

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

World War II Veterans Project

Personal Experience

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Paul John Perlich

Interviewed

by

Frank Kovach

on

July 10, 1989

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Oral History 1243

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: Paul John Perlich  
INTERVIEWER: Frank Kovach  
SUBJECT: World War II Experience  
DATE: July 10, 1989

Kovach: This is an interview with Paul Perlich for the Youngstown State University World War II Veterans Project. The interviewer is Frank Kovach. The interview is taking place at Mr. Perlich's residence at 909 Edenridge in Boardman, Ohio. It is July 10, 1989 at approximately 1:05 pm.

K: Why don't we begin the interview with a little bit of your back ground, your growing up in Youngstown, your youth before World War II.

Perlich: Well, my youth was like all the kids. Playing at the corner. Playing all kinds of games at night, after school, like hockey, football, or baseball. At the age of 14, I went to work in a bowling alley. At the age 16, I worked in a brewery. When I turned 18 years old, right on my birthday, I was hired by Republic Steel, which I worked there for 40 years. At the age of 19, I went to the service, and I stayed in the service a little over two and a half years.

In the service I had full combat of 10 months. That was total combat, steady, [for] 10 months. Out of those 10 months, I had three days rest. In those 10 months, I was involved in four major battles, which included the Battle of the Bulge. I received four Bronze Stars. We were supposed to go to Japan at the end of my 30 days at home. The last day I was at home, the Japanese surrendered. Then I got discharged in November of that year. Well, that's most of it right there.

K: Now we have a capsule of your service time and your growing up time. Did you spend all of your time in Youngstown, before the war?

P: Yes. All of it.

K: Do you remember December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor? Any reactions to it?

P: Well, it's just like every American, you got pretty hot at the idea. You know, if you're a true American, it burns you up quite a bit. That would be when I was 17 years old.

K: Were you in school then?

P: I was out of school then. I was drafted.

K: What were your first impressions of Army life?

P: My first impressions of Army life was...it's hard to say. You were totally under their command, you were not free to do what you wanted to do. It wasn't that bad of a life actually. You had to go to the physical program. They kept you up on your schooling, education, and stuff like that. It wasn't that bad actually. I didn't mind it, truthfully, I didn't. As matter of fact, I figure, every youth at the age of 18, should have at least two years service to know what life is really about. To know what it means to be that your not on your own and someone else is commanding you around. So, when you get out you actually know how to take care of your life.

K: What was an average day in basic training like?

P: An average day in basic training was, well, first you get up and take a shower, which was at about six o'clock. Take a shower, get your breakfast, and then you would have calisthenics. After the calisthenics you would either go on a hike, or if you had a field problem with your guns or so, you'd go in the field. And that's most of it. It was actually getting you prepared for combat duty. How to set your gun up, which was mounted on a M4 tank, it was a field artillery piece, 105. It took quite a bit of practice. How to set your gun up, because you have two sets of stakes on a hill, and you'd have to line your two stakes up with the scope on the gun. That took quite a bit of time, and eventually you got pretty good at it. Even the tank driver got to know how to hook up the gun just by looking at the stakes. So, that was mostly getting us ready for combat duty.

K: Where did all this training take place?

P: Most of it took place at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

K: Was it a long period of time you were at Fort Campbell in Kentucky?

P: No, I'd say months, most of the time. Then I had one year over seas duty, that was a year and a half. The other six months was at Kansas, Camp... Anyway, it was near Topeka, Kansas.

K: At Fort Campbell then, you went right from basic training to your advanced artillery training?

P: Yes. Right. I was the gunner, then I got to be a chief on the tank. It was a 105 field artillery. It was actually used mostly for fast, for spearheading. When we were in combat, we were always on the go, we were seldom at a steady pace. [We] rarely stayed in one place for a long time because when we got into combat, it seemed like we were just on the go all the time, so they called us the "Spear Headers". Then in the end we were called "Patton's Ghosts", because half the time they didn't know where we were at. That's the truth, for a nineteen year old to see what I saw is quite a bit.

K: While you were down in Fort Campbell, Kentucky did you get

a chance to come back to Youngstown at all?

P: Yes. I had a leave before I went over seas.

K: Did your flight leave out of Fort Campbell?

P: It's in New York, and from New York we went to England. And we stayed about one month in England.

