

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
LEONARD MADAUS
Pilot, Army Air Corps, World War II.

2002

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Madaus, Leonard, (1923-). Oral History Interview, 2002.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 76 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 76 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 76 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

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

Abstract:

Leonard Madaus, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a C-46 pilot flying the hump over the China-Burma-India theater. Madaus talks about enlisting in the Air Corps, basic and technical training at Sheppard Field (Texas), attending condensed college classes at Texas Tech, and pre-flight training at Santa Ana Army Air Base (California). He describes primary and basic flight training on Stearmans at Thunderbird Field (Arizona) and training in a twin-engine Cessna at Douglas Army Air Base (Arizona). Assigned as an instructor at Taft (California), he tells of seeing a friend killed in a training accident. Madaus talks about training to be a co-pilot in Great Falls (Montana) and Reno (Nevada), learning to fly the C-46, and the flight overseas to his base at Mohanbari (India). He characterizes his tent mates. He details his missions flying over the Himalayas to Chunking (China) including altitude problems, types of cargo, and dangers encountered while flying the hump. He tells of once noticing the gas cap wasn't on after takeoff and having to land the heavy plane. Madaus describes military life in India including living conditions, worry about cholera, interacting with African-American troops, food, cigarettes, alcohol rations, inspections, and weather. He speaks about getting in trouble for running out of gas right after landing near Karachi (India). Madaus details sneaking two women and a baby aboard their plane to give them a free ride. He touches on additional duties on the base and occasionally acting as a C-47 flight instructor. He was discharged after flying his required 650 hours and comments on being stuck in Karachi for thirty days with nothing to do, return home, transporting airplanes in the States, and discharge at Truax Field (Wisconsin). Madaus speaks of several post war jobs in Milwaukee, using the GI Bill for on-the-job training, and joining the CBI Veterans Association.

Biographical Sketch:

Madaus (b.1923) served as a pilot in the Air Corps during World War II. After discharge at the rank of 1st lieutenant, he worked in the insurance business and settled in his hometown of Milwaukee (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2002
Transcribed by Thomas Johnsen, 2010
Corrected by Channing Welch, 2010
Corrections typed by Erin Dix, 2010
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010

Interview Transcript:

- Jim: Okay. It's the 13th of February in 2002--talking to Leonard Madaus. Where were 'ya born, sir?
- LM: Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- Jim: Okay, and when was that?
- LM: February 7th, 1923.
- Jim: And tell me what were you doing on December 7, 1941?
- LM: December 7th, 1941 I was sitting in the living room listening to the radio with my father and all of a sudden the announcement came through that we were bombed, and --
- Jim: What did you think?
- LM: I didn't have too much thought about it at that time—
- Jim: You were just a kid.
- LM: Yeah, I really think that was the whole story. I felt like, "So what?" You know at the time it didn't strike me as it did later on.
- Jim: You didn't think it was going to affect your life did you?
- LM: No, no, no. As a matter of fact, eventually as you know, I became a pilot, and prior to that I was never even in an airplane.
- Jim: Is that right?
- LM: Right. [laughs]
- Jim: So, had you registered by that time? For the draft?
- LM: No. No, I didn't, and I'd held off and just continued working.
- Jim: What was your job?
- LM: I don't know if it had a title or not. I was working at A.O. Smith in Milwaukee. A.O. Smith Corporation. Well, we were – no, I take that back. By that time I was working for the International Harvester Corporation for the Navy. The Navy had a contract for torpedoes, making emersion units and gyroscopes, and I was in there – I forget, I mean it

wasn't a very important job because I was just out of school and hadn't attended anything yet. So anyway, I – that's where I was, at that time.

Jim: Okay, so when did you decide to become a pilot?

LM: It just so happened that a woman that lived four doors away from me, in Milwaukee, was working for the draft board. And she called me one day and says, "Len, you're just about due to be drafted, so if you want to do anything--"

Jim: Now's the time?

LM: Well, my brother had joined the Air Corps and the same deal as I did, eventually, and so, I thought, "Well, I'll do that." I'll join the Air Corps; I want to become a pilot. So I did. I joined and then they made me wait. I joined in December of '42, and I wasn't called until February of '43.

Jim: The whole winter?

LM: I had to wait all that time. They had, well, they had so many people doing it that were—

Jim: Sure. So, where did they send you?

LM: Sheppard Field. That was for –

Jim: Where was that?

LM: Sheppard Field, Texas. In Amarillo, Texas.

Jim: And you had some basic training there?

LM: Basic training, learning how to march and all that sort of stuff. Salute, and get your uniforms and everything together. And from there – at one time, just not too short of time before, in order to become a pilot you had to have two years of college, and well, in my area none of us had two years of college. We were too young anyway. So they sent us to college.

Jim: Where was that?

LM: They sent me to Lubbock, Texas. Texas Tech. And we went there for five months, took everything in mathematics from plain arithmetic through spherical trigonometry. And, of course, with that we got English, and we got, of all things, ancient history. That was a rough one. And the roughest one, of course, was physics. We had to finish a full college physics book

in five months, and oh, did we cram! So eventually we took our tests and passed, and from there then we went to Santa Ana, which is a pre-flight.

Jim: So this is by the summer, then, of '43?

LM: Yes.

Jim: Five months at –

LM: Yeah. One thing they did, though, at Texas Tech was they did give us a chance to get the feel of flying. They gave us ten hours of flying, where we never landed or never took off, but all we did was fly once we were up in the air to get the feel of it.

Jim: And what kind of an aircraft? Piper Cub?

LM: Piper Cub, right. And it felt real good, I liked it. I thought, “Boy, this is for me.” And then of course, as I said I went from there to Santa Ana, and then we had to go through, oh, various, various tasks –

Jim: Where is Santa Ana?

LM: Santa Ana, California. It's right near L.A. And there were 92,000 people on that base in Santa Ana. Can you imagine that?

Jim: So that was your primary?

LM: No, that wasn't primary, that was pre-flight.

Jim: Oh, just pre-flight.

LM: Yeah, there we went on bivouacs, we were gassed, we—oh, they did everything to us in that place.

Jim: That had nothing to do with flying?

LM: No, not really. We went to school, too. We had continuous schooling all the time wherever we went. But from there we went to pre-flight, I mean to primary, which I went to Thunderbird Field, in Arizona. Thunderbird, Arizona. Glendale, it was. Glendale, Arizona.

Jim: So when did you arrive there, do you recall? Where are we now? Just the first part of '44 I would imagine.

LM: Mm-hmm. I—let's see. Probably—oh, goodness me. July, around August. No wait, around September.

Jim: Of '43?

LM: Mm-hmm.

Jim: Okay.

LM: But anyway, it was somewhere in that area. And then after we finished there – there we flew Stearmans. That's the biplanes with two wings, you know?

Jim: Oh, yes. I know the Stearman. How long did that course last?

LM: I think it was two months.

Jim: And you had to qualify at the end of that two months on that Stearman?

LM: Yeah.

Jim: Solo?

LM: Solo, that's where we first soloed.

Jim: How did that go?

LM: Easy. I was just adapted to it.

Jim: Not many guys washed out at this point?

LM: No, no.

Jim: Most everybody seemed to get through it?

LM: Yeah, there were a few fellas that would – they ground looped. In other words, when you come in and then you can't keep it –

Jim: Hit the runway.

LM: If your wheels are too close together you have a tendency to ground loop. If you're wide apart you don't have a tendency so much. And these were—in fact, they used to call that field, "Washout Field" because of the Stearmans. But anyway, no, everybody that I know made it through there, and nobody was killed. Then from –

Jim: You really enjoyed it though?

