

Pasquale Angelone

Interviewer: Okay, we're at the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City, Nevada. It's May 3, 2006 and we're interviewing Pasqual Angelone. My name is Shannon Berndt and our cameraman is Ed Feldman. You're a veteran of World War II.

Pasquale Angelone: Yes, ma'am.

Interviewer: Well, what were you doing before you enlisted in the service?

Pasquale Angelone: I was working in a bakery and going to school.

Interviewer: You were going to school for what?

Pasquale Angelone: I was working in the bakery part-time.

Interviewer: What were you going to school for?

Pasquale Angelone: Just regular school.

Interviewer: High school?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ah, okay.

Pasquale Angelone: I was only in the eighth grade kiddo.

Interviewer: [Laughter].

Pasquale Angelone: I was young.

Interviewer: You were young yes. Where were you living at?

Pasquale Angelone: At Cleveland, Ohio.

Interviewer: You were enlisted. You enlisted into the Navy and Army.

Pasquale Angelone: Navy and Army.

Interviewer: Why did you decide on that branch of the service?

Pasquale Angelone: Well, I got this shirt from the Navy after going through a turn of war and when I got out I spent about nine months looking for a good job. I couldn't find anything. They

wanted me to go back to the bakery, but that was only sixty cents an hour. In 1947, that ain't too good, so I went back in the Army and I re-enlisted in the Army.

Interviewer: Oh.

Pasquale Angelone: I spent three years in there.

Interviewer: Okay, so you were in the Navy during World War II?

Pasquale Angelone: Right.

Interviewer: And then after World War II you enlisted into the Army?

Pasquale Angelone: Right.

Interviewer: Tell me about your first days in the service.

Pasquale Angelone: Well, I was going through boot camp training. It's pretty rough, a change in life like that at a young age of 17 and then I got a regular ship and stood on that ocean for three years till the end of the war and then I got off.

Interviewer: Did your ship...what was the name of your ship?

Pasquale Angelone: Well, there were three of them, three aircraft carriers. One the Kula Gulf, the Saratoga, and the Chenango Bay. The longest I spent was on the Kula Gulf. I put that in commission, I took it out of commission. That means I'm a plank wounded ship.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. Let's see, so you enlisted before the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Pasquale Angelone: Oh no, that was right after.

Interviewer: Okay. Is that what made you decide to enlist?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah, me and a bunch of guys from the class just joined up. They went into the Army and I--they were turned down, but the Navy and they went in the Army.

Interviewer: You were listening to all the news reports on December 7th and you and your friends decided to join?

Pasquale Angelone: Right.

Interviewer: Did you see a lot of action in the South Pacific?

Pasquale Angelone: Well, I don't know if I've seen a lot, but I've seen enough.

Interviewer: Well, yes. What was your job assignment?

Pasquale Angelone: Well, the regular job was ship's cook, ship's cook third class, but in combat I was an aerial gunner you know and you yield to your battle station. I was an aerial gunner.

Interviewer: Those were the great big guns?

Pasquale Angelone: No, no that's the ones on the airplanes.

Interviewer: Oh, oh okay. So tell me about being an aerial gunner. You would go up in the airplane?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah, behind the pilot.

Interviewer: Oh.

Pasquale Angelone: We'd get our orders like they wanted a strafe or bomb the beach and so natural I went up because it's due to bombing and I'd do the shooting you know, if I had a target and if any other planes come in, which at one time is three torpedo planes, they came in so I was pretty busy up there.

Interviewer: So, that's quite a difference in your jobs from the cook to the...

Pasquale Angelone: From cook to aerial gunner, but during combat in general alarms everybody has got war stations like gunnery, mortar, and whether you're a cook or a greaser, you got some kind of battle station you had to take because you ain't going to be cooking in combat. You're going to be up there fighting, so them cooks are just as much in the battle as anybody else.

Interviewer: And so whenever they call "battle stations" then you would take off in an airplane?

Pasquale Angelone: Right, right if they called for that, in which they usually did, that you go up in planes.

Interviewer: Were any of the ships that you were on ever hit?

Pasquale Angelone: They were bombed and yeah, a torpedo plane got in there once and a torpedo then hit us, but he had some bombs too that he dropped, they hit us. You see, when an aircraft carrier is out there the Japs thought of nothing else but get to that aircraft carrier. They don't care how they did it if they even got killed, so they kept you pretty busy you know.

