

We are at the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne reunion in San Antonio, Texas with Mr. Vincent Vicari. It sounds Italian.

Mr. Vicari: Sicilian.

Sicilian. My name is Steve Smith and I am accompanied by John O'Brian, the Division Historian, and Scott Schoener from the Don F. Pratt museum. The three of us are going to be asking questions here. Scott is going to lead the way because there are things that he really wants to talk to you about.

The main story that I would like to get from you on tape going on record and I don't know if you have ever done this before...

Mr. Vicari: Everything I say is on tape and on record I don't just BS!

I would like to hear about moving to Camp McCall and the division going on the Tennessee maneuvers and some of your duties as a stay behind taking care of the Eagle.

Mr. Vicari: Before we went overseas the division went on maneuvers. Captain Powell, may he rest in peace, and another Lieutenant and myself were placed in charge of men that were coming in that were supposed to get basic Airborne training. Being 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant it gave us an opportunity to take advantage of my right because I had taken a tremendous beating when I was an enlisted man. As they were leaving I was told that I was in charge of the Eagle. Coming from the city at that time I didn't even know what grass was. I asked the question, "Well what do I do with the Eagle?" He said, "You are in charge of the Eagle." That was the only answer I got and they left. As soon as they left I went down to the mess Sergeant and told the mess Sergeant, "Before you feed the men, you feed the Eagle." He said, "Well what do I feed him?" "As you feed the Eagle before you feed the men." This went on for a few minutes. The guard that was around the cage, we had a humongous cage, I have a picture upstairs of the cage. I told him, "Make sure you feed the Eagle." The guard that walked around the cage had to check for water and they had to keep the cage clean. Everything was going fine and one day the Sergeant and guard came running up to my room. He said, "Lieutenant the Eagle is dead." I said, "What?" He said, "The Eagle is dead!" I got dressed and the cage was between the officer's barracks I was in and the division artillery headquarters. I ran up to the cage and there is the Eagle lying on his back with his feet up in the air. I think, "Oh man, what am I going to do now?" I didn't know what to do either so I told Sergeant, I said, "Get a couple of men and dig a big hole. Then I got a 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter and said, "I want you to ground it. Get stones this big." Now you can imagine getting stones this big at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I said, "I don't care where you steal them from but you come back with big stones." We got the men and they dug the hole. I had to make a stake and paint it and put \_\_\_\_ died on such and such date. They came back with the stones we painted the stones white. We made a nice mound and we put the white stones around the grave. I thought, "We will see what happens when the division gets back from maneuvers. At that time I was assigned to the 321<sup>st</sup> squadron field artillery battalion. So when they came back I went up to the battery commander and I said, "Captain \_\_\_\_, the Eagle died." He said,

“Okay Vicari.” That was the end of that. About a week and a half to two weeks later they came looking for me. They told me the General wanted to speak to me. I thought that was the end of my military career. I was through. I went back to my barracks and cleaned up and got dressed and walked up to the division headquarters and reported to the Colonel. “Sir, I understand that the General wants to see me sir.” He said, “Wait a minute.” He went in to the General’s office and he came back and he said, “Wait a minute.” The General calls me in his office and I went in and I reported, “Sir, Vincent Vicari reporting as ordered.” I was standing at attention and I’m thinking this was the end of my military career. It was very short especially as an officer. I had just got my commission shortened before that. He said, “At ease. Sit down!” We just spoke about a couple of things like that. I was waiting for him to tell me that I was being court-martialed. As he is speaking to me I am thinking to myself, “Don’t play games with me, tell me you are going to court-martial me and then we will take it from there.” Then out of the clear blue sky he turns around and says, “How would you like to be my aide?” I hadn’t the slightest conception of what an aide did. He taught me. I didn’t know what an aide did. He taught me that I had to always be on his left when he got in the car depending on what side of the car. If he got in on the right side I would open the door to let him get in and he used to grab me and push me in. He would say, “Vicari get in.” This is how I got to be his aide but I thought I was going to be court-martialed. Finally one day I got courage enough and asked him, “How come I always got to be on your left?” He says, “It reverts back to Roman history that the sword was on their left and their right hand had to be free to fight. So this is why you must always be on my left.” But it was an honor and privilege. I don’t know how he came around and got this old fool to be his aide. But he taught me a lot. He was the only General I ever met that never cursed and never heard him let off a profane word the whole time I was his aide. If he was talking with you like we were discussing something amongst ourselves with other people and he said, “Nuts!” that was the end of the conversation. You know at Bastogne he answered the Germans by saying “Nuts!” when he received the surrender letter. This was part of his normal vocabulary. Being that he was Irish, if he started flushing red from the neck up, he was really mad and you had to stop the conversation. I know I go off on a tangent and this is the story. No one ever commented about the Eagle that it was dead. Later on someone told me, “Why didn’t you get the Eagle stuffed?” I said, “You are out of your cotton-picking mind having to pay for it out of my own pocket!” I was only making \$125.00 a month plus we had to pay for our food and everything else. But this was the story of the Eagle and it was true. It was a beautiful Eagle. This is how the Eagle story came about and they take me over to cause periodically on that one; that I am the one that killed the Eagle.

That’s a very interesting story. Let me back up a little bit. What year did you come into the service?