- LM: Yeah, it was great.
- Jim: Your instructor was pretty good?
- LM: Oh, he was terrific. We just loved the guy. And as a matter of fact, not that I want to forget this, is after I was overseas for about three or four months my instructor came over there and flew at the same field I was at, at Mohanbari, India. Can you imagine that? But we never flew together, and the thing about it was—I think it was even longer than that, but the thing about it was—he would had to have been the co-pilot, and I would've had to been the pilot [laughs].
- Jim: Oh, wouldn't that have been something!
- LM: Yeah, that would have been it. But, anyway—
- Jim: So anyway, you finished that course, and then you went to –
- LM: Went to basic —
- Jim: To basic, where was that?
- LM: That was at Thunderbird Field in –
- Jim: This is primary you just went through.
- LM: Yeah, that's where we soloed, and we were—
- Jim: And then what's your secondary school called, the second level?
- LM: It's basic training.
- Jim: That was basic?
- LM: Basic training, yeah. And then from there --
- Jim: What did you fly there?
- LM: I can't think of the name of the ship just offhand. That's terrible.
- Jim: Well, did they—by this time had you'd gone from multi-engine –
- LM: No.
- Jim: You sort of were unclassified as to plane, right?

LM: Right, we were still in single-engine.

Jim: Okay.

LM: And there we—

Jim: But it wasn't a Stearman.

LM: No, no.

Jim: It wasn't an AT-6?

LM: No, no.

Jim: Because that's pretty hot for you guys –

LM: Oh, we could've flown it.

Jim: Could 'ya?

LM: Yeah.

Jim: That was a very popular airplane.

LM: Yeah. But people that flew AT-6 usually ended up in fighters, and it's odd. I don't know how they ever judged where we were supposed to be or what we were supposed –

Jim: They didn't ask you?

LM: No, no, no, they didn't say, "What would you like to do?" You just went with the crowd, and they said, "Well, we need so many here, so many there, so many there", and that's where they put us. This was a one-wing plane, low, you know, on the bottom.

Jim: Not a Cessna?

LM: No. It's real funny that I can't think of that, oh gosh. The names of these – Stearman was easy, but these other ones are kind of a little more difficult because I don't – I never categorized them by name. But anyway --

Jim: You were there how long?

LM: There for about another two, two and a half months, something like that.

- Jim: Did you do anything different with that airplane than you did the Stearman?
- LM: Yes, we had flaps for the first time so we had to put down flaps before we'd takeoff, and we had a high and low pitch on our propellers. In other words, it would dig more when you took off, and then when you—then you put it into low pitch when you were up flying normally. We did a lot of acrobats, both in primary and basic, you know, loops and Immelmans, and whatever. But then we also had cross-country. We had to take a cross-country trip alone –
- Jim: Alone?
- LM: Yeah, and map it out, and take it and get back to our field. And then they also had auxiliary fields there, you know. And they were on salt flats, just flat ground. And nothing too exciting about the place, I mean we did the same thing as far as ground school. We did a lot of navigation, a lot of study in navigation. After we finished there then we went to advanced training, and there they –
- Jim: Where was that?
- LM: That was in Douglas, Arizona. Douglas Army Air Base. It was twin-engine, Cessna.
- Jim: So what was the jump from one to two engine? How did that affect you? What did you think about that?
- LM: Well, first of all, we finally got into a plane where we could retract the wheels. The wheels would come up and down, so we had to remember that, and we had flaps again. The thing was we had two throttles instead of one. And we had to synchronize those because if they weren't just in order they'd go "ur, ur, ur" until you finally got it synchronized, same thing later on with the –
- Jim: Was that hard to learn?
- LM: No, no, not at all. The only hard thing was at first, right at first, was to remember those wheels coming in. If you'd forgot 'em and you pulled those throttles way back a horn would blow.
- Jim: Oh, really?
- LM: Yeah, it'd let you know, "Your wheels are up."
- Jim: That horn would sound at, what, about fifty feet?

- LM: It was loud –
- Jim: About fifty feet off the deck?
- LM: Yeah. Well, what do you mean off the deck? It was in the plane.
- Jim: I mean, when you were fifty feet off the runway –
- LM: Oh, I got you. No, it was when you finally pulled the – yeah, you could be about fifty feet. Because when you pulled the throttles back, and if the wheels weren't down, that horn blew. The same thing happened with your C-46. If you ever pulled it back and your wheels weren't down you had a horn that blew to warn you. But anyway, there we did a little more cross-country, and we learned night flying. We did night flying previously –
- Jim: What kind of an aircraft was this? You said it wasn't a –
- LM: Cessna, a twin-engine.
- Jim: Twin-engine Cessna.
- LM: Yeah. We did night flying in basic, prior to this, but it was very short. Now here we did night flying whereas we did formation flying at night and did a lot more different things –
- Jim: That was more difficult.
- LM: Right, right. Well, it wasn't difficult as far as I was concerned, it was easy. It just came easy to me.
- Jim: Navigating, how about that, though, at night?
- LM: We didn't navigate at night. Never did that. We learned that later on [laughs]. Then we had our regular ground school which was, well it consisted of engines, navigation, and things that pertained to an airplane. And then we also worked on airplanes, just a very little bit. We would help work on engines, for instance, with mechanics, and they would teach us a little bit something. It's a little bit more difficult to explain. And I was very proud in one respect. Everyone was afraid of navigation, and I was the only guy on the base that got 100 in navigation.
- Jim: Very good.
- LM: Yeah, I was really good at navigation. I was good in mathematics, that was one of the reasons.

Jim: That's probably the reason, yeah.

LM: Yeah, and so anyway, then we were graduated, and then what do we do? We either become a flight officer, or we become a second lieutenant. Those – as an example – the one fella that I told you that groundlooped in primary? That was a point against him, and he became a flight officer. And when you're a flight officer, you're not an officer.

Jim: You're like a warrant.

LM: Yeah, you're like a warrant. You have certain things you can't wear. Anyway, we were told what we were going to do, and it was nothing like we wanted. They just said, "We need so many here, we need so many here, we need so many here. You're gonna put this guy here." They must have had some way of deciding, but they made an instructor out of me. So I became an instructor at Taft, California, in Bakersfield, right out of Bakersfield. And I taught a couple of classes there, and one of the bad things that happened when I was there was I ran into a fellow that I joined the Air Corps with, Jimmy Clifford. And so we sat together one evening and just talked and talked because we hadn't been together for a while. We went to different schools until we got there, and he was there one class ahead of me. And the next day he was killed.

Jim: Oh, no.

LM: Aw, that was—

Jim: Just in training, you mean?

LM: Yeah, he had a student up on instrument training, and they came down. And two planes came together, too close, and when their wings touched their noses immediately came together, and they fell. And I was washing my car, I took my car along there then. I was washing my car, and I saw this, not knowing who it was, I ran out there, and a couple of guys hopped on. I had a convertible at the time, so they just hopped in, and we drove out there, and these fellows were all pushed up into the instrument panel, and their heads were just like a bowling ball, all burnt off. [clears throat] Excuse me. The planes were still burning. Out of the four guys that were in the two ships, one of them tried to parachute out, but they were too low. His parachute never opened. So he just tumbled to death. So I didn't know about this until later on that afternoon. I took a swim in one of the pools, and a very good friend of mine, his name was Keen, Jimmy Keen from Milwaukee. He says, "Len, did you hear about Jimmy?" And right away when he said that, I knew that he was one of those that died. So, that was really bad. And talk about coincidences, I go out to my father-in-law and

mother-in-law's grave, and Jimmy Clifford's grave is right next to it, out at Holy Cross in Milwaukee. I couldn't believe it, Lieutenant Jimmy Clifford, 21 years old. God! So every time I go out there now I always say a little prayer for him. But then after that we started to train—

Jim: By this time had you been to a DC-3?

