

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
LAWRENCE HOLLEY
Clerk, Air Force, World War II.

1999

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Holley, Lawrence H., (1924-). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 35 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 35 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 35 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Lawrence Holley, a Blue Mounds, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a member of the clerical staff with the Air Force. Drafted in 1943, Holley talks about basic training at Greensboro (North Carolina), Air Force school at Greeley (Colorado), and assignment to the Air Force statistical section at Pratt Army Airfield Base (Kansas). Shipped overseas in 1944, he comments on stopping in Casablanca, being stationed at a B-29 base in Chakulia (India), and joining the 58th Bomber Wing of the 40th Bomb Group. Holley addresses problems with the B-29 and describes the aerial operations based in Chakulia. Holley mentions his role in the administrative section inventorying parts and gathering reports. He speaks of hiring Indian kids to take care of the barracks, food quality, and beer rations. Holley describes an incident on the base when some bombs exploded while being unloaded. He talks about missing a chance to fly in a B-29 because he was hospitalized with an illness. Holley touches upon being stationed at Tinian Island as chief of the statistical section, learning the war had ended, and seeing the base empty as people and supplies were sent home. He recalls enjoying the music on Tokyo Rose's broadcasts, seeing singer Lily Pons at a USO show in India, attending 40th Bomb Group reunions, and using the GI Bill to attend the University of Wisconsin.

Biographical Sketch:

Holley (b. May 8, 1924) served with the 58th Bomber Wing, 40th Bomb Group in India and the Mariana Islands. He was honorably discharged from service at the rank of tech sergeant in 1945. Holley earned a degree in economics from the University of Wisconsin, worked at the McKay Nursery Company for thirty-nine years, and eventually settled in Waterloo (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999

Transcribed by Joshua Goldstein, 2010

Checked and edited by Channing Welch, 2011

Corrections typed in by Katy Marty, 2011

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

Interview Transcript:

Jim: You were born when?

Lawrence: May 8th, 1924.

Jim: And in Madison?

Lawrence: Nope, Blue Mounds, Wisconsin.

Jim: And you were entered military service when?

Lawrence: I entered military service on April 10th, 1943.

Jim: And were you a volunteer or a conscript?

Lawrence: I was conscripted.

Jim: Where did you go first?

Lawrence: From Madison we went down to Fort Sheridan for induction, and from there we were shipped to Greensboro, North Carolina for basic training.

Jim: This is U.S. Army?

Lawrence: U.S. Army, yes.

Jim: And what were they teaching you?

Lawrence: [laughs] A little bit of everything in basic training.

Jim: Sure. I know about the Army.

Lawrence: How to fire—

Jim: Sooner or later they --

Lawrence: Then they sent me to an Air Force School in Greeley, Colorado to learn operational procedures for the Air Force. Like control tower work, office work and various—

Jim: Is that something you applied for or is --

Lawrence: No.

Jim: They told you this is what you are going to do?

Lawrence: They told me where I was going.

Jim: I see, and this is where?

Lawrence: In Greeley, Colorado; the Colorado State College of Education.

Jim: And this training took how long?

Lawrence: That lasted from July 24th until September 18th.

Jim: When you were finished there you could run a control tower?

Lawrence: Supposedly. [Laughs]

Jim: But that's what you're being trained for?

Lawrence: Yeah, that was one of the things they taught us in school.

Jim: I'm not familiar with what this encompasses; I mean what did you have to learn specifically?

Lawrence: Well, recordkeeping was the main thing I think, but how to line the planes up to land when they were coming back in from a mission or when they were taking off. Those were the basic things they taught us and how to keep records with the plane number, the flight number, the serial number.

Jim: Did they teach you the characteristics of these airplanes?

Lawrence: No.

Jim: So you could sort of predict about what's going to happen?

Lawrence: No.

Jim: That wasn't part of it?

Lawrence: That was not part of it.

Jim: That's something you learn on the job I'm sure.

Lawrence: Would, yes.

Jim: So after -- now you are in this category, what do they do with ya?

