

**Anthony J. Palangi
Veteran**

**Unknown
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on January 21, 2007
Hudson Falls H.S., Hudson Falls, NY**

Q: You said you were born in Italy. When did you come to the United States?

AP: 1929

Q: How old were you when you came?

AP: 10 years old

Q: Why did you come to America anyway?

AP: My dad and my 2 uncles used to come to America. They would work a couple of years, a year or two and they would come back. And... We were in the wine manufacturing field in Italy, and so, they would come to America, they would earn some money and they would come back and they would expand the wine business. And when Mussolini came in to power, I guess, we didn't care about dictatorship, so we decided to move here to America which he was able to do.

Q: When you came here, you said you were drafted by the army of the United States?

AP: Yes, when the war was declared, I was drafted in 1945.

Q: What were your feelings on the draft then?

AP: My family was a very patriotic family, and... I kind of felt... I felt good about it. I wanted to contribute whatever I could.

Q: When you drafted, you usually need to go for basic training, you needed to go to school, right?

AP: Yes, we went for basic training, I think for about 30 days. In St. Petersburg, Florida, where I had basic training. And I attended the Air Force administrative and supply school in Washington DC.

Q: When you went to DC, what did they teach you there?

AP: They taught us how to operate a complete supply department, supply the troops, depending on the size of the organization. And of course, the administrative part of the training was the different regulations to order supplies.

Q: After your basic training, where did you go?

AP: After basic training I went to Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. It was a part of the Air Force and at that time it was experimental base mostly.

Q: What did you do in Ohio?

AP: There I had to actually organize a complete supply department.

Q: Were you one of the people in command then? What was your rank when you got to Ohio?

AP: When I got to Ohio, I was just a private and six months later I was a sergeant and in another six months I think I was promoted to a staff sergeant.

Q: After Ohio, where were you sent to?

AP: After Ohio, I served in the Asiatic-Pacific and the Philippines, mainly in the Philippines.

Q: So, does that mean, you filed late?

AP: Umm, I participated in the battle of the Philippines. Actually, I was not in the direct combat, I was supporting the combat troops with supplies.

Q: Does this mean you were on the ship for ...?

AP: I was on land.

Q: So you never saw any direct combat right?

AP: No, not direct combat but I was in the combat zone most of the time.

Q: You said you supplied some troops that far?

AP: Yes, In the Philippines, I was in the Luzon Island and Mindoro Island. We supplied the troops that actually were the fighter group – these were P38s that protected the B29s that bombed Japan.

Q: So, when you said you supplied the troops, does this mean you personally brought ammunition and weapons up to the line?

AP: No, I supplied with clothing, food and all the necessary necessities. There was a lot of administrative work involved because I had to order material and I was also in charge of critical equipment. The equipment that became critical in any area of combat, which I got the order and someone had to ship it immediately and ship the fastest way they I could.

Q: What would you say was the hardest part of your administrative duties in the Philippines?

AP: The toughest part was, basically many times, you had shortages and you couldn't quite supply the troops with proper equipment, we would have to find sources and ways to get the material to supply them as quickly as you could.

Q: What did you need to do to find supplies and materials that the troops needed?

AP: You would need to order through headquarters and if they were short, they would order from other areas where they were available. And we would start the process of transportation from one area to the other and came to the final spot where it was critically needed.

Q: Were you ever turned down? Say, the troops needed this material but the Headquarters said no, did that happen often?

AP: Not too often. Occasionally... But we would try to substitute the best we could, you know. Because as you know, World War II was a considerably world-wide war, there was a lot of war going on. Both in Europe and in Japan, it was worldwide... that's why the supply was the critical issue. Constantly. Twenty four hours a day. And many times we would find substitutes the best we could.

Q: Did you ever need to supply other allies, such as Italians and French and British?

AP: No, when I was stationed in Wright Field, Ohio, I was stationed there, about two years, they had a contingent of the Italian Airforce lieutenants. And I can speak Italian fluently, so I was their first sergeant for about a year. And that's about as close as I got to the Italians.

