

WWII Veteran Alfred D' Arco
His history and service
By Michele Starkey

Thankfully, Alfred D' Arco recorded this history several years ago and we are pleased to be able to share his recollections of WWII with you today. Alfred has been ill for some time now and we were unable to interview him but his family passed this along to share with our readers and for that we are truly grateful.

Alfred D' Arco was just 19 years old when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and he enlisted in the Army just a few months later in March of 1942. Following basic training, D' Arco was attached to the newly formed 443rd AAA Battalion.

The AAA or Anti-aircraft artillerymen of the 443rd Bn were selected to receive 80 of the newer type half-track AA guns by General George Patton. Patton envisioned a fully mobile unit of anti-aircraft guns that could protect his tanks.

The 443rd Bn was sent to Camp Pickett, VA, and attached to the 3rd Infantry Division and in November 1942, under Patton's Western Task Force, they invaded the French Morocco. Just three days later, the Armistice was signed with the Vichy French Government (The term "Vichy France" reflects a period in France when the wartime government based in the city of Vichy, south of Paris, was in control. It lasted from July 1940 until November of 1942)

It would be the first of nine Campaigns that D' Arco would fight in during WWII. The 443rd Bn was sent to Tunisia when it became attached to the 1st Armored Division. This campaign was referred to as a "Turkey Shoot" and the 443rd shot down a total of 73 enemy planes.

Once again the 443rd returned to the 3rd Infantry Division and invaded Sicily and fought battles in Messina but was in dire need of repairs and replenishments after that battle. After replenishing themselves, the 443rd became permanently attached to the 36th Texas Infantry Division for the remaining six Campaigns. They would participate in the invasion of Southern France, Germany and Austria.

While in Italy, D' Arco located his father's relatives living in Formia on the Mediterranean coastline. Once Rome was liberated, D' Arco found his grandmother and met her, along with other relatives, for the very first time. He would spend three days with his family in Italy and his grandmother gave him a message to carry back to his father, "I will not close my eyes until I see you again." In 1952, the elder D' Arco would travel to Italy to see his mother again. Shortly thereafter, she would pass away. 1952 was also the year that Alfred D' Arco would marry Terry and the two remain married today, sixty years later.

D' Arco shared the following, "I am very proud to have served my great country through all nine Campaigns during WWII. I live with my memories every single day. I helped to form the 443rd Bn Association in 1970 and remained active for many years, attending reunions in Hazleton, PA, with my wife, Terry. Many of my old buddies have passed on now but they will never be forgotten."

Editorial Note: Anti-aircraft gunners from the 443rd are credited with saving the beleaguered beachhead at Anzio by shooting down so many enemy planes. They were the

ones who drove M-16 half-tracks onto Omaha Beach. General Omar Bradley once said that his troops never would have made it safely off of that bloody beach without those fearless men of the 443rd. The skill and character of these soldiers proved to be one of the most formidable weapons of all in helping to turn the tide of the War.

Caption:

WWII Veteran, Alfred D'Arco, while serving in Italy. (photo provided)