

**Mario R. Gigante
Veteran**

**Scott Campbell SC
Rome Free Academy H.S. Rome, NY
Interviewer**

Interviewed on March 15

**Mario Gigante: MG
Scott Campbell: SC**

SC: What were your branches of service and the dates that you served?

MG: United States Army, April 6 1951 until April 3, 1953.

SC: Where and when were you born?

MG: I was born in the Bronx, NY on October 8, 1927.

SC: What was your pre-service education?

MG: I had a high school education and worked a little bit in advertising. Upon release from the service, I returned to advertising and had some college education.

SC: Did you draft or enlist?

MG: I was drafted.

SC: You said your branch of the service was the army. So, I guess you were drafted into the army?

MG: I was drafted into the army, did basic training at Fort Dix in New Jersey and from there I went to [unclear] General School at Fort Benjamin Harrison Indiana.

SC: Do you have any memorable experiences from basic training?

MG: At that time we had the minimum basic training because I was going into additional training at the [unclear] General School. The [unclear] General School involved stenography, typing, accounting, English of course, and that's basically it.

SC: What was the unit or ship you were on?

MG: Upon graduation from the [unclear] General School, I was sent to European Theater and the army of occupation in Germany.

SC: This is after WW2, during the Korean War?

MG: Right. From 1952 until 1953 that I was in Germany, I was assigned to the second

army division, which was headquartered in [unclear] Germany.

SC: How would you rate your training? Did it prepare you well for what you were doing?

MG: Yes, the [unclear] General's course was well in training us for the type of office work that we had to do in Germany.

SC: What was the name of the General where you were stationed?

MG: The name of the General was Major General George W. Reed and the second army division commander and I was his personal secretary.

SC: Were there any medals or citations you received?

MG: I received the Good Conduct Medal, I received the Medal of the [unclear] occupation, and upon release from the service when I was through with active duty the Secretary to the General gave me a letter of accommodation that I could have going back to civilian life.

SC: How did you keep in touch with those at home?

MG: With those at home at that time we didn't have the telephone lines such as they have today and it was all by mail.

SC: Did you write home often?

MG: Yes, I wrote home quite often and received letters from family and friends.

SC: What was the food like?

MG: Food was not bad for army food. It was good. We ate in the mess hall. We didn't have any k rations or things like that but it was not war time over in Germany at that time, just occupation forces.

SC: What was your most memorable experience, good or bad?

MG: Well, the voyage to Europe could be a memorable one. It was eleven days on the rough seas and it wasn't a luxury liner. That's one of the memories that I have. But, of course I was able to take the opportunity to see many places in Europe while I was there, taking short weekend trips to different countries, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, Paris and a 10 day trip to Italy. That's some of the memorable things too, being able to travel.

SC: You enjoyed the aspect of being able to travel?

MG: And of course being the military service at that time, I don't know how it is today in the military service we were allowed special discounts on trains, transportation.

SC: The occupational force in the second army division?

MG: Right, but shortly after I arrived in Europe, the occupation became almost over, then we became part of the NATO forces that were stationed in Europe.

SC: Did your responsibilities change after that happened, as an occupational force what were you doing?

MG: Not as far as my duties were concerned, it was the same type of office work. I don't think that there was any changes in the duties of the men, their responsibilities may have been greater because we were part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

SC: Did you stay stationed in once section of Germany?

MG: Yes, I was in one place of Germany for the entire year. [unclear] Knox which was about 50 miles southwest of Frankfurt, in the French sector of Germany at that time. Germany was divided into four zones. British, America, French and Russian. Although we were United States forces, we happened to be in a camp area called [unclear] which was in the French Zone, but we were not under French command.

SC: While were you there, was the area you were in war torn from bombings or invasion, or was it relatively nice?

MG: There had been a great deal of devastation to West Germany after the bombing during World War 2. A lot of the rubble was still very much noticeable throughout the entire area.

SC: Did you notice the impact of the German population?

MG: No, I really can't tell because I didn't know anything about the German population before.

SC: How do you feel about your military experience? Do you feel lucky that you weren't sent to Korea, lucky you weren't drafted to World War 2, lucky that you were trained to be a Major General's assistant?

