

David E. Golden
Veteran

Robert von Hasseln
Interviewer

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Q: Mr. Golden, where and when were you born?

DG: I was born in Albany, New York on December 24, 1923. Actually on 53 [unclear] Place in Albany. At home.

Q: And you grew up in Albany?

DG: Grew up until I was 16 years old. Then we moved to Latham on Forts Ferry Road in Latham, where my dad bought a twenty-five acre farm, and I lived there until the time I went into service.

Q: Where did you go to school?

DG: I went to Albany Public schools. I went to various schools. School Four, School Sixteen, School Twenty-Seven, Philip Livingston Junior High School, Albany High School, and then I finished at Watervliet High School in Watervliet for the last year.

Q: When you were growing up, what did you think you were going to be when you grew up?

DG: Well, at one time I wanted to be a minister. I wanted to maybe be a lawyer. I had an uncle that was a lawyer, my grandfather was a lawyer, my mother's father, and I thought, I'd want to be either a lawyer or a minister. I had four brothers and four sisters, so there were nine children in our family, and I was in the middle. I came after one boy and four girls. And the idea of going to college was kind of not very possible at that time, so there was very little chance of me ever being a lawyer. So when I got out of high school, I worked on the farm for a while. In fact, that's one reason why my dad wanted me home to help with the farm. We had about thirty head of milk cows then and grew asparagus and different vegetables. I helped my dad with the farm until I got a chance to go to work in Albany at the Central Warehouse, a cold storage warehouse where I was making eighty- seven

cents an hour. And believe me, in 1942 that was a lot. I had been used to working for a dollar and a quarter a day on the farm. So I worked down at the Central Warehouse. But of course the war was on by now; this was 1940. I remember the night we went to the Grand Theater. I'm not sure whether it was a Saturday or a Sunday night, but we went to the old Grand Theater normally. It was between North Pearl Street and Broadway, right near where the Palace Theater is now. And when we came out of the theater that night, they were yelling, "Extra, extra, Pearl Harbor bombed. The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor." Here I was an eighteen year old kid, and I said, "Boy, now we'll get those guys." And because we knew that the war was going on in Europe, and possibly sooner or later we would be in it. But I was only eighteen, and still my dad needed me on the farm. But they were drafting. My brothers-in-law went. Even the one with two children. And so the time came when I decided, hey, if they're going, I'm going. I went down and enlisted even though at the time they were only drafting at twenty. I volunteered because I got my choice of service. I wanted a tank outfit.

Q: What did you think of it?

DG: Probably because I thought I was a big deal farming, running a tractor on the farm. Some of the farmers out here then, where Burns Whitney Estates is now, was a farm. The farmers who ran that, never had a tractor. We used to go over and do their plowing for them. I did it with my dad's tractor, and I enjoyed equipment and machinery, and I thought driving a tank would be the greatest thing you could ever do. So that's why I asked for the armored force.

Q: Let's back up a bit before we go into the armored force and your experiences. What was life like after Pearl Harbor here in Latham?

DG: Everybody was looking for help on the farms. You could get a job on a farm in the winter, a dollar and a quarter a day. That was from six to six. Twelve hours. In the summertime, your pay went up to two dollars a day. We used to walk, believe it or not, from Latham to Watervliet to save the bus fare. To go to a theater in Troy that was nothing, to walk down there and back. Or we rode the bus to Watervliet and walked across the bridge, because we saved seven cents that way by walking across. One rule in my family, where I grew up, was that however much money you earned, half of it went to your parents. You make twelve dollars a week, six went to your parents, and you kept six. If you made nine dollars, regardless. I felt that I had a responsibility to my parents. I had the greatest parents anybody could ever want, and I felt responsible for them. But I also came from a family that was very patriotic. My mother belonged to the DAR [Daughters of American Revolution]. She had ancestors in the Revolutionary

War. And the only problem with that was when I looked back into my father's ancestry, he, too, had ancestors in the Revolutionary War, but one of them was a Hessian soldier fighting for the British. And he settled after the war out in a town of Rensselaerville out in southwestern Albany County. And that's where my dad came from. I just grew up with a lot of patriotic feelings in my family, and my dad had never been in the war because he was already too old for World War I. When World War II came along, he was well into sixties at that time.

In Latham at that time, Route Seven ran from Troy to Schenectady and was a two-lane highway. Alongside it was the old dirt road where the old railroad tracks used to be when the Schenectady Railway used to run trolley cars from Troy to Schenectady. And the biggest thing we ever did at night was, after working for twelve hours, go up and walk up and down from Latham back here to maybe up to Verdooy and back and forth. Girls would come out and walk and we were kind of getting acquainted and that's about what it was. There wasn't an awful lot of excitement. It was not unusual, sometimes I'd ride a bicycle into Albany to visit kids who I'd gone to school with years before. The big thing was on the weekend we'd generally go to a movie at the old Grand Theater. And that's why I remember so well the night that they bombed Pearl Harbor. When we came out and heard that. And from there on, I guess there wasn't much doubt that most young men were going to go into service, and so I just hustled it along a little by enlisting, going and getting my choice of service.

Q: You said your mother's family had ancestors who were in the Revolutionary War?

DG: Oh, yeah. Up in the Blue Mountain Lake Museum in New York State, I was told that there's a sign up there that says Mills Brothers General Store. My mother's maiden name was Mills. Her grandfather would be, I think, my great great great grandfather. They had started the first trading post north of, up near Sacandaga anyway. In that neighborhood someplace near Blue Mountain Lake, and that was way back. He was captured and held prisoner in Quebec during the Revolutionary War. One of my mother's greatest fears was that we might look back into our ancestry and find that Benedict Arnold was related to us, and chances are he was. I grew up with that feeling in my family. America is a great place, a great place to be, a great place to be proud of and a great country to serve.

Q: Any civil war ancestors?

DG: No, not that I know of, no. No one in the Civil War and then no one in World War I?

Q: How did your family feel when you said you wanted to enlist?

DG: Well, it's strange because my dad was in the hospital at the time, had a very serious illness and I had to go down. He had actually signed for me to go, and he was kind of proud of the fact that I was going. My mother was too. I'm not sure that they were happy about it because, after all, I was helping support the family at that time. But I had done it, and they agreed. My dad signed the papers, and I was ready to go. I have no doubt that they were proud. I had three younger brothers who hadn't gone yet. Eventually, they did. Two of them did. But I think my mom was proud that I went.

Q: So, you joined the armored force?

DG: Armored force, yes, that was my choice.

Q: Where were you originally sent for training?

DG: I first went to Fort Dix, New Jersey, for induction. From Fort Dix, they put us on a train. We didn't know where we were going and we ended up in a place called Camp Campbell. It's on the Tennessee Kentucky border between Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and Clarksville, Tennessee. [It is] way out. We were the first unit to go there. When we went there, there was red clay and no grass and brand new barracks buildings, and it was quite an experience. First thing they did when you got there, they put you in a big field house, and they started training you for eye perception and all kinds of physical abilities to decide what unit you were going to go in. Well, I wanted tanks. I didn't know that in an armored division, you have artillery, you have tanks, you have infantry, armored infantry, you have ordinance, you have fourteen different units. At that time they had armored regiments, I was assigned to Company I, the 44th Armored Regiment.