- Lawrence: Well, they sent me to Pratt, Kansas to join a B-29 outfit. There I was assigned to the statistical section which consisted of keeping records on all of the parts changes, engine changes, the serial numbers, the hours they had on them. And eventually I was assigned to head quarters where, statistical section, where we coordinated the four different group's records.
- Jim: You didn't have to make these inspections yourself?
- Lawrence: No, we had the records from the maintenance crews.
- Jim: You became a bean counter then?
- Lawrence: More or less. That's about what it was.
- Jim: I see, and how long were you there?
- Lawrence: I was at Pratt, Kansas -- I was there from October 28th to until March 12th of 1944.
- Jim: And then what happened?
- Lawrence: Then they sent us overseas. We went up to Camp Patrick Henry in Newport News, Virginia, and they shipped us out on a converted banana boat. And our first stop was Casablanca in Morocco where we—
- Jim: How long that take you? Do you recall, roughly? Couple weeks?
- Lawrence: Well, let's see -- March 23rd, about three weeks, two and a half, March 23rd to April 10th.
- Jim: In Casablanca?
- Lawrence: We spent two weeks there and just waiting for our transportation to our next stop which we did not know what it was going to be.
- Jim: They let you off the ship?
- Lawrence: Oh, yeah. We were in an Army camp which was using Italian prisoners of war to guard the camp.
- Jim: I see. What was your contact with them, anything?
- Lawrence: No, we had no contact with them at all.
- Jim: What about Casablanca itself?

- Lawrence: We got a chance to go to town a few times and mingle with the natives, yeah.
- Jim: What was your impression of that?
- Lawrence: Well, it's so long ago, and in fact we just got back from there about two weeks ago. We took a cruise, and I spent another one day there, and I [laughs] couldn't remember a thing about it. It was all so different. But it seemed like a very bustling, busy metropolis. They didn't seem as poor then as they are now.
- Jim: Well, they had the French around then.
- Lawrence: Yes.
- Jim: So after that you hung around there, then what?
- Lawrence: Then they put us on a plane and flew us to our final destination which was Chakulia which was about fifty miles north of Calcutta. We made several stops on the way over. We stopped in Tripoli, Cairo, Iran, hit Karachi and finally Chakulia.
- Jim: These were just refueling stops.
- Lawrence: Yes.
- Jim: You didn't spend any time there.
- Lawrence: No, just refueling stops. We spent three, four, five hours in each place while they were refueling the plane.
- Jim: So finally you got to where you were suppose to be.
- Lawrence: We got to where we were stationed.
- Jim: And where is this in relations to the other big cities in India?
- Lawrence: Well, as I say, it is about fifty miles north of Calcutta. But there were no other large cities in the area. There was a rest camp up at Ramshapur, which I suppose was fifty to seventy miles north of where we were. That was a British rest and recreation camp.
- Jim: And you had a B-29 base?
- Lawrence: B-29 base, yes.

Jim: How many ships did they have there, B-29s? Was it a big base?

Lawrence: Well, there were four groups on the base. The whole wing, not the whole wing, but the whole – well, yeah, the wing, 58th Wing was on the base.

Jim: How many airplanes is that?

Lawrence: Boy, that I really am not sure offhand.

Jim: I mean roughly?

Lawrence: Well, I suppose we had forty to fifty planes in each group because they didn't have enough planes, really, to operate effectively for a while.

Jim: What was their mission?

Lawrence: The mission was to bomb Japan, China, Singapore.

Jim: They could make that home on one stop?

Lawrence: Yes.

Jim: Nonstop?

Lawrence: Yeah. The first mission they ran from Chakulia was on June 5th, and they bombed Bangkok, Thailand. That was a nonstop. That was quite an experience, the first flight for all of the flight personnel.

Jim: Because it was a new plane?

Lawrence: Yeah. Untested, in fact they were still making modifications on them while they were running the missions.

Jim: The B-29 was a crazy airplane. They hadn't even finished – they didn't test it completely.

Lawrence: That's right. They did not.

Jim: They put it in combat, and it wasn't even ready.

Lawrence: Yeah, they sent it -- the first planes they sent to us in Pratt needed many, many modifications. Forty, fifty minor modifications had to be made on each one, and they had to change all of the engines at that time too, to war engines.