Mr. Vicari: I came in the service in 1941. I was supposed to be drafted and a bunch of my friends were going in. I knew I would be called in shortly. I had no conception once we got in to whatever camp that we would be split up. I figured I would go in with them so I went in to the draft board and said, “Look I am volunteering.” I figured I would have went in with them. We went down to Fort Dix. This was classic, the first duty at Fort Dix they made us fall out before they gave us the uniforms which didn’t fit. Our Sergeant

came around and said, "You, you, you, you and you; you are all on latrine duty." There was a story about you got into the pit and had to shovel it out and put it in a bucket. This Sergeant played it to the hammer. He made us walk up and the latrine at that time was just a big bench maybe about 10-12 feet long and maybe about 5-6 feet wide. There was wood on it with holes on it where you sat and everything just layed in there. It was like perfume. He made us lift the board off. He said, "Okay you'll got to get ready to get in and shovel the stuff out. I'm going to make it easy for you. Turn on the water." I'm looking at him and I said, "Its bad enough there is that amount of water in here and you are mashing it up more?" He turned around and we did what we were told to do. He had some shovels there for us. Finally he told one of the fellows, "Come over here." He pushed us off to the side. He said, "Loosen that chain there." So he loosened the chain. He said, "Okay, everybody walk back." We walked back the length of the chain. He said, "Okay when I say pull you pull and everybody run like heck." He used the other word but General Mac taught me not to curse. I use the letters but I don't say the words. This fellow pulled the chain and we all ran like heck. There was a big plug in the bottom of this tank; it was a medal tank that everything just layed in. Everything just swooshed in into there. But then came the pit, we had to clean it out with the hose and the brooms, soap and disinfectant. That was my first duty in the Army.

So after Fort Dix, how did you receive you commission?

Mr. Vicari: After I got my basic training from Dix, I went down to Fort Bragg in the artillery school there. After we got our basic training for the artillery, I was assigned to the 30<sup>th</sup> Division at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. On the way down to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, I was put on fire control for my battery for my battalion. I did really well on that. Finally we were sent down to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as school troops for the field artillery school applying for the OCS. While we were out there the Major came in one day and said, "Vicari I put your name in for OCS." I said, "Thank you very much sir. I don't want to go." He said, "Vicari, I put your name in for OCS, you are going." I said, "Thank you very much sir, but I don't want to go." He said, "Well you don't have any options. You go to OCS or I court-martial you." I said, "I want the OCS sir!" This is how I got to go to OCS. It was challenging. I had no formal education. As you know in field artillery you dealt with calculus, geometry, advanced geometry. When I finished I was able to do surveys by myself and plot them. While we were in school we had to plot and we were just given a fraction of a 16<sup>th</sup> of an inch to be off and praise to God I came out in the upper 10 percent of my class. My class when we started there were 560. When we graduated there were about 345. Of those 345 there had been about 55 or 60 that had been sent back from previous classes that were getting a second chance to go through the program again. Praise to God, he helped me. He used to tell me, "I got enough trouble up here Vicari, stay down here." While we were there, three weeks before we got our commission, they posted on a big bulletin board all of these different units you could volunteer for. There was a first, second, or third choice. There were two divisions. There was 101 AB and 82<sup>nd</sup> AB. So we asked our PAC officer, "What is this 101 AB or 82<sup>nd</sup> AB?" He said, "It's the new way to fight the war." I said, "What's that?" He said, "Just before there is the big push, load you aboard the plane and as soon as the push starts the planes take off and they fly two, three, or four miles behind enemy lines, the plane lands.

You get out, you take the ground and as soon as the ground troops catch up with you, you fall back. We went back to our huts and had big discussions for two or three days. It was the best way to fight the war; two, three or four days at a time and then you were through. This is all we knew about it. So then we found out that whoever volunteered for airborne could change their mind to go to another unit. I volunteered for the 101<sup>st</sup>. I want you to know that today I am afraid of heights. I love flying but I will not get up to the roof on my house. I'm deathly afraid. I will not climb a ladder. The third day I was with the division we went down to the airfield and the Sergeant says, "Lieutenant that is your glider and that is my glider." I never knew we were going to go in a glider. There was nothing that was mentioned about flying gliders. We walked over to my glider and there was a jeep in it. I looked at the Sergeant and I said, "Get that jeep the heck out of there!" He said, "I can't." I said, "Sergeant get the jeep out of here!" He said, "I can't." I said, "Why?" He said, "That is to pull the gun." I said, "What gun?" He said, "The one that is in my glider." I said, "What gun?" So we walked over to his glider and there is this 75 sawed-off Howitzer. So all these guys are looking at me, the 90 day one that just came here. They are going to see how he is going to react. After that I go sit in the glider and close my eyes while we take off or something. I sat in the jeep and the glider pilot says to me, "Lieutenant, fly co-pilot." I said, "Oh I am fine here." He said, "Lieutenant you come up and fly co-pilot.? All the men are looking at me. I was more worried about the men than anything else because of respect. I went up and sat in the co-pilots seat. When it was time for the glider to take off the plane starts to take off and as you know the glider becomes airborne and the plane is still on the ground. I'm up in the air and there is a plane on the ground. I turned around to the pilot I said, "Take this glider down." He said, "I can't." I said, "Take this glider down." He said, "I can't." I pulled out my 45 and I said, "Take this glider down or I will blow your brains out." He said, "You want to see what happens?" He took the glider down and he got caught in a pump wash. The glider started swaying sideways back and forth. I said, "Take it up" and up we went. That was my first time I was ever in the air in a glider. General Mac was a glider rider just like myself. He came over to give me an idea when we were having lunch one day. I normally sat across the table from him. He said, "Vicari we are jumping this afternoon." What do you say to the General, "Yes sir!" we got through eating and went down to the airfield and Colonel \_\_\_\_\_ was there, may he rest in peace. He explained to us about getting in a plane, about red lights, standing up and hooking up and checking equipment when the green light went on and how you went out the door. He said the most important thing was how you land; you bend your knees and roll forward. There was a mark up there. He showed us how to go off the mark up. General Mac and I jumped off the mark up twice. We did good. We didn't put the parachute on. We got in the plane. That was the extent of my parachute training. You couldn't get me to go to parachute school for all the money in the world. These fellows are out of their mind. I loved it but I am still afraid of heights. I love flying. I have flown in helicopters. When I go to Fort Campbell they have taken me up. I participate in some of the shows where they have a demonstration. I enjoy the academy. I have them fly me as they would in combat in between the trees up and down. I want get up on the roof of my house.

