Dachau, was born on October 12, 1924 in Fairfield, Texas. He grew up on a farm where he picked cotton. He also played baseball. Darden had two brothers and one sister.

At 18 years old he joined the army and was posted to an all African-American medical corps unit. He was trained primarily as an ambulance driver but also in basic medical needs. He was wounded in an ambulance accident in which he was riding and was incapacitated for several months.

After he recovered his unit was sent to Europe and eventually to Dachau where he arrived in the early morning (no date given). There he saw dead bodies piled up, gas chambers, and crematoria. The former inmates in the camp begged for food, but the unit was told that they should not feed them because it might cause the survivors' death. Darden remembered that one Nazi officer was found by the inmates and beaten up. He did the same to another German officer he found nearby. The soldiers in his unit were sprayed twice a day with DDT to kill any diseases. Their job was to evacuate the inmates, whom they carried out for six to eight weeks. During that time the African-American soldiers were the only ones there except for a few white officers.

After the unit left he and his fellow soldiers were prepared to go to Japan, but the war ended. Darden believed that witnessing Dachau had an effect on him. It made him more restless and "hyper" but also more compassionate. Like many of his ancestors, he became a Baptist pastor. He lived in Pasadena, California.