K: While you were in England did you have much contact with the English people?

P: No, not too much. [They] kept us closed in mostly. Giving us field problems and stuff like that, getting us ready. I only had a three day rest in England, you know like a pass, a three day pass that was it, in that month that we were there.

K: Were they strictly American troops, or were they English troops?

P: No, American. They took us over on combat ships, it was...

K: Some kind of troop transport?

P: No. It wasn't a troop transport. A... when the ship comes down...

K: Oh, a landing craft?

P: Yes, a landing craft. Because when we landed at Omaha Beach, there was still gunfire then, and I saw a lot of unfortunate American soldiers still in the water. They were dead, and stuff like that.

K: This is part of D-Day?

P: No, this is after D-Day. I wasn't experienced in combat, and you think you're going to be scared, but I don't know it seems like fear sort of vanishes, and something else comes into your mind, something that I never experienced. It's something that makes you want to do good, and it seems like all of the fear vanishes. Because after you see American soldiers dead and stuff, and your fear is gone, madness takes over. In one way, I was glad I could do my part. That's quite a bit to know that it's fortunate that we came back, that's all.

France, logged, just like I tell, we had 10 months of total action. They called us the "Bastard Battalion". I was associated with the third armor, so, whenever one division needed help, they'd want a bastard battalion to go along and wander. If we helped one out, and another needed help, we'd go along with them. We were always on the go.

We had a three day rest out of the total 10 months, I had almost 10 months of steady combat duty. In fact, I had more points over in those two and a half years, than a lot of guys do in four years service. Because of all the combat time I had. I forget how many points I had.

A lot of times when we were spearheading, they even put us with a cavalry outfit. And a cavalry is reconnaissance. What that means is, you're ahead of everybody. Just like they say, we ran out of gas and Metz. I remember that town, Cravelotte. Right near Metz. That's where we ran out of gas. Spearheading, they called us the spearheading outfit. A couple of times we would be going down the road and we would be at the tail end of a German convoy, we were just having combat with them, right at the tail end. That's how

close.

K: While they were in retreat, you were in pursuit?

P: Yes. Right after them. A lot of times we were right at the tail end of their convoy taking prisoners and stuff like that.

K: So you had a lot of contact with the enemy hand to hand in person?

P: No, not personally. It was mostly, well, we had ground troops with us on the tanks, they would take care of the personal combat.

K: But you were involved with the battle?

P: With the first armor. We broke through with the first armor.

K: Do you want to tell us a little bit about the battle if you remember it?

P: Oh. What I remember is that it was cold. A lot of snow. We were under a lot of artillery fire which, when we got into position we also responded with fire. I don't really know how many rounds we went through because, it's in my book, I wish I had my book I could tell you how much rounds we went through. We were under fire quite a bit, and fortunately, with the help of the other divisions, and all, we liberated the 101st, not liberated, but the 101st Airborne which was surrounded by the Germans. It's something that a 19 year old, it's hard to experience what you see. Combat is something that you don't think you'd ever see, but you see it. [I'm] fortunate, one tank and back and we didn't get hit, you know, we were fortunate not to get hit. I can't tell you how long we were there, how much rounds we fired, I know this, we were under heavy attack, too for awhile. The only other thing that I remember about the battle is the prisoners. After you saw the German tanks burning, and burning bodies all over the place, [it's] something that's hard to explain. [You] never think you'd see dead bodies like that where they just pile them up, just like on a big stack of wood.

K: These were German bodies?

P: German bodies mostly, yes. We went to the forest and I saw a lot of American bodies, but that was before the Bulge, this was in a different operation. A lot of times when we came to a horse drawn out chili which the Germans had, you see a lot of dead horses along side of the road. A lot of prisoners, and a lot of death, which fortunately, I thought of, or dreamed about when I first came home but, its been a long time now, it just vanished from my mind.

K: You were with Patton?

P: Patton, yes. Third Army.

K: Did you ever...

P: I never saw Patton, no. We were too close to see Patton. Patton wouldn't be that close. A lot of times we were in position three or four days and the infantry would just be coming up. We were way ahead of the infantry and all. When your on spearheading all you do is break up the Germans in small pockets, and then our infantry would come up later and clean up. You were supposed to break up the Germans into columns and small pockets where the

infantry would come up and either take them prisoners or do whatever.

