



Born in 1935 and raised in New York City, U.S Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant Lu Caldara enlisted in the US Marine Corps during the final years of the Korean War. He was first assigned to the 3rd Service Battalion as a communications person to be deployed to Korea. However, the war had ended on their way to Korea. He was discharged from Active Duty in 1959, but continued to serve in the Marine Corps Reserves until 1979. In 1965, GySgt.Caldara helped create the Young Marines National Program and became the 2nd National Director in 1967. He continues to remain in the program as a Unit Commander to Rivertown's Young Marines.

I grew up in Queens, NY, went to the public school system, was fortunate to be selected for Brooklyn Tech High School and, like most people, I guess they call them dysfunctional families. We didn't get along, but that's part of life. Then, I joined the military. I was the oldest with two sisters. I had a stay at home mom. She took care of the family and very caring. My dad was a little tough, but it was tough in those days with the Depression and that. He was virtually working 6-7 days a week whenever he could; very strict. My dad was in the Italian Army during World War I. I didn't have to work, but I did work to contribute to the family income.

I enlisted in the US Marine Corps, but it was at the end of the war. It may sound crazy, but after living with a strict parent, it (basic training) was, except for the physical that I had to keep up with, but being athletic, it wasn't too bad, and the strictness was just like home. Believe it or not, I got in trouble a lot for smiling when being yelled at. My MOS, or job, was communications. I joined as a private, went through boot camp, was one of those selected to Meritorious PFC., and got out, after 20 years, as a Gunnery Sergeant. I was assigned to many units, except Aviation. I started off the first unit to the 3rd Service Battalion as a communications person and we formed at Camp Pendleton, CA to go aboard ship to go to Korea. Never made it because while we were aboard ship, they called the armistice, so we couldn't enter Korea, so we



ended up going to Japan. I was very lucky. In Japan, I was in communications center, then a radioman and a telephone operator. I started off being stationed at Parris Island, South Carolina for boot camp. Went to Camp Pendleton in California for Infantry Training and then went to Japan, Camp Gifu. I was stationed in places like the Philippines, Okinawa, Camp Lejeune and North Carolina, and for a short time, on my reserve duty, I did summer camps around the country. I was injured, but not through enemy activity; injured with a crushed hand in a hurricane cleanup construction accident. I was a non-combatant, so I was very fortunate. It's those who have been truly injured, PTSD, shell-shocked; they call them all kinds of names, but those who had to go through traumatic experiences. I was a non-combatant and blessed.

I was released from active duty at the end of November 1959, and in 1966, I joined the Marine Corps Reserves because I thought I might be needed in Vietnam. I was not called. As an 18-year-old, to spend that initial time in Japan. I was very fortunate to get to see a foreign country and even learn a foreign language. There were a number of medals for the number of years, but the ones that are outstanding, of course, for any Marine is I got two Good Conduct Awards for my active duty, got my Korean service, and the United Nations ribbon. For some of the state duty, actually it was during, even got an award from New York State for the World Trade Center; I was called in on that. That was for state duty, they called it the Naval Militia, so I was the Operations Chief for the Naval Militia. It was one of several emergencies we were called in on, but it was nice when Governor Pataki presented the award to me. I got married in 1960 and I then was fortunate enough to join IBM and did a career with IBM; became a programmer and a finance guy, and retired. I am now working part-time with Westchester County Parks Department in the recreation department. (I attended ceremonies honoring veterans and) one of the things I always look forward to is meeting and being friendly with other veterans.

I was one of the creators of the national program. We got together in 1965, and the unit in Westchester actually began February 1965 and we've been going ever since. Names have



changed, but it still better the youngsters here in Westchester. Since 1996, with my Young Marines program, we were accepted to go to South Korea and have been going annually, except for the pandemic. I was connected with the ROK Marines, both the veterans and the active-duty, and it gave my youngsters a great experience in South Korea.



