

**Irving Goldstein
Veteran**

**Michael Russert
Wayne Clarke
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on November 20, 2003 3:00 P.M.
Oyster Bay, NY**

Q: This is a home interview, Oyster Bay, New York with Irving Goldstein, the 20th of November, 2003, approximately 3:00 P.M. Interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke. Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?

IG: My full name is Irving Goldstein, date of birth is June 2nd 1915, and I was born in Manhattan.

Q: Okay. What was your educational background prior to entering service?

IG: Just finished the tenth grade in high school, junior high school.

Q: Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

IG: Yes, I was visiting a friend with my wife and we were listening to the TV or something like that and the news flash came in that Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese.

Q: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

IG: No, I was drafted.

Q: Okay, so you were drafted into the Navy.

IG: I- yes, well, I wanted to go into the Army because my brother was in the Army and I went and was drafted and I told him, so he says, "Okay, you're in the Navy." [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter} He gave you a choice.

IG: Yes.

Q: Where was your induction?

IG: My induction was in the Grand Central Palace on 42nd Street.

Q: This is in June of '43?

IG: Yes, June 3rd, 1943.

Q: Where did you go for your basic training?

IG: Newport, Rhode Island.

Q: Did you have any specialized training there, or just the-

IG: No, the specialized training- I didn't have any specialized training. We just went to a regular normal exercise and conditioning. Yes, the only thing that was strange was that instead of beds or cots, we had hammocks.

Q: Oh really?

IG: I had to climb up a pole. I felt like I was a monkey!

Q: So you were in a barracks but you had hammocks?

IG: Yes, we slept in hammocks.

Q: Interesting. When were you assigned to the Beach Naval Battalion?

IG: After graduation, which was about six weeks. Get a furlough, and we were assigned to Camp Bradford, Virginia, and there, it was formed [the] 6th Beach Naval Battalion.

Q: Did you receive any specialized training there at all?

IG: Specialized training, yes. We were...our job, we didn't know what it was. It was Camp Bradford, Virginia ATB. I already knew what it was because somehow I had a feeling that I was being trained for something big, and so it happened to be [an] amphibious training base. But when I wrote home to my wife, I told her that I was at an Army training base, because I didn't want her to worry.

Q: You married then before you went into service?

IG: Yes, I was married. My daughter was eight months old.

Q: When did you get married?

IG: It was 1941.

Q: So, could you tell us a little about the specialized training that you received there?

IG: The specialized training consisted of walking, hiking to the beach, being [unclear] into the water, with LCMP...LCVP, Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel, which, they drive you to the beach into the water and sometimes they get stuck, and you have to try to minimize the damage and everything like that. My job of amphibious training was ship to shore movements, which consisted of a squad of four and communicating with oncoming vessels and creating—of course, with the help of army engineers—creating a path for vehicles, tanks, trucks, and everything, to go through.

Q: Being in an LCI [Landing Craft Infantry], how many in your crew?

IG: Well, well an LCI...the LCI, I went on the LCI, we were preparing for the invasion-

Q: So you were training in the-

IG: We always were training in water and amphibious- with the Marines ship and Army personnel. That consisted of Army training, getting off of the transports, APAs— amphibious personnel assault—and coming down the widgee gear, the cargo net which was called Jacob's Ladder, and you went into the small boats, and they took you to the beach and everything like that.

Q: How long was this training?

IG: This training was...from the minute I got in, I was after six [weeks] from Camp Bradford, Virginia, about a year later...[unclear] and to hit Normandy. Then we did additional training in England.

Q: How did you get to England?

IG: We got to England, well...we always seemed to be moving secretly at night. From Camp Bradford, Virginia, we were taken to Little Beach, which was in Queens, and of course they have St. Albans Hospital there right now. And in the middle of the night, they took us to...I don't know...this ship there to get on, to embark on, it was an English ship, the *Mauretania*, and we sailed from the *Mauretania*, we sailed from the city to Liverpool, England.

Q: Did you go in convoy or single ship?

IG: I don't think we went in a convoy, I think we went in a single ship because the *Mauretania* was a faster ship, and could outrun certain submarines, I guess.

Q: Your entire battalion was onboard?

IG: Yes.

Q: And where did you land in England?

IG: I landed in Liverpool. And then from there, we were taken to a base in Salcombe, England, which was somewhere near Wales...Swansea, Wales, which was a huge park like Central Park, but bigger, because not only was our beach battalion there, but there were navy and army personnel, too. There were about twenty, thirty-thousand troops there.

Q: Were there barracks there?

IG: Yes, yes, like in a dorm.

Q: Did you ever get to meet the people...local people?