K: At first you thought you'd have fear, and then anger took over...

P: Anger takes over as soon as you see dead American soldiers.

K: Did that continue throughout the...

P: Throughout, yes. I don't know but what is was I never thought of war that way, I didn't have fear. Actually, it's hard to explain, something else takes over, something where, when you see dead American soldiers that fear is gone, you want to survive and get even in some way.

K: You only had three days of rest?

P: Out of 10 months combat.

K: You were constantly on the go?

P: Constantly.

K: Would you rest right in the tank? How did you...?

P: Rest, well. We'd get into position, rest beside the tank. A lot of times we slept right on top of the snow, you know, with our bed rolls and stuff like that. Sometimes we'd go two days without rest. Just on the go two days. Very seldom were we in position a long time. I can't recall when we were in position a day. It seemed most of the time we just travelled.

K: Germans were constantly looking for you?

P: No. Like I said in the end they called us the "ghost troops", Patton himself didn't know where we were at. I mean we were so far ahead.

K: You're heading into Germany now, this time and this is toward 1945 after the Battle of the Bulge.

P: Yes. At the Rhine River they were putting the pontoon bridge up as we're going along. The bridge wasn't all the way up yet, you know what I mean, they were just setting the bridges up as we were going along over the Rhine River. The bridge wasn't completely installed.

K: Is this the Army Corps of Engineers?

P: Yes, the Army Corps of Engineers were setting up the bridges.

K: You were out that far in front?

P: Yes. We ended up in Austria, the name of the town was Salzburg. That's where we ended up, Salzburg, Austria. That was sometime in the month of May. I know it was close to my birth date. The 17th, 18th of May, something like that. That's where we ended up, Salzburg, Austria.

K: How about Christmas of 1944? While you were over seas in battle, what was that like?

P: It was a quiet day, the Germans respected Christmas a little bit too. It was a quiet day.

K: Do you remember anything special about that day?

P: Oh, we got an extra Christmas meal, which was a little extra from what we usually had from K ration to C rations. We got some turkey, I don't know how they got it, but we got turkey, trimmings and stuff like that. Most of the time we had K rations

or C rations. Very seldom was it a prepared meal.

K: What are your memories?

P: Well, memories are, they weren't actually that bad. It filled your stomach up. It's not like a complete meal but it provided you with energy, and foods you needed for the time being. If you want more information, when I get that book from Jimmy, you know, I'll give you the book and then you could look at the book. It adds the complete history of all that.

K: I'm more interested right now in what you remember. Personally.

P: There was five major battles which they considered in the European theater, so the only one I missed was D-Day.

K: Do you want to take us through the other major battles that you were involved in? You already talked about the Battle of the Bulge, how about the other three?

P: Well, the others were all similar. When you're on the spearheading, it seems it's day to dance home was the same match and its almost the same match and you've seen shelled out towns and you get involved with the troops and stuff like that. When you're spearheading just like we were, it seemed like the same thing. Breaking up the Germans and the infantry would come up later and mop up. Most of your actions were the same like that. One thing I do remember is when we came to a town, we had direct fire on the buildings and stuff like that. Which the first time we ever did that was fire direct at the buildings that were housing Germans.

K: Are these occupied cities then?

P: Yes.

K: Is this in France or is this in Germany?

P: Well, the direct fire was in France.

K: Did you see many civilians? You went through a lot of towns.

P: We didn't have too much contact with civilians. Most of the time when we went to the town it was at night. We associated very seldom with civilians because we were too far out there. There would not be any civilians. If we went to a town it was at night. In fact, the only time I saw civilians was the three days I had rest in Metz. That's the only time I associated with the civilians.

K: What do you remember about those three days?

P: Well, the only thing I remember about those three days is being in the clean barracks, having good hot meals, and being occupied with different soldiers playing cards and stuff like that. There's not too much you could do in three days.

K: There wasn't much chance of recreation or rest during those 10 months then, was there?

P: No. No Frank, very seldom were we in position over a day.

K: Once you were in Europe, France, and Germany did you have any contact with any of our other ally Armies, or were you restricted to the U.S.?