Our motto was *The Is have it*. I started my basic training with Company I. That was in October, Halloween night in October 1942. Around the middle of December, they called me into the orderly room. We had learned all the close order drills and right face and left face and about face, and we were learning map reading and all kinds of tank maintenance and things like that. But they asked me, due to the fact that I had a high IQ and a high mechanical aptitude mark, they asked me if I wanted to go to school. I never stopped to think. I said, Gee, that's a chance. I said yes I do. So the result was they were going to send me to Fort Knox to go to tank maintenance school. Well, they said, you got to be a PFC to go there. Now, none of the recruits had made even one stripe, and I was the youngest man in the company, and here I got a PFC stripe. But then before they

went, they found out you can't go there if you're a PFC. You had to be at least a technician, fifth grade. So here I was, not even three months in the army. I made T5, and off I went, three months in tank maintenance school. And I did well there. And when I came back, I came back to my company and all the assignments in the company had been made. In other words, they had selected their tank commanders and their gunners. And I ended up in the motor pool, which isn't what I wanted. I wanted to be a combat soldier. Let me make a long story short. Eventually I did. I got transferred into a tank as a tank gunner and I ended up in the company commander's tank. And that's where I stayed all the time throughout Europe for the next thirty months.

Q: This was with the 44th Regiment?

DG: No. We trained until September of 1943 at Camp Campbell. It's now Fort Campbell, of course. And then we went on Tennessee maneuvers. [We spent] three months on Tennessee Maneuvers past Thanksgiving and then they reorganized the armored divisions. They did away with the armored regiments, I understand now all except a couple of divisions. 3rd Armored, they didn't do this with. But regardless, most armored divisions were triangularized and became tank battalions. The result was that they had an extra tank battalion. And the one extra that they had was the 714th. That was us. When the 12th Armored Division had their maneuvers they went to Camp Barkeley, Texas, near Abilene, Texas. The 714th, our battalion, was sent to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. As what we called in those days, a bastard tank battalion. And we spent about three months at Fort Jackson. Once we went out on maneuvers and we tore up so much farm country there that they stopped us, they grounded us. They wouldn't even let us run our tanks down there. So all we did for the next couple of months was guard duty. I walked around warehouses. Instead of doing two on and four off, we used to do a four on and eight off because we were doing it constantly. I got so I knew how many nails were in the buildings and how many boards.

Then all of a sudden, I guess they needed a tank battalion in the Pacific. We thought we were going to Europe early. They took the 44th Tank Battalion out of the 12th Armored Division at Camp Barkeley and sent them to the Pacific and then moved us back to the 12th Armored Division. With the 12th Armored we once again were Hellcats back with the 12th Armored Division. We trained in Camp Barkeley. We went back there, it must have been May or let's see, January, February, April. So we went back and we stayed there most of the summer. In 1943 we left Camp Barkeley, went to Camp Shanks, New York, down near West Point. And then we boarded USS Simon Abbot and sailed for Europe. Now, my

history papers tell me that the 12th Armored Division landed in Liverpool. However, we didn't. The ship that I was on landed in Southampton. I remember today, going across the ocean when I saw this land and the sailor said, that's Land's End. Land's End is the southwestern tip of British Isle, the main island, anyway. And it was a thrill. Eighteen years old and you're doing something. By this time I was nineteen and we landed in Southampton. They took us up in the countryside and we were in some Quonset huts and within ten feet of the Quonset huts the farmers were plowing the ground because they had to utilize all the ground for food over there. We spent two or three nights in these Quonset huts and then they moved us to a place called Tidworth Barracks. Tidworth was between Andover and Salisbury in southern England, southwest of London. And these were old big old brick...that had to be in November because it was when I think Wendell Willkie was running against Franklin Roosevelt for president, if I'm not mistaken. I think that's the year that Wilkie got beat. I remember the results coming out. We were still in Tidworth at that point.

By this time the Allies were already into France. My biggest gripe, I used to get some of the guys a little peeved at me, although they all loved me, I know they did. But I used to get them peeved a little because, boy, if we don't hurry the war is going to be over before we get there. Anyway, we got new tanks and the tanks we got at that time were M4 Shermans with the old 75mms on them and we got all set. We did go down one time down on the English Channel and fought some target practice out into the Channel. But pretty soon the day came we were going to go to France. We went down and we boarded the LSTs and we put your tanks down in the hole and chained them down and everything's all set now, we were ready to go. And they had all these number ten cans of vegetables all around the place. What are they afraid of? The sailors said, you will find out. Well, we sat there a couple of days, I guess because the weather was so bad they couldn't go out on the Channel. But finally we did.

We sailed for France and we came in near Normandy, not far from Le Havre. Of course by this time our troops had taken Paris. We were billeted in the field in a big old barn near a place called Au Fait, France. The French kids came out there to the barn and talked to us. It was really kind of a rural country. I mean, it really seemed like back in the 1800s right where we were there. We had our Thanksgiving dinner in a field there. Then we went across France and we got over towards Strasbourg and we had our first battle in a town called Bettviller. I have maps and things here to show that, but that's where we had our first casualties, one of our tanks. And this is kind of hard to believe, but I know what happened.

The Germans dropped a mortar shell in front of it, another mortar shell behind it, and believe it or not, the third mortar shell hit smack in the turret. And a man named Sergeant [Irving] White, who had been a recruiting sergeant in Detroit and had fought like the devil to get into a combat outfit and had been assigned to our outfit, was standing in a turret when that hit. Another man named Blackham [?] was the gunner.

Anyway, it bent the breach of the 75mm and it just blew those men all apart. One man got out. Jones Woods was the assistant driver, and he got out with just a little nick on his back. He came running to tell us what happened, and those were our first casualties. And on that same day, we captured some prisoners in this little town and some young German soldiers. I don't know whether they were AWL or what, but we captured them.

He claimed he was trying to get back to his outfit, but we didn't know what was happening. That was the worst that happened to us there. One of the headquarter's company tank lost a tank crew too. They started a fire where there had already been a campfire. And sure enough the Germans dropped a shell right on that spot. They probably had it zeroed in. They probably had that marked and they killed three or four of the tank crew with the battalion commander's tank. So that was in Betvilller. From there, our biggest battle was a town called Herrlisheim. That was when the Battle of the Bulge had started in the north, up in Luxembourg. At that time we were almost down to...now I'm losing track of my cities.

But anyway, we're in a town called Herrlisheim, not far from the Rhine River. We were told to get down there, that there were seven or eight hundred Germans down there and we should clean it out. Well, they sent one combat command of an armored division that consisted of a tank battalion, armored, infantry battalion, armored field artillery and some assorted units. I was with the company commander when he got his orders, and down we went. The trouble down there was this town was right near the Rhine River and it had canals all around it. The Germans had blown the bridges. The first thing we had to do was get the engineers down there to repair the bridges so we could get into this town of Herrlisheim. Every time we fixed a bridge, they blew it again. Finally we got across the first bridge and we were between the Zorn River and another little stream that was there. And they blew the bridges on both sides of us. Here we were, a bunch of tanks sitting out in the field.

