

James R. Armstrong
U.S. Navy – World War II
Seaman First Class
Narrator

Interviewed by
Herkimer Fulton County Historical Society

I am Jim Armstrong from Gloversville, NY. I was in the Navy and I went in in August, 1943. I was a 17-year old kid at that time. When I first went in I was at Sampson Naval Training Base in central New York. I went through boot camp there.

At the time they were filling out the crews of all the aircraft carriers that were being built like crazy. So I was one of the guys that got picked for carrier duty. I went right to sea (duty). I had enlisted in Albany, NY and went to Sampson. I put in 7 weeks there when they were filling all the compliments for all the different (new) carriers. I went aboard the USS Hornet, CV 12, after the first (USS Hornet) got sunk.

From there they didn't keep us very long. We qualified our air groups in the Chesapeake Bay and headed for Panama and the Pacific. In the Pacific we picked up our Admiral and headed for the Marshall Islands and ended up in Task Force 58 and 38 of the Pacific Fleet. Admirals Halsey, Spruance and Mitcher were the admirals in charge. We made most of the major engagements from the Marshall Islands until the war ended.

The advance base for the fleet, TF58 and 38, was in Majuro in the Marshall Islands. So that was our first stop. From Majuro we started hit and run operations against all the islands, the Mariana's, New Guinea, etc. That led up to the first Battle of the Philippine Sea where the U.S. fleet caught the Japanese fleet. We ended up sinking quite a few Japanese ships and chased them away. In the meantime, the Jap carriers were launching planes against us. The ship's gun crews, which I was a member of, didn't get too many but we shot down a few. Our pilots were so good that they were getting them left and right. That is really what got to the Japanese fleet and sent them on the run. They got their fighters and bombers.

That was about the time that the Japanese started the Kamikaze deal. We were on the alert constantly. As a matter of fact, we would go to general quarters some days and stay there for 2 or 3 days. You ate in the gun tubs and slept there. It was just a waiting game. Hurry up and wait. We hit one island after another.

At the end of 1944 we ended up going into a tremendous typhoon off the coast of the Philippines. Our admiral was Admiral Halsey. They didn't have the weather instruments in those days to tell them and we ended up going right through the eye of the storm. Three of the destroyers that were with us, USS Hull, USS Spence and USS Monaghan, capsized and sank with most all of their sailors on board. At the same time, we had been

re-fueling at sea and chasing the remainder of the Jap carriers. That was when the 7th Fleet ships got cornered in the Philippines. We had been suckered away chasing their carriers to the north towards Japan. Admiral Halsey took the bait which is something he shouldn't have done but he wanted those carriers badly. So when he got the alert that the 7th fleet ships had gotten trapped in the Philippines we turned around and made a speed run back. Then we chased them away and would try to catch them another day.

Through all of this we were hitting different islands like Iwo Jima, Okinawa, China, Indo China, and Formosa. Formosa was just a little island that you didn't hear much about. Today it is Taiwan.

In those days the Kamikazes were in full effect. On the 12th, 13th and 14th of October they came out after the fleet and the one day we had 4 cruisers with us and a couple battleships. They ended up hitting the cruiser USS Houston and the cruiser USS Boston towed it and got it out of there. The next day they brought in the cruiser USS Canberra and that night she got hit, so it took another cruiser (I think it was the USS Wichita) to tow her out.

But of all the actions of the war I think Formosa was the worst I remember going through. It was so bad that the destroyers laid down a smoke screen to cover us up and get us out of there.

From there we ended up going into Indo China (Vietnam today) because that is where Halsey thought the Japanese fleet had gone. But once we got over there they ended up sinking an old Japanese battleship that had been in the China Sea and not part of their major fleet.

One of the interesting parts was the sampans coming out and we were afraid that they had radios and stuff to send in our positions. So they gave us gunnery groups permission to sink them. They would get pretty close. I was on a 20mm which only had about a 200-yard range. We'd get along side of them and you wouldn't see a sole. Then we'd get the order to commence firing and heads would pop up all over and jump over the side. We shot a few and sunk a few.

Then we went back and pulled Christmas in our advance base, which had gone from Majuro, to Eniwetok, then Kwajalein in the Marshalls, to Ulithi atoll which I think was a part of the Caroline Islands. That was now the new advance base and we went in there for Christmas. This Gloversville kid was used to snow for Christmas and there it was about 110 degrees in the shade.

