

**Interview with Albert DeFazio, Sr.
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Penn Hills, PA
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[Begin Interview]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

JZ: Would you please tell me your full name and date of birth for the record?

AD: My name is Albert DeFazio Sr. I was born on January 14, 1925.

JZ: Tell me a little bit about your family background. Who were the first to immigrate, did your parents come over from Italy?

AD: Yes. My dad came over; he was single at the time. And after that my mother came from the same town as they did and she was living with her brother down there in the lower part of the Hill District. And of course they knew each other from the town in Italy.

JZ: What town was that?

AD: That was a town that was on top of a mountain outside of Naples, it was called Altavilla Irpina. But anyhow, my dad emigrated, he went to New York first and then he spent a little bit of time in Boston, and then he came back here to Verona, what year I don't know. Then he had a brother he called for. He came over and he stayed on East Railroad Avenue too, in a house that my dad owned and he died as a young man. Then he met my mother and they got married on East Railroad Avenue in Verona and raised five children, four boys and one girl. The four boys are still here and I have a sister that's in California. And of course, we were brought up during the Depression, hard times.

JZ: What did your father do for a living?

AD: During the Depression there wasn't any jobs and he come over first; he worked on the buildings up in New York. And a beam had fallen on his foot and he got crippled 'cause he didn't know how to speak American, and had weights on his leg and nurses didn't know, you know, they

didn't speak Italian and he ended up a cripple. Then when he came down to Verona he got a job at the Union Steel down in Lawrenceville, but that was only a few days a week. Then when the Depression hit in '29 everybody was out of work, nobody was working. People were on relief, getting whatever they could- food gets so much, we got seven of us in the family, we got seven dollars a week.

JZ: Now when you said relief, who gave that to you, that seven dollars a week?

AD: Welfare.

JZ: Would it be the government? Federal U.S. government?

AD: Yes, that's when Roosevelt brought in Social Security and the three C's and WPA. At least people worked for it. But we had two houses in Verona, and my mother said when we all started to work, she told them to call them up and asked them how much do we owe you? So we sold one house, the house I was born in. Told my brother, I forget what it was, a couple grand or something. Sold the house and sent the check in and paid them off for what we got for relief.

JZ: Oh really? You had to pay them back?

AD: Yeah, we didn't have to, 'cause at that time they was in the house they had a lean against the house if you ever sold it. But it was in the family until not too long ago but then my mother said well we'll sell it. And I had my oldest brother call down and ask him and it was around two grand or something, and sold the house and sent it in. But we didn't have to, we could have held onto the house and wouldn't have had to pay nothin' but she wanted to pay them. She appreciated that we got something to live on. Seven dollars a week, a dollar per person.

JZ: She wanted to do what was right.

AD: She wanted to pay it off and we did. It's on record.

JZ: Did you grow up speaking Italian?

AD: Oh yes well, the whole five of us spoke Italian before we even learned to speak American. 'Cause even when we were at the school, my oldest brother, when he went they didn't understand him, they asked him what his name was he says my name's Pellegrino, that's Italian. And his name means William. So we learned to speak Italian because all around us was Italian people.

JZ: Yeah tell me about the Italian community in Verona.

AD: Did you know the Loggi's?

JZ: No...

AD: Well they lived next door to us. The Procoppio's lived there, back in the Procoppio's house would be caddy corner to where your homestead was in Verona.

JZ: The Ricupero's?

AD: Ricupero's down there too, Jimmy Ricupero. The Maiollos was there and the DiLibertos and we was all mostly all Italians. There was about eight or nine families on that one block plus what was across the railroad tracks. So it was a mostly Italian community. All the people were good, even the non-Italians were nice people, we all got along fine. Everybody knew everybody, you needed help, somebody was there but we all got along which was good.

JZ: What did your family life... did your father join any clubs in Verona, Italian clubs, or did he make wine, play bocce, anything that stands out in your mind?

AD: My dad made wine as far back as I can remember, always. He only drank a glass of water just for the fun of it. We'd tease him about it. You know, he'd make five, six bottles of wine they were fifty, sixty young barrels too. And we drank wine and on Sundays all the Italians, mostly paisans would come to our house and they would play cards. Briscola, tressette, [underbus], whoever won, they got to drink the wine and who won could give it to this guy, this guy, this guy, and it would be Sunday. They had a good time. Every Sunday they'd come to the house, and drink wine and if my mother had some stuff, salami or sopressata or whatever and she'd put it out, and we were kids running around but nobody had anything, but we had a wonderful time. We really did. At that time, your dad gonna take you out to play baseball, or football? No way! We had a big

garden up on top of the hill there, up on South Verona Hill. Man, we came from school we all went to that garden and we worked; we had a big garden. And that's what we did, my mother canned a lot of stuff.

JZ: So it was your dad's garden, that was his, he owned that?

AD: Oh yes. Well we had the garden, but not the ground. Everybody had, all the Italians had a piece of ground up there. Big, big piece of ground. And that's how most of it went in charge [?], my mother canned a lot of it and of course she baked bread all the time and I never ate store bought bread until I left home. She always baked bread, made handmade macaronis, her own sauce, everything. Then 'course we used to go out, we used to pick the stuff, we'd haul it from South Verona Hill down past across the boulevard and home and we'd sell it. Sell corn, 15 cents a dozen, tomatoes, peppers.

JZ: What kind of vegetables, items did you have in your garden? Corn, tomatoes?

AD: Everything. Tomatoes, corn, we had greens, we had peppers, any kind of vegetable you wanted, we had.

JZ: So this produce, especially during the Depression, this helped sustain your diet, you couldn't go to the supermarket and have the money to buy this stuff?

AD: My God no, and we used to haul 'em down on our shoulders, we were kids ten, eleven years old, have bushels on our shoulders, go down like I said, go down past where the DeLiberto's lived on the hill and then we'd cross the highway, Allegheny River Boulevard and go home. And like I said, we'd sell whatever we could- what we had left, my mother put it all in the can. Jarred everything, hundreds of jars. And that's the way we sustained, who had money to go out and buy this? Of course everything was cheap too but it was a hard life, but it didn't hurt any of us, didn't hurt none of us. We did pretty good, I can't never say that I went to bed hungry. I can never remember that, 'cause always something in the house, not the money, but I always had a piece of bread, or we had some salami or olives or whatever.

JZ: Like you said you were happy, you had fun too?

AD: Oh God yes, we used to play out in the middle of the street there against the telephone pole there with the railroad tracks past there.

JZ: So you didn't have no TV, no computer?

AD: No radio.

JZ: No radio! But you had fun, you enjoyed it?

AD: Oh yeah, no telephone, no nothing. But we made our own fun. We practically lived down in the river, you know the river wasn't too far from us. We'd go swimming everyday.

JZ: Playing in the river?

AD: Oh yeah.

JZ: People would say "Oh that's dangerous, that's dirty," no, you'd just go swimming?

AD: Yes we would. Of course we never went alone; we always went in a group in case anything happens. When we used to go over we would call the ball dime, that's where, you know, the part company was over there now, across the railroad tracks?

JZ: Is that where Demor Towers is?

AD: Yes, now we used to go over there, there's nothing there but shacks that the old railroaders used to stay in occasionally, and we played there with rocks and stuff. We played, we had a good time, played softball, baseball wasn't big at that time, it was all softball, mushball.

JZ: Mushball? What was mushball?

AD: Mushball was a bigger ball than a softball and it was mushier, that's what they called mushball. Then after that we'd go right into the river, we decided to go swimming. We had a good time.

JZ: Where did you go to school at? St. Joe's?