LM: No. Now at this point they decided that they needed people to fly over the hump. They needed more people over there. And so they gave us – they took us off of this situation we were in at Gardner Field and put us in – the two of us that were together, a fella by the name of Lieutenant Magley [??] and myself, and we were transferred to Reno, Nevada. Reno is a training base for C-46's, primarily because it's –

Jim: 46's?

LM: Yeah, C-46's. That's what we flew overseas. And the reason for that is because of the elevation. The elevation of Reno is pretty close to what the elevation is over there in China. The elevation in China, of course, is between five and six thousand feet. So when you take off your engine naturally is affected by the height. Anyway, we went there, and we practiced a very, very short time, and then they sent us to Great Falls, Montana. And now we got into a group. There were maybe—

Jim: When did you meet the C-46?

LM: After – well, let me go a little bit further. We went to Great Falls, Montana, and they trained us in C-47's, B-17's, and B-25's. And then we had to go through ground school on all this, and fly them and what-not. But we were never first pilots. We were just, you know, co-pilots, but we understood the ships at least. Then we were transferred back down to Reno, and then we got into C-46's.

Jim: Now, stop there.

LM: Okay.

Jim: How about that C-46 as compared to the C-47?

LM: Oh, my goodness, C-47 was like a little toy. Real little – it's a –

Jim: That's the plane all of us, you know, got a ride in when we first did any air traveling cause that's the standard.

LM: Uh-huh. That was a beautiful ship. Eventually I became an instructor in that, overseas.

- Jim: Right, but the C-46 was a lot more airplane.
- LM: Oh, yeah, very big.
- Jim: Bigger.
- LM: Big and cumbersome. Harder to manipulate on the ground, to taxi –
- Jim: Kenny Johnson said it was a hard one to deal with.
- LM: Yeah.
- Jim: It was difficult.
- LM: But we flew so much. I ended up with probably 750 hours at least in that C-46. So—
- Jim: But it had more power?
- LM: Oh, yeah. It had –
- Jim: Bigger engines.
- LM: Yeah, Wright and Ditson [??], 2,000 horsepower, I think they were. It was the same engine that was in the P-47, only we had two of them, and they had one. [laughs]
- Jim: I understand. Were they reliable?
- LM: Yeah, as far as I was concerned, I thought they were. But there's always bugs in any ship. You know, you run into situations that this ship has got this wrong with it, and that's got this wrong with it.
- Jim: Generally, what would that be due to? Some structure in the airplane, not the motors?
- LM: Well, once we lost an engine when we took off when I was a co-pilot at that time, and so we just flew on one engine. But we were already up. And the reason for the loss of the engine is – I don't know. When we got the thing back down on the ground they found out about it, and we just forgot about it, went to the next day, and the next ship. But, we had lots of – a lot of little things that went wrong.
- Jim: While you were in Reno?

LM: No, no, this is when we were overseas as far as that 46 is concerned. There were a lot of bugs that they had to work on and fix up. In Reno, again, we were not classified as pilots. We were co-pilots.

Jim: Oh, really?

LM: Oh, yeah. And eventually, after that, we were told we were going to go overseas. They didn't tell us where, they wouldn't tell us. They wouldn't let us open our orders until we were over the ocean. Can you imagine that? Everything was so secretive.

Jim: But you knew you were going west though, didn't you?

LM: We could've gone to Africa, or Europe – I mean not Europe, but Africa, or— we didn't know, we just didn't have any idea. But anyway –

Jim: How big a group were you talking about?

LM: I'd say there must have been about twenty, twenty-five of us.

Jim: All at the same level of training?

LM: Mm-hmm. And, after that we were–

Jim: So, what did the orders read?

LM: Well, first of all, we were transferred to Nashville, Tennessee. And there we had ourselves equipped to take a plane over with a first pilot, of course, and get all our necessary equipment. You know, shoes, and everything that we would need for overseas. So, we went up to Buffalo, New York, and picked up a brand new ship, right out of the factory. Flew it back down, and by this time, I had a pilot. His name was Stewart Watson, and he was 41 years old. I thought that was ancient at the time because I was only 21. Anyway, he and I flew up there, and he flew the ship back, and then we got ourselves in there and went to Miami, Florida.

Jim: With the airplane?

LM: Yeah. And in Miami, they loaded the ship down with everything that we could carry overseas, you know things that they needed over there: propellers, engines, whatever. So, we had a full loaded ship to fly over. So we flew down to Cuba, down to South America, across the – I forget the name of the island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

Jim: Azores[??]

- LM: No, no. This was like Borinquen or something. But anyways, right in the middle of the ocean. And then from there we went to Acraw, in Africa, right straight across Africa, over to Arabia, and then to Karachi – and I'm not sure if that was a part of India then because that was –
- Jim: Yeah, it was then.
- LM: In then. Yeah, I thought so.
- Jim: And now it's in Pakistan.
- LM: Right. So, that was the most miserable night I ever spent, because it was so hot there.
- Jim: In Karachi?
- LM: Oh, it was just, just unbelievably hot. And we only stayed there one day and then flew from there to Calcutta, and then from – and I flew with two other fellas that were in this group, and they became my tent mates.
- Jim: How many airplanes in this group [unintelligible] took this overseas hop?
- LM: There were just three of us that went together.
- Jim: Three airplanes?
- LM: Three airplanes. And the others, they managed to go separate ways. You know, same course, but – now we had a navigator with us, and that's all he did. That was his job, to bring these ships overseas. The three of us became tent mates overseas, Ray Lewis and George Kemp and me. And there was one other fella in the tent already, Willy Swinford [??].
- Jim: But there were six of you who flew the airplanes?
- LM: There was a crew chief, a radio operator, a pilot, a co-pilot, and a navigator. But we only need one navigator for the three ships.
- Jim: I see.
- LM: So that would be five in one and then four in the other. We really didn't need a crew chief, but the idea was that they needed them overseas.
- Jim: The chief was an enlisted man?

- LM: Yes, they were usually sergeants, or above – mostly sergeants. And then these particular ones that were in our ship stayed on our field in Mohanbari, except for Captain Hatch. He was from –
- Jim: That was where your base was? Mohanbari?
- LM: Mohanbari, yes.
- Jim: M-o-h-a-n-b-a-r-i?
- LM: Right.
- Jim: And that was in?
- LM: The Assam Valley.
- Jim: Assam, yeah, in the – Northeast India.
- LM: Right.
- Jim: Right. I know--near Burma.
- LM: Very, very close, yes, very close. Right on the Brahmaputra River. Hatch was transferred to Kunming, he was a captain already, Captain Hatch. And he became operations officer over there. And Stewart Watson, who was my pilot, he flunked out on an eye test [laughs] and they put him in the –
- Jim: That late?
- LM: Yeah, all the way over there and he had bad eyes [laughs].
- Jim: I didn't think they would be giving anybody eye tests when you were that far along.
- LM: Yeah, well, he was 41 or 42.
- Jim: Ah, that's the reason they –
- LM: Yeah, and he flunked out. And so what did they do? They made him a – I forget the title he had, but he was transferred to Burma, to Mishinaw [American version of Myitkyina] in Burma.
- Jim: Myitkyina.