IG: Yes, we used to meet the English people when the orders were taking walks—promenades, you know?--in the park, talking, and we on a Sunday or something like that, we had nothing to do so we played softball and as Americans, you know this sport, and they came over they saw us and they spoke to us. But they weren't [unclear].

Q: When did you start your amphibious training there?

IG: Once we got squared away, we did the amphibious training. We went to various parts of England. We went to Bristol, Dorchester, Manchester, I mean there were a lot of places we went.

Q: Was this where you were assigned to an LCI?

IG: No. When we were assigned to an LCI was the day before we were supposed to know that we were going to hit Normandy.

Q: What kind of craft did you train on?

IG: We trained mostly on landing...LCVPs [Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel] and LCMs [Landing Craft Mechanized]. LCM is mechanized, which is tanks.

Q: They're a little larger aren't they?

IG: Yes, they're very large, yes.

Q: So, basically, the first time you were on an LCI was just before the invasion?

IG: That's correct, yes.

Q: Do you think you were prepared for the difference in the crafts?

IG: We were prepared, yes, of course. We knew what our job was and everything like that.

Q: How many on an LCI? What's the crew?

IG: I really don't know, but from what I heard, according to what I read in the papers, on our LCI-85, it was I think 35 navy personnel, beach battalion, and about 200 army, which consisted of engineers, rangers, and somehow I think also from the 1st Army.

Q: Could you describe the preparation for D-Day and your...?

IG: Yes, the preparation for D-Day was- actually, the English people knew before we did that we were going to go to hit France, and so...actually the landing was supposed to be, from what I understand, June 5th, because we started out, but the weather was so bad, terrible, so they came back. And so, with the astrologists and everything figuring the weather to be a little bit better, they picked June 6th. So, we started out on June 6th--well June 5th, we started out on June 5th--and we had to cross the English Channel. Unbelievable...

Q: In what ways?

IG: In what ways...the water was so rough, everybody was seasick, throwing up. I don't think there was a clean spot. [Chuckles].

Q: Do you recall the aircraft going overhead?

IG: I'll tell you about the aircraft, yes. Well...that I can tell you later.

Q: Okay.

IG: Alright?

Q: Sure.

IG: So, we were getting set to head to Normandy. The bombardments started early in the morning, I don't know what time, and one thing was when we saw the ships, I think there were about five, six thousand ships that you could actually walk on them, you know, that's how...we started out, but I think about 37 LCIs from Weymouth. England. Everybody converges...I guess they had their orders. And so we met at that place and I was so astounded when I looked up and everything like that, and I went over to my squad leader and I...there were a lot of fireworks, everything was going ahead—planes, ships, arms, destroyers, battleships. So my squad leader says, "You've seen enough. Go down below. You'll see plenty when you get on the beach."

Q: What did you wear? What kind of equipment did you wear?

IG: We wore coveralls and of course we had our weapon with us, a Springfield rifle and of course a helmet with a patch, that signified the Navy, and then...

Q: Did you have a vest on at all?

IG: A vest?

Q: Like a Mae West or a life vest?

IG: No way. So then it was time for us to hit the beach. The number one ship was the LCI-88, and we followed close behind the 85, and as we got to the beach, we started in. I was down below in the compartment and I was talking to my radio man when all of the sudden—it's hard to believe—but it's a sight that I can't forget. I was talking to him and I saw a little hole being burrowed, like somebody was drilling a hole, and then all of a sudden there was a tremendous explosion and I ducked. It happened to be a German shore battery that hit..and then there were cries of *Medic! Medic! I'm hit! I'm hit! I'm hit!* I saw my corpsman [pauses] with his stomach spread open and my buddy Hackett who was with me within the same crew caught a piece of shrapnel in his behind that you could put a hand through, and of course, there was a lot of damage, and the ship was getting hit terribly. And then, all of the sudden, we hit a mine. Then there was a

tremendous explosion and a hole opened up in the ship and water started seeping in. And so, I yelled upstairs, "We can't stay here! We'll drown!", so they said, "Try to come up and try to take whoever you can with you." So we took all the wounded we could and carried them topside.

Then when I thought that everything was bad down below, I got topside. I saw bodies all over. There was no place to hide, so we just lay down among the dead and the wounded for cover. The shells were exploding all around us. Later from what I heard, our ship was hit with twenty, twenty-five shells. Lucky we weren't sunk.

Q: How far out were you from the beach?

IG: We were stuck on the beach, so they had us dead to rights. Somehow, maybe an act of God, the ship...the skipper got the ship off and so it was in a capsized position, but we were able to make it a few miles to the hospital ship. At the hospital ship there, we started to unload the dead and the wounded, and while doing that, I saw American planes flying over and I cried, "Give those bastards hell!"