- Jim: What's a war engine?
- Lawrence: Well, it's a heavier engine than they would use just in the testing and transporting of it.
- Jim: I see. And when you got to India, though, you were still testing this—
- Lawrence: It was still more or less being tested. They didn't start bombing Japan right away or China because they decided to open a base, a forward base in Hsin-ching, China. So they had to convert some of the B-29s to tankers to haul gasoline and materials and equipment over the Himalayas which was affectionately known as "The Hump" which was a very dangerous -- almost as dangerous as flying a combat mission because of the weather conditions.
- Jim: I've known several people who flew the C-46s over "The Hump."
- Lawrence: Half the time we weren't sure where they were. They didn't know if they were going to run into a mountain top or -- because you just couldn't tell. Navigational equipment didn't really tell you everything you wanted, needed to know up there.
- Jim: So then you had a lot of functional problems; a lot of planes that didn't make it because of malfunction?
- Lawrence: Well, there weren't -- actually they were pretty lucky getting the planes. They only lost one plane on the way when they left Pratt, Kansas to go to Chakulia. And they flew those in all different directions. I mean some went over the northern route, some went through Europe. Some of the troops that went over, some went down through around Italy. They were trying to confuse the Japanese as much as possible as to where the B-29s were going to be used. They established that forward base in China, and that facilitated the bombing of the Japanese mainland.
- Jim: Did you have an opportunity to fly in any of the missions?
- Lawrence: No, I did not.
- Jim: Didn't they offer you?
- Lawrence: Not a regular mission. I did have an opportunity to fly when the peace treaty was signed to fly over the *Missouri*, but as luck would have it I had a stuffed nose for some reason that day [laughs], and they put me in the base hospital for a week. So I missed out on that big opportunity.
- Jim: Oh, that's too bad.

- Lawrence: I've regretted that ever since.
- Jim: Sure. That's too bad. So while you were there you were just in the office most of the time?
- Lawrence: Yeah, I was strictly the statistical office.
- Jim: The material just came to you, and you sorted it out.
- Lawrence: Yeah. We coordinated it, yeah.
- Jim: And how did you send your information that you had back to the authorities?
- Lawrence: They had a regular communications transport that would take the things back.
- Jim: How many people were on your base?
- Lawrence: That I really couldn't tell you. I don't know because there were twelve crew members in each plane, and they had their ground crews of four, five people and all the other squadrons I really don't know how many people there were all together.
- Jim: Did you have trouble getting fuel?
- Lawrence: No.
- Jim: Never ran out of that.
- Lawrence: No, they never ran out of fuel.
- Jim: Any other piece of equipment you were lacking?
- Lawrence: Well, that is all we had were the planes other than a few jeeps around for transportation on the base.
- Jim: And the city was very large that you were in?
- Lawrence: Chakulia was a very large city, yes, and we got to visit that quite frequently. I had a friend that was stationed at Chakulia so that helped a great deal.
- Jim: Was there other Army facilities in Chakulia?

Lawrence: Yes, there were other -- I don't know what they —there were engineering outfits there.

Jim: One of them was involved in putting the gas out, sending gas over "The Hump."

Lawrence: Yes.

Jim: Gasoline on the pipeline in Burma.

Lawrence: Well, most of the gas that we used we flew over. They'd fly it over, and then planes would fly over there, re-gas and then do, run their missions.

Jim: Were any of the pilots from around here?

Lawrence: There were none that I knew of.

Jim: On your base?

Lawrence: There were none that I knew of from around here. I'm sorry – Woody Swancutt was, I don't know, I'm not sure if was in our -- I don't think he was in our squadron, but he was over there. And he used to go to the University [of Wisconsin] and was a boxer at the University. So he's the only one that I know of that was a pilot from this area.

Jim: So your daily routine would be what? Just give me that.

Lawrence: Well, we would just go in the morning and gather the reports from the various squadrons. They'd bring them in -- then we'd spend the day re-typing everything. We'd have to take, like if they had an engine changes we'd have to get all the engine changes on one report. Any other minor modifications on another report; each piece of equipment on its own report.

Jim: Did you have a large supply of engines on base?

Lawrence: Yes, they had engines. They had plenty of engines so they could change if necessary.

Jim: Was that something that was done frequently?

Lawrence: Only really after they had so many hours on them, and I am not sure how many hours were required before they would change them. But very seldom an engine failed.

