

**Philip Caruso  
Veteran**

**Interviewed by  
his granddaughter  
at his home**

**Q:** Do you remember what branch of service you were in?

**PC:** Yeah, field artillery.

**Q:** When did you enter the service?

**PC:** 1941, April.

**Q:** Do you remember where?

**PC:** I went to Fort Dixon first, I was in the Pennsylvania outfit, 28<sup>th</sup> division.

**Q:** What theatre, or campaign, or location were you in?

**PC:** I was in Europe, Europe campaign.

**Q:** Do you want to tell me about France?

**PC:** France, we went there. I landed in England first, and then we went to France for D-Day. I landed on Omaha Beach. And from there we went to France and all that.

**Q:** Do you want to tell me about the time you found all of the cathedrals in France?

**PC:** All the small villages, as we went through in Europe, we found a lot of villages that were blown up, some of them standing. People were all around, looking for a place to stay, anything. [unclear]

**Q:** What were your duties when you were in Europe? What was your job title?

**PC:** I was doing a lot of mechanic work, and I was on a gun, so I was a gunner.

**Q:** What did that involve?

**PC:** Well I was shooting 105's with the infantry outfit, we used to back the infantry up. When they needed fighter support, we supported them. [unclear]

**Q:** What did you work on when you were doing mechanic work?

**PC:** Trucks.

**Q:** Trucks?

**PC:** Yeah

**Q:** No tanks?

**PC:** You know, trucks, cars. Whatever we had.

**Q:** Did you ever get injured while over there?

**PC:** No, no I didn't.

**Q:** You didn't?

**PC:** Well, no. I got hurt after the war, not during the war.

**Q:** Ok.

**PC:** Well I went to the hospital. I got sick. One time I jumped off a truck and I landed wrong and busted my ankle. Spent enough time in the hospital then.

**Q:** Didn't you cut yourself on a piece of glass though?

**PC:** No, glass cut me, it blew up.

**Q:** Where was that?

**PC:** In Germany.

**Q:** In Germany?

**PC:** Yeah.

**Q:** That cut through your tendons didn't it?

**PC:** Yeah, yeah.

**Q:** That was serious.

**PC:** Oh, yeah it's not too bad.

**Q:** What was your daily life like when you were over there?

**PC:** Ha, it wasn't good.

**Q:** What did they give you to eat?

**PC:** Oh, it depends where you were. Sometimes you were in a place where you had good eats, otherwise you eat out of a can. I used to eat C rations. Beans I used to eat; I didn't like hash. Some days that's all we had, C rations. Then later on we had K rations, that wasn't too bad.

**Q:** What's the difference between a C and K ration?

**PC:** The C ration was in a can. With beans and hash, things like that. K rations were dry stuff.

**Q:** So you liked the K rations better?

**PC:** Well yeah, it's better than eating beans all the time. Ha-ha.

**Q:** What about sleeping? Where did you sleep?

**PC:** Three quarters of the time I spent in tents. The other time, I was out in the field somewhere. We had dugouts, that's what we used to live in. Then at camp, I used to live in tents. Very seldom I lived in a building.

**Q:** Did you have a tent all by yourself?

**PC:** No, no. There were about seven or eight of us in there.

**Q:** In one tent?

**PC:** Yean.

**Q:** Was it warm?

**PC:** Well ha, not in the wintertime it wasn't warm. It was wicked up there in the wintertime. A lot of rain, snow, all that.

**Q:** Where were you first in combat?

**PC:** Well, first I landed in Omaha beach. First one I had, real real bad.

**Q:** Can you describe Omaha beach?

**PC:** We went on the boats. We had those, oh I forgot the name of them. A bunch of us would go down, and would land on shore. The front of the boat comes down. I went on a truck; I didn't walk in the water because I was a mechanic and we had a truck. I came on land with the truck over at Omaha beach. We went through there, you kept moving along. You didn't stop.

