

**John Filipello
Veteran**

**Michael Russert
Wayne Clarke
New York State Military Museum
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on March 22, 2006, 1:15 PM
New York State Military Museum
Delmar, New York**

Q: What is your full name, please?

JF: My full name is John Joseph Filipello.

Q: Where were you born?

JF: In Albany.

Q: And when where you born?

JF: At 4/1/21. [Pauses] In a couple weeks, I'll be eighty-five.

Q: April Fool's Day, huh?

JF: Yes, April Fool's Day.

Q: What was your educational background prior to entering service?

JF: In fifth or seventh grade I went. I didn't do too much school, I worked all the time. I didn't do much schooling to tell you the truth.

Q: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

JF: Yes, I was on the corner of Madison and Pearl, and it was a restaurant across the street from the banks, that's where I heard it.

Q: How did you hear it?

JF: Over the radio.

Q: What was your reaction when you heard about that?

JF: I didn't feel too good about it, you know, I figured it was bad. I knew something was going to happen, you know, somebody's going to end the war.

Q: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

JF: No, I was drafted – in '42.

Q: Where you drafted here in Albany?

JF: Yes.

Q: Where did you go for your basic training?

JF: Camp Blanding, Florida.

Q: How long were you there?

JF: Well, I was a year and a half in the states, to tell you the truth. [Pauses] I was there, and then Tennessee, and Indiana.

Q: What other types of training did you have?

JF: Basic training was all – I was in the artillery.

Q: Now what was your job as an artilleryman?

JF: I was with the gun section, there was seven or eight of us to a gun section. I used to put the ammunition in the breach and fired it . . . but I've done the corporal job and everything so – everybody had to know the job.

Q: What type of artillery was it?

JF: 105.

Q: So there were seven in your crew, how many guns did you have in your battery?

JF: Four. There was A Battery, B Battery, C Battery, and Headquarters.

Q: Did you have trucks to move the artillery pieces?

JF: Oh yes, I was a driver. I was driving the truck with the artillery, the 105's, in the back of the truck.

Q: What type of truck was it, was it a two-and-a-half ton?

JF: Yes, something like that.

Q: What artillery unit were you assigned to, do you remember?

JF: I know it was an A Battery.

Q: What division were you with?

JF: The 30th. It was a [unclear]

Q: Where you assigned to that in the states before you went overseas?

JF: No, no. I went overseas, and they gave us all kinds of training to see where we were good to go to . . . seeing that I was a truck driver, they put me in the artillery.

Q: Did you go overseas in a convoy or in a single ship?

JF: It was a single ship. It took us ten days to get over there because they were waiting for another convoy. [Pauses] There was a lot of ships anyway. It took us ten days to get over there.

Q: Where did you go, England?

JF: England, yes.

Q: You said you received additional training in England?

JF: Yes, we trained in England.

Q: Where were you in England, do you remember?

JF: I was in London.

Q: How did you get along, did you have much contact with the English people, or were you on base most of the time?

JF: Not too much, it was docked in anyway when I was there. It was totally dark.

Q: But you ended up going across on D-Day?

JF: Yes, we were in England. In fact, I was in one of those small towns there, you know, taking it easy . . . and then they called us back, and that's when we had to start some more straining. You know, under the channel, getting shot – you're real training. From there I went to the English Channel, and from there they would ship us to Boston, and from Boston we went overseas.

Q: You went over on D-Day? Across the channel?

JF: Yes.

Q: What was it like?

JF: Well I went in D-Day [unclear]. I forgot that the army – they needed the artillery and they called us, the artillery divisions.

Q: Did you drive a truck ashore?

JF: Yes.

Q: Did you have to prepare it, and water-proof the engine then?

JF: No, it was on the ship and the ship landed . . . the tide was pretty good.

Q: What did you go in, in an LST? Or a smaller . . .?

JF: It was one ship that carried all our division anyway.

Q: What was the beach like when you got there?

JF: It was kind of rough, I saw, you know, a lot of dead stuff. Dead animals – the first thing I saw was a dead animal.

Q: A lot of wrecked equipment?

JF: Yes.

Q: Were you under fire when you landed?

JF: Very little, very little.

