

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

LYMAN A. WAFFENSCHMIDT

Supply Sergeant, Army Air Force, World War II

1996

OH
306

**OH
306**

Waffenschmidt, Lyman A., (1921-). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 30 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 30 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Lyman Waffenschmidt, a Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin native, discusses his early life in Sauk City and his World War II service with the 742nd Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group in North Africa and Italy. Waffenschmidt talks about the jobs he had as a boy including selling magazines and delivering the Wisconsin State Journal, his family's food stand overlooking the Wisconsin River, and being drafted into armed service in 1942. He mentions choosing the Army Air Corp, having basic training at Jefferson Barracks (Missouri), and, on his twenty-first birthday, graduating from armament school at Lowry Field (Colorado). Waffenschmidt comments on training in Oklahoma City for three additional months, New Year's Eve celebration at Times Square before going overseas, and sharing a bunk and eating bad food on the boat. He describes duties as a supply sergeant in Italy and Bizerte (Tunisia), the increase in food supply once liberty ships began reaching Europe, living conditions, and building an airstrip in Bizerte. He talks about what sorts of bombing missions were based in Bizerte and describes his duties maintaining guns and loading bombs. Waffenschmidt evaluates the B-17 aircraft. He touches upon riding in a bomber over Germany five days after the war ended to see if anyone would shoot at the plane. He describes a friend who landed a crippled plane in a field after the rest of the crew bailed out. He talks about volunteering for duty in the Pacific theater, homecoming, celebrations in Chicago, discharge at Camp McCoy (Wisconsin), and using the GI Bill to attend the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Business College. Waffenschmidt describes having a hand in inspiring Eagles Days in Sauk City (Wisconsin).

Biographical Sketch:

Waffenschmidt (b. October 10, 1921) served with the Air Force during World War II. He served in North Africa and Europe and achieved the rank of corporal before being discharged in 1945. He graduated from the Milwaukee Business College, ran his own full-service Mobile station in Sauk City (Wisconsin) until 1985, and served on an ecumenical council.

Interviewed by Doris Litscher Gasser, 1996.

Transcribed by James Erwin, 2008.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcribed Interview:

- Gasser: Today we are happy to be with Lyman Waffenschmidt. Hello Lyman.
- Lyman: Hello.
- Gasser: How are you today?
- Lyman: I am fine today. It is a beautiful day so I have to be.
- Gasser: And we want to hear a little about you, we are having a series of the VFW anniversary, so we want to hear about your World War II experiences, but we also want to learn a little bit about who you are. This was your home country, wasn't it?
- Lyman: Yes, I have lived in Prairie Du Sac ever since I was seven years old. I was born in a home out in the country.
- Gasser: Tell us about that.
- Lyman: It was on thrasher crew day and I weighed twelve pounds.
- Gasser: Your mother was cooking?
- Lyman: No, no, my mother was laying in bed and it was a terrible thing to have this baby born at two o'clock in the afternoon. There it was, thrasher crew day, and I weighed twelve pounds. The lady laid me on the bed for two hours and all of a sudden I started to kick.
- Gasser: Did you cry?
- Lyman: No, I didn't cry. I started to kick and when I started to kick, my mother, who was still suffering from the birth of the baby started to scream, and the lady came in and said, "You will have to pick up the baby." I couldn't stand it on the bed anymore. She pulled back the covers and my legs were just kicking that sheet so that was the beginning of my life. Later on, we moved to town and I was seven and the first thing I had to do was try and make enough money to support myself because we were poor people when we came to town.
- Gasser: And who all came to town? Did you have brothers and sisters?
- Lyman: I had a sister, Nora, and a brother, Henry, and we came to town and I was the youngest and we rented a house in town for twelve dollars a month an so—

Gasser: What kind of a house was that?

Lyman: A nice one, a white one.

Gasser: What street number is that?

