

Navy Medicine Oral History Project

LCDR James Gennari, NC, USN

Medical Administrative Officer

James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, North Chicago, IL

Date and Location of Interview: 19 December 2013, Telephonic Session

Interviewer: Mr. André B. Sobocinski, Historian, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED)

SYNOPSIS

LCDR James Gennari was born in St. Louis, MO, as one of nine children to a first-generation Italian-American father and a mother who was of French, German and Irish extraction. He graduated De Smet Jesuit High School in St. Louis, MO in 1978; he paid his full tuition with money earned washing dishes and bussing tables at a local restaurant. After graduation he worked and studied classical French cuisine and obtained a position as the assistant banquet chef at the Hilton Palacio in San Antonio, TX. While later living in Houston, Gennari met several Vietnam veterans with stories of Navy service and was enticed to enter the military. This decision was also influenced by his father's service in the Korean War and his grandfather's service in the Italian Army during World War I. Both his father and grandfather were awarded combat awards for their service.

From 1984 to 1986, Gennari served as an undesignated seaman aboard the frigate USS Stephen W. Groves (FFG-29) chasing Russian typhoon-class submarines, later made famous in film *The Hunt for Red October*.

He graduated from Search and Rescue Swimmer School (HSL-1) from NAS, Jacksonville, Florida in 1985 and participated in joint operations with STANLANFORTLANT. Subsequent to being undesignated, Seaman took advantage of the Navy's program to strike for a position of Corpsman assistant and was granted permission to leave the ship and attend Naval Hospital Corpsman School at Great Lakes, Illinois in 1986.

Upon graduation from Hospital Corps School, Seaman Gennari became a member of the Coronary Care Unit at Naval Regional Medical Center, Bethesda, MD, which at that time was nicknamed "The President's Floor" for that was its collateral function while performing the primary duties of providing specialized (cardiac) health care for all active duty, dependents and retired military and government officials. Seeking a career in nursing, Seaman left active duty, joined the United States Naval

Reserve Unit Gary, Indiana, and began his journey at Purdue University-Calumet (Hammond, IN). From 1987-1998, James P. Gennari multi-tasked as a full time student, nurses' aide (ICU at Munster Community Hospital, Munster, IN), EMT-I and Emergency Room Technician (St. Margaret Hospital, Hammond, IN) until gaining his license as a Professional Nurse (RN) in 1993, Illinois Department of Public Health Trauma Nurse Specialist(1994) and later his Bachelor's Degree in Science-Nursing (1998). Since 1994, James P. Gennari concentrated his professional nursing career in the area of emergency-trauma and critical care nursing. Simultaneously, Petty Officer Gennari while in the USNR participated in Operation Desert Shield/Storm, and eight Joint Task Force-6 counter drug missions.

In 1998, Petty Officer Gennari became Ensign James P. Gennari, Nurse Corps and returned to active duty. ENS Gennari's first duty station, 1999-2002 was Naval Hospital Great Lakes, Great Lakes, IL. Although a junior officer, Lieutenant Junior Grade Gennari's vast experience and certifications in Emergency-Trauma-Critical Care, allowed him for selection to the operational duties with the Third Marine Expeditionary Force, Third Medical Battalion in Okinawa, Japan (2002-2005) where he was assigned as a Surgical Company Commander, Branch Medical Clinic personnel manager, clinical resource instructor, EMS personnel coordinator and special operations clinical leader. Among his multiple deployments, he was selected as the clinical and Officer in Charge (OIC) of the medical detachment assigned as the only American military medical unit permitted to enter the country of Indonesian for the tsunami relief efforts (2004). His unit treated over 400 civilian victims of that catastrophe with zero loss of life. Lieutenant Gennari was also hand selected as the USMC/USN representative to Vladivostok, Russia demonstrating the applications of the Forward Resuscitative Surgical System. Upon leaving Okinawa, Japan, LT Gennari attended the University of Texas at Houston School of Health Sciences from 2005-2006 and detaching to become a member of the Emergency Department at Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, Portsmouth, VA (NMCP) from 2005-2009 seeing over 78,000 patients a year. Included in his duties, LT Gennari was the departments and later member of the command's Emergency Disaster Management Team.