P: Strictly U.S. I didn't have any contact with British. Sometimes with the free French. The under cover French would tell us where the Germans were, we had contact that way. Most of the

time it was the free French we had contact with. We were the type that was never associated with. Germans, the French, we were always on the go. With the armor, its different than if you were a foot soldier, the foot soldier naturally is going to associate a little bit. When you are with the armor you don't associate too much with the civilians.

K: How about the comrade ship between the guys in the armor division? Tell us a little about that.

P: Well, we helped each other out. We took care of each other, we had close relationships with the other divisions and stuff like that. We were real close, our unit was real close. I remember if we rested for awhile, we joked with each other and stuff like that, to forget about what the hell you're in. I never thought I'd see that being 19 years old. This is the first time that I've been talking about this since I've been discharged, because I very seldom talk about my service record. What really sticks out in my mind is the colonel we had. His name was Leon Bieri. He was our commander, and he seemed to really want to take good care of us. He didn't seem to want to put us in the war, hotter positions than we could get into, you know what I mean, you try to minimize the casualties. He was always up front with us, riding in the jeep. [He] sort of reminded me of the guy that wanted to take care of his people. I was glad he was associated with us, he seemed to have wanted to take care of his organization, his people. Most of the guys in my tank, I was close with them naturally, you have to be close with them, you know what I mean? It's what you talk about when you're in combat, it seems that you try to do your best and you try to take care of each other. The more you do, you want to do more. It's hard to explain it. Where all the fear is gone, I thought I'd be under fear all the time when I was in combat but there's something else that takes over when you are in combat. You want to excel in some way, get it over with, you know what I mean? That thought right there, where you can take of your own tank, and take care of the people on your own tank.

K: Earlier you started off as an artillery gunner and then you moved up in position?

P: Sergeant, yes. I got discharged as a sergeant.

K: When you moved up in rank, did that entail more duties for you?

P: Your in the same tank, it's the same amount of people. It's just somebody else is the gunner and they take orders from you. Most of the responsibilities was to make sure that you got your tank set up properly in position, and make sure that, well, the men knew what they were supposed to do. It was just automatic, they knew what they were supposed to do. You get your directions of how to set your gun up from the Lieutenant, he would be in the middle of the battery. [He would] tell you how many degrees to set your gun, what degrees to set your gun. Make sure your gun was taken care of good, clean and fired properly.

K: What was the range?

P: [It] depended on the gun. I forget, but it was at least four or five miles. Also, it has to do with women and stuff. Like



what it would be like. [We] joked about that and a lot of times a guy would go to the latrine, and we would start shouting and he'd come out with no pants on or something like that. You get your humorous spots as you go by, because without humor I guess you'd really crack up or something. You have to have humor, and of course, we had a lot of corniac now and then to help us along. We made sure that we didn't get totally drunk because what the heck, you couldn't get drunk. You'd mess everything up, but you get a couple of shots to build you up a little bit. Sometimes we go to the town and the people would be out there, we'd never stop, we'd just went right through, and they'd give us a bottle or something like that. Our tank wasn't enclosed. It had sides to it, but it was open all the way on top.

K: Oh, yeah.

P: Yes. It wasn't an enclosed tank.

K: This battalion you were in, it was an all tank battalion and you had support infantry with you?

P: Yes. Well, our main object was to support the division that needed support. Sometimes they needed more fire power, and you'd get attached to them. Naturally they're going to put the bastard battalion where they don't want their own battalion. The position where their own battalion wouldn't be.

K: So you took a lot of casualties in your battalion?

P: Well, unfortunately we took quite a bit, but I couldn't tell you how many right now, not until I get that book, it's in the book how many casualties we had and all that. I know that one tank in back of me was hit.

K: How many tanks approximately would you say were in this battalion?

P: Well, we had all kinds. We had half tracks with 50 caliber machine guns. I remember one time we were in combat when a C47 right in front of us almost crashed, dropping us equipment. We saw a lot of German planes and stuff like that. We got struck by German planes. One time we were on the direct fire from the German guns. I could say in those two and a half years I have more points than a lot of guys with four years of service. You know, they've given you so many points for days in combat so many major battles.

K: Once you got to Germany, near the Rhine River, of course the Russians were coming from the East, did you ever see any Russian troops or have any contact with any?

P: No. We had contact with some Yugoslavs.

K: Do you want to tell us about it?