Q: When was the first time you came under fire?

JF: Practically every day. Not every day, but . . . we were under fire. [Pauses] To tell you the truth, I don't know why they never got us . . . over our head, you know? They never hit us directly.

Q: So, you supplied fire support to the advance?

JF: Yes.

Q: Were you ever wounded at all, or injured?

JF: No, to tell you the truth, the only thing I had when I came out of service was a fungus in my left ear, when I got out . . . I had a battery blow up from my truck, but you know, that was minor. Actually, I never got hurt, just lucky, that's all.

Q: What was your daily life like, with your battery? Did you live in foxholes, or tents? How did you live?

JF: Well, we lived with our batteries, but they lived in foxholes.

Q: Did you have to eat the rations every day, or did you have any hot meals at all?

JF: We had rations, but I'll tell you we had a hell of a cook . . . always made us something to eat. Sometimes at midnight, when we're getting a little action, he used to always make a big pot of coffee. We had it good, you know? They had too many rations.

Q: Did you ever have any problems with your guns at all, your 105's?

JF: No, never did. They got hot, but we never had problems with them.

Q: Did you ever have to replace the tubes often?

JF: No, we never did. On rest period, we would clean them up, you know, and that was it, but never had a problem with the guns.

Q: Were you also involved with the Battle of the Bulge?

JF: Oh, I was in it.

Q: You were? What happened?

JF: We just – we just went in there, is all . . . the area was rough, there was snow.

Q: Did you have winter gear?

JF: No, just what we had, that's all.

Q: Were you frostbitten at all?

JF: I never was frostbitten. We dug holes – I always dug a big hole, and we used to put a little heat in there. We all had heat, we all had little stoves we used to keep warm . . . but it was cold, let me tell you.

Q: What were your officers like, did you have good officers?

JF: They were good, very good.

Q: How about the men in your unit, did you become close to them?

JF: Oh yes, when the war was over I'd gone and visited some of them in Connecticut. It was good to see them then.

Q: What decorations or medals did you receive?

JF: No, just a conduct medal. We were supposed to get one medal when we were in St. Lo. We caught around 126 prisoners, but everybody got a medal who wasn't there. That's the army life, know what I mean? [Laughs]

Q: Basically like a unit citation?

JF: Yes. I got a lot of citations. My son's got all of that stuff at home, it's in my book. [Pauses] They said they wanted two men from each section at the airport in St. Lo. They said there was nothing to it . . . nothing to it, hell, there was 126 of them Germans, and what got them out was our artillery. They were afraid of our artillery, they thought we had automatics. [Laughs] They were coming in so fast.

Q: Did you carry any side arms?

JF: Yes, a rifle.

Q: Is there any experience that you had that you thought was kind of humorous, or funny?

JF: Oh, we had a lot of fun. I'll tell you, we had a guy named [Sproat]. He could make you laugh all the time. He'd make you believe he's drunk, and all . . . and we had rough times, I was in a foxhole, where we were getting shelled, and the Mexican guy next to me, crying like a son of a gun – well, I was scared, but what can you do? One of my friends got hit though, then fell right in his hole. He was from Connecticut.

Q: Did you get to see any USO shows at all, while you were over there?

JF: The only show I saw was – I don't know if you remember, I know you know Edward G. Robinson – he was the funny one . . . Little Caesar . . . I never saw Bob Hope or any of those guys, nothing.

Q: Did you have any unusual duties?

JF: No.

Q: Now did you stay right through to the end of the War?

JF: Yes. I'd say, how it was with me, when we were in D-Day [unclear]. From there, we just kept going, kept going, hit all these other towns and villages, until we get to the last time, forty miles from Berlin, and there the Russians stopped us . . . they were coming too. They were coming, and we were coming, so we wouldn't get hurt. All the Germans were coming on our side.

Q: They were afraid of the Russians.

JF: That's right, the Russians got around to their revenge.

Q: Did you get to interact with any of the Russians, or meet any of them?

JF: Yes. In fact, I went with one of them – it was a wedding. Boy, what a wedding. [Laughs] Lasted about two days, three days – drinking that vodka and all that stuff.

Q: So, were they pretty friendly towards Americans?