From that we started softening up Iwo Jima for the invasion there and then made strikes on Okinawa. You just went from one island to another. From there we got into the Okinawa campaign and that is when the Kamikaze started coming out in droves. Some reports said as many as 3 or 4 hundred "Betty"s, which is a light bomber, (attacked) along with Kamikaze and fighter escorts. But, there again, our pilots were well trained with a lot of experience and they shot down most of them before they got there. But I can still remember days when the sky was full of flack and planes flying all

over. At that time, you had the (Japanese) Imperial Air Force and most of those guys had been killed. The young kids that were now flyers knew how to take off but I'm not sure they knew how to land them, and if they did it didn't do them any good because they got shot down anyway. They would come out in droves and we were always amazed in the gunnery departments because our 20mm guns could be aimed in any direction. They could be aimed right overhead if you wanted to. These planes would come in on such an angle that you didn't have to train very far. You could get right on them and follow them all the way in. They started with our 5-inch guns which could shoot way out. The 40mm's would be a little bit less than that. Then it was our turn. When they got to us everyone started to scramble.

I think it was the 19th of March when the carriers USS Franklin, USS Bunker Hill and USS Hancock were all getting hit with Kamikaze's. They took some tremendous hits. We had a guy come down from the island. He was in the lookout division. He spotted this plane coming in and (showing picture) you can see how it came across and landed in the water on the other side of the ship. I guess he actually scorched the guys in the gun tub on that side, he was so close when he came down. I had a buddy that was in the after gun group. The guys were scrambling out of the plane and they trained their guns on them and shot them. It was such a scary thing, as all of our planes were on the flight deck loading torpedoes, bombs, napalm gas, ammunition, etc., getting ready for a strike. They were all turned up and the pilots were in them. When this happened the pilots got out and shook hands with gunnery guys for shooting it down because they would have been dead ducks if it had hit.

We were one of the fortunate ones. We got strafed and I lost a couple friends from strafing. We had near misses with bombs and that type of thing, but the Kamikaze's never got to us.

This picture here was from a photograph and this guy painted it. This Shepler was a famous WW-II artist. He painted a lot of action shots. I never thought much about it until I had a nephew that worked in Washington at the Navy Yard. He invited me down and to the officers' mess for lunch and said he would take me over to the art gallery and museum that they have at the Navy Yard. When I walked in the door of the art gallery there was a large wall and this painting took up the whole wall! I said I was in that picture. It is one of the most famous pictures from WW-II.

Getting back to bombs and such, the Navy had a condition in the gun tubs. When there were no bogies on the radar they would set a condition they called "one easy". Everything in the Navy is done by "port" watch and "starboard" watch. This particular day it was a nice sunny day and they said for the port watch to go below and have a sandwich and cup of coffee and that most of the starboard watch could go below too. They said to just leave a couple guys in the gun tub with the phone and a lookout. I got picked for the lookout. So a guy from Syracuse and I were in the gun tub by ourselves and we are looking out and its nice, then all of a sudden I heard a plane engine! I started looking around and then I looked up and this Japanese "Judy" was diving on us. He had

us. I figure here comes a kamikaze and this is it. He could have strafed and he didn't. He could have crashed us and he didn't. But he did have a bomb under his left wing, and I thought it was about a 500 pounder but I never knew. So I nudged the guy with the phone and he reported it to the island where the gunnery officer was. With that I yelled "kamikaze!" and the guys all came running out of the equipment room and manning their guns. As he came down he released his bomb and I can see it coming. It was not more than 30 feet from us when it went under us. On the forward end of the flight deck the gun tub sticks out from the flight deck. It came down right at the corner, went under the gun tub and exploded in the water and did no harm. About 40 years later I went to buy a new truck and the guys says that his dad was on the USS Hornet. I asked what division he was in and he said he wasn't sure so when we went back to his office he got his Dad's book out. As it turned out, he was on the USS Wasp which was one of our sister ships. On that particular day they were traveling with us and were on our starboard side. Somebody on the Wasp had taken a picture of this bomb coming down and the explosion. I never thought about it, but there was such a water spray that we had to have gotten wet, but I don't remember it. Shortly after that the Wasp took a bomb hit. It was one of the most scenic ones I had ever seen. We were headed into the wind and she took it down the stack that led to the kitchens for ventilation. It exploded and took out gas lines, etc. Fire is one of the dreaded things on a carrier. When this happens the first thing you do is turn out of the wind because that is what fans it. When we looked at the Wasp she was turning out of the wind and as she went around in a circle the deck tilted toward us and all of the fire looked like Niagara Falls. We thought she was done, but they got it out. It was amazing what these guys did, many of them nothing more than seamen, "deck apes", assigned to fire fighting. I've seen them put on their asbestos suits and walk through that stuff. It's amazing what some of those guys did.

