

Louis “Lou” Gasparini

- *Interviewed by Michael Verrino & Perry Verrino ~ 2005*
- *Interviewed by Nicol Haywood, Liam Payne, Kyle DeSantis, Perry Verrino, Jeremy DiFabbio - July 29, 2020*
- *Documented by: Perry Verrino*

Branch: Army 23rd Infantry Division

Rank: Staff Sergeant

Years of Service: 1953-1955

Location of Service: Korea

Medals: Combat infantry medal, UN Defense Ribbon, Korean Defense Ribbon



Lou Gasparini was drafted and deployed to Korea March 1953 through August 1953. When the fighting was going on, he was mostly in trenches and Lincoln Bunkers (logs in the snow and rain). There was heavy fighting every night. There were always supply issues. USA was technically more advanced than the Korean's.

When describing his equipment and the environment; Mr. Gasparini said “I was given Mickey Mouse boots and a parka. We slept in sleeping bags in the trenches. We were sprayed down with DDT for lice. The food rations that were given to us were things like SPAM and pork & beans. I remember during basic training; most soldiers were required to keep their hair real short in a crew cut. I said give me a “Trim Please” jokingly. My captain asked how would an Italian with wavy hair look with a crewcut? Since it was the captain's request, I got away without the short haircut. I was only guy in basic training without a crew cut!

When asked about his involvement in combat; Mr. Gasparini said: “I was in combat during the time that the US was in peace talks with North Korea. The troops did not want to take chances if they could help it. A peace treaty was in sight.” One memorable battle Mr. Gasparini took part in was on three mountains that were nicknamed Tom, Dick and Harry. “The North Korean's tried to come down in waves. They would wound a man. When one man was wounded, that would take three men offline. Sometimes they would kill one man and leave another alive to demoralize the other. I was on guard duty in a “blocking position”. I was always afraid during my tour of duty. The North Korean's were cruel. The Chinese were better.” The North Korean's would blow trumpets before an attack. They would try to scare our troops. We would call for flares. “There were so many enemy soldiers coming up the hill that when the flares went up, it looked like ants coming up the hill. I still have recurring dreams of a North Korean trying to stab me.”

When asked about America's part in the Korean War; Mr. Gasparini said: "I felt that we were doing the right thing. The South Korean's were thankful of our help. I believe that the soldier in Korea was the last of the "Obedient Soldiers". Basically, we would "Pick up your stuff and go to war", "Pick up your stuff and go home" and "Now get back to your life."

What was it like during any downtime while you were deployed? "We did not run into civilians while deployed in Korea. Mail Call was the best morale booster for the men." Lou wrote letters to people at home while in the service to try to stay connected.

What skills did you learn while in the service? "I needed to pick up and learn military life, survival, and wilderness training. I can read the signs in the wilderness. What to eat and what not to eat. How to share duties as a team."

Mr. Gasparini recalls: "I finished my tour of service in Okinawa. By then everything was forgotten. This was the forgotten war. I came home. It was like it was all over...so no reception. When I returned home, I was scared to listen to the radio since it was all Rock & Roll. I was used to listening to Big Band. I lost contact with some of the friends he made while in the service. I got married. "

What did you do when you came back? I got married. Sometimes we would go to NYC to a show with some friends from the service. I had been working before I was drafted. When I came back, we moved to Brewster, NY. I took the test and received my High School equivalency. I learned the plumbing trade and became a plumber. I worked as the water superintendent of the Brewster Heights Water District for 22 years. After that I started my own plumbing & heating business. I then took over the Water Superintendent position for the Village of Brewster.

Later in life: "I visited the Korean War Memorial. I went there as the sun was coming up so I could remember coming back from patrol."

When asked about War Today: "I support it but would rather see something done differently. It is a different war today. We knew the enemy then. Today it is different. We do not know our enemy and it is a different war and a different task."

What was the most memorable experience during your tour of duty: It was when the peace treaty or truce went into effect ending the war. Peace was to begin on July 27, 1953 at 10:00 PM. When the time came, it became still. I started to hear the birds and animals. No more artillery. One man in our group took out a trumpet and blew Taps. I went off in a corner and cried...

"There are no winners in war. The cost of lives lost on both sides is a high price to pay."