**Q:** How long were you at Omaha beach?

**PC:** One day that's all.

**Q:** One day?

**PC:** We went through. I left after one day. I didn't go in the first wave, I went in the second wave. It wasn't as bad as the first one. The first one was a real bad one. The second one wasn't that bad. Bad enough, but not that bad.

**Q:** That's not the only combat you saw though right?

**PC:** Oh no. [unclear] As you went through the places you're under fire all the time. If infantry asks for support, we would support them. We used to change and go different places. We stay in one place a maybe couple of weeks, or maybe a day or two, then move. We were always on the move, never sit in one place.

**Q:** Is that why you ended up in so many tents and foxholes?

**PC:** Oh yeah. A lot of foxholes. [unclear] We kept always moving. We would fire for the infantry. We always kept the infantry ahead of us. And we'd keep following them.

**Q:** Who came behind you?

**PC:** Behind us we had big guns. Big 155 rifles we had behind us. They were a couple of miles behind. When we needed support we'd call them, shoot the big ones.

**Q:** How did you feel about the men in your unit? Did you get along?

**PC:** Oh yeah, we got along.

**Q:** How about the officers?

**PC:** They weren't too bad. Some were good.

**Q:** What was your rank when you left?

**PC:** I was a corporal. I got busted because I went over the hill.

**Q:** What does that mean?

**PC:** One time I took off, I came home at Christmas time. I couldn't get leave so a bunch of us took off. I came back, I was arrested and had to pay a fine of 155 dollars and 21 days of hard labor.

**Q:** What was hard labor?

**PC:** Well we didn't have too much of it. Sweeping out the roads.

**Q:** Sweeping the roads?

**PC:** Yeah. After four o'clock in the afternoon we used to go out and clean out the roads. And that wasn't too bad.

**Q:** So, this happened before you left the states?

**PC:** Way after I left the states, about three years later. Yeah, that was way later.

**Q:** When you went over the hill you were in Pennsylvania?

**PC:** No. Where was I? I can think of it.

**Q:** Who do you remember most from your service? Which man did you remember the most from being in the army, the infantry?

**PC:** They were from New York.

**Q:** Do you remember their names?

**PC:** Yeah, one was Angelo, the other was, oh what was the other one's name? [unclear] Then Gordon was from North Carolina, he was another buddy of mine. And then I had another one named Savage, he was from somewhere down south too. There were three of us. There was another one from Philadelphia. There was quite a few of them. I got along with all of them.

**Q:** How come those three or four stick out? What do you remember from them?

**PC:** Those were the guys we went drinking together.

**Q:** How long were you guys together?

**PC:** We were all there for four years.

**Q:** Did you stay in touch when you came back to the states?

**PC:** One did. The other ones I either lost track of or they passed away. I sent a letter to them and got no letter back and he passed away.

**Q:** But they all survived Europe?

**PC:** Yeah. [unclear] When I left there was just a few of us. [unclear]

**Q:** Do you remember anything that was inspiring while you were in the service? Any event that really inspired you?

**PC:** When I went to France, Paris. To see everything going on over there is amazing.

**Q:** Can you describe it?

**PC:** I went to Bures over there and I went to [unclear]. We had a good time in France. [unclear]

**Q:** Didn't you get in trouble for stealing a pig?

**PC:** Oh yeah, we stole a pig one time.

**Q:** Why did you steal the pig?

**PC:** It was a nice-looking pig and we grabbed ahold of it and cooked it. So, we went down to the field, we were cooking it, but we got caught. [By] The farmer. We had to pay for it. [unclear]

**Q:** Well it's better than a K ration right?

**PC:** Oh yeah. One time I was chasing a chicken, a big rooster, I was shooting at him. He got in one of the building with a hay roof. I blew the roof apart; I couldn't get him. I couldn't find him. I wanted to roast him.

