RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH B. LAURIEL MOODIE GIANTONIO

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II * KOREAN WAR * VIETNAM WAR * COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Elaine Blatt: This begins an interview with B. Lauriel Moodie Giantonio on November 4, 2006 in Salisbury, Connecticut, with Elaine Blatt ...

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: ... and Sandra Stewart Holyoak.

EB: All right. To begin with, where and when were you born?

B. Lauriel Moodie Giantonio: Where was I born? Everett, Mass [achussettes]

EB: And when was that?

LG: 1922, March 16th.

EB: Tell me about your father, what was his name, and what did he do for a living?

LG: Andrew Moodie, and he was an engineer.

EB: What else did he do?

LG: Almost anything, to earn a living.

EB: Where did he work?

LG: Where did he work? He worked at the Falls Mill, he worked for the town of ... [Norwich].

SH: Okay, tell us about your father.

Andrea Giantonio Blatt: Tell about how he, early on he was a merchant marine, and then he became an engineer, and he was the boss of the mill and made the canvas, and that kind of stuff.

LG: And he blew off three fingers.

SH: What did he do?

LG: He blew off three fingers, a thumb and two fingers.

AB: He was working at the mill.

LG: He was doing something with one of the engines that he wouldn't let the guys work on because it was dangerous, so he did it, the idiot, and blew off three fingers.

SH: Was he a merchant marine during World War I, or did he do that as a young man, and then become the engineer and work for Falls Mills?

LG: I don't know where he did it from. That's old for me. I'm eighty-four, and that's old for me.

EB: What about your mother, what was her name, and what did she do?

LG: Eyla Dart, she was an industrial nurse.

EB: How did your parents meet?

LG: I have no idea, and couldn't care less.

EB: What was your childhood like? You grew up with your father, right?

LG: The pits.

EB: What did you think of your parents, is there anything between your parents that you would like to talk about, your mom and dad, like what did you think of them?

LG: I thought my mother was good-for-nothing, and my father was queen, king, queen and king.

SH: Now your father passed away where?

LG: Norwich, Connecticut.

SH: And he was originally from Scotland?

LG: Oh, yeah.

SH: So, he immigrated with his whole family here?

LG: I want to say, I don't know, but, I know his sisters were here with him, which meant my grandmother and grandfather were, too, because I vaguely remember them living in different places.

SH: Did you have cousins that you played with?

LG: No. They were all older than me.

SH: Did you have brothers and sisters?

LG: They were older than me, and I didn't want them anyway.

AGB: Tell about how when you were little and your parents got divorced.

LG: Oh, my parents were divorced when I was about five, and, I insisted I had to live with my father, and they said, "No, you got to live with your mother." I said, "No, I haven't, I'll run away." So, they sent me in to see this judge, and his name was, I think Johnson, something like that, Thompson, and I went in to see him, and he said, "Well, what did they expect you to tell

me," he said. I said, "My father said, 'tell you the truth,' and that's all, so what can I do?" He said, "That's good enough." So, he asked me a few questions, and gave me to my father.

SH: Now the older brothers and sister went with your mother?

LG: Oh, yeah.

SH: Now how many brothers and sisters did you have?

LG: I had an older sister, and two older brothers.

SH: How much older were they than you?

LG: Well, I was probably seven, and they were fourteen, twenty-one, twenty-four, twenty-five. Then I found out the oldest one was in the service, so he had to be inductable age.

EB: What did your mother tell your siblings, like why did they go with your mother?

LG: I don't know what she told them. She told them ... [he] had another girlfriend and she was the one who had the boyfriend.

EB: But, did she tell you that you could come with her and quit school?

LG: Oh, yeah. "You didn't have to go to school." Me, who loved school, and loved to read, and she's telling me I didn't have to go to school anymore. I thought, "Who is this nut that's telling me I don't have to read anymore?"

SH: And you're only five or seven?

LG: Yeah. I was pretty mature for that age.

Michael Blatt: She might be the first person in the state of Massachusetts to be awarded to her father's custody. It was very sensational, in terms of newsworthy, it was in the papers. It was very big at that point to be awarded [to her father], while her mother still wanted the child.

SH: Now was your father's mother and father there to support and help him?

LG: Hey, they were Scots; they didn't support anybody but each other. "Mind your own business, keep your mouth shut."

EB: What was it like living with your father? Where did you live? Did you live in a house with him? What was your childhood like growing up with just your father, and not having a mother there?

LG: Well, I lived in boarding houses, sometimes with aunts, sometimes without aunts, always my father and I. We depended on each other, even though I was only six or seven years old, we depended on each other.

SH: Now when you would come home from school, who would be in your home?

LG: Nobody.

SH: And you would take care of the house and the chores?

LG: Yeah. I'd let the dog out, and be sure everything in the house was fine, and get supper ready, and by the time he got home everything was set, and, I didn't feel it was any imposition. I just felt that it was something I should be doing.

EB: And did he ever, he was a merchant marine for a little while, did he leave for periods of time and come back?

LG: Right.

EB: So where were you, were you living with friends of the family while he was gone, or even by yourself?

LG: I was living in Malden at the time, Malden, Mass.

SH: Was one of his sisters there?

LG: I'm trying to think of which sister it was. I think it was Greta.

EB: Did you have a foster mother?

LG: No.

SH: Did your father ever remarry?

LG: Yeah, after I was grown.

SH: How old were you when he remarried?

LG: How old was I? You're dating me now, I'm eighty-four, you want me to remember back that long?

AB: Were you in nurses training?

LG: No. It's before I was in training.

SH: How about high school? Were you in high school?

LG: Yeah, I was in high school. Oh, that's right, too, and, I told the principal I wanted to go to my father's wedding, and he was gonna shut me up in a room until I got my marbles back. I said, "He's getting married, he's gonna go to St. Pat's and get married, I want to go." So, finally they let me go to shut me up.

SH: Were you in a public school?

LG: That was in high school.

SH: Public high school?

LG: Yeah.

EB: What was the name of your high school?

LG: Norwich Free Academy.

EB: What was high school like, what was your favorite subject?

LG: Science.

SH: Was the Academy just for girls?

LG: No, no, Norwich Free Academy took everybody. In fact, it was the only high school in the surrounding areas, still there.

SH: Did you go to dances?

LG: No. Have a man put his arm around me? Good Lord, my father would shoot him.

EB: Your father wanted you to learn how to sew, so would he give you money?

LG: Oh, yeah. He sent me to sewing school, the United Worker's Sewing School, it was ten cents a week. So, I knew how to sew, I said, "Ok, I'll take your ten cents," and I'd meet my girl friend on the way down, and we'd go to the movies, and then we'd come back, and he'd say, "What did you learn today?" I said, "Oh, hems." "Oh, well, that was good. It wasn't a waste of time?" "No, no, it wasn't a waste of time, Dad."

SH: Did he ever ask to see your finished product?

LG: No. Thank God, he never did.

EB: Where did you actually learn how to sew then? Did your sisters teach you?

LG: My aunts taught me.

AGB: You were a good sewer.

LG: Yeah, I was. I made all your clothes.

EB: Did you participate in any extra-curricular activities when you were in school? Did you have any clubs?

LG: Well, I belonged to the Bow and Arrow Club, archery.

EB: In high school?

LG: Yeah.

EB: Did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up?

LG: Oh, I always knew what I wanted to be. I wanted to be a nurse, better than my mother.

EB: Do you remember your mother working as a nurse?

LG: No, she was an industrial nurse, and just went out in the morning, I took care of myself all day, and then she came home at night.

EB: But you still knew that you wanted to be a nurse.

LG: Yeah.

EB: What was it about nursing that attracted you?

LG: I wanted to be better than her.

EB: That's why you picked nursing?

LG: That's right.

SH: What's the more positive aspect of why you wanted to become a nurse, because you were good in sciences?

LG: I was good in science, and I liked helping people, and I'm a good talker. I mean, I was a good talker. Don't know what it is now. But I could get guys, who had psychological problems, they would open up to me and tell me what was wrong, and I could tell them what they were doing wrong to be thinking like that, and it worked out fine.

SH: Were you, as a young woman, did you volunteer in the hospital before you began your training?

LG: No. I went right from the Academy into training.

EB: So, you didn't have to work growing up then, your father had a steady job?

LG: Oh, that wasn't allowed.

EB: What was it like growing up during the Depression then? Did you feel any of the effects?

LG: I didn't feel it at all. I had everything I wanted.

EB: Did you know that there was a Depression, and that people were struggling?

LG: Oh, yeah, I knew that.

SH: What were some of the signs, that you saw other people going through?

LG: The bread lines.

SH: Did you see those?

LG: Yeah. There were a lot of them in Norwich, because it was a mill town, and people were mostly Canadian immigrants, and, they didn't have their papers that they had to get, so they got into the bread lines, and that was the thing that I remember most about the Depression.

SH: Did any of your father's sisters, or uncles, or anyone lose their jobs?

LG: No, they were considered rich.

SH: Were they?

LG: Yeah. They weren't rich, but they were considered rich.

EB: Your father was the boss at the mill? Did he run the mill?

LG: Yeah, one of the mills. He works in the department that he was boss of, the engineering department.

EB: And what type of people did they hire?

LG: Canadian French immigrants.

EB: Because they would work for cheap?

LG: They would work for cheap, and they were good workers.

SH: Did he speak French?

LG: No.

EB: So they spoke English?

LG: Yeah, he figured he had to teach them English if they were going to go around in the United States.

EB: Did you ever go to the mills to visit your father?

LG: Oh, sure. I spent half of my life there.

SH: What does a kid do in a mill?

LG: Walk around, talk to everybody, and look and see what this loom was going, and that machine is doing, and, I could have woven a canvas from the ground up by the time I got out of there.

SH: What were these canvases going to be used for?

LG: Awnings.

