

## VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

**Veteran's Name: Anthony Vittiglio**

**Interviewer: David Meyer (O'Shea)**

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**Transcriber: Carol Slezak**

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**Interviewer:** This is David Meyer, son of Earl D. Meyer, Co. H, 379th, 95th Infantry. Today is August 9, Saturday, 2013. We're in the Hilton in Arlington, Texas, and it is 9:10 a.m. And today I have the great privilege of talking to, Mr. Vittiglio, can you say your name?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Anthony Vittiglio.

**Interviewer:** And Mr. Vittiglio, where were you born?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** In Italy. In Cassino, Italy.

**Interviewer:** And what's your birth date?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** January 1, 1921.

**Interviewer:** What branch of the service did you serve in?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** In 360 Field Artillery.

**Interviewer:** 360 Field Artillery, U.S. Army. And what war were you in?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** World War II.

**Interviewer:** What was your final rank?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Pfc [Private First Class].

**Interviewer:** What was your main job in the war?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I was 605 [or 604], a combat machine gunner. I got a piece of paper from the Army when I got discharged. That particular piece of paper says "machine gunner, 605." I forgot now – [whether it is] 605 or 604.

**Interviewer:** What were your parents' names?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Louie and Philomena (PH).

**Interviewer:** What did your father do for a living?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** He operated machinery.

**Interviewer:** And what did your mother do?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Housewife.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any siblings?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Two sisters.

**Interviewer:** What were their names?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Mary and Jeannie (PH).

**Interviewer:** I understand you came to the United States when you were 15. What made your parents come then?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** You see I was a Blackshirt [Voluntary Militia in Italy]. You had to be a Blackshirt under Mussolini in order to go to school. I didn't like ... fascism. That's why I came to the States. I was over here I think about here four years. I didn't learn any English. I was always with [other Italians]. And I got called into the Army. I was always in trouble because I didn't know the language. They would tell me to do something and I'd say, "Yes sir!" I didn't know what to say.

Well anyway, one day they pulled us and said all non-citizens step forward. So I was one of the guys. Then he says, "Well, you guys, if you want to become a citizen, we'll make you a citizen if you'd like to, but don't forget, after you're going to have to go to combat." So we agreed.

This was in Harrisburg [Pennsylvania]. So I said, this country gives me food, I like this country, so I volunteered to [go overseas]. I was thinking, at that time Italy was at war, too. I said, "Maybe I'll go in Italy." .... [But they said no, maybe they thought I was a spy or something.] (CK)

**[Time 5:00]**

But anyway, instead of going to Italy, when I volunteered for the overseas duty, we went to Camp Swift [in Bastrop, Texas], then from there we went to some different camps, then we got on the boat.

**Interviewer:** You say in Joe Januszkiewicz's book ["The Battles of George S. Patton's Lowest Ranks"], in a letter you wrote to him, that you joined the Army October 28, 1942?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Right.

**Interviewer:** And you said then they sent you from the Induction Center to Camp Upton [on Long Island in New York]. So when you moved here did you move to New York, to the city?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Long Island City, yes.

**Interviewer:** What was it like there?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Life wasn't too good, you know. But it was better than Italy. Because over here it's a different living. That's why we also wanted to go overseas and fight for this country. So, from Long Island City, like I said, I had a lot of problems with the Army. So I was in trouble.

**Interviewer:** Why did you choose the Army and not the Navy or something else?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I didn't know how to speak. But they called me in the Army, so I had to go.

**Interviewer:** What did your parents say? What was it like when you said good-bye?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** They didn't like it, but I had to go.

**Interviewer:** You mention here what you already said about your problem. So people would tell you things and you would half understand, and you would say, "Yes, sir?"

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Well I had a big problem. There was a Sicilian guy one day he told me, "You know when you see an officer just salute him and say, 'Yes, sir.'" So that's what [I did].

One day we were over in Louisiana, and Captain Cleveland (PH), my battery commander; my first sergeant said report to Captain Cleveland (PH). So I went over to the office and he said, "Blah blah blah blah blah." So I said, "Yes, sir." I didn't know what he said. So the next morning (inaudible) .... Sub duty. Digging subs. (CK) You know it gets to be so bad, sir. I didn't know if I was a laborer or I was a soldier. Digging subs (CK) digging latrines. ... Always punished. They used to have KP duty. One day they spelled it out: kitchen police. I thought, "[Darn], I'm a policeman now." [laughter]

So ... I report to the step sergeant.... The mess sergeant saw me and he said – I can't say what he said [laughs].