- LM: Yeah. And I thought, “Oh, that poor guy”, after I found out what Mishinaw was all about, you know, because they were still in the war in Mishinaw.
- Jim: Well, that was a big battle there.
- LM: Oh, you’re not kidding. So, he went there. And then Kurth [??], who was my other roommate’s first pilot stayed there, and he became what was classified as a chief pilot at our base. Then we started flying.
- Jim: Okay. Did you get any instruction? Did your navigator, you know –
- LM: Nothing, nothing. We just—we landed, got our tents –
- Jim: What, they said Kunming was over there in China somewhere, go find it?
- LM: We didn’t have to. We were just co-pilots.
- Jim: Oh, I see.
- LM: We were just sitting there doing whatever we had to as far as helping out. But we weren’t the main “gazabo” [1930s slang term for important person], let’s say.
- Jim: But the pilots knew where they were going.
- LM: Oh, yeah. And the first flight I took was a night flight, and I remember it very distinctly. I was asking him a lot of questions, and one of them in particular was, “Why are there so many lights down there?” He says, “Those aren’t lights. Those are forest fires,” over the hump you know, in the Himalayas, the mountains. I says, “Forest fires?” “Yeah,” he says, “those are just forest fires all over down there, mostly caused from lightning.” So I thought that was odd. And from then on I saw a lot of those thereafter.
- Jim: What altitude did you fly?
- LM: 15-5 [flight level]. We usually flew over at 15-5, and as a rule, as I can recall anyway, we came back at 18,000.
- Jim: Oh, higher?
- LM: Well, yeah, because we had an empty ship, and it was easier to get up there. Because with a full ship, you gotta –
- Jim: 15-5 then, was pretty close to the mountain tops?

- LM: Not that close, really, and when you come right down to it because, I guess when they first started out, they were pushed further north, away from Mishinaw, because the Japs were in that area, and as a matter of fact, they were on the Burma Road. But little by little, we were able to reduce that, and come down to a lower altitude because the mountains were lower the further south you went. So that's why we were at 15-5.
- Jim: You said you were on oxygen from the moment you took off?
- LM: No.
- Jim: There was no reason for that.
- LM: No. At night we went on it at – let me see, I don't really remember because, you know, that's fifty-some years ago. At daytime at 10,000 feet we'd put our oxygen masks on. And at night we had to put them on quicker. I know I ran out of oxygen one time when I was a co-pilot, and I was coming back on a return trip from Kunming or one of those places. And I just went out. I just passed out, just grayed out. First I got real gray, then I just – but the pilot knew what was going on so he got the radio op to get his off and give me oxygen. So then we shared it on the rest of the way back.
- Jim: Oh, you didn't have another bottle?
- LM: No, we didn't have another. It was all just one tank I think. Otherwise it was a malfunction in mine, yeah. But I remember going out like a light. So, boy, you get up there, up at that altitude – oh, I had the same thing happen at Santa Ana. They put us in a pressure chamber, to give us an idea of what it feels like to be up there. They took us up to 35,000 feet at Santa Ana; that was one of the things we had to go through. And they says, "Now watch this." They took a pencil and a feather and they dropped them, and they both hit the ground at the same time [laughs]. Can you imagine that? Because there's no air, there's just nothing there, they just drop. And now he says, "I want a volunteer," and I was always willing to do anything. "I want someone to take their oxygen off," at 38,000 feet. I says, "Ok, I'll do it." So I took it off, because everyone was on oxygen at that time, and about the count of five I was out. I just passed right out. So then they put one on me real quickly, and they said, "Now that gives you an example of what can happen if you don't have oxygen up there." There's just none up there at that height. That's why I said we had to fly 650 hours of flying time because it was mostly oxygen.
- Jim: That was your limit? Then at 650 hours of flying time you would be rotated home?

- LM: Yes.
- Jim: Is that right?
- LM: Yeah, that's right, right.
- Jim: So that was your goal then, really?
- LM: Yeah, right, you had to make it. And then of course there were all kinds of little things that happened. One time, maybe your wheels wouldn't come down and you had to crank 'em down by hand, and then the governor would go out on your throttle, and then one would go "ooh, ooh, ooh," and so you'd have to do it by hand instead of taking both of them and doing it together. Oh, just so many thing like that. We never had any deicer boots on our wings. It was too heavy. They were too heavy; they took 'em off. So very, very often, especially in the winter time, naturally, you'd look out there, and, "Holy man," your wings were loaded with ice. And so were your propellers, and ever so often –
- Jim: That would bring you down though.
- LM: Oh, yeah.
- Jim: So what'd you do about that?
- LM: You back fired your engine, and it would shiver it off the wing. Did that many, many times. But we did have deicer boots on the propellers, and then we would press it, and that fluid would come out onto the propellers, and you could see. It would hit the side, and all of a sudden, BOOM! The ice would hit the side of the ship, it sounded like a bomb [laughs]. So we did have that. That was good because you'd get ice on your propellers it's worse than on your wings practically.
- Jim: Did you take food along to eat?
- LM: No.
- Jim: How long did missions last? You went from your base to Kunming which is this usual run, is that right?
- LM: About five – anywhere between five and six hours.
- Jim: Total?
- LM: Yeah.

- Jim: So that's two and a half out and two and a half back?
- LM: Mm-hmm.
- Jim: You didn't stay long in Kunming?
- LM: No. No, they had an egg shack there. We went into operations, checked in, then we went to weather, then we went to briefing to see if there was anything unusual that happened that we should've known about on the trip back, and then we would go to the egg shack which was right next to it. And then we would get two eggs, a piece of toast, and coffee. It was black coffee, and brown sugar, real brown sugar [laughs]. It was raw sugar, you know. And we had to be back in the plane within a half hour. We had to do it all in –
- Jim: How long did it take them to unload that?
- LM: By that time they would unload it.
- Jim: So you only stayed a half hour then in Kunming?
- LM: Yeah, yeah.
- Jim: Then you were on your way home.
- LM: Right.
- Jim: They'd refuel you and emptied the plane?
- LM: They never refueled us--most of the time they took the fuel out. We had enough fuel to get back, plus. So they would—
- Jim: Oh, you could have enough to go both ways?
- LM: Yeah.
- Jim: On board.
- LM: Right.
- Jim: Oh, I didn't know that. That's something I'm learning here.
- LM: Oh, yeah, yeah, we—
- Jim: I never knew that.

- LM: We were filled up to the brim. And I forget just exactly how much – I knew all that stuff; that was all second nature.
- Jim: Well, you were a lot lighter then, going home.
- LM: Yeah, yeah, right. In fact, one time, we were on the way back--they rerouted us to a place called Yunan. And they had dynamite and alcohol. They loaded our ship up with dynamite and alcohol [laughs] that we had to take to Yunan on the way home. But we were light so we could accept all that stuff. As a matter of fact, almost all of our trips we had ballast in the back, way in the back, to compensate.
- Jim: What was the usual cargo you carried over there to China?
- LM: Gasoline and pipes.
- Jim: Pipes?
- LM: Yeah, they were trying to make a pipeline going over there so they wouldn't have to take it over in drums any longer, and they'd pump it over, over the hump.
- Jim: That was your main cargo?
- LM: Yeah, but that wasn't all.
- Jim: I understand.
- LM: We had everything from ketchup to Kotex. Everything you could imagine we had on there, bombs, lots of ammunition and bombs.
- Jim: Did you always know what you were carrying?
- LM: No, not until we got to the ship. We'd get to the ship; we'd see what was in it. That was all.
- Jim: They didn't want to discuss that with you anyway.
- LM: It wasn't important. We had a goal regardless.
- Jim: "You drive!" [laughs]
- LM: One time, I remember I took a – I didn't take it, I saw they were putting this in the ship that someone else took when I was going out to my ship, a 1939 Plymouth they got in there.

- Jim: They fit that into a C-46?
- LM: Yeah, and it was too high. They couldn't get it into the door. So they took the top out. I don't know if they pounded it out, or pounded it down or if they cut it out. But whatever happened, when they got it over to China then they put it back together again. But they got it in there, and they took it over, a 1939 Plymouth [laughs].
- Jim: Did you carry passengers?
- LM: No, never. Just the radio – always a radio operator--pilot, co-pilot and radio operator.
- Jim: But he was attached to your plane, and he went where you went? Or not?
- LM: He was, but then we never saw him again after that. Next time we'd have a different one.
- Jim: Oh, I see, so he really wasn't in your basic crew, a part of your ship?
- LM: No, no, no, we had no crew. It was a matter of when you got there, you looked to see who your pilot – when you were a co-pilot just looked to see who your pilot was. And when you were a pilot you'd look to see who your co-pilot was, and then you'd also see –
- Jim: And the navigator?
- LM: No, we didn't have any. We didn't need any.
- Jim: So generally on most trips then, it was you, the pilot, the co-pilot, and the –
- LM: That's all.
- Jim: Just two of you?
- LM: Oh, and I mean the radio op, the radio operator.
- Jim: And the radio operator, three of you?
- LM: Radio operator. Right, three.
- Jim: No crew chief or anything?

