

2015-07-08 SIDE B

Hayward L. Oubre, Jr.

March 22, 1992

Phone interview

Lael Morgan, interviewer

Series: Lael Morgan Collection interviews

Lael Morgan asked about leaves. Hayward Oubre talked about leaving in the winter for leave. He always was responsible. He talked about his experience in Winnipeg. He returned to the highway after his furlough. He said it pays to be dutiful. He has always been dutiful. He said it was always important to him the way he conducted himself. He said he could never be racist because there were a lot of kind white officers. Morgan asked if the Black troops got as good of supplies as white troops. Oubre said there was a white combat unit who became bored and wanted to be away from Alaska. The food came to them and instead of bringing it to them they just dumped all of the food and left. They had to go and pick up the supplies and complete their part of the road, too. They put the road all the way into Fairbanks. He said he saw Russian soldiers in Fairbanks at that time. They were in Fairbanks for several weeks. He talked about how his chaplain, Caston Smith, was a commissioned officer who had a special tent where he ate instead of eating with the other officers. He said there was complete segregation. He talked about spending time in Fairbanks and how he was treated. He talked about his wife and having to experience segregation in Iowa.

Morgan asked him what they did when they finished work on the highway. Oubre said they returned to the states by boat. He talked about hurting his leg when he was playing softball. They organized recreational activities for everyone while they were working on the highway.

Morgan asked him about the names of his officers. Oubre said Colonel Mitchum treated him well as a soldier, but he was a segregationist. Mitchum was from Mississippi. Oubre talked about some of the men not being able to read or write.

Oubre said they went back to Valdez to take a boat out of Alaska. He doesn't remember getting sea sick on the return trip. After he returned to the United States his regiment received training before going to New Guinea. He had been hospitalized. He was asked to perform duties beneath his rank which he refused to do. After he got out of the Army he was married. His wife was teaching high school in Alabama. He got a job as an art teacher. They worked teaching for a year and then left to go to Iowa for school.

Morgan asked him about his career after he graduated. Oubre said it was unique. He was trying to decide where to go to graduate school. He was told to go to the University of Iowa. His first job after graduating was at Florida A & M. He talked about the people who have helped him in his life.

Morgan asked about his camp at the gold mine when they were working on the Alaska Highway. Oubre said there were mountains all around them. Morgan told him that he was at the end of the Nabesna Road. He said he was in charge of purifying the water. He hiked over to the mountains one day about three or four miles and he saw where the fish had spawned and died by the hundreds. He went back to camp and told an officer not to drink the water and he had to purify it. He talked about the way he treated his fellow soldiers. Morgan thanked him. Oubre said he wanted to make a contribution to the effort about the Alaska Highway.