

**Bernard W. "Bernie" DiPasquale
Veteran**

**Tyler Matthews
Brandon Scofield
Joe Jacobs
Interviewers**

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Orchard Park High School
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Bernard W. DiPasquale	BD
Tyler Matthews	TM
Brandon Scofield	BS
Joe Jacobs	JJ

BS: Why don't you start off by telling us were you drafted or did you actually enlist into the force?

BD: No. Actually, I had signed up for the Military right after I had originally had a scholarship for football out of high school. I was injured and couldn't play the game anymore so I didn't know what wanted to do so I decided to follow my father's footsteps and join the Navy just like he did years prior. So, that's how I got started on June 20th of 1974.

BS: Can you remember where you were living at the time?

BD: Yes, I was living in Lackawanna, actually, like I said I had just gotten out of school and I was living on East [unclear] with my parents. Not sure what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go in life at that point, wasn't sure if I wanted to pursue a college education any further so I well deciding that I wanted to get in the Military, see what trainings they had available and decide from there if it was something I wanted to get involved with outside of the Military.

BS: What branch did you join when you first enlisted?

BD: Originally I went in in June of '74 into the Navy, active Navy. I stayed, originally to stay just for just a four-year tour, ended up spending 16 years on the active side of the military and decided at the age of 40 to get out and pursue a civilian career. I was discharged from the Military, the active Navy side in February of 1990.

BS: Why did you choose to join that branch at that time? What made you choose?

BD: It was kind of ironic because my father's footsteps and mine have kind of paralleled in life. He was a ball player, a baseball player, not a football player but I was a baseball player also and he went into the Navy and I thought it was a good thing, a good way for me to see the world, be able to travel around and see other cultures, see how other people lived and you work but it's more of a free trip. I've seen probably more of the world than most people see in a lifetime in just a matter 16 short years so, it was a great experience as far as that goes.

BS: What really stuck out to you when you were traveling that much? What was the one thing that really...you remember a lot?

BD: The one thing that I really enjoyed was seeing the other cultures and how other people lived. People in the states take things for granted, but I mean, but if they get outside of the realm of America and they get to see some of these other foreign countries and how people actually lived and how they're ruled and how they're treated and how valuable assets such as food is. It actually gives you a different perspective on what life is really like and how valuable it is to be here, and what we really have compared to what they have.

TM: Did you have any specific assignments or jobs when you were serving in the Navy?

BD: Yes. Which actually I went into the service, well, being in the service 16 years, I had quite a few different jobs. My main function was I was an Administrative kind of guy, which kind of threw people off. I would show up to ships, I was a big body builder, football player, like I mentioned before, and when I would report for duty on the variety of units I was being assigned to, they would ask me what my job was and I would tell them I was a [unclear]. Basically all that is is you work for the commanding officer and the executive officer for that command but I basically did a lot of typing and filing so they were looking at me going you've got to be kidding me. No, that's what I do. [All Laugh]

JJ: What were the first couple days like?

BD: Well the first couple of days, originally when you start off at basic training, that's where everybody has to go through, which was in Great Lakes, Illinois, that's a whole different environment all together. You get a taste of not being in control of your life is really like. The first day your there they fly you on a plane, once you get to the airport they pick you up on a bus. As soon as you arrive, it's kind of like watching movies, you know you put your feet on the steps, you have to stand a certain way, they're screaming at you as soon as you get there.

JJ: Really.

BD: You can't talk back; you're being basically told everything you're going to be doing to do. Within a matter of 48-hours you have the buzz cut and your uniforms go on and they ship your civilian clothes home to your parents. The guy that's going to be in charge of your unit says listen, I'm your mother, your brother, your girlfriend, your family, whatever so get to know me really well. It's a

culture shock kind of thing. I was prepared for that I think just because of sports, I was used to doing that kind of stuff.