Q: What was your personal opinion on General MacArthur – sending people over the Philippines?

AP: I would call him a traditional commander.

Q: What do you mean by traditional?

AP: One hundred percent patriotic. He was extremely patriotic. And if he gave out orders, they would write the order, you better carry them out, or the proper punishment was issued. But he was in my view, he was respected by the troops. And... he was really a role model for the troops. He would rally them, he was enthusiastic and he had a way of rallying his troops.

Q: So, does it mean you felt that he was justified sending the United States Army to the Philippines then?

AP: Yes, definitely. He liberated the Philippines. Filipinos are very good people. They are just, I've had a very good experience with them.

Q: Did you ever meet any Filipinos while... (being interrupted)

AP: Oh yes, yes, as a matter of fact, they were maybe... sixty percent of my workforce in supply in the Philippines. Then also, at the end of the... after the Philippines were liberated, we had Japs in the caves in the mountains. Just like terrorists in Iraq today. I recall they used to... they used to get volunteers to go and try to get them out of the caves. That's when we used the flame throwers.

Q: What were your personal views on the Japanese?

AP: I never did have a.... I would say a favorable view of the Japanese. They were a... fanatics. Their philosophy was entirely different than our philosophy. And as you know, they have suicide bombers, just like we have today in Iraq. They would dive right into a ship.

Q: Did you ever meet a Japanese?

AP: Oh yes, we had quite a few prisoners.

Q: Did they speak to you in English, or did they attempt to?

AP: I didn't run into many that spoke English. It was all by sign (indicating hand motions).

Q: The ones that were captured, would you say, they were less fanatical than the others, and more open to... (unclear) to cooperating?

AP: My view on the Japanese was that ... They were considerably different than the average GI, or the average American. They have a different culture, different religion, so it was very difficult to appraise what they were going to do. They were not the average American or even the average European. Europeans, more or less, their culture resembles ours. But... The Japanese culture is quite different.

Q: Yes...

AP: That's... That was the separation point.

Q: Did you ever receive any medals or awards while you were in the Philippines?

AP: Yes. (reaches out to the papers on the desk). I jotted some down here. ... (unclear) papers.... (both laughing)

I'll help you out a little bit. World War II, this is the decorations and medals. World War Two: American Theater, Wright Field, that's where I served. Then I got the good conduct medal there. Then I served in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater, I got two bronze stars, those were for the Philippine Operation. And I also served in Korea, when Japan was invaded, and shortly afterwards I went to Korea, I was there for about 4 months. And I was, actually, processing the GIs home. They used to go by number according to the board they had, and was the order they had been drafted, you got a number.

Q: (cuts in) And that's how you decided who would go home and when?

AP: Right. They would process so many a day and would reach that number, according to the number. I actually processed my own number. (both laughing). And Asiatic-Pacific, I got two Bronze Stars. These were battle campaigns, Southern Philippines, Luzon and a Mindoro Island. I served with the fifty eighth air service group. We supplied the pilots of the B38s that protected the B29s bombing Japan.

Q: Wow, does that mean, you said you supplied materials and stuff and clothing, did you also supply the missiles and...

AP: No, ordinance, we didn't collect ordinance and ammunition stuff. We supplied the basic needs, food, clothing, and equipment, some equipment.

And... (continuing reading off his paper): that was those two campaigns. State of New York gave me the medal for merit. That's for serving in direct support of combat operations which you supply... And the certificate of recognition during the period of the Cold War. The Cold War was from September of '45 to December of 1991. And promoting peace and stability for the nation. If you want to see them, I've got them all downstairs, I will show you in my office.

Q: I would like to see that. Bronze Stars, you said...

AP: Those are battle stars.

Q: How did you earn those?

AP: Because I was in the combat area. To earn those you have to be in the combat area. So, I personally was not in combat, but most of the time was in the combat area, because you have to deliver supplies and so forth...

