

# **VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

**Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations**

**Interview with**

**Sam Cangelosi**

Conducted by Ms. Deb Barrett

February 12, 2010

This project sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library  
in partnership with the Library of Congress

**This interview is being conducted on February 12, 2010, with Mr. Sam Cangelosi at the Indian Prairie Library in Darien, IL. My name is Deb Barrett. Mr. Cangelosi was born on December 12, 1923 in Chicago, Illinois. He is a retired truck driver. Sam learned of the Veterans History Project through a neighbor, Diane Simms, who is also a volunteer on this project. Also with us today is Mr. Cangelosi's son, Tom. Sam has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. Here is his story.**

### **Life Before Military Service**

**Sam, where were you living before you went into the service? What was your life like just before that?**

Well, I just got out of high school at that time. I did odd jobs – jobs were very scarce at that time; worse than they are now. I went to several schools to learn trades. Eventually I hoped to get into some trade after a while. I never decided to go to college. I just didn't feel I had the mindset for it. So I went to these trade schools.

In the meantime the draft kind of exploded – they needed soldiers, and I was right in the middle them. I was 19 going on 20, and they needed help. I was ready. I was eager to go because I wanted something to really do with my life.

**Were you drafted or did you enlist?**

I was drafted. I went in about the month of January or February.

**What year was that?**

I think it was 1943.

**Were you living at home at the time with your family, your parents?**

I was with my parents and ...[three] sisters.

**Had anyone else in your family gone into the service?**

No. I was the only one.

### **Induction and Training:**

**What was your family's reaction when you got your draft notice?**

Well, I was a 'mama's boy.' She was very depressed about it, but she got over it and said her prayers (both chuckle).

In January, 1943 we left for Great Lakes – I think it was ...[Camp Grant] – to be indoctrinated. And from there, after three days of getting military information, they gave us uniforms immediately and we were put on troop trains and we left west for California. Everybody had a hunch it was for California. We didn't know for sure.

**What can you remember from those three days? What was the first thing that happened? Did you get to Great Lakes yourself – you got there on your own?**

No, they took us in buses. The first thing they showed us how to do was make up our beds.

**What were your sleeping arrangements like there – your living arrangements – was it a barracks type arrangement?**

They were barracks type buildings with double cots – one on top of the other. We learned how to put our sheets on.

**So you could bounce a quarter (both chuckle)?**

Sure! The next thing you know, the three days went by. We got a few shots and we headed for California.

**So you got to Great Lakes. You were picked up where to go to Great Lakes?**

We were picked up right at the base at ...[Camp Grant]. They took us in buses to the train. The train was a five-day trip. It was a slow trip.

**So you were in uniform.**

Yes, we were in uniform.

**And you had packs. What was in your pack?**

We didn't have packs yet, I believe. We had khakis, I think – Army khakis.

**What happened with all your personal clothes from before?**

I can't remember what happened to them. All I knew was I was a soldier and I had to follow orders. It took us about five days to get to California. Everybody enjoyed it because it was much warmer.

**What did you do for those five days on the train?**

We were just thinking about what the future was going to hold and keeping our fingers crossed.

**How many guys were on the train? Do you have any idea?**

I'd say at least 2,000 troops were on that train. They were drafting pretty heavily then. We got to Camp Roberts, California – San Luis Obispo was the camp site.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: It was a big camp, wasn't it?**

It was a pretty big camp. It was a mountainous area.

**Had you traveled before?**

No.

**So this was all pretty new to you.**

Yes.

**What did you think of the mountains?**

I thought they were great. I really felt excited. As a youngster I never traveled, so this was exciting.

**So the train pulled in. And you got on buses to get to the camp?**

I'm not sure if it was buses or troop equipment, like trucks. We went to Camp Roberts, and it was in San Luis Obispo, California. Everybody had duties to do.

**What happened when you got to the camp? You all got off the bus or truck?**

We all lined up and they separated us by alphabetical order, I think. And they assigned us to certain buildings. We ate pretty healthy.

