



Bernard J. Warchol

World War II
U.S. Army, Europe

Battery A 498 FA
13th Armored Division
PFC

Bernard J. Warchol

Veterans
History
Project
Transcript

Interview conducted
September 19, 2013

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Veterans History Project Transcript

Veteran: **Bernard J. Warchol** Rank: **Private First Class**
Branch of Service: **U.S. Army** Theater: **World War II – Europe**
Unit: **Battery A 498 FA 13th Armored Division**

Interview Date: September 19, 2013, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Place: 6854 W. Oakton Ct.

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder

Interviewer: Neil O'Shea

This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted on Thursday, September 19, in the year 2013. I am sitting here in the front room at 6854 W. Oakton Court near to the Niles Public Library. I work at the Niles Public Library. My name is Neil O'Shea, and I am privileged to be speaking with Bernard J. Warchol. Mr. Warchol was born in Chicago on March 17, 1925. ("Yes, St. Patrick's Day." -Mr. Warchol's comment) and he has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. I believe Mr. Warchol learned about the project through his attendance at our Veterans History Project Breakfasts at the library and his wife, Dorothy, often volunteers at the event. Mr. Warchol has been kind enough to brief me a little bit on his military career. There is a book here, The History of the 13th Armored Division, the Black Cat Division which was published on its 50th anniversary. There's a helpful map, history and pictures. He has also shared with me here a beautiful, bound album that his daughter produced on his service in the United States Army which has beautiful pictures and includes details of his Honor Flight to Washington. Bernie Warchol is a local Niles hero and we look forward to interviewing him.
(Interviewer's words appear in Italics.)

Mr. Warchol, do you recall, I see that you have it here (on the Biographical Data Sheet), when you entered the service? Would that have been November of 1943?

Yes, that's correct. Unfortunately, during the Christmas holidays we were traveling to California but the car with the food supply was detained and wasn't attached to the train and we had to settle for a sandwich and an orange or an apple – that was our Christmas dinner! Unfortunately!

That was the troop train and you were heading to

California, Camp Roberts, for our basic training in the field artillery.

Were you living in Chicago at that time? Do you know which neighborhood?

Yes, 2327 Iowa Street – that's off of Western and Chicago Avenue. Those are the principal streets.

Were you in high school at that time?

No, I had already graduated and was working on a government project and was deferred on two occasions for six months each. But that meant I worked seven days a week and for a young man that was getting to be a little rough. I decided to forget the deferment and then I was drafted.

What high school did you attend?

Crane Technical High School

And that line of work for the government was that in manufacturing?

Yes, it was. As a matter of fact, I had an outstanding record at work only because I started to work at Milwaukee Profilers. They were producing six units per day. I produced six units per hour. And they called everybody down from the office and they watched me perform. And of course, the chips were flying all over. You had a unit that was an actual piece and then you had a forging and then you cut the forging to the shape of the piece. And this was a cocking lever for a naval gun. So then they had four of those machines there, brand new. Of course at that time there wasn't very much to pick from as far as workers because you had the butchers and bakers that went to these jobs because they were required to or otherwise they'd be drafted even though they had families. I was in charge and I was instructing them in how to accomplish this. It was a simple matter of increasing the follower by about 25 thousandths so that you could apply more pressure and that as you applied more pressure it eliminated the vibration reflection on the piece -- chatter marks -- a surface flaw left by a wheel that is out of tune in grinding.

When you were at Crane did you take job courses?

Yes I did. At that time they offered shop courses: operating a lathe, a mill, a milling machine and I went to work for Triplex. The man who was the foreman at that time was like Stonewall Jackson and he was a rugged individual. He said, "You said you had the experience. There's the machine; there are the parts. Run 'em!" But he says, "If you bust up those cutters, you're out!" But I had a little problem but not much of a problem actually. I did the puzzles. And this is just a matter of taking a piece. You know what it looks like. You have the shape in the rough and in the finish. You put it in the fixture and you lock it. But then turning the machine on, of course, you've got the usual red and green button but that just started the cutters rolling. But then in order to move the machine, the bed into the cutters there was another lever to push. And when I picked up the lever, up and across, the machine table moved rapidly toward the cutters and it looked like disaster. But I stopped. Then I did it again. Stopped. Did it again. And then when I came close to the part, it went into a slow feed. And, of course, after I made the first piece, then I was king.

So this was a good job and you wound up in a supervisory capacity and it became a seven day a week job and you thought ...

It got to be a little rough. Not that they were demanding, but I got stuck with all the special jobs. There were jobs that were so precise that the machine couldn't make the part to the proper dimension. You had to bring it up to a point and then move it by hand, feed it. It was a matter of thousandths, and there were 38 slots on it and it was a torpedo shaft -- that's what they called it;

its function was probably something else - because of the number of slots that were cut into piece. But if any one piece was made oversize, the piece was rejected. The fellows they had at that time lacked control. They'd get in there and try and it ended up that I worked 32 hours to turn out the work they needed on that part.

And I'd go and eat. I had pancakes repeatedly. Every six hours I'd go over there and eat pancakes

So you figured you'd rather take your chances in the army on the battlefield?

Yes, well after a while, not that it was monotonous, because it was exciting, But it was uncomfortable. The guy across the street with two kids, he got drafted and here I am, a young man who wasn't going in the service.

You could feel that?

Oh, yeah. And it was a little insulting because my mother went to the butcher shop and the comments made there.

How did your family feel about you going?

They were all for it. It was necessary. "You feel it is necessary; you go ahead."

You wound up in the Army. Would that have been your choice of branch of service?

No I preferred to go in the Navy because there I would be able to use my skills on machinery, most likely In the Army I thought that I would get a rifle and that would be it – march away in the Army.

So you wind up on the train then

Yes, that was after we took tests. When we took the tests to get into the service, I was fortunate enough to realize that if it is going to be any kind of a test, I have to make it look good. I went and bought a pamphlet for 25 cents and I read it. It had all kinds of short cuts for math and this is what helped me get a better IQ score. I was just one of the lucky ones, one of 500. We ended up in a group of 500 and that was the group that went over to California to the Field Artillery Basic Training instead of Army basic training.

So the army had already decided that you and these other 499 men were going into Artillery before you even went to Basic Training.

That's right, that was our Basic Training.

Was that first time you had ever been away from home?

Yes,

And those 499 other people were they from all different parts of the country?

Yes, they were and there were quite a few lawyers, surprisingly.

Lawyers? That must have been quite an education!

Yes, older men, in their late twenties, thirties? It was interesting. It wasn't a young, rowdy group like you would normally expect in the service with teenagers.

So you're out in California then at Christmastime, 1944.

Well I was on the train going to California.

Yes, then Basic Training out there with the Field Artillery. Was that for a couple of months?

Yes, I think 17 weeks for Army. I don't recall what it was for Artillery. But along side of us they had the trainees for officers. But the difference between them and us - they had to "double-time." to lunch, stand at attention and double-time back. Everything was double-time. You had to run. And we got away just leisurely walking.

So the fact that you had to help make guns for the Navy, that still helped with understanding Field Artillery and the mechanics.

Not necessarily, No.

Do you get a chance to come home before you head overseas then?

Before that I went to Ft Sill, Oklahoma, for wire communication school. It started off with Morse Code, telephone, wire communications. Morse Code the first week was a snap, easy, the dots and the dashes, no problem. But in the second week, the speed of it, I couldn't distinguish between the dash and the dot. So then I moved, I wasn't the only one but about half of us were knocked off. We went to radio communication, wire communications, semaphore. We had two weeks of coding and decoding. We had a coding device and you entered substitute letters for whatever you needed. It gave you a substitute letter and then you sent the message.

Wire communications, it was everything including climbing poles at night and signing your name on top. Then coming down, the poles were badly chewed up from the climbers. You dug in with your climber and tore into the wood and then if you hugged the pole, the pole would scratch the hell out of your chest. You were miserable. The object was to lean back away from the pole and then move the belt up and then adjust yourself, again, and up and keep going until you get to the top.

There is probably a knack to it.

You got to be brave because the idea of coming in close didn't work.

So even though you were in Field Artillery, you still had to take this communications, stringing lines in the field.

Oh yes, not only that but the forward observer when he spots a target, he calls back and gives fire directions so that you can - the first round to spot it and then you relocate it - that spot where the target was, that way you can destroy the enemy's tanks

When you're up the pole, you're stringing the wire. You're not doing the actual observing.

No, but you could find yourself in that kind of a situation where height would give you an advantage

So were there any particularly funny or crazy situations during Basic Training at Camp Roberts?

Just the idea of going up the tree with a flashlight and sign your name and come back down at night!

What did you think of the army food, pretty good?

Not bad at all. As a matter of fact, I had an unusual situation only because - I, we had a second floor and the cadre which are the personnel that stay there, they are the instructors, they could be a Corporal; it could be a PFC. And we had a jerk standing on the stairs and he was pushing you along. He wanted us to run down the stairs. He grabbed me and he pulled my arm and I clumsily rolled down the stairs. Then I came back and I socked him.

You don't do that to the cadre. That's a big mortal sin. You just don't do that. So I got on record and I had to go to the kitchen almost through my whole basic training as a dish-washer. But the sergeant in the kitchen, he felt sorry for me and he got to be my best buddy. I'd come into the kitchen at 4 o'clock in the morning and he'd say, "What'll you have, eggs? ham? chicken? Whatever you want I'll make it for you." So I would eat like a king. And then after that, I got "promoted" out of the kitchen from dish-washing to serving in the cafeteria, putting the ketchups, sugar, milk, and ice cream. I passed it out so when I passed it out, you know, all the buddies would nudge, they wanted more milk or they want this or they want that so I got to be a well-known and popular guy.

Did a lot the other soldiers have trouble with that same guy, that jerk?