Q: As a supply person, were you ever under attack directly or were you away from the battle most of the time?

AP: I was considerably away from the front lines but there were snipers at night. The Japanese would sneak in our tents and they would slice your throat while you were sleeping.

Q: Wow.... You must have been scared in the Philippines?

AP: Well, I had a few reservations. Even though you have guards and everything, they sneak in anyway, you know.

Q: Did you ever experience anything out of the ordinary as a supply, like something you were not prepared for but that happened? Anything you can tell me about that?

AP: Yes. This was on Mindoro Island. The B38s were the planes with the big wide tail and had two mortars. And they were, I think, the fastest planes at that time. They flew right below the sun level, sometimes they broke the sun light. And they protected the B29s. And they used to practice at Mindoro Island and they would dive down straight. This was something that I would never forget. I was behind my truck when a group of Filipinos was going down to the supply area. And we were watching them and all of a sudden, this particular one, (showing a plane diving down with his hand), never rolls, usually they go down and disappear and they shoot up and this one went right into the ground and this was a troop area. So, when we got there, it's got to be a hole almost as big as this house.

Q: Wow.....

AP: And I could see parts and bodies of all my troops.

Q: Did you ever found out what happened, why

AP: Probably blacked out. Might have had medical problems, but more than likely blacked out. Dove right in.... That one got me a little bit.

Q: Did this happen often?

AP: It happened in many areas but probably where I wasn't in. That was one particular time. There were a lot of crashes, we used to get B29s coming back. They would come in like an injured duck. They would be just out of balance (spread his arms showing a duck flying and balancing). But they would come in. They were really.... They really were upfront fighting.

Q: What happened at Luzon? You said, this happened...

AP: Mindoro Island was the one I was talking about, the B38. Because B29 was a considerably large airplane. That was a big airplane. And the islands in the Philippines couldn't hold too many. We had to have several islands, I think, basically 5-6 islands that they flew from.

Q: Wow.... Did anything different happen at Luzon Island?

AP: It was a big island, the main island of Philippines. That's where most of the fighting took place, some of the small islands they were smaller battles and mop up situations, you know. The Luzon Island is a big one.

Q: Was heat in the tropics a big factor for you at all, and the weather?

AP: Yea, the climate was.... There was a lot of mosquitoes, it was damp. It was hot. 95 degrees, 100 degrees. Really warm. But after the mop up and everything the conditions improved. It wasn't so bad.

Q: Did you experience shortages in water or food while you were there?

AP: Water was fairly, fairly available. We didn't have any problems. Clean water was the problem. It was the clean drinking water. You had to be careful (laughing).

Q: So how contaminated was the water supply that you brought the troops? Would that be bad or did something happen in the middle?

AP: Most of the water in the Philippines was from springs. If there was no contamination around it then it was good water, normally.

Q: Exceptions happen though....

AP: Yea, of course being behind the lines we did experience the shortages that the front lines did. We had the supplies. But they were amazing. The American supply lines were amazing. We really served for the combat troops. That made the difference.

Q: You are right, without supplies, troops couldn't fight and nothing would have happened.

AP: You got no food – you can't live. You got to have clothing, you got to have the basics.

Q: Were you serving with African Americans at the time too, or was everything segregated as well?

AP: Umm, in my organization, the 58th air group, we didn't have any Africans. But in California, when I was processed to go overseas, they had a main staging area. There were a lot of African Americans there. At that time they served as mostly truck drivers. Of course, today, they serve in the technical areas. Side by side, you know. But then they were mainly in transportation, let me put it down this way. Now at Wright field we had a lot of African Americans in the administrative field. Because Wright Field was an experimental base. And there it was really the heart of the Air Force, so there was a lot of administrative activity. And we had a lot of African Americans there. And we had an unusually large coordination base. Because many many many troop organizations drove for the supply base, and at the supply end of it there were a lot of African Americans. But overseas I have not seen many.

Q: You said Wright base was experimental, did a lot of people know about it then or was it kind of..