**What was your typical meal like?**

We had plenty of steak and eggs. They were trying to build us up, I think.

**And it tasted pretty good?**

Everything was good, yes. In three months we were all ten pounds heavier (both chuckle)! So, basic training, they give you a lot of exercises to build you up.

**What was your typical day like?**

We'd get up early – about five o'clock in the morning.

**How did they wake you up?**

By a horn I think (both chuckle), by trumpet.

Everybody had to get up, dress up fast and run out as they could outside the buildings to do exercise. The exercise was hard – everybody had to fall on their stomachs, fall on their backs, fall on their head (chuckles). They wanted to make it tough.

I was starting to gain weight fast, between the food and exercise. Before you know it, the three months went by pretty fast.

**Let's talk a little bit about the day. You said you got up early in the morning. You ran out and did your exercises. How long was exercise?**

About a half hour.

**And then you went to breakfast. Did you go as a unit?**

I think we were split up into units. I really forgot how they split us up. But eventually, three months went by pretty fast. The next thing I knew, we were on a parade field and we graduated.

**So you had exercise to build you up. Did you have classes in military history or using your weapons?**

Well, weapons mostly. They tried to train us as fast as they could because they needed replacements. We were replacements. We weren't regular Army; we were called replacements.

**What weapons did they teach you to use?**

Mostly the rifle.

**Do you remember what kind of rifle you got?**

M1. They called it an M1 rifle.

**Did you learn other skills besides using weapons – hand-to-hand?**

Karate, stuff like that. And jumping over walls (both chuckle) – six foot walls. At that time it was easy for me.

**But it's a little tougher now!**

Yes. So we got hardened up pretty good. And then they had this parade before you know it, and the three months went by fast. We graduated and they gave us some kind of diploma. The ...[general] came over and made the speech that we did very good in training. But then in the middle of the speech he started to cry.

**The ...[general] started?**

Yes. He started to cry because he had seen all these young faces and he knew a lot of them weren't coming back. We got the idea right away.

**You knew what was coming. Were any of your family able to come and see you graduate?**

No. They weren't able to come.

**So, from the time you got to California until graduation, did you have any time where you were able to go home?**

No.

**Were you able to communicate with your family?**

With letters and possibly a phone call here and there.

**Were you able to receive anything from them – little packages or anything?**

Yes. I received some packages – not many, but some goodies Mom used to make for me.

**Because she wasn't sure you were eating enough! So, at graduation were you able to go home before your next assignment?**

No.

**Were you able to get any leave at all?**

No. We just had one big going away party.

**Just on the base?**

No. We went to town. It was the first time anybody drank hard liquor. But they made sure we got back safe. It was all abandoned at that time – just a small town and not a lot of liquor spots.

The next few days later we were packed on a train. I forgot what equipment I had. But we had a duffle bag with our clothes. I don't think we had any rifles or anything until we got to our regular barracks.

### **Deployment to the Pacific Theater**

**How did you know where your next assignment would be? How did they tell you?**

Most of it was that we guessed. Then, as we went farther west on the train everybody had the feeling we were going to the west coast.

**So when you got your orders, how did you receive them? Did someone come and tell you? Was it posted somewhere?**

Some officer, when we reached our destination, told us what we were there for – basic training – and to keep as clean as we could because we had to stay in shape.

So we took this basic training and before you know it another three months went by and we were on a troop ship.

**So you had three months in San Luis Obispo, and then had three months?**

No. Then we got on troop ships.

**And where were you headed?**

For New Caledonia. We found out later that we were headed for New Caledonia.

**Did you know when you were getting on the ship where you were headed?**

I don't recall.

**Were you able to tell your family that you were going or where you were going?**

No. We weren't able to say much because everything was secret then.

