

**Theodore Anderson  
Veteran**

**Philip Leonard  
Hoosick Falls Historical Society  
Interviewer**

Q: Could you give me your full name?

TA: Theodore Anderson.

Q: Where do you live?

TA: 13 Danforth St. Hoosick Falls.

Q: Have you lived in Hoosick Falls all your life?

TA: All my life.

Q: All your life have been a Native?

TA: A Native.

Q: Alright now before you tell us about the service, will you tell us a little bit about what was going on before you got in the service?

TA: I was a student at Hoosick Falls High School. And in September / October 1943 along with most of my male classmates I joined the NYS Guard. Graduated in June of '43 and the next morning we all left for Camp Smith in Peekskill NY for ten days. By the end of that ten days I was ready to stay home, I wasn't interested in going in the Army after that. In July 16<sup>th</sup>, '43 we left Hoosick Falls and I was the leader of the Selective Service Contingent.

Q: You were drafted then?

TA: Oh yes, a good number of us had to have deferment in order to finish the senior year of High School. We went to camp up on Long Island and here we were like everyone else all the tests before you get assigned. So on a basis of twelve words a minute on typing I was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina Field Artillery to become a clerk. I didn't realize it then but that was probably the best thing that ever happened to me.

So we were at Fort Bragg for seventeen weeks, half the time learning to be a cannoneer and the other half learning to be a clerk. After that, got home for New Year's 1944 for ten days and then back to Fort Meade, Maryland getting preparation before we went to Europe. Went overseas on a Liberty ship called the Anne Arundel. And this was the first time out after having been torpedoed. So every time a good sized wave would hit the ship and there was a bang, everybody

was figurin' are we goin' stay up or we goin' back down again. We landed in Berry Docks in Wales which is near [unclear] and the first thing I remember when I woke up that morning was hearing this very high pitched whistle. When we got on deck looked out here is this little bitty engine pulling these little railroad cars around which were full sized there but not to us. We were there for a month and then I was sent to Kensington, which is a suburb of London. And this is where General Eisenhower had his headquarters. We got there late in the afternoon and the corporal took us to mess. When we came back he asked us if he knew where we were. And we were assigned to 6803<sup>rd</sup> service company so I figured I was going to be moving garbage cans around and that sort of thing. But what actually was it was SHAEF, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces which was General Eisenhower's headquarters. So that was a lot better than having to mess around with the garbage cans. I went to G-1, which is personnel, so we handled all the troops coming over, all the troops building up for the invasion, and later on we were responsible for prisoners of war and then we ship all the troops back home again. I was sent to [unclear] Headquarters at Portsmouth in a dried out swamp. And I was one of two enlisted men in the compound where Eisenhower's headquarters were. In fact I could have thrown a golf ball and hit his trailer from my tent.

Q: Let me ask you this that was getting ready for the invasion?

TA: The invasion had already happened.

In 944, we went across the channel in an LST, and we ended up on Utah, and from Utah we went to a place called Jullouville, [France] (?) which originally was a rich man summer village and also had a very large TB sanitarium. But there were no TB patients there when we got there because that's where most of the offices were while we stayed. We went from there to Versailles and we were in Versailles about 7 months right across from Naples. I was walking on the street one day and I met this soldier and we shook hands, and we had no idea who either of us was. So were you here were you there were you somewhere else in the United States. Finally we ended up asking "where'd you come from?" And I told him I was from Hoosick Falls and he says "I am too". And it was Pete [unclear]. Pete was in the anti-aircraft group at the Headquarters. I never saw him after that again until we got home.