Yes, he was just pushing everybody. You could hurt a person pretty bad. You're on a second floor. There was a flight of stairs and then there was a landing and then another flight of stairs. Well, I got down to the first landing and then I went back up and I socked him.

I wonder why he did it?

I don't know. Well, I don't want to say he was doing his job because you could do your job just as well and say "C'mon guys hurry up." instead of pulling. You could catch a person off-balance and on stairs. I didn't like it.

Unless he was trying to recruit people for dishwashing!

Yes, that's what it looked like.

Were you able to check in with your family while you were at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma?

Yes.

At this time you knew you going to be part of the Artillery and then the unit gets its orders to head overseas?

Not yet. I went to this communication school and when I got back, I ran into a problem I got back early. They said: "You're not due yet. You're not going to do anything today. It's noon. You can go to a town. There's a dance at ..." I know there was a big, red brick building. There was a dance over there like a USO dance. So they said "Go!" Course I'm going but I'm going with a quart of whiskey.

How did you come by that?

I brought it from California, knowing that where I'm going is a dry county. And when I got to the dance over there, you know, everybody is my buddy, drinking with me, drinking my booze. Everybody's friendly. Well, one thing led to another and the MPs come along and I was out after curfew, resisting arrest. It was a dry county and I had booze. You know, "whose is it?" "Well, it's mine!"

So I ended up in a stockade and in the morning they took me back to the Battery Commander, and the Battery Commander says "What do you want? Battery Commander's punishment or the military court? They sentence you according to the written rules. Of course, I knew with the officer that I would get it knocked off easy.

I ended up getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning and picking up cigarette butts in the area. But I was busted (in terms of rank) I didn't get the Sergeant's rating. Usually after ten weeks of school, you wound up getting a sergeant's rating –Tech Sergeant's, whatever the company needed. But it ended up I was Private First Class. No, just Private. I think I had a step to go to get into PFC. And, of course, I am pulling all kinds of duty. I was pulling guard duty. I'm the only one with a carbine that has ammunition and we're on the train going to New York, going overseas. But here again, I'm going as private, but that hindered my record because once you got overseas everyone got some kind of rating, but I didn't qualify – bad kid.

Yes, interesting file.

So everyone was excited to get the news that "Hey, we're going over."

Yes.

So that was toward the end of 1944?

Yes.

Do you remember the name of the ship you sailed on?

It was one of the general troop ships, (the "Mormac Moon"?). We were in a 54-ship convoy and we had a German sub that was in our waters. We dropped depth charges and when they drop a depth charge, it exploded and the walls would buckle. It sounded like steel crimping, crunch, crunch. It was a nervous situation. You're down below. They put a Marine at each end with a rifle and if a soldier got out of his bed, he could be shot. You lay in your bed and you were laying maybe five in a row, one on top of each other and if a guy got sick on top and he puked - tough. It was scary because of the noise. And of course when the Navy had to go, they were on the run. Being at close quarters, you could understand nobody could stand around and block the way. You lay in your bed - period.

That crossing, was it five or six days?

Oh, it was longer. We took the southern route. After we got out, we had ice on the ship. As we traveled, we got a warmer and warmer climate. We had summer clothes to mislead anybody that saw us going on the ship. They would think that we were going to the islands, instead of going to the ETO, but we got there.

When you're in this 54-ship convoy, you don't make any stops along the way once you leave New York?

No, and we sailed from New York.

Then you come around up and is Le Havre the first place you land?

Yes, that's right. That was the first place we landed and got off the ship.

Now when you say this is an armored division and you're in the artillery. Is the artillery in the...

Ah yes, that's why we were in a general ship. We had like 500 soldiers on there, and the rest was tanks and ammunition. We had everything we needed

When you say a "general ship" what does that?

It implied a certain class. They had a general's name but that class of ship was identified by size and general.

Did you find yourselves going a little stir-crazy on the ship?

No, I enjoyed it. The ride on the ship, and it was surprising because it didn't bother me at all.

No sea-sickness?

No and we had seasickness.

And you stand and eat; you don't sit. You stand.

And if the ship rolled one way and then the other, everything on the table was on the move so you had to hold it with one hand and eat with the other. AND in the washroom there was a foot riser before you could get into the washroom facilities and there was water swooshing back and forth The sea was so rough that the water from out of the toilets came out.

Wow.

So nobody had any liquor or booze on the ship?

No, unfortunately!

But we had plenty of it when we got back to combat.

So when you land in Le Havre in January? of 1945?

It was winter. We tore down one wooden shack and used it for firewood to heat up our place, and the French objected to that and they came over and they wrote us up for what we owed the government for tearing down that house.

So when you land at Le Havre, how long is it before you are on the road?

Oh, we were on the road the next day.

Wow.

Oh, there was no idle time. We were on the move.

From the map (see appendix) it looks like you go to Totes and then Beauvais and Soissons and Sézanne and St. Dizier

We were used in the Battle of the Bulge as reinforcements. That was our first stop. Unfortunately, truckloads of American soldiers were coming back, and they were coming back bloody and bandaged up. It wasn't pleasant sight but it put you put in a mad mood.

Then eventually, I suppose, you heard about the massacre at Malmedy of the American soldiers

Yes, you hear about those things happening.

And in the some of the fox holes. You'd think the guys would have some naughty pictures but no, they had rosaries, prayer books. There was a lot of praying going on over there. And of course there were a lot killed.

Did find that your training was effective?

It wasn't quite the same because even on the ship they were telling us hand-to-hand combat. When we got closer in, they said forget it. You got a carbine; you use it. You shoot the guy before he shoots you. And you try to shoot as many guys as you can. That was the instructions we got.

So you're carrying the carbine and then you're in the field artillery division.

Yeah, we had all kinds of firepower. Because every driver had a forty-five, I think it was even a 30-caliber 45. You had a magazine that you used. And, of course, in the turret you had a machine gun. I had the 50-caliber. I started with a 30-caliber but when I fired the 30-caliber machine gun, I would go deaf for a couple of weeks so then I told the officers "Put me on a 50" because you got "ping" on the 30. On the 50 you got "Boom, boom, boom." The 50 didn't bother me.

The only thing is when you have the planes that were attacking the convoy, the soldiers got off the tank or where ever they were, half-tracks, jeeps, and go under the vehicle for protection and you as a 50-caliber, you go and shoot the plane.

So you've got the air responsibilities.

When you're firing- is that from a tank? or a half-track or an armored jeep?

A half-track, usually

Because they carried us as additional personnel for a while, I think there were five positions: in firing, loading, changing the bags or ... There were two positions on a shell - when a shell hits and it goes deeper and then blows up or you have one that travels so far and then it blows up. Fuse delay and I forget what the other one was called (proximity?) It's either one or the other and then the bags (powder) determine the distance. Sometimes you just lob up and back down when the enemy is the closest.

Your officers did they impress you?

They were alright. Everybody wakes up when they get over there. They don't push unless it is necessary and then it's understood - "We got to do it? We got to do it!"

Was there a general who was?

We had a general who was killed but that was because - I shouldn't say that. We had Patton. He was in charge.

Drive, Drive!

Yes. The thing is the enemy always looks on the steel helmet. If you got too many stars, too many birds on the shoulder, they are gunning for you. They don't want to kill a private. They want to kill the officers so the officers were targeted, deliberately. And the General got it. He was killed.

His name was, do you recall?

No, but it is in the book – The History of the 13th Armored Division. (Major General John B. Wogan was “severely wounded in the throat while trying to clear a road block that was holding up the 46th Tank Battalion on a bridge over the Dhunn River in the vicinity of Manfort, Germany.” p 166.)

So Patton was a driver

Oh, yes.

Did the men like him, or not necessarily. He did what he had to do.

On the one hand when you're winning, you like it. When you're losing, “Oh, my heavens, we can't have that.”

So you reinforce American positions at the Bulge and then you push forward?

Oh, yes.

Did you go into Germany then? Did you cross the Rhine?

Oh yes. Yes. Every time we crossed where they were bridges, underneath the bridges there were shells or dynamite. The Germans wanted to blow the bridges before we got there but if we got there soon enough, we got to use the bridge. In some instances we had the Americans build a bridge for us so the tanks could go over it without sinking.

Does the pontoon bridge work for tanks?

Yes. Oh Yes. They had that all figured out.

When you get into Germany, does it look like there has been a lot of devastation or bombing?

Yes, yes. Some of the places we shelled all night long. I think there are a few pictures in the book of some of the streets. I had one situation over there in one of the towns. I was given seven prisoners to clean the streets of rubble - bricks and mortar, stuff like that. And, of course, I am sitting in the turret with a machine gun and I only got seven guys out there working. They all worked at a nice pace. You can't pick on them; you have to treat people nice no matter who they are. After a while, people came over by me and “Can we work for you? Will you feed us if we

help clean the streets?" I ended up with 50 people cleaning the streets! - because they were going to get fed.

You didn't have to have a gun on them, my heavens, – honest people, women, kids. Everybody came and helped. The kid would take one brick and carry it.

They got their meal afterward?

Oh yes. Our kitchen came along with stew or something like that. We had no shortage of food. We had plenty of food and we had plenty of gasoline. And the one time they had to bring gasoline by plane because we were too far ahead.

You were making great progress.

Yes!

Because of the general, "GO! GO! GO!" An armored division basically one goes down the center; one goes to the right flank; one goes to the left flank to protect the flanks and you keep going. We didn't take prisoners but we didn't shoot. We'd have them drop the guns, we'd run them over with a tank and if we couldn't, sometimes the Germans would turn around and pick up the guns and use them against the infantry. When you hear that, then the next time you grind up everything.

A lot of the Germans were sick and tired and they didn't want the war to continue. We had a lot of friends that were working in German factories, making ammunition, and they came out with duds. When they shot, "Boom," and when I got up in the morning there were duds all around. Had they gone off, it could have been a different story.