Lyman: I don't know what street number is that, but it was Kinsey [?] Street at that time and later became Eighth Street. So we lived there for-- and we had a wood lot up in the railroad bluffs and we went up there every year and made our own wood and so we had a shed out in back we put the wood in. So, I started selling magazines and I got this agency with the Saturday Evening Post and the Country Gentleman and the Ladies' Home Journal. And I couldn't sell any of them. I couldn't get anyone to buy them. So finally after about a month of going from house after house, I went to Mrs. Turnagers [?] and she said: "Oh, those are nice magazines, I'll take all three." So, that was the beginning of my magazine route. After that it was quite easy to sell, but it was that first moment to get someone to buy it. And when I was eleven, I had to give it up because they enforced the Child Labor Law. So from eleven to twelve --

Gasser: You were jobless.

Lyman: Jobless and unemployed. So when I was twelve, the Wisconsin State Journal came and I took the Wisconsin State Journal and Kenneth Field had the Capitol Times. Kenneth lives down there in the house over there. And, so, we had a lot of wonderful experiences. I had the State Journal and he had the Capitol Times. We both had somewhere about fifty to seventy customers. We covered the city pretty good and it was really nice. It is really tough to be a newspaper carrier in the winter time when there is ten inches of snow and you have a bicycle and you push the bicycle through the snow because you can't ride it through the snow.

Gasser: I suppose you had to carry the newspapers.

Lyman: We had to put them in the basket and we had to push the bikes in a real bad winter, just so we could get the papers to where we were going, and it was a tough deal, you know. But we enjoyed it in the summertime. We had some wonderful customers and we got a lot of gifts for Christmas for being good boys, you know. So later on, my brother, Henry, built a stand and he was going to have hamburgers and everything.

Gasser: How old were you then?

Lyman: I was -- he ran it one year and he hated it.

- Gasser: Let's go back a minute, just briefly. What else was going on in town? A bit about school-- until you got to the age where you ran the stand-- a bit about school days or anything that was fascinating to you as a child.
- Lyman: Well I used to be the reporter to the school for the State Journal because I was delivering the paper. We would go to Cliffy Kaufman's after the games were over and we would call in the scores, or anything about the game, and they would print it. I would get fifty cents for each call.
- Gasser: To report about the game.
- Lyman: To report about the game and they would give me credit on my newspaper route.
- Gasser: Did you just give the results or did you tell something else?
- Lyman: Well, it was pretty short 'cause you always give the results, or some little thing about it, but never more than three minutes cause they had to put it in the paper and, you know, they had a lot of towns they had to do it. Clifford Kaufman was very nice, they had the restaurant there, and then I used to set up pins with Sam Babbington [?] once in awhile. There was a bowling alley downtown.
- Gasser: You did this by hand. Wasn't it kind of dangerous?
- Lyman: We did it by hand, but it wasn't really. Sam was a pretty capable person.
- Gasser: You had quite a workout.
- Lyman: He would keep you on the ball so you wouldn't get hurt. Every time I worked there Sam was always there, I never worked with anyone else. I always worked with Sam. It was pretty nice that way. And, uh, I guess we'll go on to the stand. My brother built the stand, and got the lumber, and built the stand, and we had hamburgers.
- Gasser: Okay, describe what the stand looked like and where it was.
- Lyman: Well it was on the Graf lot by the river. We had the river view.
- Gasser: It was right on the southern border of the lot.
- Lyman: Well, she had an extra lot, and it was right in the middle of the extra lot.
- Gasser: And did you have to negotiate with Graf's to get the lot?

- Lyman: No, because at that moment it was owned by a Doctor and he was glad to rent it for practically nothing because he wanted to keep it. He was going to retire and build a home there and the Grafts had sold it to him.
- Gasser: Did that materialize?
- Lyman: No, his wife died.
- Gasser: What doctor was that?
- Lyman: I don't know--a doctor from Sun Prairie. Henry built the stand and he opened it up and ran it himself. Mother helped him for the first year and he just didn't like the idea of having to cook and wait on the cars and ---
- Gasser: Okay, you had it--it was a little square building.
- Lyman: A little square wooden building.
- Gasser: How many feet would you say it was?
- Lyman: Oh, I would say it was about sixteen by twenty--
- Gasser: And you had windows that you could open and shut.
- Lyman: Screened windows to keep the bugs out. Then we could open and serve through. Most generally we had to go to the cars to get the orders.
- Gasser: They would pull up to the curb.
- Lyman: They would pull up to the curb and you would go out to the car and get the order, and you had a tray that attached to the car, and you would deliver the order to them.
- Gasser: It was a root beer stand.
- Lyman: Yes. It was the beginning of the root beer stands, you know.
- Gasser: And I see you have some big Seven Up signs. Did the companies put them up or just send them to you?
- Lyman: Yes and Hires Root Beer.
- Gasser: Did the companies put them up or just send them to you.
- Lyman: All of this stuff was delivered by truck by them, and the Johnson's had this pop factory down at Sauk, and it was all delivered by truck, and they

would bring you these signs by the trucks, and then you would put them up.