JF: Yes, they were friendly. The women, they were dressed up like, Jesus Christ, full pack and everything – they were like, worse than men.

Q: There were women Russian soldiers?

JF: Yes.

Q: Did you ever liberate any of the prisoner of war camps, or the concentration camps?

JF: No . . . I visited them when they were empty. I was in Buchenwald, I'd seen the ovens where they burned them.

Q: What did you think of those things when you saw them?

JF: Oh Jesus, my stomach just got sour – I couldn't believe it. And I'll tell you the truth, being overseas, I never heard of them killing the Jews –

Q: Yes, I was going to ask you that.

JF: No, I'd never heard of it, until I got out at the end of the war and then they showed the Holocaust . . . but I didn't hear of it. I don't know if they kept it away from us . . . but I saw a lot of dead bodies, when I . . . you know, bulldozing them on the ground, and burning them up, covering them up, it's easy to get sick to. I can't believe I managed to do it . . .

Q: Where you in Europe when President Roosevelt died?

JF: Yes.

Q: What did you think of that? How did you feel about that?

JF: I felt bad because I – I'm thinking about six months later the war ended and he couldn't see it. He was good, he tried to keep us out.

Q: What did you think when you heard about the dropping of the atomic bombs? Were you aware of anything like that?

JF: To tell you the truth, I was glad it happened, but I felt sorry for those people. They said we were coming home for thirty days, and we were going to go to the other place, fighting the Jap's. But then, I heard the war was over . . . we were happy, just turned around to come home to New York.

Q: A lot of celebration?

JF: Yes. Oh, it was a pleasure, coming in that ship, seeing the Statue of Liberty, you know what I mean? It's your home – war was over. I pulled exactly three years. I went in October 20th in '42 and come out October 20th in '45 . . . and I wound up having fungus in that ear, that's it. That's the only way I think I got hurt.

Q: What did you do when you got home? Did you go back to work, back to school?

JF: No . . . I stayed home a week, then went back to work.

Q: Did you ever use the GI bill for anything?

JF: No, never did. But, when I bought a house, there was a GI loan on it, so . . . I took that mortgage in that loan at that time was four percent.

Q: Do you ever use the 5220 Club?

JF: No.

Q: What kind of work did you do after the war?

JF: I went back to work with the – do you remember Doebler Beer? I worked there about thirty years . . . all that work I did for a lousy hundred dollars a week. So, I quit, and went to work for Schaefer, at that time was Beverwyck Brewery. That's where I should've gone when I came out of service. Beverwyck Brewery.

Q: What did you do at the brewery, what kind of work did you do?

JF: I was a truck driver, deliver a keg beer or two grills.

Q: That was heavy work wasn't it?

JF: It was, yes. When I worked at Schaefer, I got a helper, I had a helper and I never had a helper at the other place. I'd taste beer and take beer by myself.

Q: Who had the better beer? Doebler or Schaefer?

JF: Schaefer was better beer. Doebler was good, but Schaefer was big – and they wound up closed, they broke all kinds of records, you know? I was a truck driver there, at Schaefer, and I'd make good money too.

Q: Did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in service with you?

JF: Yeah, I used to – twice I went to Connecticut, and they came to see me, my two friends. I had four – one of them died, there was three of them left, then two of them came to Albany . . . took them to the Hawaiian club. It was twelve o'clock, he says we're ready to go home, and I said where? This place doesn't close until three o'clock. In that time over there, they close early . . . a lot of fun.

Q: Did you join any veteran's organizations?

JF: No . . . I did for a while, but . . . no. We had a club in west Albany, and I joined that club. I was there a good sixty years. I'm a social member now, I don't pay anything.

Q: How do you think your time in the service changed or had an effect on your life?

JF: I don't think it changed . . .

Q: No?

JF: No, not really – I come home and I had a girlfriend, at forty-six I got married. No . . . I forgot about it, and for a while there it was tough, but I made the best of it and got out of it, you know, just lucky I never got hurt, that's all.

Q: Okay, well thank you very much for your interview.

JF: If I had the book, I'd let you read that book. It shows right from the moment we started, then at the end of the book is a folder with a map that shows you just how we went.

Q: This is the history of the 30th Division?

JF: Yes.