We had all kinds of help. Over here the women did a wonderful job. It took a lot of ammunition and it took a lot of material and we didn't have to worry about it. Think of a soldier that's an infantry man gets a 150 rounds. I shot 150 rounds in the squeeze of the trigger. You don't have to worry about who or how much or anything else I sat on cases of food or ammunition. You know that was my seat. I'd have to worry when my seat got low and I needed more ammunition.

So when you're in these armored columns pushing forward, do you think the biggest danger is the enemy artillery?

Oh, yes. that German 88, that makes just a horrible, horrible noise. The whole outfit had one blow up, it was maybe 40, 50 feet ahead and it was maybe 30 feet in the air, it was an 88 that blew up. It was meant to blow up in the air. There was such a huge noise, horrible, horrible and what it could do. We had a hot kitchen come over, trucks with heaters and lots of food. The kitchen came over to give us food and this guy went to the half-track and he leaned over to get his mess kit and a shell blew up above him and the skin and clothing were just torn to shreds, just shreds – nothing left. You know, you see that and... rough.

Yes, you said there were only religious articles in the foxholes. So when the Germans retreat after the Bulge and then you guys cross the Rhine, you're confident the war is coming to an end.

Oh yes, there was about 140 of us. We took 20,000 prisoners.

WOW.

You have to say half of those were voluntary prisoners. They all surrendered. That's the reason why we went out there and told them you go that way, drop your guns.

So when you get into Germany, you swing south.

Yes

Then you're going to wind up in Munich or

We ended up in Hitler's home. It was the 13th Armored Division that captured Hitler's home.

Do you mean the "lair"—Berchtesgaden?

The place is in the book, on the right-hand side at the bottom with the cradle.

Oh Braunau. Yes, Hitler in the cradle. By that time you were in Austria. Wow.

Now what happened over there. We took it and the 1st Airborne, they had 6,000 men and 5,000 were killed so there were only 1,000 left so we let them have Braunau because we were coming home to go to Japan and they had that all worked out and they passed out Japanese currency. I had a Japanese 5 yen bill that I was supposed to use when I go to Japan. That's how sure we were.

Our outfit was going to land just north of Tokyo. It was all spelled out. We were home for 30 days and during that 30 days the war was over.

So the bombs are dropped in early August, 1945. So when your division comes down into Austria then, you don't stay there too long.

No, we stayed long enough to justify a ribbon - we had to stay there two weeks, and then we were entitled to the German Occupation Ribbon.

I see here from your Biographical Data Form that you also received an Overseas Good Conduct Bar

(Laugh) Well, everybody almost got a Good Conduct How could I get a Good Conduct when I was a bad kid nearly all the time. (Chuckle)

But you weren't.

Did you have any USO or entertainers coming through while you were over there?

Yes, and we had the priest have Mass I believe we ate at Mass and passed out communion in a combat zone out in the field.

And were there any famous movie stars or singers?

No, No, nobody.

And no USO?

There was a USO-sponsored entertainment, but it was kind of rough because all they do just stand on the back of a truck. There's no stage. There's no nothing. They stand alongside a truck. Who can see? Half a dozen rows and then after that you listen to the music.

When you return to the United States, that's by ship?

Yes.

And where do you depart from?

That's a darn good question. Le Havre!

We shed some of our equipment. We had to clean it up and give it to the Russians. I couldn't see that. That was stupid.

It wasn't as long a trip going back?

No, because we didn't take the southern route. We just went straight ahead. As a matter of fact, we hit a couple of bad storms. When the wave hit the front of the ship, it rolled over and there was maybe 30 feet high of water on the ship and then crashed in the middle of the boat, then collapsed and ran off the sides. If you didn't pay attention, you could hold on to the banister and the water goes under and around you. When it was dangerous they would run a rope so you held on to the rope from one end to the other

You must have made friends with your fellow soldiers. I suppose some of them might have been with you even from Basic Training?

No, we were all scattered.

When you're coming back in the ship, you must have felt pretty good. We licked the Germans.

Oh yes, gambling and

No liquor?

No, no liquor

But it's funny, you're coming back, and you're going to get a hero's welcome and a little break then you are shipping out again.

Then you're going to Japan .and you had the little book of Japanese phrases to study. "Where you're going?" "Come over here." I think there are similarities in *Go I Nee* – "I love you":

A useful phrase

For relationships

Did you sent a lot of letters home while you were overseas?

Yes, but it took longer.

Everybody must have been glad to see you back on Iowa street. You came back on the train?

I really don't remember because there was a time limit. We had 30 days and we didn't want spend it just traveling. I know that maybe when we were going back the first time. We were all pretty much liquored up and some guy was trying to jump out the window when we were going through a town.

I suppose you would have sailed from the west coast, San Francisco for the Japanese invasion.

That's probably where we were going to go.

It reads here that you were in the service from November 27 of 1943 and then you're released April 22nd, 1946, so even after the war against Japan was over; you were still in the Army.

Yes, but I had enough points and then it was a combination. I had enough points and I went, where the hell did I go to Texas or the 13th Armored. I may have gone to Camp Crooke and they sent me home again for 30 days because of my health conditions. My heart wasn't too good.

But that heart condition never showed up when you were going in.

No it didn't show up then, but coming back it showed up, probably when that air burst. There were a lot times when you were scared. When you're in the foxhole, you got your raincoat on the bottom and when the shell bursts, the vibrations causes, either the shell fragments or dirt rolling in so you don't know whether its shell or fragments. Fragments go with power and they can go into your skin.

Mr. Warchol, did you mention that your back was affected by sitting in those armored vehicles?

Yes, I blame it on – you know the guys are goofing around, all the young men; you're in the tank or a half-track and you hit a bump. "Whoopee!" You know, I'm going to hit that really hard, and you step on the gas and you go and you really whack it. Everybody on the half-track, 6 or 7 guys, you're all getting this punishment, this pounding from the tank - same thing and that's not good. But it's like a football player. He knows but he's getting paid big bucks. I forget what we were getting paid. (chuckle)

So your heart acts up a little bit and they send you back to Chicago for a certain amount of time. But they would still have sent you to Japan?

Oh yes. They are goofy that way.

You must have been feeling a whole better when the Japanese surrendered.

Oh, my heavens, yes, because they were mean, nasty.

The Germans were, at times, mean and nasty. I come across five or six, I can't remember whether it was five or six, Americans in sleeping bags and they were shot up. The sergeant and I, I was going over to the sleeping bags to look and see if they were living, you know, still alive or dead, but by then, other vehicles pulled up; and the medics came over so the sergeant said, "Leave it to the medics; we better go." With a sergeant you don't argue when you're a private.

And everybody knew me.

Well, first of all, when I was in the half-track, I'd go to homes. I'd go downstairs and pick liquor, wine. The bottles, whiskey, we'd give the officers. The wine we'd share with a125 guys, drinking wine out of, one time we had we had 2 five-gallon cans of wine and no water. "Of course, it's Bernie's fault. Bernie did it." Deduct it! But when the wine was there and they wanted it - ooohh. Then you exchange.

Was this in France or Germany?

Both

Do you still enjoy wine today?

Oh, I drink wine every day. I drink six ounces, red wine, and I think that's helping me stay alive. I don't know. Red wine, they say is good for your heart, well, I got a bad heart.

Were you discharged then in Chicago?

Yes. I was separated in Chicago.

Did you have any difficulty getting your old job back? Did you want your old job back?

No, oh no, I had no trouble at all. As matter of fact, they sent me; they acquired a building and from the US Air Force and they converted it to a machine shop. They were manufacturing automobile pistons. I was one of the guys who was in on the ground floor. When they were talking about going into production on automobile pistons, I told them it would be advantageous to have a straight-line production. We had a double row of conveyors behind the operator, the operator and the machine. The first machine was a sun strand automatic lathe. You pick up four pistons upside-down. When they opened up the carton, they opened it so the pistons were upside down, you reach in, you pick up four, put them on the table of the lathe and then you take one and put it on the tail stock and then by air you move into the chuck, then you lock the chuck, withdraw that and pull the lever and the machine did the work. You could have a woman do it. That was the first position. I could go down the line and tell you each and every position because I set up the line

And this company was?

Triplex Corporation.

And they, this Mr. Lang, he checked up on me. He came back down stairs and said, "OK, you got your straight-line."

At that time I was going to Industrial Engineering College on Washington Boulevard, full-time day school.

Was there a G.I Bill then for that?

Yes, the G.I Bill paid for it, but they had to pay double, triple the rate because that's what they wanted.

They felt they were a qualified school, this and that. It cost them money to operate. They were taking advantage of the veterans but the classes were only 15 students to a class. The teachers were not only educated but they had factory experience. They knew what they were talking about. It was very important.

Was that a two-year course?

Yes. That's what it was.

So then did you stay with Triplex for a number of years?

I stayed with them for a while, but when they sent me to Pueblo, Colorado; it was 14 miles out of town. We got over there, Dottie and I. I talked to some of the guys that I knew from before and the guy said "You know I'm going back because my wife can't take this hot air, bloody noses," and stuff like that. So that kind of turned me off a little.

But you decided not to

go over there and stay there. You could live in one of those barracks, and remodel the barracks to live in, and the company would collect rent on that.

Oh, a company town,

Yes, a company town. Oh, we had the mother-in law; she was in the 90s.

You and Dottie were married in?

Oh yes. We have been married for 60 years.

Did you know Dottie when you were overseas

No. When I came back, I crashed her brother's wedding.

Were you in uniform?

No, although you can take advantage of the uniform. I did my share of that, too. You always talk to the person and get invited otherwise

So you eventually you left Triplex and stayed in industrial manufacturing?

Yes, I became an industrial engineer

What year then did you move to Niles, in the fifties?

Oh, I don't know, probably 27 years ago. I'm not sure.