**Interviewer:** No, you can say it.

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I'll say it in a nice way. He says, "What the heck are you doing over here with these boys?" I said, "I'm a policeman!" He said, "You get the [heck] out of here and go put your (inaudible) and then you come back over here.

Another time I was on guard duty. All of a sudden I see somebody coming. Now, I didn't know the language, I used to say it in Italian, I'd say, "Alt, alt." It means halt.

**[Time 10:00]**

So I made a motion .... He stopped. He didn't say nothing. He turned around .... Sub duty (CK)!

So Captain Cleveland (PH) that day said, "Shine my boots, take my clothes and bring them clean tomorrow to general inspection." .... I didn't do that.

The best thing is, when I got on that boat, I had to go overseas. [He felt relief because he got out of there.]

**Interviewer:** You also mentioned that one day you were maneuvering in West Virginia and you became battalion commander Colonel Ohmer (PH).

**Anthony Vittiglio:** They made me a driver. I was a pretty good driver. I couldn't speak the language but I was a pretty good driver. So I was supposed to pick up Colonel Ohmer (PH) somewhere in the woods in the morning. Tonight it rained. So as I was going to pick him up and old man with a car was coming in and the street was very narrow so I had to use all of it. As I slow a little bit the car flipped and I was under the car – four wheels up in the air.

What saved me was a stump. .... I hit the stump and it stopped the car. Otherwise there was a huge drop. So I went back and asked the old man if he could take me to the camp – the old man with the car.

[And he did.] So I went to the motor side and I said, "Sergeant, send the tow truck to pick up the car, and send somebody else to pick up the colonel, because my car is upside down." He didn't want to believe me. I said, "I'm telling you the truth." So anyway, the next morning my name was a big splash in Stars and Stripes. "Driver Vittiglio made the ... front and center." [laughter] I wish I would have kept that.

And so the colonel that day said, "Vittiglio, get your stuff ready. You're going to machine gun school."

**Interviewer:** Instead of a driver.

**Anthony Vittiglio:** In New Mexico. And I was over there 18 days. Shooting at [airplanes] ... With a 50-caliber machine gun. So I was there for about 18 days, and I was the first one to get out of that school.

**Interviewer:** Because you were so good [at shooting]?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** For those people who don't know, how big is a 50-caliber machine gun?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** With the barrel, almost [five or six feet]. It was on a tripod, but they had me in the field, and it was mounted on a ring for the aerial attack, and then...I had to take that out and put it on the ground. It was very heavy, but I had a second guy [to help].

**[Time 15:00]**

**Interviewer:** Did someone else carry the ammunition? So were there three people?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** No, I could carry the machine gun and the box...

**Interviewer:** How long were the shells?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I would say about five inches.

**Interviewer:** So you become a machine gunner – and where did you go after machine gun school? Where did they send you?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** They send me ... always machine gun tactics. So shooting ... Sometimes they had me ... a 50-caliber can knock off a tank if you hit in the right spot on the caterpillar. You hit it on one of the pins, it's finished.

**Interviewer:** So you must have had great eyes, too.

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Well, when you shoot at the caterpillar, that's luck. That's luck. Because every full bullets you have one ... you don't have to aim.

**Interviewer:** You were going to talk about the boat ride across. How was that for you?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** It was pretty good. It wasn't bad. I think the boat was the Mariposa ... one of the two big ones, I forgot.

**Interviewer:** You didn't have any trouble with the sea?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** No, no, no.

**Interviewer:** Did you see anyone who did?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Not really, because they put me on the bottom of the ship where they had the food. I stole two turkeys. I liberated the turkeys. And I took them up the ship for the guys. But anyway we finally landed in Omaha, over there [Omaha Beach in France].

**Interviewer:** When you landed in Omaha, could you hear anything, or were the Germans away?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I went with foot wave. I wasn't actually with the full division, I was forward detail. I remember we were with the forward detail. I remember the 29<sup>th</sup> Division was also there. ... Then we got on the Red Ball Express. My machine gun mounted on the ring and we guarded the area of attack, just in case, to guard the .... Gas.