Our Armored infantry got in and got into Herrlisheim and they got really massacred. It turned out there were elements of seven or eight German divisions in there. This was a reflex from the Battle of the Bulge which was farther north. They had sent some troops down north of Strasbourg and we were about eight or ten miles north of Strasbourg. Finally they got the breach fixed and we got into Herrlisheim. I was in the company commander's tank. They called the battalion commander. His name was Joseph Phelan [?]. We called him Smokey Joe. He called a meeting and all the officers went into this one building. They weren't in there for five minutes when a shell hit it. There were Germans around us in all the alleyways. We were in a little town. You can't maneuver your tanks. And our armored infantry had been sold. Some of them were down to twenty or thirty men in a company. Anyway, the tank right behind me got hit and four men got out of it. One man, the assistant driver named Bob Blackham, who had come from us, from the old ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program] as he came to us just before we went overseas. Very intelligent man. He was still in there and the tank was starting to burn. And foolishly, I shouldn't have done it, but I left my tank and I went to that tank and I went in the driver's hatch because everybody else had gotten out. I unlatched his hatch and I was able to boost him and somebody pulled him out. We got Bob out, but he had been hit [points to his temple]. It was a panzerfaust. They put a hole about this big [gestures the size of a baseball] in the side of the tank. When it gets in there it goes [gestures spreading out]. It must have hit him right in the side of the head. Bob was a wonderful, wonderful man. Anyway, I took him in a building there and I held him for quite a while. It seemed like a long time. It couldn't have been too long because I had to get back to my own tank because the company commander was in this meeting. And then a shell hit the building where all the officers were meeting. Our battalion commanders. We called him Smokey Joe Phelan. He got a broken back. We loaded him on the back of a tank and took him out. And a couple of our officers from our company got hit. The ranking officer left after that. In town was my own Charles Clayton, my own company commander. So we started out. We got orders to evacuate the town because we couldn't maneuver. It was no place for tanks to start with. And we didn't have enough armored infantry. The Germans were right in the alleyways when they hit this one tank behind me with a panzerfaust. The man wasn't more than ten feet away when he fired a panzerfaust at it. We started out and we got hit. Our tank got hit. And in fact, as we got hit, it rolled right over into a canal. I jumped out and my assistant. Charlie Clayton, our company commander, was up front and led us out of there by foot. At that time, I was only about twenty-one years old. Charlie Clayton was four days less than a year older than me. And he was our captain. A wonderful soldier.

But anyway, we lost our tank on the way out, but we did get out. Finally I rode out on the back of another tank soaking wet because I'd gone through the ice in this stream canal that we went in and we got out. Two days later, I don't think it was 30 hours, we had another tank. They got us another one. Forty guys went back. I went with Clayton and another tank. The other three men in our crew went back and they got another tank. So we were right back up there with it. But the only good thing about this all was that our original tank only had a 75 millimeter gun on it. The new one had a 76mm. That doesn't sound like much, 1mm, but the muzzle velocity was about half as much. With the 76mm, you had to almost learn to read your sights again because the trajectory was so much flatter. That was Herrlisheim, and it was really our baptism into battle. We lost one of our tank battalions. Finally they decided to commit the whole division. When the 43rd Tank Battalion came in from the south to try to relieve us, they lost 90% of their tanks. The Germans had eight inch guns or 88s or whatever and they picked them off just like a shooting gallery. And the last they heard, the battalion commander from the 43rd said, I'm hit, and that was it.

Later on they took an anti-aircraft battalion and made a tank battalion out of it. They took two years to train us here in the States as a tank battalion, they did this [trained anti-aircraft battalion] in something like less than one hundred hours. They made an anti-aircraft battalion into a tank battalion to replace the 43rd. We felt that we had a very outstanding combat record by the time the war ended. Herrlisheim was bad enough, but then we took Colmar down south. We met the first French down there and we took the city of Colmar. Then we went up and we were assigned to the 3rd Army with Patton. We jumped off from I think it was Trier up near Metz. And we were supposed to take Worms on the Rhine River. But we had four armored divisions abreast at that time and we were diverted south and we took the city of Spire. Spire was almost like a college town, a cathedral town, some big schools there and a beautiful town. We got stopped by a roadblock going in there and fortunately because we finally did break through and we weren't about four blocks from the bridge across the Rhine River when the Germans blew it. If we'd have been fifteen minutes more maybe we would've been on it. We took Spire and it was two days after that or the next night that we crossed the Rhine River and we went and we started moving.

We went through Germany and we ended up down in Austria and almost to Nuremberg but then we turned south. I feel that the 12th Armored Division...well I have papers that tell me that the 12th Armored Division was the second most

feared American division. Now, of course, that might be propaganda from the people that are writing for our benefit. But regardless, I know that I feel that for the short time that we had in combat because we didn't get in until...some of the men in my outfit and some of them are still with us today will tell you [about me] [They will say] "Boy, that Golden. The biggest fright he had was that he wasn't going to get there before the war was over." I felt that, hey, we're into this, we might as well see some of it. But we had a good outfit. 12th Armored Division. We had a lot to be proud of.

Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas has started a museum dedicated to the history of the 12th Armored Division. And in fact the first week in October this year we will be down there when they officially open that museum. We have people from our own outfit to go down there all the time and work on it, help it get going. We're donating a lot of money to it. A lot of our mementos and souvenirs are down there and a history of every outfit. I'm particularly proud to have been a Hellcat. Remember the 12th Armored Division.

After the war was over I was actually hit three times by enemy fire. Never got a Purple Heart for the simple reason I only went to the aid station once. That's when I got hit right on the head and the blood was streaming down. And that was the day after I lost my tank in Herrlisheim. I got hit, I didn't have a tank. I was in a chow line of all things and I got hit with shrapnel. When I went to the aid station there were men in there with their legs blown off. I just didn't want to stay around, so no paperwork was ever done. And I regret that today to a certain extent because a Purple Heart makes a lot of difference in some of the benefits you can get at a VA hospital and things like that. But hey, I'm proud that I served with the 12th Armored Division and the men I was with. We have a reunion every year. Every year we have a national reunion. This year...oh, I got the Hellcat. [holds up a newsletter] That's our monthly newspaper that we print. Each unit has a unit representative. I write for the 714th Tank Battalion. That's my column there. That's Dick [Richard B.] Iverson. He's the man that wrote to Disney and got Disney to draw up these different things for our Hellcat unit, like this. [Shows photo of Hellcat image drawn by Disney] That's our Hellcat symbol. And I get pictures of different people each month. But we had some great, great people, and the thing that has held us together, probably now for over fifty-five years, is this newspaper we put out every month. Every month that comes out. We have one unit now that doesn't have a unit wrap because we're starting to dwindle down. I'm down to two-hundred-seven people on my roster right now, and I think fifty of them are widows. So we're starting to fade away. Like Doug MacArthur said.

But we had a good outfit, the 12th Armored Division and I'm proud that I served in it.

Q: Tell me what happened to you after the war.

DG: After the war, when I hit Fort Dix for my discharge, I made a couple of mistakes.

One of the first things they asked you just before your discharge is, do you want to put in a claim for any wounds or anything? I said, no, I just wanted to go home. But they said, do you want to join the reserve? I said, yeah, I'll join the reserve. I like the army. I enjoyed army life, even though it was during a war. I met a lot of good people and I enjoyed discipline. It doesn't bother me, I can take it along with anybody else. I think sometimes there's too little discipline in this life for some people. But anyway, I got my discharge, but I did join the reserve. One of my disappointments was, I got out February 1, 1946, the reserve wasn't very active at that time. It was Active Reserve that I was in. I got credit for three years in the Active Reserve, but in that whole three years, I don't think I went to five meetings. [I went] down to Watervliet because I lived right over here on Forts Ferry Road. There was not much to it. The reserve was very... it was more like inactive than active reserve.