Gasser: How was the inside laid out? Did you have a refrigerator?

Lyman: We had an old ice box and Sam Shrader [?] brought us ice every day and then we had a grill to cook our hamburgers on. Then we had a special thing to do our hot dogs on, and then we had a big pop corn machine, and we made popcorn, and the machine after you did four or five turns, it would take over automatically. And we bought butter from the Sumpter [?] Creamery, and we used about thirty pounds a month, so we would go up to Sumpter Creamery.

Gasser: So all this was stored in the ice box.

Lyman: Well we had an ice cream machine and what you had to freeze, you put in the ice cream machine. Perkin's Ice Cream from Sauk City and Walt Anloff [?] was their repair man for them and once in a while if anything went wrong, Walt would come up and then every spring Walt would come up and get everything working for you.

Gasser: So the ice cream machine was like a freezer.

Lyman: Yes, yes, you see in the lattice work there, it's like the back part of your refrigerator. It was underneath that lattice work there, and it worked nice, and we had four different kinds of ice cream, and we served ----

Gasser: So you made the ice cream too.

Lyman: No. Perkins Ice Cream in Sauk City did it.

Gasser: They made it and brought it up.

Lyman: They made it and brought it up.

Gasser: Would they sell it to you in quart containers?

Lyman: No, I had two and a half gallon containers and ----

Gasser: How many did you have?

Lyman: Four

Gasser: Did you sell double dippers or----

Lyman: Well, whatever they wanted.

- Gasser: How much did you charge?
- Lyman: A nickel for a single dip. A dime for a double dip.
- Gasser: You got pretty rich then.
- Lyman: Yes, the pop was a nickel.
- Gasser: You didn't have coffee or anything like that.
- Lyman: No, we didn't have coffee.
- Gasser: Pop, and ice cream, and popcorn, and hamburgers.
- Lyman: And hamburgers and pop corn. So it was pretty nice and mother would make some homemade pies and we would sell them for fifteen cents a slice. So it was nice and one day, the second year I was running it-- my brother had it the first year-- he had it in 1937 and I had it in 1938 and 1939, and '40. In 1939-- a State Inspector came and he said, "You have to lock up. You have no potty on the premises." And I was closing the big doors--and Mrs. Graf came over--and I was crying, the tears running down my cheeks, and Mother Graf came over and she said, "What in the world is happening now? Did somebody die or something? Well, I said, "This gentleman here said I have to lock up because I have no potty on the premises." And she said, "You come with me." And she took him over to her back door, and down in the basement she had a closed seat down there, and she had a sink with towels down there, and said, "Does that pass your inspection?" And he said, "Yeah, it passes inspection, but can anybody use it?" And she said, "Yes, anybody that wants to use it can use it." And late that summer, about the last days of August, some lady came in and wanted to use the toilet on the premises. So we went over to Mrs. Graf and she met us at the door, and she took the lady down into the basement, and that was the only time, that whole year, that anybody asked to use the bathroom on the premises. So the next year we painted the nickel hamburgers over [on the sign]-- and we quit the hamburgers and hot dogs because we didn't want to get in trouble with the state. It is weird that way back then.
- Gasser: But you still had the pop and ice cream.
- Lyman: We still had the pop and ice cream.
- Gasser: And you still had a nice bench out there under the tree and the kids came along?