EB: So, you were the cute little girl, distraction, for all these men bored all day working at the mill.

LG: Yeah.

EB: Weaving all day.

LG: "Here comes Lauriel, great."

EB: You were the entertainment for the day.

SH: Did any women work in the mill?

LG: They must have, but I don't remember them. I'm thinking the Canadian French women worked every place.

SH: Did you have any kind of help in your house, or you were the sole housekeeper?

LG: No, no. My father and I were it.

SH: What was your favorite meal to prepare?

LG: Steak and French fries. I can still taste it. Now, I don't have the teeth to chew it, [but] I can taste it.

SH: Did you bake?

LG: Yeah, I baked. That was before instant bakery stuff.

EB: Cooked everything by hand?

LG: Yeah, I think I got a cookbook around here somewhere.

SH: Did you have an allowance?

LG: Yeah, twenty-five cents a week.

SH: Did you save it, or did you spend it every week?

LG: I saved it, up to seventy-five cents, and [then, once I saved] the seventy-five cents, I wanted something, and I haven't the vaguest idea what it is now, but I wanted that seventy-five cents for something, and I finally got it. Got what I was saving it for, and I don't know what it was. It was so important to me.

EB: Something you had to have at the time?

LG: Right.

EB: Did you have any girlfriends growing up?

LG: Oh, yeah.

EB: Or guy friends that you would hang out with?

LG: I didn't like girls much, but I had a couple of girlfriends.

EB: What did you guys typically do in high school?

LG: We used to try to go to the dances after the football games, and the baseball games, but my father would never let me. I was gonna get in trouble.

EB: He was strict about your social activities?

LG: Yeah, I don't know what kind of trouble he thought I was gonna get in. I was gonna get pregnant, and have a baby, I guess. That's his idea of trouble.

SH: Well, for a father that would be, I would think.

LG: Oh, yeah.

EB: You were his only child.

SH: What church did you attend?

LG: Which one? Well, there was the Congregational Church, and then there was the Episcopal Church, then there was a Presbyterian Church. I attended all of them.

SH: Did you?

LG: Yeah.

AGB: She actually grew up as a Protestant, and when she was going to marry my father she converted to being a Catholic, that's a whole other story.

LG: I had my eye on that for a long time, but my father wouldn't tolerate it. "You don't join the Catholic Church, what's the matter with you?" Here I am.

EB: You knew that you were gonna be a nurse after you graduated from high school. Now, did you notice the feelings of people around you before the war, towards Europe? Did you have an idea what was going on in Europe or Japan?

LG: Oh, no, we had all the papers to read, and all that stuff, which my father got, and, I don't know where he got them from, but we knew how the war was going, and what was going on. When they sent me to England, I thought this was the dumbest thing they ever did, "they're trying to kill me." One time the town that I was living in got bombed and I got bounced out of bed on the floor.

SH: Did your father have any family left in Scotland, or in England?

LG: He must have had cousins and stuff like that, but none that I ever knew.

SH: I just wondered if there was any family reporting back?

LG: No.

SH: About the Battle of Britain, that sort of thing?

LG: No, he just read it in the papers. As long as they were American papers, they were worth it.

SH: When the draft started in 1940, would you still have been in high school?

LG: I graduated in 1940. Then I went directly into the Army Nurse Corps.

SH: Do you remember a lot of the young men in your town going to the draft?

LG: No. I wasn't allowed young men.

SH: But you might have noticed that there were fewer around?

LG: No. If I wasn't interested, how could they be interested?

EB: Did any of the kids, did you notice when you were a senior in high school, were any of the kids in your class, were they joining the war? Did you notice that there was maybe some people missing?

LG: When would that be, '43,'44?

SH: 1940.

EB: If they were volunteering?

LG: High school graduates. Yeah, they were volunteering, they were going in droves.

SH: So, you started nursing school in 1940, that fall?

LG: Yeah, because I graduated in '43.

AB: What year did you graduate high school?

LG: '40.

AB: Okay, and then she went immediately to Hartford Hospital.

SH: Did you have the summer off, to do anything, after your graduation?

LG: I don't know, but it would have been a waste of time. My father wouldn't have tolerated that. If I could get six months ahead of the other guy, "go ahead."

SH: What school did you go to, what nursing school?

LG: Hartford Hospital.

SH: Hartford Hospital had a nursing program. Can you tell us a little bit about what it was like to get into it? Did you have to apply?

LG: Well, it wasn't easy to get into it. You had to have good marks, and, of course, I always had good marks, and I had to have, I don't know what else I had to have, the gift of gab, I got that.

EB: So, you actually applied, like filled out an application, or did you go there and talk to them?

LG: I applied, and then they gave me an appointment to come and see them and I went and talked to them, and they accepted me. The first time we went to the Hartford Hospital School Of

Nursing, my father and I went, and I can't remember who it was, the director of nurses was there, and she was gonna interview me, and she asked a couple of questions, and I said, "Well, I don't know if I should answer those," and she said, "Well, if I ask them, you answer them," and my father said, "Just a minute. Lauriel, you want to go to this school?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, let's go," and we walked out, and on the way out he said to the director of nurses, "She'll be back when school opens, and not before." I said, "Holy cow," and they took me.

EB: Was your father a powerful-looking man, or was he a big man?

LG: No.

EB: He was small.

LG: No, he wasn't a big man at all. He was, I guess, the same size as everybody else during the Depression.

EB: Did he have a big presence maybe because he had a strict tone?

LG: Yeah. His word was law.

SH: Was he tall?

LG: No. He was only, well, I'm 5'4" now, he was maybe 5'6", 5'7", and that was it, but he had a forceful presence.

SH: How far was the Hartford Hospital from where you lived?

LG: Across the street.

AB: About a half an hour.

SH: Because you came for Massachusetts.

AB: No, when you lived in Norwich, to Hartford Hospital was about a half hour. When she lived at the hospital, she lived across the street is what she means.

SH: Okay. Was there a boarding house for the nursing students?

LG: Yeah, there was, yeah, I guess you could call it that.

SH: Did they have a curfew?

LG: No. If they did, I don't remember it.

SH: Nobody kept an eye on you young women?

LG: No. If they did, we didn't pay any attention to them.

EB: So, when you went to nursing school, you had the goal of just becoming a nurse, or were you already thinking ahead that you were going to enlist?

LG: No. You had to be a nurse to enlist.

EB: But, were you thinking in your mind, "I'm going to enlist after I get my nursing degree"?

LG: Yeah.

EB: So, you knew already when you were going into nursing school.

LG: Yeah. I knew already, yeah.

SH: Pearl Harbor, you go to school for almost a year and a half before Pearl Harbor happened, right?

LG: Yeah.

SH: If you started in September of 1940, you were already well into your program when Pearl Harbor happened in December of '41.

LG: But we knew there was going to be a war anyway.

SH: You were sure of that.

LG: Yeah.

SH: Everybody was talking about it?

LG: We had made up our minds.

SH: You were just waiting for Roosevelt to make the call.

LG: Yeah, "Come on, get off your butt and do something here."

SH: Tell me, what did your father think of Franklin Roosevelt?

LG: Thought he stunk. He was a Democrat. ...

SH: Tell me then, if you would, were there any other politics that your father discussed around the dinner table?

LG: He was a Republican, Democrats were good-for-nothing.

SH: What did he think of the land-lease program, after Europe became embroiled in the war and the Nazis had taken over?

LG: He didn't see why we should go there and help them out. They should get ... back on their own two feet.

SH: Did he talk at all about what was going on in Japan and China?

LG: No, he was all for what went on in Japan [with the dropping of the atomic bomb]. They should blow them up, because he was a POW for three years, three and a half years.

AB: That's Dad [Dominick Giantonio], you mean.

LG: Oh, no, I'm sorry that's my husband, not my father.

SH: Okay, well, we'll get to that.

EB: So, you went through nursing school, and that was good training.

LG: Well, it was a great training. I loved it.

EB: After Pearl Harbor, you knew you were going to be in a war definitely. When did you actually enlist?

LG: As soon as I graduated. I graduated in one hand, and enlisted in the other.

SH: Can you tell us what the reaction was in the school, and what you remember about December 7th, and hearing about Pearl Harbor?

LG: Yeah, but I can't use that language in front of this thing [microphone].

SH: What did people say?

LG: "Those sons-of-bitches, they skipped in at the wrong time. Now we're gonna get them." Because we hadn't declared war on Japan up until that time. That's when we decided we were gonna get them, and everybody felt the same way.

SH: Did you listen to Roosevelt's message that he gave after the bombing in Pearl Harbor, when there was the declaration of war?

EB: "The day that will live in infamy."

LG: We must have, but I can't remember now.

SH: In nursing school, what was your favorite focus for study?

LG: Surgery.

SH: So you decided you were going to become a surgical nurse?

LG: Yeah.

SH: You specialized in it, or was it fairly general?

LG: Hartford Hospital was very specialized in everything, because they graduated nothing but good nurses, so they said, and I thought we were a bunch of duds, too, but I didn't say anything, kept my mouth shut that time.

EB: How many of you were in one class, like the graduation class from nursing school?

LG: I'm trying to think how many there were.

EB: Was there ten of you, or was there sixty of you that graduated?

LG: No. More like twenty, or thirty.

EB: So, a graduate class would have been in all the same classes, all twenty of you?

LG: Yeah.

EB: So, someone that you would have gone to nursing school with your first year, you would have every class with throughout the whole nursing program, all twenty or thirty of you? Did you become close to the group then?

LG: Well, no. It depends on by the time you get to your upper classes if you were qualified for more advance classes.

SH: What was your least favorite class?

LG: What's that thing where you get people who would eat their dinner and have their dirty clothes on the table at the same time, welfare?

AB: Yeah.

LG: I think it was something else at that time.

AB: Like a clinic of some sort do you mean?

EB: Clinical nursing?