**Interviewer:** Will you tell us what the Red Ball Express was?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** A fleet of trucks. They were loaded with gas fuel to go where the tanks were to supply to tanks.

**Interviewer:** Because Patton drove so far inside he ran out of gas. So when the 95<sup>th</sup> Division got to Normandy their first job was anyone who could drive became [part of] the Red Ball Express. So they would bring cans of gas. And it was called Red Ball because the route was marked with red balls.

**[Time 20:00]**

**Anthony Vittiglio:** That's right. One time we got attacked. An 88 [German anti-aircraft and anti-tank artillery gun] came in and shrapnel hit two gas cans. And there was a guy named Tyler. He was so braved, he jumped and ... that was the first guy who got decorated. And he lived.

So after that I was on and off the machine gun. Then we came back and I would go to different places. But most of the time we were on the Red Ball. Until the 5<sup>th</sup> Division was in trouble in Nancy [France]. We relieved them because they were getting hit so bad.

**Interviewer:** Did you take the 40/8 trains across, or did you drive pretty much in the truck?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Most of the time I was on the truck.

**Interviewer:** So when you got to Nancy you took over for the 5<sup>th</sup>?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** The 5<sup>th</sup> went in the rear. We took over the front. And then from there we took Nancy, we took Thionville, and we took ... another big city, the last big city before the river [before they got to Metz]. Then we built bridges to cross the Moselle [River], then we took them down, then we got on a small boat crossing the Moselle. While I was on the boat, the boat was about 60 feet, and [something hit it—the water] and pushed our boat onto a poplar tree. Above us there was a German machine gun, but it did not know we were there. So we thought, if we throw a hand grenade maybe it hits the limb of a tree and comes back to us. So somebody spotted it, and one shot, from a 55, hit that. So we were safe. Then we got out.

Then we had a little trouble with the forts. I think Fort Driant was the worst. It was the Seven Dwarfs [a series of small defensive emplacements the U.S. built in a line between Driant and Jeanne d'Arc]. They erect a monument to us. And then from there we took Metz and jump into Germany.

We got to Germany, Felsberg comes, we had to take Felsberg. And we were ordered to take the machines from the field up into the ring. I think that was about 10 o'clock in the morning when I saw the first plane come in.

**[Time 25:00]**

**Interviewer:** These are the Messerschmitts?

**Anthony Viggilio:** Yes. 109 [Messerschmitt 109 German fighter plane]. ... The first burst didn't get him. ... Another burst and I got him. He started to smoke. He caught fire. And he went, he didn't come back. He must have went down, because when a plane catches on fire, it's finished.

Then all of a sudden I say, "Oh Holy Christ, here comes another one." The second one comes in. Knocked off a few guys... This was a funny situation [he was on the hill]. And the other guys were coming in in the middle, very low.

So this guy is coming in, the second guy, and he saw me where I was. As he was making a turn, I ... hit him. All of a sudden I saw fog and mist. He stopped shooting, he came right on me, and he belly landed. When I saw him coming down I said, "God help me," in Italian.

And those guys ... there was nobody shooting them. Some guys I hear a little pop of rifles. Then ....

[Interviewer and he consult book, where he had written his memories]

**Interviewer:** [Reading from book] "When the other plane nosed down and bounced on the ground I ran over to the plane. By the time I got there...."

**Anthony Viggilio:** The pilot came out on the wing, he raised his hands. And I told my partner, you get behind the machine gun, I'm going to make him a prisoner. So as I'm running to make him a prisoner, I hear "Bang." Some guy from Services Battery (CK) put a bullet into him. And he went like this .... [fell down].

He was stripped. No helmet, no gun, no boots, no clothes. He was just with the underwear. They stripped him. And I believe there were GIs because at that particular spot there were no civilians. That's bad. That was bad. Really bad.

**Interviewer:** [Reading from book] You said, "The only souvenir I was able to get out of the whole incident was a scar that I got from a piece of metal."