Jim: The pilots seem to enjoy flying those big planes?

- Lawrence: They did, they did, yes. The crews enjoyed the plane. And many of them were shot down and had to find their way home through China. I get a magazine or a bulletin every other month, and there are stories in there about some of these fellows, how they got along with the natives and how they helped them get through. But there were not too many losses considering the number of missions that they ran.
- Jim: Did you have a chance to fraternize with the natives in India?
- Lawrence: In India we did, but it was very difficult because they did not understand English, and of course we couldn't speak Hindu. But just about everybody had some little youngster that took care of their daily chores for them. We all had --
- Jim: In the barracks?
- Lawrence: In the barracks. Yeah, they'd clean up for us around there for a couple of rupees a week.
- Jim: So every barracks had a couple of those guys.
- Lawrence: Oh, yeah.
- Jim: Kids.
- Lawrence: Yeah, just kids.
- Jim: How was the food over there?
- Lawrence: Well, it wasn't the best, but considering the circumstances, why they did a pretty good job. The mess sergeants did a pretty good job.
- Jim: Did anybody bring you fresh vegetables --
- Lawrence: Not a lot of fresh stuff, no. No, it was mostly canned, and we had greasy margarine from Australia, [laughs] yeah.
- Jim: Most of the guys I've talked to didn't like any of the food they got from Australia.
- Lawrence: No, it wasn't—it was mutton tough.
- Jim: Mutton, they hated that, and pretty soon they wouldn't eat it at all.
- Lawrence: It was tough and not very tasty.

Jim: But you didn't have any fresh meat to speak of?

Lawrence: No.

Jim: None?

Lawrence: I can't recall every having any.

Jim: Eggs?

Lawrence: We would get eggs occasionally.

Jim: How about beer?

Lawrence: There was always plenty of beer around. The rations came in, beer and a little liquor came through at least once a month they would get --

Jim: What was you rank when you were there?

Lawrence: I was a corporal, and I think I was, well, let's see, I think I was sergeant when I left when I left Tinian.

Jim: Well, then the club always had plenty of beer for ya?

Lawrence: Well, we didn't really have an enlisted man's club.

Jim: Oh, you did not?

Lawrence: No.

Jim: Where would you get the beer?

Lawrence: Well, they would distribute it, and we kept it in our lockers.

Jim: Oh, but you had no place to keep it cool.

Lawrence: No, but that didn't bother most of 'em [laughs].

Jim: Well, warm beer is not very good—

Lawrence: No.

Jim: Unless that's the only alternative.

- Lawrence: Yeah, that's right. We left Chakulia, oh, in May of 1945 we left Chakulia. I remember that because it was May 8th, and that is my birthday, and we were sitting in a transport on the Hooghly River in Calcutta. I'll never forget that date. But they took us down around the southern tip of Australia then up through the islands into the Marianas, and we arrived in Tinian on June 7th, 1945.
- Jim: Do you know a place called Bud-Bud? It was on that same river near the coast?
- Lawrence: No.
- Jim: How far where you from the coast?
- Lawrence: It was quite a ways inland from the coast where we were stationed.
- Jim: Roman Carpenter from Madison was there on the river.
- Lawrence: Oh.
- Jim: At a base where they were supplying gasoline, sending gasoline to Burma.
- Lawrence: Yeah.
- Jim: In a pipeline.
- Lawrence: Pipeline.
- Jim: A whole new[??] pipeline.
- Lawrence: Mm hmm.
- Jim: So then where'd ya move?
- Lawrence: We moved then -- from there we went to Tinian where we were until November 7th. I was appointed chief of the statistical section while we were over there. The war was starting to wind down, and they were starting to send people home. And promoted to tech sergeant eventually, it was the grade I had when I was discharged. And again the date we were to be discharged I had another stuffy nose or something [laughs] similiar. And they put me in the hospital for a week with a fever and a temperature. So, but they were going to board the transport -- I boarded a hospital bed. But it took a week. Then they got me on a ship and sent me home. When we were on the island of Tinian, why, we ran the first mission May 5th on a naval aircraft factory in Kure [Japan] and from there on it was all down hill for the Japanese.