AD: Verona. I went to St. Joe's a few years. That's when they had the nuns and that's when we had to go in the morning and fire up the stoves for the heat, they were all wooden buildings and the outhouses was outside. Yeah. Then I went to transfer. They were tough, but man they could teach ya. Because there was only seventh grade and eighth grade you went to the public school then. We knew everything already; we were a year ahead because of the discipline of the nuns, boy. They smack your hands with them rulers man they didn't care. They were tough but, like I said, they didn't hurt anybody.

JZ: I'm curious to know, you know both your parents were from Italy, and they weren't around at the time when Mussolini came to power, but did your father might ever talk about Italy when you were growing up and what was going on over there, did they know what was occurring?

AD: Well, my, I asked my dad one time, I say "Pop..." I don't know I was maybe twelve, thirteen years old, I said, "Would you like to go back to Italy and visit?" And the funniest thing is my dad says, "No! There's nothing over there for me." And his mother was still living, over there. He had such a hard time over there as a child, when you went to work over there you was seven, eight, nine years old. If they paid you pennies a day, my mother the same way. My mother had, I think she had two or three years of school, my dad had one. Now for my dad to say, no, there's nothing over there for me, he loved this country, even though he come up during the Depression. Because they worked hard over there, he used to tell me he'd go out and pick the olives and the figs and hoe the gardens you know for the landowners. And they had it tough. So I can understand now, why he said he didn't want to go. And his mother was there yet, you know. But they used to write all the time and he would do what he could, send a buck or two whenever he could, but we didn't have it ourselves over here.

JZ: And he never went back?

AD: No, he never went back. But he had brothers over there.

JZ: Did he become an American citizen?

AD: Oh yeah. He and my mother.

JZ: Do you know when?

AD: I have no idea when, I don't know. But then you had to learn. You hadda learn how to speak it a little bit and learn to read and write your name or whatever before you became a citizen, see they had to go Downtown to the courthouse and they had to learn a little bit about everything before you got your papers. And they both did. I mean, my mother and dad both spoke English... I mean they killed it but you could understand what they were saying. But at least they learned.

JZ: Tell me about as a young man, what did you think, what did you know what was going on in Europe and over in Japan, the Pacific? I guess by that time in the late '30's, early '40's before the war, you were in high school at the time. What did you know about what was going on, what were your thoughts about it?

AD: Well I really didn't have no thoughts and 'course I never graduated high school. I quit high school when I was sixteen years of age. Went to work right away, you know.

JZ: Where was that?

AD: Carried a little bit of hod for a plaster man and then I went to work for the water company. This was back in 1940. For thirty-five cents an hour I was a flagman and then when the job was done there, I went to work where the Giant Eagle is now in American Steel Foundries. Went to work in a steel mill. And then from there, 'course I caddied everyday too, when you got to be twelve years old you got your working papers in the school. Me and all my other three brothers we went caddying at Longue Vue Country Club. To make a few extra bucks.

JZ: That was a hike!

AD: A hike? We used to hitchhike; you had to wait about an hour for a car to come by because nobody had cars back then! Oh we used to hitchhike right there at the beginning where the old police station was. Used to hitchhike, but you hadda wait for a car to go by, because no one had cars in them days. That was 1939.

JZ: Nobody had cars?

AD: Well they had cars, but there wasn't that many. You had to wait for a car to come by to hitch a ride.

JZ: I can't imagine that, Allegheny River Boulevard, having no cars.

AD: I remember when they put that in, too. We used to hitchhike from there down to, you know where Nadine pump station is? Down to there, and then either walk up or one of the members going up to the Longue Vue Country Club would pick us up. And then come back, we'd do the same thing.

JZ: Well tell me about, working at the country club, of course you were a caddy... there wasn't very many Italians at that time, members...

AD: Oh no, I can't remember one. I can't remember one Italian member. Not one. No.

JZ: How was it working at the club?

AD: Caddying wasn't bad; some members were very nice even though they had money, you know, some of them were pretty good. You get good and bad in everybody. And you have to take it, what are you gonna do, you're caddying there, and you want that dollar and a quarter and you did what you were told, and that's it. But they weren't bad, they weren't bad people to work for, them was real nice people.

JZ: A dollar and a quarter, that's it.

AD: A dollar and a quarter for eighteen holes.

JZ: That's the standard rate, or is that...

AD: That's the rate for eighteen holes.

JZ: Did you get a tip with that too?

AD: If they give you a tip- some of them did, some of them didn't, it all depends. I didn't get out everyday though; I went seven days a week, all of us went seven days a week to caddying. I only

got out Saturday and Sunday. Monday till Friday, forget it, but I went, in case there was a tournament. If there was a tournament, then there were a lot of people. We went seven days a week, and maybe got out Saturday and Sunday because that's when everybody come out to play.

JZ: And that's of course during the summer time?

AD: Oh yes. My mother used to pack our lunch, peppers and eggs, and them guys wanted to buy them off of us, too.

JZ: When you say peppers in eggs, in just a sandwich?

AD: Fried, my mother used to fry the peppers with the eggs in there and then put the sandwich in, homemade bread. She'd pack our own lunches, and we'd go there seven days a week.

JZ: Christ, you could probably charge three dollars for that!

AD: You know what, they'd steal them off of you too, you know, them was good eatin' then.

JZ: It's hard to imagine, you went to work seven days a week as a young twelve year old, not even a teenager, to make money.

AD: Yes, then that's not counting working up in the garden too, all summer too. And we had a little garden behind the house, on East Railroad Avenue.

JZ: Well, twelve year old kids today have it lucky!

AD: Oh, you kidding? They don't know how good they got it.

JZ: I guess by '40, '41 when the Japanese attacked, did you know, I mean what was going on?

AD: Like I say, I was about just turned eighteen. And at that age, you think, well what can you think, you don't know until you get into it. So I never really give it much thought. But then it wasn't too long then I was drafted at eighteen.

JZ: And that was 1943? When you were eighteen?

AD: Yeah, 1943.

JZ: Did you see many of the guys you knew, maybe your friends in Verona that were being drafted before you in '42, I guess, did you see them go?

AD: No. Because they were a year or two younger than *me*, they went after I did, 'cause we all lived together, we were all Italians then, the Bosco's, Liberto's, we all lived together there and they were a year or two younger than me. So they went in after I did.

JZ: So when you got your draft notice, you were to report, you had to go downtown?

AD: Oh yeah, well when I got my draft notice, they told you that you had to go downtown, get your physical. They give you a physical and then you go home, I forget for how long. Then they sent me to training grounds at Aberdeen, Maryland.

JZ: Is that Fort Meade?

AD: Fort Meade, yes. And they interviewed me there, that's where they interviewed everybody that went there. 'Course we took off from Wilkinsburg Station to Aberdeen, Maryland and they had a big room, rec room. They would set you down and interview you. Ask ya all kind of questions. So he's asking me, "Did you graduate," I said "No, I quit school at sixteen", and about your mother and father and stuff like that. And he says to me, "What branch of the service do you want to go?" I says "Well, I'd like to try the Marines." And he says, "Pick another branch." I says, "Ok, I'll go into the Navy." He says "Well, I think what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna put you in the army." I say "Why did you ask me what branch of the service I wanted to go, if you knew all along you was gonna put me in the army?" Which I didn't care, and he sort of smiled and he says "I'll tell you the truth, because you don't have a high school education." He said "That's why, or else you could be in any branch you wanted to." I says, ok, I didn't care; I didn't much care. So then ok, put me in the army and they send us over to the quartermasters, they give us our uniforms. Shoes, they just take a look at you and they throw this on there, they have to give you shoes about that big and I said "Hey these feel kinda big", he says "Well exchange them wherever

you go”, because you got hundreds and thousands of guys coming through there. They can’t take enough time to measure your feet.