TM: I think a lot of people always wonder, what's the food like in basic training?
[All Laugh]

BD: The food isn't actually as bad as people make it out to be. They have a regular cooks and a server just like they do anywhere else and you get three meals a day, regular chicken, steak and corn and whatever. Now, if you're over heavy, if you're on a weight control program then they kind of limit your calorie intake. I mean the Military is just like anybody else, but the food really isn't that bad, it really isn't. You want the best food if you ever want to go into the military, guys? Go to the sub court, they got the best food there is. [All Laugh]

: Sub court, huh [All Laugh]

: Keep that in mind [All Laugh]

BS: Now, did you ever get a change to go into combat or were you...

BD: I volunteered during the Vietnam area. I went in during that time frame but I didn't actually go into theater there because by the time I finished my basic training and I finished my schooling, my MOS, what they call your skill training, that was just about over. It was in June... I can finish that in January of '75, so shortly thereafter the Vietnam everybody was being pulled out at that point. However, during the course of my 16 years active duty, I was involved with Granada, when Granada went down we were assigned a ship then and what our job was was to circle the island of Granada, keeping the militants from trying to get on the island to create more problems than they had already had. That was something that was interesting to see.

BS: Did you have anyone close to you pass or was injured in combat?

BD: No, we didn't have anybody injured in combat when I was there. I did have a friend of mine was actually killed onboard the ship. Actually, what happened was we were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, we were doing what we call [unclear] punishment where they take another ship were your side by side, oh about 100 yards or less and they're pumping fuel onto your ship so you can continue on with your mission. I remember, just vividly, a very good friend of mine and I were on the [unclear] tail, which is the back end of the ship. All of a sudden we see this big cloud of black smoke come out of the [stack?] and we said we're going to general quarters and the next thing you know the bells are ringing and everybody's scampering around trying to get to their spot. What happened was when they went to disconnect the fuel line, the fuel line snapped and our engine [unclear] and the bolts broke free and it hit the bulk head and sparked and at the same time thousands and thousands of gallons of fuel were being pumped into this space and it ignited the fuel and one of our friends actually...

: Really?

BD: they just [unclear] by shutting down the engines and by the time they got done shutting down the engines everything was inflame, the stairs were already melted away and he ended up dying in that fire. It's a dangerous, I mean you're 800 miles from anywhere so you're looking around you're like man I can't believe this is going on, where am I going to go, ya know, so survival while your out there. You learn a lot of basic firefighting skills out there.

: I'm sure.

TM: Now, I understand you served on multiple different battleships? I was wondering what would be a typical day in the life of naval guy on one of those?

BD: Well, it depends, if you're in port and you're not really underway it's pretty much like a normal workday. The difference being, you don't go in a punch a clock from like 8-5. You get paid on a 24-hour clock, so whenever your bosses, so to speak, or your supervisors tell you you can leave that's when you can actually depart and be with your family, your friends, or just go to your bunk and relax, or wherever. When you're out to sea it's a different thing, but you still carry on an everyday routine. It's like a little city on a city, I mean, everybody's got their jobs, I've worked in the Administrative Field, I've worked with officer records, I've worked with correspondence, I worked with classified documents, so on and so forth, legal paperwork, stuff like that. I mean, it's a regular functioning, operational unit. You have different side jobs that you give [unclear] [unclear] with, like underwear replenishment that was the phone [unclear], what they call sound park phone for the commanding officer. Everything he said, I relayed to everybody on the ship - that was my job. I was the legal [yoin?]. What that means is that anybody that was ever brought up on charges within the military justice system, not the civilian system, the military system, a different set of rules or UCMJ, I would take care of the paperwork and I would attend the hearings and what not, finalize the paperwork for that. I would bring officers on board, I would transfer them off, I would take care of housing orders, so on and so forth. It was interesting; get to look at a lot of correspondence. Some of the stuff I can't talk about because it was classified but that's the area that I worked in for the most part.

JJ: While you were out there how did you communicate with your family? Was there anyway...