Now is that the only jump you made?

Mr. Vicari: No I jumped in Normandy.

So you did jump? You didn't go by glider?

Mr. Vicari: No, I went into Holland by glider? General Mac also went into Holland by glider.

Let's talk about preparations. You had an inside track during the preparations for the Normandy invasion; you were the General's aide. Can you tell us about the buildup and the preparations the division made for the invasion?

Mr. Vicari: We were constantly training. They took us both ways. We did a lot of flying and they also had us come in over the beach a few times. We don't know why but they put us on boats they took us out. The boat is going up and down and my stomach is queasy. I can't take motion. The LSD would come up to the beach and run up through the water on the beach and simulate taking a position. This happened the whole time and there was constant training, especially the physical end of it. As a matter of fact we were billeting at and the division headquarters was at there was approximately 5- 5 1/2 miles distance. General Mac got the brilliant idea one day he called all staff. He said, "From now on in everybody walks back home. After that when we got through with the day, you walked back to where you were billeted regardless of whether it was raining, if it was cold, or snow or whatever, you walked. It paid off. With the grace of God I am one of the lucky ones that made it back. I complain about my knees and my back. But I am here to talk about it. The other guys can't talk about it. They gave us a very, very, very strange strength. You jumped or you flew in gliders. They kept us busy. The only thing weird about being an aide to the General, I couldn't even go the pub at night. If I wanted to go to the pub, I used to say, "General may I go out to the pub?" The rest of the staff used to take off and just go off to the pub. But I had to ask permission. He had to know where I was in case he wanted me for anything. He treated me great. He was the personification of a military man.

During the planning phase while you were still in England, I take it you were with the General in his meetings?

Mr. Vicari: No, I was with him but when they were in a room they went by themselves. I had to make myself available if he wanted something. The aide would come and say, "Hey Vicari?" just by motioning. I had the honor and privilege of meeting Eisenhower, Patton, Montgomery and I forget, the names don't flow like they used to. I was introduced to them and I had conversations with them. But I had to make myself immediately available in case he wanted just motioning me to come. Just by a movement of his head I walked over and done what he wanted. When we were leaving one day he calls me, "Vicari, you know it would be nice if we had leather jackets like the fighter pilots." When you get a request like that what does that mean? I made the call. I got Sergeant Brown who was our driver, may he rest in peace, so I went down to the supply sergeant and got 20 pair of jump boots. We took off and I had to go and find the fighter squadron. I found the fighter squadron. At the supply office the supply sergeant said

everybody wanted jump boots because if you caught anybody wearing jump boots while airborne they had to be hospitalized for awhile. I went in there and I made a deal him. I had the sizes of the artillery staff so we worked out a deal and I got leather jackets. I brought them back to the office and he said, "Vicari, there is no 101<sup>st</sup> insignia on there." so I went down to the supply and got the 101<sup>st</sup> insignia. So I took the jackets and went down to the town and gave him the jackets and had the insignia sewn on. I still have mine on. In the fall and the spring I still wear it. It still has the original insignia on it. When I got the insignias on it I took it back to the office. That night after supper he had the sizes belonging to the staff names. He said, "Colonel Works this one is yours. Colonel Sherbert, this one is yours." He passed them out and we all got the jackets. About a month and a half later I got called into his office. "You know Vicari, it would be nice if we had the jackets like the machine gunners use on the B-17's." So I went down and got some more jump boots. The final thing was the bomber squadron. I got the jackets and had the insignias sewn on and passed them out. Unfortunately I loaned mine to my former son-in-law. Finally I asked him to give it back to me. He brought it back and it was ripped and splattered with grease. I spoke to Colonel \_\_\_\_\_ who was our S3 and he still has his down in Texas. Those are the warmest things. In the winter time I used to go out and shovel snow. All I would do was just put that over my shirt and you sweat.

So you were quite the procurer weren't you?

Mr. Vicari: General Lee, our division commander had a heart attack and he was being sent back to the states. So again, General Mac called me. He said, "Vicari, I want you to go out and get General Lee a coffee and tea set; send him off with a tea set to take home with him." This is the only time I ever answered the General back. I said, "General, he has his own aide, let his own aide buy it." He said, "Vicari, take the car and take Sergeant Brown, I don't care how long it takes you, go out and buy a beautiful set." So we took the car and I was out maybe three, four or five days. I went to London and to Redding. Finally in Redding I found this silverware shop that had the most exquisite coffee/tea set with the sugar bowl and the creamer. It was a beautiful platter all engraved. As a matter of fact I even conned the jeweler into selling me a diamond ring for my niece. He wrapped it up nice and I took it back to the office. General Mac opened it; looking back in retrospect I was stupid, I should have \_\_\_\_\_ for myself too. When General Mac took it over to General Lee they had a private party. I didn't go. I understand that the coffee and tea set is down at the General Lee museum. One of these days when I get enough \_\_\_\_\_ I am going to go out and confiscate in the name of the Vicari foundation.