But then when my time was up in the reserve, I'm not sure how long it was between then, and when I was working in the General Electric Company in Schenectady. One of the men up there said he was in the National Guard. Why don't you come and join the National Guard? Well, I did. I'm not sure how long it was between February 1, when my enlistment in a reserve expired, and I joined the National Guard. I'd have to look, but I don't have a discharge from the National Guard yet. I joined the National Guard as a private. I'd been a corporal now for over three years. Or a technician, fifth grade, and then I made corporal from that. And all that time in the service, as high as I got, I saw men come in there and bingo, they were sergeants because they were tank commanders. In our outfit, a staff sergeant was platoon sergeant. It was only staff. And we had one tech sergeant. He was a motor sergeant, and we had a first sergeant. That was the extent of our NCOs. And I was a corporal. I'm not ashamed. I'm proud of it, in fact. I got out and I got in the National Guard, in the reserve. And I don't know what I was in the reserve, I don't remember. But when I went in the National Guard, I went in as a private and within about two years I was a master sergeant. And some people found fault with that. One of the regular army officers, when I went up, I took the Series Ten course and passed it well. But the trouble was, by this time I was 27 years old. Over age and grade for second lieutenant. But I got a

stack of papers like that, all kinds of endorsements from the commanding general, New York National Guard and everything else, recommending that I be accepted. So I went before the board over in Troy.

And I don't know, I think there was some politics going on right at that time because we had a battalion commander in Schenectady and it seemed to me that they were trying to get him to retire. And so they said to me, you go back and you wait a month or two and then you come back again and then we'll consider you. I went back and I went in and I said, I will just take my discharge because if I can't pass a board after all this time in the service. And young kids coming along as second lieutenants. I think you should be young to be a second lieutenant, especially in the infantry. So anyway, to make a long story short, I got out of the National Guard and I've not been too happy with that. It wasn't one of my best decisions because I liked the Army. I liked Army life, I liked Army discipline. I wanted to go to Korea. I went down two or three times and tried to enlist and they wouldn't take me because I was in the National Guard during the Korean War. Because I felt that in the infantry, knowing what I knew about tanks, I could take and I could be a match for a tank because I knew how easy it would have been.

One time we stopped our tank. They blew a bridge in Germany and the bridge blew right ahead of us. We stopped, we started making our coffee, our Nescafe. Jim Bagley, who was a staff sergeant, was my loader for my gun because he was our communication sergeant. And he was with our tank because of the company commander's tanks and he wanted this communication sergeant with him. But Jim got down, he went over in the bushes to urinate and I saw him grab him for his pistol. There was a young German boy with a panzerfaust. A panzerfaust looks almost like a sink plunger. It's got a big ball on the end with a long tube on it. And he wasn't more than ten feet from our tank. Now, if he had gotten up there and fired that, he would have put a hole through the tanks. Now, the kid was scared to death. They had taken this kid out of his house and given him a German overcoat, put him in a foxhole and told him if a tank comes along, hit it. The kid was laying in there crying his head off. He was scared to death. So we took him out, took the overcoat away, we asked him where he lived, he said, down the street. We kicked him in the fanny and sent him home. And that's how close we came to...but they had blown the bridge. When they blew the bridge, they had people there still putting the charges in the bridge when they blew it. They blew their own people up. So things like that, how close you can come to being...

Q: Let's hold there for a minute. Take two. Interview with Mr. David E. Golden, March 7, 2001. What happened after the war? You came home. What did you do with the rest of your life?

DG: I came home and first I went back to work on the farm right over here on Forts Ferry Road. At the time, my dad had about thirty-two milk cows in the barn and my dad wasn't well. And so I ran the farm for one year. I got out of the army on February 1, 1946. We had asparagus, about eight acres of asparagus. So come April, as soon as you can till the soil and the weather gets warm, the asparagus starts coming along. Every morning my younger brother, a neighbor boy I hired and I would go out and we would cut asparagus. Then I ran it into a market in Troy. I had a man that bought everything I could take him. I made some money on asparagus on July 4th. I'd been in the service with men from North and South Dakota and from the big farms. Well, they didn't talk about acres in the west like that. They talked about sections.

One man, Jerry Thielbold [?], told me, I'm going to have a section of rye and a section of flax and a section of wheat, maybe. And he said, if one fails, I'll make my living, on the other. I'll make it. He said, they don't necessarily own all that land. They lease it from the government, some of it. When I came home, I was going to do things. We used to start haying in late June, and we'd be haying until about September 1, going out, cutting it, raking it and bringing it in. But what I did that year, three or four of my neighbors got together. Georgie Volk, who runs a farm over here on Route Seven, he helped me out. And another farm from the Green Farm up the road. Some of the other farmers came in. We only had twenty-five acres, but I was renting about eighty acres from other farmers or other people around. So we went out and we mowed all that hay, and we brought in twelve-hundred bales of hay on July 4, 1946. And I don't think anybody ever did anything quite like that around this neighborhood. I paid ten cents a bale to have it baled. That was one-hundred-four dollars or something like that. And that was a lot of money in those days. But anyway, we did it. We did all the haying in one day. And then, of course, things weren't going just right. It wasn't my farm, it was my dad's farm. And I had an older brother. Things didn't work out. To make a long story short, I just farmed it for one year, and then I went to work in an automobile apprenticeship. And then I got a better chance. I went to work for General Electric Company in Schenectady, up in the old turbine factory up there. And I worked there for about twelve years. In the meantime, I was in a reserve. I was in the National Guard. I'd go away to camp for two weeks every summer. And I loved it. I enjoyed it. I liked the military. And I always feel that a little bit of discipline doesn't hurt anybody. In fact, I think it's one of the greatest things you

can have. Then I met a girl and I got married. I got married in 1948. I better not forget that if my wife ever saw this. I got married in 1948 right over here on Wade Road where we lived at that time. Went off on our honeymoon up to Vermont, way back in the mountains, my wife and I, to a brother in law's place on a farm way back in the hills. And the man that lived there and ran that farm, had been gassed in World War I, and that's the reason he lived back there in the mountains, because of the air. [When] he came down here, he couldn't breathe.

I stayed at GE for twelve or thirteen years. Things got...they had layoffs up there. So I left GE and I went to work for the Watervliet Arsenal. I stayed with the Arsenal for twenty-nine years and six months, something like that. Well, that's counting my military time, government time. I retired from the Watervliet Arsenal. I was their equipment manager, a member of the commander's staff and so on. I feel that the Arsenal was good to me.

And my wife couldn't have children, so we've adopted three children since then. I have a son, Todd, my youngest son. When he came home one day from high school he said, dad, I'm going to join the army. I said, why are you going to join the Army, Todd? Of course, he had had the recruiting sergeants to the house, and I knew this was in the wind. He said, I can get \$24,000 to go to college. Anyway, Todd joined the army while he was still in school, and then he had to wait until he got out, and he was only home about two weeks, and off he went down to Fort Dix. Then he went to Fort Belvoir for engineering training for a short time. Then he went to Fort Benning for jump training. He did his jumps. One day he called, he said, dad, I haven't jumped yet. He said, the weather's too bad. They won't let us jump. The next day he called, and said, dad, I did it. I jumped five times. One day. Five times. They made all five jumps in one day. I never jumped. I tried to volunteer from the 12th while we were still in the States. I tried to transfer to the paratroopers. My company commander reamed me out. He said, all the training we gave you, you're not going to the paratroopers. So I stayed. But Todd did it. He served his time. He met a girl in North Carolina, got married, and never came home. He got out of the service after four years. But then he got called back during the Persian Gulf. Todd went over in the Persian Gulf and he was in charge of a maintenance crew for a field hospital. All the electronics, air conditioning, refrigeration, and he's got a tape of that field hospital. I've seen it. He said he hated to see them close down that hospital when the Persian Gulf War was over because they had Iraqi civilians in there that they were taking care of. He said they needed that hospital.