Did you stay in contact with your buddies after the service?

No. They were really from all different states. You think while you are in the service, "hay" because we went through close scrapes, but I guess we all had our problems.

Then did you join any of the veterans organizations?

I joined the VFW in Park Ridge and I spent a lot of time there with my son, who died at age 42. And we'd go over there, put and play and drink beer.

Were there ever any reunions that you were invited to?

No.

Now you mentioned that you thought you wound up in the artillery instead of the infantry because

of the high IQ because everyone in the group had a high IQ. Let's say that we all answered the questions on the test like we were supposed to. And that was due to my 25 cent investment in the pamphlet.

You probably had some good teachers at Crane.

Yes, I did, and I had Mrs. Linder for Division teacher and that woman would take a personal interest in you. She wanted to teach you manners and how to eat at the table. During our period time, she always prepared something. She always was trying to educate us to do something in addition to the regular mumbo-jumbo. I was taking trigonometry or some mathematics and I just couldn't understand it. I just couldn't. The teacher got a hold of me and sat me down. We went over it. I said, "Is that all there is to it"? And that was it.

The light went on!

Yes, the light went on. It's really surprising. I had perfect grades in wood shop and I had machine shop and the teachers were encouraging you to take extra subjects after school. "Come in and I'll show you; I'll teach you." Always. - that was a damn good school.

We had 3 black people in our division, good, hard-working kids just as good as any one of us. But then after that, the school is getting a bad reputation.

I think one of the veterans who comes to our breakfast every year is a Crane Tech graduate – Max Kolpas. I think he might have been on a ROTC rifle team.

Yes there was a team. I was in on that and then my son took up this ROTC. They would take him and a few of the other fellows to the firing range to practice.

Did your son go into the service?

No.

Was there anybody else in your family who was in the service?

My brother, he was in Germany and he was with troops of occupation.

He was younger than you were?

Yes. He was in the Army.

We're coming to the end of the interview and there are a couple of questions we always ask the veterans. Mr. Warchol, how do you think your military service and your experiences in the Army affected your life? That could be a big question.

I always wanted my own business so that kinda turned me off. I ended up trying a couple of businesses and I failed in a couple of them. There wasn't that much to be gained by it. The one business that I was more successful in, that was a big, heavy machine operation. I say heavy, One of the milling machines, were, I don't know, 20 feet long. We made track for a flank cutting machine. That's a machine that runs a track and has more than one cutting edge. It has a torch; it might have 3 torches and it slits the iron. It makes parts for stairs, for oil tanks. It was pretty good for a while. But the other companies were too much competition.

Wait, I got to stand up for a second. The hip pocket is impossible to get into for a handkerchief

You know, it's difficult to say, what you would be doing. I would have been a plant manager, probably, without the war.

You know, I started for American Spring and Wire and I got 60 cents an hour. Then I went to Triplex in the afternoon at 5 o'clock and I got that Stonewall Jackson talking – got a job over there for \$125 a week. And then I think I had 35 people -good, hard-working people, honest people. You know if a woman ran a reject, she cried; she felt sorry. This is war materiel. Everything we were working on was war-related. It was affecting more than just her and me. Lot of the people were just very nice.

I had my routine I would go and talk to each every person. I'd come in a half-hour early so I would talk to everybody from the previous shift to see who had trouble. Between other shifts, they always had 3 shifts going. Between shifts, they would argue, this one left over scrap rejects this and that. Between my shift and other shifts there were no problems. People were honest The drill cracked, broke She didn't drill six holes, she was drilling five, and she did for 15 minutes and didn't catch it right away so we had a discussion.

It sounds like you were talented as a manager of people as well as equipment. You had the human touch.

Yes. People were good, honest, and hard-working; everybody put in, I think, a 110%, and I always treated them like that, you know. And I think this personal relationship category is important, you had a kid who was sick at home. The next day I a made sure to say that "Hey, how's your kid doing? Better? Give him a couple of more days, he'll be alright." A lot of good comes from that.

Mr. Warchol do you think your military experience has influenced your thinking about war or about the military in general?

Oh yes. War. Oh that's alright. My hearing aid fell out when I shook my head.

You know, the women and the kids, people suffered something awful and what the hell for? We have never gained anything. We're not out to gain, but the people that we help, what the hell, they become our enemy. I wouldn't trust Russia for nothing. I am sorry if you are of Russian descent or anything else, it's those people over there. Putin is the most dishonest man on two feet. And what the hell does he want? What do these people want? 2 million, 5 million, 10

million. What for? You can only eat so much; you can only drink so much. And really it's the nice people that live and enjoy life.

You know I spent about 8 months with the psychiatrist I had the problem. You know there were those guys in the sleeping bags. That bothered me a lot and there other incidents.

Alright, so I go to the psychiatrist and she says the Germans, you know, weren't that bad. If you were there with 5 or 6 Germans in sleeping bags, would you shoot them first or would you wake them up and have a chance to... We all knew that. I always carried a pistol with me in a sleeping bag. You would automatically shoot. It's difficult to travel at night because you're best friend might shoot you

After the psychiatrist explained it to me; we talked about it. We talked about a couple of other incidents. Oh, another one. The guys were in a foxhole. The two Germans and they had an anti-tank gun; and we went over them. We stopped and we ground them into the ground, killed them, moaning, yelling, screaming. But if we had gone further ahead, they would have shot at our back which is the weakest part of the tank and we would have been dead. You know, if you stop and analyze it. Some of the men that I had seen they were ragged, cold, miserable and they wanted to quit a long time ago. Hitler was a nut. It's really surprising how many people were friendly. I don't know if you're French, I don't care. A lot of people are wonderful, a lot of different languages. They are all wonderful but they got their bad ones too.

Let me tell you about the bad ones - the French. The Germans, you leave your shoes out there, they grab them; they polish them. You thank them. You bring them something from the kitchen, extra bread or something like that. People were nice. People would find beer somewhere, bring beer for us not because we were gaining materially but because they were very friendly, very nice people. I was invited to many suppers when there was no fraternization.

Was that in France and in Germany?

Germany.

In France it wasn't quite like that. I mentioned that we tore down the building. Damn building, must have been how old. I don't know how old, it had dirt on the roof - that was the roof - of dirt and we tore it down because we were cold. It was miserably cold. And they came over and charged us for it. We took water from a well. The farmer complained that we ran his well out of water; we brought it down so low he couldn't reach it. We had to come and bring water and put it in his well, a French well.

We never had any problem in Germany like that; of course, the situation was a little different. The people were nice, were friendly, were sympathetic and didn't say, "You, conqueror." They were nice, easy going people.

It sounds like you preferred the Germans to the French, perhaps?

Yes, unfortunately. Let's say, maybe, the French got into a habit of .., "You don't pay me in advance; I'm not going to do it. I don't know what I'm going to do, but I am going to charge you anyhow" It was always they had to have it first. But they may have suffered a lot too. You know a lot of the French were good because I benefitted and I am living here because there was the underground movement, the Resistance, and they suffered. They were on our side. They helped, too, with the war.

Mr. Warchol, is there anything you would like to add the interview that we haven't covered?

I think we did a good job.

I think you did a very good job. Thank you very much.

I am relaxed and you got me talking.

I'm going to turn this recorder off and if we think of anything, we can turn it back on.

In that German village

And I guess the mother or the father said, "Why you don't you go and shake this man's hand?" She came over. I shook her hand and I thanked her and she took her hand and she went by her mother and she said "He shook my hand!" Her mother and father, they realized what transpired. The excitement that the little girl had created - great girl.

When you were at that Triplex plant before the war, you were making Navy shells?

Making cocking levers for a naval gun. It had a shaft. It had a cam. This profiler, all it is, is a cutter, which is operated by a motor and a follower. The follower actually follows a pattern. You hold the table with both hands. All the other machines you have a fixture. You put the piece in the fixture. You lock it. You move the table. The table moves in and performs the operation but the profiler makes more complex parts and it's usually casting. You put a casting in there and it has different shapes. The idea was, some of them hold the wheel over here - no good. You got to hold the wheel so that your elbow is holding, you couldn't move this away from me because I had the leverage. Once you start on the piece, you just go with it. You follow it. First of all, the choice of people that they had, very poor, bakers, this, that, never saw a machine before, never operated a machine before. The profiler, the other machine where you put a piece in - once you're shown how to do it. Anybody could do it. And we had a lot of good women working in the shops

Could the women also do the profiler?

No, I don't think so because of the arms. We never tried a woman. A husky woman, I'd say would be able to do it. And the women they're willing, willing to work hard.

We won the war because of everybody's good effort. Everybody, - women too.

I think that's a great line on which to end the interview.

And you know, you get released from the draft board, you're on a plane and you got a job. I go to the draft board. We had a meeting on Thursday. I sat down and there's about 3, 6, 7, about 7 guys. They look over my papers, pass it on, pass it on, pass it on and this guy says, "You're going overseas, but you're going in the Army." The question is "Is that the best place to use me or what was it on those torpedo shafts I made over those 32 hours?" and I am sure that everyone was accepted. You're right there and you check it. They were good so they ended up in torpedoes. The Navy had them. I always say use the person where it's most advantageous for the government.

So do you think it was just one person on the draft board who decided?

No, they all said "ok" and just passed it on. Nobody felt I could have such qualifications. It was just that I was there at the time when they needed it. If you went down the line and you asked a guy what his background is, "I was a baker." He was complaining about the flour that he had on his lungs from baking.

Talking with the vets, it seems that the Army puts them in the opposite place of where they should be.

Yes, you should put a cook where he enjoys cooking, where he would bake a pie for the guys, they'd appreciate it. You want to keep the guys in a good mood. Guy is going to go and get his head or leg or arm blown off. You see some of those and it's terrible. They deserve a real pat on the back. It's those guys who are the heroes.