LG: Yeah. I can't think, because I didn't know what that word meant.

AB: To where the poor people came?

LG: Yeah. I didn't mind the poor people, I minded the dirty ones, who didn't have a bath for maybe six weeks, and it seemed to me they could have washed their face and hands before they came to eat. So I knew something was wrong.

EB: Now, the women that were also at Hartford Hospital, in classes with you, did you become friends with them there at the hospital?

LG: Not really. I can't think of anybody I can even remember now.

EB: So, you were housed across the street?

LG: Yeah, the dormitory.

EB: So, all the women lived in the dorm, and you would all go over to class together? What was class like, from the morning till night, or how long was a typical day?

LG: From morning till night. There was no break of any kind, just went right on.

SH: When did you start having duty in the hospital then?

LG: I think it was after we've been in six months. Does that seem right to you?

SH: When was your capping ceremony?

LG: After the first year.

SH: Did your father come?

LG: No. That was a girl's job, so he sent my aunt. That was when men were men, and women were women, and no in-between.

SH: When did you get your pin, your nursing pin?

LG: When I graduated.

SH: That's when they gave your pin?

LG: Yeah.

SH: Did you feel very proud of that?

LG: They gave me my pin in one hand, and my papers for the Army in the other.

SH: Let me ask you about your enlistment. Did you have a choice? Did you think that you might want to become a Navy nurse?

LG: We had all kinds of choices. We had Army, Navy, Marines nurse corps, and then we found out that the Marines and anything else that were connected with the Navy, were Navy nurses, period. So, we didn't bother with any of that stuff, and the only ones who were going overseas were the Army, that's why I joined up in the Army.

SH: Why did you want to go overseas?

LG: Adventure. Something new and different.

SH: Did the recruiters come right to your school?

LG: I think they did, but I never bothered with them, because I knew what I was gonna do.

SH: Did you take a look at the uniforms and decide?

LG: Oh, weren't they lovely. They were brown and white-striped seersucker, that was it.

EB: Now your father knew that you were going to nursing school, I assume he paid for nursing school?

LG: No, he didn't have to pay for it.

AB: How did you pay for nursing school?

LG: I didn't pay for it.

AGB: Who paid for it?

LG: The State.

AB: Oh, in those days it was free?

LG: Yeah. We were working for the government.

SH: To just back up a little bit, you said your father paid for your nursing school.

LG: Yeah.

SH: Did the State supplement that at all, helped pay that?

LG: I remember him getting letters from the State with seven dollars in them for a month, but I had no idea what they were for. I assume, since you mentioned that, that that's what it was for. Who's gonna live on seven dollars a month? Me.

EB: It may have been a lot back then.

LG: Yeah.

SH: From what we hear it was.

EB: Now, you said you graduated and they handed you your diploma in one hand, and your Army papers in the other, so did you actually have to enlist? Did you have to go to an enlisting officer and actually enlist?

LG: Well, you did, after that, because you had already volunteered to go into the Army. But you didn't specify anything particularly that you wanted to get into, you know, orthopedics, surgery, or medicine, or anything like that.

EB: You actually went and talked to someone by yourself, and they told you what the Navy does, what the Marines have, what the Army has, and you decided then that you wanted to join the Army?

LG: I decided then I'm going into surgical nursing in the Army.

SH: Did they send you for any training as to how the Army was going to be?

LG: We had, I think, six months.

SH: Where was that, do you remember?

LG: It was in whatever dormitory we lived in.

AB: Where did the Army send you for training?

LG: That was the Army.

EB: Basic training?

LG: We went back to Fort Edwards, what came before Devens? [Fort Devens, Massachusetts] Edwards?

EB: The Army sent you there for basic training?

LG: It was the dorm more than anything else, and then we had classes from there. Most of it was Army diplomacy.

EB: So they taught you what a badge would mean?

LG: Taught us who to salute, and who not to salute.

SH: If you could have seen the hand gesture, folks, one was the traditional salute, the other one was not.

LG: The other was traditional, too, but not so much by ladies.

EB: So they taught you whose uniform was whose, who was a corporal's uniform?

LG: That's something I could never figure out. That they had a different uniform for every branch of the service, in every service, and we were supposed to remember them all. I said, "Cripe, I can't remember who the security officer is here, how can I do it with the whole country?" But I got along fine; I didn't have to salute anybody. I would put my head down and went by him.

EB: You had one stripe for nurses?

LG: I don't know what I had.

SH: When you graduated and you were capped and had your pin, did you have the fancy cape?

LG: Oh, yeah, we had a cape, blue on the outside and gold on the inside. Where is that thing now?

AB: I don't know, but I wish we had it. We have pictures of it.

SH: You must have looked pretty sharp.

LG: Oh, yeah, I looked like a poor little thing from the Westend.

EB: How small were you when you graduated nursing?

LG: Small, small.

EB: One hundred pounds?

LG: I never grew an inch after that.

EB: And when you were in basic training, did they give you your uniform the first day, and did they just give you one uniform, and you had to make sure it was clean all the time?

LG: Yeah, and if it didn't fit, too bad.

EB: Too bad, they didn't alter them at all?

LG: No.

EB: Could you alter them yourself, or was that not allowed?

LG: No, I did. I didn't know whether you could or not, but I did.

EB: So you did alter yours so it wouldn't fall off?

LG: They were too long, they were hanging down to here, so I brought them up to here.

SH: She's talking from mid-calf to just below the knees.

LG: Right.

EB: So, did you have to wash them yourself?

LG: We didn't have to wash them, we had a laundry.

EB: So someone did your laundry in basic training.

LG: Yeah, we had a unit in each floor, and each floor had a laundry in it.

EB: What was basic training like?

LG: I enjoyed it. I don't think many people did, but I enjoyed it. That was easy after what I'd been through with my father. I could talk to guys and everything.

EB: Did you have a strict regiment, like wake up at 7:00 AM, breakfast at 8:00 AM, through the day every hour was scheduled?

LG: And, if you weren't in every one of them they would want to know why.

EB: So were you punished at all?

LG: No. Just reamed out. I never got reamed out; I could always talk myself out of anything. "Oh, I couldn't find my uniform, somebody stole it last night." That was a good one.

SH: Did your father, because your father had been so strict, did he have any difficulty with the fact that you wanted to become an Army nurse?

LG: Yes.

SH: And how did you resolve that?

LG: Well, he wanted to know why I didn't go into the Navy? I said, "Because they don't go overseas." "Why do you want to go overseas?" "Because I want to see the world."

EB: Was he scared, or he didn't want you to leave?

LG: I don't know, I think I was too far away from him. He wanted me closer to him.

EB: You two grew up together, just the two of you, and now you wanted to abandon him and go overseas.

LG: Well, he was married by then, yeah, remarried.

SH: Did he have a family with the woman that he remarried?

LG: No.

SH: Do you know if your older siblings, your older brothers joined the military?

LG: Well, after the war was over, I found out my oldest brother went in the service.

EB: So, you finished basic training, so you already knew you were going to Europe, but did they tell you what Europe was going to be like? Did you have any idea what it would be like? What you would see, or what was going on there?

LG: No, they didn't tell us anything about it.

EB: I mean, you knew, obviously, that the war was going on, so there would be bombing, and things like that. Did you know how bad it was?

LG: It wasn't over, over there.

EB: Did you know how close the bombings would be? Where your hospital would be, or anything like that? They just told you you were going overseas on a boat; you took a boat over there?

LG: I can't remember what it was now. I can't remember.

SH: You went in convoy, when did they assemble your unit, or did they send you over individually to England?

LG: I went over on the *Queen Mary*. I didn't need anything to help me other than the *Queen Mary*.

SH: Yes, because it went so fast.

LG: Because nobody was gonna try and attempt to blow that up.

EB: Now, did you know when you were in basic training, the group of girls that you graduated with, did you know you were all going to be one unit? That you were going to be attached to the surgeons and things like that, did you all stay together?

LG: No, we thought we would, but we didn't bank on it. That's when we learned what the Army was like. Then we decided we better not depend on anything.

EB: So, they sent you over to Europe, and you didn't know where you would be going. Did they tell you whether you were going to England or Germany?

LG: No. We went to England first, and then we went from there to Germany.

SH: Now, where did they put your unit together, your hospital? When did you get to meet the doctors and the other nurses?

LG: When they sent us to Germany.

SH: In England, first, you would have gone to England sometime in 1943.

LG: Yeah, we went to England first.

SH: In 1943, around then?

LG: Whenever I went overseas.

SH: Yes, this is before D-Day. D-Day starts in June of 1944, so you were in England possibly in the winter of '43?

LG: I don't think we were in England very long. I think it was three or four months.

EB: Where were you stationed when you were there? Were you in London?

LG: We were in tents.

SH: Do you know what part of England?

LG: No, not right off the top of my head.

SH: Do you remember the names of any of the other doctors that you were assigned to, or the surgeons, or anybody like that?

LG: No, I thought they were a bunch of washouts.

SH: Did you?

LG: They were only there because they were drafted, which was wrong.

SH: It was wrong to draft them?

LG: No, it was wrong to think that.

SH: When you were in England where were you housed in the tents?

LG: Quonset huts. Do you know what a Quonset hut is? That's what we lived in, these Quonset huts. It was better than tents.

EB: How close were you? I mean, you were in Quonset huts, and then there was a tent hospital, or was there a full working hospital?

LG: No. It was an old military school that they put the patients into.

EB: And you would get up every morning at 7:00 AM and walk over to the hospital?

LG: Right.

SH: Did you have any interaction with the people in England, the natives?

LG: No, they didn't like us very well. That's all I can remember about them.

SH: Was there an officers' club there?

LG: Oh, yeah, that's the only place we were allowed to go. I thought, "What a bunch of duds."

EB: How was it actually being in another country for the first time? I mean, you wanted to go overseas, and then you get there, and what did you think?