- Jim: Sure.
- Lawrence: But we ran eight other missions in May, two being right on Tokyo. Those two missions they dropped almost four thousand tons of bombs each mission.
- Jim: That March 18th mission was the one that burned down Tokyo.
- Lawrence: Yeah.
- Jim: Yeah, that was pretty bad[??].
- Lawrence: And then in June there were ten more missions on the Japanese mainland. July they only ran nine, in August five, and the last mission they ran was August 14th, and that was the day that the Japanese had capitulated. But the bombing run was made before the--
- Jim: So did you watch the Enola Gay take off?
- Lawrence: No, that was in a different group, a different wing. So we didn't even know it was taking off. In fact nobody on the island knew what the mission was; they just knew a plane was taking off.
- Jim: Except the only thing different about it, it was all alone.
- Lawrence: Yeah.
- Jim: It had a chase plane with it, another -- three or two of them.
- Lawrence: Yeah. That's all that they—
- Jim: The other was Bockscar [also Bock's Car or Bocks Car; a pun on "boxcar"; the B-29 that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki].
- Lawrence: Yeah. I don't think the crew even knew it until they got in the air and what was in there and found out what they were doing.
- Jim: So then all of the sudden—tell me about getting the word the war was over.
- Lawrence: It came through in a hurry. That was a whoop-de-doo [laughs] for everybody.
- Jim: Was it a surprise to you?

Lawrence: Yes, yeah, it was that it ended.

Jim: When the bombs were dropped on August 6th, those two days, 6th or 9th, I guess it was -- whatever. Did you know then, did you hear about that there was a huge bomb dropped on Japan?

Lawrence: No.

Jim: You heard nothing.

Lawrence: No, we didn't know that.

Jim: So as far as you know up until the day that somebody told you it was over you thought the war was going to go for a long time.

Lawrence: Oh, yeah!

Jim: Is that right?

Lawrence: That's right.

Jim: Okay, tell me how this happened.

Lawrence: Oh, we just heard -- we got word of mouth that the war had ended. Somebody had picked it up on the radio, and there was no big announcement over the camp system or anything.

Jim: Was it hard to believe?

Lawrence: It was. It was hard to believe at first, but it sunk in a hurry. We were sure happy that things turned out like they did.

Jim: Right, and everybody go home.

Lawrence: Everybody was ready.

Jim: But you had to stay until November.

Lawrence: I was there until November.

Jim: Tidying up?

Lawrence: Well, cleaning up odds and ends, yeah. They kept us busy.

Jim: But the base must of started to empty pretty soon.

Lawrence: Oh, yeah. Yes, it was.

Jim: When did the planes leave?

Lawrence: Well, they started leaving shortly after the Tokyo mission because they had -- crews I think thirty-five missions, and they would send them home. And then they started loading the planes up with the personnel and --

Jim: They didn't replace them?

Lawrence: No, they didn't replace them.

Jim: So that should have told somebody something. It was winding down with fewer and fewer planes right up till the end.

Lawrence: Yeah, but everybody was certainly happy when it happened.

Jim: When you were there did Tokyo Rose broadcast to you?

Lawrence: Oh, yes. Yeah, she came through loud and clear. Well, it was a very good program. I mean, they played some nice music on it; mostly propaganda.

Jim: The music was American?

Lawrence: American music, yes.

Jim: Popular tunes?

Lawrence: Yeah, the popular tunes.

Jim: And between songs she would come in with a little propaganda?

Lawrence: Oh, yeah, telling you your wife was going out with your best friend.

Jim: You mean she would name names?

Lawrence: Well, sometimes she had names, but I don't think—they may have been fictitious as far as I was concerned because I didn't know any of them.

Jim: Sure. What time of the day would she come on?

Lawrence: Any time of the day. She could come on any time of day or evening.

Jim: That wouldn't—there wasn't a certain time.

Lawrence: No, it wasn't a certain time that I know of.

Jim: Would it be several times a day?

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah. She could pop in on any break at any time.

Jim: Mostly everybody just ignored it?

Lawrence: Except the music, they enjoyed listening to the music. It was good music.

Jim: Did you have a USO outfit?

Lawrence: Well, we had a couple of USO troupes visit us.