Departing NMCP, newly promoted Lieutenant Commander James P. Gennari became a member of the staff at The Naval Hospital Corps School (NHCS), Great Lakes. His duties included Department Head of Clinical Training, Department Head of Testing, Command Historian and disestablishment team member. At the disestablishment of NHCS and currently LCDR Gennari became staff member of the new and first integration of the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense-Department of Navy Medicine merger in what is now called the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, North Chicago, IL.

Of particular note, during LCDR Gennari's last deployment with the Second Marine Expeditionary Force-Forward, Second Medical Battalion-Forward, to combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, he did receive the Bronze Star Medal making him the second Navy Nurse since 1970 to have received that award, as well as the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal for operations from Second Marine Division-Forward Combat Regimental Team.

LCDR Gennari married in 1987. He and his wife, Leslie, have one daughter, Micayla.

KEY FIGURES

Gee, Theresa, CAPT (ret.), NC, USN.
McCormick-Boyle, Rebecca, Rear Admiral, NC, USN.
Sommerfield, Benjamin. Sgt., USA
Taylor, Charles, CAPT, NC, USN.

KEY WORDS

ACLS- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support
EOD-Explosive Ordnance Disposal
FMF-Fleet Marine Force
FRSS-Forward Resuscitative Surgical System
JTG-6-Joint Task Force Six
Navy Medicine
Naval Medical Regional Center (later National Naval Medical Center), Bethesda, MD
NC-Nurse Corps
RPG-Rocket Propelled Grenade
SAR-Search and Rescue
USS *Stephen W. Groves* (FFG-29)

GLOSSARY

- Camp Buehring: Located in northwestern Kuwait, Camp Buehring served as a major staging post for thousands of Iraqi-bound U.S. troops during Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- Camp Virginia: During Operational Iraqi Freedom Camp Virginia served as one of 15 American military bases in Kuwait.
- Cook County Trauma Unit: Established in Chicago, IL in 1966, Cook County Trauma and Burn Unit was one of the country's first comprehensive trauma units. The unit was the setting of the 1990s TV series "ER."
- FMF: Fleet Marine Force; combination of both Naval and Marine Corps forces
- FMF Corpsman: is a reference to Navy hospital corpsmen assigned to the Fleet Marine Force. NEC HM-8404-FMF, Hospital Field Medical Service Technician is a hospital corpsman subspecialty for service with the Marines that requires completion of training at Camp Lejeune, NC or Camp Pendleton, CA.
- FOB Edinburgh: Forward Operating Base Edinburgh (AKA, "FOB Eddy") located on the outer rim of the Regional Command Southwest in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. The base served as home to many Marines and sailors of 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward).
- JTF-6: JTF-6 was established to serve as the planning and coordinating operational headquarters to support local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies within the Southwest border region to counter the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. JTF-6's original area of operations consisted of the four border states of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas -- a land area of more than 660,000 square miles. In February 1995, by directive of the Commanding General of U.S. Army Forces Command, JTF-6's area of responsibility was expanded to include the entire continental United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. In June 1997, responsibility for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands was transferred to U.S. Southern Command.
- JTF-6's efforts led to both a greater recognition of the potential for military assistance in counterdrug efforts and a significant expansion of the partnership among active duty forces, reserve components, and the nation's law enforcement agencies. In 2008, JTF-6 was renamed "Joint Task Force-North."
- Great Lakes: Naval Station Great Lakes, located near Chicago in Lake County, IL, is the home of the Recruit Training

Command, which in 1996 became the only Navy basic training site.

IA: Individual Augmentee; Sailors who support or "augment" another Navy, Marine Corps or Army command. Sailors usually go to their IA assignment on temporary or TAD orders and return to their current or parent command once they complete their assignment. Assignments vary in length from a few months to a year or more.

M997: designated as Maxi-Ambulances (HMMWV) that can transport up to 4 litter patients, 8 ambulatory patients, or a combination of litter and ambulatory patients.

USS *Steven W. Groves* (FFG-29): twenty-first ship of the Oliver Hazard Perry-class of guided-missile frigates, was named for Ensign Stephen Groves (1917-1942), a naval aviator who was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism at the Battle of Midway during World War II. The ship was commissioned in 1982.