

**Dominic Giarraputo
Veteran**

**John Wood
Robert L. Lewis
New York State Military Museum
Interviewers**

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Saugerties American Legion Post
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DG: Good morning, John.

Q: Dominic, how are you?

DG: I'm fine, thanks.

Q: We're here at the American Legion Post in Saugerties, New York, on December 5th, 2004, and were interviewing Dominic Giarraputo, who served in the United States Navy both during World War II and was reactivated for the Korean War. So, Dominic, were you drafted, or did you enlist?

DG: I tried to enlist, but they said I had to go back and finish school.

Q: What did you enlist in?

DG: The Navy.

Q: Okay, but you had to go back and finish school?

DG: I had to go back and graduate, and in the meantime, they drafted me as soon as I was 18 years of age. I had the notice in my hand.

Q: When you got drafted then, you got put in the Navy?

DG: Well, I had an argument about that one. The Army, Navy, and The Marine Corps were mainly after me, and I had told them that I went to maritime school, and I had intention of going to sea.

Q: Where did you go to maritime school?

DG: In New York City.

Q: Were you living in New York City at the time?

DG: I was living in Brooklyn, but still within city limits.

Q: Did you manage to get into the Navy?

DG: Yes. The lieutenant commander walked over and said, "He's mine. I want him. You pick the next one".

Q: Why did you want to go to the sea?

DG: I was fascinated by the sea.

Q: You lived in Brooklyn?

DG: I lived in Brooklyn.

Q: Did you see the sea all the time?

DG: We had a summer home out in Wyoming, and I got acquainted with some of the fellas there on fishing boats, so I used to go out with them.

Q: Where in Wyoming was that?

DG: Byron.

Q: Once you got into the Navy, do you remember your first days of service? What was it like? Where did you go? Did you go to bootcamp?

DG: On a nice sunny day, we left New York City, July the 6th.

Q: What year was that?

DG: 1943. When we got up to Sampson, in upstate New York, we were freezing.

Q: Were you training on The Great Lakes?

DG: No, on The Finger Lakes. That was the biggest camp around. I spent 6 weeks training there.

Q: Was it very cold?

DG: In the morning, it was very cold, but once you became accustomed to it, you [unclear]

Q: What was your bootcamp training like? Did you have physical training?

DG: We had physical training, educational training, discipline, marching, everything that would be required of a person in service.

Q: Did you get on any boats at that point?

DG: We got on one of the small boats that we had on the lake deck, or when doing the rowing exercises.

Q: Do you remember your instructors?

DG: No. We did have a chief, and he was fantastic. In fact, we ended up being the Rooster Company. That was all the training over the period of 5 or 6 weeks, and

the Rooster Company, whoever that company was, won a prize, which was 10 hours on The Liberty in Geneva, New York.

Q: So, you got to go on The Liberty in Geneva, New York, huh?

DG: Yes.

Q: What was that like?

DG: A lot of fun.

Q: So, you got through bootcamp. Where did you go after that?

DG: I went to Landing City Naval Air Station and became an oxygen expert.

Q: An oxygen expert?

DG: Yes, for the private planes.

Q: What was your Navy rating at the time?

DG: I was only a “C” at the time because I was just coming out of bootcamp.

Q: It looks like you went into Naval aviation, right?

DG: Right and I didn’t like it. [unclear]

Q: Did you want to go to the city?

DG: Eventually I would have ended up on The Hornet, which I did because aviation is strictly carriers.

Q: So, you went about the U.S. Hornet?

DG: Yes. I was assigned to The Hornet in November or December of 1943.

Q: Where was The Hornet?

DG: Norfolk, Virginia. I managed to speak to one of the navigation officers and told him that I would be interested in, what I wanted to do, and that I wanted to be in navigation, and he managed a transfer for me to be in the navigation division.

Q: So, you were in the navigation division aboard The Hornet?

DG: Yes.

Q: Then you went to the sea?

DG: We went to the sea.

Q: Where’d you go?

DG: I often joke about it as a summer cruise. We left Norfolk and went to Diego, picked Up [unclear]

Q: That would be San Deigo?

DG: San Deigo.

Q: You went through The Panama Canal, I take it?