But today you are lucky if you can get anybody to talk about it. Nobody ever thought about it. I didn't for years. I worked with guys in the 4th Division that hit the beach head in Normandy. Guys only talked about the funny parts. My good friend told about how a sniper got him through the legs. They came and got him and put him on a litter on the back of a jeep to transport him to the medics. He said that he and another guy were lying on the back of the jeep and going up the road. Both sides of the road were lined with infantry moving forward. All of a sudden a German plane came in strafing. Everybody dove into the ditch and they left me up on the jeep all alone. He yelled at them for leaving him there, but he never got hit. Those are the kind of stories everybody talked about. With the veterans' groups today that is what most of them talk about. They don't talk about the action stuff. You often wonder why, and the only thing I can imagine is like when I was watching Tom Brokaw one night and he was talking about the veterans of WW-II, and out of all the veterans about one out of six actually saw action. So they didn't want to talk about it and the others just say they didn't see anything. Like Bill Galfun(sp?). He was on the USS Gambria Bay and the USS Independence, two carriers that saw a lot of service. Every time I talk to Bill he says he didn't see anything, as he was a "snipe" down in the engine room and never saw anything. That was the difference. My cousin Bill Armstrong had 14 battle stars but never saw anything. He was a radioman.

He was in the radio shack so of all the stuff he went through, he didn't see any of it. When you were on the gunnery crew you were up on the flight deck and you saw everything. You were just a gunner, but you saw everything that was going on. We had just one catapult on our ship, when some of the carriers had two. My gun group was right by the catapult. They were always bringing planes forward and launching them from the catapult.

One particular day they brought a fighter plane up and he still had his wings folded. On his wing they had mounted about 6 rockets. As he got up close to the catapult they were hooking him up. The flight deck officer gave the flight deck crew members the order to open the wings. When they open the wings they push them forward and they lock them in place. We are standing there leaning on the flight deck and when they swing the wings forward all the rockets dropped off. We thought they would explode, but they didn't. Nobody thought anything about it. The flight deck crew brought them over and handed them to us and we threw them overboard.

It was so hot in the Pacific that you couldn't sleep in your compartment much. I slept up topside in the breeze on a catwalk. I used to sleep right by my gun tub. I crawled in one night to sleep on some kapok life jackets which made a nice mattress. They were always launching planes day and night. They had the night fighters with radar that they would send out. This one night they were bringing them in and launching them, and I heard a hell of a crash. I didn't know what it was. We got up and came out of the gun tub and all of the catwalk forward of us was ripped off. A plane had screwed up and went over the side. They never got the pilot.

I think the accidents were worse than the actions. We went through a lot of stuff that we didn't really think about at the time. Oh, there were times when we were scared. I had more friends get killed from stupid things. One was riding up on the elevator with torpedoes and got caught in the elevator. Another was a plane handler and got run over. He was pulling on a wheel instead of pushing and he slipped and got run over. There were a lot of burns and a lot of accidents. I bet we lost 200 or 300 guys just from accidents in two and a half years. I can remember back to when we qualified our air group in Chesapeake Bay. We had SB2C's that were fairly new. It was a Curtiss dive bomber and we were having a lot of problems. They were qualifying these guys. We used to be at general quarters and train on them as they dove on the ship for practice. We towed a steel sled behind us and they would dive on that and drop water bombs. I would see one after another come down diving on it and never pull out. They lost several guys that way until they figured out the problem. The fighters were good and the torpedo bombers didn't have too much of a problem. There again, when we got into the Pacific we had a lot of trouble, like one particular time we had a torpedo bomber that for some reason couldn't release his torpedo. There was a rule that if they came back with a bomb or torpedo they made them ditch. They made they ditch the plane and bail out or land it in the water. This particular day he had a torpedo in the bomb bay. We had guys in the gun crew with phones and we would tell them there was a plane coming in with a bomb or torpedo aboard. We would be told to get our heads down, as the flight deck was about