- LM: No, no, no, there was no need for that. If there was ever some trouble with a particular ship and they said they were going to take it off then they would put a crew chief on so he'd be there, and he knew what the trouble was. But that was very, very, very seldom.
- Jim: Did you bring anything back from China?
- LM: Ballast. We used to bring tungsten and things like that back--tin, tungsten, for us, for the United States. And it was just -- we considered it ballast to make -- so the ship --
- Jim: If you were flying empty [unintelligible] otherwise—
- LM: Yeah, right, right. They put that in the back of the ship.
- Jim: So they didn't really have to take anything. You did it to balance the ship rather than deliver an important --
- LM: Right, right, and at the same time, we needed it, so why not take it? There was a shortage of everything during the war. Yeah, that was something. One time we took off, this was when I was a co-pilot, and they filled the gas tanks, and I looked up, and they forget to put the cover on the gas tank, you know, screw it back on. And the gasoline was flowing out of the --
- Jim: Where were you at that time?
- LM: We were about 4,000 feet above the field. [laughs] Yeah!
- Jim: Oh, my God!
- LM: And you can't land with all that weight, with all that weight of gasoline. So we had to keep flying around to waste gas until we figured that we had wasted enough and we wouldn't overtax the wheels by landing with all that weight. So we made it in naturally, and was that luck that it didn't start on fire.
- Jim: Boy, that could have been a bad experience.
- LM: Sure, from the exhaust, you know.
- Jim: I'm surprised the engine didn't catch on fire and the plane explode.
- LM: Well, the engine was far enough away, but it was not that far, like this, that distance --

- Jim: Three feet.
- LM: Yeah, from the exhaust, but it was coming off the top. But boy, it was a scare. But there were a lot of little things that happened like that, you know. I wish I could've remembered –
- Jim: The engines always seemed to work?
- LM: Mm-hmm.
- Jim: They seemed to be reliable, and you never had to shutdown halfway or across the mountains?
- LM: No, I never had to. I used to practice that on the way home most of the time.
- Jim: Shut one off?
- LM: Shut one off and fly with one engine. Usually I would do it when the co-pilot was sleeping, because he was always sleeping on the way home, you know, because it's tiring. And I'd shut it off, feather it. And I'd poke the guy and say, "Look, look. Oh, my God! We lost an engine!" [laughs].
- Jim: How long were you a co-pilot before you became a pilot?
- LM: Quite long. Well, see, I was just graduated so I was like new in the industry. I think it was from September until, I've written it in the book that you've got there, to January. And then January, for the rest of the time I was over there I was a first pilot. January, February, March, April, May. Five months, I was a first pilot.
- Jim: Then you had your 650 hours?
- LM: Mm-hmm.
- Jim: I bet you were excited when you got that done.
- LM: Yeah, it was embarrassing.
- Jim: Why was that?
- LM: Well, I usually left the co-pilot fly it back, so he'd get accustomed to it and get—
- Jim: You got the hours, and he got the experience.

LM: [Laughs] Yeah. It didn't matter. But anyway, I says, "You don't mind." I says, "This is my last trip," to the co-pilot, and I says, "I want to take it back. I want to just be sure." He says, "Oh, no, go ahead." And so we're coming in for the landing, and I'm getting kind of close to the ground, and I said, "Watch me grease this one in," and I bounced it [laughs]. I was too high, and I pulled the throttles, and "BOOM!" Oh, it was the worst landing I'd ever made, honestly. But that was something. That was over once it was done with. Oh and then after that, baksheesh was a tip, that was a Hindu word for a tip. Baksheesh sai baksheesh, and then we went on baksheesh trips if we flew after 650 hours.

Jim: Oh, you didn't leave the base?

LM: No, we had to wait until we got orders to leave the base.

Jim: So you were there for a time—

LM: Mm-hmm.

Jim: Doing little things?

LM: Well, then I flew the C – I was checked out in the C-47. We flew thirty-some people that were going home to Karachi in a C-47. And we got over the Taj Mahal, and the pilot – I was a co-pilot then, learning, being checked out in this ship. The pilot says, "What do you think, we got enough gas?" So we get the old E6B computer out and check everything, you know, perfect. "Just enough, I think. We got enough." I said, "What do you think?" He says, "I think so, too. We don't have to land and get gas." So, we turn to New Delhi, and I don't know if we had to pick up another couple people up there or what, but we went to New Delhi. And we called in, got landing instructions, and something happened that the wind changed, and it seemed like—it was odd to me because it was at night. Usually it's more calm at night. But then he says, "Do you know the emergency go around?" In other words, once you started, you take off again and you go around and fly a certain pattern, then come back down. And we said, "Sure." Well, it's the same practically on every field. So we took off again, after we were down about 50 feet, and flew out, and came back around and landed this way instead of the other way. Our wheels just touched the ground and we were out of gas [laughs].

Jim: Wow!

LM: Talk about embarrassment! Did we get reamed out. So they had to bring a jeep out –

Jim: You couldn't taxi up to the –

LM: No, we were in the middle of field, just not a drop of gas left. Oh, man! So we got towed in, got out, slept overnight and we were called into operations the next morning, and the CO got us on the carpet. He reamed us out, just reamed us out for having done that. I don't blame him. But we were so sure, you know. I suppose if we would have made the regular landing instead of having to go around that wouldn't have happened, and we could have taxied in, and nobody would have known the difference when they filled it up. So, anyway, we get to Karachi, and we drop off these people, and they asked us if we would take a load to Calcutta instead of just going home. Well, sure, why not. I mean it's part of the things we have to do in the war. So they loaded the ship down with loads of – most of it was all boxed, whatever it was in. Loads and loads, just the whole thing was loaded. So we flew to Calcutta. Then we landed there, and this pilot that was my first pilot in this case knew a fellow who was a civilian pilot. We had civilian pilots flying over there out of Calcutta. This guy was the son of an air— **[End of Tape One, Side One]**

-- of someone that owned an airline, and so he got a deal, naturally. And they were being paid, I think, 1,300 dollars a month which was big money in those days. We were getting \$221. So, he knew him, and so we were going to stay overnight. So he took us to a place, to dance and spend the evening. But then I found out that this pilot had a couple of girlfriends that were down there, and they had to go back to Chabua. That's where they stationed, these two girls. So they came along, and one of the girls had a little baby. So we finally managed to get them down under the backseat, you know, when we went through the gate.

Jim: Oh, at the air base?

LM: Yeah, and so they weren't seen. And we got to the airplane, and they were just finished loading it to take another load up to our area, and these guys were wondering why we got two women and a baby [laughs]. See, the strangest things happened to so many people in the service.
[Approximately 15-second pause in recording]

We were loaded, really loaded down heavy, and we couldn't get the altitude we wanted to so we came to a field that was on our map, and we called in, and we landed there. So these women had to stay on the ship until daytime –

Jim: Because you didn't want them to be seen.

LM: Yeah, and then we went to operations, and I remember on the --

Jim: Did you bring them some food?