P: Well, just like I said, we had contact with some Yugoslavs and it seems like their dialect was a little different from what I understood. My mother's dialect was a little different from theirs, it was hard for me to understand them, but eventually I understood them a little bit. We liberated them actually from the Germans. Because the Germans were just taking off and letting them go. They thanked us for liberating them and stuff like that, but I mean, they were treated pretty good. They said the Germans treated them pretty good, it wasn't that bad. They were glad to

get liberated. They were used mostly for labor and stuff like that.

K: They were used for labor by the Germans?

P: Yes, the Germans needed help digging trenches or something like that, well, not trenches, but latrines or doing stuff around equipment like that. They were laborers, and the Germans made them do the dirty work. They were glad to get back to Yugoslavia and stuff like that. Of course, in combat everybody got kind of rough. They didn't seem under fed or anything.

The most of what we saw was the free French. A lot of times we'd see the infantry, like if we'd be in position more than one day, the infantry would be seen having a slew of Germans, prisoners, but personally, we didn't have anything to do with the prisoners. We were always on the go, it's hard to explain. You don't have anything to do with it. Your main object was to break up the Germans into small pockets, then the infantry would come.

K: How about Americans being prisoners of the Germans, would you...?

P: I didn't see any of that.

K: You never got near the prisoner of war camps?

P: No.

K: How about concentration camps?

P: Concentration Camps? No. I don't think, no. No we didn't have anything to do with concentration camps or anything like that.

K: Had you heard anything about them? The skuttlebug that was coming through?

P: No. The only thing I know is passing it down from the infantry, a lot of times we would have infantry soldiers on our tanks, and they would tell us about the prisoners they took, or stuff like that.

K: You got to the Rhine River and you say you were in Stalzburg, Austria, at the end of the war, how long did you stay in?

P: One month. The war ended in May and we were shipped back in June, about a month we were there after the war. We were supposed to go to the Japanese theater. In fact, they had our guns and everything on the west coast. Right after my 30 days at home we were supposed to go to California, but the last day I was at home, the Japanese surrendered.

K: What did you do in Germany those 30 days after the war before you came home?

P: Oh, we started to associate with the Austrians a little bit, go to town and live it up a little bit. You didn't get too close you know what I mean. You enjoyed yourself, face it after all those 10 months of combat... The Austrians treated us real good. I liked Austria because it's clean, Austria was real clean. I mean it's neat. Those people are real neat. We were there a month and then we got shipped home. The only thing I remember is going swimming with the women and all that. We didn't have a bathing suit but we had those GI shorts on. Go swimming, we went swimming quite a bit. We weren't aloud to stay in the town or

anything like that. Maybe go in for a day or two and then come out. We weren't aloud to stay a long time because we were close to the Yugoslavian border and they figured the communist and everything. In fact, I wanted to go to Yugoslavia because I had an Uncle in Yugoslavia and the Captain said no way. I wanted to go there, what the heck I wasn't far from Yugoslavia. The name of the ship was Sea Tiger, it was LTD I think it was a Kyser.

K: One of the Kyser ships.

P: Yes.

K: What do you remember about that journey?

P: That's one thing, the sea was calm, because that Kyser or LTD or whatever they call them, the ship isn't that big.

K: It wasn't one of those liberty ships was it?

P: It's a liberty yes. That's it a liberty. Fortunately the sea was calm and beautiful. We had a good trip across, beautiful. Fourteen days or something like that. It took us eleven days to go over because we were on a Norwegian ship, the Erickson, it was a liner at one time, it took us eleven days to go over to England. Then coming home I think it was something like 14 days.

K: At the United States where did they...

P: Texas. San Antonio, Texas. We weren't there too long, I think only a week or so, and I got discharged. That's where I got my discharge from, San Antonio, Texas.

K: Did you still go through maneuvers?

P: Oh no, not after the Japanese surrendered.

K: No, I'm talking about before you got back to the States, when did they surrender?

P: Oh yes, we still went through the maneuvers and stuff like that. Actually when you went to the European theater you had all that knowledge, it was more like a little rest period.

K: What were your feelings when you heard that the Japanese had surrendered?