LG: I thought this is no different than the Falls in Norwich.

EB: You just saw countryside, and did you see any cities?

LG: Yeah, it was no big deal. Of course I traveled so much when I was a kid, that moving from one place to another, didn't make any difference to me.

SH: When the *Queen Mary* came in, did she come into Preswick, Scotland, and then you went down by train?

LG: Yeah.

SH: So you got to see some of the countryside?

LG: Yeah, if we wanted to look out. All I wanted to do was sleep. I'm still at it.

SH: What about the weather in England?

LG: Oh, it was terrible, always. You're on an island.

SH: Did you have to be creative in how you nursed your patients?

LG: No. The patients were the first ones taken care of, and then if you had anything else to do after that, you could do it, medically or learning wise.

SH: Did you have all the supplies that you needed?

LG: No. We ended up with Kotex to use for dressings, overseas.

EB: So, can you describe what your typical day was like as a nurse in England?

LG: Yeah, get up in the morning and take care of the patients. Nobody was assigned to anything, unless somebody needed something particular that they knew. Like, if I knew there was a nurse in another unit that knew lung surgery, I'd call to have her sent over to my unit.

EB: So you told other nurses what to do?

LG: Well, if I had something on my unit that I wanted from some other, I called the charge nurse and told her I wanted them and [she] sent them.

SH: Were you a captain at that point or a lieutenant?

LG: No, no. I was never a captain.

SH: Lieutenant?

LG: A lieutenant. That suited me fine.

EB: Was there ever times that you were so busy that you could barely stand it, and then there was time that you were bored, maybe there wasn't a lot of action and you had nothing to do?

LG: Yeah. It swung from one end to the other.

EB: So if there was a big battle?

LG: Then we'd have a big bunch coming in, and we knew it.

SH: When you were in England, were you treating mostly Air Force men who had flown the planes?

LG: Well, our own men came first, and, then the British, the Limey guys, came next.

SH: Do you remember when you went to Europe from England, do you have any idea how long after D-Day had already taken place?

LG: That seems to me like as soon as we got over there we were there.

SH: Not too long after?

LG: Right. I do remember being on a train and going someplace. It was probably to the barracks.

SH: When you went from England to France, over across the Channel, do you remember that crossing at all?

LG: Yeah, I remember it wasn't the *Queen Mary*.

EB: I mean, did you feel like you could have been in danger, now you're going like into the heart of Europe, you're going right into the action?

LG: You know, that's one thing I never worried about, was myself. Nothing was ever gonna happen to me. I mean, that's ridiculous, some Limey was gonna go out there and shoot me, or some Frenchman? They were crazy, I'd shoot them back.

SH: You talked about being blown out of bed when a bomb went off, was that in England?

LG: Yeah, that was in a Quonset hut. No, it wasn't either, it was a dormitory with tents in it, and everybody else heard the siren blowing and they all took off for the bomb shelter, and I said, "Look, I haven't been in a bed in six weeks, I'm staying right here," and I got into bed. The next thing I knew I was on the floor, and somebody came down and said, "Well, are you coming now?" I said, "Hell, no, I'm here now, I'm gonna stay here."

AB: Was that hospital the one that was like twenty miles from the front? Or is that later, when you got to France?

LG: That was probably, this was an English town, so it was probably farther away than that.

EB: You went over to France, and did you think that there is more action going on there? Did you feel like it was busier, you were closer to the front lines?

LG: There was a lot more going on there than in England.

SH: Did they also use facilities, like buildings that were already in place, if they could, for the hospital?

LG: Yeah.

EB: Did you feel you were sufficiently trained as a nurse before you got there, or did you feel that once you were there, there were things that, for example, someone had something blown off, did you feel that you were not prepared for that?

LG: I was trained for anything by Hartford Hospital.

EB: And the hospitals you were in, what was the actual hospital like, was there a lot of medical supplies? Was it similar to what a regular operating hospital in the US would have been like?

AB: Did they have regular operating rooms?

LG: Oh, yeah, they had regular operating rooms. I'm trying to think what kind of a hospital it was. I think it was orthopedic, but I can't be sure.

EB: What was the organization like in the actual hospital? Did certain people get special treatment, or did they just bring in everyone, and treat everyone equally?

LG: You're talking about patients or personnel?

EB: About patients first. When they brought in the patients, did they tell you how to handle them?

LG: To us it didn't make any difference, a patient was a patient.

EB: So you weren't ordered to treat an officer first?

LG: No. No.

EB: So they were are all just men by the time they got there.

LG: They were all the same when they got there, and we weeded them off.

EB: Now, did anyone in the actual hospital get special treatment, like nurses, people that were ranked higher than you?

LG: No.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

SH: You were talking about having to keep the POWs separate from the others.

LH: You see the POWs weren't housed with enlisted personnel of either [side], in other words, we had all our own personnel, none of the POWs

SH: But you did treat POWs?

LG: Oh, we treated them, but in a different wing.

SH: Okay, all right

LG: Which didn't do me any good at all because all I spoke was English. I said, "Well, if they can't listen to me, then the hell with them."

SH: Were they cooperative?

LG: Yeah, they were very good patients. I think they realized that we were trying to help them, regardless of how it looked to them. So that went along fine, they were good patients. The Limeys were a pain-in-the-neck.

EB: What did you think of those that were ranked higher than you? How did they treat those of lower ranks? So the officers ...

LG: They didn't have much choice, because we were all, more or less, lower ranks, just got promoted, so somebody that looked good on paper.

EB: What was the discipline like?

LG: There wasn't any.

EB: So you pretty much took care of yourself, you knew what you had to do, and you just did it? They didn't have to tell you twice.

LG: Right.

SH: Were the orderlies men or other women?

LG: Men.

EB: So you said, pretty much, from sun up to sun down, you worked? Seven days a week?

LH: Seven to seven, seven days a week

EB: Did you have any weekends off, that you would go into town?

LH: Not that I remember, but I think we did in France

EB: So, maybe some of the men would have leave for the weekend?

LG: Possibly. I can't remember having leave for the weekend in England.

SH: Did you ever take any of the less seriously wounded men and escort them into town?

LG: No. They can find their own escorts. They didn't need me.

AB: Well, you did go some evenings into town. and went to the bars and stuff, or the pub?

LG: Well, she's talking about escorting patients in.

AGB: Right, well, you just went with your friends?

LG: Yeah.

EB: So, there were social activities for nurses. There were places where you could go every once in a while, like go out dancing, and go to the bars?

LG: England had great darts, what do you call them?

SH: Pubs, where you'd go and play darts?

LG: Yeah.

SH: Were you good?

LG: Yeah, I was. I don't know how many people I hit in the head, but most of them lived. [laughter]

EB: At least you could take care of them after. So did you and the other nurses get along?

LG: No. No, some of them were opinionated and thought that the hospital they went to was the best, and I said, "Don't be ridiculous, I come from Hartford Hospital," and that was the end of the conversation.

EB: Were you close to any of the women at all then?

LG: Not really, I knew it was a temporary thing, and I wasn't going to get close to anybody again.

EB: What did you think of them as nurses?

LG: They were good. I only think that I had one nurse that was looking for a husband and didn't want to do any nursing, but she changed her mind.

SH: Were any of the nurses married to guys in the Army?

LG: I can't remember. Somebody else asked me that, and I can't remember it. That would have been tough, for [their husbands] to be POWs in Germany, and [for them to] have to take care of these patients here.

EB: Was there regulations about dating soldiers?

LG: Oh, yeah. You couldn't date any non-commissioned officer, and I thought, "What do I care if he's commissioned or un-commissioned, as long as he's not married?"

EB: Do you remember any of the women getting pregnant, was that ever an issue?

LG: No. Nope.

EB: Do you remember any of them, the men you nursed, in particular, do any of them stand out?

LG: One wanted to marry me

EB: What did you say?

LG: Goodbye.

AGB: Tell about the story about meeting up with him later, in Hartford.

LG: Oh, yeah. He was going to marry me. He was going to the nursing complex [after the war] to find me, because he wanted to marry me. I said, "Geez, you're a little late; I'm getting married on Friday."

AB: When they got back to Hartford.

LG: He says, "Ohhhh."

EB: So he fell in love with you when you were nursing him.

LG: I can't even remember his name now.

EB: But he wanted to marry you. What was the morale like in the hospital?

LG: Good, I have to say it was good. Nobody complained about anything, because they thought they were better off than the soldiers.

EB: So, they didn't have to, was there ever a point where you had to step back because you were witnessing all these men dying?

LG: No.

EB: So, you could always handle it?

LG: Because, by that time, they had been through probably, three or four hospitals, before they got to us, and they were well taken care of.

SH: This is once you were in Europe?

LG: Yeah.

EB: Was there any prejudices against blacks or Jews or women?

LG: We didn't have any blacks.

EB: So there were no black nurses?

LG: No, no.

EB: Did you see a lot of bombing going on?

LG: Yes, too much. It jolted me out of bed, that was enough.

EB: Could you see planes going by overhead?

LG: Oh, yeah, all the time, but we never knew which planes they were.

EB: You could never tell?

LG: We would look out the window and see, but they were too high up for us to see [which plane were which].

AB: So you could hear them.

LG: When I was in England, this is retroactive, but, when I was in England, they said they had a flight going out in the morning, I said, "Oh, that's good, I'll be up early, I'll see them." Four thousand planes went over the hospital, going to Europe, and I almost died. I thought, "Holy cow, if they send four thousand [planes] back to get us, they're gonna get us, so I'll go hide in the cellar now," which I never did.

SH: Was the noise just deafening?

LG: Yes. But they never sent anyone back. I don't know where those guys ended up.

EB: Was there a big red cross on the top your building?

LG: Yes, every building had a red cross on top of it.