- Lyman: Henry made that. And all the kids from school would stop in and buy popcorn from us with the real butter, you know. It was really good. And we used to, the Stieber [?] brothers, across the street here, they had a farm out in the country and we used to buy the baby rice popcorn from them. They grew the baby rice popcorn.
- Gasser: It was exciting wasn't it?
- Lyman: Yes. We had a lot of fun and we enjoyed it.
- Gasser: And they would walk home from swimming sometimes.
- Lyman: And the show too. Everybody walked to the show and everybody walked home. So they would buy popcorn on their way to the show and they would stop for maybe a Seven Up or Hires Root beer or something.
- Gasser: That was nice simple fun, wasn't it?
- Lyman: Yes, we enjoyed it. So mother didn't have to make any pies the last year. We had a lot of fun, you know.
- Gasser: You still made some money.
- Lyman: Oh yeah, we always came out ahead.
- Gasser: It was a center. You charged a nickel for ice cream and a dime for popcorn.
- Lyman: Including the butter you know we bought the butter in thirty pound packages and the highest it was, was for thirty one cents a pound. So that way it came out pretty good. Then I worked for Emma Mortar [?] for awhile in the shoe repair business and he was real nice.
- Gasser: Things you remember about that.
- Lyman: Well, he was a shoe repair man and he was teaching me shoe repair.
- Gasser: He taught you how to repair shoes.
- Gasser: I thought he also sold shoes.
- Lyman: He did. I also became a shoe fitter.
- Gasser: That was located-- who is there now?

Lyman: That was located-- first of all he was in that old building next to Roy Petersen's. He started there, and then he went to--ah--next to the tavern. I don't know what is there now. I can't tell you. But, he was real nice. He became the Mayor of the city, and did a lot of work for the city and he worked hard, so it was pretty nice, as a boss and a friend. He was always a friend with you. And then I worked at Sauk City Standard. I would work for Mortar during the day and then I would go down to Sauk City Standard so Lentz [?] could go to supper. Also for breakfast, so he wouldn't have to start early at the Station. It worked out really nice and, of course, Uncle Sam needed me.

Gasser: How old were you when Uncle Sam needed you?

Lyman: I was nineteen when Uncle Sam needed me.

Gasser: Was that after graduation from high School?

Lyman: Yes, I was through with high School by then. Mr. Babington was a wonderful professor and he was really nice to all of us and we remember him. So, I--ah, I graduated in '40 and by '42 I was in the service already. So you see it was only a couple of years between the time, the one summer I ran the stand and worked for different places in town, worked for Hardy Revilly [?] and--

Gasser: What did you do for Hardy Revilly?

Lyman: I took care of the chickens. I had to dress all the chickens. Then I helped build that manual training thing in Sauk where the high school was down there. --Helped build that manual training for the high school. I helped build that. So I had all these little jobs, but when Uncle needed me I went into Service. In June of '42, I went into service.

Gasser: Were you drafted?

Lyman: Yes, I was drafted.

Gasser: Tell us how it happened and all worked out.

Lyman: Well, I went to Chicago and then to Fort Sheridan, where we had an IQ test, and I came out rather good on the IQ test, so I was offered whatever I wanted to do. I could go in the Air Corps or whatever I wanted to do. So, I decided to go in the Air Corps. So then I went to Basic at Jefferson Barracks and then I went to--

Gasser: Where was that?

- Lyman: St. Louis, Missouri. Then I went to Denver, Colorado to Lowry Field, and there I received my armament education, and I graduated from armament school on my twenty-first birthday. I remember it well because it was a beautiful day and I went to the mess hall and one of the cooks knew it was my birthday so he brought me a cupcake with a candle on it. So that was my twenty-first birthday. It was nice and then I travelled around and went to Salt Lake City and Walla Walla, Washington and Sioux City, Iowa, and then to Mitchell, South Dakota and then to Oklahoma City where we were suppose to become permanent party, so you better take a couple before you take me or you won't get anything. So, we were supposed to be permanent party at Oklahoma City and all set up and everything. Great, but they needed us overseas.
- Gasser: What were you going to do at Oklahoma City?
- Lyman: We were, ah, pretty much everything. We had control of the armament, and all of the guns on the aircraft, we had to load bombs, and we had to study the bomb sights and everything and we just got set up. We were there about three months and we got word that they needed us overseas. So we got to ship out and go to Camp Kilmer and go overseas and wave goodbye to the Statue of Liberty and away we went.
- Gasser: Did you get a furlough first?
- Lyman: My furlough, not from there, but I went on a furlough, I came home when I went from Mitchell, South Dakota to Oklahoma City. That was our furlough. That was the furlough we had. Before that, when we went to Oklahoma City, but I was in New York, on Times Square on New Year's Eve, so that was one of the things I was lucky enough to be at the right time at the right place.
- Gasser: So tell me about New Year's Eve.
- Lyman: Well they were so busy--like everybody from New York came down to Times Square and at midnight they all cheered and yelled and so it was nice. We enjoyed it and so our boat-- there were so many people on our boat that, when you slept, one man slept from midnight to noon and the other man slept from noon to midnight, in the same bunk, and we would be on deck the rest of the time. One night, in a storm, the waves were so high that the deck we would normally be on, when we weren't in bed, was being washed by the sea so we figured we had somewhere between thirty and thirty five-foot waves that night and so a lot of us had to go down to the mess hall and spend the night.
- Gasser: So you had good food.