How far ahead were you aware that the invasion was going to take place at Normandy?

Mr. Vicari: When we start to maneuver around and start to get closer and closer with the things we were doing we surmised what was happening. We had one of our Colonels who was home with a \_\_\_\_\_. I never found out what happened but he was relieved of his command. He must have said something and it got out. None of us ever spoke we knew it was coming. When we went into the \_\_\_\_\_ area it was hot then. This was it. We went in.

Can you tell us about the jump; the first jump?

Mr. Vicari: You mean into Normandy?

Yes sir.

Mr. Vicari: It was dark.

It was dark; it was cold, okay beyond that.

Mr. Vicari: I was fortunate enough that I didn't get banged up the way I normally did. I banged both of my knees up jumping when I was in England. I smacked the back of my head a few times and I landed on my head one time. The best part of it was that they gave us these little clickers. At first we thought it was a joke. That was the most intelligent thing that ever happened in our services. We were told, "When you land you may be by yourself. If you hear something grab your clicker and click it once. If the other guy is an American he will have the clicker and he will click back twice and it worked. So when we jumped we were scattered all over the place. I found out later on from the General that originally we were supposed to drop into a four square mile area. We were spread out over 14 square miles. The fellows were dropping in the channel on both sides of the Sherman Peninsula. The Germans coming the way knew there was something going on and flooded the lowlands. Some of our guys had as much as 175-200 pounds of equipment on them. You didn't know where you were landing. A lot of the men landed in the marshes that re-flooded and they didn't have a chance. They just drowned just like that. With these clickers, it worked and we got mixed up with everybody. Eventually when we started to make some sort of assemblance of assembly and everybody got back to their unit. That was one of the best things of recognition. You saw the picture of "Saving Private Ryan" where they were yelling at everyone. No one yelled at anybody. It was either sign language or if you were close you whispered. But nobody ganged up the way they did. The way they fought and yelled at each other that was the difference.

Now when you jumped were you in front of or after General McAuliffe?

Mr. Vicari: I didn't jump from this plane.

Oh a different plane. Did you link up with him on the ground shortly after jumping?

Mr. Vicari: I didn't know where he landed and he didn't know where I landed but eventually Divarty got together. One thing I want you to know about General Mac is General Mac was always with the troops. When I landed when we were in combat, I was no longer General Mac's aide. I became assistant S3, controlled field artillery fire. The S3 that we had is an old expression that we had \_\_\_\_\_. All he did was procure and confiscate; he had more machine gun and rifles and things that nobody else could get home. He had the men make him wooden crates and he got everything home. I was told, "As soon as you land you are to become the assistant S3." Through the whole war when we moved to combat I became the assistant S3.

Tell us about your duties as the assistant S3. How long did it take, minutes or hours, to get the S3 section running and operational?

Mr. Vicari: The assistant S3 we went in and had maps of where we were going to be. It was a matter of us assigning sections. We had four battalions; originally we had three, the 377<sup>th</sup>, 907<sup>th</sup>, and the 321. Later on the 463<sup>rd</sup> when back from Normandy was assigned to us. We were assigned each unit to different regiments. We would tell them where to set up. Each battery was set up and then they would report back to us where they were set up and we would plot it on a map. Even though they were scattered if they wanted battalion fire we could get the batteries to swing; the swing that comes around. If we wanted to get them full artillery we could get the other guns to swing around and we would plot the course and we would set the time on target. Then the FO controlled the firing from there. Once he was ready to go, we told them, "Ready to go" and then it took off on its own, controlled. Sometimes they used a battery, most of the time they used the battery unless it was something really big and they could use the battalion. More than normal they used the two battalions. It was a matter of coordinating all the fire and most importantly keeping a check on the amount of ammunition we had. When we went into Bastogne they would call me and say, "We might have battalion fire." I would give them one round. We didn't have any more ammunition.

Is that battery one or battalion one or one round?

Mr. Vicari: One round because the only thing we had when we went into Bastogne was what we had left over from Holland. We hadn't had a chance to refurbish our clothing or our ammunition and food supplies.

How was your command and control in Normandy? How long did it take before you could talk being an S3 you had to be able to talk to the battalions and talk to the battery? How was your communication?

Mr. Vicari: I think that in about 4 days or 5 days we had everything set up. We actually purposefully the division at that time was to get across the Carentan River to set a foot hold on the other side of the river. I called for Frans Proper so that when the legs troops came up they could just go across and everything would be set and we would be on the other side of the river. We controlled it and they would take off. When that happened we thought we were going to be shipped back for R & R. Instead we got the order to clean up the Sherberg Peninsula and we did. When we got up the Sherberg, Sherberg is down by the sea and we were up on top of the hill. At that time nobody knew where anything was. So we came down and things had sort of settled for us. There was fighting but it wasn't as bad as Normandy. I layed down on a blanket and during the night I felt something cold on my neck. I will never forget that son of a b had a knife on my neck and he was waiting for me to move and he was going to slice. I had my 45 cocked and I had to figure out a way to make out that I am moving in my sleep without feeling this cold thing on my neck. Eventually I rolled around and grabbed my 45 and left the safety off. I layed there and I thought, "Well it is either going to be him or me or both of us but one of us is going to be killed." So I got my hand on the gun and I started to shoot. I went from my right

completely over to the left and I hit the ground. As soon as I started shoot, all hell broke loose. Everybody started to shoot. They didn't know what they were shooting at but they heard shooting and all hell broke loose. But after my hand hit the ground I still felt this cold thing on my neck. So I reached up and it was snails. I was loathing with snails under my clothing. The next morning they wanted to know who started the fire fight. I was told to get up. I said, "Who started the initial shooting? If we catch you we are going to court-martial you. Who started shooting?" Nobody until today, until now knows that I was the one that started the shooting. When we were down to the bottom of the hill, the mountain was carved out by the Germans. It was loaded with booze. We took it for disciplinary purposes, not for strength. You had to take care of yourself medically. We had all the trucks packed up and we were loading in some booze and Army MP's suddenly showed up and put a lock on it. So General Taylor had to negotiate with them to get some of the booze. We got some truck loads of booze. They Okayed General Taylors negotiation. It was split up amongst everyone. They took good care of us over there.