**So your family didn't even know you were leaving the States?**

No.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: Didn't Auntie Jo say that when she wrote you that she had a code?**

Oh, yes. My sister was pretty smart. She wanted to keep track of me. So we had some kind of a code. We'd mention some sort of a name that meant a destination. So she knew where I was.

**Do you remember what New Caledonia was?**

It was a French island.

**Do you remember what name you had in the code?**

No, I don't remember that.

**Do you remember the name of the ship you were on?**

I think it was the Oconto – like Oconto, Wisconsin.

**How many men were on the ship? Do you have any idea?**

I could give you a guess. I'd say about 2,000.

**You said you hadn't traveled before, so going out into the ocean must have been a real experience!**

It was pretty calm. The Pacific was calm all the way there. We didn't have any stormy seas yet. I witnessed quite a few stormy seas. The China Sea, later on, was the worst experience I ever had on water.

**When you took this trip, now, to New Caledonia, did you go straight to New Caledonia or did you stop somewhere?**

We went straight to New Caledonia.

**How long did the trip take?**

It took one month.

**A whole month, without stopping?**

A whole month. We had to worry about torpedo boats sinking our ship, so we had to zig-zag to get there.

**What did you do for a month on the ship? How did you pass the time?**

We exercised a lot, to try to keep us in shape. We didn't eat a lot because most of us were seasick (both chuckle).

**What kind of food did you have while you were on the ship?**

Just the basic necessities. We probably had a steak once in a while. We had a lot of potatoes! I know we had a lot of potatoes (both chuckle). A lot of milk. We all gained pretty good weight. We were ready for the slaughter.

**What did you do when you weren't exercising or having your meals? Were there card games going on, did you read – what did you do to pass your time?**

I mostly talked and read. They had information on New Caledonia that we read about. It was a French island, and they weren't very friendly – I know that. I don't really recall how long we stayed in New Caledonia. I know it was sandy and windy by the beach area where we camped.

**Did you camp in tents?**

We camped in tents.

**How many men in a tent?**

Two men in a tent. We had portable small tents.

**And cots?**

No. We slept on the ground with a sleeping bag and blanket. It started to get uncomfortable and we were not sleeping well.

They gave us lots of shots for mosquitoes – malaria shots – tetanus shots. New Caledonia is a vast open space with a lot of water around it and not many people. I remember we could buy our own fresh eggs and have the chef cook them for us. We'd share them with him and have some for us. We had fresh eggs.

**When you were on New Caledonia did you have a regular military day with exercises and assignments?**

Yes.

**What was your day like?**

Each one of us was trained on certain equipment, like machine guns, tank guns and rifles. We had to clean them every day and tend to them.

**What type of gun did you have?**

I carried a pistol – a .45 caliber pistol. I had an M1 rifle, and was trained on an anti-tank gun – small cannon that destroyed tanks.

**So you knew at this time what your MOS was – your military operation specialty.**

Yes.

**What was yours?**

I was an anti-tank gunner. I was trained mostly for that. I only ran into one tank in the Philippine Islands.

**So you had all that training and only one time to use it!**

Yes. Our group was mostly for mopping up. The marines went right through there. They were the big honchos. They went through and did a lot of killing. Then we went after them to get what was left over to get prisoners.

In that experience I got to know what the Japanese soldiers were like. They were well trained. They were well trained soldiers. They knew their stuff. They were small people and could hide in caves. They were out to get us like we were out to get them.

**So you were in New Caledonia for how long?**

I was there about two weeks. Then we went to the Solomon Islands, where the 25<sup>th</sup> Division had already had a battle previous to when we got there. They had a big battle with the Japanese. I was a replacement, don't forget. I replaced someone who died or got hurt. Soon after, they needed a lot of replacements.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: Those guys who were there – they came from Hawaii, right?**

Yes. The original 25<sup>th</sup> Division were based in Oahu, Hawaii. They thought they were going to have a good time. Peace time was a good time, but after that they paid dearly.

**So in the Solomon Islands, you stayed with the same unit you were with?**

Yes. I was a replacement.

