

Americans in Combat

The Andrew James Horvath Story

By Artie Maglionico

On September 27, 1943, Andrew James Horvath joined the ranks of the United States Marine Corps. Later in August of 1944, the young Corporal arrived at Guadalcanal where he trained as a machine gunner. It was there in the heat of battle that the legendary 6th division was born. Mr. Horvath has been a proud member of that division ever since. "Once a Marine always a Marine." He says and he wears the colors well even now.

Andrew was born on March 6, 1922. His father Antal arrived in the USA in 1906 at the age of 16 from Hungary. He settled in Cleveland, Ohio where, on April 30, 1914, he married his soul mate Mary. "My dad was a steel worker." said Andrew. "My mom was a homemaker." By 1928 the Horvath household had grown to six children. Eldest son Vincent was born in 1915 in Steubenville Ohio. William, also born in Steubenville, died just shy of his first birth day. Earnest was born in Portsmouth Ohio in 1918, Theresa in 1920 in Cleveland along with Andrew in 1922 and Joseph in 1928. In 1931 the Horvath family relocated to Jackson Street, Passaic, NJ wherein 1935 Virginia was born. During that time Antal became employed by US Rubber.

At 16, Andrew quit high school and joined what was known then as the Civilian Conservation Group. This program was formed by President Roosevelt to remove children from the streets of America and into these "CC Camps." Andrew was stationed in Hackettstown, NJ where he toiled at a fish hatchery which, at the time was the largest of its kind in the world. From there he was sent to Fallon, Nevada, then to Nehalem, Oregon, where at 17, he was blowing up the sides of mountains to build roads and bridges. From Oregon, Andrew was transferred to Mt. Rainier National Park in the state of Washington where he worked as a tree topper. "That's where I received my first driver's license." said Andrew.

Upon his return to Passaic, NJ, Andrew became engaged to Anne Berei of Garfield, NJ. The couple married on November 29, 1941 at St. Stevens Church in Passaic. "We were on our honeymoon when we heard the news about Pearl Harbor." recalled Andrew.

Andrew went to work as a civilian delivering radar equipment across the country. A year later he was employed by the Manhattan Bus Company where he remained for 34 years including service time. Finally, on September 27, 1943, Andrew was drafted into the military and immediately chose to join the United States Marines. In August of 1944, Andrew arrived at Guadalcanal where he joined the ranks of the 6th Marine Division. By mid- March of 1945, Corporal Horvath boarded a troop carrier headed for Okinawa. "We arrived on April 1st expecting a heavy Japanese resistance." said Andrew "That's when I took up cigarette smoking."

The 6th Marine division went ashore at the north end of Okinawa where, to their surprise, they received little opposition. By then Andrew had become a forward observer for an artillery unit. "I directed the cannon fire." said Andrew "Those 155 mm guns shot up to 18 miles."

The 6th fought an enemy they never saw both on Sugar Loaf Hill and on Charlie Hill. "Many of our fellow Marines were killed on the side of those Japanese infested hills." recalled Andrew. "We lost more sailors in the Okinawa campaign than any other battle in history. The Kamikaze pilots sank 38 ships and damaged 250 more." The campaign lasted from April 1st to June 22nd. The depredations inflicted on our soldiers by the enemy, according to Andrew, were unspeakable. When he recalls the grim past, he admits that he cannot help but to feel the bitterness re-surface. "I still refuse to buy a Japanese car." said the Marine.

After Okinawa, the 6th left for Guam. Lodi resident Frank Roberto teamed up with Andrew along with war correspondent Ernie Pyle who was later killed at Ie Shima, near Okinawa. Not long afterward, the bomb was dropped that ended the war. The 6th Division was then ordered to China to accept the Japanese surrender. Things would have been different for Andrew had he not been married. He admits that he would have joined his

Garfield buddy George Koran in the Canadian Royal Air Force. "George went onto become a fighter pilot for the Flying Tigers." said Andrew "After the war he flew his plane back himself."

On January 12, 1946 Andrew was discharged from the service and returned to work at the Manhattan Bus Co. The 6th Marine Division Association was then formed, with Andrew serving as President until 1996. "I dedicated a memorial in Hawaii" said Andrew "in honor of those 500 Marines who never came home." The inscription composed by Andrew reads: "This is not a bivouac of the dead. It is a colony of heaven and some part of all of us is buried here." The stone was dedicated on February 26, 1999.

The Horvath family moved to Lodi, NJ in 1955. Andrew and Anne have two sons, Richard and James, and daughter Beverly Ann. They have eight grandchildren.