Then from there they shipped us down to Hattiesburg, Mississippi, that’s Camp Shelby, big army camp down there. And they put me in the 69th division. That was one of the known divisions in World War I, the fighting 69th. Anyhow, they shipped us there and they wanted to. ‘Course we went on our 25 mile hiking trips and we went through basic training which was tough. Man, you ate your muscle, but they didn’t care man, everyday you went through that, but it was good, I mean you ate and everything, but it was fine. So then finally they give us a couple weeks to go home. So I went home on furlough. There was nobody around at that time, they were all gone then. Some were gone to the service, then there was nobody around. As a matter of fact it was boring to be at home in Verona! I couldn’t wait to get back. So anyhow when we got back to camp they said we’re gonna get shipped overseas. I says ok. So the lieutenant comes out there and he had the sheet and he’s gonna read all the names off, alphabetical order, the guys that’s gonna ship out. And he’s readin’ the names, he gets down to the D’s, and he gets past the D’s but my name wasn’t on there. And when it was all over, he says, ok we got another list here, supernumerary. I don’t know if you know what that means? Supernumerary means if nobody can go, then they’ll pick somebody from this group. But I was in that group not to go.

Well when my name wasn’t called I went up to the lieutenant I said “Hey, you passed me up, I didn’t hear my name!” He says “Oh you’re on the second list.” I says “What are you talking about, on the second list? You mean I’m not going?” He says, no, I’m unlisted. I says “Oh no no no no, I’m going. I wanna go, I wanna go with my friends.” He says, “There’s nothing I can do about it.” Man I was really down and out. I says “Well I’m not gonna let it go.” So I went to the headquarters. And I asked to speak to the captain in charge there. So I goes in and he said “What can I do for you son?”, and I said “Listen, my list is shipping overseas, I’m not on that list, how come I’m not on that list, I wanna go!” And he says “I’m sorry, I had nothing to do with this, this comes from headquarters.” Well why me? He says “I’m sorry I can’t help you.” I says “I want to go, I don’t want to stay here.” So then he said “I’m sorry”, and I left, I felt so bad. Then the next day the lieutenant comes up to me, he says, “Hey I don’t know what you did but you’re going, you’re on the list.” I was so happy to go. So anyhow, we get together and they ship us to Newport News, Virginia. That’s where we were shipping out from there. So they say we’re going to be in a convoy of about 500 ships. We didn’t know where we were going.

JZ: Go back to Newport News. I'd like to know, you wanted this so bad, was this to be with your friends, or to get out of the states, to get in the war theatre...?

AD: I felt if I didn't go then I would be like a slacker or something. I wanted to go because I was with my friends and I didn't want anybody to say that I wasn't picked to go overseas because there was a war on, them was the two main things, that's why I wanted to go.

JZ: So you were in Newport News in this convoy?

AD: Well they told us there was a convoy of five hundred ships, they had some submarine destroyers to protect us, going with us, and anyhow they loaded us 500 guys to a ship; they were a liberty ship commanded by the Merchant Marines. It was nose to nose in the bunk. Anyhow we boards 'em and we go out to sea and they anchored out there waiting for the convoy, for everybody to come in there. Well still we don't know where we're going. So we're out, finally the next morning, the convoy's ready, we take off. But we're zigzagging to avoid the submarines. And they called for chow time. So we give them our ID, they give us a cup of some kind of juice and a cracker about eight inches round. I says ok. We go down the line and says "Where's the rest of it?" He says "Well that's it." I said what are you talking about this, we're gonna starve here, that's it, that one cracker a day with something to drink all day. Man, the guys were starving. We couldn't survive on that. So somebody broke into the hole of the ship. And down under there they found crates and crates of C-rations, K-rations, that's what they used to use, man them things was coming out of there until they dished them out to everybody. When they found out man, they went down there they were over them hatches shut! Because that stuff was supposed to go for overseas, but we were starving!

JZ: Really?

AD: Yeah! And as we were going man, we hit one heck of a storm. That bulb ship or boat, whatever they want to call it, that thing, you'd see the wave come up, and then some would come down, boom, you'd see nothing but water. And here, I was almost washed overboard, I should have been inside- here, good thing I grabbed onto a rope or I'd still be swimming.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

AD: Anyhow, you hear a shrill whistling and somebody would come out over the microphone and say, “the smoking lamp is out.” I says, well what is this, the smoking lamp’s out? I says, “the lamp’s out, light it!” Here they tell us after what it is... no smoking. I didn’t smoke anyhow. No smoking because if this submarine’s out, they see a flicker of light, or something, they might think there’s something out there. Ok so they told me that’s what it means, no smoking. And then they talk, starboard side, port side, front of the ship, back, this is that, I says, what are they talking about? I didn’t know that language. They say the port side is the right side of the ship, this is the left side, aft is the back, I says why don’t they call it like it is then? Well anyhow, it took us thirty days at sea, thirty days to the day. Finally, we spotted land.

JZ: When did you leave?

AD: Oh I don’t remember the day.

JZ: What year, ’43 or ’44?

AD: Oh yeah, ’43. ‘Cause I was drafted in ’43, and 12, 13 weeks of basic training. Then right after that, it wasn’t too long, 3 or 4 months and then we’re gone. Anyhow here we landed at Casablanca, Africa. So we was there at the camp, had sixteen to a big tent and they told us, listen, when you go to bed you sleep with your rifle next to you because them Arabs in Casablanca there you know Oran, it was Oran, Casablanca. They’ll break into the camp steal whatever you got, maybe even cut your throat. Every once in awhile you’d hear machine gun fire, someone’d try to get in and they’d shoot him. Well anyhow, we got leave to go into Oran. Lot of French over there too in Oran and in Algiers and that. So then they said now when you go into town, don’t venture out alone. Always be in a group, five or five, ‘cause you don’t know what’s going to happen. And make sure, the truck is gonna come back, make sure you’re there to pick you up because we’re not running a taxi service here. If you don’t catch it, you miss it. You miss the truck back to camp. So we made damn sure, but anyhow, we was there for maybe about a week or two so they shipped us to the train station and they loaded us on, really, cattle cars is what they were. They used to haul cattle in them on the railroad. They put eighty of us to each car. You couldn’t lay down to sleep, you hadda sit down with your knees up. And occasionally they would stop, you’d get off and eat something, and stretch your legs, get back on again. It took us three days to get from Oran to Algiers. We went to Algiers. And then we’d go through the tunnels. Now these here

were steam engines that burned coal. And when we went through the tunnels, all that smoke, where was it gonna go? Everybody was coughin' and hackin', all that black soot and smoke coming in there, man, we couldn't wait to get the heck out of there; we went through three tunnels and almost choked to death! From the smoke, from the coal, yeah it's poisonous! Well anyhow finally we got to Algiers. Took us to camp, and in the camp they were starving us too, we gettin' one meal a day and everybody got dysentery.

JZ: Now what's that?

AD: Diarrhea. And man you'd see guys gettin' up and running for the latrine, and when they stopped, goodbye, that means they let everything go, they couldn't make it. But there was one place there, the Arabs, they were selling some beautiful oranges, they were like that (gestures with hands), thick skin, nice. But to get any of those you had to be there early in the morning waitin' for them to open up and they would always sell up 'cause you're talking thousands of soldiers there. If you were lucky enough, then you got some or at least you ate some oranges or something. Well anyhow we got orders to ship out again. So they take us to the seashore and there was an English transport ship there. I mean I thought it was the Merrimack from the Civil War, that's how old it was and cranky. It was a troop ship, it belonged to the English. We boarded that at night. So we takes off, we go through the straits of Sicily and the mainland was to the right. So we spotted land. I was at the front of the ship. And you know a funny feeling come over to me, 'cause I said, "That's where my mother and father were born!" They probably took off from the port of Naples to come to America and it left me with a funny feeling.

