

Taped Interview
Nashville Reunion 2009

Frank L. Romano, Co. C 410th

I was born on December 15, 1925 in Alton, Illinois. I was still in school, attending East St. Louis Senior High School, in East St. Louis, Illinois, when I heard about Pearl Harbor. I lived in the little suburb of Rosemont. I was preparing to be a math major in college with the intention of being a mathematician. On my birthday, December 15, 1943, I was drafted in East St. Louis, Illinois at the age of 18. On January 27, 1944, on my dad's birthday, I was in uniform at Ft. Sheridan in Illinois, soon to be in basic training at Camp Walters, Texas, outside of Mineral Wells. I remember a statement about being shipped overseas that I found humorous. We had heard that you would never go overseas if you did not know how to swim! I walked in that swimming pool, I don't know how long, and I still don't know how to swim! I took my specialized training at Camp Walters, TX.

I sailed from New York on the *USS General Brooks*. The ship was so crowded that if you bent your knees in your bunk you touched the bunk above you. My bunk happened to be on the waterline and one day I heard the "sub attack" warning. I decided I wasn't staying on the waterline, so I went up the steps. A sailor said, "You don't belong up here, get back below." I said, "You make me. I am on the waterline and I am not staying there. Send me back to the States if you want."

We landed in Marseilles and I had one leg over the deck to get on the rope ladder when "Axis Sally" said, "Welcome boys." I decided I would like to go back, but the landing craft was there waiting for me.

We were in the Rhine River Valley. My Commanding Officer was Captain Curtis Neely, a very good man. At Sessinhein, I had picked up a BAR instead of the rifle. I was on a railroad track embankment protecting a water cooled machine gun. Three of the men slid off the tripod. Then they hollered grenade. I turned around just in time to see an Oriental belly flop the grenade behind us. His name was never known until Alston Shakeshaft, who was in our platoon, went to the Archives in St Louis. He kept looking for the name of the Oriental that I kept telling him about at all the reunions. He finally found Lew Y. June. Zack Sigler looked him up and found out that Lew Y. June is more or less unknown, just by name. No purple heart, no nothing. I am here because of a young man, who had just come to us, doing what we were trained to do. It is very sentimental on my part, still.

Another time, during a night raid on Nieffern, in January, we encountered minefields as we were going into the town. We finished our job in the town and we started back. We picked up the soldiers who were wounded on the way in. I was carrying a medic on my back but I did not know his name. McClure, who was carrying John Foley, said for me to go first and he would follow in my footsteps. I made it but McClure did not make it back. We wanted to go find him that night but they would not let us. The next day the liaison plane saw McClure moving and they asked for volunteers to go out and pick him up. Another young rifleman named Erwin A. McHenny and I, along with six medics carrying stretchers, went back into the minefield. When we found McClure he said, "I knew you would come back for me." Sadly, John Foley was deceased. Their location was just about twenty yards from a German machine gun; we could see them and they could see us but not a shot was fired. We turned around and walked back

unhindered. McClure is still alive and living in Summerfield, Florida. He ended up with an artificial leg and received medical attention to his arm, face, mouth, and teeth. He married Clara, his hygienist, who assisted the dentist during his visits. McClure and I talk periodically.

Another time we were on a hillside in a foxhole in our sleeping bags. The Germans were in a house below us and one of them had a nature call. He ran out to the corner of the fence and he squatted. McClure popped him with his BAR. Two other Germans ran out to get him. McClure never touched them; he didn't even fire. The rest of the evening we played hand grenades until daylight. We would roll them down to the Germans and they would try to throw them back at us. When McClure and I talk now, he asks me if we are still friends. We are still friends and we talk to each other periodically.

One time we were marching a group of prisoners back to a location. I don't remember where or when but one of the prisoners had a red scarf around his neck. He kept moving from the front of the line to the back of the line where I was. When he got near me I found out that he could speak English as well as I could. He said that we wouldn't have any problems with the group. I made sure we watched him carefully.