DG: We went to San Deigo. We picked up a division of marines.

Q: Aboard the aircraft carrier?

DG: Yes, and the planes.

Q: So, it was an aviation division?

DG: No, the Marine Corps Infantry.

Q: You had the infantry aboard the aircraft carrier?

DG: This was the division that we were taking over. We were taking them to the pacific in the morning and we left there and went to Hawaii, dropped off the Marines, picked up our new air group, and we proceeded out to Majuro.

Q: Where was that?

DG: One of the Irelands. It was the furthest point we had at that point. From that point down, we started doing what we had to. We took care of it. We were attacked in the [unclear] islands. As a matter of fact, I have something over here if you want. [Shows picture]. This is a whole outlay of what was accomplished.

Q: Hold it up a bit.

DG: It shows all the different islands that we were on. It only doesn't show the days that we requested dateline or the equator.

Q: Let me read that [looking at picture] so I can put this on record. It included operations in Hollandia, the Marianas operation, West Carolina Islands, operation Western New Guinea, Leyte operation and Luzon operation and that was with the liberation of the Philippines, those last two operations. So, you were on board the aircraft carrier for all those campaigns?

DG: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us what kind of work the aircraft did? Did they do close air support for the Marines on the island landings?

DG: That was one of the main purposes [unclear] the Japanese naval fleet and the islands. Supporting all our men.

Q: So, you certainly saw combat as far as the actions of your ship at that time?

DG: Yes.

Q: Did it come under enemy attack, your ship?

DG: I would say roughly about 60 or 70 different times we were under attack.

Q: From enemy aircraft?

DG: Well, from enemy aircraft and the submarines. Here's one picture here [showing picture] of the time that the Kamikaze guys came in on us and there's a story on that.

Q: Tell me.

DG: We were in condition 1, which we thought condition 1 was easy. We were at the battle station, relaxing. We were having lunch. Up in the sky was just one big blue cloud and up there was this Japanese plane and all the sudden it was coming down at us. The gunnery unit behind me, behind the wheelhouse, they got excited. One kid, when no one was giving orders to fire, took his bologna sandwich and jammed it into the cockpit to fire it off. That started the whole thing, and we got them down. They were responsible for shooting it down.

Q: They shot it down before it hit the aircraft?

DG: It never hit the aircraft. It crashed into the ocean about 200 yards off the portside. The captain, by name is A.K. Doyle, came from Staten Island [unclear]. He ordered the crew up and promoted them on site.

Q: For having shot down that aircraft?

DG: Right, because everyone was asleep, no one's seen it. It was just one of those odd moments.

Q: So, you were under the attack from enemy kamikaze aircrafts?

DG: Right, and then, after that we were under attack at night and the one thing that was said was "protect the carriers". They caught us in a turn, 4 turns, [unclear] and our stern was exposed. The cruiser [unclear] was coming in, the crew came in, I think it was the Canberra. She came in and took the fish for us.

Q: The cruiser took the torpedo?

DG: Right, and then she came back to shoot the [unclear].

Q: So, it didn't sink, though?

DG: No.

Q: Must've had casualties on board though, I guess?

DG: I honestly don't know.

Q: Did you have casualties on board your ship?

DG: No. Not that time.

Q: Any other times?

DG: The following night, same scenario. Everything that happened was the same. This time it was another cruiser. She took the fishes for us. She took 2 fish. Fish

means torpedo, and we got away. There was another time when we had a bomb land on the ship and it rolled off.

Q: Was the bomb was dropped by a Japanese aircraft?

DG: [Nods] It rolled off into the water and then exploded. That's what we call a lucky Hornet. We had the man upstairs guiding us, you know? Without him, we were in real trouble. We had a lot of things going on. I think we had 5 pilots who made ace in one day.

Q: So, each pilot had to shoot down 5 planes to make ace and 5 of them did it in 1 day?

DG: Right.

Q: Was this the great Mariana's Turkey Shoot?

DG: That was part of it. Another thing is they formed a perfect T, that's when you had all your ships forward and the target was coming around. This guy Miles Browning, he was our first [unclear] on The Hornet, but he was a bad boy, so they got rid of him. He performed from the headquarters. He caught the Japanese fleet trying to escape. They were just within our range. What happened was we headed somewhere else and had to turn around. What we did was send our planes ahead of time, following them and then pick them up on the way back.