**Anthony Viggilio:** Yes, over here on my right leg.

**Interviewer:** Was that from the plane?

**Anthony Viggilio:** Maybe he hit a piece of metal on the ground; not from a bullet from the plane. And I got it over here. [A Major] said, "Viggilio, you're good for a Silver Star and a Purple Heart." I never got it. [laughs]

[Brief discussion ensues about how you have to apply for a purple heart]

**Anthony Viggilio:** I was thinking I'd go to a Senator, but [didn't].

**Interviewer:** There's a picture in the book of a plane being shot down...

**Anthony Vittiglio:** That's the one. And I'm behind over there [discussing photo].

**[Time 30:00]**

**Interviewer:** Look at that, a German plane is shot down by Anthony Vittiglio.

[Brief discussion as to whether Vittiglio got a Bronze Star; he did not.]

**Interviewer:** Richard Hogstan (PH)...

**Anthony Vittiglio:** He's the guy who... We were in Oklahoma City at a reunion, and over the loudspeaker I heard, "Vittiglio, report to the front desk." I said, "What the heck." So I reported and there was a guy there. I didn't know him. He was [from a different division].

He said, "I got something for you."

I said, "What do you got." He says, "Some pictures. You know this plane?"

I said, "Where'd you get that?"

He said, "I saw you when you were shooting it." He took a picture when I was shooting.

[Brief interruption as a phone rings]

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I'd like to send you a little clip that came in [a newspaper] a few years back. There was a girl who lost a brother in Felsberg. And they went over there to find the street where he got killed. ... And they had a [guide book] but said everything had changed over there. The guy, Mr. Wilhelm, a German guy, goes, "We know where this plane is. Who shot it?" So the husband somehow, I don't know how, but somebody from Texas called me to report to Germany, that Mr. Wilhelm wants to see me. ... And five people questioned me about that plane, because somebody went over there and claimed that they shot it down.

But I'll send you a clip. So it was a party of five; they had an interpreter for me over there. Me and my wife went to Germany. We were put in a hotel, and Mr. Wilhelm says, "Tomorrow morning there are going to be a few guys who are going to question you about that plane." Somebody took that plane out of the ground, and buried it.

So the next morning ... and they were asking me trick questions. They said to me, "Mr. Vittiglio, how did you feel when you shot down that plane that came down on fire?" I said, "No sir, that plane didn't come down on fire. That plane came down, I saw a mist or cloud or something."

**[Time 35:00]**

Then he goes, "How many shots did you shoot?" I said, "Sir, there were two planes. I don't know. Maybe 50, 60 rounds. You just touch that trigger, that thing goes off, real fast."

Then he picked up a piece of paper and he goes, "I see over there the pilot was picked up, he was alive, he was in the jeep, and the Americans were taking him over in the jeep." I said, "No sir, the pilot was not in a jeep. He was lying down on the ground. He was stripped."

He said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Good."

This is through the interpreter, now. Then he goes, "What do you think about the pilot?" I said, "Sir, I think the pilot is a very good pilot, to make a belly landing. He didn't crash the plane, he came out alive. I think he's a very good pilot."

Then I said, "I think he was doing his duty. He was defending this country like I was defending my people." Then I said, "Besides that, I think he was a hero."

He goes, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." He liked that. Then they put me in a wagon, they took me [to the place where the plane was shot down]. They stopped the wagon, we got out. They said, "Do you know anything about this country over here?" I said, "Yes and no. This is the place where I was with the machine gun, but I don't think it is though." They said, "Why not?"

I said, "Well sir, I don't think it is because when I shot that plane down, when it came down, there was another hill across the way over there. And that hill is not there."

They came back and said, "You're right, that hill was taken down, because a big highway went through."

They said, "What else do you remember?" It came to me that there was a huge, big pastry factory over here somewhere. I pointed [in the direction]. So we got in the car and he took me to the place. So then we got back, we had a few beers. And he gave me a basket of cheers. And he gave me one bottle I think it was a Mirabelle ... and he said, "I want you to drink this with your closest friend in your Division." It was nice.

Then we went on to Saarlautern .... [etc.]. .... Then we were assigned to the 9<sup>th</sup> Army, and we went as far as the Hale (PHP (CK) River, where we met the Russians.

**Interviewer:** What was it like meeting the Russians?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** It happens this way. We cross the river. Then about 1 o'clock in the morning the lieutenant comes over and says, "Retreat."

**[Time 40:00]**

I said, "The Germans are not shooting anymore. Why do we have to retreat?" Strategic retreats...

**Interviewer:** Who was the most important person to you in the war?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I'd like to say... the most important as far as battle is concerned?