Jim: In India or --

Lawrence: In India—well, in both places, yeah, more so in India than on Tinian 'cause we weren't there that long in Tinian. About four or five months is all we were there. But there were several nights a good show came over to India. Lily Pons was -- I remember her coming over to India to entertain us. That is about the only one --

Jim: No Bob Hope?

Lawrence: No, Bob didn't make it when we were there.

Jim: I see. And did you see the Red Cross or the Salvation Army at any time?

Lawrence: Red Cross was there because they served lunch to the crews when they came back from missions. They'd always have coffee and cinnamon toast or something like that ready for 'em.

Jim: They didn't charge them for it?

Lawrence: No.

Jim: And you read your mail, how was that, was that pretty regular?

Lawrence: It seem to come through pretty regular, yeah, and go out pretty regular.

Jim: Even in India?

Lawrence: Even in India, yeah. Of course they used the special mail that --

Jim: The V-mail.

Lawrence: V-mail, yeah.

- Jim: Okay. And have you kept in contact with any of the folks that you were with over there?
- Lawrence: I have kept in contact with one of my friends that I met over there. In fact, we are going to meet next week, ah not next week, next month about three weeks from now in Albuquerque for the 40th Bomb Group reunion. We have one every year.
- Jim: This was your outfit -- it was the 40th Bomb?
- Lawrence: 40th Bomb Group, yeah. We were with the 58th Wing and the 20th Air Force.
- Jim: So you have a reunion every year?
- Lawrence: They have one every year now, yeah; started about 1966, something like that.
- Jim: Well attended?
- Lawrence: Very well. It's getting tougher to get a lot of people there though [laughs]—
- Jim: They're dying.
- Lawrence: Because, yeah, well, now they are starting to bring families in. Sons and widows and they invite them all.
- Jim: Oh! That's nice.
- Lawrence: Last year they had it in North Charleston, North Carolina. The year before that it was in Boston.
- Jim: Usually a two day affair?
- Lawrence: No, it's four day.
- Jim: That's pretty good.
- Lawrence: Well, they run tours. They get you down there then they will take you on tours of the area. You have a show and tell night, and then you'll have a banquet one night.
- Jim: Oh boy, that's really nice.

- Lawrence: It is nice, yeah.
- Jim: The Air Force doesn't help with that.
- Lawrence: No, no, no, we are all on our own [laughs].
- Jim: Of course, I was just teasing[??].
- Lawrence: In fact, this year they're—its starts on – the convention actually -- registration starts on Wednesday, but if anybody goes down on Tuesday, then Wednesday they are going to take a tour to Santa Fe which we are looking forward to. So were my friends from New Jersey and we are going to meet them on Tuesday, and we are going to go on that trip to Santa Fe and see part of the country out there that we've never seen before.
- Jim: Yeah, Santa Fe is nice. I had a house there once.
- Lawrence: Oh, did ya?
- Jim: And after the war did you use your GI Bill?
- Lawrence: Yes, I went back to the University [of Wisconsin].
- Jim: And finished—
- Lawrence: I finished; I got my degree in economics.
- Jim: In what?
- Lawrence: Economics. From there I had several jobs before I ended up with my career which I ended up with McKay Nursery Company. My high school commercial teacher had told them I was kind of on the loose looking for something more better to do than what I was doing, and they called me—
- Jim: Bill McKay?
- Lawrence: Yeah, and they called me and I went out and interviewed. Mr. McKay was there and his right-hand man, Mr. Willard Gorman, and when I left I had a new job. I stayed [laughs] thirty-nine years.
- Jim: Yeah, Earl Wilke—
- Lawrence: Earl Wilke.
- Jim: Yeah, he was a patient of mine for many years.

Lawrence: Oh, was he?

Jim: The coach was. So, I met his son—

Lawrence: Tom.

Jim: Who worked for McKay, see, and who's an awfully nice--

Lawrence: Yeah, I know Tom real well. In fact, I have lunch with him every once in a while.

Jim: When you see him next time say howdy for me.

Lawrence: I will.

Jim: I remember him. He was awfully nice, and he was a very dutiful son, you know.

Lawrence: Yeah.

Jim: Earl was sick for a long, long time.

Lawrence: Yes, he was.

Jim: But his son was there, came to the office with him, and I just was impressed with him. He took good care of his old man.