When we left the Solomon Islands we joined the regiment out of the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry, the 25<sup>th</sup> Division. When replacements were needed, they sent so many of us. It wasn't so bad, because the bad things were already over with.

**So you're saying the worst of it was over when you got there.**

The worst was over. We were kind of cleaning up.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: Where were you when they gave you that burial detail?**

I didn't know the original 25<sup>th</sup> Division soldiers who were killed. I didn't know them, and it seemed like it was easier if you didn't know. It was kind of a bad experience because I never saw so many dead people.

**Was this on the Solomon Islands that you did this?**

Yes.

**Were these burials temporary until bodies could be returned?**

Your own soldiers would grab you when you went down. When they found out you were dead, they'd put you in a spot and put some sort of garb over you and cover you with dirt until they could get your body out of there. I didn't know anybody who was killed or hurt, so I was one of the group. I volunteered.

**So emotional it would be easier to bury someone you did not know.**

Right. They were in pretty bad shape because they had been there three or four days already under a small cover of ground.

**So you had to find them and uncover them and re-bury them?**

Yes. We had to wear gas masks and heavy gloves.

**Because the bodies had started decomposing.**

After I got used to it, it wasn't too bad. I really felt uncomfortable about it. If they had a mother like I had, and the mother saw the condition they were in, it would be heartbreaking. They had dog tags on so they could be identified. Their original clothes were on, their glasses and hats and everything.

**You just buried them with whatever they had on at the time.**

Yes. I had shovels and canvas bags and labeled them. I'd put them in my truck and they were buried in the cemetery. I didn't go where the cemetery was.

**So your job was to unbury them and put them in bags and get them on trucks.**

Yes. It was a detail. I did it – somebody had to do it. I got over that. It was a pretty good experience for me to see all this. I really felt sorry for the parents of these boys – they were pretty well shot up. I just hoped nothing would happen to me like that.

**How long were you in the Solomon Islands, and how long were you doing this?**

We were clean up. We got everything that was left over – guns that fell down, soldiers who fell down – we had to gather everything up. And if the Japanese were hiding, we had to go up and destroy them.

**Did you come across any Japanese?**

Oh, yes.

**Did you have to engage them?**

It [was] long-distance firing, but we were firing at each other. I saw a lot of young men fall down, and that was the end.

**Did you have any hand-to-hand with them, or was it mostly long-distance.**

It was mostly long-distance. The closest I was, was about 50 yards away.

We were there from New Caledonia until we cleaned up and all the enemy was gone, and we got the civilians stabilized so they could get back to their lives. After that we had a break, because a lot of the soldiers got run down where they got malaria.

**Was this on New Caledonia or the Solomon Islands?**

It was on the Solomon Islands. That's where our division started fighting – the 25<sup>th</sup> Division had their biggest battles there.

The Islands were cleaned up and about six months went by. Most of the soldiers were worn out – sick and tired – by that time. They told us we were going to get a vacation. We were going to go to New Zealand for R&R. We were overjoyed! I had heard about New Zealand and I was going to see it. We got cleaned up pretty good. Anybody who was sick got well, and we got on troop ships and we headed for New Zealand.

**How long of a vacation did you have on New Zealand?**

It was just the right time, because the season of summer is at Christmas. It was Christmas time when we got there. People were very courteous. They sympathized with us. They tried to help us.

**So this was your first Christmas away from home.**

Yes, it was.

**How long had you been in the Army at this point?**

I'd say about a good nine months.

**So you celebrated Christmas away from home.**

Yes. We had three months' leave when we got to New Zealand.

**Three months?**

Yes. We got to know a lot of people, and they got to know us. We drank the New Zealand beer. They had a stout. We had a taste of it.

**But it was beer.**

We got used to it, and we drank beer most of the time.

**What were your living arrangements in New Zealand?**

We had regular camp sites – tents. We were out on the farm land. There was plenty of fresh food and milk. They wanted to fatten us up.