Interviewer: Were there a lot of casualties?

Pasquale Angelone: Oh yeah, there was the first time that aboard ship there was sixty and that was the worst one.

Interviewer: And what ship was....?

Pasquale Angelone: That was in Okinawa.

Interviewer: In Okinawa?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah.

Interviewer: And what ship was that?

Pasquale Angelone: On the Kula Gulf.

Interviewer: Was Okinawa...that's where your ship would be?

Pasquale Angelone: That was the last island I was on and they dropped the bomb. If they didn't drop that bomb I wouldn't be here talking to you because we were ready to go into Tokyo, Japan.

Interviewer: Tell me about your most memorable experience.

Pasquale Angelone: Scary one?

Interviewer: Whichever, it can be scary, it can be...

Pasquale Angelone: The most one I remember is one time I was fighting a fire in there on the flight deck and another ship on the forward end caught fire and blew up and a big ball of flames was rolling towards me and this other guy, we were on the hoses and I thought that was the end. It just rolled right over us and it just singed us, never hurt us. Yeah, it singed us. You could smell air burning, but it just rolled right by us.

Interviewer: Yeah, that would be pretty scary.

Pasquale Angelone: That was scary yeah.

Interviewer: If you were on the, if you were the cook, then you must have made all good food for all the men, didn't you?

Pasquale Angelone: I hope so. They didn't think so, but...

Interviewer: [Laughter]. What did you cook? What did you make?

Pasquale Angelone: Well, just about everything. Roast, turkeys, chicken, mostly beef because that lasted the longest. You're out to sea a couple of months you don't have no fresh vegetables, everything's dehydrated. Powdered coffee, I mean, milk, flour, and cabbage, it's all powdered.

Interviewer: Powdered cabbage, hmmm.

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you do anything special for the holidays?

Pasquale Angelone: Oh yeah with turkeys. Used to have a picture, me standing among all the turkeys we had to cook and it was over a hundred and some. You see there was almost five thousand men aboard ship, so you had to do a lot of cooking.

Interviewer: Yeah didn't you?

Pasquale Angelone: But it was good. They had about eight guys on each shift, eight cooks on each shift and then you had two KPs, so that took care of it pretty good.

Interviewer: Were you able to stay in touch with people at home? Did you receive letters?

Pasquale Angelone: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Did you receive packages?

Pasquale Angelone: Regular yeah. You'd always smell my packages. Guys would pick it up and sniff it. They would say, "Angelone," and they would throw it, if they had pepperoni in the end you could smell it.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. So you always got the good-smelling packages huh?

Pasquale Angelone: Right.

Interviewer: So what did you do for recreation?

Pasquale Angelone: Going to get two at a time when we was able and get drunk and rowd it up.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. So what skills or lessons did you learn while you were in the Navy?

Pasquale Angelone: What lessons?

Interviewer: Yes.

Pasquale Angelone: Not to gamble.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. Not to gamble. How about your skills?

Pasquale Angelone: Nothing, I come out being a plumber. I'm a plumber contractor.

Interviewer: You learn that in the Navy?

Pasquale Angelone: No, not [##] 0:10:10 [INAUDIBLE].

Interviewer: What were you doing when the war ended?

Pasquale Angelone: I was just sailing off of Okinawa Beach picking troops up and dropping them off at different beaches and then we heard the war ended. You know everybody says about that parade after the war, "Oh them guys had a big parade." We didn't have no parade, the ones that had a parade were the people that were home already. All the GIs that were fighting were over there fighting, they didn't have no parade. You know, I never was in no parade.

Interviewer: I always wondered about that.

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah. There's no parade for me, never was in one.

Interviewer: Do you recall the day that you left the service?

Pasquale Angelone: Oh yeah. It was a happy day.

Interviewer: Was it?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah. All we wanted to do was get out, sign the papers and get out.

Interviewer: And then you turned around and enlisted again. [Laughter].

Pasquale Angelone: Getting names and addresses of guys that you were going to see and you never go look them up.

Interviewer: But you made lots of friends.

Pasquale Angelone: Oh yeah, a lot of good friends too.

Interviewer: So you, after you left the service what did you do for the days and weeks after?