BD: Yeah, initially when I went out to see what we do is, basic letters, you would write letters home, you could send tape recordings home to your families, you know that kind of stuff. That's probably the roughest part of being away is that you don't have any communication, where you can call somebody like you do here. You would have to wait for the mail to come. Being out to sea, obviously it's not delivered, but when you would have these unreps or replenishments details they would send these bags over through these ships and that is when you would get your correspondence. As time progressed and the communications network started to improve, we were actually able to communicate with our loved ones via

radio. They would have the hand radios, the hand operators, and they would connect us to our families so we could talk to them for a few minutes at a time. Other than that there wasn't any communication at all.

BS: How do you think that helped you get through life with your experiences, how do you think that's helped you in later years...?

BD: You make me sound old [All laugh]

BD: No, No, just kidding, just kidding.

BD: Actually, I will tell you what... My personal belief is I personally believe that everybody should spend at least a couple of years in the military because people don't realize how good they really have it until that is taken away from them. I mean, you can complain about school, you can complain about college, you can complain about your parents, you can complain about a lot of things, but when you start getting into these other areas where you don't have control, like when you're out to sea for example, you really don't have control about what's going to happen. You kind of hope things go well, but you don't really have control.

TM: Yeah

BD: You grow up quickly. You learn to take responsibility for your actions because you're responsible for you. I was one of the fortunate ones. I was always in charge of a group of people, so that can be a good thing and a bad thing because everything that comes down comes down through the top guy down to the ranks, that kind of thing. It teaches you to be a leader. It teaches you not to make excuses, you know, for things don't go right. Things that go wrong you don't make excuses cause they're going to find out about it, because it's just a very small community. I think it helps especially when you go into the other countries and that's the thing, when you get to these other countries and you see how these people live, and even though we're gone when you get back, you appreciate being there that much more.

BS: Sure.

TM: Did you meet any life long friends in the military or anything?

BD: Yes. Actually, I have in fact. I have a very very good friend of mine, his name is Gary Kelly, who lives in West Virginia and I have another very good friend of mine whose name was Dan Hillbury?. We had actually lost contact for 15 years and we had just reached each other again and we're planning a reunion based on our friendship because we were the three that kind of [unclear]. We were kind of like the Three Musketeers at that time. We went everywhere [unclear] together, we partied together, that kind of stuff.

: Really?

BD: Those kind of friends...[Pause] I don't call people in the Military... I don't think you get really close to a lot of friends, I think you make acquaintances and you get to know people but there's, like even high school or college, maybe one or two or three people or a handful at the most that you really get to be close with

and you're able to keep in contact with. I think that's the most part, you find those people when you're there.

JJ: What did you guys do while you were out there to kind of keep yourselves entertained.. down-time?

BD: Downtime in the military pretty much you practice firefighting drills, flood drills. For example, for that fire we had on the ship, if we hadn't practiced what we were going to do, we could have all died in that particular incident. When you're out to sea they have movie night, they show movies on the [unclear] decks, that's the area where you eat. That's where you eat during the day. You play cards; you learn how to play all kinds of card games and board games and stuff like that. Other than that, when you're talking about being able to move and have flexibility, you don't have that because your ship is only maybe 500 feet wide by ya know, 560 feet long by 70 feet wide and that's it. Other than that it's just compartments and spaces that you need to work with. [Pause] So, you try to find things to do. A lot of times it's boring, you read, you had a tendency to read a lot of books and stuff like that and keep up with the news if you can.

: Lost the ship

BS: Mmm Hmm

TM: Were there boxing matches and stuff like that? [All laugh] Cause I've seen movies and...

BD: Well, they do have those. We did that in basic training. In fact, I was one of the boxers in basic training.

TM: Really?

BD: I'm not going to tell you the results, [all laugh], but I held my own, lets put it that way. They do have, in our particular ships, the ones that I was assigned to, we didn't have a boxing club or anything like that. We did have a weight room, we did have a rugby team for when we went over seas, we did have softball teams, we had volleyball teams and stuff like that. We did try to keep ourselves entertained as much we can, with what we have. Especially when you get [unclear], one of the best times was playing rugby against the English sailors cause we got to go to England several times and they whipped us whole heartedly, let me tell you it was a massacre, it really was. [All laugh]

BS: We're going to go into some of the photographs...