P: My feelings? Hey, I was relieved. I mean, after being home for 30 days you figure how much longer can you go without something happening? You see all that combat and then you figure it's going to be your turn, you know what I mean? I felt like the world was given to me. [I] celebrated good, I got drunk. What the heck? Last day they surrendered, the last day I was home. Then I got discharged.

K: You were discharged in November?

P: Yes.

K: When you came back home after the war was over, how were you received by the people back in Youngstown?

P: Beautiful, they treated me like I was a hero or something. I didn't have to spend any money, anywhere I went they treated me real good.

K: Oh yeah?

P: Yeah. When I went to the service I was the puny kid, what the heck, I was only about 150 pounds when I went to the service, and when I came out I must have put a little on. I don't know how I did it, but I was up to almost 200 pounds. When I came home, everybody treated me good, people always wanted me to go to their

house and talk, but I wasn't too keen on talking about the war or anything like that. I wanted that forgotten. Well, I was treated good.

K: Was there a feeling of patriotism in the country?

P: At that time. I wish it was now, right now I don't know what this younger generation would do if there would be a war. I tell you, I don't think half of them would really want to go. Something's missing in this country now. It's not there no more Frank. Help pride, pride in yourself and your country, and its something that you wanted to help, today it's different, with the kids today it's give, give, give me. If a dad can't give his own son or daughter discipline when they need it, that's pathetic.

K: You mentioned your parents, what were there feelings about you going into the service?

P: There was a lot of fear in their hearts. Every parent fears for their child. But when I did come home, they felt proud. To see the medals and stuff, they were proud. You had respect in these things, today it seems like they don't have any respect any more. The way we should have brought our kids up, was the way we were brought up. As soon as they got a job, which you didn't need the money like our parents did. Our parents came over from Europe, they didn't understand this country too well. They came from Europe, they had to work hard to get ahead. That's the reason at 14 years old I went into a bowling alley to help, to help out at home. A lot of times I would bring home more money than my dad did from the mill, setting pins up. You ask a kid for a borrow, which you're not going to take the money, you're going to put it in the bank. Most of the kids from our parents like me, are pretty well set, we have our home paid for, but our parents were different, they needed help. We didn't need that much help because usually two people work in the family, the husband and the wife, and they get ahead that way. I believe if you tell your kid today, give me your board money, he'd say, well, I'm going to go live somewhere else.

K: You mentioned that you were 19 years old when you went off to war, you served two and a half years...

P: Quite a bit, I was glad for every day being alive. I don't think I ever hurt anybody's feelings, because you know the type of guy I am. I didn't hurt anybody's feelings. Being associated with a club for 25 years, you very seldom get someone to operate a club that long, so if I was bad... That's all what life is. You realize what life actually is, when you get out of combat, you want to enjoy every day, and be sure you live it.

K: Anything else you want us to know about World War II, about your service before we end?

P: It's like now, you see where all this money is going to, to missiles and all this, I think it is just a waste of money. Eventually we are just on the verge of bankruptcy, just like Russia, right? Russia's running out of money the same way we are, and all our money is going into arms.

K: Then in World War II...

P: No, we took care of our equipment. Because hey, that was

your life, you had to take care of it. I'm thankful, I thank the American know-how and engineering. We had good equipment, but I tell you, the Germans were superior to us, the only thing we had more of, we outnumbered them.

K: You say they were superior to us?

P: Their equipment, their 88s, they were superior to us. But we had more equipment than they did. Eventually, they were fighting on two fronts, they were fighting Russians and they were fighting us, and it took a lot of equipment, and they're running out of it. We had the production and we had more planes. Look at the end of the war, the Germans had the buzzbombs, a couple more months if they could have stood it out, maybe they would have won the war. If they could have produced more buzzbombs and all that, they were too far behind us, we were too close, there would have been no purpose for that.

K: Did a lot of their 88s get captured?

P: We captured a lot of there 88s and we used it on them.

K: Oh yeah?

P: Yeah.

K: You say the 88s were superior, did you fire some of their 88s?

P: Oh yeah. We fired their 88s.

K: Superior in what sense?

P: Projectury and fire power. It seems that it was a greater gun than what we had. In destruction, it was a lot more accurate than ours. Eventually we got the bugs out of ours and they came out with a 90ml, I think at the end of the war, which was superior to the 88. I believe it was a 90ml.

K: What is it like for a spearheading operation and be out of gas?

