

**Amos (Andy) Cambron
Veteran**

**Senator Patty Ritchie's office
Interviewer**

**Oswego County Legislative Office Building
Interviewed on November 11, 2013**

PR: Andy, how old were you when you joined the military?

AC: Well the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on the 7 of December and I went into service on the 12th.

PR: Wow, so was the attack on Pearl Harbor the one event that made you decide to join?

AC: Yes everyone who was eligible to go into service did. Boy there was lines and lines of guys waiting to sign up.

PR: Was there more to it for you than seeing the attack on Pearl Harbor or was there something else which drove you to enlist?

AC: Well yes there was because shortly after they bombed Pearl Harbor we were stationed at Camp Cook at the Vandenberg Air Force Base and that's where my division started up. I was in the Fifth Armored Division, they had me down on the beach with a Thompson submachine gun carrying it back and forth, watching for the Japanese to land, we didn't have any army, we didn't have anything back then. So after that was over they transferred me to Pine Camp NY. I started out as a motorcycle rider but when I got to NY it snowed and the captain said you can't ride a motorcycle here, you're a tank driver. I went into combat in England, I landed on Utah Beach in Normandy. I was at the Battle of the Bulge, I was in a lot of battles. You can see my hat I've got five of them.

PR: Now if you could, could you explain the one on the far right that blue one there.

AC: That's a good conduct. Boy was I proud to get one of them, you didn't have to do much to get a court-martial. I fought in the ETO that's Europe and the last is all the battles I was in. Here's my name on the back and this is the Sherman Tank.

PR: Now Andy, a couple seconds ago you rattled off a bunch of battles that you had taken part in.

AC: Well I was in Normandy, that was a battle; the liberating of France, that was a battle and we also liberated Luxembourg, had a battle there and I was at the Battle of the Bulge.

PR: Could you briefly describe what you did in each battle.

AC: Well what my job was was I was a (unclear) observer for an artillery and we had to use the tanks so they made me the driver and we were always out in front; we got shot at a lot.

PR: I was going to ask were you ever nervous being in front and center?

AC: Well I got one bronze star for just doing good work and the other bronze star well..... we were in Germany and coming into this little town, my gunner and my loader and radio operator and I got shot at just as we got over into the town. They hit us twice, a direct shot off our tank and I happened to see that German tank where it was hid and I told my gunner where it was and we fired a round, armor-piercing and it hit right in the spot between the turret and the tank so it tilted the gun and they couldn't shoot then he was backing the back loader cause the other guys jumped off and run. So after battle a little bit and everything well then he hit the tank then he jumped out and put a white phosphorus shell in, what that does is just set everything on fire. Well that's what happened to them and there was a convoy following me that was genoa and he was head of the convoy and he sees what was happening and if I hadn't I don't know if you read that article it tells you why. Now where's that...

PR: Now those are all of the awards you've gotten over your military career yes?

AC: Yup!

PR: Now if you could just point to each metal and describe what that medal is and what you had to do or what you went through to earn it.

AC: This bronze star was to show I had taken care of my equipment and things. And this other bronze star is from when we saved the convoy, and then the French gave me this silver star in the liberation of France. We liberated Luxembourg and we were the first Americans in Germany and I was the closest one to Berlin on the Elbe river circle and I can always say I was the first American soldier to be that close to Berlin. They wouldn't let us go across the river because there were 9000 German soldiers gathered where we were. If we hung around there a little bit they would take us down to a castle in Germany or somewhere and we had a little rest there. We had a point system, you had to have so many points to stay in the army of occupation, and you had to have so many points to get a discharge and it took eighty points to stay in Germany for the army of occupation and I had 79 so I couldn't stay so they were shipping me to Okinawa to invade the Japanese but then they dropped the atomic bomb and the Japanese quit. My war experiences, oh I could sit here for two days.

PR: I'm sure! Now there's what, about four other medals that you hadn't pointed out yet on the bottom row there?

AC: This first one here, European American Eastern Campaign, the second one efficiency and (unclear), the third one, army of occupation I was transferred out there but I didn't get into it. The next one is world war two and this last one is the American campaign and Corporal Thomas

(T5 Amos Cambron) headquarters 47 100 and (unclear) artillery, Technician to (unclear) while serving with a (unclear) battle, 5th armored division his connection with military operations against an enemy of the united states and Germany, the 2nd of March 1945. Technician Cambron, action reflects great credit upholding himself in the 47th armored artillery battalion in the army of the united states. Given to the under by the hand of the (unclear) of Washington, DC this 9th day of March 2006.

PR: That is quite the achievement! Now is there any one memory that sticks with you more than any other from your battles or years of service Andy?