Q: Was this in the Philippines campaign?

DG: No, I don't believe it was. There were so many, I don't remember. I remember the incidents more than anything else. On the turkey shoot, we put all our lights on. The whole fleet put their lights on. So that the planes couldn't land. They were running out of fuel. We were ditching them in the sea. They needed to land on a carrier ship, it made no difference which ship it was. They had to land for their own safety. In fact, we had one Japanese airplane try to land. He couldn't make it. We were going just a little bit too fast. One of the tin cans picked him up.

Q: Did you capture him?

DG: Yes. We had him on board our ship.

Q: Right, because he was a prisoner of war. Did you keep him in a brig?

DG: Yes. A nice, secluded place.

Q: Did you get to see him?

DG: I got a glance at him, but he looked like any other Joe, you know?

Q: What were your actual duties aboard the ship? What did you do in the navigation unit?

DG: In navigation, I stood the watches. One duty I had was to check all the ship's clocks. I went through the ship checking all the clocks to make sure that they were right. Also taking orders from the officer of the day.

Q: You mentioned battle stations. Where was your battle station?

DG: In the wheelhouse. Not all the time but when the kamikaze came, I was in the wheelhouse.

Q: Where the kamikaze landed?

DG: Yes. I felt the heat. I was down where they called "the steering". It was like being down in the basement with a high rise, you know? There is 1 way in, 1 way out. We were lucky.

Q: This was a picture of your ship here, The Hornet? [looking at a picture]

DG: Yes.

Q: What kind of airplanes did you have on board?

DG: We had the fighters, the F6s, the torpedo bombers, and the SVDUs, which were the dive bombs.

Q: I see you were in the liberation of the Philippines.

DG: Right.

Q: Did you get to on shore of the Philippines?

DG: No. I wish I had. My brother was there.

Q: Was he in the army?

DG: Yes, he was in the army.

Q: Did you know that at the time?

DG: No. When we came back, I knew he was in New Guinea.

Q: How did you keep in touch with your family?

DG: Mail.

Q: Mail? Did it take a while to get those letters turned around?

DG: Oh yeah. That was normal.

Q: How was the food?

DG: Bad at best, but we had 3 square meals, a nice clean bed to sleep in and we had a big dugout.

Q: Did you have plenty of supplies? No shortage of supplies of all kinds? Ammunition and all that?

DG: No. We always had sufficient.

Q: A huge supply at sea, I take it?

DG: Most times, if not, right into a staging area into [unclear]

Q: Where is that located?

DG: It's also in the same area. It's around the same islands there.

Q: Did you feel any pressure or stress while you were doing this?

DG: Occasionally, but I never let it get to me.

Q: How did people entertain themselves? Did you have any entertainment?

DG: We did. Once or twice. We had this fella; his name was Red Nichols. He had a little piano that you could barely get out on the floor, and he would play that, and he would have a regular band with him. At the same time, we had another incident. One of the officers decided to bring the [unclear] on board. Well, the captain wasn't very happy about that. He ordered them all off. It was done without his knowledge. The individual that did it was an actor. He was a lieutenant. I know his name, but I'm not going to say it.

Q: Was he a famous actor?

DG: No, he wasn't a real famous actor. He was good, he was on TV. He was sent back to The States. They were in all kinds of shape when he ordered them back.

Q: Did you see any U.S. shows or anything like that?

DG: No.

Q: Did you have movies on board the ship?

DG: We always had movies.

Q: Did they trade them back and forth with other ships?

DG: They traded them back and forth to Hawaii.

Q: You were going to tell about what happened when you were in bootcamp about how you didn't get any leave for watch. Tell me about that.

DG: When I challenged the petty officer, he told me to sleep. I didn't have a wristwatch. I asked him for the time, and he said it was 2am. I said I was supposed to leave at midnight. He went right back to the barracks. He got the chief out. The chief told the next man to get out and keep watch. He refused and he let him get away with it. I stood the rest of the watch and got the day off. I wasn't looking for it because I was anxious about the training. When we graduated, we got a week vacation. They put him over to a new company, passed the word and he was blackballed. When we came back, the FBI came on board, put him in handcuffs and right aboard the ship. He was a merchant, and what he

was doing was he was taking a trip, then missing a trip. He did that two or three different times and somehow, they found out about it. They said they were watching. He went three hours over the watch and then they grabbed him.