Army life had changed. Now. I'm still very close to the men I was with. I got a call yesterday from a man in Kentucky because he wanted to be sure that he was going to be able to get in the same hotel next October in Abilene, Texas, with me, with my unit. Although he wasn't in my unit, he was with the MPs of the 12th Armored Division. But he worked with our company a lot, and he said, Dave, I want to be with your unit out here. I told him how to go about getting it because I've made arrangements. We're going to have five hotels in Abilene in October because they're small, and I've already written all my people a letter so that they know what hotel to go to. We've got 24 reservations made the last I knew last week. I imagine we got more now. So I stayed with it, the 12th Armored.

I was president of the association in 1980, 1981. I was a unit rep for several years before that, and now I've been a unit rep again now for the last ten or fifteen years. I write a monthly column, two-thousand words or so, and generally I had to cut myself short because I can't get everything I want to put in. But you can see our newspaper there. That's what's held us together. They talk about the book, who wrote the book *The Greatest Generation*. I've read it. I could name a hundred people from the 12th Armored Division or the 714th Tank Battalion who could write their autobiography and be in there. Just the greatest people ever. And I have a lot of respect for the people who served in World War II and since then. But I do realize that I think that the military has changed a lot since then. It's changed quite a bit. I'm not sure that I would feel right at home in it now because I don't know. I'm afraid that they've relaxed. When I went to visit my son at Fort Dix, he had just been inducted, he didn't even eat in a mess hall. He went to a cafeteria to eat. They didn't have the cohesiveness that I think that we had in our day. When you were a member of I Company, the 44th Armored Regiment, or C, the 714th, which was the same company...the worst of it was I went away to school, like I told you, in December of 1942, I went to school. When I came back, half of the men that had been there in basic training with me were gone. They had needed replacements over in North Africa, and they had taken anybody below the rank of corporal and sent them over there. So that's the reason a lot of people got promoted to corporal or sergeant quickly, early and within three or five months of the time they were in the service, because they wanted to protect the men that they wanted to keep in that company. So a lot of the men that I knew in the first early days of my training before I went away to school were gone.

I can name some of them yet because I got pretty close with them. We went through Tennessee Maneuvers. We went to Camp Barclay. We went to Jackson for three months and then we went to Barclay and we shipped and went to

Tidworth barracks. And these things are just as fresh in my memory today. It's been a very, very big part of my life. I often wonder what my life would have been like if I hadn't served in World War II. I don't want another war. I don't want to see my grandsons have to go to war. But if the time ever comes I hope they're fortunate enough to serve with the kind of people I served with. Good, good people. And they're just as great today as they were then. I can remember a few, one in particular. We had one man in our tank as my assistant gun. My loader. In Herrlisheim where we really got beat up badly and we lost our tank on the way out. I told you that. That man wouldn't load the gun. This man was a staff sergeant. Had been one of the cadremen in our outfit. One of the toughest guys ever in basic training. But when he got there, he just lost it all. He lost everything. He was so scared and frightened that he couldn't load the gun. That's the reason they changed and they put Jim Bagley, his assistant, in there after we got out of there. But ninety-nine percent of the men in our outfit were one hundred percent. We had a couple of cases where men didn't live up to what was expected of them but for the bigger share of them, they were good people.

Q: What did you do with the guys who couldn't cut it?

DG: They left him back. He was our communications sergeant and Jim Bagley was his assistant. Well, what they did, they put Jim in here and left him back with the trains. And of course, sometimes one time we were coming down going down toward Nuremberg and one day we went fifty miles down the Autobahn. Our trains were behind us and no telling how far back. We went through a roadblock. We blew a roadblock up one time in a big woods and we got through and off we went. And then about an hour later, we got a call. When our trains got up there the Germans had come back and set that thing back up again. George Gray, our armorer who was in charge of all the armor in the company. He was a sergeant. Every time we lost a tank commander, he went, Clayton, Captain Clayton, can I come up? Can I take his place? Can I take his place till you get somebody? And he would. He came up and took the tank commander's place until we got someone. He was back with the trains, and they got ambushed by this roadblock. And they told me George jumped up on a fifty caliber machine gun mounted on a six-by-six and a sniper got him right in the head and killed him. So you never know. Just sometimes it seemed like the best people were the ones that really got hit. Like the man that I pulled out of the tank or pushed out of the tank. In Herrlisheim, Bob Blackham. We had a Blackham and a Blackard. It sounds the same, but this was Blackham. He had been a vice president for the Standard Oil Company of Ohio and here he was a PFC because he had been with the ASTP Army specialized Training program in Texas A and M. And when they disabolished that program,

they sent a lot of them into the 12th Armored Division as replacements. And Bob was killed out there. Just a wonderful, wonderful guy. You wonder, maybe God wanted them with him. Another one, Noble [?] Johnson, was one of my mechanics. This guy could fix anything. You got trouble with any motor problem, any kind of a problem with anything, he'd fix it. Sure enough. He was fixing a flat tire on one of the big trucks and a mortar shell landed right next to him. Killed him. It was men like that that we lost. And all too many. But the infantry, our infantry got shot up so bad. There were days when an infantry company was down to twenty-five percent strength. Especially in Herrlisheim. One time, we used to go down the road. We were going down the highways in Germany. We had a couple of tanks on point and then there were maybe a couple of halftracks of infantry. And then the tank I was in was the company commander's tank. I'll never forget we were going down one time and a mortar shell lit right in one of those halftracks with the infantry men in there. Some of them got out, some of them did get out, but a lot of them didn't, and things like that. It's just war can be Hell; it's Hell.

But then again, I often wonder what my life would have been like if I hadn't been there. I wouldn't know some of these people and something else would have happened, I suppose. But that's the way faith had it. I just thank God for the fact that I knew some of these wonderful people I served with. Charlie Clayton, my company commander. He came to us after [Tennessee] Maneuvers. Well, actually, he wasn't with us in South Carolina when we were in a separate tank battle, we had Captain Cleary [?]. He had been a first sergeant in the old army, and they claimed they had to twist his arm to take a commission. But he ended up a captain, and he was our company commander a separate time. Then we went back to Barclay, to the 12th Armored. They took him out and put him in recon, a 92nd Recon. And they put Charlie Clayton in charge of our department. Charlie Clayton, we called him Junior. He was four days less than a year older than me. He was a captain. He had been ROTC at Oklahoma, A and M. They said he was a nephew to General [Carlos] Brewer, who was our division commander at that time. A lot of talk, but boy, I'll tell you what, a soldier this man. He never got upset. Colonel Field would be back there yelling, Clayton, Clayton, take that bridge, take that bridge. And Charlie Clayton said, we're doing it, we're doing it. But there were times when instead of sacrificing a couple of tanks to get through a roadblock, he encircled it. It took a little longer sometimes, but by gosh, he was right there. And in fact, he's the one that brought us out of Herrlisheim, and he got a Silver Star for that. And just some wonderful people, wonderful people I served with.