Pasquale Angelone: After I got out? Looking for work, hanging around in different bars, trying to repair these junkie cars that we got. Couldn't find nor couldn't even buy a car, not even a junkie car.

Interviewer: There was a shortage?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah, it was a very big shortage and the only ones that had cars was the people that had them when they left. You know they put 'em up on blocks.

Interviewer: So, how long did it take you before you decided to go back into the service?

Pasquale Angelone: About eight – nine months, almost a year.

Interviewer: And you decided on the Army this time?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah because I thought it would be better. It was a lot worse.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. So what was your career after you finally got out of the...?

Pasquale Angelone: Plumbing, I was a plumbing contractor for fifty-five years.

Interviewer: Did you have to go to special training to do that?

Pasquale Angelone: No, just apprenticeship and then get your journeyman license and go up for a contractor's licenses. It wasn't easy to get either.

Interviewer: Did your, how did your experiences contribute to your thinking about war and military service? Did it change after you were in there?

Pasquale Angelone: Oh, it ain't nothing like they tell it, try to tell you on TV. A guy gets shot he just falls down. In real war he tears them up pretty bad. War ain't nothing like what they show on TV even when they just real one they got now, they only show you the good part, not the good part, but the cleaner parts. It's a regular that a GI is laying out around, they don't show you that part.

Interviewer: How come you were, during World War II, how come you were on three different ships?

Pasquale Angelone: Well, it was near the end and they transferred me from the Kula Gulf to the Chenango just because they were putting it in, not dry-docks, they were too late getting ready for the end of the war you know. It didn't work out that way, didn't it? I was only on it for about sixty days, then I went back on the Kula Gulf, so why they transferred me off the Sara, I don't know.

Interviewer: How long were you on that?

Pasquale Angelone: On the Sara?

Interviewer: Yes.

Pasquale Angelone: About eleven months. Most of the time was spent on the Kula Gulf.

Interviewer: Were they modern ships for the time?

Pasquale Angelone: Pardon?

Interviewer: Were they modern ships for the time?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah, the Kula Gulf was brand new. The Saratoga was an older one but fully equipped you know.

Interviewer: So, your sleeping quarters on a ship, did everybody have their own bunk or did they share?

Pasquale Angelone: No, they had their own bunk and then the cooks had their own room and the painters had their own room and the oil-men had their own room because when they change shifts it's different times. You don't ever camp out with the other guys you know. That's what it was.

Interviewer: How long was your shift?

Pasquale Angelone: How long?

Interviewer: Yeah, did you work like twelve hours, breakfast, or did you just work a certain meal or...?

Pasquale Angelone: No, every, you're like, I had to work dinners for a week and then suppers for a week and shift off like that. Then they finally made me a night cook, so I stood on nights all the time. That's the guy that just prepares the food for the guys getting up in the morning and make them a little snack and coffee for night shift gunners and pilots that were coming in. You always had food for them.

Interviewer: So, if you worked all night then you slept all day?

Pasquale Angelone: All day, right.

Interviewer: Were you able to sleep?

Pasquale Angelone: Oh yeah, yeah it was pretty good. I had no troubles sleeping.

Interviewer: So, what was the main mission of the ships that you were on? The, carrying airplanes, carrying troops?

Pasquale Angelone: Carrying troops. We carried the first Marines. I forgot, from one island to Okinawa, I forgot the one island it was because I've been on so many islands, but we brought them to Okinawa. It was ten thousand of them. It was a passenger ship like you know? So if we were torpedoed and sunk, that would be about fifteen thousand dead. That's why these numbers now that I hear on the war we have today, don't bother me one bit because what their losing in these last three years we've been at war, we lost in a couple of hours you know.

Interviewer: Yeah, so did you take wounded back to hospital ships or anything like that?

Pasquale Angelone: We did for awhile, not, yeah, we brought them to the hospital ships. We didn't bring them to the States. They'd take them from the beach, put them on our ship and then we would go out. The hospital ship was usually anchored where all the action is, so it wouldn't be too far to bring them back and forth.

Interviewer: So were the hospital ships bombed and torpedoed also?

