

**A Veterans Oral History**  
**Heritage Education Commission**  
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Moorhead, MN

**Leo Dale Weber**  
Narrator

**Linda Jenson**  
Interviewer

**June 2007**

LJ: Can you state your name?

**DW: Dale Weber, 2102 14<sup>th</sup> Street South, Moorhead, Minnesota.**

LJ: And Mr. Weber where were you born?

**DW: I was born at Rockville, Minnesota, to George and Anna (Court) Weber.**

LJ: What did they do for a living?

**DW: My folks farmed and when I was three-years-old, we moved up to Ada, Minnesota. I went to a country school there. I worked on a farm for a number of years before I went in the service. I went in the service in March 1941.**

LJ: Did you graduate from high school?

**DW: No, I did not. I did my basic service at Cheyenne, Wyoming, and joined a medical hospital.**

LJ: And what branch of service were you in?

**DW: Medical, the Army.**

LJ: Army.

**DW: Army, yes.**

LJ: And did you elect to go in on your own or were you . . . ?

**DW: No, I was drafted. Yes.**

LJ: Drafted and what year was that again?

**DW: 1941 ... March 1941.**

LJ: You went to Wyoming for your training?

**DW: Yes.**

LJ: How long did you train?

**DW: We were there for a little over a year. I was drafted for the one-year service at that time. Of course, when the war broke out, then we were automatically in for the duration of the war. In August 1942, we went overseas. We landed in England and we were there for a number of months and then we went to the invasion of North Africa on November 8, 1942. Then we went through the campaign of North Africa, and we invaded Sicily. When we got done there, we went back to England in October 1943. We stayed there until the invasion of France and that was in 1944 of June, yes. The war in France and Europe lasted a little over a year and when that was over, we proceeded to come home. I went back to Ada and I started farming at Borup, Minnesota.**

LJ: Now you were trained as a medic, is that correct?

**DW: Yes.**

LJ: Can you tell us about some of your experiences as a medic?

**DW: Yes, I was trained as a medic. I worked in surgery. We had a field hospital. We set up in tents. We had about 45 doctors and some nurses and 300 enlisted men. I worked in surgery all the time, assisted the doctors on surgery. One of the cases that we had that I can remember was a man come in with a big anti-tank shell end sticking out of his side. They cleared the surgery room except myself, the chief surgeon and anesthetist and we took out that shell. It wasn't exploded, but we felt fairly safe that it wouldn't explode, because we handled it carefully. Another case we did a triple amputation and some work in the guy's stomach. I don't know if he lived because we never could keep track of him after he left the surgery, so.**

LJ: Where did they go after surgery was done?

**DW: After surgery as soon as they were able to travel, they went back farther to a bigger hospital and had some more medical treatments.**

LJ: Were you close to the front lines?

**DW: Yes.**

LJ: When you were doing the surgery?

**DW: Yes, we were quite close to the front lines. We were the first unit doing surgery to the troops.**

LJ: Going back to that first surgery that you assisted with, what was that like? Can you remember?

**DW: Well by the time we did that surgery, the first surgery, why you know you get so hardened it doesn't bother you. But when I first started why I couldn't even watch it and then after a while you get toughened in, so. Yes.**

LJ: So you were a medic the whole time you were in?

**DW: Yes.**

LJ: Beginning in North Africa and back into England and France?

**DW: Yes.**

LJ: Any other stories come to mind – when you think back about the surgeries, the people that you saw coming off the battles in the front lines?

**DW: Yes, I could really feel sorry for those people because I knew what they went through and saw the results of the war where a lot of people don't see that.**

LJ: Can you recall any of the people that you worked with during those times?

**DW: Oh yes. That I worked with? Yes. We got to be a close-knit family because we were together almost five years, see. After the war we had reunions and it was so nice to see these people and I still miss them after all this time. Yes.**

LJ: So you said there were 45 doctors?

**DW: Yes and probably 20 some nurses and about 300 enlisted men.**

LJ: That assisted like you did?

**DW: They did other work. In surgery we had six operating tables. And about 25 people worked there. We operated 24 hours a day when there was a lot of casualties.**

LJ: Would you be woke up at any hour if there was a casualty that came in?

**DW: Well, no. You had your shift and when a lot of casualties it was just real busy. As the fighting slowed down, there was less casualties and it wasn't near as bus. There's doctors that worked 24 hours or more at a time straight through in surgery. I don't know how they could do it but . . .**

LJ: What type of a barracks were you in?

**DW: No, our hospital was in tents, a 400-bed hospital. It was all in tents and we lived in tents all the while and of the three-and-a-half years that I was over in the war. At least two-and-a-half of these years, I slept on the ground, or we all slept on the ground except the nurses and officers.**

LJ: There were no cots?

**DW: No cots, we slept on the ground. When we were in Africa it was in the wintertime there and it was a little cool at night. You'd wake up in the morning and you'd have these little lizards, about six inches long or eight inches long, laying alongside of you under the blankets, because they were looking for heat.**

LJ: That must have been unnerving the first time.

**DW: Yes, but I guess you get used to anything.**

LJ: What about like mosquitoes?