And about the manufacturing, 300 per day, I set it up with a multiple position, presses and we made 300 per hour! DM 48 fuses for bombs - brass casting, brass housing from, a screw machine product

We could do anything that we wanted to do. This one guy, guy Gordon Schicorny, (sp?) he hired me. He later became president of a company. I told him, "Let's get a roll of butcher paper." And we got the slide projector from the tool makers. The only difference between that and the finished product was either riveted holes or screws. They put in screws; we take out the screws and put in rivets. But you got the unit, I don't know, it was \$40,000. We'd take it apart, take the cover off, the cover had 2 or 3 baffles with mirrors and magnifying glasses and you kick it back, you got a ball over here, you got a fan motor and as you disassemble it, we take the individual parts, make a sub-assembly and then that would be fed into the line where the girl is putting the housing on there, putting the motor in and you just sit and you disassemble, you reassemble it and you determine how long it should take. We had movies. We had dealing cards, 52 cards, to get yourself into a mood of knowing how fast is fast. How fast is fast normal for a person t

Did you use the film and the playing cards for training?

Yes, training purposes.

Was that during the war or after?

Before the war and then after the war also.

Well, I agree with you. You were too valuable. It's interesting, the Army's choice, or the draft board.

You know, there's a lot of people that are gifted in a certain way. One thing that shut me up is putting me on a stage with a group of people or take me out of my environment.

I used to be able to conduct an instruction period of how to do things. In this room which was my room. I had my things here laid out. I could talk. I could reach. I could do everything. The guys take me out of there; put me on a stage in an auditorium. I am lost. I can't speak.

Yes, it's an adjustment.

That's not me. I'm more my hands.

We had a little shell that we were making and that shell, a blade of grass would explode it.

Sensitive.

Very, very sensitive. We were making it. Problem was because it was so sensitive that to manufacture around it was difficult, dangerous. It could blow up, but you never put the heavy powder in there. So that we know that it functions. And the fact that I could remember, and I didn't leave any detail undone.

If you didn't tell the guy in the shipping room to take that carton and turn it over so he could cut the bottom off so that the operator could reach in and grab four at a time, you'd have them taking them one at a time or you would send a carton on a conveyor to the operator. "Wrong person." Four at a time. You know. Both hands always working. Always two at a time. You get a rhythm.

Time and motion study there, too

Absolutely.

We proved it by movies. Well, we had the fuses. A girl picks up a part, puts it in and a machine indexes, picks it up and puts it in – that's it. 20 a minute – a minute is a long time. You could do a lot of things.

Thank you for the insights into industrial production of munitions. I haven't spoken with any veteran about this.

It look a lot of ammunition, my heaven.

Were you impressed with the German equipment?

Yes, one time, we and the Germans ran out of a foxhole and left a machine gun and took off. The other guys were chasing the Germans. I took the machine gun and tried to take as much ammunition as I could. One time I was supposed to go up front as a forward observer. You go with an officer and two or three guys. There's a driver of the jeep, a Corporal. Here I am, a Private again. Sometimes I had trouble. Sometimes I didn't. Had 2 half-tracks with 14 men in there and they all had rank – and I didn't. And I was in charge of the half-tracks. But, you know, that's the way it goes.

At any rate, let me see, oh yes, I took the bullets with the German machine gun. I tried it out and I knew how to operate it. It was good. And I was going to go out as a forward observer and I put the machine gun in the ¾ ton truck, and the driver said, "You're not taking that with you. We're not there to attract fire; we're there to communicate." One thing led to another and I don't know whether I said it, but the word was one of us wasn't going to come back. Strong words. The officer, this captain, well I knew him just like you, and he says, "Bernie what are you trying to do?" I said, "Nothing, I got a machine-gun, I'm going to go out there and shoot the Germans with the German machine-gun." He says, "Well, the Corporal has a beef. You're shooting with a German gun. There's a distinction between theirs and ours, that we would attract our fire and the German fire." It ended up that none of us went! But then I went along with the idea – my idea was not the best. We destroyed the machine-gun.

Some of the vets said you could tell the kind of shell from the sound.

Yes, like you could tear a cloth, brr, brr. No bing, bing, bing that's a big difference. I was in the wrong.

Seemed like a good idea at the time.

Yes, what the hell.

You know there's a world of difference between using a machine-gun and shooting several rounds at a time.

And you were trained on using a machine-gun

Oh, yes. I was trained on the American 30 and 50. Our carbine then became a 15-round clip with an automatic ejection so you pull the trigger and fire 15 rounds. That's it. If you don't see the enemy hiding behind a wall, you could wait until he puts his head up or you just shoot where the wall is, hoping to get him behind the wall. So if you have extra shots, you just spray the letter "L."

Another recollection, my father was in the army over there in Europe and instead of going home on a furlough he came to the United States during World War One, and his brother who was here joined the American army right away and he ended up being a Sergeant.

So the World Wars of the 20th Century certainly affected your family.

Yes, you know, it's difficult to say whether it's favorable or unfavorable, what could have happened if there was or there wasn't.

And that area of Poland was

Constantly, back and forth - that's the reason why people leave Europe. Even the best systems last 25 years and right away somebody's creating a war, what the hell for? The same ground is still there.

Yes, That's another good line.

Thank you, Mr. Warchol.

Reader's Note:

The following nine pages present helpful scans taken from Mr. Warchol's personal copy of his Division's history, *History of the 13th Armored Division, Black Cat Division*, 50th anniversary, edited by Elmer Bowington, Paducah, Ky.: Turner, ©1992.

In addition to the map of the Division's advance, history, and letter of appreciation from General Jacob Devers, the reader will also find copies of photographs taken of Mr. Warchol and his family on the day of his Honor Flight, April 25, 2012.

498TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

The 498th Armored Field Artillery Battalion of the 13th Armored Division terminated over two years training in California and Texas with its departure on the 3rd of January, 1945, for Camp Kilmer, N.J. From there, after ten days of training and processing as well as passes to New York, the battalion went by train on the snowy morning of January 17 to the New York Port of Embarkation at Brooklyn, where they loaded on the USS *Mormacmoon*.

The voyage across the Atlantic was relatively quiet for the wartime winter months. Once a storm was encountered and twice there were submarine alerts. Just before reaching England, destroyer escorts dropped several depth charges between the *Mormacmoon* and the adjacent British battleship *Nelson*.

On 29 January, the *Mormacmoon* sailed into the battered port of Le Havre, France. The next day the battalion debarked, marched through the city, and entrained in Forty and Eight box cars for the brutal all night trip to the billeting area.

For six weeks the battalion readied itself for combat by modifying vehicles, drawing ammunition and equipment, and putting the final touches on training. The life of comparative ease was ended on March 16 when the battalion set off on the first leg of the trip to the battle front. The march carried them through Soissons, Vitry le Francois and Nancy to Bathelmont, France in the rear assembly area of the Division.

On the morning of 19 March, the battalions of Division Artillery moved to firing positions near Alsting, France. The 498th was attached to the 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion of the Seventh Army with the mission of supporting the 63d and 70th Infantry Divisions in their assaults on Saarbrucken. The battalion fired harassing and interdiction fire all night, and by noon of the 20th, fire slacked off as the infantry moved into the ruined city.

On 25 March, the battalion, back with the Division, was on the road to Germany, this time on a mission of aiding military government around Homburg. Here the officers and men had the experience—later to become a common practice—of dispossessing Germans of their homes. Setting up civil controls, rounding up German soldiers, Nazis, and displaced persons, kept the battalion busy until 1 April.

On the rainy midnight of 5 April, the battalion, as part of the Division, rumbled out of Trier and headed east with the mission of relieving the 4th Armored Division at the front. The Rhine River was crossed on a pontoon bridge at St. Goar. Finally, after traveling 221 miles, the battalion closed in the little town of Ostheim near Alsfeld. On the after-



Fidelitas et Vigilas

noon of April 8, a march order was given and the battalion moved to firing positions near Rott in the Ruhr. The Division was now part of the First Army.



1st page describing Mr. Warchol's Battalion, scanned from the *History of the 13th Armored Division, Black Cat 13th Armored Division, 50th anniversary*, editor, Elmer Bowington, Paducah, Ky. : Turner, ©1992

The guns of the battalion supported the 97th Infantry Division's bridging of the Sieg River near Hennef.

As soon as the bridgehead was secured, Combat Command A of the 13th went into the attack with the 498th in direct support. Soon the leading elements of the Combat Command pulled out of range of their organic artillery. However, late on 10 April, the 498th was finally able to cross the one way pontoon bridge over the Sieg River to Kaldauen and by noon of the 11th had moved up to the hot spot of Lohmar on the Autobahn. The battalion fired all night out of Lohmar on the enemy positions. The Germans returned the fire and laid in everything they had upon the firing positions.

Still in direct support of CCA, the battalion left Lohmar on 12 April and proceeded to Altenrath where it stayed until the next noon before displacing to Rosrath-Hack where some shell fire was received. The next day the battalion advanced to Forsbach. The only fire received here was against the observers, both ground and aerial. On April 14, the 498th advanced to Harkenrath and left the same day for Mulheim, on the east bank of the Rhine River, opposite the much bombed cathedral city of Cologne.

On the afternoon of 15 April, the battalion displaced forward to Burriger, near Leverkusen. From here the battalion guns fired all night despite heavy enemy shelling which harassed the batteries for hours. At dawn, a battalion observation plane spotted an 88 battery and it was knocked out within 15 minutes.

Around noon, the 498th marched 18 miles to Hilden and went into firing position in an open field. Battery A had been in position north of Hilden under direct observation of the enemy, but it had to pull back when the shelling became too heavy. Making use of aerial photographs to spot the enemy positions, the guns fired throughout the night, many

of the rounds with radio controlled fuse. The next day the German prisoners attested to the destructiveness of the fire by reporting that their casualties had been very heavy.

