

**Lloyd J. Goggin
Veteran**

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Q: Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?

LG: My name is Lloyd Goggin. I was born in Carroll in Greene County, December 15, 1928.

Q: What was your educational background prior to going into service?

LG: I was a high school graduate from Carroll, now Carroll Durham.

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

LG: Yes, I do. I was up in a bedroom at my aunt's house listening to a Giants football game on the radio. No TV back then. They interrupted the programming and announced Pearl Harbor.

Q: Now, you were pretty young. Do you remember what you thought of this? Your feelings at all?

LG: Well, we knew it was coming one way or another. And of course, I was very young at the time, about 13, 14. So it impacted me as much as it would a young child. I wasn't really concerned about the service or what I would have to contribute. Although we did contribute a lot.

Q: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

LG: I enlisted.

Q: Why did you decide to enlist?

LG: Well, I graduated from high school at age 16, and I didn't have the means to go to college, so I went back to school. Get me off the street until I was 17. And I turned 17 on a Saturday, December 15, 1945, and I went up to Albany the following Monday. Enlisted, took the physical, was on a train that night for Great Lakes.

Q: Now, you were only 17. Your parents?

LG: I don't know whether they did or not. I don't remember. I only had a mother; my father wasn't around. I don't think she signed. Maybe one of the relatives did.

Q: Now, you went into the Navy. Why did you make that selection?

LG: Well, because I wanted, you know, I heard about the Navy, these guys going out with a girl in their report and so on and so forth. And I wanted the adventure. And of course, back then, you know, you're almost disappointed that the war ended and you missed the show. So I sat there patiently waiting until I was 17. And then I went into the Navy to, you know, to start getting a base of my life.

Q: Where did you go for your basic?

LG: I went to the Great Lakes training station.

Q: How long were you there?

LG: I was there from probably... we had a very indeterminate time we were going to be there because the war had just ended, and I think I was there about six weeks and then I went to electrician school there at Great Lakes.

Q: Had that been your first time away from home?

LG: Yes, it was. And it was just before Christmas, and I remember having to peel work, help peel 800 pounds of potatoes. And I had hung my peacoat up there and my wallet was stolen. So it wasn't a very happy merry Christmas.

Q: Do you remember hearing about the death of President Roosevelt?

LG: Oh, yes.

Q: What were your reactions on that?

LG: Well, you know, first of all, at school we all were moved down to the church for a service on the death of the President. The reaction was that he was well loved by the country people, and we never heard of this other guy. But the reaction was sad that we were in a battle and here we lose our leaders. So I had the reaction you would have; I felt really bad.

Q: How long was your electrician school?

LG: Well, that was about 16 weeks.

Q: And where did you go from there?

LG: Well, this is an interesting story. I applied for small craft, new construction, and I wanted to get on Higgins boats or destroyer escorts, some of those things that really chug through the water. And I got my orders to the USS Rena Mercedes, which was a station ship at Annapolis, Maryland. I shook my head and wondered, what am I doing? What navy am I in here? But I did go to that and served a two-year period there at Annapolis as ship's company and then was discharged because my enlistment was a two-year enlistment.

Q: What were your duties there at Annapolis?

LG: I was an electrician serving the sailing craft they had there. They had sail craft and training boats for the midshipmen. My duty as an electrician was carrying batteries out to these sail craft for lights, night lights, or at night going out and servicing them. So it was interesting, but it was a long life in small craft, new construction.

Q: Okay, so when were you discharged?

LG: In October of '47.

Q: Okay, now you then went into the Air Force. Did you go in?

LG: Right. Well, I had a one-year period before I went in the Air Force. I belonged to the operating engineers, and I like to say I built the VA hospital up here. I worked on a crane when it was being built, and then it got to be a little bit cold up here in December '48, and I said, I can't do this. So in January, I re-enlisted in the Navy.

Q: That would be 1950 then?

LG: No, '49. January '49.

Q: Did you go in at the same rank you were when you...?

LG: Yeah. Which wasn't much rank, but I went in at the same.

Q: Now, why did you pick the Air Force this time?

LG: Well, no, this was still the Navy. I went back in the Navy.

Q: Oh, you did? Okay.

LG: And I was assigned to a new cruiser under construction that was being built, and I served on that for a couple of years. This was the Newport News. I went to the electronic school and then was transferred to Boston to the CIC Team Training Center out there.

Q: Now, what is that?