**Interviewer:** Battle, or friend...

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Well, I lost a ... Joe Serkitech (PH). It happens like this. I was with the 50, on the Front. Command car in the center, another 50 in the back. ... They let me go by, must have been a bazooka. ... German. I don't know why they would. Hit the command car, and they hit circuitage, and the step-Sergeant on the radio. And that was it. Nothing else.

One time we were – I don't remember where. Was guarding the command post and all of a sudden I see a 50-caliber coming over. And I'm watching it, because, sometimes could it be Germans. A command car in the center, another 50 in the back. ... I don't remember where the heck we were. We had crossed the river, and the Germans they were pounding us you wouldn't believe it. And he says to the German, "By tomorrow morning ...."

And he said, "Do you know how many men you're going to lose?" He says, "I don't give a [bleep] if I have to send a 2 ½-ton-truck to pick them up in dump bags."

Two o'clock in the morning, we got the hill, we cross the river – a small river – but ... every little move we used to make, they had us. So we crossed the hill, we see a piece of ground intact. All .... It was bad. I would say General Patton is a very good leader. ... But he used to take a lot of chances, too. .... He came out on top all the time.

One of the officers, Captain Krieg (PH), he was a nice guy, a very nice guy.

**Interviewer:** General Patton gave that little Christmas card – I think it was a prayer. My father used to keep the card. I have no idea where it is now.

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Christmas time Colonel Larmer (PH) came over, it was 12:30 or midnight, with some chocolate. .... Colonel Larmer (PH) was a good officer, but he was really ... One time a shell landed by us. ... And the shell came in, "Wham!" Colonel Larmer (PH) [hid under the table].

**[Time 45:00]**

So he said, "Come..." Captain Krieg (PH) goes, "What the hell, Colonel? You don't cover ... let's go see who's got their guns out."

**Interviewer:** How was the food in the Army? Did you like it?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Food, yes. K-Rations, no. [laughs]

I want to tell you something else. I think I did the greatest thing in my work. I don't even bother with the two planes. I did it better than that. I think it was in Krefeld [Germany], I might be mistaken. Hot food came in. So we lined up under the trees. And we lined up like .... Apart, this way if you get hit [fewer] guys [are killed].

So we go into our line, and I spotted a woman with a little girl about six or seven years old. And you could see the kid's ribs. Dying of hunger. And ... you couldn't even talk to them, because you'd get court martialed. I said, "Damn." Then [the officers were there] and I said if I give [food] to them, [the officers] are going to see me. Then I said, "What the hell. By tomorrow morning I don't think I'm going to be here, I'm going to get killed. I'm going to give it to her."

So I made a beeline, I give it to her, the basket and all, and the officer goes, "Vittiglio, you son of a B, get over here." He said, "Do you know what you did? You're going to be court martialed." I said, "Sir, between you and I, we're not going to be here, we're going to be dead."

Then I said, "Sir, assuming reverse the situation. Germans were in the United States. One of the German soldiers would go to your wife and kids and give her food. What would you say?"

"Get the hell out of here you ..." [laughs]

To me, I treasure that more than their two planes, believe it or not. Honest to God.

But he realized himself. He didn't report me. ...

**Interviewer:** Who was your best friend in the Army?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** My best friend was Joe Casorino (PH). He was a handy man. ... Spiker (PH), Vinzico (PH), Mike DiMento (PH). These are the guys, we were close.

**Interviewer:** And did Spiker (PH) make it out of the war?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** No, he didn't make it out.

**Interviewer:** Did you keep in touch with any of those guys?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** There's another guy; he's still living. Floyd Tarquindo (PH). Another guy was .... These were the guys who were close by. I was in Headquarters.

**[Time 50:00]**

**Interviewer:** What did you do when you had time for relaxation? Did you get to go to Paris at all?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** No. As a matter of fact, I think the captain had it in for me. Because I disobeyed him. Not that I wanted to, but because I didn't know. One time we got the city of [a city in France]. And they said they were going to send a few of us back to England to rest. So they started asking questions. Lots of questions. ... The guy [one questioner] was named Nick Novak (PH). The last question he asked me, he said, "Vittiglio, assuming there's nobody around, would you fraternize with a girl?"

I said to myself, what am I going to say, "NO? I would say YES." So I said, "Yes." And he said, "[Inaudible], you go."