**Q:** Did you guys ever get fresh meat if you couldn't catch it?

**PC:** Yeah, we got a few. One small town we used to grab ahold of chickens, and I had a gallon pail. I used to go to Bessel and get some lard, put it in there. And we used a fireplace to roast the chicken in it. [unclear]

**Q:** And you never got in trouble?

**PC:** Not with the chickens, only with the pig.

**Q:** Only with the pig?

**PC:** Yeah. Hahaha.

**Q:** Did some of the men eat the horses?

**PC:** Oh, horse meat? I had that in France, yeah. It's good. It wasn't bad.

**Q:** Were the horses killed in battle?

**PC:** No. That was in France, a town, I can't remember all the towns we went through. We went to the restaurant there to get something to eat, and they were serving horse meat. They raised horses there for meat.

**Q:** Were the French people nice to the American soldiers?

**PC:** Yeah, they weren't bad. The girls were nice.

**Q:** The girls were nice?

**PC:** Yeah. Ha-ha.

**Q:** So, they were thankful when the Americans came through?

**PC:** Oh yeah, [unclear]. Sure. That's a different story.

**Q:** Well, you want to tell me?

**PC:** No, I'll just tell you the good things.

**Q:** Did you ever have to do anything unusual when it came time to work the guns or to be a mechanic?

**PC:** [unclear] One time I went down to the junkyard that had all the trucks and everything and I rebuilt a truck and brought it back home. Made it to the camp there and we had it there for about a month and then some officer came around and said we weren't supposed to have it, so he took it away from us. I got mad, boy. I got mad. All the work I'd done, they took it away from me.

**Q:** Why?

**PC:** Well, we weren't authorized to have it.

**Q:** Even though you built it yourself?

**PC:** No, I said we built that thing and he didn't want to know anything because he wanted a truck. That's what the reason was. So, they took it away from us.

**Q:** What were you guys the truck for?

**PC:** Oh, to carry our stuff around. We had a lot of stuff to carry around. See we carried ammunition with us all the time.

**Q:** Was that when you were in Europe?

**PC:** In Europe, yeah. Not here. In Europe.

**Q:** Tell me about how you went over there. In the ships?

**PC:** Yeah

**Q:** When you left the states?

**PC:** Well we were in a convoy and it took I think 21 days to get across because we were zig zagging all over the place to counter submarines and all that. It took a long time getting there. We would have landed in England. I got equipped then we crossed the English Channel.

**Q:** Did you ever see a submarine while you were on the convoy?

**PC:** No, I didn't see one, no. I went to the English Channel and got equipped and then landed in Omaha on the beach.

**Q:** Did you get to see England at all?

**PC:** Very little. We just got equipment. [unclear]

**Q:** What equipment did they give you?

**PC:** Stuff like guns and rifles. Everything you're supposed to have. Masks. We were fully equipped. [unclear]

**Q:** Do you remember what gun you carried?

**PC:** Yeah, an M1. No, I had a carbine. First I had a pistol. A 45 pistol. Then they took that away and gave us carbines, little carbines.

**Q:** They only gave you one gun at a time?

**PC:** That's all you had. That's all you needed.

**Q:** Did you keep it on you the entire time?

**PC:** Oh, you kept it with you all the time. Yeah, you kept it all the time. Then we had to use it. I never was in combat with the enemy. Always at a distance, never got face to face with them.

**Q:** You never saw the enemy face to face?

**PC:** No. Only one time in France at lunch time I had to go to the john. We used to go out in the field. We had logs where you sat down. I sat there and I was going to read the magazine, but they saw me, the enemy and they opened up on me. They were firing with 77's. Well, I tell you, I moved. I never did know what happened. I never cleaned myself, I was under the bushes somewhere.

**Q:** Oh my god.

**PC:** Well, sure. He was shooting at me.

**Q:** I don't blame you.

**PC:** But our boys shot back at them after that, they shut up.

**Q:** Well that's good.

**PC:** Oh yeah. They chased me off the toilet [unclear]. They did that on purpose, they had seen me. They figured that.

**Q:** They did it on purpose?

**PC:** Well they must have because why fire at one man. They said, lets fix this guy. He's taking a dump there and let's fix him.