**They wanted to build you up again. So, you ate at the camp?**

Yes. We were able to go on furlough – maybe a week or so each time. We had our own money and paid our own way in the town. If there was a problem – if you misbehaved – you paid for it later.

**How did you pay for it later? What happened?**

Well, say you were at the USO and fell down the stairs from drinking too much. Well, for doing all that damage and getting the MP's riled up, it was KP for a week (both chuckle).

**Did you do KP?**

Yeah (both laugh). I had to get it out of my system.

**What did you have to do on KP?**

KP was mostly peeling potatoes.

**More potatoes than you ever wanted to see, right?**

Yes. Then we used to have to dig trenches for trash. They were big trenches – 8' X 8' – and you had to dig and dig and dig. That was your punishment.

**Did it work? Did it keep people from getting drunk?**

Oh, yeah. But everybody behaved pretty well, and people were nice to us. After three months it was like being in heaven.

**I bet. So it was three months in camp, but in a much nicer place. And you got a week furlough in town while you were there, so you got a chance to go to town and relax and enjoy yourself while you were there.**

Yes. You got to know people. They got us tickets for the theater.

**What sort of shows did you see while you were there?**

It was mostly stage theater, and I can't recall. There were pretty good movies, too. Mostly everybody liked the bar.

**That was the most popular spot!**

Yes, that was the most popular spot.

If you had dinner, it was steak and eggs. It was famous there. It was all we talked about – going for steak and eggs. We had it for breakfast!

**So you had your week furlough in the month you had in New Zealand. What happened after that? Where did you go?**

We had to go back to New Caledonia and take more training.

**What type of training?**

Just to review all your basics – weapons and get back in shape. We all knew we were going to have more action.

**How long were you there, when you went back to New Caledonia that time?**

Let's see. We didn't go back to New Caledonia – we might have gone to New Caledonia to line up and have all our regiments ready, and they were ready to plan the invasion of Japan.

**So you went from New Zealand to New Caledonia? Or did you stop somewhere in between?**

No. We did go to New Caledonia then.

**And you said you got more training.**

Yes. We got more training.

**Do you remember what the training was for? Was it more physical training?**

They'd show us maps of the terrain. Not the language because it was hard to learn the Japanese language.

**So this was a map of Japan, and the terrain to prepare for an invasion.**

Right. That meant a lot more soldiers were going to be killed, because the Japanese were not ready to give up yet. After we trained we went back to the Philippine Islands.

**So how long were you on New Caledonia that time?**

I'd say about three months.

**So you were there three months and went to the Philippines from there.**

Yes. We went to the Philippines. We did clean up. There were more Japanese in certain areas and we had to clean them out. From there we were going to go to Japan. In the meantime, it was

February – approximately a week ago today [anniversary of my being wounded]. I think it was January or February.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: I think it was February.**

**February, ...[1945]?**

Yes. We were cleaning up Japanese who were left on this island of [Lupao, Luzon] ..., I think they called it. We were lined up for tanks. At that time they had trained me as a machine-gunner.

Like I said before, the Japanese were well trained soldiers. They were pretty good. They had a certain mess kit, they called it, where they cooked their own meals – mostly rice and fish. They had a sort of heating method to heat their food. Well, all our food was cold and out of cans! Six weeks of that stuff and you were down to nothing.

**What kind of stuff was in your cans?**

It was meat and beans, hash.

**A lot of protein kinds of things.**

Right. There was hardly any bread.

On the days we got out of our camps, if we wanted to heat it up, we turned our helmets over and put our food in there to heat it up in the helmet

**You used your helmet like a pot.**

Yes.

**Was it any better warm?**

No (both laugh). It didn't taste any better.

We had a lot of water that was packed in canvas bags with a spigot on them.

**So you wouldn't get dehydrated.**

And sometimes there used to be streams. We used to get into the stream to take our showers, our baths.