P: What it's like? You're surrounded, that's what it's like. When we went over with this cavalry outfit, we went through the woods making our own road, knocking down trees and all that. When we got to Cravelotte, they wouldn't bother us because most of the Germans were ground troops, they wouldn't mess with the tanks. Eventually we got our gas, but we weren't in position more than two days or so until we got our gas.

K: Was it a strenuous time?

P: Oh yeah, you stood within your position, you didn't go out. The ground troops wouldn't bother you. Eventually, I guess they knew that they were on the verge of surrender. Once you start going back, retreating, you know the times up pretty soon. You figure why bother if they can't get away with it. Why bother somebody else, like all of us? We had the fire power, they didn't have it then. It's some experience that really made you grow up. You know what life is and you enjoy everyday. I never thought I'd see it, I'm glad I did. I enjoy life now, what I do.

K: You worked at Republic before your tour?

P: Yes, I worked at Republic almost a year before I went to the service.

K: Any problem getting your job back?

P: No, in fact, they gave me a better job. They asked me if

I wanted to go back to my old job, I said no, you can't give me anything better than that? I'll go someplace else. They said what do you want? I said I live near the Center Street Bridge, how about getting me a job close to Center Street Bridge? Which they did, they treated me real good, they gave me a better job, more money, cleaner job, I was satisfied. They treated me good. I'm set, what the heck I had 40 years there. I get a pretty good pension with the social security, I live good on that. They treated me like a hero. They treated me good, if I went down to the club or anywhere. They treated me good, real good.

K: So the community was really proud?

P: Yes. That's why I said that any kid who gets out of school today should give at least two years service. Because that really opens your eyes up to what your parents are, what life is about. It's not just you come home whenever you feel like coming home, and you go out and do what you want to. If you don't have any money, your parents want to take care of you. Life today is easy for these kids. That's one thing I can say is that I grew up. I really found out what life is and what your fellow man is. That you respect another human being, which today is not so good. You respect another man or woman.

K: Any animosity towards the Germans after the war by yourself?

P: No. Because you knew that they were in the same position as us. There is no need for war, actually, there is no need for war, what for? There is enough land and everything for people to live, you know? There doesn't have to be war, what for? They had to fight just the way we did.

K: So that anger you had...

P: That anger, my first anger was when we got to Omaha Beach and I saw dead American soldiers on the beach and some floating in water still like that, all full of water. That's what got me angry.

K: But once the war and the combat was over, it was gone?

P: Yeah, it left. You figure you did your job, right? So why still have ill feelings? That's what your religion has taught you, to forgive. If you didn't forgive, there would be wars continuously. No body would be satisfied. I grew up in combat. When I get the book from Jimmy, I'll give it to you.

K: Yeah, if there is anything in that book that possibly I could add to this, get some pictures or something, I'll add it. Now you're talking about your divisions...

P: No, the combat, from the day we set foot on Omaha Beach.

K: Sure if there is anything in there, I'll look through the book and make copies and add it with the transcription. Sure, no problem. The main thing I wanted though today was the type of thing we got from you, Paul's personal history, and what he went through, and your feelings, and if there is anything out of that book that we can use. I appreciate your time.

P: Ok, thanks.

France.

When the war in Europe ended in May of 1945, they had reached Salzburg, Austria. They spent a month near Salzburg, and were sent back to the U.S. to prepare for the invasion of Japan. Once the war ended, Paul was discharged on November 4, 1945, at Topeka, Kansas. He reached the rank of Sergeant and Tank Commander during his active duty.

He returned to work at Republic Steel in 1946 and retired in 1982. In 1954, he married Marguerite Fouque, a French immigrant. Mr. and Mrs. Perlich had two children, a son Michael, and a daughter Denise. Mrs. Perlich passed away in October of 1988. Michael resides in Boardman with his wife and children. Denise married Jim Lynch, an associate of the columnist Jack Anderson. She and her husband reside in Maryland.

Besides receiving four Bronze Stars, Paul received the American Theater Medal, the European Theater Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

Paul has belonged to various organizations during his lifetime. Numbered among them are the Amvets, American Croation Citizens Club, A.A.R.P., and the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees. He is a member of St. Peter and St. Paul Catholic Church. He still resides at 909 Edenridge in Boardman.