During the Normandy Campaign Colonel Weisberg of the 377<sup>th</sup> had a lot of difficulties, I was wondering if you could comment on some of that from your perspective as an assistant S3.

Mr. Vicari: After we set up in our different batteries, our glider battalions came in. They finally located the guns that were dropped and we confiscated what we needed. We finally got 377<sup>th</sup>'s set up and the 907<sup>th</sup> and the 321. Initially there was a lot of fighting going on and a lot of artillery support given. As a matter of fact at one time within a matter of 3, 4 or maybe 5 hours we had fired close to over 5,000 shells. At that time it was humid and all the gases from the shells started coming to the ground and one of the sergeants came running in yelling, "Gas, gas, gas" and what was the first thing we got rid of when we landed; the gas mask. So everybody went looking for a gas mask and I finally found one. I put it on and adjusted it and everything. One of the Captains that was on the artillery staff came over and said, "Lieutenant, give me your gas mask!" I looked at him; I let him know what I thought of him. I told him, "Get your own!" In addition to the gas mask we had these little plastic sheets in case there was a liquid gas you could put it over you to protect yourself. So I pulled out the liquid sheet and I said, "Here use this!" He said, "What am I going to do with this?" I said, "Put it over your head." He said, "It's not going to protect me." I said, "At least it will give you another 5 or 10 minutes. I wasn't going to give him my gas mask. I said go look for your own. Finally we found out because of the humidity with the amount of the shells that we had fired, the gas actually clung to the ground. It was real bad. Getting all the artillery battalions set up and even the infantry companies, battalions, and regiments set up where they start to work in unison it was hard. It was very, very hard. It took maybe about a week before everything was actually fully operational the way it normally would have been. Let me tell you something, people get the wrong perceptions of the German soldiers. They were very good soldiers. The only advantage we had over them and I mentioned this on one of my television interviews, I think there was a World War II German paratrooper that was with me, if a German soldier was told to shoot his toe off, he would get his gun and shoot his toe off. But if an American soldier was told to shoot his toe off, he will get his gun and go, "Bang, son of a gun I missed!" He is not going to shoot his toe off. We had our ability

to use our ingenuity. If a German was told to go up this road and take that thing, and he decided he couldn't go up the road and went around this way instead and he took it, when he got up there they would shoot him because he didn't follow orders. The American soldier, we had a basic plan but everything used your own ingenuity depending on the situation and what was taking place. I think this had a lot to do with the way the wall was formed. Even with our armored and so forth we had basic plans, but if a situation wasn't what they thought, they used their own ideas and what they wanted to do.

How much credit do you give to our logistic superiority?

Mr. Vicari: I think that was one of the main factors. The amount of supplies that we had, we didn't like. Initially the Germans were the same position but as the armored took place and their equipment was being destroyed from the air and on the ground. They couldn't keep up with supplying their men with what they needed. A lot of their equipment was superior to ours. We would get our 75 and shoot out to the German tank at a direct shot head on. It would bounce off. If they got their tanks with the 88 it was like you getting a can opener and opening a can of peas. That 88 shell would go right through. Their equipment in a lot of instances was a lot superior to ours. We have been making History now. If the war would have lasted longer they had already developed rocket plans. We used to watch when we would come back from Normandy when we were stationed at \_\_\_\_; we used to watch the rockets at night go over. They knew how far they were going to fly and that they were going to land in London. They had it down to a science. After we got back from Normandy, we were given 7 days leave; the whole division. Everybody scattered over England. Some of the officers and myself went to London and checked into this hotel. They gave us this beautiful suite on the top floor of the hotel with a big balcony. We went out on the balcony and we could look all over London. It was beautiful. It got dark and all of a sudden a buzz bomb starts to come over. We were watching it. I said, "No wonder the dirty SOB's gave us the top floor." If it hits the hotel we are the first ones to go. The American soldiers went to all the countries over there. We froze our customs on them. We would never accept their customs. The English hated our guts; too much money, too over-sexed, and you can't blame us even with the small amount of pay that we got. The British got practically nothing. Heck when I came home I had the trunk where I kept my clothes and I had English money and I had French money in there, I had Belgium money in it, I had Dutch money in there and German money in it. Where was I going to spend it? We never got that much time off. As a matter of fact, I sent the shorts that we used to get rolled up and I sent the one that I had I gave it to my niece. My sister about two months ago sent them back to me. She had opened them up and layed them flat.

Can we talk about the invasion of Holland for a little while?