So then when we got off of the boat they took us to the, it's called Mussolini's Race Track. That's where we had big tents and we camped there. And this one time they called us for chow. We went to chow, they had some meat, it sort of had a sweet taste and it was stringy and real red, and I says "What kind of meat is this?" and one guy says, "That's horse meat." I says, "What are you talking about, they won't feed us no horse meat." He says, "This is a race track, isn't it?" I say, "Well what's that got to do with it?" He says, "I tell you it's horse meat!" I didn't believe him. Anyhow I took off to go back to camp... I was going at a pretty good trot. It could have been horsemeat, I don't know, because it was different, not like beef, it was different. They probably made a joke, maybe it was, maybe it wasn't.

JZ: Was it good?

AD: Well, when you're hungry you'll eat anything! Well anyhow they come round then and they give us patches, they had put me in the 36th Infantry Division out of Texas. And they gave us the patches and we had to sew them on our jackets.

JZ: You had to sew them on yourself?

AD: You sew them on yourself, you had a little sewing kit, or there was somebody around camp make a few bucks who would sew 'em on for you, you know, put 'em on your sleeve. On your shirts, on your sleeves or whatever. Come the time to ship out and they loaded us on the trucks, it was at night because we're headed towards the front lines now. So when we get to the bottom of the mountain, you could hear some shooting going on, big stuff, not small stuff. So we stayed there over night, it was cold, this was in January. We dug our fox hole, laid in there, slept at night, if you could sleep. Next morning we all line up, just waiting. So then three of us started to climb this mountain that was near, me and two other guys. So finally they blew the whistle, come on back down and get together, we're ready. So we comes down and this one lieutenant, he wasn't from our outfit, I don't know who the heck he was, and he said "The three guys that climbed up in that mountain there, partway, who were you, raise your hands." And I'm saying to myself, "Why's he wanna know why we climbed the mountain?" Two of the guys raised their hands. And me, from boot camp, a guy told me, an old sergeant, he said never volunteer for anything unless you know what it is. So that thought came to me, I said I ain't gonna put my hand up. So I didn't. I just put my head down. He said "Who is this, one more guy, one more guy." I said nothing. So anyhow he told the two guys, come with me. They went. So I'm asking around and I say, "Why did he take the two guys there?" He says "Well they want to make mule skimmers out of them." I say "What are you talking about, they gonna skin some mules and eat 'em, or what?" He says no. There's a lot of mountains over there now to go up to the front lines and that they used mules. And they needed soldiers to guide 'em up, with ammunition and food and that. And that's what they wanted them for. Well I wasn't gonna be no mule skinner! So I got out of that. Yeah, I didn't volunteer, I says no, I ain't gonna put my hand up, not me, I don't wanna be no mule skinner! Well anyhow, so then we starts up to the top of the mountain, I forget the name of it.

JZ: This is near Naples?

AD: Well it was outside of Naples, yeah. And we gets on top and we start to pitch our tent, we had pop tents, two to a tent. We put two of them together so four could sleep, more body heat. Well anyhow, the mailman comes around, mail call, he always would try to get the mail to you as often as they could, once, twice a day, or at least everyday. So we all gathered around. And he'd call the names out and he'd give you your mail. So the one lieutenant he told the mailman, he says, "You're going back down to camp?" He says yeah. "I want you to tell the cook to bring some fresh donuts and bring some hot coffee up here for these men, 'cause its cold." He says ok. So the next morning he comes back up, the mailman, he says "Well did you tell the cookie to bring...." He says "Yeah I told him but he says it's too dangerous to come up there." So the lieutenant tells him, he says, "Are you going back down?" He says yeah. "When you go down you tell the cook, either coffee or donuts, or him." He went down, it wasn't too much longer, here comes them mules with coffee and donuts. Oh yeah! Brought them up and give it to the guys. Well anyhow nighttime, we went to bed to sleep. Next morning I get up, got out, there must've been about four inches of snow on the ground.

JZ: In Naples!

AD: Outside of Naples, this was in January and up in the mountains now. You were up in the mountains. Four inches of snow on the ground. Now that day was January the 14th. And the reason I remember that because I just turned nineteen years of age. I didn't even tell the guys I was with there, never said a word to nobody. I was afraid well maybe they's gonna say well hey come on let's go, I'll take you into town, we'll have some dinner and get a few drinks, I'm just joking now. But no, I never said a word to nobody. But anyhow, you know we go on watches, four hours on, four hours off. So many guys. So we was in a wooded area and off to the right of us was like a plateau, it had big rocks. And as you're lookin out over, you're looking out over the river, the Rapido River over onto Monte Cassino. That's the abbey where the monks were. Well anyhow, me and two other guys was there plus our captain of the company was there. So the captain looks down at me, he says, "Hey soldier" he says; well first of all when you're on watch there he says, don't move around too much because if you moved around they'd seen you moving, the Germans, they'd lob a few shells in there, you know. He says we don't want that, just lay low, ok just make sure nobody's coming. So the captain comes to me he says "Soldier, how 'bout going down there and get the heater." There was little heaters that we had, and he says "And we'll have some hot chocolate." 'Cause we used to get candy bars and you'd melt them for hot chocolate. And he said "Hey soldier go down and get the stove and bring it up." I says "If you

want it go down and get it yourself”, I told the captain. Then it hit me, I said oh my God he’s gonna court-marshal me and put me against the wall and shoot me down like a dog ‘cause I disobeyed an order. Oh, it was on my mind. So finally our shift was over and I’m going back to the camp and I’m talking to some of the sergeants and that and I says they’re gonna court-marshal me. And the sergeant says “No, nothing’s going to happen to you.” I said “What are you talking about, I disobeyed the captain.” “I’m gonna tell you something”, he says “read your book. No officer or non-commissioned officer is to tell you what to do if they wouldn’t do it themselves. He didn’t go down and get the stove, did he?” I said no, he told me, “Then he was wrong. Nothing will happen to you.” He was right. They don’t tell any soldier to do anything that they wouldn’t do themselves. He wouldn’t do it. So nothing ever happened. And it’s in the code book. The guy told me.

Well anyhow we’re getting ready, he came around, we’re gonna cross the Rapido River and put an attack on Monte Cassino. Ok, I’m not worried about it. So we all get together. He says, “Now they’re gonna put the smoke pots out, so there’s all smoke. And when we’re headed down I want you to hold the backpack of the guy in front of you, because you can’t see nothing.” And the guy on the side of you, we were really piled in there, so we started down the mountain, run into the smoke, we grabbed the guy in front of me and on the side. Going down, all of a sudden all hell broke loose. It was artillery shell come in there; it blew the smoke away, lit up the sky. Oh my God in heaven, I was seein’ bodies ripped apart, three or four piled on top of each other. I couldn’t believe my eyes. This part all shot off, I just couldn’t believe it. And then within seconds another one hit, same thing, another pile of mangled bodies. “Oh my God,” I said. So I was just in the side of the bank, I hit the ground; I didn’t want to see anymore. Nobody could see nothing, nobody was giving commands, so I said well, “I gotta do something” so I got up and I headed forward to get away from it. I come to the river and I’m looking down the river, they had pontoon bridges stretched from one side, ‘cause it wasn’t a wide river but it was swift and it was high because of all the snow we had in the mountains was melting. And the current was like hell. And I looked downstream and there’s soldiers down there crossing, the bridge breaking loose, they’re falling into the water with all their gear on and drowning and I seen one or two of them break loose. I look upstream and the bridge was there. I says, well, I gotta get across here, that’s what we’re supposed to do. I gotta get across this bridge. I wonder if I can make it. So I got up, I was by myself, I headed across and I hit the other side of the bank, the riverbank and I didn’t want to put my head up because there was a lot of small arms fire coming, gonna shoot my head off here. But I had to look! Because I was looking maybe if they would sometimes counter attack. And if

they did, I didn't want to be caught with my head down. And I was there all by myself. The rest of them were still back there, charred up.

