

**Glenn C. Iafrate**

Persian Gulf War



**What year did you enter the military?**

“1988 in July”

**How old were you?**

“I was 25 years old at the time”

**How long did you stay in?**

“4 years, I served in the marine corps reserves.”

**What boot camp did you go to?**

“Parris Island South Carolina it’s the Marine Corps boot camp for the east coast.”

**How long was it?**

“About three months, July 11 to October 3<sup>rd</sup> I believe I finished, and after that you go to your vocational school which is another period of time afterwards.”

### **What did you learn at the vocational school?**

“My M.O.S or military operational specialty was radio operator they sent us to school. Radio operator school was in twenty nine palms, California which is up in the dessert in southern California. That was another three months of school.”

### **What did that entail?**

“We learned about all the different radios the marine Cop-rs used, different forms of communication whether vehicle, man, man carried vehicle carried stationary. We learned how to set up stations. Relay sites how to set them up in a secure area so they are not as obvious as you might think So the enemy can't detect what's going on. There are a lot of aspects of communications.”

### **Did you go to a second boot camp?**

“No just one”

### **Did you join the military voluntarily?**

“Yes it was something I wanted to do. First I went to college and afterwards I regretted not going so I joined the Marine Corps.”

### **What made you choose that particular branch of the military?**

“A lot of good friends of mine were marines at the time or had been in the Marine Corps and I felt the Marines were a premier organization. You had a lot of opportunities. I got to do a lot of things I would not have been able to do otherwise.”

### **Are you still in touch with some of your friends?**

“A few guys; it's been a long time, twenty three twenty four years now. I still keep in touch with a few people but it's kind of difficult. Everyone is scattered all over the United States.”

What equip did you use on a daily basis

“We used... at that time they were just starting to get into the digital radios, these were all analog type radios so they were big bulky twenty five pound radios you had to carry on your back. You had a vehicle pulling a radio it could take up the whole back of a Humvee, very large very cumbersome equip very heavy and all your intensive stuff.”

**What rank did you achieve?**

“I was a lance corporal.”

**Were you wounded?**

“No”

**Were you in any famous campaigns or battles?**

“I fought in the Persian Gulf War, the first Gulf War back in 91. We got activated, lets see when Iraq invaded Kuwait so August of 90. We got activated somewhere in October I was a reserve unit we got sent out to Camp Pendleton California training for several months and then in early January of 91 we got sent over to Saudi Arabia and I was there for about six months.”

**Can you tell me more about the Persian Gulf War?**

“It was a very quick war; as far as wars go. Sent over and set up an overwhelming force with all the services and reserve units pretty much every asset we had we sent over there. We basically overwhelmed the Iraqi Army and it was basically a four day war. It was over relatively quick. It was a real eye opening experience.”

**Did you receive any awards or medal?**

“We received a whole bunch of stuff. I brought a box let me take them out and explain what they are. These are the ribbons for fighting in the gulf war. Navy Unit Accommodation, Meritorious Unit Accommodation, Marine Corps Reserve Medal South West Asia Service Medal, National Defense Service medal sea service deployment ribbon and Kuwaiti liberation Medal.”

**Which one means the most to you?**

“Probably the Meritorious Unit Citation; that’s for the unit we were attached to. It was a mode of a transport attached to first marine expeditionary force. While we were there, the six months we were there in Saudi Arabia, it was our job to move materials supplies. Ammunition, whatever they had coming into the country we would get it up to forward operating bases; for the combat units. We moved somewhere in the vicinity of eighty one thousand tons of material in the six months we were there. Basically you came into Saudi Arabia through the port of al Jabil. We had to move things, it’s about a 120 mile trip along the Persian Gulf and then west again into the dessert and then back north toward the Kuwait border. It’s every day running the convoys.”

**Which medal was the first one you got?**

“It was probably the National Defense Service Medal. Once the deployment is over they figure out what medals or ribbons you earned on an individual basis or unit basis. Some of the other ones from the Kuwait government came later on after everything was over.”

**When you were moving materials around did you encounter any enemy forces?**

“Yeah, initially there were some small battles in different areas and we covered a lot of territory. Sometimes they would hold us back and we had to wait until an area was secure. You could think of incoming artillery at any given points. It wasn’t really accurate. They were firing just for effect. You just had to be very careful. Other than that once the fighting was over, we had to start moving a lot of our POW’s. There were POWs; there were hundreds of thousands that surrendered and we had to move them to secure camps where they could be held we could feed them and care them until we turned them back over to the Iraqi military.”

**When you encountered the enemy forces what weapons did they use against you?**

“They had AK 47’s a whole host of different machine guns, vehicle mounted wheel mounted RPG’s grenades, artillery, tanks, pretty much the whole gamete.”

### **When you were on your trade route were you ever ambushed?**

“No, no all our conveyances had a great security element with us it would be several tractor trailer type vehicles loaded with whatever and we would have security up front, security in the back, communications if we needed anything further like air support or whatever the case might be. It was pretty secure we never had any issues”

### **Could you tell us once more about the medals each one individually?**

“This is The Navy Unit Accommodation

The Meritorious unit Citation

The Marine Corps Reserve medal

The South West Asia Campaign Ribbon with Three Bronze Stars

The National Defense Service Medal

The Kuwait liberation ribbon

The Sea Service Deployment Ribbon

Along with those, some of them come with a medal. This is in its original box, I rarely take them out. This is the (red with gold middle) this is national defense, South East Asia Service Medal. From of these from the Kuwaiti government are pretty elaborate and beautiful, sparkly. The writing is all in Arabic. Some of these are duplicates. Not all the ribbons come with medals but some do.”