LG: It's a training center for radar operators. And that's where my life took a turn. That's when I met my wife and we got married while I was out there. I was discharged in 1954, and then as a reserve, I joined and was a station keeper at the Naval Training Center in Scotia, New York. I was on active duty then, and I put a year in there.

Q: And that's when you decided the Navy wasn't really the right place?

LG: Yes, because, first of all, I was seasick most of the time. And the other thing I considered was that there was going to be a lot of traveling, so I opted to just make a swap and went in the Air Force.

Q: When did you serve in the Air Force?

LG: I served starting in 1955.

Q: Did you have to start over with training in the Air Force?

LG: No, I didn't have to take basic training, but I did take a reduction in rank to join.

Q: Where were you stationed in the Air Force?

LG: I was stationed at the ACN Aircraft and Warning Radar Station in Brunswick, Maine.

Q: What were your duties there?

LG: I was a crew chief on a radar maintenance team, running the warning radar 24/7 and overseeing maintenance.

Q: Was it a secure base?

LG: Yes, it was the Brunswick Naval Air Station, and we were a small detachment of radar personnel on the base.

Q: What was the significance of your work there?

LG: We were part of the early warning defense system, which later became known as the SAGE system.

Q: Did you have to go overseas?

LG: Yes, I volunteered for overseas duty on the Texas towers.

Q: What were the Texas towers?

LG: They were three offshore radar platforms managed by the Air Force off Long Island and Cape Cod.

Q: How long were you assigned to a tower?

LG: I spent a total of 365 days on the tower, rotating between the tower and Otis Air Force Base.

Q: Where was your tower located?

LG: Our tower was about 80 miles south of Long Island, off the Jersey coast.

Q: Was there a construction flaw with the tower?

LG: Yes, there was a flaw that occurred during transportation, which damaged the tower and caused it to be unstable.

Q: What was the issue with the tower's stability?

LG: It was known as "old shaky" because it would shake and vibrate, especially in stormy weather.

Q: How many men were on the tower?

LG: There were around 80 men stationed on the tower.

Q: What happened to the tower after you left?

LG: The tower collapsed in January 1960, resulting in the loss of 28 lives.

Q: Where were you when the tower collapsed?

LG: I had been transferred to a radar site in Montauk, Long Island, about six months prior to the collapse.

Q: How did you feel about the tower's condition before it collapsed?

LG: It was a traumatic experience, and we had concerns about the tower's stability all the time.

Q: What did they do with the rest of the towers?

LG: Well, they ultimately disassembled and brought them in. And I guess the tower that I was on remains there yet underwater? I don't know. I don't really know.

Q: How long did you serve at Montauk?

LG: I served at Montauk for about four years in the same capacity I was at Brunswick as a radar technician at a warning radar site.

Q: How long had you been in the service by then?

LG: At this time, I had about 17 years of service. Most of my service had been right on the east coast here, ironically.

Q: What happened after that?

LG: In 1954, I got orders to become a missile guidance technician at Vandenberg Air Force Base. The duties were on Johnson Island as a guidance missile technician, which was a highly classified project. We were home-based at Vandenberg, although we spent most of the time at Johnson Island.

Q: What was the role of the unit you were part of?

LG: We were an active air defense command unit. It was highly classified at the time, but now you can read about it on the Internet. It's been brought out what we were doing there.

Q: Did you participate in any launches while stationed there?

LG: Yes, I participated in a few live launches, combat launches. That was, of course, an interesting experience. But I had to retrain from the beginning to transition from a warning radar technician to a guidance radar technician.

Q: How long did you spend retraining and at Johnson Island?

LG: We spent three years retraining, and I spent a total of over a year on Johnson Island. There were different crews that would go out at different times.

Q: Is there any information about the work done at Johnson Island available online?

LG: Yes, there's information on the Internet about this station. It's under the 10th Aerospace Defense Squadron, which is what we were assigned to. You can go online and find out everything we did or didn't do. The Internet keeps the world posted on what some of these activities are, which you probably would never hear about under normal circumstances.

Q: What happened after your service at Johnson Island?

LG: By this time, I had my 20 years of service, and the Vietnam War was raging. To be perfectly frank, I'm a peacetime soldier, so I put in for my retirement after 20 years of service.

Q: Was your wife able to travel with you during your assignments?

LG: Most of the time, yes. She followed me to places like Otis Air Force Base and Vandenberg Air Force Station. But, of course, there were separations.

Q: Where did your wife live when you were stationed at the tower?