So then finally I heard an order come by, says, "fall back to the positions." I looked back the bridge was still there, I says "I gotta get back there again?" But I hit that bridge, man, I took so many steps I got on the other side and headed back up towards the mountain through the smoke back up in. When I got up on top, man I was cold. I was red, I was tired, I just put my head between my legs and I just couldn't believe what I saw. I couldn't get it out of my mind. And when I got home, I got nightmares. I was afraid to go to sleep. I'd stay up as long as I could, but it didn't work. It still nightmares. It took a good while, but finally it went away, and thank God I could at least sleep again. Well anyhow I'm sitting there, the lieutenant comes by and he says "Put some dry socks on, we're going back again tonight." I said oh my God, I won't make it, I won't be back, I can't be that lucky with what went on. I couldn't rest, I didn't even eat, I didn't put no dry clothes on. I just sat there all day. Finally nighttime comes and they assembled us all together. And they say well this time we're not gonna have the smoke pots out. I says thank God, whoever the idiot was that ordered them should be shot. We lost a lot of men on account of them, 'cause they hit us right in the middle! We were packed in like sardines! They knew where we were and we knew where they were. Shouldn't a had them smoke pots. Anyhow we're not gonna have them. We start back down the mountain. We're getting close to the place where all hell broke out. I'm trying to brace myself for what's coming. How do you do that? How do you brace yourself for something like that?

We got down to the river. This time instead of footbridges, they had rubber pontoon boats. I says thank God I wonder who the guy was that thought of this now too. To get away with the bridges. 'Cause if you're in the boat, at least the boat floated downstream. They relieved my captain, the one that I told him to go get the stove yourself. I don't know why. They brought another guy in, it was a redhead his name was Lieutenant Spike. Nice fella. He was a first lieutenant, not a second. Well anyhow he got us to go and told us, "Well I'm your new commander. But I'm going to tell you something. Most of you guys will be killed before I even know your name." I said, "That's a nice thing to say!" But he was right! When he come around and tried to get acquainted with everybody it was me and my buddy that I took training with in camp, he says "You know, you two guys you look so much alike, I can't tell you two apart. Which is which?" He said "You look so much alike, you look like twins." We weren't. Getting back to the river. Me and my look-alike...

JZ: What was his name?

AD: I don't remember his name. And I went through everything. I don't know why I don't remember his name.

JZ: Was he Italian too?

AD: No. Well me, him, and the lieutenant get in the rubber raft. We shimmy across. I'm on the bank. We're the first ones across. So the lieutenant looks down at me and says "Let's go." I said "Ok let's go." I got up and there was a field there. Beyond the field was Monte Cassino on the mount there. And this field, was no trees. It looked like it was cultivated for something, I don't know, maybe they grewed wheat on it for when the monks ground it for flour; maybe it made the secret recipe for their bread, I don't know. It might have been some kind of a field. Anyhow I get up, we started across. My buddy was to my left behind me. The lieutenant was on the side, and we're going towards Monte Cassino. So I look to the left and there was my buddy. To the left of him was the lieutenant and on the other side of the lieutenant was a big gap before the other company. Well I don't know how far away they were. I look behind me... nobody there. No soldiers, nobody there they were back at the river or still trying to cross. And I'm out there fifty, sixty feet by myself never missed a step. I turned around and I kept going towards Monte Cassino. Nothing, everything was quiet. I says, "Good. They must have left Monte Cassino." No sooner then I said that, oh my God, a shell come and hit behind me. It blew me two or three feet ahead into a drainage ditch that had water, full of water. And I was stunned... shock! I didn't know where I was. I come to, and I felt a pain behind me. I put my hand back in my pants. My pants were ripped. Stuck my hand back in, my finger went inside a hole. And then blood, I knew I was hit. Took that out and I had another sting in my back. I put my hand back there, same thing, my backpack was ripped and my shirt. Put my hand back there, same thing, my finger went in a hole. So then I look over to my buddy to my left. Oh my God. His back was shattered. He probably took the brunt of it. He was gone. I don't know how you know, I mean he was *gone*, was dead. He didn't move, he didn't yell, he didn't say nothing.

Finally I heard the lieutenant hollering. He says, "You guys alright?" I says, "lieutenant, no, I'm hit in two places. I think my buddy's gone." He says, "Well get back to the river, get some help." I say, "How am I gonna get back there? I'm here hit in two places, there's nobody around to get

help, they're all back at the river." Well I have three choices to make. I could either get help try to get back. Stay there, freeze and bleed to death. Or stay there till they capture me. So I say I don't want any of the two or three, I better take a chance. So I got up, I was fine, I was hurting, and I started back. I had to go fifty, sixty yards back to the river to get any help at all. So as I'm going back there was small arms fire, machine gun, small arms fire going. And I could just feel the bullets going past my legs. How I never got hit again I'll never know. I could hear them whizzing across me. I must've been lucky again. Anyhow, the way back this one shell hits and I see this one soldier bounce about maybe six, seven inches off of the ground. So instead of me going back to the river where the boat is, I cut to my left towards him, 'cause he was hit. I went over there and sure enough, who the hell was it, it was this Lieutenant Spike, the one that said, "Most of you will be killed before I even know your name." And he was shot up bad; he must've got a direct hit with a bullet. But he was alive yet. He was just moaning. And I said, "We gotta get him out of here, he's gonna die here" because all this time, the rest of the guys are going back across the river, there's nobody there. I finally hollered at one guy, one soldier, I said, "Hey! This is Lieutenant Spike here, he's hit bad, we gotta get him out of here across the river, he's gonna die!" And he said ok, so we got him, we dragged him down to the riverbank. Put him in the rubber raft. Shimmied across. We didn't know where the first aid station was, the hospital. I looked across the river, make sure there was nobody there, make sure they were all back across again. I cut the ropes. Put him in that boat. Me on one side, the other guy on the other, I didn't even know who he was. We started to carry him along the riverbank. And I was hurt and I was bleeding.

Finally we run into some soldiers there, we say, "Do you know where the field hospital is?" He says, "You go down here, bear to your left you can't miss it, you'll run into it." So we did, I don't know how long we walked, how far so we got to the field hospital and there were bodies all over the place there. Because we got hit bad there, oh we got hit bad. A lot of guys were [] my platoon. Anyhow I said, "The lieutenant here is hit bad". He said, "Ok, we'll take him on, how about you?" I said, "I'm hit in two places"- "But will you be alright for a little while?" I says, "Yeah, I'll be alright." "Sit here, don't move." So he took the lieutenant in, it wasn't too long they come back after me, they brought me in there. Took the shrapnel out. The next thing I know I was in the hospital in Naples. Then they come around, they dished out the Purple Heart and then years later they sent me the Bronze Star. I got a Bronze Star for it. But the guy that was killed, my buddy, went through camp, I don't remember his name, no matter how hard I try, I can't remember his name. I don't know why. We went through camp and I don't know, I don't remember his name. Even the lieutenant, Lieutenant Spike, I don't even know whether he

survived or not. I don't know whether he made it. But anyhow, the hospital, they shipped me back to my platoon, my division. After the rest area, they said, "Well we're ready; we're going on a hike." I said, "What the hell? We're supposed to be back here resting!" So with a full pack, it was about eighty pounds when you carried everything on your back. We started out at night and when we started out it started to rain, not hard, it started to rain.

JZ: This was still winter, right?