head level. I remember looking down the flight deck and I see this torpedo coming up the flight deck! It must have ripped loose from the landing plane that had come to a stop alongside the island. About that time a chief petty officer of the flight deck crew jumped into our gun tub. Everybody jumped into our gun tub to get out of the way. I'm peeking up because I'm curious and he tells me to get my head down. But I peeked again and a chief torpedoman had grabbed a broom handle or something and calmly stuck it into the prop of the torpedo and some guys threw it over the side. He knew more than we did. We expected it to blow any time.

Another time, speaking of accidents, we had just gotten into the Pacific and the planes were coming back from New Guinea. This one dive bomber had a 100-lb anti-personnel bomb and he couldn't drop it. They told him he couldn't land, that he had to shake it loose. He went around us a couple times but he couldn't shake it. So they told him to come on in. That particular day I was in an after gun group and on the phone that day. I got the word to get everybody below because of the plane coming in. so I got everybody down into the flipping room and this plane came around and landed. The next thing I heard was a hell of an explosion. I couldn't hear for about a week. What had happened was that the bomb came loose when his wheels hit the flight deck. It made about two bounds on the flight deck and on the second bound it exploded. The first thing I saw when I came up was a couple guys that I used to shoot the breeze with. They were the arresting gear operators who would come out and release the hooks from the planes. The one guy, Chasy, from New York State, was laying there with his guts alongside of him. He raised his head and looked around one time and went down. We lost three guys and one officer jumped in our gun tub. He had been hit above the knee and we laid him down, yelled for a medic and got him out of there. One guy under the flight deck lost both legs. There quite a few guys that got hit. That is the type of thing that you were up against all the time.

Another accident I remember. We used to go ashore at Ulithi and have beach parties ("R&R" they called it). They would come out with LCM's and come along side. You had to climb down a cargo net and jump into the LCM. If the sea was at all rough, they would be going up and down as they came in. You needed to hit that LCM on the upswing. If you caught it on the downswing you could get trapped and crushed. We had a couple guys that got killed that way. They got caught on the wrong swing and the barge came up and crushed them to death.

And we had the other things, operations and heart attacks with older guys, etc. The air groups lost quite a few guys, pilots and gunners. Some guys had gone on a lot of missions and they had had enough and wouldn't go any more.

Our fighter pilots were really good. We had crack air groups. We had three air groups and they were all super. They had a lot of aces (a pilot who shot down five enemy planes), going back to 1944 and the "Marianas Turkey Shoot", Guam, Saipan, and Tinian. We had this one guy who shot down seven planes in one operation. The Japanese carriers sent their planes after us with bombs and fighters. After they dropped

their stuff on us they would land at Guam, reload fuel and bombs and then hit us again on their way back. But what happened was that our fighter pilots spotted this and one that we called Spider Webb followed them into Guam when the Jap planes had no ammunition left to shoot back at him. So he got behind them and shot them down one after the other. He got to be an ace in one day. And there were more than just him. The Lexington had a guy that did similar things. These guys were keeping us safe.

It was about that time that we had Admiral Clark aboard our ship. We were the flagship of one group in Task Force 58. There were three groups, 58.1, 58.2 and 58.3, and they kept increasing as the war went on until there were eventually five or six groups.

One day the word came back from a destroyer that they had located a guy on Guam that was signaling to them. We had not invaded Guam yet. So they were looking for all the information they could get on Guam. If you have ever heard of George Tweed. They made a movie, "No Man is an Island" about him after the war. He was a radioman on Guam since 1939. He was one of the survivors of the Navy that was on Guam and avoided the Japanese for all those years. Everyone had been evacuated except for a few guys and he was one of them. The rest of them all got killed. He went into the caves in the mountains and avoided them. He rigged a light and signaled one of our ships when they got close and they arranged to pick him up. They brought him to our ship, it being the flagship. They interrogated him. I can still see him when they brought him aboard. With his long hair and beard he looked like the wild man from Borneo or something. I remember the Admiral advanced him to Chief petty officer right on the spot. They fed him and then they transferred him home. I never heard any more about him but I knew they made a movie about him.