BD: Yeah, I could show you a couple things. [Holds up picture] This is the USS Albany. This is the first ship I was assigned to. Now, you have to imagine being an 18-year-old guy, coming out of college, getting off of taxi cab, or getting getting out of a taxi cab, in Virginia, going to the Naval base and looking up at the CG-10, which is a guided missile cruiser. This is actually the sister ship of the ship that's in our harbor here in Buffalo.

: Oh, Ok.

BD: The USS Little Rock, is the sister ship. I could actually take you on the Little Rock and show you exactly where I worked, where all the spaces are, where the offices are, stuff like that. This is the first one, but your looking at a ship, when you're looking straight up and see nothing but this big massive steel and not knowing anybody there, not knowing how to go onto the ship, not knowing where you're supposed to go. It's a pretty interesting thing. From there I was transferred to the Philadelphia Naval Ship Yard and I got aboard what they call a DD Destroyer, the 940 USS Mailing 940 out of Philadelphia and then was further home ported once they had done all the repairs on the ship cause we were in dry dock down in May Port, Florida where we had done that. The last ship I was on was one of the newest ships that they have is called the Fast Frig at the FFG34 the Aubrey Fitch. The special things about this ship that I really enjoyed was number one, it wasn't the old style oil burning ships. It was a gas turbine so you could be underway in just a matter of minutes. You didn't have to wait for the engines to warm up and take a couple of days and so on and so forth. These are the things that you really enjoy but there are some difficulties that you have to deal with everything. I mean you had asked if I lot anybody in any of them and on one of the ships I was on, the Mainly, we were down in a replica? [unclear] professional training going through our [unclear] exercises and our actual gun [unclear] exploded and actually killed one of our officers and one of our enlisted men and so on and so forth. It's a dangerous position so you always have to be aware of what's going on.

BD: This is a photo, I was 18 years old, just starting to get my facial hair, I thought I was a hot shot. This is when the military would allow you to have mustaches and beards, and that's me at 18 when I first went into the service. I don't know well that's coming up but that's when I was a strapping young sailor, ya know, I thought I was all that when I went in. Then I have a photo, actually this is an old photo. This is of my dad and my two brothers, all of us are veterans, we were all in the military. We had every branch of the service covered. My dad was in the Navy, I went into the Navy, my brother Jerry went to the Marine Corps and he retired as a Major in the Marine Corps. My brother Jeff went into the Air Corps. He worked in Minot, North Dakota, on the missile silos with air conditioning and so on and so forth. Then I went from the Navy to the Army National Guard where I was involved with the clean up of 911, I had a crew for that. The other person that's missing, actually two people that are missing are my daughter Lori, who went into the Army and fought in Iraq, left a 4 1/2 month old and a 4 year old baby behind to go fight for her country cause that's what she was doing and now her boyfriend has now come back from a second tour and is a Purple Heart recipient; he was wounded when he was there. So, history of the military for us seems to be part of our blood, part of our bloodline kind of thing. One of my favorite pictures that I always try to show people is this one here. This is taken in October of 1982, it's the commissioning ceremony of the USS Aubrey Fitch out of Bath, Maine. My dad was there, I was there, but the keynote speaker

for that particular ceremony at that time was Vice President George Bush, before he became President. That was an experience all in itself. I mean you had to go through high levels of security and it was funny because when my dad had called and said what's the weather like of Maine, I said it's beautiful, it's 80 degrees it's sun shining and the day of the ceremony it went to 32 and it was storming and raining, it was miserable out.

