

HISTORY:

Delio Zani was born June 26, 1925, in Tuscany, Italy and emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1938 just before the start of WWII. He was drafted on October 1, 1943 and sent to Ft. Bragg, NC for Field Artillery Basic Training. Following 17 weeks of intensive training on a 105 mm Howitzer, Zani was sent to Fort Meade, MD, on to England, and ultimately to La Havre, France. At this location he was issued combat clothes and ammunition and sent to Luxembourg, where he joined the 302nd Field Artillery Battalion 76th Division, 3rd Army, George Patton, Commanding General, awaiting orders to assault the Siegfried Line and the German mainland.

On approximately February 7, 1945, the order to cross the Sauer River and move in to German soil was received. We relentlessly hammered the concrete pillboxes of the Siegfried Line in preparation and support to our 417th Infantry Regiment crossing.

The objective was accomplished; however, the river crossing and the extremely fortified Siegfried Line left us with many more casualties than anticipated. On the first night the 302nd FA Bn alone fired over 1,000 runs of ammunition leaving my ears still ringing today.

After entering the Siegfried Line, Zani vividly remembers looking out to the rolling fields in the early morning, and just as the fog would lift, the deadly pillboxes seemed to grow right out of the ground like giant mushrooms. (A few years earlier he was picking real mushrooms in Tuscany, Italy with his Grandfather.)

In the months that followed and for a period of 102 days and nights, our artillery guns kept busy supporting our Infantry, capturing a large number of cities and towns. We crossed major rivers (Kyll, Moselle, Rhine) and many other places that are too difficult to spell.

We traveled over 400 miles in all directions while in Germany. During the 102 days and nights on the line, the 302nd FA Bn fired a total of 26,912 rounds of ammunition and the 76th Division captured over 20,000 German prisoners.

Zani remained with the 302nd FA Bn until the end of the war. He received two Battle Stars for the participation in the Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns. In April 1946 he was honorably discharged from the Army at Ft. Dix, NJ, as a Sergeant. In 1990 he retired from a real estate corporation that he operated for over 25 years.

Would Zani do it all over again? No, not for 21 dollars a month.