So once we unloaded the dead and the wounded, they put me and a couple other fellas on an LCM that was going to the beach, and so we transferred over and we hit the beach. And maybe about six or seven of us—I'm not sure, I can't remember, maybe more—I chose the middle path, the others chose the side path, and as I got off the ship [unclear] I can hear *Woof! Woof! Woof!* Those were German shells. Those were the ones you didn't have to be afraid of. The ones you had to be afraid of were the ones you couldn't hear. Eventually, I couldn't hear. I ran and I was looking for cover, and I saw a row boat and I saw army troops behind it for cover. So I went there also for protection. And then before you knew it there, I could hear a shell. A shell hit the row boat and it...my head reeled like I didn't know where it was. It was like in shock. I couldn't open up my eyes, they were tearing and all. But I remembered from basic training, they said that German batteries fire in fours, and also that if you come on the ground, you have to be careful of minefields. And to avoid the minefields is to see tire tracks. If you see tire tracks, you know it's a safe place to go. And that's what I did. To my half-blinded eyes, I could see tire tracks and I climbed there and I was groping my way along the beach, and I was picked up by my corpsman who happened to be in my group.

And then from there, I was evacuated and went to the hospital somewhere in Southampton, England. I spent about four, five days there. They took care of me.

Q: What kind of wounds did you have?

IG: There was a shotgun wound, there was burns, concussion, burns, concussion.

Q: How long were you hospitalized?

IG: About four or five days, and then from there I was discharged with another person from the 6th Beach Battalion and we went to a base—a survivor's' base I think they called it—in Plymouth, England. And we went there, we had no clothes, so we got some things from the Red Cross and everything like that. And then from there we went back to our base in Salcombe, England, and from there we went back home.

Q: How many of the men in your unit survived?

IG: Survived? I don't know. According to — about 23, 26 who were killed. It could have been much more, but the wounded, there was a big share of wounded. Normandy was—the place was full of bodies, burning tanks, vehicles, everything. Bodies in the water.

Q: Have you seen the movie *Saving Private Ryan*?

IG: No, I couldn't see it.

WC: You landed on Omaha Beach?

IG: Omaha Beach, yes.

Q: When you returned to the States, what happened with you then?

IG: I was returned...they gave us a 30 day furlough for leave and then after it was over, I was sent...ordered to Camp Oceanside, another amphibious training base, which is opposite Camp Panelton, the main Marine base. And there...I stayed there. They wanted volunteers for ship's company, there was mess cook and everything like that, so I was still reeling from the effects of Normandy, so I volunteered. And so, by doing that, I was there a year, and then from there, I went aboard...I was transferred to a ship, the *American Legion*, APA—American Personnel Assault—and there, we did some training also because we were at that time set to hit Japan. But fortunately what happened is that on our way to Honolulu and [unclear] Guam, we saw Japanese prisoners, and we went to Kwajalein, then we got caught in a typhoon, which was unbelievable. Waves 30 feet high covering the ship, and *general quarters, general quarters*. All the small craft were lowered and got tangled to the reef and everything like that, and then finally we settled down. Then, in the middle of the night, we hear *bing bing bing, general quarters, general quarters*, and jump out there. I was in my underwear. I go topside, you go to battle stations, and you see a monster of a ship coming towards us, it was the aircraft carrier, the *Bon Homme Richard*, which broke loose from its moorings. And that carries planes, and high-octane fuel and headed straight for us, and it hit us, and tore a big gash into—I don't know—on the right side, or left side. So finally, they were able to back off the ship and moor it again. Of course, then we went back to sleep. Then, again, we get *general quarters, general quarters*, the same ship broke the mooring and it had hit us on the other side, so we had two gaping holes on the side of the ship. So, we weren't in any condition to go anywhere, so they got orders to come back to the States, and so we landed in Long Beach, California. And then, in Long Beach, California, I had enough

points to be discharged. In fact, my daughter was three years old. She was there with my wife when I got discharged. The irony of it was that I was discharged November 11th at 11 o'clock in the morning. It's this was was 58 years [unclear]. So, that's my story.

WC: Where were you when they dropped the atomic bombs?

IG: When they dropped the atomic bomb, I was in San Diego.

Q: Did you have a reaction? Did anyone...those around you, what was their reaction to that?

IG: People were happy. They were happy. In fact, I was in San Diego, so when Germany surrendered, people were dancing in San Diego. They had parades. I don't have to tell you what's going on here in the city.

Q: Do you remember where you were and did you have any reaction to the death of President Roosevelt?

