



PFC John Giovanni
Army Serial No. 32 999 612
Company "M" 141st Infantry - Ammunition Carrier
Born December 24th, 1917 - Died February 7th, 1989
Served his country from September 7th, 1943 to November 30th, 1945
Central Europe, Normandy, Rhineland, Rome, Arne, Sicily, Southern France and Tunisia

Awarded The Following Medals

Purple Heart w/cluster

Bronze Star

Good Conduct Medal

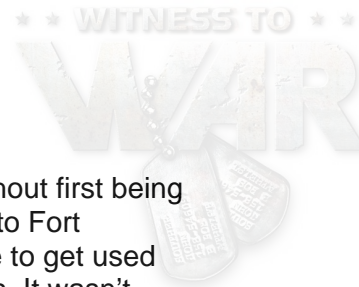
Presidential Unit Emblem

**European-African-Middle Eastern
Campaign Medal w/Arrow Head**

WWII Victory Medal

**Honorable Service
Lapel Button WWII**

**Sharp Shooter Badge
w/Rifle Bar**



In 1943 (the same year my first daughter was born) I volunteered for induction without first being drafted. We first went to Camp Lipton Long Island for shots then were transferred to Fort McClellan, Alabama where I had my basic training. An adjustment had to be made to get used to Army life. You have a home, a child, a job and suddenly your whole life changes. It wasn't easy, but there were millions just like me. My pay was \$30 a month. Clem (my wife) received a separate allotment but I don't remember how much that was. It was enough to take care of herself and the baby. She got tired of hanging around the house however and went to work in a defense plant right near the house. My mother-in-law took care of Valerie (my daughter).

I made a lot of friends at boot camp. The fun we had made it easier to cope with Army life. One morning as usual, the Sergeant blew the whistle at 6 a.m. We fell out into ranks that didn't satisfy the Sergeant. He said, "When I blow the whistle, I want to see a cloud of dust and when the dust clears I want to see statues. If any of you guys think you can whip me, step out." I stepped out. As you might guess, there was no fight.

Ralph Culp was my best friend. He was from Kentucky and just 18 years old. I was 25 then. Ralph needed my protection. He was the kind they would pick on. We lived in huts and I was in charge of mine. There were four of us. Every morning we had inspection. We had the best hut one day and "Maggie's Drawers" (the worst hut) the next morning. It was fun!

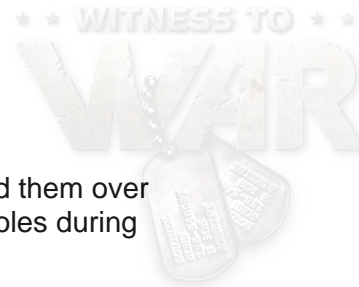
Germano was my other buddy. He was my age and was a New York native like myself. He played guitar and when I didn't play harmonica we would sing. These diversions took place in the evening if you weren't on guard duty. Lights had to be out by 11 o'clock. We went to the PX just to break the monotony. The most popular song then was "The Steel Guitar Rag." The jukebox was going steadily playing that song.

I was the best in the battalion with the M-1 rifle (Manual at Arms). I had to give demonstrations. One day because of my physique the officers thought I should fight for the company. I had a couple of fights and won them both but then quit. It was easy for me to win because I had the training to be a boxer previously and the fellers I fought had never had any. I couldn't get used to the idea of two American soldiers beating on each other when we had an enemy to fight.

We ran the obstacle course and I was the fastest. I raced another guy from another company and lost because I had sprained my ankle and couldn't finish. I finished basic training with my sprained ankle but never went on sick call.

While I was at Camp Meade, Maryland I went home without a pass. The third time I got caught and put on report. I was given a summary court martial and fined \$10.

From there we went to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, from where we shipped out on a troop ship. The trip took ten days on the USS Bruckner, which carried 6,000 men on its maiden voyage. Landing at Casa Blanca Africa, then things began to get rougher. At Camp Don di Passage Africa we slept on wooden floors. We shipped out from there to Oran, Africa. By the time our outfit landed, Rommel had already been whipped. We were shipped up there on "40 and 8's" which means 40 men or 8 horses could occupy one freight car. Boarded LST's and landed in Anzio, Italy.