In May of 22<sup>nd</sup> 1945, an Officer, two other GI's, and myself, we went to Rennes France to catch a plane and we flew from Rennes to Frankfurt. Going over the mountains we hit an air pocket and it ended up that we were 50ft off the top of the mountain when the plane picked up and went back up again. Now I could think my mother was going to get a telegram in the morning but thankfully that didn't happen. This was right after the troops went into Frankfurt and we had the \$64 question... If you got caught talking to a civilian it cost you \$64. A lot of people did because there was all kinds of GI clothing hanging on the lines at the

civilian homes. Before I got home I was fortunate, I had a chance to go to Switzerland for ten days. Seven days in Switzerland and three days travel time. Couple of things I remember is everything was rationed. We got six pieces of chocolate, and one glass of milk. Everything was paid for before we were allowed in and we could only bring in \$25. Because so many people had been involved in black market, they had thousands of dollars they were afraid they'd get in there and bankrupt the city, or the country I mean. Chanel Number Five, in the gallon sealed, \$5. But we had no way to get the stuff home. Where I worked in Frankfurt, I worked in the IG Farben building. And this was the largest office building on the continent at that time. IG Farben was the owner of Bayer Aspirin.

So finally a great day came and we got on a train and went from Frankfurt to La Havre and the tracks were so bad that the guys would get out and walk alongside the train, it went that slow. We got in tents in La Havre. We used to let the little French kids steal our coal and there was three; two little girls and a little boy would come every morning. They had one coat between the three of them. And they had three shoes and so the kids would take turns wearing the clothes. So you can see why we felt bad. And some of the guys would take candy bars and put them in the coal pile, and the kids would find them. Course our Officers weren't too happy with us but never the less, we did it. We got on another Liberty ship called "Sea Perch". Don't know the history of this one so I don't know if it had been torpedoed or not. Fifteen Hundred troops on this ship. When you would see a movie on deck half the people would be seeing it right, the other half would be on the other side of the screen seeing it backwards. You only had about four films so when you got bored of seeing it right you'd try and get on the side where you'd see it backwards, make it be a little different anyhow. We ended up at Fort Dix and met George Scott. Poor George's paperwork got all messed up so he had been there a week or so before I did and he went home the day before I did. Oh by the way, that trip from La Havre took us eleven days because of a really bad storm we got into. So when I got home I was home about four days and went back to Grand Union, where I had been a part-time butchers helper to see if I was going to get my job back and I wasn't. But then they told me that there was a job in the Oneida, so I went over there and I didn't even get in the door they hired me on the spot. I worked there full time, decided I needed my math which I didn't finish up. So I went back to High School for another year and took Geometry and Intermediate Algebra. Then I ended up going to the predecessor of Hudson Valley Community College, which was Veterans Vocational School. But when we went it was a little bit different. It was strictly just veterans and when somebody would act up in class, four or five guys would holler at him to shut up because we were only there for one thing we got to get an education so we can go get a job. Also for every hour in the classroom we had another hour in the lab. So when we came out the door we know what the tools were for and how to use them.

Q: And what were you studying there exactly?

TA: Radio Communications. We had our own FM Radio station and we had our own HAM station. Which they don't have at Hudson Valley today. A shame because many of the fellas went to the local radio and TV stations after graduation and there is nothing in the area that trains for that sort of thing now. I got my HAM ticket 1963, all the guys said I was the most active unlicensed HAM there was because I knew all the stuff that was in the magazines and talked to everybody, but I couldn't talk on the radio. And since I retired in 1986...

Q: Well what did you do?

TA: I went to work for GE for 35 years.

Q: In Schenectady?

TA: In Schenectady. I went to work in the General Engineering Laboratory at first, and that was a product laboratory. They developed all the washers, the dryers, the flat irons, the toasters and that sort of thing. And then they decided they weren't going to have as much product so a lot of us got essentially laid off but I was transferred to the Research Lab, which later became the Research and Development Center in Niskayuna. So I was very fortunate because in February I was told if I didn't get a job at the Research Lab, I didn't have a job. And I was supposed to get married in April.

Q: What year was that?

TA: 1955. I went to work with GE in '51, and I got married in '55. And so for the next thirty five years I commuted; for a while with a bunch of fellas and most of the time by myself. Very happy when that last day came. [unclear] and I weren't all that happy to begin with.