- LM: No, no food. It all happened so quickly. It seemed like it was like in a few hours it was going to be daylight. Well, to make a long story short, I was out on the porch of this operation, and there was this big light there and bugs flying all over the place, and there was a monkey out there. And that damn monkey was eating these bugs, like, oh, that was for him. And he bit me [laughs].
- Jim: He bit you?!
- LM: Yeah, I was trying to be nice to the monkey, and he bit me. He didn't want to be bothered; he was too worried about eating [laughs]. So anyway, I got away from him in a hurry. So we took off the next morning as soon as it got light out, and we couldn't get the altitude we wanted to, and I remember we had to fly along a river, and it was pouring like mad! And it seemed to me, at least to my memory, like there were cliffs on both sides. It was wide, you know that we could fly in there, and we were down low, flying in there. Anyway, we finally got back to our base. Then we had to get these women off that base. And this guy, this pilot, he knew everybody. He knew some African-Americans that were there –
- Jim: He was a civilian?
- LM: No.
- Jim: No.
- LM: No, these were – no, he was a pilot—
- Jim: Oh, I see.
- LM: From regular. I think he was finished with flying, too. He was waiting to go home. But anyway, he got these two African-Americans to get a truck because they were a part of the motor pool, and that's where we put the women. We put them in the back of the truck [laughs], and we took them over to Chabua and got rid of them. Oh, what an experience. But these are all little stories, things that occur during your time that you're in.
- Jim: Did you ever get in to eat in any of the Indian cities when you were there?
- LM: Yes. We were very worried about cholera. We had cholera shots because they use human excretion a lot over there for fertilizer. So, when I was in Calcutta we didn't eat. We just stayed on the base.
- Jim: How was that food? Pretty—

- LM: The base food? It was good.
- Jim: It was?
- LM: Yeah, it was very good. The one place that we could eat was in Dibrugarh. That was that little town that was close to our Mohanbari Field, and we used to get duck. They'd roast duck in there, and every so often we'd go in there for duck meal. If you were an officer you could get a jeep, or a command car, and we'd just get one, and then three or four of us would go in there and get a duck meal. That was funny. And the really bad part was our CO got amoebic dysentery from that place because they weren't washing the utensils properly.
- Jim: Sure.
- LM: You know they wouldn't get in between the forks and that, and he got amoebic dysentery from that. Oh boy, that was bad news.
- Jim: Did they send him home?
- LM: They didn't send him home. No, they just put him in the hospital. We had a hospital over there.
- Jim: They treated him there then.
- LM: Yeah, right. We had a hospital. We had a dentist's office, no electricity. It was a pump type, where he would pump the motor, and then he'd drill your teeth if he had to. I didn't have to go, thank God. And we had a priest on our base, and we had a chapel, and then there was a Red Cross. I don't know where they stayed. There were two ladies; they were Red Cross. And if you came in from a flight it was all free. You could go get donuts and coffee.
- Jim: Did you have a service club?
- LM: Mm-hmm.
- Jim: You could get some liquor and beer?
- LM: Well, we had our own. We had a distribution. Every month we would get a quart of booze, and we never knew what it was going to be. It was going to be gin, or rye, or whatever, or Old Overholt [laughs]. And we would get a case of beer. And the enlisted people would just get a case of beer [laughs]. And most of the time, I wasn't a drinker. I didn't like to drink so I would trade my booze to the colored fellows because they would come up and down – every time the distributions came out, they would be

looking for a bottle. Then they would trade their beer for a bottle of whiskey. But they wouldn't take gin. They would not take gin. So if you had a bottle of gin and you wanted to trade it, you were stuck with that gin [laughs]. The colored fellows weren't going to take it. And then we had a theater, and we had a place called, "The Rice Bowl," because our CO was Colonel Rice, and they used to have boxing matches. The colored fellows would put on boxing matches once a week. They were pretty good. It was a funny thing, one time they wanted to know if any of the white people wanted to come up there. And one guy did, and they beat the living hell out of this colored fellow. He was a golden gloves champ, and they didn't know it [laughs]. Oh, he was good! But we had that entertainment, and then we had a – what do you call it, where you buy your cigarettes and your candy, and all that – a store. So we could buy things there –

Jim: Post exchange.

LM: Yeah, yeah, right.

Jim: And how about mail?

LM: Mail, I forget how we got the mail.

Jim: You were single then?

LM: Yeah, yeah.

Jim: So your folks send you a lot of stuff?

LM: Oh, I got mail every day. Practically every day. And I had a girlfriend then. I was—

Jim: Did they send you food?

LM: Mm-hmm.

Jim: Cookies and stuff?

LM: Yeah, yeah, we had packages. I was over there at Christmas time, too, so I mean naturally we got these Christmas packages, food and clothing and everything you could imagine, you know. And I told them that— I never liked shrimp when I was a kid, and when I left from the States I left from Florida, and I tasted my first shrimp there. It was a French fried shrimp, and I thought it was just tremendous, and when I wrote home and told them about it—so they send me little cans of shrimp [laughs]. But we didn't have any refrigerators so we had to dig a hole in the ground and put

it down there just to keep it tepid [laughs]. But they sent food and candy and things, but we didn't need that. We had most of that stuff.

Jim: Sure.

LM: Cigarettes, we had – oh, we had so many cigarettes. And then people in the United States were starving for them. But we could get, I think it was, a carton a week, or two cartons a week. It was plenty. I had more cigarettes than I–

Jim: More than enough.

LM: Yeah, right.

Jim: You were a smoker then?

LM: Yeah, oh yeah, I smoked heavily.

Jim: Everybody— we did too. I mean I –

LM: Mm-hmm. One of my other duties there was I was a briefing officer, and Link trainer officer [a type of flight training developed by Ed Link], and tower officer. They rotate you into these different positions, so that you— they keep you – in other words, they don't have to get a special man for this to bring them over there to do this thing. They get the pilots that are not going to be flying that particular time, and they'll put him up there in the tower, and the next day you'll fly, and then maybe the next day they'll put you on briefing--briefing was nothing more than handing out your kit with all your maps and stuff and tell what the last guy –

Jim: Did you carry a weapon?

LM: A .45, yeah.

Jim: They issued that to you?

LM: Mm-hmm. And we had to go in once a week and have it cleaned. You'd do it yourself, and clean it in front of somebody to show that you cleaned it.

Jim: And taken care of it.

LM: Yeah, right, because it was so humid over there.

- Jim: Did you have any instructions when you were flying, you know, in that [unintelligible] country – did you have any instructions if you had to bring it down? And what to do?
- LM: What do you mean?
- Jim: Well, if the engine quit and you had to land somewhere.
- LM: No.
- Jim: In enemy territory. You had no—
- LM: Well, we were pretty much away from any enemy territory. But there was all mountains, you couldn't land. You had to bail out. You had to bail out or shoot out. Like if you lost an engine and you didn't have the power to continue with that full load then you would have to jettison your load. That happened many times. Not for me, but I mean I'd seen other people or listened to other people talk about it having done that. Especially the gasoline, that was easy. You just cut ropes and then roll the thing out or shoot it out [laughs]. And it was funny, it smelled like a gasoline factory in the ship, but we were smoking away [laughs]. Well, we opened a window so there was a good circulation in there. And a side window, we'd open that up and it would circulate air.
- Jim: When you're immortal you don't have to worry about anything.
- LM: [Laughs]
- Jim: What can hurt?
- LM: [Laughs] Yeah.
- Jim: So, tell me about going home.
- LM: Going home was a catastrophe because we got to the Karachi, and we had to wait there 30 days for transportation home.
- Jim: With nothing to do.
- LM: No, nothing to do and no money to do it with. Fortunately, we could go to an enlisted men's – where they eat, and isn't it funny that I can't think of words now? A mess hall. An enlisted men's mess hall. And for a quarter we could get a meal there. Isn't that something? And so we were eating in that enlisted men's mess hall for most of that time because we ran out of money, and we weren't going to be paid until we got back to the States. So, 30 days we sat there in Karachi, and was it hot, because you know that

was right in the summertime. So, eventually people were so drastic that they were taking ships, vessels on the ocean, home, and they'd go around Cape Horn. Was that Cape Horn? Cape of Good Hope, which one is that now?