EB: Did you hear of any other hospitals that had been bombed? Did any stories come back to you that other hospitals in other towns that had been bombed?

LG: Well, the majority of them, the smaller ones, got bombed, because the [the enemy] didn't know what they were. They thought they were just marking them for their own safety. But, as far as the big hospitals are concerned, they didn't get bombed.

EB: Was there ever a point, where there were so many patients that there just wasn't enough beds for them, people waiting outside in the grass?

LG: Oh, yeah, always, always. Put them in the garage and transfer them when the ambulance came through, and then move them up.

EB: So, you would just take the patients that were in the worst condition?

LG: Yes.

SH: So, the patients, as you were receiving them, had already been basically received downstairs, or at the gate, and were sent up to you?

LG: Yeah, if they needed surgery.

SH: So they were already prepped, so to speak?

LG: Right.

SH: How did you keep your utensils clean?

LG: I didn't, I gave them to the aide. "Take these and clean them off, and bring them back, every one of them, I don't want to see one missing."

AB: How did they clean them?

LG: They scrubbed them, and put them in like alcohol. I don't think it was alcohol, I think it was some other chemical. I can't remember what it was now, but alcohol was the thing to have, so we didn't waste it.

SH: What about anesthesia for the patients that were undergoing surgery?

LG: They were on ether.

SH: Ether is what you used.

LG: Yeah, which made me sick.

EB: What sort of protection did you have from it?

LG: A mask, and keep my mouth shut, which was the hardest thing to do. [laughter]

SH: From seven to seven, I bet. [laughter]

LG: Yeah.

SH: Did you ever write home to the States, and ask them to send you something that you needed, whether it be shoes, or personal items?

LG: The only thing I ever wrote for, to send me back, were Kotex, because in my unit we had a lot of abdominal surgery, a lot of chest surgery, and we had no dressings for it, and what we had was going soon, and I said, "Geez, there must be something we can use from the States," and, then I thought of, well, Kotex pads had just come out, so I wrote and had my father send me boxes of that, and we used them for ages. They worked good. Nobody got pregnant.

EB: So, that was one of the hardships you faced?

LG: I didn't face any hardships in the Army; I would have been living home with my father ...

SH: What about food, did you have a kitchen, or did you have to eat K-rations, or C-rations?

LG: We had a kitchen that cooked for the hospital, and we ate first, and then we went back to take care of the patients. I never had any complaints about the food.

EB: Was anybody else allowed in the hospital besides patients?

LG: As a patient?

EB: No, did they allow anyone to visit the patients?

LG: Yeah, as long as they were on our side.

AB: Did they have girls from town come?

LG: I imagine so, I don't know.

EB: Local girls from the town would come, that wanted to see the American soldiers, and come cheer up the patients, that sort of thing?

LG: It depended on how they wanted to do it.

SH: Did you have instances of someone wanting to come and do more?

LG: I just looked them over.

SH: And what did you say?

LG: "Go." "Stay."

AB: Tell the story about the soldier who had the local girl coming in, and he snuck out to meet her.

LG: I can't remember that. They would call Corporal So-and-So.

SH: "This is your visitor coming in?"

LG: Anybody. And when they came in and they needed a nurse and they yelled, "Moodie," and I thought, "What does that make me?" I mean, I'm a low man on the totem pole. But it worked out all right, I didn't lose any patients. That I know of.

EB: You went from England to France, and then you went to Germany.

LG: Germany had the best barracks, the best food.

EB: But, I mean, you had heard about the Germans at this point, about the Nazis?

LG: Oh, we didn't have anything to do with them.

EB: But when you had German patients, did you have trouble treating them the same?

LG: I had trouble talking to them, I didn't speak German.

EB: But did you think lowly of them, like these are the Nazis?

LG: No, no. Once a patient, always a patient, didn't make any difference.

SH: When they began to liberate the concentration camps and the labor camps.

LG: We didn't get them back. They wouldn't mix them with the POWs.

SH: Well, definitely, for sure, but were any medical teams sent to treat them that you know of?

LG: Not that I know of, I think they were coming from the States and going right to these compounds, but I don't think they would send us, after seeing all the GIs who were shot up.

EB: Did you attend church when you were there?

LG: No.

SH: Was there a chaplain assigned to your hospital unit?

LG: I don't know, I wasn't interested in going to heaven.

SH: No, but did you have to call the chaplain in for lasts rites sometimes?

LG: Oh, there was always two on-call, one Catholic and one Protestant, and, we can get either one, and they were very good about coming.

EB: So, if a patient wanted to talk to someone, you could send in a chaplain?

LG: Yeah, but they were very busy; it was a hard time to get them [to just] talk to anybody.

SH: Knowing that you were in the surgical unit, how did they treat men with, what they would call then, "battle fatigue"? How would they handle that?

LG: I don't recall having any patients with battle fatigue. Except once, and the orderlies had him up against the wall, and were talking to us. I said, "What are you doing?" They said, "Well he's complaining about battle fatigue." I said, "So, why have you got him up against the wall? That's not how he should be treated." I said, "Put him in bed." "Well, yeah, but." I said, "I don't want to hear it, put him in bed, that's it," and he was better by the next day, because he thought he was going to be maltreated, which he was, but, fortunately I caught him first.

SH: So, basically, he just needed rest?

LG: That's all he needed, and he needed somebody to talk to, and he needed rest. I could listen to him, if he could ... [speak] English.

SH: Were there any nurses that were not as able to handle the situation as you were, and needed your help?

LG: The young ones. The young ones, who came over after we had been over for a while, that was tough on them.

SH: What advice did you give to them?

LG: I told them, "to just play it by ear." Listen to what they've got to say, and then talk back to them. You can't do anything else, you can't give them advice, you don't know anything about it.

EB: Was there ever a time, I mean, the doctor's are making the decision to operate, was there ever a time where there wasn't a doctor around, so you had to make an important decision?

LG: No, you could always wait another ten minutes.

EB: So, there was never a time when you had to make an immediate decision?

LG: Life or death? No.

EB: Was there any nurses that were scared that they would do something wrong?

LG: Plenty of them, they always had to ask somebody else their opinion.

EB: So they would say, "I gave this patient this medicine, is that okay?"

LG: Well, I would hope they would come and say, "I'm gonna give him [this medicine]," not "I gave him [this medicine.]" [laughter]

EB: So they would ask you your opinion?

LG: Yeah, and I had my little notebook in my pocket and I could pull it out and check it. [Editor's note: Lauriel Moodie Giantonio kept a notebook with notes on all sorts of medicine dosages, etc.]

EB: Was there a lot of medicine, or was it very limited?

LG: There was plenty, but it was all old. Well, I would say like two classes behind us that had them, these medications, and they hadn't graduated to anything higher, but it worked.

SH: What were some of the drugs that you were using?

LG: A lot of morphine.

EB: Did you guys use penicillin, for infection?

LG: No, we weren't using penicillin yet.

AB: Sulfur?

LG: Yeah, I was trying to think of the name. A lot of sulfur, and you had to be very careful with that because it wasn't refined as it is now, so if you gave them too much it would kill them. As far as narcotics were concerned, we could get morphine and we could get codeine, but no more than that.

SH: When did you start getting penicillin?

LG: I think I was back in the States, I can't remember, it was a long time ago.

SH: When you went into Germany, how long were you there once the war was over?

LG: A year.

SH: What do you remember about the reaction when the war was over? Was there a huge celebration?

EB: V-E Day.

LG: No, the German people were trying to stay on the good side of us, I think. But, nobody came right out and said it, but that's the attitude I got. They were trying to make friends with us, naturally, they were trying to make friends with us, and stay on the good side of us, so they would do anything that we wanted them to do.

EB: What did you actually think about the war being over? What did you think would happen?

SH: How did the Americans celebrate the war being over?

LG: We went out to a pub and had a couple of bottles of ale. I didn't drink it, it was terrible stuff, and, talked all one evening, couldn't worry about getting back on time, got back and went to bed, and then the next day, "Well, was the war over or wasn't it?" We didn't know.

EB: You said you also later heard when Hitler committed suicide?

LG: Oh, yeah, that was when I was sent to Berlin. I was stationed in Berlin at the end of the war, and they said, ... "Hitler, committed suicide." I said, "I'll believe that when I see the body." But they hauled him up and buried him. They're still digging him up.

SH: So you were on the outskirts of Berlin?

LG: The combat area. Beautiful buildings.

EB: Now, did you think you might be sent to Japan?

LG: God, no, I would have died.

EB: So then the war was over for you, what did you think?

LG: I did my part, I'm going home.

EB: Were you happy to be going home?

LG: Not particularly, it's gonna be a dull life after what I had been living.

EB: Did you think, "Now I am going home and now what??

LG: Now what? What do I do now?

SH: Did they take you right from the front to one of the Lucky Strike or cigarette camps?

LG: Yeah, I can't think of the name of it now. I had it a little while ago.

SH: It was Lucky Strike you were at?

LG: Yeah, I think so.

SH: Now, did you have to nurse there?

LG: Oh, yeah, we always had to work.

SH: Did you? There was no just sitting around waiting to catch the next ship?

LG: No, there was no such thing.

SH: Now, did the nurses have to go through the same point system that the men had to go through to get sent back?

LG: If you're in the Army, you're in the Army, that's all there is to it.

SH: So how did your point system add up?

LG: I was a low man on the totem poll. I can't remember how many points I had, thirty-two, or twenty-five, something like that.

EB: How long were you there altogether, a year and a half?

LG: Where?

EB: How long did you serve for?

LG: Yeah, a year and a half.

SH: When the army sent you back, did they just sent you straight to Dix [Fort Dix, New Jersey], or did you came in to New York, or Philly?

LG: We came in through New Jersey, Fort Dix.

AB: Literally, where did the ship come? Do you know where the ship landed?

LG: No, I don't know that.

AGB: You went to Dix, and what did you do there?