Mr. Vicari: Before we went into Holland we went out into the marching field. Three times we were supposed to jump in and take Paris. One mission was called off an hour before takeoff time because we found later on that DeGaul had a march down with the chancellor there when he would walk down through the middle of Paris. You go one time the mission is cancelled. You go the second time the mission is cancelled. You say the

heck with the flight; then when we had the mission cancelled an hour before takeoff time. Then our next mission was Market Garden, Holland and that one I went in, in the glider. General Mac went in, in the glider. Market Garden was a day light invasion. They kept shooting at us and why, I don't know. That wasn't fair because we couldn't shoot back down at them. But we landed and we ran like heck because the paratroopers that had gone in before us, as soon as they seen the gliders landing they ran out so you could see them. They would motion you to come into the woods. We didn't even unload the glider until it sort of quieted down. Then we went out and got the jeeps and the guns and equipment and we set up. That went up smoothly. All of the other organizations set up very, very rapidly. Actually what was supposed to happen was the 101<sup>st</sup> was supposed to open the highway going into Eindhoven (?). The 82<sup>nd</sup> was above us and then Montgomery who was in charge of the operation insisted that the British go across the river. This humble individual and I probably said this, he thought just because the Germans would hear American airborne that they would give up. Like I said before, the Germans were good soldiers. He insisted that the British jump across the river. So we had the highway open and the 82<sup>nd</sup> accomplished this mission. We were in Holland about three or four days and General Mac comes up to me and says, "Vicari, there was supposed to be a British column come up. Go down and find them." So I stole a jeep and got a driver. I said, "Let's go!" So we drove about 20 or 25 miles down the road and there is the British column pulled over on the side of the road. They got their Bunsen burners out and they are making tea. I walked up to this Colonel and I said, "What the heck are you doing?" But I used the other word. He said, "It's tea time." I said, "Your fellows are getting the heck knocked out of them over there." He said, "Well as soon as we get done with the tea, we will move out." His men are getting killed and he said as soon as we get done with the tea. I said, "Okay I will go back and tell the General that as soon as you get through with the tea you will move out." I got back to the jeep and I heard whistles blowing like crazy. They were all packing up their Bunsen burners up and getting into the truck. At that time the road if two big trucks tried to move by each other simultaneously, one had to pull off of the road because they were basically dirt roads and they weren't that wide. One had to pull off the side of the road to let the other by and he couldn't move that fast. Another time around midnight General Mac came up to the Divarty headquarters. We were looking at the maps to see what was going to take place the next day. The carrier that was supposed to be the British column coming in from the East and this was dark; like I said it was midnight. He said, "Get yourself a vehicle and go down and find where the column is." So I got a driver and got the jeep. Colonel Sherman who was our exec officer from day one called me later on and said, "When the General told you to do that, Vicari, I admire you, but you turned snow white." I got in the jeep and we started down this road. I had the map but I didn't know where I was going. We went down that road about a mile or a mile and a half. I got stopped by one of our guards. He said, "Lieutenant, where the heck are you going?" I said, "I don't know, I am looking for a British column." He said, "You are crazy, the Germans are out there!" I said, "What?" He said, "They are out there maybe 50 or 60 yards away. We don't know where they are actually located." So I told the driver to pull the jeep in. So we pulled the jeep in and we stayed there in case we got into a couple of fire fights. The next morning I told the driver, I said, "Okay, let's go back." I went back and I reported to General Mac, I said, "Sir, we looked all over the place for them, we couldn't find them." They finally came up that

afternoon. What had they done? They had stopped and bivouacked for the night. The British soldiers were good soldiers. They just had their own customs which didn't coincide with ours. We didn't accept their customs like I said. With the British and so long in history now the 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> had to go across the river and evacuate the British. They left wounded there, they left the doctors there, they left the chaplains there and moved everything that we could find across the river to evacuate quite a few of them. No one knows what happened to them. But Market Garden consumed us. We were on the island. The mud was really deep and we had goulashes. We slept in a pup tent on top of the mud. One day I was walking and my foot came up out of my boot. Our jump boots had leather prongs on them. It's a good thing someone was standing close to me. I grabbed a hold of him. There is my boot and goulash in the mud and I am holding on. I said, "Get my boots out, get my boot!" So they pulled it out and got it cleaned off. They held me and I put my boot back on. Before we came back I had the pleasure of at that time I was S1 when we were in Holland before we went back to Marmalan (?) General Mac told me, "Major \_\_\_ was our S4." So I went back to base camp and the British finally rotated to take over. He said, "This is your S4." I had to make arrangements to form battalions, the transportation, and moving the gear and so forth. Then we went to Marmalan. We were only getting 10 days.

Then you were trucked into Bastogne.

Mr. Vicari: I got a phone call that night to tell General Mac to come to the division headquarters. So I woke the General up. I said, "Sir they want you at division headquarters." I got dressed right away and walked across to the driver, Sergeant Brown. I started to walk out with the General and he says, "Vicari, stay by the phone and don't move. Just stay by the phone and don't move!" I didn't know what was going on so I stayed there. Now within 2 to 3 hours and I have no perception of time but I got a phone call, "Alert all the battalions and get ready to move out." How are we going to move out when we don't have any vehicles? The only vehicles we had at this time were the ones we had been \_\_\_\_\_. He said, "The trucks are on their way and make sure they leave absolutely nothing behind." We hadn't had a chance to refurbish ourselves: no clothing, no food stuff, and no ammunition. All we had was what was left on us from Holland and sure enough the trucks started coming into the area and were designated to go into their respected regiments to attack and so forth. We didn't know where we were going. We moved out and headed up toward Bastogne. We were even driving with the headlights on. Then they put the so called night lights on. I remember that there were no rest stops if someone had to relieve themselves. The fellow that was in the truck behind us suffered the consequences. Finally when we got outside of Bastogne as I remember the convoy actually pulled over and stopped. Then when we turned to our S3, he says, "I think there is a town up above and I think we are going to go into that town. It turned out to be Bastogne. We went in and we set up our DIVARTY Headquarters but we weren't the Infantry; moved up a little more and they got out of the trucks and started out on foot to make contact with the Germans. They made contact with them. I still can't understand how our intelligence couldn't pick up orders for moving because the Germans pulled all of there elite troops off of the Russian front and moved all the troops that they had available now outside of the forest. This was humongous, moving troops. Now our