Going forward, you got up into Okinawa and Iwo Jima where the Kamikazes were going nuts. They were coming out in droves. I remember it was the 30th of May and we had been at general quarters most of the night and all day. My group had the breeches buoy on the fantail. Every time ships would come along side and we would refuel them we threw over what was called a hi-line. The destroyer would hook it up to their gun tubs and we would send a basket back and forth. One time they came along side and they had 155 Jap prisoners. We brought them over two at a time. A couple of them didn't want to remain prisoners so they jumped out of the basket and drowned. Anyway, we had them for quite a while.

Another time we were receiving destroyers on the fantail. If they picked up downed pilots, they would bring them back and we would hook up the hi-line and the basket and bring them back aboard that way. We were called to the breeches buoy that day, it was late in the afternoon. We had received two or three destroyers and then they had general quarters again and that was when I got hit and that was the end of the war for me.

It was a funny thing how you often read about guys in the Civil War and WW-I and how they got shot on the last day of the war. This was on the 30th of May and on the 4th or 5th of June we hit that tremendous typhoon off Okinawa and it caved in our bow and

smashed up other ships, and the war was over for us anyway. We came back to the States on the 15th of June.

Anyway, all those years I could have used the Purple Heart because it was worth money and worth points at your discharge. But I never got it. It was in my records but I never got it. After the war I didn't care about it so much. My kids were always after me, saying I had it coming and should do something. So one day, Joe Hill spotted it in my records and asked if I ever got it and I said no. He said he would get it for me and he did. It doesn't mean so much now, but it is kind of pretty. It is a nice collector's item and I'm sure my kids will get a kick out of it.

Along with that I got all of this other "fruit salad". Each one has a different meaning. When you go different campaigns, every island or major battle they give you a bronze star for. For every five bronze stars you got a silver. We ended up with nine and the Philippines Liberation ribbon. Then after the war they sent me a Presidential Unit Citation and that had a star on it. Then we got a China Theater ribbon. We got two ribbons from New York State for conspicuous service. That is about all of the decorations that I got, plus the "ruptured duck" pin they gave you upon discharge.

We never did get rated. Someone had to get killed before you got rated. The first 4 or 5 ribbons had to be worn. If you went ashore without them, you could be brought up on charges. You were out of uniform if you did not have them on. Anyway, I kept my uniform and kept them on it, and it's a conversation piece.

When the war was over they wanted to send me to a hospital but I wanted to stay with the ship. They were going back and forth, bringing all of these troops back. So we made three or four trips to the Marianas and Pearl Harbor. We loaded up with civilian workers who had rebuilt Pearl Harbor after she was bombed. They were the first guys to come back. After that, we started bringing back Seabees, Navy nurses and anyone else that was on the island. They called that the "Magic Carpet" duty. They took the big carriers like I was on and they welded hundreds of bunks on the hanger deck. That is what we were doing, bringing troops back. That is what I was doing up until I got discharged.

Talking about that werewolf like I wrote that article about, they would always take new recruits and send them after a bucket of steam or a left-handed monkey wrench, etc. The Navy had what they called the mail buoy watch. One night they took this kid that was new on board. It was dark, and as you went along, the phosphorous would light up in the ship's wake. They gave this kid the mail buoy watch. So we told this kid he had to go up forward on the flight deck, and it's dark and scary. We told him that he had to watch out for this mail buoy, and when you see this mail buoy coming you have to yell to us and we'll pick it up. So this kid is up on the flight deck and he's looking out, and nobody knows what is going on except the guys that sent him up there. Then all of a sudden this kid comes running down the flight deck hollering "mail buoy! mail buoy!". Well, the guy on the island doesn't know what he's talking about and they think he's calling "man overboard". In the war they never stopped a ship for that. They would signal a ship behind them to pick him up. But this particular night they stopped, and I went down to

the hanger desk to see what was going on. They lowered a motor whale boat over the side and they went to pick up this man overboard. When they couldn't find anything, they brought them back and started investigating. So they found out that they had set this kid up and of course the Captain gave everybody hell.

I tell all of these stories, but I am more proud of what my family did altogether. My father and his three brothers, born in the 1890's, were all WW-I vets. Three of them had been in France during the war and they had a hell of a lot of service. Us kids came out of all of them. My brother was first. He enlisted in 1939 in the National Guard and he was in until 1945.