- Lyman: No.
- Gasser: What did you have to eat?
- Lyman: Oh, you know, we got used to not having food on the boat. When you are on the boat, you are only allowed--you go through the mess hall and you have breakfast, then nothing until dinner, like for instance, you get one piece of French toast for breakfast and, for dinner, you would get some kind of--a slab of some kind of meat and some bread. We ate a lot of bread. Just for an example, I weighed one hundred sixty-four pounds when we left the United States and six months later I weighed one hundred thirty-seven.
- Gasser: Oh boy!
- Lyman: So everybody lived off their bodies and then Henry Kaiser built the Liberty ship and six months after we got overseas we got food starting to come in on the Liberty ships. I transferred then from armament to quartermaster supply and I became a supply sergeant and we started to get merchandise. So we would have to go--we were in Italy then –
- Gasser: When did you land in Italy?
- Lyman: We landed at Naples and went to Bizerte, so I spent about four days in Naples.
- Gasser: And how many of you were there together?
- Lyman: The whole outfit went. See, we transferred our aircraft from North Africa to Italy, but we went over on a flat bottom boat and a lot of us got sick. It was nice in North Africa. We didn't have any rain for six months and the temperature in the daytime was one hundred fifteen and, every night, it was sixty eight. We had sheepskin jackets and sheepskin pants and, when the temperature would change, we would slip into the sheepskin, but we enjoyed Naples and Bizerte was totally destroyed when we went into it.
- Gasser: Who destroyed it? The Americans with bombs?
- Lyman: Yes, it was a complete wiped out.
- Gasser: So what did you do when you went there?
- Lyman: We went out and set up our own camp. We had these fancy tents you know--these pyramid tents you know. It was top shelf with six to a tent. They had little up tents too, you know, but we were really happy with our new tents. So started setting up amp. The first thing we had to do was get

the airport set up so the bombers could take off and on, but the runway was done first.

- Gasser: So you had a major war there. Everything that was there before was destroyed. **[End of Tape 1, Side A]**
- Lyman: Pretty much. Then they brought in this stuff we used to put on the runways and we had to pack it.
- Gasser: What kind of planes landed there?
- Lyman: B17s. That was the only thing we had was B17s. It was a four-motored bomber.
- Gasser: So the only people on the plane were the ones on a mission.
- Lyman: When they had the missions--after so many missions. He was one of the men on the bomber and he flew fifty missions over Germany.
- Gasser: That's a lot of missions.
- Lyman: You sweat it out. The first thirty-five seem to go pretty well and then when you get close to your close, you really worry. You lose a plane in your squadron, and you see a plane go down, and you say, "Am I next?"
- Gasser: So they take off on these missions and there would be a group of them together.
- Lyman: There would be a group of them together. There would be three of them together and there may be fifty of them.
- Gasser: So they would fly in formation to support each other.
- Lyman: Right. Right. When the Germans came in with their aircraft, you could form a group and you could all shoot at the aircraft. We had upper turret guns.
- Gasser: You also had bombs.
- Lyman: We had two bomb bays and we filled them with bombs. We cranked them up with a crank and then when you got them up there, then you would fuse them.
- Gasser: So this was all hand work.