AC: One of the memories I'll never forget was we had landed on Utah Beach, I was always the second tank in the LST; there were 16 tanks in there and there was always one tank ahead of me so when they let the gate down on the LST, boy that channel was rough and when we came off there the first tank went partly under, but the loadmaster (unclear) guy told me to go in and I did. We were the only tanks that got off of that; what had happened because the ocean was so rough was the LST I was on had moved and hit a big mine. Anyway we lost all those tanks on that trip. When I went up on land and after the battle started there were thousands of dead guys lying all over, you don't forget those places and even today I could go in there and tell you where every grain of sand is. When I go up there (unclear) before I could get out of my tank I was walking around there and there were parts of human bodies in my tank tracks and that really got me but that was war. You can go watch the movies and everything but to live in it is completely different. I had another close call (I had a lot of them) but this one was real close. I was in Paris, we were the first Americans into Paris too, with general Patton's 3rd army and when we went in to Paris we finally stopped and got gas and started to get the tanks loaded up with (unclear) and everything. Well I was up on my tank with a 5 gallon tank of gas and I was pouring gas into my tank when a sniper shot at me. I had a little microphone up on top of the tank, his bullet hit that, it was as close as you and I are together. Well that was pretty close and sometimes I get to the point that it just tears me up, you can't forget those things.

I was born in Oklahoma and raised in Arizona and when I was stationed at Pine Camp, well we got to go out on leave once in awhile and back then we used to have aircraft guns down at Anderson, now the pill boxes are still there but they'd practice shooting at the sleeve they were pulling and when I got a leave I was down there most all summer because I was firing out there and finally I got a leave and got a chance to go home. I'd been in the army 14 months and hadn't had a leave. So I went home to see my mom and dad, I had five days at home and when I was coming back to Watertown I got to Syracuse and the MP's wouldn't let us leave the ? and I said what the hell's the matter I've got all my papers, they said you're out cause your division moved out. So they sent us to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania and that was the first place I saw Bazookas fired. Then we went to Camp Gilmore. I can't think of the name of the next place but it was where we got discharged, where we took our army and boarded a ship which went from NY to

England. There were a lot of ships because they were getting ready for the invasion and there were miles and miles of tanks, (unclear) and airplanes.

PR: How many tanks do you think were there? Thousands?

AC: Yeah! There were airplanes, you wouldn't believe all the big planes sitting out there in the run way and jeeps and everything else that the army had, stacks and stacks of stuff. When they got ready to go I was on a landing craft and boy it was flat bottomed and there were more guys seasick on there than you've ever seen. But when I got back to the states, they gave me a thirty day leave and I married my wife because I was headed for Okinawa but they dropped the atomic bomb and I got out.

PR: So what did you do when you got out?

AC: Well you know back then they had some things like if you couldn't see good people wouldn't hire you, it's completely different now than it was back then. I finally found a job working in car remodeling, I was straightening frames and doing all that sort of stuff. I worked at that for a number of years and finally the army hired me at fort gun and I finished my time there. So that's my life!

PR: Well I could certainly sit here all afternoon and listen to your stories. Is there one story you like to tell more than any other, maybe it's something you got to experience overseas that was you know amongst all the chaos of war, that was something you were very happy to be able to experience?

AC: Well you know there are a lot of things that you've done and seen and you never had a dull minute but I think when the battle of the Bulge started our division was up in Holland because the British had landed paratroopers and things and they were killing them so bad that they finally called for help. So then we left Holland and the battle of the Bulge started. We were on the northern side of it, we weren't by the Bastogne we were by ? up that way. That was when I was glad I was in a tank because it was the coldest winter they ever had.

PR: Does it get cold in those tanks or do they keep the heat up pretty well?

AC: Oh that tank don't have any heat in it! Oh that frost!

PR: How'd you handle it? Did you bundle up?

AC: Well I had my sleeping bag and I would put it on but keep my arms out so I could drive.. Oh and one time we got hit it took a handful of steel off the turret right beside me. Another time we got hit they hit the back end of the tank and all of a sudden we started spouting gas and a piece of that shell or whatever it was went off and knocked a hole in the carburetor and we carried 110 gallons of gas. Luckily I told the lieutenant in charge of us that we smelled gas so we jumped out and it didn't explode because there was nothing going out and then they repaired that and when they got that done then we had...let's see before we were at the Battle of the Bulge we were in Luxembourg to free it and when we had freed Luxembourg we received orders to go to

Germany. We did but we didn't stand very long cause they just kicked us out there was just a few of us. After that there were small battles, we used to watch the big bombers come over ?. I don't know if you've ever seen pictures of how Hitler got rid of the Jews and all that well one battle place there must have been thousands of bodies laying out and they had a lot of those places where they were killing them. In fact when Hitler started out every time a boy turned eight years old Hitler had him come in his army and a girl when she got old enough to have babies then she'd start having them and of course the soldiers starting in Hitler's army. That's what he done. We liberated hospitals and things oh they were nice and clean with everything fixed up. Right now I'm watching...there showing a lot of the German families, the battles they were in and how they murdered and I'll tell you it was something you'll never forget. So that's about it. Like I said I could sit here all afternoon.

PR: Oh I don't doubt it. Just a couple more questions before we wrap up this interview. Overall what were your thoughts of the war?

AC: Well the Americans didn't want to get in the war, no way but when they bombed Pearl Harbor that's what got the Americans stirred up. My wife she worked out here at the New York air-break (?) she was a defense worker. Anybody who could work did and I know the people back in the states had it rough cause everything...they had to have little coupons. In fact my wife's got some of those coupons that her mother had. Back then when the war was going every able man was either drafted or he was... because these little towns they took most of the guys that were able, if you were a farmer or a defense worker then you had to be picked out. It just happened that I hated war but that was a war we had to win.