We hit the beach at Anzio, had very little resistance from the Germans. We pushed them over the first row of mountains and was then called back to the beach. We lived in foxholes during the day and ate C rations consisting of chicken, or hash, or stew.

Those C rations we all got so tired of. When we spied a wounded cow in a nearby field painfully mooing, my friend Lang said, "Let's kill the cow and we'll have steak." So, we went out from the edge of the canal to the field. We proceeded to kill the cow for Lang said that his father was a butcher. Lang took his pistol, fired straight at the cow's head but the cow wouldn't go down. He just kept mooing. So I took my 0-3 and shot the cow through the ear. It went down. Lang started to cut off a hindquarter with a knife he had. By this time the Krauts were zeroing in on us with mortars. Land got desperate. He took his shovel to chop off the hindquarter. Shells were landing closer. Lang picked up the hindquarter, slung it over his shoulders with blood dripping onto his uniform. I was laughing and running for the canal at the same time. We ate steaks for three days between skirmishes, which started every morning at 6 a.m.

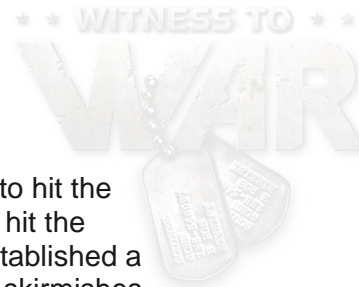
One day I decide to give the boys a treat. I said I'd fix the meal. Nobody liked hash and that's all we had at the time. I got some onions at Mussolini's farmhouse, cut them up, mixed them with the hash, made patties, fried them and fed them to the boys. They said, Mmmm, this is good. What is it?" I told them it was hash. They didn't believe it because it tasted so good.

There was a house near the canal and we practically took turns bedding down there so we could dry off from the water in the foxholes. The Germans would counter attack and we'd leave the house and go back to our holes.

We took a town called Corri in Italy. We stayed there in reserve for a short period. We shaved and cleaned up, then moved out. Just outside of the town our own planes bombed us. It was every man for himself. I found myself diving over a wall not knowing what was on the other side. It was a hilly ground and I slid down. By that time the bombing had stopped and our outfit regrouped. We went on, took another town built on the side of a mountain. Its name was Artena. We were shelled during our stay there. We evacuated the people because we felt someone was giving signals to the enemy.

I came upon a wine cellar and walked down several steps into it. There were rooms and rooms of champagne bottles. I drank my fill, and then stuffed all of my jacket pockets with bottles. I had to tell the guys what was down there. By the time I hit the top of the steps, I was the Mayor of the town. Everybody had a good time.

We moved on to the next town called Voltmontone. It had been completely flattened. We remained on the defensive for four-and-a-half months. On May 23rd, 1944 at 6 a.m. we pushed off to Rome. We could have done this all along; I believe that for the time we were at Anzio, the strategy was to bring German troops and supplies into the "Boot" to ease the pressure at Normandy. When we took Rome on June 6th, 1944 (D-Day) at 6 a.m., our troops hit the beaches at Normandy, also at 6 a.m. We policed Rome and lived in Mussolini's headquarters where there was a swimming pool and we ate plenty of Italian food. We were there five days.



Then we went to Banyolee near Naples. While living in pup tents there we trained to hit the beaches in Southern France. We moved onto LST's two weeks later. The date we hit the beaches in Southern France was August 15th. There was little resistance as we established a beachhead. We then moved on, on foot, 40 miles in 24 hours! No rations! We had skirmishes along the way. When we got to Aix, the whole regiment went swimming in the nude, in the reservoir! Had a lot of fun!