**That's how you cleaned yourselves.**

Yes.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: Didn't they run out of food sometimes?**

Yes. We had melted Christmas candy one time.

**Because they ran out of food?**

Yes.

**Wow. So you had your food in the cans that you could heat if you wanted to. You had water, so you had clean water. You bathed in the streams to get clean.**

And we had an appetite for fresh fish – the fish that are colored.

**Tropical fish?**

Yes, tropical fish, a lot of tropical fish. They were edible.

**So you caught your own fish?**

Some guys had their own methods. They got their hand grenades, threw them in the water and up come the fish. And the helmet came in handy, too, for catching dinner. We'd have fried fish because we always had fire. That helped us quite a bit. It built us up a little bit.

**So you each went out and did that if you wanted it, or did someone from the kitchen detail do it?**

Well, we followed the leaders. There were quite a few farm boys who knew how to take care of themselves. They knew how to hunt and fish. So we learned that way. Once in a while we'd get a stray deer and butcher it, and we'd all have deer meat.

**This must have been a little different for a boy from Chicago.**

Yes. It was good for me. I was spoiled as a youth.

Anyway, at night we had to have a line, a barrier, between the Japanese and us. We would sleep and be alert for enemy soldiers because they were still in the jungle. I had a partner and the machine gun.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: One guy fired the machine gun ...**

Yes. One guy fired the machine gun and one guy carried it.

At night we had to stay in a perimeter. We lined up our guns, got a blanket to cover ourselves and took turns sleeping. With the machine-gun, you needed one guy to load the machine gun and another guy to fire. I didn't know this man – he was an elderly man – he was my partner.

**How old was elderly?**

I'd say he was in his middle 40's, and we were all in our 20's.

**He was an old man!**

And he was a minister. He was my partner on the machine gun, and we all had our duties. That evening I told him, "One of us has to fire the gun and one of us has to load it; what do you want to do?" He said, "I'll load it and you can fire it. I'll be on the right side." Well, it was just a lucky happening for me that he chose that side of the gun and I chose the other side, because they dropped mortar shells on us about 4:00 in the morning. That shrapnel spread all over. Fortunately, somehow he got all of it. Only one piece got me in the arm.

**He got all the shrapnel except the one piece?**

Yes. And we ended up in the hospital tent. I was next to him. I saw him all cut up, and he lost both arms. I didn't even know I was hurt, it was so slight. But it was enough to get me out of the service, because the shrapnel went into my arm and severed a nerve. I forget the name of the nerve. The doctor told me I was unable to go any farther. He said for at least nine months I wouldn't be able to use my arm. He said the best thing for me was to go back to the United States.

**And you weren't going to argue with him.**

I don't think so! It was a long trip back.

**How long were you in the hospital tent in the Philippines? Did they evacuate you very quickly? Did they have to stabilize you?**

They evacuated me. They sent me back to New Caledonia and I got treated there. And I got back on a troop ship and was sent back to the United States. I went back to San Francisco, to Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco.

**Returning State-Side**

**Now, was this another one of those month-long sails back to California?**

This one wasn't as long. I had to take a hospital ship back home. But in the meantime I had my first airplane ride from the Philippines to New Caledonia. And from there I went back on the hospital ship.

**When you were on the hospital ship, were you confined to your bed or were you able to get up and move around a little bit?**

I was about the healthiest guy on the whole ship. I just had the one arm bandaged, so I could get around pretty good.

**So what did you do on the ship on the way home? Did you do a lot of reading? Did you play cards with the guys?**

I can't remember that far back. But I know it was much more pleasant.

**Much more pleasant than on the way out!**

Yes, it was.

**Let's go back to when you were in New Caledonia for the first time, then the Solomon Islands and the Philippines. That whole time, were you able to communicate with your family?**

Yes. I could write letters.

**But you couldn't tell them where you were. You said your sister had a code, so she knew.**

Yes, so she knew where I was at.

**Were you able to get any packages from home, or was everything just reading letters?**

It was letters.