When I heard about VE Day I thought, "Thank God." After the war ended I was two points short of coming home immediately. I was reassigned to the 45th Division and then transferred to the 9th Division. The 9th Division put me in Co. M of the 39th Regiment where I had a terrific duty. I was Sergeant of the Special Police Force in Traunstein, Southern Bavaria. I had fifteen men under me and we stayed there until May, patrolling the city at night. We lived in the hotel, had two jeeps, and five gallons of gas for each jeep. We weaned those jeeps on gasoline because we only received five gallons a

day. Munich was forty kilometers north and we took off for Munich as well as Berchtesgaden every time we could.

I was discharged May 4, 1946 and embarked from Bremerhaven, a port in Northern Germany, on a Merchant Marine ship. It wasn't a bad trip because one of the guys gave me a box of soda crackers to eat so I wouldn't be sick.

I did not want the 9th Infantry on my discharge papers because I did not fight with the 9th Infantry at all, only with the 103d. My request for that consideration was granted.

After the war I was a salesman for Sears and Roebuck and Co. Sears opened a store seven miles up Interstate 64 from East St. Louis, Illinois. Our store was at 10th and State, down by the river from St. Louis. In 1976, six months after they opened the new store they let thirty-two of us go. I received mandatory retirement because I was two months from thirty years. My son purchased Edgemont Sports Store from his uncle who he worked for and I went to work with him.

I have one granddaughter age thirty-four named Elizabeth, soon to be married on September 19, 2009. I have been to many reunions. It is so good to be at the reunions with my friends and every time I meet somebody new. I recently was advised that I may be the youngest, having a birth date of December 15, 1925, of the 14,000 to 15,000 original men who went over on the three ships in October 1944. I hope to come to the reunion next year, but it depends on the health of my wife. This is the first time my wife has missed a reunion; she is in a wheelchair with Parkinson's disease.

I am proud of the ASTP men that came from Colorado Springs, and Oklahoma. Tony Hillerman who wrote about the Navajo Indians was in the Army with us as well as Carl Pohlad who owned the Minneapolis Twins. Carl came from a farming family and

worked in banking after playing baseball. Donald Clem ended up as the Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut.



FRANK ROMANO

Unarmed Yanks Rescue Buddy On Battlefield

East St. Louisan in
Party Risking Lives
for Wounded Man

It literally was a field day for Private 1st class, Frank L. Romano, 19, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank D. Romano, 1313 North Fifty-first street, when one day in France he ventured out on a field walking toward the German lines. Six medics and two unarmed doughboys, one of whom was Frank, walked out on the field as volunteers to pick up a moving wounded man.

It was all quiet in No Man's Land, the release from the 103d division of the 7th Army in France said. All eyes, enemy and friendly, were on the file of the eight American soldiers walking toward German lines.

It was early afternoon. The night before a platoon had raided the German-held Alsatian town to their front. Mine fields had been encountered. When the Americans pulled back, they believed there were no wounded men left behind in the mine field.

See Man Moving

However, early the next morning outposts reported a man moving in the mine field. Volunteers were organized to get the wounded man and another man near him if he were still alive.

Private Romano and the other rifleman wore no arms. The medics carried two litters. Leading was a medic carrying a Red Cross flag and bringing up the rear was another Red Cross flag. Romano and the other rifleman, who had been on the raid, were along to show the medics the mine fields.

The volunteers did not know what kind of reception they would get. They crossed a stream, waded through mud, nearer and nearer to the German lines and mines. But they reached the wounded man, who lay 25 yards from the German-held town. The man smiled, said quietly, "I knew you'd come." The other soldier was dead.

Start Back

The procession started back. The suspense was nail-biting. Those who watched, "sweated it out" with the small band. But it reached the home lines without a shot being fired.

Some in the rescue party said that they worried about being fired on or captured, and the road back had seemed much longer.

Private Romano was wounded in action on Dec. 26, 1944, in France. He entered service in April, 1944, and has been overseas since October, 1944.