- Lyman: Yes, it was all hand work. We would load them up with a crank and then we would fix them and fuse them.
- Gasser: By fusing them, you mean you lit them?
- Lyman: No, we put a fuse in that when the bomb hit the ground, the impact would create the fuse and detonate the bomb,
- Gasser: Okay, so it was not light fireworks.
- Lyman: No. No. The fuse would set off the bomb.
- Gasser: It was automatic.
- Lyman: Yes, it was automatic. You had one hundred or two hundred-pound bombs--or five hundred-pound bombs--and all these aircraft would try to drop their bombs at the same time so it would spread it out.
- Gasser: So it would have a real impact.
- Lyman: It would have a real impact if you just wanted to. Sometimes we were bombing the ships in the Mediterranean that were bringing gas to North Africa and each aircraft would individually-- If the first aircraft hit the ship then they didn't have to do anymore. If he missed, then the next guy would try and then the third guy. You would do it one at a time.
- Gasser: Did you work on those planes?
- Lyman: I worked on them. The only time I flew was when we would go out on test missions.
- Gasser: So what was your main job then?
- Lyman: My main job was to maintain the guns, so they were always in working order, and help load the bombs. The main thing was those guns. We would take them apart. The thing we learned in Denver, Colorado was we had to take a forty-five apart, and put it together blindfolded, and take a fifty-caliber apart and put it together blindfolded. That was the stuff you had to learn. And that was the same thing, so if the firing pin was bent, you would immediately recognize it, and replace it.
- Gasser: You would have these in stock.
- Lyman: If we didn't have them in stock, you would go to the planes that were all shot up and take it off them. We thank Henry Kaiser for his Liberty ships. They not only brought us food, they brought us supplies that we never had

before, either. Then finally the war was over in Europe and I took a flight over northern Italy and then into Germany to see if the Germans would shoot at us.

Gasser: When you took this flight?

Lyman: Five days after the war was over, a regular bomber.

Gasser: A bunch of you together?

Lyman: They only took five.

Gasser: To see if they would shoot at us.

Lyman: We had to drop down to three cities in Germany and circle the cities at three thousand feet, that if they were shooting rifles or small stuff, we could feel it.

Gasser: And was this just to see if they were following the rules?

Lyman: Just to see if they knew the war was over.

Gasser: Oh I see. They might not have known the war was over.

Lyman: The war was over, but they might not know it.

Gasser: Because of communications.

Lyman: Right, right. We circled our three cities and then we came back to Italy again.

Gasser: What were your communications?

Lyman: The telephones we had, the hand cranked telephones. That was the only communication we had.

Gasser: So it could be pretty slow to get the message out.

Lyman: We made a few crystal sets, but, sometimes you could get something on the crystal set and some times you couldn't.

Gasser: Where were you when the cease fire actually came?

Lyman: In Italy.

Gasser: And actually how did you hear the news?

Lyman: I don't know, our commander actually told us.

Gasser: You slept in tents.

Lyman: We slept in tents.

Gasser: You slept in tents and then did you have a regular day?

Lyman: Our main object was sleep when the bombers were gone, and they when they came back, you got busy.

Gasser: You got busy.

Lyman: We had to work on then until we got done.

Gasser: And was mess was in a tent.

Lyman: Yes there was a mess tent.

Gasser: Did you have plumbing or was it outdoor plumbing?

Lyman: It was outdoor plumbing,

Gasser: Where did you get your water then?

Lyman: They brought it in by truck, and then in Lister Bags. A Lister Bag is a like-
- I don't want to say plastic.

Gasser: It was rubberized stuff.

Lyman: It was rubberized stuff, and we put the water in that, and it had a faucet at the bottom.

Gasser: How many gallons did it hold?

Lyman: It held fifty gallons, and we were allowed one helmet full a day at the most.

Gasser: For each person?

Lyman: For each person. If you needed a bath, you had to take it out of a helmet.

Gasser: Oh dear!

Lyman: Well what are you going to do, you know.