AD: Yeah this was in January! When we crossed the river it was on the 22nd of January. Well anyhow, we got to this mountain and they said, "Well we're going on top of this mountain; we're going to camp up there 'till morning." So it's raining, so we starts up this mountain. And they give you a rest every fifteen, twenty minutes. We sat down, it's still drizzling. And I happen to look behind me and I seen a light. I said to two or three buddies, "There's a light, farmhouse over there." They says, "So what?" I said, "I'm going over and see about it, see what's going on, what it is." "What are you talking about, we're going to be clearing out pretty soon. I said, "I don't care, you wanna come with me, fine." But I went, two other guys was with me this farmhouse, knocks on the door. I started talking Italian to the guy; I told him what we were, this and that. When I started talking Italian and everything, then he was at ease a little bit. So I said, "Do you have anything to eat in here?" He says, "Well the only thing I have is some bread, and I have some chestnuts and wine." Good enough! So we went in there, all sat down at the table. He has a big bottle of wine, a big bowl of chestnuts and Italian bread. Man, we drank- I'm not a big drinker but I drank some, we ate chestnuts and ate the bread.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

AD: So anyhow, them other guys are saying, "What are you talking about, we gotta be on top of that mountain." I said, "I don't care!" In the morning we heard trucks down below. And as we looked down, the trucks come back, I guess was gonna pick us up, was gonna be a ride. And them guys says, "Well what are we gonna do now, what are we gonna tell them?" I says, "I dunno, wait till we get down." So we starts down the bottom of the mountain. The trucks were all lined up waiting, the sergeant comes over. And he says to me, "Where were you guys at?" I says, "Where were we? On top of that mountain, cold and wet! That's where we were." He says, "Ok, get in the truck, we're going back." And when we got in the truck, we started to laugh, all three of us. The

rest of the guys in the truck thought we was crazy. But it was so funny! And we laughed the whole way back to camp. And weeks after we'd think about it and we'd just bust out laughing! 'Cause if they didn't know that we was in that house sleepin' they thought we was on top of that mountain, I don't know what would have happened. Well anyhow we gets back to camp and we used to go this... Avellino. Just a canteen, didn't have no beer in it, it had anisette, they had cognac, or wine- I wasn't a drinker. Well we goes in there and this soldier comes around and he says, "Hey is there anybody here from around Pittsburgh?" (He's an American soldier.) I says, "Yeah I'm from the outskirts."

JZ: Now this was in Avellino?

AD: Yes. I says "Why, who wants to know?" He says "There's a little Italian guy over here that's been asking everybody if there's anybody here from Pittsburgh." So I goes over and I starts talking to him in Italian. It was my mother's first cousin. As true as God made green apples! He said "Oh my God, you have to come to my house."

JZ: What was his name?

AD: I don't remember his name. I know he was my mother's first cousin. He says, "You gotta come by the house, I'm gonna call the town, Altavilla Irpina, and tell them you're here." Because I had uncles there, my dad's brother and sister was there and my mother's sisters was at the town. So there was no transportation. So he brought down a horse and wagon. And use that as a taxi. And we went to his house. From there he gets on the phone and it was hard making a connection. He called the town where my mother and dad was born. Told them that I was here. He said, "They wanna see you." I say, "Yeah, I'm gonna leave right now, I'm gonna go and see them." Well I said, "I gotta get back." So I went back to camp and then we went to camp another place and this one lieutenant that was there... cause occasionally I would smoke a cigar, Marsh & Wheeling cigar and I had written home and my mother and dad they send me a box of marshruling cigars, they was a long cigars. And this lieutenant or captain, I forget what he was, he liked to smoke cigars. And he'd always come down and bum a cigar off me. So I give him one, I give him two. So I say now it's my turn for a favor. So I went to him and I said, "Listen, I got relatives not too far from here. Uncles, aunts, cousins. I would like to get a pass to go." He said, "Well I'll tell you what. I don't know, we got orders to ship out, but I'll give you a pass for two days." That's good enough!

So the trains were running then, they had beautiful trains over there. Oh, they had big picture windows; they were all electric too there wasn't no steam engines. They had green velvet seats, they were beautiful. You could hardly hear that train pulling out. I got off the train and I went as far as Foggio. And I remember that Foggio is where my dad said when he was a kid he used to take the mule and go to that town and sell figs in that town. So when I got to Foggio I told the guy I'd like to go to the town Altavilla Irpina and he said, "Well it's a distance from here on the mountain over there." I said, "Well can I get a bus?" He says, "Bus? You wanna get there, you gotta walk." Because all the bridges was out, no transportation. I said well I'm here now, I started to walk. He told me take this road. And I happened to run into an Italian fellow, so I talked to him.

JZ: You were wearing your uniform at this time?

AD: Oh yeah, I had everything, not the gun. Just the uniform. Ran into this Italian fellow on the road. And I said, "Do you know where the town of Altavilla Irpina is? He said, "Yes it sits on that mountain up there." I told him, "Do you know this certain name?" He said, "Well I don't know people from up there, but do you see that little farmhouse down there? Why don't you go down and ask him, he probably knows." So I went over there and knocks on the door. Italian fella comes out there. It was my mother's brother. My mother's brother, so help me God. Man oh man, he grabbed me. "Come in!" I said, "I wanna go into town." He said, "We'll go to get something to eat here first."

JZ: When you found out he was your uncle, how did that come about, did you just say, "my name is...?"

AD: Yes, I knocked on the door and I told him I got relatives up there, I told him, "My name is Albert DeFazio." I said my mother was Giuseppina Galasso. Well he says, "Galasso? Oh my God," he said, "You're my sister's son!" Oh my God, he grabbed me, brought me in there, he says, "You gotta get something to eat first before I take you up and meet everybody up there." Ok, so then we ate something and he took me up there. I met his sister, which is my mother's sister. Then I went over and met my father's brother. I stayed with him overnight. Then I went and met my father's sister and she was a nice, beautiful woman. "You have to come over here and eat." She made homemade *fusillis*, you know, *macaronis*, and I had to go over her house and eat. And I also met my godfather that baptized me. 'Cause he was in this country way back. He even worked

for the water company way back in the middle '20's and he baptized me and he went back to Italy cause he had a wife, kids, he had a farm back there below the town. And he spoke American too. And we was walking through the plaza, we was talking, and he was talking American to me. And I still have the pocket watch he bought me when he baptized me, still have it; I gave it to my son. And that's 80 years ago.

JZ: Do you have any photos of this?

AD: I didn't have no camera. Then cousins. They were like flies. Well I still had family over there. They were all like flies. In other words, some of them my first cousins, they named DeFazio that would be my father's nephews, they're in Toronto, Canada. They used to come down here occasionally to visit us.

JZ: So the whole time you're wearing this American uniform, and you're born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA... they looked past all that, they looked past the uniform?

AD: Oh yeah

JZ: You were speaking Italian, you were some long-lost relative, you just came back to town...

AD: They was my dad's brothers and sister, my mother, well this is their son, they've never seen me. And cousins was all around, I don't know who the heck they all were but they were my first cousins, which I still have over there. First cousins, one's in Rome and I have one that's still living in the town where my mother and dad were born. And I have them spread out; I have some in South America and in Canada. But then when I was over there we went to Caserta, that was where the king's palace was in Caserta, Italy. That time Mount Vesuvius was erupting and me and my buddy went to Pompeii, the new Pompeii. We went through the old Pompeii too, did you ever go through there?

