Gordon R. Marsham

Maintenance Man-Locksmith
Physical Plant
(1972-1983)



U. S. Army
WWII
Inducted: June 12, 1943
Active Duty: June 26, 1943 – December 19, 1945

Army Combat Veteran in Europe (France)
Company A 129th Airborne Engineer Battalion
13th Airborne Division – Glider Corps
Technician Fifth Grade – Automobile Mechanic
Technician Fifth Grade – Electrician
Military Schools: Motor Mechanics 13 weeks, Repair and maintenance of gasoline powered engines, chassis, and body.

American Service Medal, EAME Service Medal
Good Conduct Medal, World War II Victory Medal
Unit Received First Battle Star, March 24, 1945, Wesel, Germany

Gordon served in Europe (France) from February 7, 1945 until August 20, 1945. He was fortunate that the war was nearly over by the time he was deployed overseas.





After the war, Gordon received and held in his possession several issues of a Bulletin, "The Thirteener" published by the 13th Airborne Division Association, Inc. that included photos and stories from reunions, letters to the editors and some letters from former servicemen describing some of their experiences. He also held onto several issues of a unit newspaper, "The Home Run." It must have been a daily publication because he held on

to copies dated Thursday, 16 August 1945; Saturday, 18 August 1945; and Sunday, 19 August 1945, distributed just days after Japan announced on August 15, 1945 that it would surrender. It appears from these newsletters, produced for and by enlisted men and women of the transport ship, that Gordon and members of his unit were indeed on a "home run" aboard the troop ship USAT Thomas H. Barry which on August 16th had travelled 1650 miles from Le Havre with "Roughly speaking 1550 miles remain to our port of debarkation." News of the day included: "The treaty signing in Manilla {sic}" and a "What's the Difference" comparison of The League of Nations v The United Nations and the stated hope that the UN would succeed where the League had failed, in the prevention of war. The August 18th issue reported that a "Japs to Leave Variety Show was a Smash Hit," and, also included notice that the ship was scheduled to sight the Ambrose Light-ship, just off the coast of the States, at approximately 0800 hours on Monday morning (August 20, 1945)." The rest of the issue focused on some guidelines for returning to civilian life that included: "…dinner is not chow, a bed is not a sack, girls are not Mademoiselles or Frauleins (by the way, don't expect them to stand on a corner and yell, "you come with me, baby?" Oui and Jaa are taboo in the States. Combien is strictly for the boids; in case you're caught talking about "Pig-Alle," remember that is just a street name in Paris. TS means tough situation, remember your manners while around the folks, and so on. [Gordon is on left in photo]



And, just speculating, the last "Souvenir Edition" of "The Home Run" likely was the one most cherished by Gordon. It includes a statement from Division Commander Maj Gen E. G. Chapman in response to a request from the editors for his personal appraisal of the Division's role in the European Theatre Operations. It is more than worthy for inclusion in Gordon's page as it likely applies also to all veterans being recognized in this project:

> "As we approach the shores of our country delighted with the prospects of an immediate return to our respective homes and loved ones who await us, a verse once committed to memory in the little red schoolhouse and now half forgotten, keeps arising in mind. I can only recall a segment which reads:
>
> 'Breathes there a man with soul so dead
> Who never to himself hath said,
> This is my own, my native land?
> Whose heart that ne'er within him burned
> As home his footsteps he hath turned
> From wandering on a foreign strand.'
>
> A Worthwhile Experience…..
>
> It is the sentiment of all soldiers returning to their country after having dedicated and served at least a portion of their lives for those things which they cherish most highly. Regardless of the part which we may have played in the war, I feel certain

that each one of us appreciates more fully the advantages which our country affords than we ever did before. If so it has been a worthwhile experience.

You May Be Well Satisfied…..

Ever man has doubtless asked himself the question, "Has my service been worth the time, labor and effort which I have been called upon to render?" Each must analyze his own case. Regardless of your personal desires concerning your service record or the role that you have played, if you have responded to the call of your country, have prepared yourself to render efficient service, have won the comradeship of your associates and the esteem of those about you, then you may well be satisfied with the part that you have been called upon to play in the greatest war of all history.

An Affirmative Tie…..

A recent unit skit depicted your Division Commanders continuously "Hunting a Mission" – and such was the case in reality. While I regret that our Division was not afforded an opportunity to evidence its full capacity in combat, believing as I do that it would have established a record second to none, yet it is a satisfaction to know that had it been so committed, with the inevitable resulting losses, no greater material benefit would have been gained towards shortening the war, and therefore, that the decision of higher commanders to hold it in strategic reserve is more than justified. Certainly no one would propose risking a single life needlessly—and our ranks remain intact to serve again in other capacities. We were well trained, fully equipped, and eager to serve whenever and wherever called upon. What more can anyone say in sustaining the merit of his service? In the years to come, memories of particular battles will fade, and the only question which men of our generation will ask one another is "DID YOU SERVE?" The affirmative answer to this query is the future tie which binds us together as veterans.

The Confidence, Respect…..

Our Division has earned the confidence and respect of those individual units, and communities with which we have been associated. Special problems or organization have confronted the Division requiring amalgamation of units, attachment and detachment of major units and the absorption of many individual reinforcements. Thru all these trying periods the morale and esprit of command has been maintained at a high standard with all credit due to the determination of individual members in the will to develop a fighting team.

A Welcome Awaits…..

American citizens residing adjacent to Fort Bragg and Camp MacKill, North Carolina and French officials and residents of the Department of Yonne have on many occasions recorded their full appreciation and kindly sentiments concerning the service and conduct of "Thirteeners." A welcome awaits the individual or unit

which returns to the site where the Division previously has been stationed. Such a reputation is one to be zealously guarded.

The Future Service…..

Negotiations for the pending termination of Japanese hostilities, which have risen since the initiation of our present voyage, will alter the existing mission assignment of our Division. To what extent this will effect {sic} the future service of individual members of this command is not yet clear, but certain it is that new policies will shortly be announced which may alter our association together. In this, as in major changes of the past, we should plan and be prepared.

Good Luck…..Always…



Within forty-eight hours after landing, members of our Division will be enroute to destinations throughout the length and breadth of the land—schedules for the happiest reunion of their lifetime. Whether our separation be temporary or permanent, I send with each one of you an expression of my deep appreciation for the service you have rendered and my best wishes. As representatives of the Lucky Thirteenth, may you reap the rewards you so well merit. Good Luck and Happy Landings – Always." E. G. Chapman, Maj Gen, Comdg 13th

And, while it is hoped that we may add some more content relating to Gordon's actual experience during his military service, this page will end for now with a couple of final paragraphs from the editors of the final issue of "The Home Run:"

> "Came the time, then, when the excursion was over and the Division was to move home. The men were glad, yet each was saying to himself, although he was glad to be homeward bound he, nevertheless, felt that he was leaving something. He didn't know what. Yet, he could feel it, although you can bet your life that he never showed it when his buddies were around.
>
> Today, you can look out over the gun mount on B, or C, K, Q or Z Deck and see those men looking out over the sea, wonder what it was. Not knowing and particularly not seeing it in the foamy water. For you can't see memories of the things you have seen and done."



[Thanks to the late Gordon Marsham for his service to his country and to the College, and for saving the documents from which most of the information on his pages was extracted, and, thanks to his son, Terry Marsham, for sharing these materials with me.]



Locksmith Shop, The College at Brockport, sometime between 1972 and 1983