LG: She lived in Falmouth, Mass, near Otis Air Force Base. Later, she moved back to my previous station where she knew people and felt more comfortable, up in Maine.

Q: What was your schedule like when you were on the tower?

LG: I'd come in every 30 to 45 days and would have 15 to 20 days off, and then I'd go back out to the tower. We flew to the tower on a banana-type helicopter. If the weather was bad, we had to go on a supply ship. So, I got more sea time than I did in the Navy, really, between that and Johnson Island.

Q: How would you describe your military experience?

LG: It's been an interesting experience. As I say, I've got more good conduct medals than I do war medals, but it was a good experience.

Q: Were you ever able to use the GI Bill?

LG: The ironic part is I had the full benefits of the GI Bill when I was 18 years old, but I didn't use them. I just went back into service. I was eligible for all of them, but never took advantage of it. Maybe that's all right too. I was never a student, I guess you'd say. I feel I made good choices, and the service was very good to me and still is.

Q: What rank were you when you got out?

LG: I was an E7, a technical sergeant. That's what I was when I got out of the Navy. It took me that long to reestablish myself. Things were starting to toughen up then, rank-wise, and so I was satisfied. I got my just due.

Q: Were you able to carry out the skills you learned in the Navy?

LG: Oh, yeah. To go back to my high school days, I was an electrician. I worked for an electrician in Cairo when I was 16 years old, which today would be unheard of, but I worked for him for one summer. Because of that, I got into electrical training and then into communications electronics. When I retired, I went to work for New York Telephone Company, and they were very good to me. I had a nice position there, which was related to the communication electronics skills I learned in the service. So, yeah, it was worthwhile.

Q: Did you join any service organizations after your time in the service?

LG: No, I didn't. I thought about it a lot of times since and thought I should have, but I never did. I never joined the Legion or any other organization.

Q: Did you stay in contact with anyone from your time in service?

LG: Not really, no. You meet so many people, even civilians, when you're in the service. You go back to see them, and it's a different world. Things have changed, you've changed, they've changed. So, no, I didn't stay in contact much with anyone from the service.

Q: How did your time in the service affect or change your life?

LG: It gave me a basis for life. I was 16 years old when I joined, with no formal training, no background. I often look back and think, "How was I going to cope with the world?" The service took care of that for me. They gave me a home, clothes, food, and a life—a career. So, it didn't just affect my life; it was my life at that time.

Q: Did you bring any photographs with you?

LG: I just brought my discharge, my separation papers. I know you sent us these or we have these.

Q: Can you tell me about the first photograph?

LG: That was taken at Anne Florence's. It was probably taken around 1951. The second one was probably around 1953, if you notice the difference. I've changed since then. I think I was about 21 in that second picture.

Q: Can you tell me more about these photos?

LG: I think this was when I was working at the radar and missile guidance. There were three of us at a console, handling height, elevation, and range for guidance. We operated various functions for that, and it was all computerized at that time. Basically, we just sat and occupied the seat. These photos would have been taken around 1966, maybe 1967, for sure by 1966 because I retired in 1967.

Q: Do you have any interesting stories or incidents from your service?

LG: Most of my stories are right there in the service. I was assigned to the oldest ship in the United States Navy during World War II. I've got information on that. And I was on the Texas Towers, which was an interesting experience. I retrained to become a missile guidance technician, and I even have a certificate from the Air Force for that. I jokingly refer to myself as a rocket scientist to my daughter.

Q: What is the story of the ship you were on?

LG: The ship was built in 1897 in Spain. It was sunk in Santiago Harbor during the Spanish-American War by Admiral Farragut and two U.S. battleships. They raised it from Santiago and brought it up to Annapolis, Maryland, where it became a station ship for about 800 enlisted men. In 1941, they decided it wasn't fit to live on, so they bought land across the river in Severn River and established the Severn River Naval Command, which I was assigned to. It was still a commissioned ship and was the oldest commissioned ship to serve in the United States Navy during World War II. It was referred to as extremely fast—but only to the pier in Annapolis, Maryland, where it never moved.

Q: Do you know what eventually happened to the ship?

LG: I think it's in the story. It was taken to one of the shipyards and disassembled, I think, around 1953 or 1957, somewhere around there. But it was a shocker when I got my orders to go to that.

Q: Did you read the story about it?

LG: Yes, I read the story on it.

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

LG: Well, thank you. I hope this is some information for you.

Q: Is there anything else you want to leave?

LG: And Bob, I want to leave.