

An Interview with Vince Moresco, WWII Army Veteran
By Michele Starkey

The Sentinel sat down with Vince Moresco recently to talk about his life in Newburgh before and after his years serving in the Army during WWII. He would attend school for half the day and go to work at Stroock on Broadway for the other half of the day. Three of the Moresco brothers were serving in WWII by the time Vince was drafted in 1944 when he turned 18 years of age. He shared with us, "It was my first time away from home."

Where did you go for basic training?

"I went to Camp Upton in Suffolk County and then to Camp Blanding in Florida for basic training. We headed over to the European theater on a fourteen day trip across the ocean to France and most of the guys were sick for twelve of those fourteen days. If the guy on the top bunk got sick, everyone else got sick, too. It was a rough crossing. We left NYC in route to Marseille, France."

What happened when you first arrived in France?

"One of the first things I remember when we arrived was going through this town and there was music coming from the end of this factory and we started walking towards the sound. An American soldier was walking past us and I recognized him and called out, 'Hey Lefty Burkowski!' and he turned around. He was from Newburgh, too. We talked for a bit and then he told me he was heading back home to the States and needed some fresh clothes and I gave him some of mine to wear. During the next three days, my division would fight two big battles in France and 40% of the unit was wounded or killed. Within two weeks, I found myself on the frontlines in Wingen. It was a French village nestled in the Hardt Mountains and we were in 3 feet of snow. We weren't prepared for the harsh weather conditions and we just had our green Army issue uniforms, jackets, boots and each soldier had one blanket. I spent 29 days in a foxhole with another soldier. It was just the two of us and I wished there had been more because we would have had more blankets. We placed one of the blankets on the ground and put the other blanket over top of us and that is how we kept warm. The Germans were much more prepared than we were for the cold and snow and they even had white uniforms. They were only 300 yards in front of us. We held our positions and at the end of the 29 days, my feet were frost-bite as we made our way out of there. There were only about 35 of us left and as we were peeling back I tripped on some barbed wire and dove forward, my weapon going in one direction and myself going in another direction. Four mortar shells exploded all around me and just missed me. It's a real miracle that I didn't get hit or even killed, and when I finally caught up with the others they asked me where I had been. We saw so many things out there and each of us that were standing there were lucky to be alive."

Did you get first aid for your feet?

"I did go to the first aid station to have my feet looked at but when I heard that my unit was heading out again for the Great Push, I returned to my unit to be with them. We found out that the entire division was being held up by about two dozen Hitler youth. We finally overcame them and pushed on into Furth, Germany where the battle raged on." Moresco's Rainbow Division, 222nd K Company would receive the Bronze Star for their combat mission in Furth, Germany. It would take many years for Moresco to finally

receive his medal and paperwork. On January 21, 1963, he would finally receive his recognition for the events that took place in 1945.

What was the worst memory that you have from the War?

“The worst was witnessing the liberation of the concentration camps. There were so many people dead, many of them still in boxcars. It was a horrible sight to witness.”

What was the best memory of Europe?

“After the European occupation, we went on to Vienna, Austria and we were detailed to a parade company with the Russians, French and English. We were there for about six months, eating, sleeping and parading. We would stand revelry and people would come to watch.”

Did all of the Moresco sons make it home safely from the War?

“Yes, all four of us survived and probably because we were all spread across different fronts of the War. My mother was very happy when we all came home alive.”

What did you do after the War ended?

“I was 21 years old and went to work at the A&P on Broadway until 1949 or 1950 when my brother and I opened the Grandstand Restaurant. I met my wife, Rose, whose friend was living near the Grandstand at the time. We were married in 1951 and had four children. I went on to work at the A&P in Beacon and then to work for Mattewan Prison for 28 years.”

How long have you been a member of VFW Post 1161?

“About 7 years now. I would encourage all veterans to join the Post because there are so many benefits. They help with prescription medicines and you get your dues back with a check on your birthday. You attend monthly meetings and we do so many things together. It really is a great organization.”

The VFW Post 1161 meets every third Friday of every month in the City of Newburgh Post 973 Bldg. The meetings begin at 1:00 pm and you can call Quartermaster Steve Fanizzi at (845)236-7295 or Commander Donald Ruckdeschel Sr. at (845)562-7828 for more details. They are recruiting for new members and offer many benefits, call for details.