And I go to reunions now. I'll be going down to what we call a smoke...see, we have a whole bunch of reunions. We have a national reunion every year, and this year we're going to have our national reunion in October. But in the meantime, we're going to have an Eastern reunion in Pennsylvania, Smoky Mountain reunion in Virginia, midwestern, seven, eight different ones around the country. There they are, all the different times we get together. [shows newsletter] And that shows you here we are fifty-five years later, and we still have that *esprit de corps* that we get together. I think it's a good example of the kind of people I served with in World War II. North, central, northeastern, that's down in Callicoon, New York, if you know where that is. It's at the old Villa Roma Resort. We go down there, and that'll be in June. As long as I can afford them, I'm going to them. But the national I have to make every year because I have to set a lot of the stuff up and do that. We've been hanging together all these years. Like I said, I got a call this morning from one man from the MPs. He wants to be with our unit. [He said] I want to be with the 714th, even though he was with division headquarters.

I don't know what more to tell you. I certainly hope we never have to fight another war. That my grandchildren or their children never have to fight another war. But I would say that I hope that if they ever do that, they can serve with men and people like I did. Not only were the men great, but since the war, I found out how great the women are that they married, too. Because a lot of those women still come to our reunions even though their husbands are gone. In fact, I got a call, what was it?, Thursday or Friday last week, from a girl in Florida. She said, I'm coming. And Wanda Challans [?] is coming with me. Now, Wanda Challans' husband was in the 56th Armored Infantry, one of our other outfits. But she comes because they share a hotel room together. The *esprit de corps* in our organization is just great.

Q: Let me ask you some questions, and then we'll get into that National Guard period. What was the first type of tank you were trained on?

DG: First tank? M3. That was the old US Grant with a 75mm on the sponson and a 37mm in the turret and with the Wright Whirlwind engine. I will never forget the one time we cleaned. We used to put crews of people in there, cleaning them up. We only had two or three tanks when we first went into the service. In there, there's a place if you pull this thing, it's a fire extinguisher. And somebody that was cleaning must have pulled it, because a fire extinguisher [gestures extinguisher going off], if you want to see five or six guys try to get out of a tank in

a hurry, I'll never forget that as long as I live. [laughs] But that was the US Grant. And then we went toward the end, while we were still at Campbell, before we went on maneuvers, we started getting the M4s. We got all different ones. Some had the Wright Whirlwind engines in, these were medium tanks. Some had the Cadillac engines, five, six-cylinder Cadillac engines, and they were synchronized. But the trouble with them was they'd get out of synchronization. We'd go out with one running pretty good, and by the time we came back in from the field, two of the engines would be dead and we'd be dragging them. Just barely limping in. But when we went to the Ford V8 and the Ford V8 engine had originally been a twelve-cylinder engine for aircraft, they cut it down to eight cylinders for a tank. The result was that the timing on those was not the same. In other words, they didn't change the timing. In other words, instead of taking eight into three-hundred-sixty for your timing, it was eight into or twelve into three-hundred-sixty. But anyway, that's just a technicality. We never had any engine trouble with the Ford engine all the time we were in combat with our Fords. The worst of it was, once in a while they had to make a stop during our run through Germany for first echelon maintenance. Then the next day we'd get shellacked because if you give the Germans a chance to set up. One day they were waiting for us. We lost one of our lieutenants that way. And of all things, his tank got hit with white phosphorus. And we understood the Germans didn't have white phosphorus. They got some from someplace. A man named La France. Richard la France, lost his eyesight. When I came home, I visited him. He was a masseur at Cornell University for their football team. And Dick was there and [he] couldn't see, of course.

Q: Tell me about the time you spent in the M3 Grant?

DG: That was early. That's the thing. I was there only less than three months when they sent me away to school. We went to school to train. It was at Fort Knox Armored Force School. And I was training all on the M4s. By the time I went back, they were starting to get the M4s.

Q: And the rest of the war, you served an M4?

DG: That's all we ever had in combat. M4A3s with the Ford 8 engine.

Q: How did the M4 compare to the M3?

DG: Oh, no comparison. The M4, first off you had a 75mm gun in a turret, three-hundred-sixty degrees rotation. That's one of the reasons why we were able to beat the Germans. Because we could turn our main gun two or three times while they turned once and we could outmaneuver them. In other words, if they'd have

gotten that 88mm on us, all they needed was one shot with an 88mm. Going into Nuremberg, I saw two tanks in a row where an 88mm hit the tank on the heaviest iron plate right in the front. It went in the front, out the back of the first tank and in the front and out the back of the second tank. Two tanks in a row with an 88mm. Now, with our 75mm, I hit a German tank nine times. We never considered a tank knocked out until it started burning. I hit one nine times at about eighteen-hundred yards. And then it started smoking. About the third or fourth shot, something flew off it. I think it probably knocked the hatch off it. Something flew off it. But we hit it nine times before we considered it knocked out. But the M4 was twice the tank that the M3 was because with the M3, if you got a tank knocked off track ...Now, my driver, Julian Head [?], was my driver. He had been with Patton in North Africa with the British 8th Army. He had gone from Pine Camp. When Patton was at Pine Camp, I don't know whether it was the 1st or 4th Armored Division, one of the armored divisions that was up at...And Julian had gone to France with Patton, just a small crew as observers, but they actually got in the tanks and went out on the desert. And over there, if they knocked the track off, your 75mm was worthless, practically, because they could outmaneuver you. You didn't have three-hundred-sixty degrees to traverse.

The big thing, though, was when we went from the 75mm, after we lost our first tank, we got a new one. One of the best things that ever happened to us, we got one with a 76mm on it. The difference was the 75mm with armor piercing ammunition had a muzzle velocity of nineteen-hundred feet per second. The 76mm was twenty-nine-hundred feet per second. You actually had to aim lower because you had a flatter trajectory, but it was twice the gun. When you hit, you could pierce more armor. But of course, the Germans 88mm was thirty-nine-hundred feet per second. So there again, you just didn't want to get with one of them or you were done.

Q: So how was it? M4s up against German Panzas?.

DG: We never had any problem because nine times out of ten, we outmaneuvered them. Fact is, an officer and a sergeant from the 92nd Recon captured a German tank only because they couldn't get their damn turret to turn. The biggest thing they had with them was .45s and they captured the tank.

Q: How did they capture the tank?

DG: Well, the Germans surrendered, that's all. The gun was there, and they surrendered. Of course, this was after we had crossed the Rhine, and I guess maybe they knew the war was over anyway, maybe under certain circumstances.

But if a German tank got a shot at us, that was it. There was no question if an 88mm hit us. If you want to read a book, there's a book called *Death Traps*, written by a man named Butler, I think. Anyway, he was an ordinance officer with the 3rd Armored Division. The 3rd Armored Division never triangulated like ours. They stayed with the armored regiments. I think their total component of the tanks was two-hundred-eighty tanks in the division. From Normandy till the end of the war, the 3rd Armored Division lost almost eight-hundred tanks. That means completely lost. When the ordinance man reported back at night and said, well, we had seven or eight tanks hit. Three of them are recoverable. They didn't count the ones that were recoverable. That meant the ones that they couldn't recover. They lost over three-hundred percent of their tanks during that time they were in combat.

Q: So the trick was to get around the Germans?

DG: Oh, yeah, the trick was to outmaneuver them so that they couldn't get a shot at you. Because if they got a shot at you well, you saw what that picture I showed you what it did. I showed you that picture, didn't I?

Q: The infantry was important to you to help...