LG: Got disavowed [debriefed].

AGB: You called home along the way?

LG: I called home and told my father I was there. He said "Oh, how are you getting home?" I said, "Well, I guess I'm taking the bus." He said, "Okay, I'll meet you at the bus station."

EB: Did you already decide what you were going to do, or where you were going to go to get a job, or whether you were going to stay home?

LG: I decided I didn't need to do anything, my father would do it all for me. He had it all done by the time I got there.

AB: But, what did you do?

LG: It took us seven days, I may be wrong about that, to get from Dix to [a camp outside of Hartford.]

AB: Was there a camp, or did they just send you home, and your dad picked you up from the bus station?

LG: No, we had to go to a staging area.

SH: How about (Miles Stanton?)

LG: No, that's Army.

SH: I thought you were Army. [laugher]

LG: I was.

SH: Okay, so they sent you from Dix to another staging area in Massachusetts or Connecticut?

LG: I don't know. They sent us to some place in New Jersey.

SH: Okay well, Fort Dix is in New Jersey.

LG: Oh, is it?

SH: Okay, and, did you nurse there while you were in Fort Dix?

LG: I can't remember, I imagine I did. We were all on our feet, so they would send us all out again.

EB: And when you returned, where did you go to get a job?

LG: I said, "I'm gonna sit here and do nothing for a while."

AB: That didn't last too long though, did it?

LG: No, that didn't last long at all. I was bored, and nothing short.

SH: Did you take advantage of the fifty-two twenty club?

LG: No. Well, what did I need it for? I already had my degree.

AB: So, you went over to the Hartford Hospital and what did you say to them?

LG: "I want a job." They said, "Where are you coming from?" I said, "The US Army." They said, "Fine, you got it."

EB: But, all they cared about was that you got your nursing there.

LG: Yeah. They knew that I knew my nursing because I got it there, and, they knew that I had gotten my overseas training because I was in Germany and France, and all those places, so they didn't give me any trouble.

SH: So, did you take any time off?

LG: I don't think so.

EB: What was the transition from military to civilian life like?

LG: Nothing, I went to the hospital the next morning and got a job, and went to work that night. That's all there was to it. Scotsmen don't waste any time. They use it up.

SH: Now, where were you housed when you came back? Because now you were still a single woman, but you were no longer a student, did they still have the dorm that you could use?

LG: No. One place we had, what you would categorize as a dorm; no, wait, that was in Germany, there was eight of us stationed there. Did I tell you this story? I slept with a gun under my pillow.

SH: Did you?

LG: Yeah. Because I didn't know whether the Krauts were gonna come back and want their room back, and, I heard them coming in one night, and I got the gun out from under my pillow, and I had it aimed at the door, and who walks in, but one of my classmates, and I said, "Oh, my God, you idiot, I almost shot you." I said, "There's eight bullets in here, and you could have gotten one of them." Scared me half-to-death. [laugher]

EB: What did you tell her to give you as a signal next time?

LG: Yeah, I told her to let me know she was coming next time.

EB: You told her to whistle *Dixie* the next time she came in, so you would know she was American.

LG: Yes.

EB: To go back then, were you ever shot at when you were in Germany?

LG: Yeah. Didn't I tell you about the German that tried to shoot us in the field? I dated some enlisted men, which officers are not allowed to do, and we went out to a pub. So, we were coming back and I said, "Geez, if we cut through the field it will get us there quicker and nobody will know that we're coming." Which we did. We went half-way through the field and I hear this rifle shot go off and my cap went [makes noise of cap flying off] right off my head, and, I

want to tell you, I dug to China. I went so fast through that dirt to China they finally hauled me up and put me on my feet and said, "You're all right, Lieutenant." I said, "I am?" "Let's get out of here." They said, "Remember you are with enlisted men, you can't go back in the same way you came out." I said, "Oh, my God, how do I get into these messes?" So, we got back to the barracks, and they shoved me in the door. I went in and changed my dirty clothes, got into bed and pretended nothing had happened. Then we found out that the Kraut, who fired on me, thought we were stealing his potatoes. He was going to shoot them. Christ, he might have made up his mind about who he was shooting at before he did that. That was the closest I ever got to getting shot. That was close enough. The war's over. That's it.

AB: So you came back and started working at Hartford Hospital and then what happened?

LG: That is what my life ended up as.

AB: How did you meet Dad [Dominick Giantonio]?

LG: Picked him up. I said, "Who's that guy over there?" ...

AB: That was at a drugstore, like a soda fountain?

LG: Yeah [at the "Jeff" shop]. I said "Who's that guy over there?" And they said, "Oh, he's just getting back from the Army." I said, "Yeah? Introduce me I am going to marry him." They said, "Like hell, you're going to marry him, you don't even know him." I said, "That's all right, do me the favor." So, the woman who ran it, Ma Goldfield, took me over and introduced me to Dominick. I said, "That's good, I'm going to marry you." He said, "I don't think that's the way it works." I said, "On my end it does."

AB: Did they tell you you're not going to marry him, he's going to be a priest?

LG: Yeah, that's what they said, "He isn't going to marry anybody. He's going to be a priest. He's going to go to ... [Notre Dame]." It never happened. I dated him for six months and married him.

EB: After you met him you went for a walk around the park?

LG: Yeah. Down at Colts Industries, which was down behind the [Hartford] Hospital. I said, "I got news for you, I'm going to marry you". He said, "I don't think it works that way, I think I'm supposed to say 'I'm going to marry you'." I said, "I don't care what you think, I am going to marry you." So, we got married.

SH: So, what did you know about this man before you proposed?

LG: Nothing. What did I have to know? I liked him, I wanted him, and that was it.

SH: Was he good-looking?

LG: Yeah.

SH: That helped?

LG: Yup, and he was a nice guy.

EB: What did your dad think about this nice Catholic?

LG: He called me, "Stupid." Not only that, Italian, it was bad enough that he was Catholic, but he was Italian, and what was I thinking? I was going to marry him. I must have been out of my mind. I don't even remember if my father even came to the wedding. He probably did.

SH: Was Dominick's family all from Hartford?

LG: Yeah.

EB: Didn't he say, "You're gonna marry this man, become a Catholic, and have a dozen children"?

LG: ... He probably did.

EB: Well, you did convert, and you had half a dozen children.

LG: Right. I ran out of time.

SH: Did you continue to nurse, even when you had your children?

LG: Yeah.

EB: How did you work that out, what was life like raising six kids, and both of you working?

LG: Well, Dad [Dominick] worked days, and I worked nights.

EB: So he worked seven to seven?

LG: He worked ... [8:00am to 5:00pm].

AB: And you worked the night shift?

LG: Yeah, so it worked out fine.

EB: So how did you find time to see each other?

LG: Obviously, often enough, I got six kids.

AB: Weekends?

LG: Yeah, weekends.

EB: Did you have weekends off?

LG: Every other weekend.

SH: And, when you would have your babies, how long would you stay home?

LG: Three days, a whole three days, that's all you need, I was a nurse.

EB: What would you do with the baby, though?

SH: I think it would have been a little longer than that.

LG: Yeah, but not weeks.

SH: So all the babies were on the bottle?

LG: Yeah.

EB: So you had all day home with the baby, and then Grandpa [Dominick] would come home and you would go to work.

LG: And he went to sleep. [I would say,] "How was the baby?" [And he would say,] "Fine." "Did she give you any trouble?" "No, no, slept all evening." "That's good." I got home at eleven 'o clock [pm].

EB: And, you would hope the baby had her pajamas on and was in bed?

LG: Yeah.

AGB: And were they always dressed for bed?

LG: No, they weren't always; sometimes they still had their shoes and pants on.

EB: So, after the war, how did you feel about the public's perception of women in the Army during World War II?

LG: I thought it stunk.

EB: So, you thought that people had a bad perception of women in the army?

LG: I don't think they appreciated enough what the women did.

EB: What other things did people think about the nurses or the WACs?

LG: That they were in there to get a husband.

EB: Did you feel that some of the women were?

LG: Yeah.

EB: Did you get along with them?

LG: I got along with everybody.

EB: But, you weren't there to find a husband? You were just there to do your job?

LG: Right, and travel around.

SH: What do you remember about the patriotism before you went overseas?

LG: I remember that there was a time before we went overseas ... we didn't talk to French Canadians, or Polish who were living in this country, and, we figured they were living off the fat of the land, and they were criticizing us. They got a lot of nerve. So we kind of put those on the back-burner, they're going to go first.

SH: But was it a sense of patriotism that made you enlist?

LG: Yeah ...

EB: So, did you feel that it was your duty, since your father was too old and your brother couldn't serve either?

LG: Yeah, who was gonna go besides me?

EB: Because you did live with your brother, Charles, for a little while?

LG: Yeah, but he was epileptic, so he couldn't have gone.

EB: So, he couldn't have gone, and your dad couldn't have gone, so you felt that you were the only one in your family that could serve? You felt it was your patriotic duty to serve the country, to represent your family?

LG: Yeah. But, I hate that term "patriotic duty." It's just your duty.

EB: So, you felt that women's role in the war had been underrepresented? Did you ever see the political cartoons?

LG: They were terrible. All of them, I didn't see anything good about them.

SH: What about the ones that had been done about the GIs, in their favor, Bill Malden's cartoons?

LG: Oh, we didn't see those till long after the war was over, and we laughed our way through those.

SH: You know, Ernie Pyle, those types of cartoons?

LG: Yeah.

SH: What did you hear about what people were doing in this country with rationing during the war, gas rationing? Did you father ever talk about it, that it was difficult?

LG: Well, my father wouldn't have criticized the United States government for anything, but he did say that the people were giving him a pain in the neck complaining about rationing. They were lucky they got something to eat.

SH: Now, he was working in a place where they had been making awnings. Did that become then war production?

