Andrew D. Virgilio

Professor-Principal-Chair-Dean
Educational Administration
(1961-1997)



WWII (1943-1946)
U. S. Army Air Corps
Fort Dix, New Jersey
Biloxi, Mississippi
St. Louis, Missouri
Wichita Falls, Texas
Greenland
Field Radio Operator-Morse Code

[Andy shared the following information with daughter-in-law, Marianne Virgilio, in February 2016. She prepared it and shared it with him just before he died and he gave it a "thumbs up."]

The US Army Air Corps Memoir of Andrew D. Virgilio

In September 1943 I was enrolled at Villanova University and enlisted in the US Army Air Corps in Philadelphia. Only 17 years old at the time, I had to be 18 before I could go on active duty. So, I completed two semesters at Villanova and returned home to wait until after my birthday on December 28.

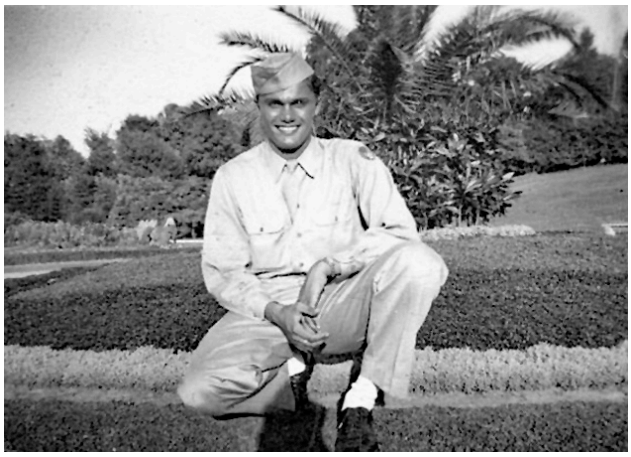


April 1944 arrived and with it my orders to report to Ft. Dix, New Jersey for induction. There, I received my inoculations, gear, and so forth. Three days later, I was on a troop train heading for Biloxi, Mississippi where I completed my six weeks of basic training at Keesler Field. Next I was sent to Scott Field Radio School just outside St. Louis, Missouri where I was trained in Morse code, learning to send and receive communications.

After six months of training at Scott Field, I reported to Sheppard Field in Wichita Falls, Texas and spent the next two to three weeks preparing to go overseas. I boarded another troop train to Presque Isle, Maine then flew to Goose Bay, Labrador and on to Greenland.

I landed in Greenland on VE Day, spent three to four weeks at the main base and was slated to report to an outpost on the west coast of Greenland. Three of us were

alerted that we were going on the next plane because they had an airstrip at the outpost. However, when the sergeant came in the truck to pick us up, for some reason he asked the other two men to get in the truck and told me to stay, commenting that there was not enough room on the plane. Two hours later, we learned that the plane had crashed into a mountain alongside the airstrip and all aboard were killed. So, I figured that Somebody wanted me around for a while.



I flew to the outpost on a Navy PBY on a clear, sunny day flying over the ice cap and landing at Marak Point, Greenland. There were 25 of us at the outpost, including weathermen, operators, etc. Monitoring the weather was the main purpose of the post because the conditions there influenced weather elsewhere. The weathermen would take readings twice a day then that information was communicated by radio. I served at Marak Point for almost a year, with food and mail flown into us occasionally. Speaking of food, our diet was not very substantial. Salt pork and mashed potatoes were about it.

Life at the outpost was plenty cold, with lots of snow. There were three or four of us who were operators and we took shifts manning the station; sometimes all night, sometimes for part of the day. At night, the airwaves were much clearer. One night, I reached someone in the Azores. Another time, I reached a friend stationed in Iceland and we "talked" for quite a while.





It was about the spring of the year when we were ordered to "button up" the outpost and informed that a Navy Coast Guard ship would pick us up. We traveled down the west coast of Greenland, back to the main base. I stayed at the main base doing operator duty and air tower control duty until May 1946 when I was slated to be discharged. I boarded a plane to Westover, Massachusetts. All told, I was in Greenland just one year. From

Westover, I traveled by military transport to Ft. Dix from where I was discharged on May 13, 1946. I mustered out as a sergeant and headed back home to Rochester, back to 179 Champlain Street. I served for about three years.

{Editor's note, he returned home to marry his high school sweetheart, Sue Pugliese, who is pictured here with Andy while he was on furlough in February 1945.}