When all resistance ceased in the Ruhr, the battalion marched to Peckhaus, near Mettman. On the 19th of April, the battalion moved 65 miles to Waldbröl and vicinity and recuperation and maintenance of weapons and vehicles. On the night of the 20th, it again hit the road for a 119-mile march to a bivouac area. After an eight hour rest, it moved on and during the night the column was bombed by German planes, and after traveling 279 miles in 41 hours closed into Heroldsberg.

Shortly after midnight on 26 April the battalion, still in direct support of CCA, left Heroldsberg to march 50 miles to the forward assembly area in the little Bavarian village of Mausheim. The 498th moved out the next day though rains had turned the roads into all but impassable sloughs of mud. On 28 April, they crossed the Danube River on a pontoon bridge near Lohstadt and proceeded to Gebelkofen. The next morning the battalion drove on the Isar River to find all bridges blown. From Einack, and Unter-Knollenbach the batteries fired across the river at enemy troop concentrations and gun positions. Battery A advanced several thousand yards into Worth on the river, but was shelled so heavily that it was forced to withdraw. Many Allied Prisoners of War were liberated in this area.

Unable to cross the river here, the battalion pulled out early on the morning of the 30th and marched 40 miles to the vicinity of Plattling. Shortly after midnight on 1 May, still with CCA, it crossed the Isar on a pontoon bridge and dashed 60 miles to Stubenberg several miles short of the Inn River. From positions here the battalion 105s delivered accurate observed fire on targets in and around

Braunau, Austria, Hitler's birthplace. On May 2 more missions—the last of the war for the 498th—were fired on anti-aircraft batteries and troop concentrations reported to be elements of the 6th SS Panzer Division.

On 3 May, the war was just about over for the 13th. The period from 3 May until 25 June was spent in the area east of Simbach, Germany, in military government work—searching houses, apprehending enemy prisoners, enforcing the laws—maintenance of weapons and vehicles, trips to Berchtesgaden and rest camps, and sport activities.

On 25 and 26 June, the battalion left their German billets for Camp Atlanta, France, A and B batteries traveling by train and the rest by motor convoy. Here it was staged for indirect redeployment to the Pacific. After staying at Camp Atlanta from 27 June until 9 July, the battalion departed by rail for Camp Old Gold in Normandy. Leaving Old Gold on 13 July, all batteries traveled by truck to Le Havre and boarded the USS *General McArae*, a Navy transport. After a ten-day voyage, the men of the 498th landed in the United States. Following thirty day recuperation furloughs, the men of the battalion reassembled at their new station, Camp Cooke, California, early in September, 1945.

As their commander, Lt. Col. W.S. Richards, told them before they left Germany, the men of the 498th Armored Field Artillery Battalion could look back on their days of combat with pride in a job well done. From the observer parties, firing batteries, fire direction center, to the supply and maintenance sections of Service Battery, the Battalion functioned well and was instrumental in defeating the armies of Germany. It can be said that the words of the motto on the coat of arms of the Golden Griffins, *Celeritas et Virtus* (Speed and Valor), epitomize the combat career of the battalion.

BATTALION STAFF 498th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

William W. Glenny
Major
Executive Officer

Edward C., Rose, Jr.
Major
Battalion S-3

Frank F. Fata
Captain
Liaison Officer

Dan A. McKenzie
Captain
I. and E. Officer

Robert R. Scott
Captain
Battalion Surgeon

Edward J. Sekan
Captain
S-4

James E. Alvaroz
First Lieutenant
Liaison Pilot

Ian R. W. Chisholm
First Lieutenant
Adjutant

Thomas R. Gross
First Lieutenant
Communications Officer

Joe P. Hughes
First Lieutenant
Reconnaissance and
Survey Officer

James R. Sloane
First Lieutenant
S-2

John A. Wyckoff
First Lieutenant
Liaison Pilot

A.Z. West
Warrant Officer
Battalion Personnel

HEADQUARTERS

BATTERY 498th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

Alexander Edwards
First Lieutenant
Forward Observer

Vincent Ellis
Second Lieutenant
Air Observer

Virgil H. Williams
Second Lieutenant
Forward Observer

Ray F. Livingston
First Lieutenant
Forward Observer

Federico, Victor J., 1/Sgt.
Riley, Edward M., M/Sgt.
Kent, John B., T/Sgt.
Shuler, Manly D., Jr., T/Sgt.

Gifford, Chandler, Jr., S/Sgt.
Harle, John D., S/Sgt.
Hudson, John E., S/Sgt.

Wilson, John, T/3
Barnick, Edward A., Sgt.
Corder, Richard R., Sgt.
German, Charles, Sgt.
Linden, William, Sgt.
Pinkston, Clifford M., Sgt.

Smollar, Joseph P., Sgt.
Waddell, J.B., Sgt.
Baugh, Jasper, T/4

Cameron, Thomas L., T/4
Fletcher, Robert J., T/4
Gaal, Joseph K., T/4
Hardy, Paul H., T/4
Jeffries, Gurley T., T/4
Leon, Melvin F., T/4
Owen, Oscar L., T/4
Rybenske, Paul D., T/4
Ulatoski, Joseph S., Jr., T/4

Sahl, Oliver, Pfc.
Skerczak, Michael, Pfc.

Baumbach, Dewey D., Cpl.
Eubank, Robert C., Cpl.
Hale, Gordon, Cpl.

Henrie, Thomas J., Cpl.
Hesselink, Richard, Cpl.
Hoover, Richard, Cpl.
Huncovsky, Melvin E., Cpl.
Jefford, Joseph W., Cpl.

Korbi, Ernest, Cpl.
Labus, Carl R., Cpl.
Leavey, Robert L., Cpl.
Meyer, Eddie H., Cpl.
Pace, James R., Cpl.

Parks, Jack, Cpl.
Posthumus, Henry E., Cpl.
Rose, John Edwin, Cpl.

Arent, Severy W., T/5
Davis, Herbert A., T/5
Heinhorst, Earl E., T/5
Jones, Carroll N., T/5
Kyaw, Edward H., T/5

Onheiber, Jerome, T/5
Schutte, Herman B., T/5
Simons, Dude H., T/5
Stith, Thomas E., T/5

Anderson, Raymond L., Pfc.
Beistel, Wayne L., Pfc.
Bushnell, Jack D., Pfc.
Cordova, Antonio V., Pfc.
Cox, John F., Jr., Pfc.

Flowers, Clifford P., Pfc.
Hayden, Robert G., Pfc.
Heindel, Robert E., Pfc.
James, Stephen K., Pfc.
Lewis, Troy D., Pfc.

Marks, Harold I., Pfc.

Ranson, Donald T., Pfc.
Remerowski, Ray A., Pfc.

BATTERY A 498th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

Alexander A. Rybicki
Captain
Commanding Officer

Ewart J. White, Jr.
Captain
Reconnaissance Officer

Freeman H. Beets
First Lieutenant
Assistant Executive Officer

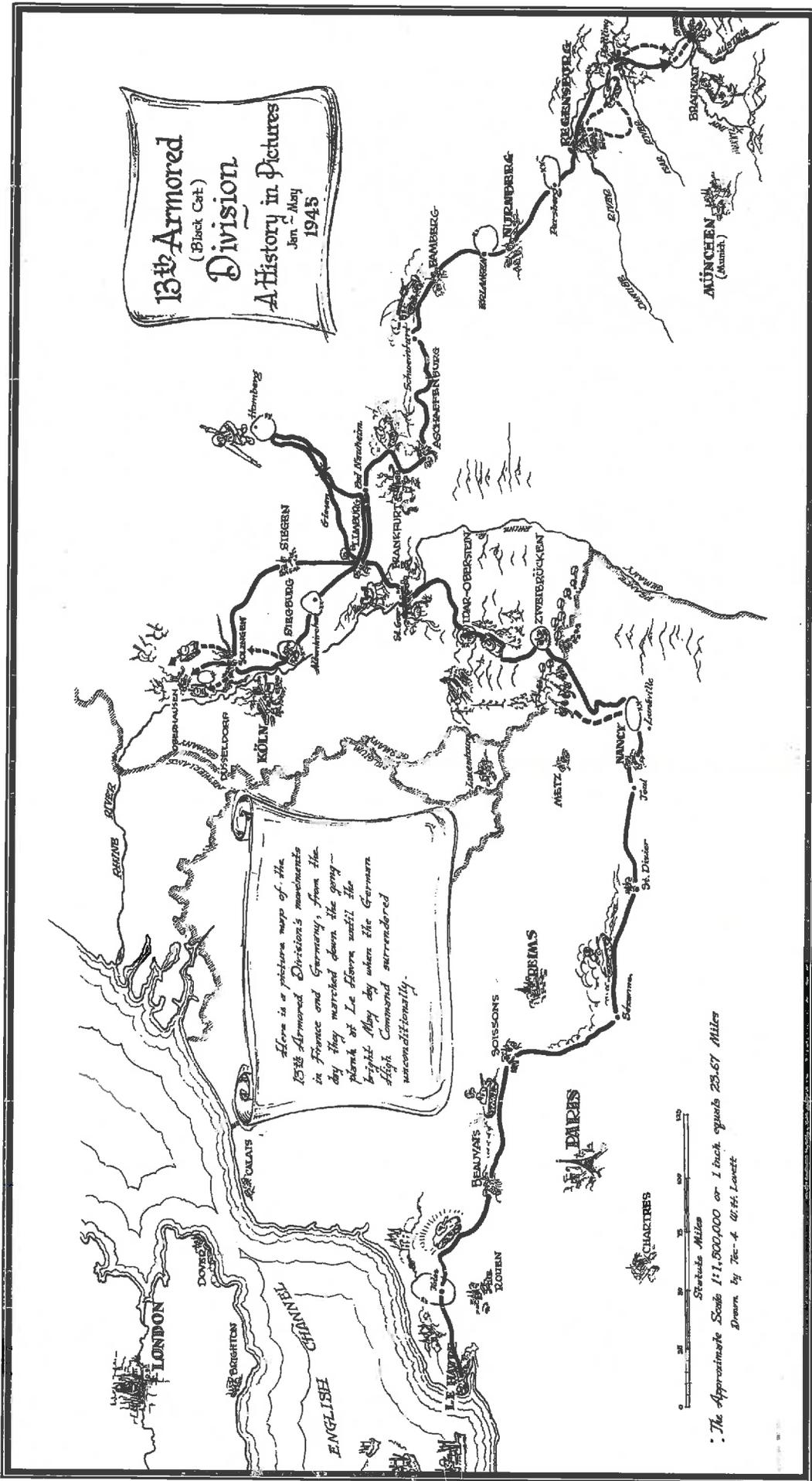
Francis J. Riddell
First Lieutenant
Executive Officer

Bowman, John H., S/Sgt.
Hegwood, Arthur M., S/Sgt.
Kilburn, Leroy B., S/Sgt.
Molotsky, Sol, S/Sgt.