JZ: No

AD: Very interesting, the body of the woman and the child was buried under there, stone streets, and went into buildings that's unbelievable. In the middle the spas that they had way back in them days. We was in the new Pompeii and we had parkas on with the hood and boots because

Vesuvius was erupting. There was smoke and fire and soot coming out of that. And it was covering us. I forget how thick it was on the ground. And for the smoke, you couldn't see too much. I told my buddy, "Hey we better get out of here. Because if this thing erupts, they're gonna be digging us up in five hundred years and putting us on display." 'Cause it was coming out of the sides and everything! So we got out of there, we spent a little time in beautiful churches there, buildings. They got buildings here they're lucky they stand for 50 years, over there they're thousands of years old and they're still standing.

Well anyhow we got out of there before it erupted. From there we got orders to ship out going with the invasion of Anzio. So we went to the seashore. Well the 3rd Division was the one that made the first landing. Whoever thought of that was a very strategic move that they made because they came around Monte Cassino where the Germans was dug in there. There wasn't a shot fired. We hit the beaches in Anzio and we started straight ahead. And as we started straight ahead towards Rome, there was mountains there. So then what they did, the lieutenant comes up to me he says, "DeFazio, you take the point." Well you know what the point is? You're the first one out there and then 50 yards behind me would be the second point then behind him would be the company, or division really. And I said "Well thank you very much, I'll remember you in my will." In my mind, I didn't tell him that but that's what I thought. And I was scared, man. I really was. Because you're the first one. We're going out there to meet the enemy; you're the first one to get it. So I was hoping maybe if there was a sniper there I was hoping that maybe he might be cross-eyed and a bad shot and he'd miss me.

Well anyhow I kept going and my eyeballs was open and I seen it was a dead German soldier on the side of the road. Which I felt bad for he was half covered in mud, I said oh my God he has a mother and a father back home too he has a family; there he is laying there like a dog. I figured hey, we're getting close to the enemy if they didn't have time to pick him up. We get within Rome, on this side was the mountains then the other side of the mountain was Rome.

They had a gun right outside of Rome. That thing had a shell I betcha it was as big as a streetcar when they shot it. It was loaded on three railroad cars, this gun. It come out and when they shoot you could hear it and you could see that shell going past it. I mean it was monster and when it hit, it put a hole so deep you could call the block layers in to lay the foundation. If you heard it, you were fine, it was past you. If you didn't, boy. When that thing hit, I mean it really hit. And they would fire maybe three or four and then they would sneak back into the mountains by the time

our planes got up there to get it, it was gone, it was in the mountains you couldn't get 'em out. Then in the evening they'd bring it out again and they would fire some more. Being that they made a good move by going into Anzio because they had to pull a lot of troops out from Monte Cassino the Panzer division, the tank we had to come over and defend that because we were surrounded. But the mistake they made, that mountain was ahead of us... we should've kept going to the mountain, to the top of the mountain. No, they stopped. The Germans come in; they got on top of the mountains and lookin' down our throats. Big mistake.

We carried on and finally we hit resistance with the German front lines. There was some shooting. I had a foxhole here, right here, here comes a tank, one of the only tanks, right next to me. And they zeroed in on that. 37 mm they come hitting that thing. Man, everybody's running, "Get that tank out of here!" Because they zeroed in on us. And I said "I gotta get out of here" so me and my buddy we got up and we went back to get away from that tank. By God, all hell broke loose there was cannons they're coming in there I mean it's a wonder I didn't get a direct hit. It was all around me, you could feel the ground shaking. I was just beside myself. And then when it was all over, man, I didn't know what the heck to tell you. But the medic happened to be there, I said "Hey man, you better give me something here. Give me something a pill or something to get calmed down here." He looked at me he says "No, you come with me." So he took me back into a farmhouse, there were a lot of GI's wounded, laying around there and this one guy, they must have split his stomach and his bladder was sticking out, they're trying to push it back in, his stomach couldn't do it, his whole stomach was sticking out. Oh my God, so finally what they give me a pill the next thing I know I was in the field hospital.

And finally they figured well that's when they shipped me home then. And that's when I came home. And that was the end of that. But it's terrible. You don't know until you get into it. You know when you first go, you're thinking, but 'till you're in it and if anybody ever says they ain't scared, they're lying. It was terrible. How many guys we lost at the river, and at Monte Cassino. Terrible. Lots.

JZ: How do you... you're scared the whole time. So it's just a matter of suppressing it at times?

AD: You mean when I was over there?

JZ: Yeah absolutely, being in combat, do you just...

AD: Well, you have no time to think about anything.

JZ: I guess before and the after is the bad, but during it, you're just reacting with ...

AD: Yes, that's all.

JZ: You're not thinking about death, you're not thinking about anything...

AD: No, not really. Just when he said we have to go back the second time, that's when I thought "Well I ain't coming back" because we lost a lot of men. There was only eight of us that come back out of our whole platoon. There was 3 squads to a platoon, only eight of us come back. Wounded, or just came back unwounded, that's all, 8 of us. When I went back, I hardly recognized too many of the guys. But I have some pictures of me when my mother and them they sent me some pepperoni, at the rest area me and some of the guys and we were eatin' some pepperoni, I got some of those pictures.

JZ: So you came back home, did you have to stay in a hospital?

AD: No. I was fine, but like I said, I never talked about it. Not that I didn't want to, or that it would affect me. No, that didn't bother me. I just didn't talk about it. That's all. Never told anybody. I figured I come back in one piece, and I thank God for that.

JZ: You came over in '44?

AD: Yeah, in '44. then it wasn't too long after that then the war was over, then they went into Rome it wasn't too long after I got home.

JZ: What was your rank?

AD: I was a Private First Class.

JZ: So how many Purple Hearts? Two then?

AD: One, hit two places but one Purple Heart. I give everything I had; I give it to my son. And he made a beautiful collage out of it, beautiful. He did a nice job with it, he has it, I give it to him, I give everything to him. I give him the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart, as a matter of fact, that's me, that picture's taken in Italy. I was eighteen.

JZ: Now when did you get the Bronze Star? After the war you said...

AD: Yeah they send it to me.

JZ: When was this? In '45?

AD: No as a matter of fact it wasn't too long ago, all these years.

JZ: How did they... did they just give it to you?

AD: I had put a lot of this stuff in writing, ok, and one guy, we happened to be talking and he asked me where I was and I told him where I was at Anzio and Monte Cassino, he says, "You know, they want to know the stories from the veterans, 2nd World War, because they're so many dying off everyday, that they want the people to know that you guys have the story." And he said "Do you have anything." I say, "Well years ago, I wrote stuff down, I have it written down on paper." So I went up to see Tony DeLuca up there, and he referred me to this major I think he was over there was in the Air Corps and he said, "I want to talk to you." I made an appointment to go see him at the office up there in Penn Hills where DeLuca has his office in the next building. He says, "You have stuff written down, I'd like to see it." I said ok. So I got it, I brought it up to him, he looked it over, he says fine. He took photocopies of it. And he sent it to Washington, D.C. or one of those historical places, the government he sent it.

And to my surprise wasn't too long after that, they sent me this Bronze Star and it was a big surprise to me from what I wrote down, what I went through. And that's how I come about to get it. I didn't ask for it, he said because they wanted to put what everybody said in the records, in the archives someplace is what this major told me from the Air Force. He said, "I'm glad you wrote this down and have it." Just like the woman that called me from Harrisburg for the interview, she says, "We want you on real bad because we have nobody on from Monte Cassino and Anzio". I says, "You're kidding", she says, "No, we've never had anybody, you'll be the first." My

daughter wanted me to, it'll be fine. It'll be on in a couple weeks or so. And they're gonna give me a tape of it too. That's what they told my daughter. Well we'll give you a tape and we'll let you know ahead of time when it's on. It's on channel 48 that's the Pennsylvania cable network. I never knew that channel was around. I never watched it. I never heard of it till my daughter called me up watching a program she says turn the channel 48 on, I said what's it about, she says its about veterans telling their stories. So I turned it on I watched it for a couple of minutes, went back to whatever I was watching. And then after awhile she told me she called the station and they volunteered me.