Q: As you get older, it gets tougher too?

TA: It does, it does. So, since retiring, mostly what I've done is taken care of relatives. Five years ago we sold a big house and got a smaller house. For the next year I went back in the house repairing business and rebuilt the house the way we wanted it, with help from a couple contractors.

Q: Your wife was a local girl?

TA: She lived in that first house we were in since she was in fifth grade.

Q: What was her maiden name?

TA: Winters. Pat Winters.

Q: Did you have any children?

TA: No.

Q: Now your retired and living the good life in Hoosick Falls?

TA: That's what they tell me.

Q: Let me ask you a little bit about the service, your job was basically like a Personnel Director making sure everything was taken care of?

TA: Well that's what the officers did. I worked in the message center, so we received every piece of correspondence coming and going. Much of it was classified. I worked under a Warrant Officer and if the top secret material wasn't addressed to a particular officer then he would open it and then he would give it to me. I had a special log that I logged it in and then I had to keep track of it as long as we had it. Then when it went out, then I had an out log. Now the rest of the people in the group were not supposed to look at the information, just he and I. Before the invasion started, one day four Master Sergeants with machine guns and a Full Colonel came in and the Colonel had a big brown wrapped package. He wanted to know where General Barker was, the General that was the head of our group. So I took the five of them to the General's office and pretty soon the Warrant Officer was called, and Hank came back with the package open and he says "Okay Andy, go over in the corner with your top secret log, nobody watches you, and you can get the information on a fly leaf of every one of these. But don't look at anything else." These were five bound leather volumes of overlord. This was the plan for the invasion of Europe. I had just sneaked over the first page and it said on the bottom, "D-Day will be..." and as I lifted up the page the Warrant Officer caught me so I didn't find out when D-Day was going to be.

Q: So you were in charge of these messages that were coming in all the time and making sure they were kept confidential and so forth. Very interesting mark you were right there, right at the headquarters for Eisenhower. So you were right there where the action was?

TA: I never talked to him but I saw him many times. I saw Air Marshal Tedder, he was in charge of Air Force for the Allies. Bradley, the pearl handle man that got in trouble...

Q: Patton?

TA: George E Patton. David Niven, he came in one morning with an MP outside the door. He came in and he said Andy, I got a British Officer out here. So I went out and I recognized him but I have never seen anybody as dirty as that man was. He came right out of the trenches. He wanted to see the Assistant to the General I worked for, a British General, and he wanted to see him so I took him up to him. The next morning I happened to walk out in the hall and he just came in. Now he's all cleaned up with his mustache, all waxed, and I commented that he looked much better that day than the day previous to that. Glen Miller and the Band, they were assigned to us from Administration so we got to meet Glen and Ray McKinley a number of times. When Bruce Catcard from North Hoosick came to visit me in Versailles, I took him to Paris. I gave him a tour, didn't tell him that Glen and the Band was there. So I took him and we were walking down the street and the Red Cross Club he heard the music and I pushed him in the door. I never

drank so much coffee or eaten so many donuts as I did that afternoon. We had to leave there because Bruce had to get back to the Hospital on the other side of Paris. Some of the things weren't so pleasant but there were some things that were really interesting.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say about Hoosick Falls or about the Service?

TA: The only thing that we had a lot of fun was the first three nights that we were at Bushy Park which is at Kensington where we were stationed. Bomber's Moon, so we watched the German's drop the bombs on London and when they got too close then we would run into the Air Raid Shelter. Crazy young kids. Later on when the Buzz Bombs came you didn't run because you couldn't tell where they were going. It echoed between the buildings so you hoped and prayed that you were going to be alright.

Q: How old were you when you were over there?

TA: I went in the service at nineteen.

Q: I see, so you were in your early 20's when you came out.

We thank you a lot for coming out and telling your story, we thank you very much.