MG: Yes, I was fortunate I that instance, and I was lucky that I was not sent to Korea, only by picking the right number out of a hat. The class that graduated from [unclear] General School at that time, as a whole class one person had a stateside assignment, three of us got a European assignment, and the rest went to the far east. So I was lucky in being picked to go to Europe, because there was no fighting going on in Europe at that time. The fighting was in the far east in Korea.

SC: So, the drafting process is picking a number out of a hat?

MG: Not the drafting process, the picking to go to Europe was picked out of a hat. They picked a number right out of a hat.

SC: And the drafting was done by your birthday?

MG: No, the draft thing was done, they used to classify you depending on your, how they felt you were available for army duty. Whether you were single, you were married, you

had dependents, and so on and so forth. The fact that I was single made me available for active duty, although I did just miss the World War 2 draft.

SC: Were you too young?

MG: I just turned eighteen and the war was over.

SC: Did you choose or where you sent to [unclear] General's Training Facility?

MG: I was chosen for that. I guess it was because of the type of work I did before I entered the service, my background as far as education was concerned.

SC: Do you regret your military experience, being the army did not improve your character, I'm sure it's an experience you'll never forget, do you regret being drafted?

MG: Not at this time. I did at the time I was, but not now. It was a good experience as far as I was concerned on what I got to see.

SC: Did you feel that being a veteran of the army helped you get a job when you came back on to state's side?

MG: No, I went back to work at the same company that I had worked prior to my service.

SC: What was your reaction to the [unclear] when Truman took over?

MG: I really don't remember that very well at all. I know that there was a great deal of talk at that time, but my reaction was not one way or the other.

SC: What about the election of Eisenhower? Did you vote and what were your feelings?

MG: I voted, but I did not vote for Eisenhower, only for the simple reason that he was a military man and all of us that had been drafted felt that he would be extending our tour of duty.

SC: Afterwards, do you feel that he was a good president?

MG: Yes, I thought he did well for the country.

SC: Is there anything else you want to talk about that occurred during your service, where you were stationed, anything specific?

MG: No, I think we've gone over most of the area, that was only in the one area, My experience was good, that I got to see a lot of different places that I probably never would have gotten to and sent to Europe.

SC: So, as a General's secretary what were your daily duties?

MG: Mainly of a personal nature. Taking care of mail, what ever letters he wanted to get out. Things of that nature.

SC: OK, so we're going to move on to the post war period. You said when you arrived home, you resumed work at an advertising company. What was the name of the company?

MG: The name of the company I went to work for was Gotham Advertising.

SC: They were based in the Bronx?

MG: No they were based in New York City. I worked in the production area, the production department. I stayed in the same line of work my entire working career, but not with the same company.

SC: I guess you worked in different types of advertising, television?

MG: We didn't handle television, it was print production. Magazine, newspapers, brochures, catalogs, outdoor posters, to that nature. Everything to do with print.

SC: Do you belong to any veterans organizations?

MG: No, I never joined any.

SC: Have you attended any reunions?

MG: No

SC: Do you still maintain contact with friends that you met in the service?

MG: I have several friends [unclear] while I was in the service.

SC: The same line of work?

MG: No, our work was unrelated. We worked in the same field in the army. We all worked for the same division, army division, but we all did not work together. One was a very success farmer from Indiana, and another was from New Hampshire.

SC: So you remain in contacts by phone?

MG: Phone and mail [unclear] once in a while.

SC: How did your military experience change your influence in your life?

MG: That's a tough one. I don't know that it has changed.

SC: What do you feel your life would be like if you were never drafted, would you have gone on to continue your education, or stay in advertising?

MG: I probably would have stayed in advertising, probably would have continued my education.

SC: Is there anything else you want to talk about, about your military experience, funny stories?

MG: Not really. Nothing I can think of at the moment.

SC: Did you take the General's car? [Both laugh]

MG: No, but I did a lot of work for his wife. She used to send all of the things that had to be done through the mail, things like that.

SC: She didn't come over?

MG: She didn't come over, but they did have a home right off campus.

SC: I think we're done. Thank you very much. It was a pleasure.

MG: Good luck.