I kept getting back letters from a friend of mine who was killed in an airplane crash in the service. I kept getting his letters back marked "deceased." He was landing his plane and somebody crashed into him while he was landing. That was my first friend who disappeared.

**And that's how you found out – because his letters kept coming back?**

Yes.

**So you ended up back in California. Was your family able to come and see you or were they still in Chicago?**

No. They were still in Chicago.

**So you were in the hospital. Did they have to do surgery on your arm? Was it rehabilitation?**

Mostly it was rehabilitation. There was no surgery because it was a nerve. I don't remember the name of the nerve – the vegas nerve, maybe. And all it had to do was heal.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: It's still in his arm.**

**The shrapnel is still there?**

The shrapnel is still there. You can feel if you want to.

**Is it like a lump there?**

Yes. What happened is that they wanted to take it out of me, but I told them it doesn't hurt me, and I'd just keep it as a souvenir there.

**How long were you in the hospital in California?**

I was in Letterman General for about three weeks. And they always want to send you close to home, so I went to ...

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: Was that Camp Grant?**

No, not Camp Grant.

**Tom Cangelosi continues: Was it in Michigan?**

I got discharged in Michigan. But in the meantime I was in the hospital three months in a small college town.

**In Illinois?**

Yes. My parents were able to come and see me.

**What was their reaction the first time they saw you?**

Oh, my mother thought I was down to nothing.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: Didn't she walk by your bed?**

**Right past you!**

Yes, right past me – she didn't know me!

**They must have been so happy to see you.**

I was their only son. They were happy I got through it. It seemed like the two and a half years I was in the service went by so fast.

**I'm trying to make sure I have everything right. You were in the Philippines probably fifteen months or so after you joined the service. How far into your time in the Philippines did this injury happen? How long were you in the Philippines?**

I was there not too long. We invaded the island of [Luzon at the Lingayen] Gulf. We were there about six weeks.

**So it sounds like, altogether, after you were wounded you were in the military another year or so.**

Yes.

**So you went from the Philippines to California, and you were in California just a few weeks. And then you came back to Illinois at another camp in another hospital.**

Yes. I was discharged in Battle Creek, Michigan.

**What did you do – were you in the hospital that whole extra year getting rehabilitation?**

It wasn't quite a year, but I was getting medicated and doped up again.

**So it was all fixing what they could with your arm.**

And my mind!

**What was it like coming back? Did they give you some counseling when you came back to deal with what you had seen and what you had experienced?**

I did talk to a psychiatrist. They gave me medications to relax more. They tried to help me as much as possible.

I wanted to further myself in education, but I didn't have it. I liked to do physical work, and I was happier in that way than doing something mentally.

**You didn't want to sit at a desk.**

No.

### **Discharge and Return to Civilian Life**

**So you were in Illinois somewhere, and you were going through the counseling and getting your arm worked on and just healing. And then they transferred you to Battle Creek, Michigan?**

Yes. That's where I finally ended up when I got discharged.

**Did they send you to Battle Creek just for the discharge?**

Yes.

**So you were discharged at Battle Creek and you came back to Chicago?**

Yes. I came back.

**How did you get back to Chicago?**

I took a train and then a cab home.

**And your parents knew you were coming?**

Yes.

**They must have been really happy when you were finally home to stay.**

Yes. They thanked God for getting me home because there were so many pathetic cases. They felt sorry for some people. I felt sorry for the mothers of the boys I buried.

**That stayed in your mind.**

It stayed in my mind a long time. A lot of them had glasses on yet, the personal things – their wallets. It must have been hard for the parents.

**What was the first thing you did when you got home after you were discharged?**

I went to one of the people who would explain your benefits. I wanted to go to art school, but I never did. I liked art work.

**Did you do drawing or painting?**

I did painting. They didn't have a school in my category for some reason. So I went to an architectural college. I tried to pick it up, but it was too deep for me. So I kind of got away from that ...