DG: In this respect, the infantry was important. When we went into Spire, we went from Metz. When they transferred us from the 7th Army, [unclear] 1.05.28 Army up to Patton's Army, the 3rd up near Metz. And the idea was he was going to send four armored divisions headed for the Rhine River. So we went off. Our original objective was Worms, and someplace along the way it got changed and he diverted us south towards Spire. Spire is a cathedral town. Beautiful city. Beautiful city. And we got right there to the edge of town. There was a corner. Because we were a company commander's tank, we were generally the third or fourth tank in line. Maybe we'd have one section ahead of us. One tank started to go around that corner, and an 88mm fired right down that block. Didn't hit him. He backed up and got out. And normally what you do then is you turn to your armored infantry and you say, Get the roadblock. They'd send a platoon up there, maybe a couple of squads. They'd send enough people to encircle this thing and pick them off. Well, I'm not going to tell you the whole story because it gets a little political right here. Anyway, we had a company with us that wouldn't do it. It was the first time this particular company was ever with us in our task force. So Clayton, my company commander, called back and they said, all right, we'll send Charlie Company. Charlie of the 56th Armored Infantry. The captain's name was Captain Fairborn [?]. They were generally with our task force. But this particular day, he had another group with us that, well, we never should have happened. So

anyway, C Company came up. They went down there. In twenty minutes they had this roadblock cleaned out, and we sailed on into town.

We got down. We weren't three blocks from the bridge on the Rhine River and Colonel Fields was back there yelling, Clayton, get that bridge. Get that bridge. Bingo. We're about three blocks from it when it went up in the air, and Clayton said, Field, there's your bridge. I often say if it hadn't been for that hold up at that roadblock, we might have been on that bridge when it launched. We crossed the river the next day. We got into town and we parked in the village square. And when you went into the town, if the white flags started coming out, you felt pretty safe. But if you didn't see any white flags, you figured maybe there was SS here. Because if there was SS, even the civilians wouldn't put white flags out or they [SS] might take care of them [civilians] themselves. The white flags came out. A window opened and the infantry all got their guns up. The infantry was important for that. And there were times when well, for instance, in Herrlisheim, the tank behind me got hit because the infantry was almost annihilated. We didn't have infantry to protect the tanks.

A tank in a small town...that's what I said during the Korean War. If I'd known what I know, if we were fighting a European war again and they wanted to give me something similar to the panzerfaust or a good bazooka, I think I'm a match for a tank in urban warfare. Because you can just hide in an alley. our infantry was coming in there in Herrlisheim and the Germans were marching right in line with them. Everything was so mixed up. Tanks are great, but you have to have infantry support.

Q: How did you talk to the infantry?

DG: By radio or sometimes the commanding officer, platoon leader or the company commander would ride on our tank with our company commander. I got a book here called *The Initial Attack on Herrlisheim*. And it tells us that was one of the big things that happened when our infantry got across the Zorn River and went into Herrlisheim and we couldn't get our tanks across it. We were over there firing in, but then we had to stop firing because we lost communication. We lost all communication with them. We didn't know where they were or where the Germans were. We didn't dare give them supporting fire when we didn't know where they were. And even after we all got out of there...finally we did get in. The tanks did but then we had to pull out because they were picking us off out of these alleys. And some of our guys were trapped in here, and they were up in the hay lofts in these barns, and the Germans were downstairs. They used to wait till the Germans went to bed at night and go down and get food, some of the guys. And

there's a story book, the 56th Armored Infantry and the 714th Tank Battalion put out a book called *The Initial Attack on Herrlisheim*. And it tells all this. I even got a write up in there. When I came out and went into the infantry in the 27th Division, I'll tell you, I wanted to go. In a way, my wife wasn't happy about it, but I wanted to go to Korea because I thought I could lead a squad or a platoon, infantry men, and I could face enemy tanks, knowing what I knew. Camouflage is a big part of it. Secrecy is a big part of it. But perseverance and patience is a big part of an infantry man facing a tank. Because having been a gunner, knowing that all I can see is what I see out through that periscope, the gunner himself is, well, partially blind. And the tank commander, if you got snipers out there, the tank commander can't keep his head out too long either, especially in those. Now, the newer tanks, I think they got better ways of observation today, the [unclear] 1.10.51 and so on. But the tanks that we had, if they made you button up completely, if you didn't have infantry protection, you were pretty at risk, pretty much.

Q: Let's jump ahead and talk about your experiences in [unclear] 1.11.11

DG: I joined the National Guard. I went in there as a private. They asked if anybody wanted to go down on Saturday? So I forgot, what was the man's name? Jones, I think Jones was a motor officer for Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 105th infantry. He said, what do you know about motor vehicles? I said I worked in gas stations. I went to Armored Force School. I went down and I worked on some of the vehicles, changed and lubricated the wheel bearings. That got me started. Then one thing led to another. The first thing you know, within a year, I was Operations Sergeant in Battalion Headquarters in charge of plans and training. I worked with a man, maybe you know the name Chauncey [David] Cole [Jr.]? Have you ever heard of Chauncey Cole? Of course, this is quite a while ago, but he was an operations officer for the 2nd Battalion. A man named Frigoletto [?] was a battalion commander. Williams was my company commander in headquarters. Where my company met on Wednesday nights, once I became Operation Sergeant, I met the same night that the battalion staff met, which was Thursday nights.

We went down there. We were in charge, making sure of all the training aides. I used to teach map reading. You had to draw your own lesson plans and do everything and I was supposed to keep track of all the lesson plans for all the NCOs that were teaching in the battalion. I really enjoyed that. But then maybe they talked me into going for a commission, a second lieutenant. I took the Series Ten and passed it, and I started the Series 20. I went over one night to Troy, and I think the colonel then was Colonel Baker. I think Baker and the training officer

was an O'Toole. And of course, then we had a regular Army Major training officer.

I went in there, and I thought I looked pretty good and they asked me a lot of questions. I had my ribbons on, but I did have one ribbon wrong. I guess I did serve in the army occupation. It's not on my discharge, but I've got it now. I've got it in writing now. All the medals and things I'm entitled to. I was wearing an occupation ribbon and it was the wrong one. It was World War I instead of World War II, I guess. The regular army officer recognized that and said we're going to send you back. He said, come back in a month or two. Right now, we'll just say that you came in here with an improper uniform. He said come back in a month or so and we'll see what happens. Well, I found out, I think they were trying to displace our battalion commander back there because they were waiting back at the officers' meeting for me to come back. Of course, I didn't go back that night, but I was a little peeved because I had my uniform. My wife at that time worked for Wilkie's Laundry. I had that uniform in the press as a master sergeant. I certainly wasn't going to go over there looking sloppy. I was pretty peeved about it, and my enlistment time was up. But then they changed our battalion; they did change our battalion commander. They pulled him out and put a new battalion commander, McCord [?], I think it was something like that. I'm not sure what his name was. And he brought his own operation sergeant with him. So they moved me to H Company. Heavy Weapons Company. Captain Chase later became a colonel. I took over as a platoon sergeant in the Heavy Weapons Company, which was great. I liked that, too. But then my enlistment ran out, and I didn't re-up.

Q: Let's hold there for a second, okay?

GD: I've regretted it many times.

Q: Tell me, how did you get to be a master sergeant in Operations in less than a year? GD: I don't know. That's exactly what they said at the regimental board. The regular army officers thought that was rather quick. But I can go back to my regular army time. In less than three months. I was a T5, not a corporal. When they moved me from the motor section to the tank crew, I became a corporal. I'm not sure just when that was, but during combat, I was even recommended for a battlefield commission. But my company commander put the kibosh on that for the simple reason he said I was not leaving his tanks. Now, this sounds like a lot of hogwash, I know, but regardless, if any of my tank crew was here, they know about it.

Q: In 1950, 1951, when you came in, were the majority of guys combat veterans?