Q: How'd you get along with your shipmates and officers? What did you think of them as a whole?

DG: They were very good. There were exceptions, but the one thing I had always done was respect the raid. I didn't always respect the man, but I always respected the raid.

Q: Did you serve in the pacific right up until the end of the war?

DG: Until the end of my time. We came back in July.

Q: Back to where? The States?

DG: We came back to The States in July in Francisco.

Q: You came back to San Francisco in July?

DG: Yes, then I went home on leave. After my leave was up, I was shipped back out to the west coast.

Q: Was that in 1945?

DG: Yes.

Q: So, it looked like the war with the Japanese was coming to an end?

DG: It ended while we were in Francisco.

Q: What was that like when you got the word?

DG: Time was alive. I mean alive. Everybody ran and raved. Everybody was happy. Just like here in New York [unclear].

Q: Did the people understand what an atom bomb was at the end of the war?

DG: I don't think they did. I really don't think they did.

Q: If they hadn't done that, you would have had gone back to the pacific again, I take it, right?

DG: Definitely. There was no question about it.

Q: The invasion of Japan would've required plenty of aircraft carriers.

DG: I think more than man [unclear] dropping a bomb is the most important thing for us, well mankind really at that time.

Q: Now how long did you stay in the navy after the end of World War II?

DG: I went into the reserves.

Q: Okay and came back to New York, I take it?

DG: Right, I went back to New York. Got married, raised a family, got reactivated and went to school.

Q: You went to school on the GI bill?

DG: Yes.

Q: What were you taking?

DG: I was a history buff. I love history. I needed some credits to go to college and that's what I was working on when I was reactivated.

Q: So, you got reactivated for the Korean War? When was that?

DG: 1951, I guess.

Q: 1951? What were you working at besides going to school or were you just going to school?

DG: I was working at the army tugs, department of defense.

Q: On [unclear] island?

DG: No, in Brooklyn, on the army base.

Q: So, you were a civilian employee of the army and a navy reserve at the same time?

DG: Right.

Q: Then you got reactivated for the Korean War. Where did you go when you got reactivated?

DG: I tried to get back on The Hornet, but she was out in Japan, and I wasn't going to travel around the world to get to her. So, I ended up on the LST.

Q: It was a landing ship tank, right?

DG: Right. What we were doing was taking outdated ammunition and dumping it off on the South Carolina coast and other areas where we were allowed to drop it off.

Q: What kind of ammunition was this?

DG: You name it.

Q: Small arms, artillery, ...?

DG: Everything. At one point we also dropped off some atomic stuff in the same area. Right along the coast, maybe seventy-five miles out.

Q: Off the coast of South Carolina?

DG: Both Carolinas, actually. Nice area to stay away from. Then they opened the [unclear], which was a new arms system.

Q: Distant early warning, right? That was a radar to try to prevent the Russians from coming down and bombing us.

DG: Japan too, because of the Aleutian Islands and World War II.

Q: So, you could protect the whole area?

DG: Right. So, we went up there. They built the base under the ice. I was never in it, and I never landed on it, but we sent up trucks, gasoline, fuel, service planes, and whatever was needed. They had about six to seven transports up there that the men were living in.

Q: What kind of rank had you made at this time?

DG: I was a third class quartermaster. I wasn't looking for advancements.

Q: Then eventually you got deactivated, I take it?

DG: Yes.

Q: Did you stay in the naval reserve?

DG: No. That was it. I felt that it was time for something different.

Q: Now, you have completed your education. Did you get the GI bill?

DG: When I figured out the time element of getting my degree and how long it would take before I could teach, I decided to stay where I was and not get the GI bill. I decided to go for my coast guard license. [unclear].

Q: So, you were working on tugs and other kinds of ships then?

DG: Yes, I was captain on the army tugs. From there I went to the coast guard to work on the Governor's Island as a marine transportation officer.