Lawrence: Yeah. Earl was my high school football coach.

Jim: Right, everybody knows him.

Lawrence: Yeah.

Jim: Yeah, I pronounced him dead. That's --

Lawrence: Oh, did ya?

Jim: Yeah, at home. He just died, you know, gradually, and gradually. Awfully nice, wonderful patient, actually he never complained at all, and he'd just had pretty unpleasant last several months, really unpleasant.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's too bad.

Jim: I know.

Lawrence: Because he was a good teacher, he was a good football coach, and --

Jim: Everybody loved him.

Lawrence: Yup, he was very well liked.

Jim: So you think your training in the Army was adequate for the job they asked you to perform?

Lawrence: For the job I had it was very adequate, yes. That continued on almost with the same type of work after I got out [laughs] of college.

Jim: Well, then you were sort of in training all the time for your life's work.

Lawrence: Yeah, that's right.

Jim: Well, it stood you in good stead then.

Lawrence: Yes, it did. Paid for my education and helped me a great deal in my later life.

Jim: Sure, that's wonderful. I can't think of anything else. Anything in particular happen while you were in India that was different? Any particular experience?

Lawrence: No. We were pretty close to the Japanese lines, and we had did have an air raid one night. I think one plane flew over that didn't belong there, but nothing -- no bombs [laughs] were dropped or anything, so—I do remember another instance when I was on duty one night. They were unloading some bomb from a plane, and they -- got away from them. They were incendiary bombs, and we had quite a to-do on the base that night. A plane was lost, and a couple of lives were lost.

Jim: How'd it get away from them?

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

Lawrence: The bombs were grouped together. There were individual bombs, several in a bundle of some kind, and one of those wasn't tight apparently, and that slipped—

Jim: [unintelligible] on the ground.

Lawrence: Yeah, it was on the ground.

Jim: And they were armed.

Lawrence: Yeah.

Jim: They must have harmed them when they went up in the air and then it didn't drop—

Lawrence: Didn't drop 'em, yeah.

Jim: Brought 'em back. Yeah, I've talked to a couple of Air Force pilots, said they never did that. Said if we don't drop 'em, we are going to drop 'em on something.

Lawrence: Sure.

Jim: Because they didn't want to have to land and get blown up by their own—

Lawrence: Now, whether these were caught in the bomb bay so they wouldn't come out or not I don't know because normally they would have been dropped someplace, even if it was in the ocean.

Jim: Yeah, you know who John Ryan was --

Lawrence: Yeah, yeah.

Jim: He has to kick one out of his B-17. He almost kicked himself out bomb bay at the same time. While he was trying to kick at this thing, you know, they heard and somebody grabbed him just in time 'cause the two would be in the bomb went off at the same time. That was a problem. Well, sir, I can't think of anything else.

Lawrence: Well, there is nothing else—I don't think of anything I can add except that my group was decommissioned in October 22, 1946 and has recently been resurrected. They've started another 40th Bomb Group. Now, I don't know too much about it, but it's come to life again.

Jim: With B-52s?

Lawrence: I'm not sure even what planes they've got with them. I haven't seen that much about it.

Jim: It could be a lot of different planes.

Lawrence: Yeah.

Jim: All right, thank you.

Lawrence: Okay.

Jim: Cleared to go[??].

Lawrence: Well, I hope you can use it.

Jim: Just what we're looking for.

Lawrence: I brought these things along. I didn't know what you wanted or—

Jim: Oh, you got the information? Where is that in there?

Lawrence: Well, these are -- this is the history of the 40th, and this came out shortly after the war ended, the history of the 40th, with different shots of --

Jim: What are you going to do with that when you pass away?

Lawrence: Well, I thought maybe I'd donate them to the [Wisconsin Veterans] Museum.

Jim: Yeah, a good place for them.

Lawrence: Because I have no grandchildren, and my son, well, I know he won't be interested in them.

Jim: If you want I can introduce you to the archivist that looks at those things. If you'd like or if you just want to donate, that's fine, too.

Lawrence: Well, if you'd like 'em I can, sure—and every month I get a magazine from the China-Burma-India group. Every month they put out -- letters in it and stories in it; people looking for other people.

[End of Interview]