### **While at war what would a normal or average day consist of?**

“Prior to the war it was basically training every day; your physical standards. You are running everyday and doing your physical requirements calisthenics. After that you have a lot of class work. You are learning about history of the Marine Corps, ceremonial issues. You learn about weapons, first aid, just about everything under the sun. Then once you get into a war time situation you have a job to do. Like I said I was part of a motor transport. So my job now became to

move all this material coming into the country up to the forward areas where the combat units could have access to it and use it as a matter of fact during the gulf war they were using it so fast a lot of times we couldn't keep up with it. The units were steam rolling through Kuwait and a lot of times they had to wait for us to catch up and get them more ammunition more fuel, more food whatever the case that's how quick things happen. That's the job constant convoys we were moving hospitals artillery rounds bullets food water you name it fuel everything under the sun."

### **What type of fire arms did you use?**

"Basic issue fire arms was the m16 rifle which you carry everywhere you go it's a standard , 223 round semi automatic, full automatic other than that you carried a Berretta sometimes; Berretta 92 as a side arm. Hand gun those are basically the two personal issue weapons."

### **Did you use any heavy artillery?**

We trained on MK-19 which is a grenade launcher an automatic grenade launcher it shoots 40mm grenades when they are s a well fed grenade launcher that can launch a grenade up about 400 meters. There were different types of rounds airbursts high explosive in cinerary rounds whatever the application was. They were generally a vehicle mounted weapon very heavy quite large. Other than that 50 cal machine gun which was also generally a vehicle mounted weapon at4 tank. Rockets a larger bazooka type of weapon takes out large vehicles. Hand grenades that's about it for me. People were specifically trained for mortars, different types of weapons. That was their job .to deal with those exclusively but that wasn't my job."

### **While at war what helped you pass the time?**

"We had a lot of things that helped us pas the time; in our base camp. Initially we were at the port of Jubal on the Persian Gulf beautiful water ships coming in and out it was a very busy port. You could go swimming you could go into town they had markets just like we have here a lot of little compounds where people worked. We had a secondary camp once we moved out of there. We set up a

nice little compound we had our own volley ball court, we had our own little club house that we set up and we played backgammon every day cards, relaxed did your PT we made good use of our down time, relaxed because once you were on the go you never knew when you would get a break.”

**While at war what helped you get through the hard times?**

“The guys you served with; letters from home, care packages. Constantly everyone getting food from home letters drinks you name it. We all shared everything. If it came in with the mail we would burst open the boxes and eat whatever goodies they sent from home. It was a big boost.”

**After you came home did your perspective on anything change?**

“You learn to appreciate everything that you have. Too many people I see take things for granted. Reality is that nothing lasts for every you have to prepare yourself in your life for any given circumstance to meet and overcome whatever good and bad and move on you cant when things come your way you have to be ready for it and do your best you are not going to lay down win you over keep moving ahead and do the best you can do. “

**Do you remember best care package you ever got?**

“I got a lot of them most were different cakes cookies from home salamis and all that stuff; books and things to pass the time. Whatever you needed you would write home for like toiletries like shaving cream, toothpast, toothbrushes etc. it would take a long time before you got it but eventually it would come in we had to work at the post office so to speak all this stuff came in on giant pallets we had to break them down to the different units the different people. It was an immense operation tons and tons everyone was getting stuff it was pretty cool like Christmas every day.”

**I see you brought a hat could you tell us about it?**

“They call it a cover technically it’s a fist cutter a style, military style a lot of military uses it still. They had it in my day I believe a lot of the service has gotten away from it. The army doesn’t use it anymore I believe. The navy either. But the

VFW adopted this type of style cover. It had the VFW logo post number the state basically fits up on your head and that it. I keep my Marine Corps Globe and Anchor represents my branch of service. It is a military type of cover, they don't call them hats in the military they call them covers. Whether it's this style or officers cover."

**I see you brought some pictures could you tell us about them?**

"I was going through a lot of things last night getting ready. This is a Marine Corps rifle expert badge. Marine Corps prides itself on our marksmanship. There are three designations; sharp shooter marksman and expert and I qualified as expert. These are just a few photos. This first one would be I was at 29 palms at the radio operator school towards the end near graduation.



A couple of these here are training at camp Pendleton before we were deployed. You see in the photo of the Mark 19 grenade launcher that's one of the rifle ranges.





This here is in probably Kuwait this is a captured t72 tank that was destroyed by the air force. We had to get into some of these vehicles and check them out; get some souvenirs out of them. Here are some souvenirs.



This is a photo at one of the Marine Corps birthday balls. I was in this particular one the tradition is that the oldest marine and the youngest marine cut the birthday cake. I was the youngest marine at this particular birthday ball. The oldest marine was actually served in WWI he was probably passed away by now. That's me cutting the cake with the sword.



This is a license plate that I pulled off N armored personnel carrier an Iraqi personnel carrier. I don't know why they had our license plate on them put I pulled it off and its one of my favorite mementos."

**Is there anything you would like to add or say that I missed?**

“I would like to point out for the younger guys like yourself this is a great thing you are doing. I would like to impress upon you that you want to be productive in your life serve your communities, serve your families, live a good life and enjoy everything. Like I said things can change fairly quickly and you should always be prepared for anything that comes your way that’s my advice to you guys.”

**Thanks for your time and your service**