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Angelo Tempio: WW II infantryman by Artie Maglionico

There comes a time in most of our lives when we must confront our fears head on. At that moment we are faced with a crucial choice, one that we will have to carry with us into eternity; Will it be the ghastly shadows of defeat or the the brightness of glory? For Mr. Angelo Tempio that choice came while serving as a Private 1st Class, with the 30th U.S. Army Infantry, 117th Regiment in occupied France during WWII.

German machine gunners had sealed off Angelo's radio unit from the rest of the Regiment. The Lieutenant, from across the road, spotted the machine gun nest and ordered Tempio to advance through the bullet swept street carrying the much needed communication equipment. At first, the 19 year old Private refused, since the attempt would surely cost him his life. His first impulse was to cover his head like a child during a thunder storm. Then, upon hearing the strains of the officers voice beckoning him onward, Angelo Tempio moved forward. With bullets creasing the air above his head and exploding into the ground before him the gallant soldier reached his destination. Once there, he was able to contact a nearby artillery outfit who proceeded to destroy the enemy installation. Angelo chose glory, and in doing so, saved the lives of countless American G.I.'S.

Angelo Tempio was born in Garfield, NJ on July 30, 1925. His parents, Domenick and Onofria, arrived in the USA in the early 1900's from Bullonyetia, Sicily... a small town located 12 miles north of Palermo. "My father came here first," said Angelo. "He made money as a railroad worker, then returned to Sicily, married my mother and returned to New York." The couple moved to Garfield, NJ in 1921 with their two children, Joseph and Salvatore. Domenick then became employed at the biggest textile mill in America; The United Piece Dye Works of Lodi. "I used to bring my dad his lunch on a little red wagon," recalls Angelo. "I made the trip every day from our home on Elizabeth Street in Garfield." Angelo, his sisters Francis and Rosaria, along with his brothers Frank and David were all born in that house in Garfield.

Angelo attended the Lincoln Grammar School in Garfield and was drafted by the Army out of Garfield High School in 1943 at the age of 18, thus leaving behind the rest of his classmates who were scheduled to graduate the following year. "I lost a year of school because of a ruptured appendix," said Angelo. " That's why I was still in school at 18."

The Tempio family met the challenge of owning a home... albeit with eight mouths to feed... with hard work and sacrifice. While Domenick put in long hours at the UPDW, his wife worked at home as a pocket maker for a nearby clothing manufacturer. "Things were so tough," recalls Angelo "that when we ate macaroni we had to count the meat balls."

Street games, for Angelo and his friends, included kick the can, Johnny rides the white horse, sheeny, marbles and pitching pennies. Angelo also remembers his buddy John Fidduccia playing his guitar at a nightly potato roast while the rest of the kids sang along. Angelo's pals included Steve Greco and Joe Russo.

On the 22nd of November, 1943 Angelo was called into the Military to do his part in the War Effort. He served boot camp at Camp Croft, South Carolina and in May of 1944 was on his way to Plymouth, England. Once there. Angelo was trained as a Radio Operator. "I learned Morse Code." recalls Angelo. "I could send out 20 words per minute. "On July 29, 1944, a few weeks

after the invasion of Normandy, Tempio landed on Omaha Beach as a replacement with the 30th Infantry Division, 117th Regiment. "We lost thousands of men there," remembers Tempio. "The hill leading up to the Nazi bunker was so steep I don't know how our Boys ever made it to the top."

Angelo, a wiry 115 lbs., had to carry a 300 lb. radio on his back, along with an M-1 rifle, two bandoliers of ammunition, two hand grenades strapped across his shoulder, a mess kit and rain gear. "For the first three days we were trapped there without water, Angelo recalls. "Finally, our tanks broke through and saved us," Angelo remembers a tank driver throwing him a K-Ration of ham, eggs and crackers. After having anxiously opened it, Angelo dropped the contents onto the mud soaked ground. Famished, Angelo casually wiped the food off and proceeded to consume it with enthusiasm. "It tasted like stake to me." laughed Tempio. "Mud and all."

After finally making their way off of the beach, the 117th Regiment fought its way north toward Belgium. General George Patton and his 3rd Army, on their way to Italy, was in short supply of gasoline for the tanks and had no recourse but to relieve the 30th Infantry division of the lions share of their supply. Having done that, the 117th was forced to march 100 miles from Paris to Holland. It was at the Holland/Germany border, the Zigfried Line, where Private Tempio was hit in the leg with a piece of shrapnel from an exploding mortar shell. The fragment entered Angelo's flesh resulting in a fractured Femur. Dazed by the impact of the shrapnel, Angelo began to crawl to the shelter of an abandoned farm house which was located a half mile from where he was wounded. Minutes later the very ground from which he crawled, took a direct hit from an enemy tank, thus killing 15 of Angelo's fellow soldiers.

Angelo, bleeding heavily, and in excruciating pain, managed to reach the relative safety of the farmhouse. There, with bombs exploding all around him, Angelo sat in the misty shadows, thinking of his loved ones who were praying for him back in Lodi. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity in Hell, help arrived. "The medic was shaking so much from fright," recalls Tempio, "that I had to administer the morphine to myself."

In 1945, after remaining in a body cast for three months at a Paris hospital, Angelo was transferred home to a Virginia hospital, then to Camp Upton, NY where on July 24, 1945 Lodi's courageous young soldier was honorably discharged from military service. "It was then that I heard about my brother Joseph" remembers Angelo. "He was killed at Midway on the Aircraft Carrier Bunker Hill during a Japanese Kamikaze attack." Along with Joseph, 1,500 American Sailors lost their lives during that assault.

Before his discharge, Angelo received the Purple heart, the Eastern European Combat Medal, the Expert Rifleman's Medal, the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal and the US Army Good Conduct Medal. After the War Angelo became employed by Dumont T.V., and later went to work for his brother Salvatore as a truck driver. He then drove for the Roadway Trucking Co. from which he retired after 32 years in 1987.

On November 29, 1959 Angelo married Catherine Monaco of Passaic, NJ. The couple moved to Lodi in 1969 and have two children, Kathleen and Francis. There are two grandchildren; Christina and Stephanie. Angelo and Catherine are active members of St. Frances de Sales Church in Lodi and remain much respected members of their Community.

"Lodi is a clean and wonderful town." says Angelo. "Our leaders are doing a great job with its continued development."

