



**TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE**  
COMMISSIONER DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Voices of Veterans: Sgt. Robert "Bob" Bearden Shares His Story of Service During WWII and D-Day**


**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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Austin — Today, Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham is proud to introduce the next installment of the series highlighting the VLB's Voices of Veterans oral history program. In this special episode, we highlight the service of Veterans who experienced D-Day. Today, we hear the story of Veteran Sergeant Robert "Bob" Bearden, who served in the U.S. Army 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division in the Normandy invasion, D-Day, June 6, 1944.

Bearden, was born in 1922 in Tulsa, Oklahoma and moved to Irving, Texas shortly after The Depression began. His childhood took him across the United States, he said, and multiple schools growing up. All in all, Bearden said he attended a handful of schools in both California and Texas.


## VOICES OF VETERANS



name <b>Bearden, Robert</b>		
military branch <b>Army</b>	rank	conflict <b>WWII</b>
date interviewed <b>08/07/2008</b>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> interview available on <a href="http://voicesofveterans.org">voicesofveterans.org</a>

Robert Bearden served with the U.S. Army 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division in the Normandy invasion, D-Day, June 6, 1944.

One of the last to jump on D-Day, Bearden's unit had lost the element of surprise. He was wounded twice and eventually captured by the Nazis and held as a prisoner until the end of the war.



"My dad was trying to make a living and he was in insurance, besides the oil business, but the oil business went south in Oklahoma," he said about why he moved around so much. "He had some experience in life insurance and he came to Texas to try to sell hospitalization insurance, because it was just a matter of scrambling to make a dollar a day, which he gave my mother for operating our home every day."

Bearden said this was all happening at the height of The Depression and remembers vividly when he decided he would go into the military and the conversation with his Dad that followed.

"I was making 12 and a half cents at a grocery store and a fella told me that if I joined the National Guard and would meet with the unit every Saturday morning for four hours, I'd get a dollar -- so that's 25 cents an hour," Bearden explained. "I just thought it was a better deal, and my father assured me that that was a bad deal, that they likely would get called up like they did in World War I, and of course I told him he didn't know what he was talking about."

His father, however, was right.

"His prophecy was right because in about just little or no time later, like November, we were called up and taken to Camp Bowie in Brownwood, Texas," he said. "I think Franklin Roosevelt called up the entire Reserve and National Guard component and initiated the draft."



Bearden said he'll never forget where he was the day Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941.

"I was in a theater downtown, Sunday afternoon in Brownwood, and all of a sudden they turned the lights up and blanked the screen out and a fella came on the stage with a megaphone and said the United State Forces in Pearl Harbor have been attacked by the Japanese Navy and Air Force, and President Roosevelt has declared war," he recalled.

Bearden said when he heard the United States was thrust into war, he was anxious to be a part of it and fear was never an option.

"I felt like I probably was raised as a patriot. I loved my country," he explained. "I didn't love it as much then as I do now, but I was ready, and I thought I was as ready as I would ever be, and of course I learned a lot more before I got to combat."

Interviewed in 2008, 63 years after he left the Army, Bearden said the years of training leading up to D-Day, followed by two days of violent combat and becoming a prisoner of war, it took its toll.

"There was nothing left in me. There was nothing left in me emotionally, physically," he said about that moment he surrendered to the Germans, and did so while holding his rifle by the muzzle in his right hand. "A German soldier came up and almost took my head off with his rifle butt. You're not supposed to, if you go to surrender, don't surrender with a weapon in your hand."

Bearden said, to the best of his memory, he was one of 25 men to surrender that day before being marched to a small village and placed in a henhouse-type of structure.

"I was absolutely spent, and I've never been that way since, thank God, but that was the worst situation of being absolutely without anything going for me, and so I just stumbled along," he said. "We took off marching. I just stumbled along down the road just like a drunk or something."

To listen to Sgt. Robert "Bob" Bearden tell his whole story, how he was saved and what his military service taught him, click the button below.

[Sgt. Robert Bearden Interview](#)

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Veterans can email [VoicesofVeterans@glo.texas.gov](mailto:VoicesofVeterans@glo.texas.gov) to tell their stories. Please note that the Veteran must be a resident of Texas at the time of their interview.

Voices of Veterans is a state agency's first Veteran oral history program. It records the stories of Texas Veterans through their time in service and after returning home from combat.

The VLB records interviews with veterans over the phone or in person. Their interviews are then permanently archived in the Office of Veterans Records at the GLO, where they join the historical documents of other Texas heroes such as Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Barret Travis.

Veterans' interviews are also available to researchers, historians, genealogists, and the public. These precious records inspire future generations and remind us of our Veterans' sacrifices.

To listen to the over 500 archived stories of Veterans documented through the GLO's Voices of Veterans oral history program, click the button below:

[Voices of Veterans](#)