My cousin Art went in right after Christmas 1941. He went to boot camp and then went right to sea without coming home. He went out on the USS Enterprise and he's the only guy I know that was at Midway. He went through all of that, the Coral Sea Battle, then after Midway he went back to the Coral Sea and that was when he got killed. He was in the gunnery division and they got hit aft. It killed 74 guys, who were all buried at sea.

My uncle who had been in WW-I and worked for Niagara Mohawk Power got rated as a Chief Electricians Mate. He went into the Seabees. But he was 49 years old and it was too much for him. During basic training in Virginia he dropped dead.

My brother and I went overseas about the same time. He went over in October or November of 1943, and I went right after that. He went to the 8th and 9th air forces, and they had a hell of a lot of service. He was an armorer. When the planes landed they would bring out the bombs and load the planes with bombs and ammunition for the next strike. Once in a while one of the gunners would get hit, get sick, or otherwise be unable to fly the next mission, they would ask these armorers if they would take his place. My brother, the dummy, would volunteer, and he went up on half a dozen bombing raids. He was up on D-Day. He was also up the day before and he said as they flew over the coast of France there was nothing, other than the pill boxes the Germans had, etc. He said the next day you could have walked across the water on the ships.

That was the third one, then my cousin Dave went in on his sixteenth birthday. He enlisted in the Navy. He was on the cruiser USS Cleveland. He ended up with the Asiatic ribbon and 14 battle stars, and a Good Conduct medal. I don't know how he got it, but he did.

Then I went in of course. Then my cousin Margie was a WAVE. She was cryptographer. Oh, I had one other cousin, Bob, who got drafted and he got killed in the Battle of the Bulge. He is buried in France, in the same cemetery as General Patton.

So, out of eight of us, three didn't return. It was nice when they got the memorial up and got their names in. That's what I was always kind of proud of. Out of those eight guys, six of us mainly, they ended up with numerous medals and ribbons, and they ended up with 45 battle stars. That went from Africa, to Europe and the Pacific. They covered the world pretty good.

I did have one other cousin we called Bugs. He was a hell of an athlete. He was on one of my sister ships, the USS Intrepid. We called the Intrepid “the magnet” because every time they went out they got hit. I saw Bugs quite a few times in the Pacific. He also ended up with quite a few battle stars and ribbons. He got married early, so when the war was over he got home more quickly than the rest of us. We had to stay and bring back those people.

So I guess that’s about it.

SECOND INTERVIEW

I did an interview before about myself. Today I am more interested in talking about my family. I had said after that interview that I was more proud of what my family did than what I did. I had a pretty good record, but these guys were fantastic.

It started off when my grandparents got married in 1890, and they had all boys. Four of them came along just about the time WW-I started. They were all teenagers and ended up in the Army or Navy during WW-I.

Then, when they had their own families, there were all of us kids. There were seven of us who went on to serve in WW-II.

The one brother, my Uncle Leon, ended up enlisting and going into the Seabees as an Electricians Mate. But he was too old and it was too much for him. He dropped dead during basic training.

The first of us to go in was my brother Bud Armstrong. He enlisted as a 16-year old in the 27th Division, the NY National Guard. He went on to the Louisiana maneuvers, and was in training at Fort Drum (Pine Camp in those days). He was up there in training during the summer of 1940 when President Roosevelt came through reviewing the troops. They had a huge parade and my parents and I went up to see my brother in the parade. We saw Roosevelt go by in his open touring car, with his cigarette holder, just like you see him in the movies.

Bud was blind in one eye since he was a kid. I’m not sure how that got past them, but in early 1941 they found it and discharged him with an honorable discharge. When Pearl Harbor came along, he memorized the eye chart and went back in for four years. He spent his time with the 8th and 9th air forces. He had some pretty good experiences. He was an armorer, loading the planes with bombs and ammunition. He would volunteer once in a while, when a gunner would get sick and wasn’t going to make a bombing run, and go in his place. He made quite a few trips like that. D-Day was one of them. They were over the French coast the day before and there wasn’t anything. The next day you could walk across all the ships that were there. He stayed on until 1945 when the war was over. When the Battle of the Bulge came along, he had had some infantry experience so he volunteered to go back in as a replacement. So he was in Belgium in an infantry outfit when the war ended.