DG: No, most of them weren't. There were very few. Very few. A man named Jimmy Kloss [?] was an army veteran, but I don't know if he was in combat.

Q: The majority of people in the unit, where did they come from?

DG: I hate to say it, maybe some of them were in there because they didn't want to go in the Army and go to Korea. That was during the Korean War. And if you were in the National Guard, you didn't go to Korea. Now, I don't say this derogatory about anybody, but some people felt that they had to pay their military obligation one way or another. And a good way to do it was to join the National Guard.

Q: Was there talk about whether or not the unit would go to Korea?

DG: The possibility was there. I used to listen to the news every night hoping they'd call the 27th Division up, and it never happened.

Q: What do you guys think? Because the whole division had been called up for World War II. Did some of them think it would be likely to be called up for Korea?

DG: Always seemed like there was a good possibility of it, yes. I could never understand why they didn't. Maybe because they did so much in World War II. Because I've heard some of the experiences that they had in World War II, the 27th Division. On Saipan for instance, I got a writing home that a man wrote a brother. One of the guys I was in service with told about what happened to him. And you'd have to read this thing to believe it. He got shot up so badly.

Q: The guys thought that they might be going to Korea?

DG: I don't know whether they did or not.

Q: Did your drill activities change any?

DG: No, not very much. We drilled one night a week and two weeks in the summer. That's all.

Q: Tell me about what a typical drill night was like.

DG: A typical drill night for me was different once I got into battalion staff. A typical drill night would be a certain amount of close order drills, calisthenics, maybe a class in map reading. Depending on your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty], what section you were assigned to. Maybe motor maintenance down

in the basement. This was in the Washington Avenue Armory in Schenectady, where we met.

Q: Your annual training was at Fort Drum?

DG: Fort Drum? Yes.

Q: How did you get there?

DG: We drove up. Yeah. Well, no, wait a minute. No, how did we get there? I was up there four times. My wife used to come up and bring the car. No, we went up by convoy. My wife used to come up and visit because on the weekend, in between the two weeks, I remember we went up to the Thousand Islands, things like that.

Q: What was annual training like? What did you do?

DG: We had field exercises. I remember Chauncey Cole. He was a major. He was our operations officer, an S4. Boy, I'll tell you, you run a field with him. We went out on a lot of hikes, a lot of simulated battles. But the privates, the lower class people didn't get so much out of it as the office. It was more training for the officers. The officers could comprehend or understand what was going on. I think that they got more out of the infantry. A lot of them had no idea what it was all about, the private, because they'd go where they were told and do what they were told to do, and that was about it. But a lot of it you had to know some map reading. That is, if you were in charge of a squad or platoon and you had to go to a certain place by a certain route, you had to understand some map reading. That's one place where I fit in pretty well. I worked with Charlie Clayton going across Europe, I remember those maps we had over there were not always the greatest either. But if we couldn't read a map, we were in tough shape.

Q: Did you live in barracks or did you live in tents during annual training?

DG: We lived in barracks. Except out in the field. We went out in the field sometimes and stayed overnight.

Q: Overnight? Several nights?

DG: Two or three nights. Sometimes in a row.

Q: And what kind of equipment were you using? Basically the same equipment as World War II?

DG: No, because in World War II, my sidearm as a tanker was an old grease gun. The old .45 caliber grease gun. My sidearm in the National Guard was a Carbine. Some of them had M1s.

Q: Basically the unit wore World War II era uniforms?

DG: Yeah. The old Eisenhower jacket.

Q: Did there seem to be any kind of camaraderie among the troops?

DG: Yes, I think so. I still remember, if I see some of the guys who were in the National Guard, one man named Ed [Edward I.] Burmaster, who was our [Albany] county legislature here for a while. He was in the National Guard there with me. I can remember quite a few of the people. One man you've probably heard a lot about. He's not in too much good repute. He ran the OTB [Off-track Betting]. Davis Etkin. He was in our company in the National Guard. He was a lawyer. I always thought a lot of him, but of course, he got in a lot of trouble with his OTB. He built OTB. But a lot of people...I enjoyed the National Guard. Every once in a while we'd have an outing somewhere, go out for a company party or something. And I thought we had pretty good esprit de corps. Wasn't bad, anyway.

Q: How was it as a military unit?

Kind of hard to say because we were never really put to a real test. I think had they been called up, they would have definitely had to have some real intensive training before they would want to go. I don't think they weren't combat ready, that's for sure. They certainly had to have good leadership. And then again, of course, at that time, quite a few of the officers were World War II veterans. Chauncey Cole had been with the 27th Division. I'm trying to think who...the colonel was the company commander in H Company. Cook. Cook. Anyway, he became a colonel. I can't even think of his name. I knew him well. Sometimes those names slip you, but they would have definitely needed, I would say, three, four or five, six months good intensive training to really go into combat. When I went to the army in 1942, I went down to go in the army and my brother in law's brother named Bobby Long, went down the same day I did, only I went in the army and he went in the Marines. I was just really getting into basic training in Camp Campbell, Kentucky, and he was on Guadalcanal with the marines. They gave him a rifle and told him how to put the bullets in or something and sent him over there, I guess. Five weeks he was on Guadalcanal.

Q: Do you remember being called up for any emergencies?

DG: No, I don't. No, we never were, not to my knowledge. Not while I was in it. That was three years and nine months.

Q: Where was the armory?

DG: At Washington Avenue in Schenectady.

Q: That's not the armory they're in now, is it?

DG: Oh, yeah, I believe it's still there now, yes.

Q: Anything else in particular you remember about the unit during those four years? **DG:** Just that I felt that there were some politics going on between regimental headquarters and over there. I felt like they were trying to start...that's the impression I got. I think I got right in the middle of it.

Q: What was the nature of the politics?

DG: I think that they were trying to induce our battalion commander in Schenectady to retire.

Q: Who was the battalion commander in Schenectady?

DG: Frigoletto was his last name. I don't remember...

Q: Who was the regimental commander?

DG: Baker.

Q: John Baker?

DG: I think so, yeah. I think it was Baker. And O'Toole was the Plans and Training Officer for the regiment. I think it was O'Toole. Chauncey Cole was our S4 over there.

At that time, they were starting to bring in a lot of new second lieutenants. I mean, real young second lieutenants. I was twenty-eight and the aging grade was twenty-eight for infantry, for a commission. So that's really what loused me up. I got my endorsements all the way from the commanding general right on down, and I thought I had it made, but then I would have had to really do something really spectacular to make first lieutenant within a very short period of time. I suppose to be in. So if I had just stayed as a master sergeant, I probably would have stayed here for twenty years or whatever. Maybe even longer than that, who knows? Because I got some good friends of mine that stayed in the service here after we got out. In fact, I got to go visit one of them pretty soon. He just went to a nursing home.

Q: Anything else you remember about the 105th?

DG: The 105th, no. I used to play basketball with him. We used to go play at Amsterdam and Schenectady and bounce around a basketball team. And it was a good outfit. It was typical American boys, I guess you might say. I think, though, at that time, it was during the Korean War. I used to go out, in fact, as we had a campaign, and I went out with one of the younger people visiting high school students in their homes and trying to induce them to join the National Guard. And I don't know if I ever really got anybody to join, but I got a lot of them thinking about it. This would be in the presence of their parents. [We] said you can fulfill your military obligation by serving in the National Guard.

And I enjoyed doing that. And of course, it made some kind of an impression. The fact that I was a master sergeant and I had a few combat ribbons and things like that.

Q: I think that's a good point for us to conclude on.