**Interviewer:** You gave food to that woman. How did the people treat you? Were the French grateful? Did you see any of them in hiding?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** The French were when I used to be in France. I shouldn't say this, they will put me in jail. I used to liberate a lot of stuff from the kitchens and give it to the poor. They were starving. Sometimes I used to steal flour, lard, sugar, salt and give it to them. One time – I don't know what kind of people they were; a bunch of people driving a little car – and I had liberated some stuff and there was lard in there. Two guys and a lady refused that. I said to myself, "These people are hungry. The other guys took it, these three no. Why?" I think those people didn't eat pork or something.

**Interviewer:** Speaking of which, did you ever run across any prisoners of wars like Russians or Jews?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Yes, we liberated a concentration camp. This camp they selected people to go. Jews, Italians. Some go work in a factory. They told us that. Some go to a farm. And some of them go in the ovens. ... So they called me in for the Italians to be an interpreter. And the first thing I ask, "Anybody from Cassino?" Nobody understands. So ... one guy raises his hand and says, "I'm from [Pignataro? -- The next town over from Cassino]." So I said, "What's your name?"

He said, "Delasandra (PH)."

I said, "That's my mother maiden name."

So he comes to me, "You're my cousin."

I said, "Quit the bull, I'm not your cousin." (CK) [laughs]

**[Time 55:00]**

So anyway another guy raised his hand. He was from [another town in Italy] roughly 15 miles from Cassino. I said, "What's your name and rank?" You see they were looking for high ranking officers ...

So he said, "Why do you want to know?" I told him. He said, "Are you telling me the truth?" I said, "Yes."

So he said, "I'm a lieutenant in the Carabinieri." The fascists [in Italy] didn't like the Carabinieri because they were part of [the King's army (CK)].

So anyway, I went back to the battalion and said, "We have a lieutenant, he's an Italian." They said, "We're going to leave some stuff over here, he'll guard .... The stuff we're going to leave."

So this guy says to me, "Where you from?" I said, "Cassino." He said, "My uncle lives in Cassino. ... Anyway to make it short he became the General of the Carabinieri. And he said when he was a lieutenant he said, "Any time you come to Italy, you ask for me, you get anything you want, anything." He just died. Me and my wife Mary used to go [visit] before she died.

**Interviewer:** [Question from family member] How did his mother react the first time she saw you?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I went over in 1946. I went back for a vacation. ... [He went with friends.] It was a huge palace. I said, "Wow." Right in the middle of a plaza over there. So we are upstairs and we're introduced. And she said [inaudible]. And I said, "Yes, ma'am." And she grabbed me and started kissing me.

I skipped a little bit. This lieutenant had asked me to send a letter to my mother. I said, "You're my enemy." ... So for the heck of it I decided to tell the Captain and see what he said. Somehow he went and told the Colonel. And the Colonel said we could do it, through the Red Cross. So that's how they got the letter. So when I went over there she went over to the mantel, she picked up the letter, and said, "This is letter you sent me about my son. After two years, I knew he was alive." For two years he was a prisoner. A lot of good memories.

And then when he got promoted to General, what a festivity. Unbelievable.

**Interviewer:** [Question from family member] You were invited, you went?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Yes, by then me and Mary were [married]. We used to go to Rome for dinner. He used to dismiss the servants to make it like a family. And he used to come to [our farm] to eat the farm food. We really became really good friends.

One time I was in town and he sent a jeep with two cops for me.

**[Time 60:00]**

[Continues story about the others mistakenly thinking he was in "trouble" because his friend was looking for him, to much laughter.]

**Interviewer:** Would you recommend the army now to any young person?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Yes. To serve the country? Big time. If the war is right. ... But you know, I think, war is really too much politics involved in war. But as far as me saying, "Don't go to war," I won't say that. Because if this country gives you food, you have to defend it. That's what I thought when I volunteered to go overseas. I didn't have to go. ....

**Interviewer:** [Question from family member] When did you become a citizen?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** In the army, a bunch of us were pulled out of the ranks. One of the guys stepped out and asked us if we wanted to become a citizen or not. Then they explained if you wanted to become a citizen you had to go to war. But if you don't want to go to war, you stay back. I said, "I'll go to war. The country is good to me, I want to fight for it." So we go to Harrisburg [Pennsylvania], raised our hand, and got a military citizen paper.

**Interviewer:** How did you get back to the United States? Were you there when Germany surrendered? Where were you when Germany surrendered?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** I was in Germany.

