

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Vincent Speranza  
Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Veterans Remember* Oral History project  
Interview # VR2-V-L-2010-031

Vincent Speranza, a WW II paratrooper with the 101st Airborne and a veteran of the battle of Bastogne, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Jul 14 & 15, 2010 Location: IL Information Service studio, Springfield, IL

Date: Jul 20, 2010 Location: IL Information Service studio, Springfield, IL

Date: Oct 19, 2010 Location: IL Information Service studio, Springfield, IL

Date: Apr 5, 2011 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield

Interview Format: Digital video for sessions 1 - 4, with session 5 a digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Technical Support: Videographers Tony Bateman, Greg Lipe and Mark Suszko, IIS

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 32 + 30 + 29 + 17 + 11 = 120

Total Time: 1:58 + 1:53 + 1:56 + 1:12 + 0:43 / 1.97 + 1.88 + 1.93 + 1.2 + 0.72 = 7.7 hrs

Session 1: Growing up in Staten Island during depression in Italian-Am family

Session 2: Service with the 101st Airborne Division at the siege of Bastogne

Session 3: Combat in Europe in 1945, and return to Bastogne 65 years later

Session 4: Incidents from combat at Bastogne, and a 2009 Honor Flight to D.C.

Session 5: Retracing wartime footsteps in England 66 years later (Audio only)

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 28, 2012.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL

**Restricted Interview: Except for personal viewing, all of the interview material, to include audio and video files, photographs, etc., may not be reproduced or used for any other purpose without the prior written consent of Mark R. DePue, the Director of Oral History at ALPL, and Vincent Speranza, or in the event of his death, his legally designated heirs.**

© 2010 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

## Abstract

### Vincent Speranza, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-V-L-2010-031

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Vincent Speranza was born on March 23rd, 1925 in the Hells Kitchen neighborhood of Manhattan, New York. He grew up in Staten Island in a large and extended Italian family during the depression, and as war broke out in Europe, followed the war closely. Following his graduation from high school, Speranza was inducted into the Army in October 1943. While receiving advanced infantry training at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina he observed an airborne demonstration and thereafter joined the elite airborne service. Upon completion of airborne training at Ft. Benning, GA, Speranza was shipped overseas on the Queen Mary, and was eventually assigned to H Company, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, arriving to the unit in November of 1944 while it was recovering from Operation Market Garden.

Within weeks, Speranza found himself at Bastogne, with the division completely surrounded by German troops. He survived the battle of the Bulge, but was wounded shortly thereafter. Upon his recovery in England, he returned to his unit, which finished the war near Berchtesgaden, Germany. Following the war, Speranza was sent to France, and when the 101st was deactivated, was transferred to the 82nd Airborne Division for a short time. He returned home in December 1945, joined the merchant marines for a short time, then got married and obtained a teaching degree before settling down to a career as a history teacher and labor union representative. In 2009 Vince visited the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. as part of an honor flight, and months later, he returned to Bastogne, Belgium, for the first time since the war, and was invited to participate in the 65th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division; Battle of the Bulge; siege of Bastogne; Growing up in Staten Island, New York during depression; WW II Honor Flight; 65th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge; Berchtesgaden, Germany; Merchant Marines following WW II; Italian immigrants to New York City; liberation of German concentration camps; Kelly Ann Sproul

**Note to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

## COPYRIGHT

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. (217) 785-7955**