JZ: When you finally came home and told your parents who you met and who you saw, what was their reaction? Ecstatic?

AD: Oh yeah, oh my God yes, to see my dad's brother and sister and my mother's brother and sister over there. You just think about, you'd never think you'd ever see each other. But like I say, the ones up in Canada the three boys were just young then when I was over, they had to be maybe 14, 15 years old. And I used to remember my mother used to talk about Montevergine I say what the hell is that. So as I'm going back with my cousins, they were taking me back to Avellino, I look on the side of the mountain up there and that's where it was it was a place... well every year, the people used to go... it was the Virgin Mary in whatever you call it there. And that's when my cousin says that's Montevergine. And then I said that's what my mother used to talk about all the time. It was like a shrine. It was a shrine, beautiful on the side of the mountain. I said oh that's what it was.

JZ: So now all these names and places and things are making sense now.

AD: Yeah, beautiful country. People are beautiful too.

JZ: I guess you realized too why they left, there wasn't much there, was there?

AD: Nothing there. Well my mother and dad they worked in the fields as children, my dad said they used to get twelve, fourteen cents a day. That's how much they got paid. Because the padrones they owned all the ground, and the peons worked for them and they'd feed them a little bit in the afternoon but they worked twelve to sixteen hours a day too, from morning till night. Fourteen cents a day. That's why my dad, he didn't care, he didn't want to go back. I guess he didn't want

all them memories of when he was a child what he went through. And his mother was still living. I missed her by six months. She died six months before I got there. They had it tough over there. 'Course they're all gone, the old-timers that was there, but today they got it good over there.

JZ: When you were there did you feel American? Did you feel Italian? Or did you feel a little of both?

AD: Oh I felt I was an American of Italian descent. But just the feeling because you know that your parents were born there. And you're in the country that many miles away in the country that they lived. And no I never considered myself just an Italian of descent, but I'll always be American. Never entered my mind. 'Cause I had a lot of cousins that went from there to Australia, same name. Scattered, up in Boston, I had cousins, I had cousins in New Jersey. South America, I had a cousin there, same name as my dad, name was Anthony DeFazio. And he come over here. He come up to visit. Then I had other cousins from Australia, DeFazzio. Their father and mine was first cousins. Their grandfather and my father were brothers. They came over. As a matter of fact, I don't know whether it was Crafton or Sewickley, they had an aunt because his dad married a Calabrese, that's below Naples, in Calabria.

JZ: Any final thoughts... you obviously had a wonderful... under the circumstances, you got to see your family, your family's town, but I guess was very memorable... what a coincidence.

AD: I can still picture the town, set on the mountain. Had a big plaza there. But occasionally I think about my buddy that looked like me and think about a lot of them guys that never got back, 'cause they took a hell of a shot over there. And you know they were only kids, only eighteen, nineteen years old. It doesn't bother me too much to talk about it, 'cause I never did. But I do think about it, I still picture their faces, some of them that I was with. Well you never had too much time to really get acquainted, it wasn't like you socialized. But it was terrible. They made a lot of mistakes, the upper echelon made a lot of mistakes. Of course not that they wanted to, it just happened. And they made a lot of good decisions too.

But let's face it, it hadda be done. 'Cause if we hadn't of got involved, you know that Germany, they had the jet engine 'cause they were sending the rockets to bomb England, pilot less, they just didn't perfect it, they hit wherever they're supposed to go. And it would have been less than a

year, they would have had the atomic bomb 'cause they was working on it. And if they would have perfected the jet engine and got an atomic bomb, do you think...

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

AD: I always did what I was told. Except the one time when I told the captain to "go get it yourself", to jeopardize somebody else's life. But I did without question, never asked. I say today that the American soldier is the best soldier in the world, to my opinion. And I really mean it, I think they are. But that's a shame it has to be that way. But like I say, well what are we, this country, is this the peacekeepers of the world? But if somebody didn't step in and do something, the people that are really mean like, if they would have won the war, you know what would have happened in this country man, they would have eliminated all the scholars, the teachers... if Japan and Germany woulda won the war. They would've gotten rid of the intellectuals, the school teachers, the demonstrators; they'd have gotten rid of everybody. Because they would want you under their rule. There wouldn't have been no freedom over here. They would have taken over man and they would have slaughtered a lot of people like Germany did with the Jewish peoples, was a very disgrace that they did. And they would have done it here. They would have eliminated millions of people. 'Cause they didn't want nobody smarter than them. They want to put you under their hand. And that's what they wanted, so if we didn't step in and do the job, God knows what it would have been today here. Of course that's my own opinion.

JZ: Do you think many people's attitudes about Italians changed? Do you think anybody respected Italians?

AD: It wasn't like it used to be, like go back even fifty, sixty years ago, or less. But a lot of people, even today they don't have no use for Italians. Why I don't know. Because the Italians gave the world a lot of things. A lot of things.

JZ: Yeah every time I eat pizza, they used to say!

AD: Oh not only that, your paintings, or your sculptures or your buildings, all these buildings is built with all these beautiful sections, who chiseled them, they did. They laid the water lines, they laid the gas lines, they did the concrete work, the brick work, they did all that. They did a fine job.

They did their share. Most of it could be jealousy, I don't know. But it isn't as bad today as it was back then. To get a job back then, how many people changed their name? From Italian to something else just to get a job. Oh yeah. And I know a few of them too. You couldn't get a job if your name ended in a, e, i, o, or u. all the Italian names ended in vowels. And they worked. That's why where I worked, there was a manager there years ago, a fella went to him and asked him for a job and he was an American fella I guess and he says I don't hire anybody but Italians here. Because they work. Because at that time they was all Italians working for the water company, every one of them. All Italians. In the labor gang, cause they did the work. All the good hard work. But still there are a lot of ignorant people I guess.

But if you look back, Italy has given the world a lot of things. The bugle boy for Custer when they were slaughtering the Indians, he was Italian, his name was Martino. Yeah he was a bugle boy, the reason he was saved because Custer sent him back to tell them to get some help to come and help them out, and his name was Martino, he was the bugle boy for Custer. Read history. As a matter of fact, he died early 1900's. His last name was Martino.

JZ: Well, anything else? That was so interesting.

AD: The thing is you can't remember everything, but we had some good times in the service. I enjoyed it; as a matter of fact I almost enlisted again when I came back. I wanted to go to the South Pacific. They called me in, I said I'm gonna register to go to South Pacific. He said, well I'm going to tell you something, it's up to you, but you're gonna be getting out on the point system. Army said it's up to you if you wanna I'll sign you up again. So I thought it over and I says nah, might as well go out. But I enjoyed the service, I really did. It was a good life, it wasn't bad. Peace time. It's a good education, let's put it that way. You couldn't buy that education that you get. Everywhere you went and what you did.

JZ: Just think, you were eighteen, nineteen years old, but you were thrown into the adult world, and you grew up fast!

AD: You certainly do! But war is hell, it's what they say, and believe me it is. I don't know if them big shots had to go fight between themselves they would never have a war. Send somebody else to do the dirty work. What are you gonna do? That's life.

JZ: Well, thank you very much for sitting down, I really enjoyed it. Thank you for your service, thank you for what you did and what a wonderful story and what a great interview. You really talked, you said, I'm quiet, I'm shy...

AD: Glad to do it. I don't talk, really I don't talk. Even if I get on the phone, I say what I have to say, I never make phone calls. I'm not a talker, big talker, but this here, this interview... I wouldn't a done it, I done it for your dad, really. 'Cause I knew him all my life.

JZ: *Grazie Mille.*

AD: *Prego.*

[End Tape 2, Side B]

[End of Interview]