Jim: The one around Africa.

LM: Africa, yeah.

Jim: That's Hope.

LM: Yeah, Hope. And it took them forever to get home. And by our waiting, we luckily got a plane out, and we flew home. And when we finally hit the States, then we hit Newfoundland first, and then we—we hit Washington D.C. Broke, flat busted, no money [laughs]. We couldn't even buy a beer [laughs]. And we couldn't get a motel.

Jim: Sure.

LM: So we went into a government building, and there was some like couches there. We slept there at night until we got our transportation out.

Jim: When you got back from overseas you were discharged almost right away?

LM: No, no, then I was transferred to – we had our choice of where we wanted to be stationed. And the closest to Milwaukee was Romulus, Michigan. So I chose that. And I was there—I'm trying to think now— until, I think, October. So that was like July, August, September, October, four months.

Jim: After the war.

LM: Yeah. And then we were considered ferry pilots, where you ferry ships all over the place. I'd go up to Bangor, Maine. I'd probably fly a ship down to Augusta, Georgia.

Jim: What kind?

LM: C-46's. Oh, one thing I forgot to mention. You know after that excursion to Karachi with that C-47 and that whole deal. Well, I was considered a first-pilot, which was easy to be. And then they made me an instructor pilot [laughs]. So I was instructing guys that had never flown a C-47. One of the first trips we took was with my roommate, George Koepp [??]. He had never flown a C-47 so I checked him out in that. And what we did was we flew to different fields, and picked up guys that were going on a rest leave. And I think it was called Shillong. It was a place in the mountains

close to Burma. We came there, and there was no tower, no windsock, nothing. We don't know where the wind was coming from, and here I got this pile of guys on the back of the ship, and I thought –

Jim: And you were showing them what to do, right?

LM: The thing is I'm trying to find out how to land. I want to go into the wind, and wouldn't you know it, I chose the wrong way [laughs]. I chose with the wind. I didn't think we would ever gonna touch down. When we finally did, good thing that field was long enough; I had to slam those darn brakes on, and bring that back down, and put the wheel in my gut and slam those brakes on, and boy, we just—and when we got to the end of the field I had to hit one brake and turn quickly, and I think those guys in the back, you know, they were all veteran pilots. They probably thought, “What kind of a joker have we got here flying this ship?” So then we picked up another crew that were coming home from their rest leave, and while we were there we noticed a bunch of gliders, whole bunch of gliders were just stuck in the woods there that they didn't use. The gliders were used from that territory over into Burma when they had a big –

Jim: The C-47 was easy to fly compared to the 46?

LM: Yeah, it was like a toy. It was just like a Cub, Piper Cub, to me.

Jim: Fewer things to worry about.

LM: Yeah, you could depend on it. It was just a dependable ship. And on the ground it was very easy to maneuver down there, you know, to taxi. Very, very easy; you were lower, and just –

Jim: Not as heavy.

LM: No, no, right. Wonderful ship. I think there were 110 things we had to do on a C-46 before we'd take off.

Jim: A hundred? On the 46?

LM: Yeah, the co-pilot read it, and he hit it. You know, like the co-pilot—I was the pilot. The co-pilot was reading this list off, and then he'd say, “Check this, check that, that switch, that switch, that switch.” Before we became a first pilot we had to be able to touch every switch and every knob in that plane blindfolded. That was part of your test to become a first pilot.

Jim: Well, that's a lot for—

LM: But you knew it. You knew where every little tinty [??] was. You flew it so often it became night and day. So it was nothing as far as I was concerned. But that was one of things you had to do. But like I say, I think in one of those books they've got a checklist that you can find, that we had to read off. First we had to go out on the outside of the ship and check all the – check the wheels, check the tires, see that the chocks were out of the tail. Well, just make a visual check of everything we could, and then on the inside we'd do the same thing, and then we'd hit that 110. Then after we were through with that 110, then we'd get to taxi to the place where we were going to takeoff, and they'd have another checklist. Then we'd have to go through that checklist. You know, like the simplest thing to say is, you gotta lock your tail wheel when you finally get into position, tail wheel locked. You've got a special thing there to lock it. And are your flaps are at one quarter, and this and that, and so on, and all these things we had to do. But we had two lists we had to do every time we took off in that airplane or even taxied it.

Jim: On the C-47 you probably didn't have even half of that.

LM: No, not as many, naturally. Smaller ship. So anyway, I got to Romulus, Michigan, and I finally met a friend of mine that we went over together, but he went to Soukertain, and we went to Mohanbari, and he spent his time in Soukertain, and I still write him. We still write letters and Christmas cards. And I spent that period of time there, and we ferried ships around. Only C—wherever there was—in other words, if they had a bunch of C-46's up in Alaska that they were bringing back down to pickle in the Southern States. Altus, Oklahoma was one of them in particular. Mobile, Alabama was another –

Jim: To do what?

LM: Well it'd be called pickle 'em. They put 'em up—they bring 'em and put 'em up like this [makes gesture], and then they'd bring another one and put it up like this [gesture].

Jim: Oh, I see.

LM: It's just boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.

Jim: They're awaiting destruction then.

LM: Right, right. One trip I got was from – I think it begins with an "M", but I can't think of the name of right now. Merced or something like that, California, and I had to bring it back to Mobile, Alabama. And we could stop anywhere we wanted to. We took advantage of that a little bit, and we

had \$7 a day per diem so we had money. So I stopped in – what’s the big city in Wyoming?

Jim: Casper?

LM: No, down south more. But anyway, the first stop was we stopped there. There were two of us going, two ships. And I can’t get my wheels down, they won’t go down. So, we’re trying to crank them down. They won’t crank down. So here we’re stuck up there, and we can’t get our wheels down, and we were ready to land. The other guy I was with, he landed his. So, I thought, I’ll try something. So I got up to about 10,000, and I dove it; almost straight down. And I came down real fast, and boom, boom, they came down [laughs]! Oh, was that luck! Just complete luck. But you knew that they were down because they always “bump, bump,” you know, and then the lights, you’ve got lights. So that was something. Then we went to St. Louis, and then we went to Mobile, Alabama. And that was a little bit—I didn’t like that so much because it was a night landing, and I never saw Mobile, Alabama before. I didn’t know the field at all, and we called in, and they told us the direction, and I flew out and came out, and “Jeez, I’m over the ocean.”

Jim: Over water.

LM: Yeah, holy mackerel! But we landed okay. That was pretty much pretty near the end – oh, no, no. Then we started flying B-17’s from some place in Northern New York, one of the fields up there, down to Altus, Oklahoma.

Jim: How’d you find that airplane?

LM: Bulky, lumbering. It’s slow.

Jim: Well, it’s twice the number of engines, right off [??]

LM: Yeah.

Jim: Did that add to your difficulty?