**Was that on the GI Bill?**

Yes. They gave me a pension for being hurt. At that time it was about \$43 a month.

**It was worth a lot more back then!**

Yes. Today it's \$243. Anyway, they tried to send me to school. They tried everything. They were very good about it. I don't regret it.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: With the disability, some guys had to argue to get more, didn't they? But they told you that you were 20% or 30%.**

They told me I was 20% disabled, so every year they gave me an increase. Today it's about \$243. But I was satisfied.

**This was your left arm that was injured. Were you right-handed or left-handed?**

I'm right-handed.

**So you could still do everything you were doing before.**

Yes. But, like I say, I liked art work and evidently I didn't go after it hard enough. I could have possibly gone to the Art Institute on my own. Anyway, I wanted to be an outdoor person. I liked driving and I joined the Teamsters. I put probably about 28 years in with the Teamsters.

**So you worked as a trucker. What company, or was it multiple companies?**

Yes. The last company ... was [Excel Motor Service].

**Now when you joined the Teamsters, did they help you find a company to work for or did you find the work first and join the Teamsters?**

I had to find my own work.

**So it was the first place.**

The first place was a small local cartage company. It was bought and rebuilt by someone else who made it bigger. I happened to be lucky enough to stick around for 28 years and was able to get a pension out of it.

My only regret is that I always did like to do art work. If I had to have something to fall back on, I'd rather be an artist than anything else.

**Did you pursue it after that, or did you just let it go?**

My son used to watch me.

**Tom Cangelosi interjects: He took classes.**

I took classes and would do art work at home.

**Tom Cangelosi continues: Your one sister, Rose, she was pretty good, wasn't she?**

Yes. She died early in life – my older sister.

**So this was a talent that was in your family – there was some talent with art work.**

There must have been somebody in the family that had that. I know my mother used to tell me the surname Cangelosi was a great decorator for churches – he painted a lot of murals for churches. I don't know. Anyway, that's the only experience I had in life for a trade to be an artist.

### **Continued Military Friendships and Reflections on Military Service**

**Do you have any close friendships that lasted beyond your time in the service? Are there any people you met in the service you kept in touch with afterwards?**

Yes. There were a few at the beginning. After everybody settled down and got married and moved on to other states, I lost track of a lot of them. A lot of them died, in the meantime, that I knew.

**Do you belong to any veterans' organizations?**

I belong to the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

**You got the Purple Heart for being wounded in the Philippines.**

Yes. I joined and stayed with them for at least for ten years. Then I lost track of everybody. So I kind of went away from Army life and lost all my best friends – mostly through that.

**How did your military experiences affect the way you think about war and the military and even about life in general? How did those experiences affect the way you think about everything now?**

I remember meeting a lot of young fellows. They were really worried about their country and wanted to protect it. And then there were others who were free-loaders. They just went in to try to lead an easy life in the Army. I met a lot of good soldiers and a lot of bad soldiers.

The Japanese – they were good soldiers, too. They took care of themselves. They were well trained. I hated to even see them get killed.

I guess after the bomb was dropped many innocent people died. I missed that. It happened right after I came back when they dropped the Hiroshima bomb. Then the war was over.

**So the invasion of Japan was not necessary. When you look at things today – when you look at the current wars that are going on, and you look at the situations around the world, how does what you experienced affect what you think about and what you see now?**

What I see now is everybody is starting all over again. Everybody worked hard in World War II and fought hard for the United States – civilians and soldiers. It seems like, after many years go by, everything is forgotten. New life exists. People don't know what war is and don't care.

They don't put their heart into their country. It seems like it's all that they want to progress and live easy. But you have to have some hardships, too, in life.

**Is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to mention, that you'd like to say before we finish?**

I can't recall anything else. I was just happy to serve and I just hope the world gets safer and we never have anymore wars.

**That sounds like a good note to end this on. Sam, thank you very much for sharing your story with us.**