

RG-50.759.0042

Summary

The interview of Charles Fraser had been in progress when the recording started. Charles had been a practicing civilian doctor when he was drafted at age 29 and given the rank of 1st Lieutenant in 1943. Two years later, as a Captain, while assigned to Company B of the Medical Battalion attached to the 5th Infantry Division, he practiced as a surgeon, attending to about 100 women who had been confined for extended periods in a concentration camps. His mission was to stabilize the patients, feed them intravenously and treat or operate as necessary, until further evacuation from his make-shift hospital to a larger hospital would become feasible. The patients were mainly young women 18-20 years in age, who all looked like skeletons and appeared more like men in their emaciated state. They all had frozen feet from forced marches in the snow without proper shoes. Some of them did not survive the liberation and died within a few days after arrival; but none died under his care. Charles spoke some German and was able to converse with them but really had no time to listen to their experiences. German doctors were pulled in to help. In one case, the German internist performed a foot amputation which Charles deemed unnecessary. Thereafter the German doctors were only permitted to provide general patient care.

Charles had not been overly shocked at the situation he was facing. He had seen a lot of deaths in prior combat zones, along with dead civilians strewn along highways, men as well as women. He thought that he might die himself. He was not angry; he disregarded the brutality which caused the physical problems and just concentrated on healing the wounded. He knew that there were those who could not control their anger when a close friend was killed and then took revenge by killing prisoners. He could not go along with that. But he had no problems adjusting after discharge. He became a plastic surgeon.