LG: He went from making awnings you would use on your house, to making white duct. ... White duct was made for tents, and he sold that to the government.

SH: So they became a place for war production. Did he talk about where he was able to recruit people to work in the mill?

LG: No. Everybody was trying to get to work in the mill, because it was a safe place to work.

EB: What about your dad's hand, though, was it that safe?

LG: Well, he only needed two fingers on one hand. He was a conservative Scot, and two fingers were enough.

SH: What about your aunts, did they work in some sort of war-related job?

LG: No, they were ladies.

SH: They didn't wrap bandages?

LG: No, they did not. They took care of their husbands and children, and were royal pains in the butt.

EB: What about other women, how did you feel about the woman's role on the home front?

LG: I don't think I ever met any of them.

EB: So, you didn't know of any women that went to work at a factory?

LG: No.

SH: Was there a reserve corps for Army nurses?

LG: There was a reserve corps, but I never met any of them, because they filled up. You know, they sent them up to the front too fast.

SH: Did you stay in the reserves after World War II?

LG: No.

EB: When you went back to Hartford Hospital were there GIs there that were being treated there still?

LG: Oh, yeah.

SH: When you went back to Hartford did you go to the surgical ward?

LG: Yeah.

SH: Now, were you in the surgery itself, or were you in the surgical ward?

LG: I was on the surgical floor.

SH: Were you able to relate to some of them better because you had served in the war?

LG: Oh, yeah. I'd say to them, "Don't give me that bull, I know where you were when you got hit, and you didn't get hit there." ...

EB: So you didn't use the GI Bill, because there wasn't a need for it, because you already had your RN?

LG: Yeah ...

SH: Were you ever called to teach?

LG: Yeah, they told me I was gonna teach. I said, "To hell I am. When I teach them, they don't want to learn." So I got out of that.

SH: Were there things that you had learned when you were overseas and in the Army, that you brought back to your nursing at Hartford?

LG: Yeah, how bad these cases were gonna smell when they came through. The GIs, they reeked, but there was nothing you could do about it, when gangrene sets in, it sets in.

EB: What about Grandpa [Dominick], what did he do? When you met him at the corner drug store, was he in uniform?

LG: No.

EB: So, he wasn't in uniform, but you found out that he had served?

LG: Yeah, and I found out that he was a prisoner of war, of the Japs, for three-and-a-half years.

EB: How did you feel about being a soldier's wife? With you yourself serving, and him serving as well?

LG: ... I didn't care

SH: Had he been an enlisted man?

LG: Yeah.

SH: So, he had gone in on the draft?

LG: He volunteered.

SH: And he had been sent to the Pacific?

LG: Right.

SH: Was he part of the Bataan Death March?

LG: Right.

SH: Did he talk about it often?

LG: To me, yes, but not to anybody else [at first]. I don't know what he told the kids.

AB: He always told us the funny stories. You know, like jumping into a pit and a cobra being in it, which, not that it would be funny, but he never really told us the torture stories.

Michael Blatt: American ingenuity, and what they would do to sabotage the Japanese, even though it meant that their life would be at stake if they got caught. It was worth it, because they were doing their part. They would do remarkable things, and, at the same time, somehow endure the physical pain and the emotional scars, and they would get through that.

SH: Yes, we are really looking forward to having those tapes as part of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.

EB: Did it help him that you had also been in the Army? Did he feel that he could talk to you more easily?

LG: I don't know.

AB: It was probably more important that you had been a nurse.

LG: Right.

EB: So you could take care of him.

LG: Yeah, because the rest of the people in the world thought we were a bunch of sluts.

SH: Did he [Dominick] use the GI Bill?

LG: No.

SH: Did he use it for a mortgage for a home?

LG: We had something.

AB: Are you thinking about when I went to college?

LG: Maybe.

AB: He, eventually, was declared one hundred percent, service-connected, disabled. When he started receiving benefits, when I was in college, I then started receiving benefits as well. She might be thinking of that.

SH: Because I know that the GI Bill could also be used for a VA loan.

AB: Did you use a VA loan for that first house in East Hartford?

LG: We used it for one, but I can't remember which one.

AB: Maybe your first house in East Hartford you used a VA loan?

LG: Maybe.

SH: How long did it take you to get a home, because housing was so tight with everybody coming back?

LG: The first one we got didn't take any time at all. We lived in town and heard about this house that was going on the market and we put in for it right away, and as Andrea said, we put in for it through the GI Bill, and that was another plus. So, we didn't have any trouble getting it.

SH: Had he already gone back to work when you had met him at the corner drug store?

EB: When did he work?

LG: The "Jeff" shop. The Jefferson Shop was the ice cream parlor [in the corner drug store].

AB: He wasn't at Stewart Warner yet?

LG: No, she asked when he first came home. He went to Doc and Ma's [The "Jeff" shop/corner drug store]

AGB: He actually worked at Doc and Ma's?

LG: Yeah, well, they needed help, and he was good to help out.

SH: Now how soon did he get back, before you got back?

LG: It seemed simultaneously, but it couldn't have been. I'm not sure when he got back, but I can look it up and find out. He was a good guy.

EB: Was there ever a time when, with him being a prisoner of war, that impacted your life together? What about living arrangements, did you share a bed?

AB: Tell about how he used to wake up screaming in Japanese.

LG: You tell them.

AB: Didn't he used to have a lot of nightmares, and he would wake up yelling in Japanese, and one time he started choking you?

LG: Yeah.

AB: And that's when you decided to start sleeping in separate beds?

LG: I didn't need anymore of that garbage. "That's enough. You're home, you're here."

EB: After he tried to kill you that one time, that was it. [laughter]

LG: Yeah, that was enough.

MB: Did you ever have nightmares about the war when you came back?

LG: I don't ever have nightmares. I'm very practical. That's what it had to be, so that's what it had to be.

MB: You were able to leave it behind.

EB: Plus you continued nursing.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

EB: This continues an interview with Lauriel Moodie Giantonio on November 4, 2006 in Salisbury, Connecticut. We were talking about you being back from the war and living with your husband. That was the time that a lot of people had come back from the war, so how was it with money? Did prices go up because people were working with war production, and how did you survive with money?

LG: Both spouses worked.

EB: With six kids, though, did you still find that money was tight?

LG: Both spouses worked, and made their own clothes, and stuff like that.

SH: You were still sewing for your children?

LG: Oh, yeah.

SH: Did a typical nurse at that time work a forty hour a week?

LG: Forty-eight

SH: A forty-eight hour week?

LG: Yeah. Hey, where were you?

SH: Wasn't quite here yet, but I was working on it.

LG: They cut it down to forty-four, and then forty.

SH: Okay, what kind of vacation did you take?

LG: I took a week to go up in the mountains in New Hampshire with my father, whoop-ti-do.

EB: You were still close with your dad after you got back, after you got married, you still were close with him?

LG: Yeah.

EB: What did you think of his new wife? Was she around?

LG: She made him happy, that's all I cared about.

EB: Now, you never thought after you got back from the war, after you got married, to ever contact your mom and tell her you had gotten married?

LG: No. I had nothing to do with my mother.

EB: Was there any point that she tried contacting you, even when you were young?

LG: She tried but I didn't have any part of it.

EB: Did she ever go to try to find you?

LG: No. Maybe she knew where I was, I don't know.

SH: She had stayed in the area?

LG: No, she lived in Massachusetts, I lived in Connecticut.

EB: Did she ever try to take you back?

AB: When you were little, she tried to take you.

LG: She tried to take me, she tried to come and see me, and I was smart enough to say, "No way."

AB: Remember when you were in elementary school, remember she came to school?

LG: No.

AB: Remember she came to school and the principal called you down, said, "There was someone here to see you," and you knew it was her, so you took off and ran away.

LG: Oh, well, I did that all the time. Anytime somebody wanted me in the principal's office, I knew it was because she was there for me, and I took off, because nobody was taking me away from my dad.

SH: Were his parents around? How long did they live to be a part of your life? Were you in high school, or later?

LG: Well, let's see, they were married in 19 something, and they died in their seventies.

EB: Your parents, you mean?

AGB: Your dad died in 1956.

LG: No, I'm talking about my grandparents.

AB: They must have died well before 1956.

LG: You're kidding.

AB: If your dad died in 1956 his parents must have died before him, right?

LG: Why?

AB: Do you think his parents lived past him?

LG: Sure, they were Scots. They wouldn't go early.

AB: So was he.

EB: So you remember them in their old age?

LG: Yeah.

EB: So they're around. They had passed away before you got married?

LG: No. But they weren't thrilled with that marriage, I'll tell you that. After all, Emma [step-mother] was a mill worker, and my father was an educated man, and I said, "So what? All they're gonna do is get married."

AB: His parents weren't too happy about him marrying Emma?

LG: My grandparents.

EB: Your grandparents weren't happy about your dad remarrying?

AB: Remarrying Emma, because he was educated and she was not, and they thought she was just after his money?

LG: No, she just ... wanted a husband. They didn't think that she was good enough for him.

EB: What was she? She wasn't Scottish?

LG: She worked in the mill.

EB: Was Emma English?

LG: No, she was German. She lived in the United States all her life, she was born here.

EB: Was there any prejudice against her during the war?

LG: No. There was too many mixed up in the mill of every denomination, that were working. They couldn't be bothered with that. All they had to do was do their jobs.

SH: Did your husband, did his family ever suffer any prejudice because of the fact they were Italian during World War II?

LG: I don't know. I was wrapped up in the war then.

SH: I mean, he didn't talk about it?

LG: No. No.

EB: Well, Grandpa's [Dominick's] mother didn't work.

AB: She didn't even speak English, hardly.

EB: They had *Bund* meetings?