DB: Some of the other things I have is this is what we call our ribbon [unclear] we call it. The top one here is my Navy Achievement medal, which I actually received three Navy Achievement medals when I was with the Navy. Good conduct medals, for those of you that know me a little better than others you would be surprised that little [unclear] could receive a good conduct medal. National [unclear] medal, Expeditionary force medal, Expert Rifle, Expert Pistol, and the last one I received right before I retired was my third Army Achievement medal, so those are the ones that I am most proud of that I received all those. It's just for distinguishing yourself or your unit, for the things that you've accomplished while you were there.

BD: I have a box of stuff here that I could show you, but it would take probably longer than you guys have to interview me.

BD: The one that I do have, this is one of the things that you get. This is the Department of the Army, Army Achievement medal and it is basically for achievement and establishing the operating the Moral, Welfare and Recreational Center. The MWR Center is a success due to your continued efforts and dedications service to your peers, in addition while serving at the Retention as the [unclear] commission officer in the field first Sergeant, which I was assigned at that time, displays your leadership qualities, your dedication to duty reflects great credit upon yourself and the unit and the State of New York and the National Guard. These are the kind of things that they recognize, when you do outstanding work they get together, your boss or your supervisor has to submit a medal request or [unclear] request, or whatever he wants to put you in for. It goes through this big chain, scanning process, like a job interview kind of thing and they say ok, does he meet all of the criteria that he needs to have and then if they feel that you've dedicated yourself or earned that then they go ahead and they give it to you and issue you your medal. That's some of the stuff that I really appreciated. You're getting a pat on the back for doing a job that you needed to do.

: As a veteran is that anything that you can tell young people that are considering going into the service? Any advice, any warnings, anything like that?

BD: I wouldn't give them any warnings and I'll tell you why because I think, like I mentioned earlier, I think that everybody should spend at least a year or two in the military. I think it's a great experience for kids, especially for those that aren't sure what they want to do with their life. Ya know, it gives them an opportunity to see what's out there. It doesn't necessarily have to be the Navy or the Army or the

Marine Corp or the National Guard, it could be any branch of the service but there's GI bills out there that you can get for that, they'll pay for your education and so on and so forth. I think that when you go there if you find, the reason why I went to the Navy more than any other branch was because they do a lot of traveling and that was something that I wanted to do.

: Right.

BD: Without that I wouldn't have seen the things that I've seen. I've been across the North Atlantic four or five times, in the Caribbean three or four times. So, the stuff that I've seen that people will never ever get to see and I've seen it on numerous occasions. It's a great experience, actually get out and see where other people live.

BS: I think that pretty much wraps it up.

TM: [unclear]

BD: Alright.

JJ: Thank you for your time.

TM: Thank you, appreciate it.

BS: Thank you, absolutely.

BD: Not a problem, thank you.

BD: I'll tell you, one of the things I will share with you guys. They have sporting events and so on and so forth with the military but the one thing that you really find that really cements and puts thing together, is like when you have a 911 and you see when people all come together. I was actually working as a personal trainer when that all went down and was with the National Guard unit and when I saw the second plane hit the World Trade Centers I told the person I was training, I said I got to go. And finally by the time I got to New York with my drilling unit, which was out of Yonkers, which was about 20 miles from where the incident happened, I was assigned the night crew and we were sending people down there all the time [unclear]. You'd be surprised at how people just come together at that point. I mean just, it's an amazing, it's an amazing thing. The other thing that, one of the stories that really hits home for me is when we were over in St. Martina, I believe, visiting there and a bunch of us got together and we bought some Kentucky Fried Chicken, we found a place there to get it, [all laugh] and we get done eating and we threw our boxes away like we normally would and this little 11 year-old boy from there went in and took all those Kentucky Fried Chicken boxes out of the garbage can. Literally, out of the garbage can. We think we eat the stuff, this kid literally picked that bone to the bone. I mean, he was going after everything. It was just [unclear] to see what they were doing, the stuff that they don't have that we just take for granted. It's a really good experience. I would recommend it to anybody, I really would.

JJ: Thank you.

BD: Alright. Not a problem.

TM: Thank you.

BS: Thank you

BD: I wish I had more to show you but I guess I had more but I got....