**DW:** Yes, there were mosquitoes in Africa because everybody got malaria.

LJ: Oh.

**DW:** Yes, all the whole unit was sick with malaria almost the same time.

LJ: How were you treated for that?

**DW:** We took shots for it and medications.

LJ: How long did it take to clear the malaria up?

**DW:** I'm not sure a few weeks, probably a month. I'm not sure.

LJ: What about the cleanliness of doing surgery, when you're in a tent like that?

**DW:** Yes.

LJ: What was that like?

**DW:** We tried to be as sterile with everything as possible. But you know sometimes you couldn't. You just do the best that is available.

LJ: Did you have water brought in there?

**DW:** No, we had someone that took care of that. Whenever we'd set up, they'd go and look for a slough or something, to get water and then they'd sterilize it with chemicals. So it was fit to drink.

LJ: Kind of like a chlorine?

**DW:** Yes. Try to get the bugs out first. Yes. I'm sure everybody else was that way that was in the war, too.

LJ: You said that you were like a close-knit family with the people that you worked with?

**DW:** Yes.

LJ: And you said that you attended reunions?

**DW:** Yes.

LJ: Do you still talk to any of them?

**DW:** No. Most of them would be in their 80s now and so I'm sure there's very few living anymore. Yes.

LJ: When was the last reunion that you went to?

**DW:** It was in Minneapolis; it was about four years ago. We had it different places. We had it twice in Las Vegas and Chicago and Austin, Minnesota, and Pipestone. And they had a few at Kentucky that I didn't get to. It was always a joyous time to see those friends, comrades.

LJ: SDid you receive any awards while you were in the service?

**DW: No.**

LJ: What was it like, the day that you found out you were done and ready to go home?

**DW: Well everybody felt pretty good but I think a lot of us just laid down and rested. We were so all in.**

LJ: You were exhausted?

**DW: Yes.**

LJ: Were you in France at the time that you found out the war was over and you were able to go home?

**DW: We were up at Czechoslovakia. That's about where the war ended. Way up in Czechoslovakia. We went practically all across Europe during the war.**

LJ: What was Czechoslovakia like?

**DW: Well, I don't know, it's – how to explain it. Those countries had been in war for a number of years. And things weren't very good over there.**

LJ: How were you treated when you were in countries like Czechoslovakia? How did the local people . . .?

**DW: We didn't have much contact with the local people...very little.**

LJ: Do you have any stories that come to mind that you'd like to share about those four years, five years?

**DW: No, I don't know of anything.**

LJ: You said that a lot of the surgeries that you assisted with you didn't know the outcome after they left?

**DW: No, because as soon as they were able to travel or be moved they'd be sent to a larger hospital.**

LJ: And there was no ever reporting back to . . .?

**DW: No. We handled so many of them. I was just reading about the history of the units here and some days why the hospital was full of 400 or more and we received a lot of times 300 a day. But we didn't do surgery on all of them, but at least we received them for transportation to go further back.**

LJ: In your tent hospital, were you pretty safe from any bombings or any . . .?

**DW: Well relatively safe.**

LJ: Ambushes?

**DW: Yes, relatively safe but the Germans had what they called these buzz bombs. It was kind of a bomb with a motor in it and they put in so much fuel and when the fuel run out, that's when it was supposed to go down. When we were in Belgium, there was a large ammunition depot farther back in France and they**

**was trying to hit, so we had those buzz bombs go over us night and day. And once in a while you'd hear that motor quit, then you really got a little worried, because it would come down then.**

LJ: It would explode?

**DW: Yes, they were unmanned bombs. So I guess there's a certain amount of danger. But it wasn't like the front, the troops in the front line but – yes.**

LJ: Did you know anybody in the front lines?

**DW: No, not really. I knew there were some people in the service from back home, but I didn't know where they were. And there was a bunch of Minnesota boys with us in the service. A lot them were from southern Minnesota.**

LJ: And you know they were fellow Minnesotans but you really didn't know them?

**DW: No.**

LJ: Do you have any final thoughts about what you went through serving your country?

**DW: I would say it's a great experience, but I wouldn't want to go through it again. I'm not sorry that I did it.**

LJ: How did the war affect your life?

**DW: I don't know. I think it made me a better person. I believe that.**

LJ: Mr. Weber, what do you think about the war that we're fighting now in Afghanistan ... The War on Terror?

**DW: Well, I think it has to be done, because eventually if you don't stop all that, why they're going to be in this country. We've been lucky over the years that we haven't had any war in this country since the Civil War until just recently. So we've been fortunate in that way.**

LJ: Did you ever think that you would see terrorism on home soil like we saw last September 11th?

**DW: No, nothing like that. That's about as bad as it could be.**

LJ: Mr. Weber, how would you like to be remembered?

**DW: That's kind of hard to explain. I guess it's just that I served my country and I'm glad I had the opportunity to do it. Other than that, why I lived through it without any major problems.**

LJ: Well, thank you, Mr. Weber.

**DW: Yes. I don't know if I done a very good job or not but . . .**

LJ: Oh, yes you did. Thank you.