intelligence group never picked it up. When we were moving into Bastogne our guys were going one way and we were going the other way and you know airborne guys are very polite and very mannerable. They never used any harsh language. They kept yelling in French, "You are going the wrong way, they are up there." I think Frank told one of you that when our guys found out that the division was moving out that were in hospital well they walked from the hospital. When they were going AWOL from the hospital some Captain asked them, "Well where are you fellows going, you are not discharged." They said, "Who is going to stop us?" He said, "Wait I will get you a truck." They all reported up to their units. They made contact with them. We ended up; we had eight divisions plus the four artillery corps. We had elements of guys that couldn't get back. There was Colonel Roberts from the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Battalion. I remember him coming in. We had set up our DIVARTY Headquarters and he introduced himself to me. He said, "What do you want me to do?" I said, "Keep in touch with us by radio." I said, "If we need to we will tell you where to go and what position you should take." We had stragglers. We ended up running out of ammunition like I was saying before. They were asking battalion fire one round, number one, not two. That was it. At that time we were giving ammunition reports every ten minutes. The only ammunition we had left was anti-tank shells and anti-tank shells were no good up there. We moved some of the guns up there. If you see something hard that you think you could hit, shoot it or shoot it straight up in the air and hope that when it comes down the impact is hard enough or will hit something hard and explode and the sound of a gun, they are going to duck and figure there is a shell coming in. Even with the extra ammunition that we had, I ended up with a clip in my carbine, a clip in my 45 and an extra clip because all of the ammunition was with the troops up on the line. It was cold. I got frostbite on both feet and both hands. I get these after effects that suddenly revert back to what happened back then. The fellows that keep warm with even their guns to stop them from freezing would put their guns under their coats. Otherwise the bolt action would freeze and they couldn't fire their guns. They were out in the fox holes. Some of the people gave them sheets because we had the brown coats for when it started to snow. It came down like crazy. They stood out so some of the people gave them sheets. They put the sheet around them and tried to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible.

Did you ever get resupplied with anti-personnel rounds for your artillery while you were there?

Mr. Vicari: They tried to drop. It was so foggy. We ran for I think it was two weeks that planes tried to drop us stuff. We may have gotten one or two parachute loads of stuff..the infantry. But the Germans got most of the stuff. In all fairness of the C-47 pilots, they took a beating. They took a beating because you could hear German planes up there. On Christmas Day it started to clear up and they came in and they dropped. Our guys just ran out and grabbed whatever they could. Then Patton....could you shut that off for a moment please?....camera was briefly turned off.

Camera is back on now.

Mr. Vicari: When they came back they brought ammunition in. We were in touch with them in radio and I was talking to some Colonels and some people I didn't know. I didn't give a crap what rank they held. To me they were bothering us. I was more concerned with what was going on. They wanted to know what was going on. I said, "Get us ammunition and get us food up here." We didn't have anything. After awhile we didn't bother answering them. But after they broke through to us and things got settled we got our supply sergeants and told him, "We missed the Christmas Dinner. Go find us a supply depot someplace and pick up our share of the food." They went back and when they came back all you saw were guys walking around with big pieces of turkey in their hand. We started eating before that K-rations and C-rations. They would move us around from Army to Army and Corp to Corp and every time they would move us around they would say, "You can't get any A-rations until you were with us a certain length of time." We were never with anyone that long. But they did a good job. They did it in the name of the government because they didn't want the food to go to waste. We would go back for R&R and they kept us right in the line. We just went straight through and went up to the Rheine and finally we got orders to move down the Rheine. We crossed over the Rheine and we went down to Berchtesgaden. When we got down there, we found the French there; which they weren't supposed to be. The town that DIVARTY set up in was Bad \_\_\_\_\_, which was a small town. It had the most beautiful chalets up in the mountains and beautiful spas. The only thing that we found bad was this town had only one bomb dropped on it and what did it hit? The brewery! I told them to go on and get some of the men to fix the brewery up. So they fixed the brewery up. They couldn't start it unless they had coal. So I them I would send two half ton trucks to disappear and when they come back make sure it is loaded with coal. They came on back eventually with coal and dumped it out, unloaded it and shoveled it out. Maybe about four or five hours later the Army mp's were behind them and told them to go back. We never got any beer out of the brewery. They didn't do any damage to the spa. McAuliffe after Bastogne was transferred down to the 103<sup>rd</sup> Division where he got his second star. I stayed with the 101<sup>st</sup>. Colonel Gilmore came in from Italy. He was a friend of General Baileys. He was a very nice fellow. He allowed us to use the spas. We made them cut down trees so we could get hot water. We got the masseuses that would go in there and they would give you a rub down. Men let me emphasize that, no women. That was nice. I never got to Berchtesgaden to go up to see Hitler's thing because I couldn't move any place that I wanted to go.

After the war was over, what happened to you? Did you have enough points, did you get sent home?