**Q:** Were you out of range?

**PC:** Of the gun? No. This was at Saint-Nazaire on a submarine base. We were guarding a submarine base.

**Q:** Where were you?

**PC:** I think Saint-Nazaire the name of it was.

**Q:** Saint-Nazaire?

**PC:** The submarine base that I was at.

**Q:** That would be in France, right?

**PC:** Yeah, we were protecting that. The enemies had ahold of it, but we were on the other side of it. And they used to fire at us, and we used to fire at them.

**Q:** Did you ever get ahold of the base again? Did you kick them out?

**PC:** They took off after, yeah.

**Q:** Oh, okay.

**PC:** Well we didn't do it. The infantry went in and took it. They took everything, yeah.

**Q:** You reclaimed the submarine base?

**PC:** Yeah. They [the infantry] took it.

**Q:** Okay.

**PC:** They took everything. Who can remember everything? I can't. Its 70 years ago.

**Q:** That's okay, you're doing a good job.

**PC:** Oh god. I can't remember everything. I can't remember the towns I went through, all the villages and all that. It was a mess. It was no picnic. War is not a picnic.

**Q:** Were you able to send letters back to grandma?

**PC:** Yeah.

**Q:** How often?

**PC:** Well as often [unclear]. They used a checkpoint. Anything bad they used to cross it out.

**Q:** They would read your letters?

**PC:** Oh yes, yes. You couldn't go without them reading it. Anything negative they cut it out. If it was something they didn't like to hear, they cut it out. You had to be careful what you write in there.

**Q:** Did you ever send her any money or anything?

**PC:** Yes. One time I got a crap game. I won a bunch of money in a crap game and I sent her money.

**Q:** How much?

**PC:** I sent her 200 dollars. I won 600 dollars. I sent her 200 dollars. And the next day I went broke. Ha-ha. I lost it all. Good thing I sent her the 200 dollars.

**Q:** Absolutely.

**PC:** Ha-ha. [unclear] Sometimes I got paid, and two hours later I was broke.

**Q:** Because of the crap games?

**PC:** Yeah. [unclear]

**Q:** Is that how the men spent their time?

**PC:** Yeah that's how we spent our time. Played cards. What else are we going to do?

**Q:** Nothing

**PC:** We used to go into town and drink. [unclear] What else is there to do?

**Q:** Did you get in trouble for drinking like that?

**PC:** No, no. I never bothered anybody.

**Q:** Well that's good. So how did it feel being over there in general?

**PC:** Not so good. Not good at all. I'd rather stay home, not there. [unclear] You'd see towns where, oh god, no building's standing. I don't know how people even lived there. [unclear] One time we opened fire over the river there. I forget the name of the big river they had there. On the other side they all open up with guns and we would often fight there. Oh, we shot maybe a couple hundred of rounds of ammunition, shooting across. We had five guns, they had a hundred-something guns lined up, and would fire right across.

**Q:** What type of guns?

**PC:** We had 105's, all kinds. Depends. The big ones you had further behind. We had howitzers.

**Q:** Howitzers?

**PC:** Yeah, you'd get them up and tip them, so you could shoot close range with them.

**Q:** How did it feel coming home?

**PC:** Oh, beautiful.

**Q:** Yeah?

**PC:** Happy coming home.

**Q:** Who'd you come home to?

**PC:** When I came home I had a child that was one year old.

**Q:** Yeah?

**PC:** Ha-ha. When I left here I got married [unclear]. I went to Oklahoma. Then from Oklahoma I left. I went overseas. And when I came back I had a one-year old little boy.

**Q:** So, it was worth coming home to.

**PC:** Oh yeah. [unclear] And coming home to her, to the wife.

**Q:** Good. All set Grandpa.

**PC:** Yes, all set.