IG: I was very saddened, yes, very saddened.

Q: Did you know anything about Harry Truman?

IG: Yes.

Q: You did?

IG: Yes, he was a very good man.

Q: A lot of the people we interviewed said they weren't very sure who he was, so...

IG: *"The buck stops here."* [Taps table in front of him three times.]

Q: After you were discharged, did you make any use of the GI Bill?

IG: I was going to, I wanted to become a television repairman, but at that time, I didn't think it...I was thinking of my wife and child, and then of course, we started to have other children, too, I didn't know which course I could have made it what it was, it was good fortune, and bad fortune. Eventually, I went back to the Garment District where I was, but then they closed up, they went bankrupt. And so then, I took a test to become—I wasn't unemployed or anything like that, I mean, maybe for one week or something—I took a test for the Post Office and became a federal employee, and that's where my...I spent my years, 33 years.

Q: Do you use the 52-20 Club at all?

IG: Maybe one day, one week. That's it.

Q: Did you join any veterans organizations?

IG: Yes, I belong to the Jewish War Veterans, the state DAV [Disabled American Veterans], and I contribute to the Eastern Paralyzed [unclear]. I contribute to them.

Q: Were you ever aware of the existence of the camps in Europe, the concentration camps, at all?

IG: Was I aware of it?

Q: Yes.

IG: Yes, I was aware of it. And out of this thing, I can say one thing: I mean, I love my country, I fought for my country, for freedom. We were able to do what we could. But I'm glad as an American I helped in the liberation of France to freedom...from Nazi occupation, and most of all, I'm glad I'm a Jew. I did my share.

Q: You mentioned off-camera about the...you have a reunion group.

IG: Yes, every year they've had it, but like I say, I haven't attended.

WC: Did you want to hold that photo up and I can zoom in on it?

IG: Yes.

Q: If you could hold it right here and Wayne can zoom in on it.

IG: Okay.

Q: So tell us about that photograph a little bit.

IG: This photograph was taken to—the living of the people that were left—eventually, it's...I think it's going to be the last year because we veterans are fading away.

Q: When was that photograph taken?

IG: This could have been taken in, let's see...it'll be ten years. This may be about four years ago.

Q: Why don't you tell us about this?

IG: This was when I was in Camp Oceanside, California. We had a parade in our honor, for all the...we were presented with—that's the original—presented with the Purple Heart. They had a big ceremony. We were on it.

Q: When was this photograph taken?

IG: This was taken, let's see [pauses] could've been [pauses] could've been nineteen forty-...1944.

WC: Here's the award you received in France...

Q: You're wearing the Purple Heart in this, correct?

IG: Yes, so it had to be in nineteen forty-...1945, I think, yes. I think in April. I'm not sure.

Q: And this is...you received the Croix de Guerre.

IG: Yes.

WC: Hold it right there.

IG: And we also received a Presidential Citation.

Q: When...could you tell me how you think your time in service had an effect or changed your life?

IG: Yes, I don't have to tell you that when I was drafted and I had to leave my wife and child who was only eight months old and go into service, that I was pretty much upset, and everything like that. Then eventually, I guess with the camaraderie with shipmates and everything like that it helped alleviate your fears and everything like that. But one thing I want to say is that it made me a man for the fact that the training that I did toughened me up. You know, I was just a skinny guy! I was 148 pounds there, and with the training and everything like that it was rough going, marching 15 to 18 miles a day and blisters being formed on your feet and doing maneuvers in the cold weather and icy water in front of the admirals and the captains or whatever it was. And then of course at night, you're digging foxholes, slit trenches, preparing, and the more sand you put up and what comes out, everything like that, they had these sand flies, which were so terrible that I couldn't stand them that I dove into the water. I didn't know what to make of it. But eventually, like everything else, you get used to it. I used to drink from a canteen cup which was rusty, you put your hand...you know, mix it up, whatever it was, coffee. Everything like that.

So, I say it made a man out of me and taught me a lot of things about life which of course helped me in...today in reaching my age and everything like that. Of course, it caused health problems, but I guess God saw to it that I was spared. That's all.

WC: Is there anything else you wanted to show us? Was there any other photographs there? I think there was one with some navy equipment.

IG: This?

Q: There's this one too. Is this your unit?

IG: Yes, this is in Camp Oceanside.

WC: Okay, I'll hold that up.

Q: And this was some of the equipment you had. Is this the helmet?

IG: Yes, the insignia. That's the way they told us the difference because they didn't know who we were.

WC: Okay, got it.

Q: Well, thank you very much for your interview.

IG: Thank you very much. As General Sherman said, "War is hell."