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Summary

Doris (Don) Duplechain— his wife urged him to change his name to “Don – was born in Louisiana. He grew up hunting during the Depression. He and his three brothers and one sister were raised in a religious Baptist family. He did not know Jewish people as he was growing up, since there were very few in the small town where he was raised.

Duplechain joined the service in 1943 and was assigned to an all African-American medical unit. Since he refused the air force and navy and said he did not like killing people, he was assigned to the medical corps. He was trained for four months, mostly as an ambulance driver. After being transferred to several camps in the United States his unit was finally sent to Europe. There he went from France to Germany and eventually to Dachau.

Duplechain and his unit arrived in Dachau at 6:30 in the morning. Walking through the gates he came upon bodies piled up next to the gas chambers and some dead German soldiers. He also went into the officer quarters and found liquor that was stored. The survivors begged for food. The unit set up soup lines, since the survivors were not allowed to eat solid food for two weeks. In three or four days the hospital unit came but did not come into the camp. Duplechain’s African-American unit was responsible for cleaning the survivors’ bodies, taking them to the hospital unit, and then bringing back most of them to the camp. He and his unit were also de-loused with DDT. After eight weeks, the unit left.

When asked how he reflected on this experience now, Duplechain responded that he didn’t understand how people could do this to one another and that he had the same question for what was then taking place in Bosnia.