LG: *Bund*, and they were sort of a German greeting club, and they met three nights a week, and they held their meetings, and, all of a sudden, they put a slap on them, and said they couldn't do that anymore, and I said, "What the hell is the matter with them? All they're doing is having a meeting." Well, I didn't know they were having communist meetings behind the closed doors, so they got rid of them, and they were right down the street from the Hartford Hospital.

SH: Were there any KKK activities in Hartford?

LG: No. I didn't see any.

EB: Were there a lot of African American people at Hartford? Were there many black people in Hartford?

LG: Oh yeah, up in the North End.

EB: Did people treat them okay?

LG: They avoided them.

AB: But later after the war, at Hartford Hospital, you had plenty of black nurses who worked with you.

LG: Oh, yeah. That's when the bars were down. Any nurse that knew what she was doing, we'd take.

EB: So they weren't prejudice at Hartford Hospital against black nurses?

LG: No.

SH: Did you ever talk to any other nurses who had served in the military during World War II?

LG: Oh yeah. Well, a lot of them came through; maybe they just were there for a week or ten days, and went on their way. It's the same story.

AB: But none of your nursing friends like Anne Maines ...

LG: She wasn't in the service with me.

AB: None of those girls ever went into the service, right, they were all just nurses?

EB: Did you stay in contact with any nurses that you had been with in the war from the 101st General Hospital?

LG: I don't think so. I wanted to get that out of my head.

EB: Move on, have kids, get married?

LG: Yeah. Have kids.

EB: After the war did you feel like there was a lot of changes? I mean, you said you didn't feel the Depression, but did you feel that there was a difference after the war?

LG: Oh, yeah, definitely. If people were gonna hire, they were careful who they hired. I figured, by that time the war was over, "Give them a break." My father didn't feel that way. "No, he's Italian, he's German," not, "He's American Italian or American German."

SH: Did any of your children serve in the military?

LG: My oldest brother.

SH: Your family, your son?

LG: Oh, my kids, no.

AB: Yes, John.

LG: Oh, that's since the war was over. Oh, yeah.

AB: But, he was in the military, John was in the Navy.

LG: Yeah.

SH: So he's the only one that served. Had you gotten involved in politics at all?

LG: No, thank you. I didn't want any part of that.

SH: What did you join, as a young mother?

LG: I raised six kids, what do you want, blood?

SH: Did you join the PTA?

AB: You were very involved in school, always making costumes for the school plays.

LG: Yeah, sewing club.

AB: Girl Scouts, you always helped in, Civil Defense you did later, she was in charge of Civil Defense in Avon.

LG: Well, I figured that's just run of the mill, it's nothing special.

AB: Besides raising six kids, she did a lot of sewing. We always had a huge family garden, we canned all our own tomato sauce, we did our own pickles, we did our own ...

LG: Peaches.

AB: We made applesauce by the gallon, I think. She cooked all that herself. I don't know when she did it.

LG: When you were in school.

AGB: She even cooked and canned all day long. She'd go to work, and at night she'd come home and couldn't sleep, so she would either read, or she would sew all night long, until she could fall asleep. Which is why she still can't sleep at night.

LG: Aren't I wonderful? All, so we could eat.

EB: Awake all night, and slept part of the day?

LG: Yeah. I'm still doing that, Elaine.

EB: How long did you work for, as a nurse after the war? When did you retire?

LG: Till I died. [laughter]

EB: Once a nurse, always a nurse?

LG: Yeah.

EB: So you worked for thirty years at the Hartford Hospital?

LG: Well, let's see, I got out of the service in when?

AB: It looks like you went in on July 5, 1944, from Fort Devins in Massachusetts, and came home on May 1, 1946 out of Fort Dix. You were a 2nd lieutenant connected to the 101st General Hospital for the Army Nurse Corps, and you came home on the *Ernie Pyle*, that was the name of the ship.

LG: Yeah. What's the matter with that?

SH: Nothing. So you were in Germany for almost a year after the war?

LG: I was?

AB: Right. You didn't come home till 1946.

LG: Oh, my God. They owe me back pay. [laughter]

AGB: [laughter] Yeah, good luck with that.

SH: Are there any stories we forgot to ask?

LG: I don't think so. I think about everything that's interesting you got hold of.

SH: If you think of something else, be sure you tell Elaine.

LG: Yeah I will. Did I tell you about the barroom?

EB: No.

LG: Several guys and I went to a barroom, in the next town over, in France, and we got in there and I saw this guy across the room, and I said, "Geez, I know him," and I went over there to say hello to him. He's one of the local boys from town. He got out that night to try to take a course in quick bartending, just the same night that I decided I was gonna go there to have a drink, and I didn't drink. That went back into my papers somewhere. Shouldn't have, I didn't do anything wrong, except cooperate with this enemy, who was no longer an enemy.

EB: How about Grandpa [Dominick Giantonio] starting an organization after the war that you were a part of, American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor?

LG: Oh, he was one of the members.

EB: Founding members.

LG: Yeah, and I said, "Yes, keep it going, go ahead, that's what you need to do," because anytime I'd ask him a question about a specific happening that I heard somebody else talk about, he couldn't remember it ...[now] I'm like him. If he heard somebody else talking about it, then he'd chip in and add things to it.

EB: So, you felt that this organization was good for them to get together and be able to talk about their experiences?

LG: Oh, yeah. It was good for them.

EB: And you would go to conventions with him, and meet a lot of his friends?

LG: Yeah. We formed the ADBC, American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor.

AB: And we grew up thinking that every POW was our uncle.

LG: Right, [You would say] "Who's that?" [and I would say,] "He's Uncle George."

SH: Now was that because he had gone with the unit from that area?

LG: Yeah.

SH: They had all gotten close?

LG: They came from Massachusetts and Connecticut. I don't remember any of them coming from Rhode Island, do you?

AGB: ... Yeah, it seems like they had a New England core group, and then there was also a second, like a West Coast group, years later. A lot of guys seemed to have come from the New Mexico, Arizona area. So, we would always have the East Coast and the West Coast. They'd always try to have conventions where people could meet in-between. Met a couple of nice guys from the West Coast, too.

LG: Yeah, a couple.

MB: What was the hardest part for you, looking back at your experience?

LG: Picking him up at the corner drug store.

MB: No, hopefully, that was on the better side. I mean, in the war, what do you think the worst part was?

LG: I think probably going back to the first convention.

EB: During the war?

AB: Just for you. What was your worst part?

LG: I never had a worst part.

AB: Everyday was great?

LG: Yeah. I was in the Army, where I wanted to be, and I was getting my degree, and was in charge of a unit. What more do I want?

MB: Was there anything you wished was better?

LG: I wished they'd stopped telling you who you can date, and who you can't. It didn't make any difference to me.

EB: There was never a day that you woke and thought you wished you had today off, "I can't do this?"

LG: Oh no, I always wished I had the day off. I could go here or there or the next place, but I got to work, and once I got on the ward, where I was [thinking of] going, it was forgotten.

SH: Did you ever find that you wanted to countermand a doctor's order?

LG: Oh, yeah, and, I just stood at the foot of the bed, where he was standing at the head, and read the order, and I said, "What jackass wrote this?" And he very quietly said, "What's that?" And I handed him the sheet, and he says, "Oh that must be a mistake, that looks like my handwriting." I said, "Yeah you jackass, that's what it does," and he'd change it. But I got a lot of them that way. They wanted it to look good to them and the hell with the patient, which didn't cut any ice with me.

SH: On the average how long would a patient be on your ward?

LG: I think they had, ... I don't remember how long it was we could keep patients on the ward.

SH: This was back in the States or over there?

LG: Overseas.

SH: You could keep them that long?

LG: Yeah, well, I don't know.

AB: You don't remember how long you could keep them? There was a certain amount of time they could keep them, and then they would have to be shipped out somewhere else.

LG: Right.

MB: Were you under pressure to get them back to the front?

LG: No, not in the front. Under pressure to get them back home.

AB: If they got to you, they weren't going back to the front, they were going home?

LG: No, I saw to it that they weren't. No way, I would let them go back to the front after that.

AB: So, you saw mostly the most severely wounded?

LG: Yeah.

MB: What would you do to make sure they wouldn't go back?

LG: Write up their chart saying, "The man is depressed. He has no business being in this unit, he should be ZI'd", which meant zone of the inferior, and I usually got away with it, unless they find out twenty years from now that I didn't. They might just do that.

SH: After the war ended and you're spending that year in a hospital, you said it was a good facility in Germany. What kind of injuries were you treating then?

LG: Post-op infections. That was primarily it. I'd see some broken bones there, I don't know where they came from.

AB: You helped some local people, too?

LG: People in crutches. No.

AB: Just soldiers?

LG: Yeah, this is all soldiers.

SH: Did you ever see any of our allied soldiers? You talked about the Brits.

LG: Yeah, we had the Brits and we had the Limeys. I couldn't stand either one of them, all they'd do is bitch and gripe about the care they were getting, so they sent them to us and we gave them more to bitch and gripe about.

EB: Now, you said you had good facilities in Germany. Did you take over some sort of the building?

LG: We slept.

EB: You were at the hospital. What was the hospital? Did you take over some German building?

AB: Wasn't it the hospital that used to be a Nazi headquarters or something and you took it over?

LG: You're talking about the (Sandstrom?) Building, yeah. We were in Hitler's headquarters for a while.

EB: One of his Nazi officers.

LG: Yeah, took care of Nazi officers and took care of "Heil" Hitler. I didn't want any part of that. "I got to get out of here."

SH: Well, I thank you very much for talking with us. This has been great.

LG: You're welcome. I enjoyed it.

SH: And I think Elaine did a great a job with her questions.

LG: Oh, I think she did, too.

SH: I thank the rest of the family, [Michael and Andrea Giantonio Blatt]

LG: We've got a few more we can throw in next time.

SH: Okay.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Elaine Blatt 5/23/2007
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 5/30/2007
Reviewed by B. Lauriel Giantonio 7/26/2007