Mr. Vicari: Oh yeah. I came home. I had the points. I had plenty of points. Actually I had wanted to stay in the service because I ended up liking the military life. The 4 ½ or 5 years that I was in the service I was home twice; once on emergency leave when my aunt passed away and once when I got my commission. When I went home I started to tell my parents that I was going to stay in the service and they started in on me going, "We have seen you only a couple of times in five years, we don't know where they are going to send you. Being brought up respecting your parents' wishes, I took my discharge but I stayed in Reserves. After I got married I moved out to Pennsylvania the jobs sort of

stopped. Of course I was sort of the International representative for the labor union. I started to tell my wife that I wanted to go back to active duty. She said, "Look if you want to go back then go back." So I called the reserve officer and told him I would like to be placed on active duty. He said, "Oh that is great, take one of your bars back." I said, "What?" He said, "Come back as a First Lieutenant." I said, "No because I worked too hard to get the two bars." He said, "Oh you will get it in six months." I said, "I don't trust you. Why wait six months, give it to me now and I will report tomorrow morning." Looking back in retrospect I would have ended up in Korea and probably in Nam if I would have made it through Korea. I got so ticked off at him that I resigned my commission in the reserves. I didn't participate in anything. That was the extent of it. By the grace of God I made it through it with two bad legs and back and everything else that is wrong with me. I went to the VA and the doctor told me, "You have post war traumatic syndromes." Every time he would come behind me I would jump. I have been doing that ever since I got out of the service. I said, "I have what?" He said, "Post war traumatic syndrome." I said, "What is that?" He says, "There is something in your head that is trying to come out. Why do you jump? Every time I come through the office you jump." I said, "Because I have been doing it ever since I came out of the service." He said, "You have post war traumatic syndrome." I worked a deal with him I know. This is very important for these kids, there is no such thing as an Atheist because they don't believe, they don't believe, they don't believe. When you are in combat whether it's the Protestant minister, the priest or rabbi, whenever there were any services, everybody was there. When Chaplain M\_\_\_\_\_, the Catholic priest, when Bastogne was having Christmas mass, this was outside with one of those portable alters; we were doing mass and all of a sudden the shelling starts and you could hear the shelling coming closer and closer. I motioned him to finding back that the shells were coming closer. He suddenly gets the brilliant idea that he is going to practice singing hymns. He is singing and I am pointing him back. Finally out of the clear blue sky he says, "Okay mass is over, let's go!" Everybody disappeared, but up until that point the only time they ever moved was when they heard the shell exploding. But there is no such a thing as an Atheist. When you are in need talk to guy upstairs. The only reason I am here is because he tells me that he has enough up there, to stay where I am at and not to bother me. When I went into the service I quit school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I have no formal education. I wanted to work for the union as a labor representative. In 1986 I was given a Doctorates Degree by Indiana University of Pennsylvania. About three or four years ago, my old high school in New Jersey called me; the mayor of the town called me. He said, "We understand you want your high school diploma?" I had been wanting my high school diploma all my life. He said, "Well would you accept it if we presented it to you?" I said, "Definitely!" So they had an assembly of the graduating class and the school board came down, the board of education, and they had a nice ceremony with the kids. I got invited back by the kids to participate in their graduation. I went back and they asked me to lead the class to the auditorium. I will never forget the expression on the people's faces, the parents, seeing this old bald-headed guy walking in, in front of these young kids. They asked me to say a few words and I wanted to talk to the kids and not the parents. So I excused myself and told the parents, "I am going to turn my back on you. I don't want to be rude but I am doing it because I want to talk to the kids." I turned to the kids and I told them, "Get all of the education that you can, it's the most important thing in life. When I was out of the

service and when I applied for jobs at that time it paid 14, 15, or maybe \$16,000.00 a year and the only reason I didn't get the job was because I didn't have that little piece of paper. I told them it mattered. I only spoke with them for about three or four minutes.

We were talking with some of the members of the 377<sup>th</sup> earlier today that said that in Holland upon the invasion that fire support was supposed to be provided by the British but they were unable to get it because the radios were not compatible. Do you recall a plan where the British were to fire in support of the division?

Mr. Vicari: No because the Holland setup was: the British jumped across the river, the 82<sup>nd</sup>, and then the 101<sup>st</sup>. One British column was supposed to come in from the East and the other one what I call the South; to come up the highway. I think I relayed the story earlier that these fellows never showed up. When we went in gliders our equipment was there, it was just a matter of getting them out of the gliders and picking them up out of the chutes without getting shot up. We helped the British, they never helped us.

There was no plan for coordinated diversity?

Mr. Vicari: Not that I know of because General Mac and Colonel Sherman who became our exec officer and Colonel Kennedy who was our S3; I worked very close with them the whole time we were on the line. They never even mentioned about British support other than they were supposed to come up and relieve us. If that is what you call support, eventually they got up there but this was after we rushed the British airborne on the other side of the river.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Vicari: You welcome and thank you for the honor and privilege and to the young men of the 101<sup>st</sup>. I am very proud of you. You fellows put us in a \_\_\_\_\_. We would never do and behave the way you fellows do; especially when you have your division reviews and especially when you have the Week of the Eagles and you go out there and you stand at attention for two to three hours. In my time, if we were asked to do that and I use myself as an example, after fifteen or twenty minutes I would decide I was going to get sick and I would faint. Everybody else would fall because we wouldn't be able to stand that sun. You people honor us and I want you to understand that we honor you because you make us so proud of continuing and perpetrating the name of the 101<sup>st</sup> Division Airborne Air Assault. Fellows and girls you are all great. The only thing with women back then if we knew there were going to be women in the Army none of us would have ever been discharged. We would have all volunteered to stay in.

This concludes this interview.