My cousin Art Armstrong enlisted right after Pearl Harbor. As far as I know, Art was the only guy from the Fulton county area who was at the Battle of Midway, on the carrier USS Enterprise. Shortly after the Midway Battle the Enterprise went with the USS Hornet on the Doolittle Tokyo raid. Then they came back and went into the Coral Sea. They were bombed by the Japanese and took a direct hit in the gun tub. He got killed, along with 75 other guys.

My cousin Dave, Art's brother, enlisted on his 16th birthday. He ended up on the USS Cleveland, a cruiser. He was in the African campaign. After that they came back and went to the Pacific. They went all through the Pacific war, 1943-1945. So Dave had a lot of service.

His brother Carl (Bug) Armstrong enlisted after his brother Art was killed. He was in the air force first, but somehow failed the requirements. He fell back on the Navy and became a radioman. He and Dave were both Radioman First Class. Bug ended up on the carrier USS Ranger, after radio school, in the fall of 1942. He also ended up in the North Africa invasion and had quite a battle with the French fleet. From there they came back and he got transferred to the brand new carrier USS Intrepid, which is now a museum in New York. Bug was a plank-owner (original crew member) on the Intrepid. He took that into the Pacific and went through 1943, '44, and '45. The Intrepid was a sister ship to the one I was on. Every time she would get hit, we would pull back into our advance base and I would ride the whale boat over to see Bug and have lunch and play pitch-and-catch, etc. That happened quite often because we called the Intrepid "the magnet" because every time she went out she took a bomb or a Kamikaze or something. She got hit, with an awful loss of life. At the end of the war the Intrepid got hit in Okinawa and they brought her back. Bug got transferred to the new carrier USS Tarawa, but I don't think she ever went to sea because the war ended. He got out right away.

Then we had another cousin, Robert, who was the son of Leon, the one who died in the Seabees. Robert was one of the first draftees in Fulton County. He was in the Army in early 1942. Bob was in the Coastguard Auxiliary, stationed over near Boston. He used to come home about every weekend on a 24 or 48-hour pass. Then he got transferred over to England and was in the Coastguard in England. That is where he was for most of the war. Then, near the end, they were looking for replacements for the Battle of the Bulge. He had infantry experience, so I don't know whether he volunteered or got drafted as a replacement. So he went through the Battle of the Bulge and when they were up in Koblenz and ready to cross the Rhine, according to another Gloversville guy that was there, Bob got hit directly with a mortar. He's buried in France, in the same cemetery as General Patton. As a matter of fact, he was in Patton's 3rd Army, in the 80th Infantry Division. That was the third one that never returned, then there was one more.

Art, Dave and Bug had a sister, Marge. She was taking nurse's training in Gloversville and she was a radiology technician. She developed some sort of rash or something, and she had to get out of nursing. She enlisted in the Navy Waves. I think she went to

Hunter College for training and she ended up as a cryptographer, busting codes and that type of thing. She spent a couple of years in the Navy before she got discharged.

The reason I wanted to talk about all of these guys and my cousin Marge is that, throughout the war, with all the medals and battle stars, they had a tremendous amount of ribbons and commendations, Presidential (unit commendations), three Purple Hearts. Altogether they qualified for something like 45 battle stars, which was unheard of. Every major engagement you were in earned you a star.

I had talked about my Uncle Leon. He went into the Army about 1915 or 1916, and he was in the Mexican border campaign. Then he went into the WW-I campaign. He and my father, who was a sailor, met in France. His ship had pulled into Le Havre, France. He was looking over the side of the ship and a Colonel's car pulled up, with the flags flying. He was looking and wondering who was driving that car, and it was his brother. So the two of them went into Le Havre together. He said it was the only time he ever slept in a GI camp. They got into the local drinks and got a snoot full. Leon came out of the service and did pretty well for himself at Niagara Mohawk Power. Then he tried to get into the Seabees in WW-II and died during training.

My Dad wanted to go back into the Navy in 1919 but his Dad talked him into taking the Fireman's exam and he ended up spending 37 years with the Gloversville Fire Department. When WW-II started they offered him a Second Mate position in the Merchant Marine. He was going to take it but us kids talked him out of it. There were enough of us involved that he didn't need to do that.

The said the Art was the first (local) family member to get killed in WW-II. He is on the monument, along with Bob and Uncle Leon. I think it is the only family with three names on there.