Q: Were you in the coast guard?

DG: No. Just an employee of the coast guard. [unclear]. So, all my life has been with the military, either actual military or [unclear].

Q: I know you also served in the New York Guard. We talked about that.

DG: Yes. My first time in the guard was the 5th regimen in Brooklyn.

Q: Eventually you got the rank of lieutenant colonel up there, right?

DG: Yes. When I came out and got back into it again with the 14th regime in Brooklyn.

Q: Did you stay in touch with any of the folks you served with like your shipmates on The Hornet?

DG: Yes, but it faded out.

Q: You did join veterans' organizations. You're case commander to VFW right now and you're a member here in the American Legion, right? You also belong to The Hornet Association?

DG: Yes, also with the DAV and at the present time I am the county commander of the Hudson Valley Council.

Q: Disabled American Veterans?

DG: No, the VFW.

Q: Do you go to reunions of your ship? How often does that happen?

DG: Yes. I try to get there every year, but I missed the last couple years. The next one will be in Jacksonville.

Q: Jacksonville, Florida?

DG: Yes.

Q: How did your military experience affect your life?

DG: It taught me to enforce what we have here in this country. I always think of the immigrants. Once they get here, they try to make something of themselves. I'm sure my parents went through it. They were my idols. I learned work ethics. I didn't take anything for granted. [My parents] worked for what they had and saved to have a better life for their children. This isn't taught, it's learned from watching other people. When I see some of these other people coming over here, specifically the second generation that are here and take advantage of what we had to fight for. They don't know what it was like for their parents or grandparents to go through times of depression, where they had to work seven days per week, only to make a few dollars. They think they deserve the top dollar. For example, someone making \$8/hour ten years ago is now making \$20/hour. All these younger people coming in want to start at \$20/hour.

Q: I see you have a flag here, is it from The Hornet?

DG: Yes. This flag flew on The Hornet from the first attack on Japanese land. This was our response for losing the CV-8 Hornet. The CV-8 Hornet was the one that had General Doolittle's planes on it, the B-25s that bombed Japan. They damaged it beyond repair.

Q: What battle was that at?

DG: I think it was the battle of Santa Cruz.

Q: Guadalcanal campaign?

DG: Right.

Q: The Hornet was damaged beyond repair, right?

DG: Yes.

Q: The new ship you were on ...

DG: It was the CV-12 which replaced The Hornet, they renamed the CV-12 "The Hornet" in honor of the CV-8. The ship is now in California. If you were going to visit the ship today and went below the decks, you'd see its old name [unclear] written on the metal because that's how parts for ships were identified. When the CV-8 was damaged, the cruisers took control of her to get her away from the Japanese because if they ever got their hands on it, they would've found out all our secrets. The Japanese knew they hit something, but they couldn't find it until they saw it getting towed by the cruisers, so they bombed her again. The cruisers had to let her go because the battle was so fierce, so the captains picked her up. The one mistake they made was towing her with an open gap letting the ocean water in which held her back. So, they let her go and then we finally picked her up and brought her to [unclear].

Q: Do you still visit your ship in Alameda, California?

DG: No, I haven't been out there. I haven't had the opportunity to travel. If she was closer, I probably would. I plan on going out there next year.

Q: I see you have your ribbons on. I see you have the American campaign, the Pacific, a silver star, and three bronze stars. So that's like five, six, seven, eight separate campaigns. Also, the Presidential Unit Citation award and the medal from the Philippine government for liberating the Philippines. I see two campaign stars. I also see the World War II Victory Medal, National Defense and Navy Unit citations, and then the Philippine Independence Medal from the Philippine government. I also see some awards from the State of New York and the New York Guard. So, those are the citations and ribbons you got while you were in the service?

DG: Yes. The only one that's missing is the new one that came out. The CAB combat one I believe.

Q: The combat action ribbon?

DG: Yes.

Q: There's also the Navy and Marine Corps combat action ribbon.

DG: Yes, I have that one at home on the wall with the actual medals. I guess that's it.

Q: Dominic has made a number of contributions here to our museum and we appreciate it.

DG: I'm sure along the line I'll find some more.

Q: Well, thank you very much Dominic!

DG: Thank you!