Rentivegna, Anthony, Sgt.
Fritz, Poyd D., Sgt.
Loness, Omer L., Sgt.
McCaleb, Howard F., Sgt.
Warden, Wilbur E., Sgt.

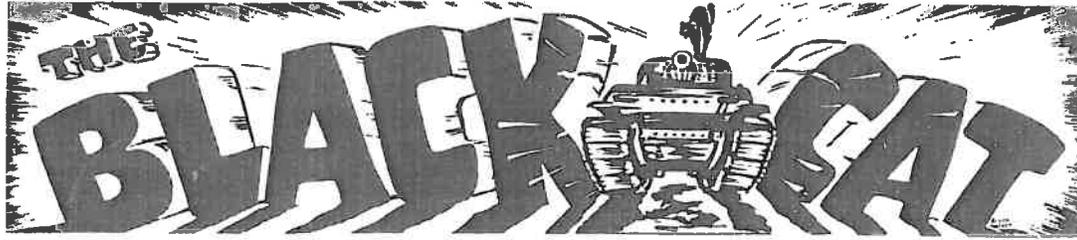
Adams, Ellsworth F., Sgt.
Doyal, John I., T/4

2nd page of Mr. Warchol's battalion history, scanned from the Black Cat Division history. Mr. Warchol's name was mistakenly not listed.



This map was scanned from Mr. Warchol's copy of the 50th anniversary history of the 13th Armored "Black Cat Division, published in 1992. The map illustrates the impressive advances made by the "Black Cat Division" as they captured thousands of German prisoners.

Adolf Hitler's Birthplace Captured By Division



VOL. 2 No. 2

13TH ARMORED DIVISION

GERMANY, MAY 15, 1945

13th's Final ETO Drive:

Victory In Bavaria



Braunau Obeys Surrender Edict At Last Moment

Braunau, Hitler's Austrian birthplace, was "captured" by a SHAEF broadcast on the morning of May 1 but was not actually taken by CC "A" until several hours later.

The city on the east bank of the Inn was taken without a fight but Gen. Augur's ultimatum to the garrison commander to "surrender or have the city destroyed" was accepted only three minutes before the time limit expired.

The Mayor of Simbach, Germany, was given instructions by Major W. A. Gray to row across the Inn to Braunau and deliver the ultimatum. He came back with a note from the garrison commander which said: "I ask for mercy for the city of Braunau for its women and children. Our fight is against the Bolsheviks only, not against the Americans."

This reply was taken as a negative answer and Colonel Alfred E. Kastner's Division Artillery was ordered to start a bombardment of the city at 12 o'clock. At three minutes to 12, however, a delegation from Braunau, led by the Chief of Police, rowed rapidly across the river.

The delegation told Pfc. Harry Parker, Black Cat interpreter, that the civilians in Hitler's birthplace had convinced the army commander that last-ditch resistance in the face of overwhelming Tank power was hopeless, and that the city was now ready to surrender.

124th Armored Engineers then threw up a foot bridge over the debris of the regular bridge which the Germans had blown, and the 57th AIB's Baker Company, followed by Able and Charlie, crossed over and occupied the town.

Armoraider Advance Into Austria To Wind Up Campaign In Redoubt; Danube, Isar And Inn Rivers Bridged

Maybe These Krauts Thought M-C Needed More Personnel

An inkling that the end of the war was near came to one of the Message center teams of the 133rd Armored Signal Company a full five days before SHAEF announced it.

The men were busy as the proverbial one-armed paperhanger when a German colonel and seven other Krauts walked into their building, quoted "Is this the Message Center?" and surrendered.

Nope, No Mayor; Only SS Officers

Two SS officers, who didn't know the law of falling bodies or just didn't give a damn, put on a brief, but spectacular show for men of the 24th Tank Battalion at Neu-Getting shortly after the Combat Command "B" unit had forced the town's surrender.

The battalion pulled up at the banks of the Inn River just opposite Neu-Getting on the night of May 1, and began negotiations for the surrender of the town. City officials were soon convinced of the futility of further resistance and turned the town over to CC "B" men.

All bridges across the river had been blown shortly before the 24th Tankers arrived and the only means of transportation was by boat.

Racing through the valley of the historic Danube into the redoubt area which the Nazi armies had selected as their last-ditch stronghold, Black Cat Division armor stabbed across the Bavarian-Austrian border and wiped out enemy resistance in their zone of action shortly before the German Reich surrendered unconditionally and ended the European war.

Operating as part of the XX Corps of General George S. Patton's Third U. S. Army, 13th tankers, armored doughboys and armored artillerymen rolled 150 miles in a campaign that carried them across the Isar and Inn Rivers as well as the Danube. Organized action was culminated on May 2 after Combat Commands R, B, and A had established bridgeheads in Austria across the Inn. Prisoners continued to pour in to 13th PWE's for several days, however.

More than 17,000 German prisoners were taken by the Division in the Bavarian campaign. Added to the estimated 20,000 PW's seized during the course of their Ruhr Pocket victory, Black Cat armorers wound up their ETO operations with a collection of some 37,000 Nazis in the prisoner bag.

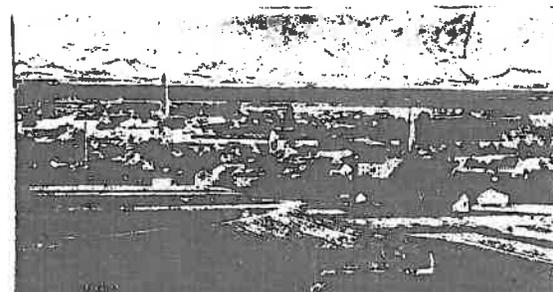
More than 50,000 soldiers of the Hungarian Army also surrendered to the 13th Armored Division. These included the Hungarian vice-premier and the commander in chief of their army.

ACROSS THE DANUBE.

On April 27, after the various units of the 13th had completed their long trail from the Ruhr Pocket area, Colonel Harold G. Holt's Combat Command "B" crossed the Danube River in the vicinity of Regensburg and pushed ahead to overrun Straubing. Task Forces McRee (for Maj. Robert McRee of the 24th) and Malone (for the 59th's Lt. Col. William F. Malone) made up the CC "B" line-up.

Because of driving rains and heavy mud, the roads leading up to the Danube bridge scheduled for use by CC "A" were almost impassable. After some delay however, Task

(Continued on Page 6)



Scan from division's history showing the *Black Cat* newspaper's reporting of a key event mentioned by Mr. Warchol - the capture of Braunau, Hitler's birthplace.

"If you go long enough without a bath even the fleas will let you alone."

Ernie Pyle, Combat Correspondent.

SOME THOUGHT ON THE BLACKCAT DIVISION

By T/Sgt. Tracy E. Goodwin

Veterans of the 13th Armored Division not only emphasized strong leadership throughout World War II, but they also proved to have excellent leadership in the Post War years, which in turn assured safe and prosperous lives for their children.

This history was written after considerable research of the records of the Division Headquarters, Division newspapers, and many remembrances and nostalgia... of places, events, and friendships. This portion of the 13th Armored Division history was written as a portion of the CCR history. The Division Headquarters was attached to the CCR and it would seem appropriate that the Headquarters' records should be assembled in the following history for the enjoyment of the members of the 13th Armored Division. Other contacts made were TO & F Tables and Order of Battle.

Originally the planning for the Armed Forces had set up the CCR Command with insufficient supporting units. This was corrected as far as the 13th Armored Division was concerned in that the following units were attached to the Division during the Ruhr Pocket and the Bavarian Campaigns: 5th Artillery Group, including the 177th and 943rd Artillery Battalions - the 177th and 943rd had 155MM guns. Also included was the 274th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. The 7th Armored Group supplied outstanding combat support. Other additions included the 801st Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 820th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 630th Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 6264th Signal Company, and the 574th Anti-Aircraft Battalion. It would appear that the Division on VE Day had been reinforced to such an extent that it was possibly in position to be redeployed for the Japanese Invasion.

Many men of the 13th Armored Division did see early combat by various means. Approximately 3800 of the enlisted men of the Division were detached and sent to the Pacific Theatre as replacements in various combat divisions. A number of personnel from the Division attended OCS schools and paratroop conversion schools and, in turn, saw action with various combat units in both Europe and the Pacific. Other personnel in the Division left the Division for assignment with other units due to special skills.

Personnel of the 13th Armored Division came from many different walks of civilian life, among which were clerks, mechanics, teachers, lawyers, and salesmen. The Division drew personnel from every State of the Union with heavy emphasis on Northeast Ohio, Western Pennsylvania, and the W. Virginia/Kentucky/Tennessee areas. Included were the World Middleweight Boxing Champion, World Typist Champion, 11 Pro Basketball players a husband of a popular movie star, and one father-and-son team.