AP: It was kind of a secretive airbase. That's where they developed the bomb sight. And the bombsight was really highly technical devise which they didn't have before. Because with the bomb sight they could bomb, pinpoint it exactly. Before that it was hit and miss.

Q: Are you talking about the B29s, the high-altitude bombing?

AP: Yea. In Europe it would be only B24s.

The bomb sight, that was developed at Wright field and... also there was an experimental base for airplane propellers. Had a huge tunnel that hummed 24 hours a day. Now you are smart.

Q: Laughing. I can't do that but it will be hard.

AP: So there I supplied, the guard unit that protected the airport, both Wright and Patterson. It was 800 guards. They drove from my supply.

Q: Wow...

AP: I had to order special equipment for them, they asked for special equipment, like special clothing.

Q: What do you mean by special clothing, what do you mean?

AP: Well, they were like policemen.

Q: I see...

AP: They had whistles and they had decorations, you know. And they were all big for size... Six feet over most of them.

Q: It's tall!

AP: Yes...

Q: When the Americans bombed the Japanese with the atomic bomb at Hiroshima, did you agree with that?

AP: When they bombed Hiroshima, I was on the Mindoro Island. It was in the month of August, I am pretty sure it was the month of August. Shortly after that, about 3 weeks after that, I was moved to Korea.

Q: But did you agree with the bombing? Did you agree that was the right route to go?

AP: To be honest with you, we agreed with any manner in which we could defeat Japan, come one! It didn't matter how...

Q: I understand....

AP: They were tough enemy. Iwo Jima was a tough one. I wanted to mention about an incident. On a Sunday morning, on Mindoro Island, we used to get troops from Iwo Jima, and they would come to Mindoro rest for a while because it was considerably away from the combat areas. And... one Sunday area I was in the troop area. And I was walking down... And I spotted a young guy, a young soldier, short. He had a dog, he had a cat. As I got closer and closer to him and finally I was able to recognize him. And... He lived on (indistinguishable) Avenue. And he looked at me and I looked at him, and he said you are from Glens Falls, aren't you. That was the shocker...

Q: Wild. That's a small world right there. To see someone from your hometown... Wow...

AP: Yes.... And at Wright field I also met, I think his name is Koocher (?) from Glens Falls. One day we were issuing clothing, I was standing there and there he was, standing in line to get his issue.

Q: Wow....

AP: I think his first name was Scott or Carl Koocher.

Q: When you were drafted, when drafted with others from Glens Falls and then you went onto your respective bases?

AP: Yea, when we were drafted, we all gathered at the city hall, we marched to the railroad station which is on North Street. And where I worked at Jackson Manufacturing, right across the street, I later worked there for 30 years.

Q: Wow...

AP: And we were shipped to Camp Upton in New York.

Q: How did you decide to go to the Air Force, were you given a choice into what branch you were to go to or....?

AP: In my case, they gave a series of tests that almost lasted two days. The first day it was mostly a refresher in mathematics and algebra and the next day they gave you all the aptitude tests. So, I qualified for the Airforce, according to the tests and that's where I went.

Q: So there was no choice on where to go even if...

AP: Um.... You had a very little choice unless you had a special training in some area. They might consider it but umm.... Usually you went where they needed you. I was fortunate to have those tests and if you didn't qualify for the Airforce then you went to the infantry. That's the way it worked.

Q: So, it's a good thing you scored well and you were placed in the air force.

AP: I was really surprised because in the high school I was not really that bright, you know... But, I was lucky...

Q: Must be pretty good to get in the Air force...

AP: Yea... And from Camp Upton they shipped us to Florida.

Q: How hard was basic training in Florida?

AP: It was about 30 days of basic training; it was all drilling and mostly walking and building moral and they were teaching how to use the firearms. It was not an advanced course. Because I was chosen to go to school.

Q: And school, you mean by going to Ohio, right?

AP: I was sent to Administrative School, Supply and Administrative School. And from there I went to Ohio.