Pasquale Angelone: In one case they were. I forgot what island that was if it was in Okinawa or what. The Japs says that we had a fifteen-inch gun on that hospital ship, that's why they bombed it and we did have a fifteen-inch gun, but they used it as a ballast. It's just a barrel that's sitting on the bottom using it as a ballast and it wasn't in commission, so they used that as an excuse. Yeah, I forgot what harbor was because I remember the guys were floating on mattresses and everything, the patients when they sunk the ship. They sunk it!

Interviewer: Oh they sunk it?

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah they sunk it. But that was one of the good things that Japs did. They were real cruel.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, let's see. Do you have any other experiences to tell us?

Pasquale Angelone: Nothing military except when I went in the Army.

Interviewer: Okay.

Pasquale Angelone: Now what happened was we marched into the white sands in New Mexico. Do you know where that is?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Pasquale Angelone: Where Alamogordo, it was a desert, nothing but a desert and three hundred of us marched in there and they stuck a peg in the ground and they said, "This is where we start tomorrow," and we lived in tents the first night and then we built Quonset huts and it takes four men to each and we built barracks. Now that's near where that Roswell is where that flying saucer and that's a big military base now for Alamogordo, New Mexico and all that and where they tested a bomb. I went to that area and seen it and that area was all glass. They had it fenced off, you couldn't get on it, but it was all glass from the atomic testing they did there.

Interviewer: What made the glass?

Pasquale Angelone: The sand.

Interviewer: Oh they sand bagged it?

Pasquale Angelone: It's fused together yeah and yeah that was rough. It's a big Army base now, top secret there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Pasquale Angelone: And I was one of the first guys to, in fact, my name was on the first Thanksgiving dinner they had there too. It was only about three hundred of us there. Von Braun used to stand in the chow line with us, he was there.

Interviewer: Oh.

Pasquale Angelone: It was right after the war you know and he was there working on rockets, the V-2 rockets, so there was a lot of German scientists there and they were eating right with us. They had to stand in the chow line, after awhile then they got their, you know, the priority to go wherever they wanted. First thing we built down there was an NCO Club, Non-Commissioned Officers Club. It was the first thing we built, then came the barracks.

Interviewer: When you were in the Pacific when they bombed Japan did you see the atomic bombs go off?

Pasquale Angelone: No, we were only, I guess, a couple hundred miles from it, but we didn't even know it. They kept saying there was a secret weapon you know, but they say that through

the whole war. You heard about a secret weapon every month and then when they dropped it they even told us that'll end the war, but we didn't believe that either. Not till it was the end, then we believed it. We didn't know how bad it was. We thought it was just some other blockbuster.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah I wonder if people, if anybody, really knew what devastation it would cause.

Pasquale Angelone: Yeah.

Interviewer: You're a long ways from Cleveland, Ohio. How did you make it here to the Las Vegas Valley to Boulder City?

Pasquale Angelone: I went to California because I was caught in too many tornadoes in Cleveland, so I said, "I'm getting out of here," I told the wife. We went to California, spent thirty-five years as a plumber and then my boy come out here to open up a shop. In fact, he's got Boulder City Plumbing now, so I followed him out here because that's all I had. My wife died in 1970, so I just had my boy. I only got one boy, so I followed him out and we have been out here about twelve years now.

Interviewer: Oh, and he's a, is that the name of his business is Boulder City Plumbing?

Pasquale Angelone: Right. Same name as I got.

Interviewer: Very good. Well, that's about all the questions I have unless you have anything else you want to share or comment you want to make or...?

Pasquale Angelone: I'm just wondering what's this all about now. I don't even know.

Interviewer: Well, the Library of Congress is working with the Folk Life Center getting all of the Veterans of the United States who would like to share their story and some of them will be published in books. Some are put on the Internet, but they all will be stored in the Library of Congress, so family members, generations like if your son has children can go look up your name and hear words, actually listen to your tape or watch the video.

Pasquale Angelone: So you're looking for war time stories then a lot of the guys got worse ones than I'll ever have, you know?

Interviewer: Well, we're willing to listen to whoever wants to share anything with us.

Pasquale Angelone: Right, I understand that.

Interviewer: And we found yours very interesting.

Pasquale Angelone: Is that right? Well good I'm glad.

Interviewer: Yeah well, we hadn't heard from the Navy yet. [Laughter]. Well, thank you very much for...

Pasquale Angelone: Well thank you people for asking me.

Interviewer: Well, you're welcome, it was very nice meeting you.