**Interviewer:** Was there celebration?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Oh yes, of course. A messenger came over to me and said, "The war is over. When you see a German shoot him in a friendly way." In other words, if he shoots at you, you shoot at them. That was the end of the war. That was May 8, 9:30 in the morning, I think. I got the cease fire.

It was brutal. I saw some really bad things. The SS [Nazi Party corps]? They were no good, man. They were the worst. They used to kill their own people.

**Interviewer:** Did you come across any of the work of the SS?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Yes. There was one colonel, he was a tank commander. This was in Belgium. He massacred those people for no reason. Anybody he used to come across [he killed]. Peiper? Colonel Peiper.

**[Time: 65:00]**

**Interviewer:** How did the war change you?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** The war didn't change me. After I took a year of vacation then I came back [to the United States.] I took a test to work for customs, and I still didn't know how to read and write English. Would you believe that day [taking the test with a proctor watching], I was looking at that thing and think, "What the hell am I doing over here [in the U.S.]? I'm ready to go home." But I said, "I'm over here now, I got this piece of paper, and I just make marks on it." Guess what mark they gave me? An 83. [laughs] ... I was the first to be called.

So I got my badge, my gun, my I.D. card. They put me in a rotation. But I said, "No, this is not my life."

I said, "Captain, this is my gun, my badge, my I.D. card, everything."

He says, "You refuse this job?" And he knew I didn't know too much English. He knew. Because when I [finished my test] he said, "How can you be finished? You just started, almost!"

I said, "It's the paper." He looked at the paper, went to his captain, and said, "Impossible. But you did it."

**Interviewer:** How many children do you have?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Four.

**Interviewer:** All daughters?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** [Question from family member/friend] You talked about the year of vacation you took after the war. How did you do that and what did you do, and what was that like?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** [I returned to Italy.] When I got there my house was half gone. Cassino is a nice city. But all the city, you don't see one building standing up.

[Talk about Montecassino Abbey, which is very near his Cassino house.]

**Interviewer:** So when you were growing up, you saw Montecassino all the time. People have said its destruction during the war was one of the worst things to happen.

**[Time 70:00]**

**Anthony Vittiglio:** [After talking about how the Germans had taken over his house in Cassino during the war.] One year, you know you slaughter a hog, and you make a lot of prosciutto, and sausage. Knowing that the Germans were coming in, they had a big oak tree, and they figured they'd hide it in the tree.

So the Germans built their latrine near the tree. But they didn't notice. But one day a soldier was doing [his business] by the tree and he happened to look up. And he saw the prosciutto. Took it home.

**Interviewer:** You already told me stories like this. But sometimes I'll ask the question, "Tell me when you felt nervous or afraid." Because right now a lot of the things you've been telling, you've overcome your fear.

**Anthony Vittiglio:** First time, I was scared. But not scared to run away. But you got scare in you. You'd be walking around like the enemy isn't there. You used to watch yourself, but...

**Interviewer:** [Question from family member] You came back, what kind of celebration did your family have?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Big feast. Big feast.

**Interviewer:** [Question from family member] Did she used to cook all your favorite foods?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Oh yes, not when I was in Germany but when I was in the States she used to send me cookies, packages. I used to share them [with other soldiers].

I would like if you don't mind to make a statement. That those two planes are not important to me, but the food I gave that lady was very important to me.

**Interviewer:** Before we end, picture a great, great, granddaughter 100 years from now. From your seat, what would you like to tell her? What is important?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** What can I say? I don't know. To a boy? To a boy I would say to him: Be a good boy, don't get in trouble. If you're called, do your duty. Never refuse. Somebody's got to defend this country. But don't ever never get out of hand, and think you're better than another guy. You always like to think about the other person ... Because if you think bad about the guy, that's no good.

**Interviewer:** Tonight I've had the great pleasure of talking to Anthony, Anthony could you say your name, please?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** Anthony Vittiglio.

**Interviewer:** And what was your final rank?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** PFC.

**Interviewer:** And what was your company?

**Anthony Vittiglio:** 360 Field Artillery Battalion, Headquarters Battery [95<sup>th</sup> Infantry].

**Interviewer:** Also, daughters Janet and Joyce are present, and a very interested friend Kate (CK). Thank you very much. -end it-