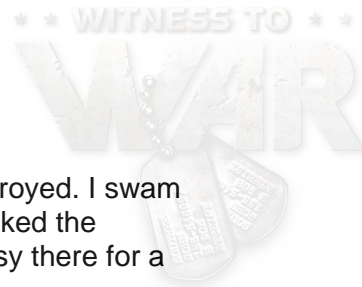
After leaving there we bivouacked that night outside of Montalemar. All night long planes were outside the city bombing a convoy. The next morning we mopped up nothing but rubble, bodies of men and horses. What a stench! We stayed there in reserve for a while and our mail caught up with us and was given out. I walked along the road over rubble and bodies and met Bill Howley giving away German Francs. I stopped him from doing so because I thought the money was good. We found out later that the money was indeed good which we estimated to be \$40,000. Naturally, Bill had given away most of it while he was having fun doing so. He later deposited the money he had left in a regimental post office. Along the way I picked up a letter opener, which was a miniature sword with a Swastika on it. As we liberated towns, the women would come and kiss us and give us bread and wine.

The Free French of the Interior (F.F.I) caught two women fraternizing with the Germans and their hair was shaved off, they were stripped naked and were marched through the streets of the town! We left Montelemar and went on to another town. Just on the outskirts we were marching up the road past a slow moving tank. Suddenly the tank hit a mine and several of us were wounded. I was evacuated to a hospital where the doctors removed small pieces of shrapnel from my left leg. I was sent from there to a convalescent hospital in Basancon, France. After three weeks I went back to my outfit, which by this time was in Espinal, France.

During a break Sergeant Green showed me pictures of his family and said he couldn't wait to get home to buy a farm. About half an hour later as we were moving in skirmish warfare, a sniper shot Sergeant Green in the head. I got so mad that I went after the sniper. He came out with his hands up hollering, "Ich gebe out" which means, "I give up." I punched his face till my hands hurt and then I took him captive.

We moved from there to the Colmar Pocket, France. When we crossed the Rhine-Rhone Canal, we found a barge with French loaves of bread, sardines and champagne. I got sick and Dick Lavoie stayed with me till I finished throwing up. When we moved on ahead, I got hit between the legs with a piece of shrapnel from an "88 millimeter" cannon. I thought I had lost everything and bravely made a check. It was all there. Back to the field hospital I went and the shrapnel was removed. But they also diagnosed me as having jaundice and body lice. I was moved to the General Hospital and within three weeks a truck took me back to my outfit.

We moved toward Alsace-Lorraine when we were fired on by German 120 mortars. Several of my buddies were killed. We came upon another sniper and dropped mortars in the area we thought he was in. I went to see if he was still alive, found him unharmed and took him captive. He was as white as a sheet.



We moved on to Kaiserslautern. The bridge across the Rhine River had been destroyed. I swam across and the rest of the outfit regrouped on the other side. Our artillery had knocked the Kraut's guns out and my buddies had time to build a pontoon bridge. We had it easy there for a while.

While going into a farmyard outside of Marburg, a 120 mortar did ripped my shoe and took the nail off my big toe. I went to the aid station and they sent me to Reims, France. I was having bad stomach trouble so I was put on diet food. I was then sent to a Replacement Depot – "Reppie-Deppie" we used to call it – where I tried for three week to get back to my outfit. I had a problem with a captain who called me a "WOP son-of-a-bitch." I hit him, knocked him down and my own MP's locked me up in the brig where I stayed for ten days. No charges were pressed so after ten days they had to release me. I then left for my outfit on my own.

When we moved on to the "Siegfried Line" several of my buddies were killed and wounded. From there we had some more skirmish warfare all the way to Berchtesgarden, Austria.

The war ended on May 6th, 1945. I waited for the point system to ship me home with several others. We were shipped back to the states by LST. I won over \$1000 shooting craps on board the ship.

When we landed at Newport News, Virginia, I stayed there overnight and the next day left for Fort Dix, New Jersey. I was discharged November 30, 1945, and headed for home.

The New York Central Railroad took me to White Plains and a taxicab delivered me to my house on Kensico Avenue. Had a wonderful reunion with my wife Clem and daughter Valerie. My mother was there to greet me and so was my brother in-law and sister as well as my wife's family the Aquilano's.



War Time Buddies

Ralph Culp

Germano

Lang

Bill Howley

Sergeant Green

Dick Lavoie