In the make up of a World War II armored division you would find that the 13th Armored Division was a typical light-armored division.

A sketch of the Division is as follows:

10,500	Men
77	Light Tanks
263	Medium Tanks
450	Half Tracks
5,200	Carbines
6	Liaison Planes
87	Side Arms

Note: The enlisted man always was of the opinion that the planes were used only for delivery of mail. The above indicates that there was a limited number of side arms in the Division. Many of these were assigned to the MP Platoon although I am sure you would find that there were many additional German Lugers and German P38's in possession of personnel of the Division.

Rivers crossed by the Division included: Rhine, Danube, Sieg, Isar, and Inn.

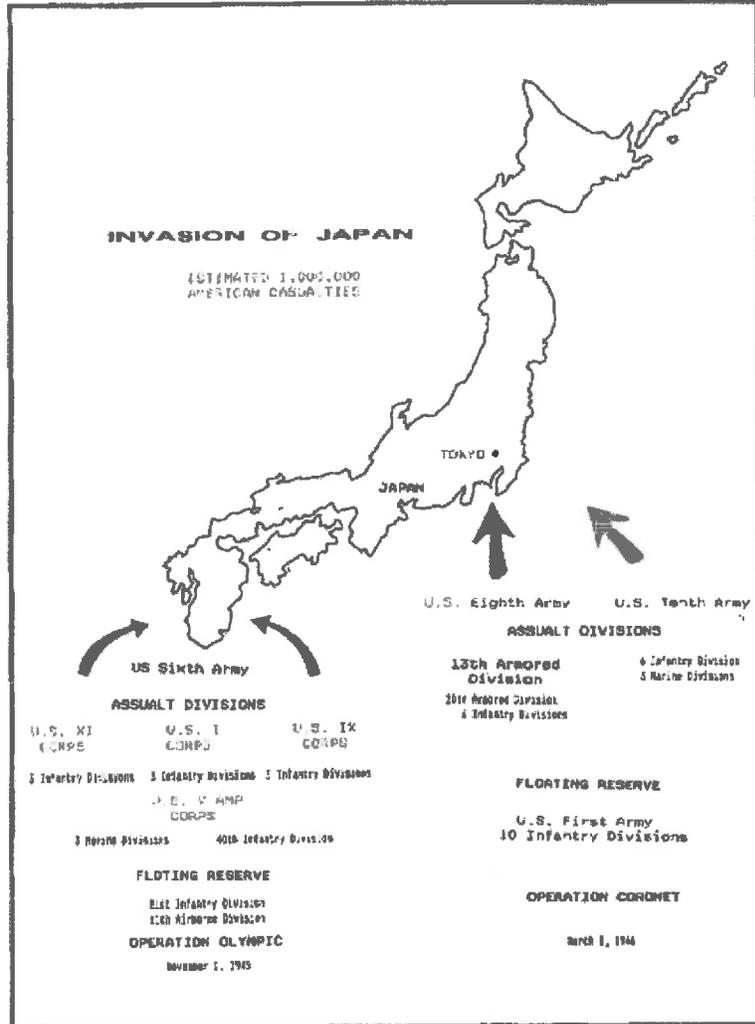
Cities along the route of the 13th Armored

Division: LeHarve, Totes, Beauvais, Luneville, Zweibrucken, Idar-Oberstein, Homberg, Limburg, Siegen, Siegburg, Solingen, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Aschaffenburg, Nuremberg, Regensburg, Plauting, Braunau, Earing, Burchhausen, Osterhoffon, Koblenz, Altenrath, Duisburg, Ratingen, and Parsberg.

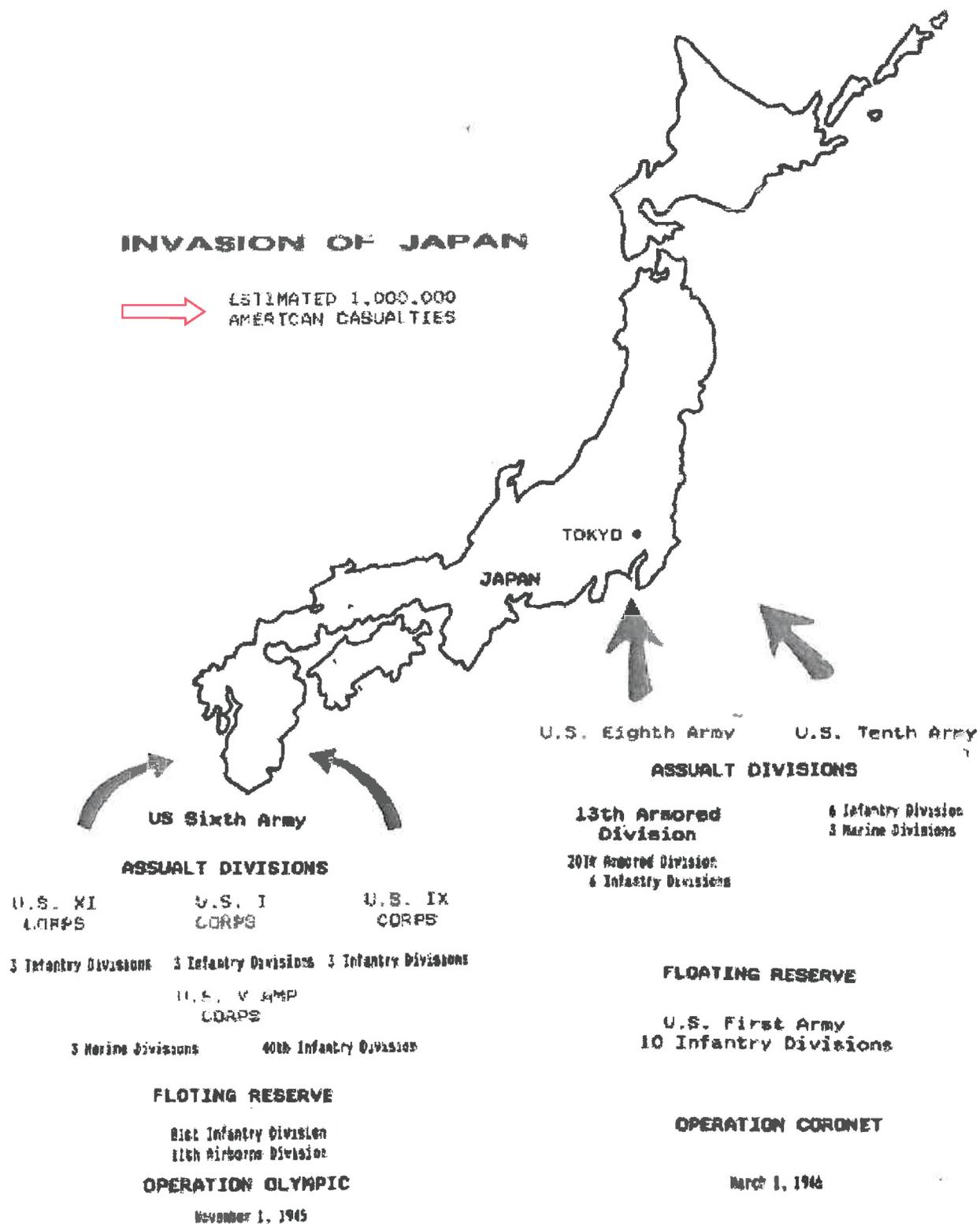
The 13th Armored Division was assigned or attached to the following units in the European Theatre of Operation: Seventh Army, 15th Army, Third Army, XVIII Airborne Corps, 12th Army Group. Campaigns included with these armies were the Rhineland and Central Europe Campaigns. The 13th Armored Division's personnel earned two Combat Campaign Service Stars.

At one time the 15th Army was slated for an invasion of Holland. On VE Day the 13th Armored Division was assigned to the Third Army which at that time included six armored divisions and 12 infantry divisions. The 13th Armored Division was in the XX Corps along with the 65th, 71st, and 80th Infantry Divisions.

The Third Army at this time totalled 300,000 men, which made it the largest American Army ever to engage in combat.



Scan from the Division's history of the Operation Coronet map detailing the routes for American forces in the planned invasion of Japan, including the route for Mr. Warchol's 13th Armored Division. Red arrow indicates estimate of American casualties.



HEADQUARTERS
ARMY GROUND FORCES
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
Washington 25, D.C.

20 October 1945

SUBJECT: Letter of Appreciation

TO: Commanding General, 13th Armored Division

Modern warfare has made necessary the introduction of new units and new techniques to ensure victory in battle. The 13th Armored Division, activated at Camp Beale, California, on 15 October 1942 as a result of the need for armored units, proved in training and in combat the adaptability and genius of the American soldier in all methods of warfare.

Since the time when I was Commanding General of the Armored Force, I have followed the career of the Black Cat Division with interest and pride. After the completion of training, much of which you did at Camp Bowie, Texas, you arrived overseas early in 1945, and your tankers quickly earned for themselves the respect of the enemy. Joining the Third Army, you participated brilliantly in the final drive across the Danube River deep into Southern Germany. Your officers and men despite their comparatively brief period in battle, fought with boldness, bravery and skill, winning a firm place in the heritage of our country.

Those of the 13th Armored who find themselves in new tasks, now that the division is being inactivated, will continue to serve their country, I know, with enthusiasm and steadfastness, until our military strength can safely be reduced.

The men in the 13th Armored Division will be forever included among the heroes of our country, and it is for me a proud occasion to be able to commend you most heartily, in the name of all Americans, for your gallant service in the defense of freedom.

Jacob L. Devers
General, USA,
Commanding.



Mr. Warchol and the other veterans receiving their Heroes Welcome at Midway Airport upon their return from Washington D.C.



**Mr. Warchol made his Honor Flight to
Washington D.C on April 25, 2012.**