LM: No. You get used to it after a while. After you once familiarize yourself with the ship the thing is to know everything in it, you know, to know what all the switches are and where they are and what they’re for. I flew one time, and I got into a storm with one, and my wings were actually going like this [mimics wing movement]. “Holy man,” I thought, “please don’t fall off” [laughs]. So I flew those down there until – that was the last thing. We were running out of clothes so I landed in Pittsburgh, and I talked to a P-38 pilot there, and asked him, I says, “We’re supposed to go

to Romulus. Is it open? We heard that it wasn't," because we wanted to land there and get clothes. He says, "Yeah, it's open, I just came from there. It's wide open; there's no clouds, you know, you don't have to fly on instruments." So we flew into Romulus, our base, and we wanted stay overnight, so we opened the petcock on the brake fluid and pumped them. Whoosh! [laughs] The brake fluid shot out to the end of the wing [laughs]. So we told them in operations, "There's something wrong with the brakes. Better check that out. We better stay overnight." So I get into operations, and my name is on the slip for getting out of the service. And I thought, "Oh, baby," and I got out [laughs]. And then I went – then I was transferred. See, the funny thing was, they said if you want to get your private license, get 'em. And they told you where and when I got there, two things I had to do. I had to go to the CO and present myself, and tell him why I didn't have my goggles, my sun goggles, and why I didn't have my leather jacket, couldn't turn 'em in. And he wanted to know why. I says, "Well, the very first trip I took over the hump I didn't know any better. I put my jacket on my seat, and I put my goggles up on the thing," and I says, "When I come back, they were gone." Boy, there's one thing, the Chinese will steal your teeth if you're sleeping, and they took it. They stole it. And my pilot never told me anything about it. So I lost my—and he took it. He says, "Oh, okay, all right." Cost me \$7. Imagine that, for that leather jacket? [laughs] And what was the other thing? I said there were two things there. Well, whatever it was, it wasn't important. So anyway, I decided to get—oh, I know what. They says, if you want to get your private license – so I went to get it, and there was nobody there. And somebody came into that office, and says, "Where you going?" I says, "Oh, I'm going to Truax Field. That's where I'm going to be discharged." "You can get it there," she said, "You don't have to wait here. This guy's out to lunch or doing something." So I says, "Okay," didn't think anything of it. So I went to Truax Field to try to get it. They says, "You should've got it where you were." I never got a private license.

Jim: Oh, my.

LM: So it would cost me \$400 just to get a private license. So I never flew another airplane in my life after that. Never flew again in my life.

Jim: What did you do when you got out?

LM: Went back to my old job at International Harvester, and it wasn't exactly what I wanted to do, so I got married [laughs]. And I wanted to get into sales. So I started doing sales work like in stores, you know, like a clerk. Eventually – I just can't think offhand of what I was doing at the time – oh--my father-in-law owned a business; leather business--and I was working with his one son who owned a factory who also did all the machine work.

Jim: Where?

LM: In Milwaukee. Van Horne Kaestner Leather Company. Anyway, so I went to work for him. And my brother talked me into a donut business. It was the worst thing that ever happened to me in my life. I was working 18 hours a day making donuts. We were made a thousand dozen –

Jim: But not money?

LM: No, no, we were losing money. We finally went bankrupt. But anyway, that's far from what we're supposed to be talking about.

Jim: You didn't try to use, or didn't think of using your G.I. Bill?

LM: Eventually I did. I did it on an on-the-job training basis. I naturally didn't like to stay where I was with my father-in-law so I met a fellow who was – I picked him up, he went to Bay View High School where I had graduated from, and I knew him. He was looking for a beginner underwriter in insurance. I told him what I had, that I could handle it, I knew I could handle it real easily, and I had the G.I. Bill, and he said, "Good, you're just the guy we're looking for." So I went and learned insurance through the G.I. Bill, and I became an underwriter. Then I stayed in insurance – I went to take a test, and I was so ahead. First of all, I took a test at the telephone company, and I excelled in mathematics, and they wanted me badly, and I didn't like—they said, "But you're going to have to start at the bottom." "Well," I said, "That's okay." "You've gotta go up to count poles or something." I thought, "Oh, that's not for me." So I went to the bureau that finds jobs for people –

Jim: Employment.

LM: Employment agency, and I took a test, and they said—[laughs] they, too, said the same thing. They says, "Go to school and become a mathematics teacher," because I so excelled in mathematics. That was again, from all that navigation boojwah. And I didn't do it. Then my brother got me talked into this darn donut business. Oh, nuts! And I should have – I had four free years of school, free! Oh, what a blast. So anyway, so I didn't, and I got into this dumb donut business, and we finally went bankrupt in that because we took too many returns. We were depending on [unintelligible] route people. Man, you know when you make a thousand dozen a night, you're selling a lot of donuts, and you're taking a lot back when they don't sell them. But we had to do that because Kappus, cause we were in Racine. Kappus Bakery was taking returns, and they were a little smarter. They were in business for many, many years. They knew what they were doing. Our guys, our route men, people wanted 10 dozen,

they'd give them 10 dozen. He didn't know if they could sell 10 dozen. Then all of sudden they wouldn't, so we'd take them back, and it was all waste.

Jim: So, what'd you do then?

LM: Well, then as I say, I got into this insurance business, and I stayed in that for the rest of my –

Jim: Working days?

LM: Yeah, right.

Jim: What insurance company?

LM: Well, Milwaukee Mutual was the last one I was with. I was with a number of them.

Jim: And did you join any veterans organizations?

LM: Oh, I joined the CBI [China-Burma-India Veterans Association], and then that was—

Jim: That's still active, apparently.

LM: Yes, yes.

Jim: You meet how often?

LM: We don't – we meet once a year, but it's so far away that the only time I've ever gone was when they had one in Milwaukee. And I didn't meet anybody I knew.

Jim: You didn't go over to China? Ken Johnson went to China here—

LM: Oh, yeah.

Jim: For the 50th anniversary, was it? Whatever it was, just a couple of years ago.

LM: I know.

Jim: He and his wife were over in China.

LM: There's some literature in there about that.

Jim: But you didn't make that one?

LM: No, no.

Jim: But you still correspond with this one fellow, and that's about it?

LM: Yeah.

Jim: He's the only one?

LM: There's another fellow, but he stopped corresponding so I thought I would too.

Jim: He's probably dead.

LM: No, he isn't. He's got good longevity. His father I guess died when he was 87 or something, [laughs] and his brother too. But I have a friend that I got into Cadets with that was smart. When I went into the donut business he applied with Eastern Airlines, and they –

Jim: Took him?

LM: Took him. So he became a pilot for Eastern Airlines.

Jim: You might have enjoyed that.

LM: I know it. I would've loved it.

Jim: Because you enjoyed flying so much I would think that would have been a natural fit.

LM: Yeah, it would've been easy because I was adapted to it.

Jim: I know.

LM: And the – dumb, I just didn't do it.

Jim: Now you won an Air Medal? And several –

LM: An Air Medal, and a—

Jim: Distinguished Flying Cross.

LM: Distinguished Flying Cross, yeah.

Jim: Did a lot of guys win those?

- LM: Mm-hmm. You flew so many hours over there –
- Jim: It was sort of automatic after a number of hours?
- LM: Yeah, a number of hours and then you get your Air Medal. And then after a certain number of more hours you get the Distinguished Flying Cross, and then so many more hours you get another Air Medal--then of course, then the Campaign Medal.
- Jim: Everybody gets.
- LM: Yeah. Just before I got over there they got a citation, a Presidential Citation.
- Jim: Your unit did?
- LM: Yeah, well, the whole area down there, every field did.
- Jim: Well, you think your training was adequate for what they asked you to do?
- LM: Oh, yes. I thought so. And it was pretty much up to yourself too, you know, to take advantage. When I was in pre-flight – I'm sorry, when I was in primary training at Thunderbird Field we were so intent, to another fellow and myself, his name was Kennedy, to get through and never fail at anything, we went to ground school every day, and we flew, and every night after we wrote our letters, he and I went to school and studied. Imagine that? Studied our hineys off, and we had the use of the rooms and the blackboards and everything, and we would question one another, and eventually it was time to take our test to get out of there, and everybody came to us [laughs]. It's a good thing the teacher went out of the class because everybody – we were passing our papers down, because we were finished, we were smart. We finished all our stuff, and everything was fine. And everybody was a little bit dumb and was afraid that they were gonna not pass, so they were taking our papers [laughs]. So we actually got a few guys through that wouldn't have made it otherwise [laughs].

[End of Interview]