- Gasser: So it came from a local supply.
- Lyman: From either the river or something, or the lake or something. If they got it from the lake, it had a chlorine taste. The taste of the chlorine in the bag, sometimes it wasn't really drinkable, but----
- Gasser: Let me go back to where you heard about the cease fire. Were you in a platoon?
- Lyman: We had squadrons.
- Gasser: How many were in a squadron?
- Lyman: I don't know, I would say, let's go for sixty.
- Gasser: So you got to know each other quite well, real buddies.
- Lyman: Well, we were losing some of them too, you know.
- Gasser: Did they replace them?
- Lyman: Yeah, well, they sent a new 17 with a new crew. The 17 was a nice aircraft, the pilots could bring it home almost destroyed. In fact one time, the plane was really shot up. The wings were shot up and everything like that and he only had one engine and when they left the German lines and the German border, they threw everything, the guns out and everything out, and all that and he still didn't think he was going to make it, and they thought they were in pretty good territory, so all the men had to jump, then the pilot himself, all by himself, he finally got over the trees and was able to bring the plane into a mud part of the field and bring it down.
- Gasser: And the others waked back.
- Lyman: The others walked back, the pilot said, "I just didn't want to give up the plane. And it just kept getting lower and lower and I am looking for a field and then when I saw that group of trees I thought, 'If I can just clear that group of trees, I can bring it into the field itself.'"
- Gasser: Was he the only one you knew that did that?
- Lyman: He was the only one I knew. He was in another part of the field.
- Gasser: When he made those fifty missions, did he make them one and another, or wait a few days?

- Lyman: Whenever the flights were. You were assigned to a particular plane and whenever the plane took off he went with it.
- Gasser: Like a schedule.
- Lyman: Yes, it depended on things like the weather, and where they were going, things like that.
- Gasser: What happened next?
- Lyman: Well the war was over and if you wanted to volunteer for Japan, they would send you home early. The war was over. A whole bunch of us volunteered to go to the Pacific, and we came home on a Kaiser Liberty ship, it was a nice ship, the ocean was beautiful, it was eleven days and we had pretty good food then coming home, and we went from our camp to Chicago, waiting for a train to transfer to a different rail, the war in Japan was over.
- Gasser: I'll bet you were pretty happy about that.
- Lyman: Everyone was happy.
- Gasser: Did you celebrate?
- Lyman: Yes, yes, we celebrated.
- Gasser: How did you celebrate?
- Lyman: Some of the fellows went to the bars and stuff, but we all yelled on the train, "Whoopee!" and stuff.
- Gasser: Did they celebrate in Europe when it was over?
- Lyman: Not that much. See we weren't sure it happened. We weren't sure we could do much. So we didn't celebrate that much. We celebrated in Chicago.
- Gasser: That must have been a surprise.
- Lyman: Yes, it was a surprise. So then we went on a train to a Camp for discharge.
- Gasser: What camp were you discharged from?
- Lyman: We were discharged from Camp McCoy.
- Gasser: How did you get to Camp McCoy?

- Lyman: By bus.
- Gasser: Did they greet you at Camp McCoy.?
- Lyman: They were pretty nice. They greeted us when we came back from overseas, and they greeted us at Camp McCoy, it was big assembly hall, and the officers got up and thanked us for what we had done, and thanked us for volunteering for Japan and stuff like that, even though the war was over and we would be discharged. They were pretty nice.
- Gasser: Did they serve you food?
- Lyman: No, they always had in the mess hall.
- Gasser: Did you come right home then?
- Lyman: No, I came home on a three day furlough and came back, because I had to get some work done on my teeth, I had lost some teeth and I had lower plate by then.
- Gasser: Did they get lost in the War?
- Lyman: Yes, I lost some teeth during the war so I had to go back, they had to make me a lower plate, so I had go back and I kinda commuted to Camp McCoy, so I got that done.
- Gasser: So they made a partial plate.
- Lyman: They made it at Camp McCoy.
- Gasser: So what did you do when you came home? Did the people welcome you here?
- Lyman: Pretty much. It was hard to get used to the fact that four years ago, life just disappeared. All your friends are four years older and doing different things that they did. --When all the youths have grown up now and it seemed like a gap in those four years. So what I did I went and registered at the University of Wisconsin for one year, and then I left that for two years, then I went back to the Milwaukee Business college and graduated from that, and that was all on the GI Bill of Rights, so I was pretty lucky, I got an education out of it. The University was too tough, because there were too many years between high school and college. Then to go to the University and then to business college was kinda of a snap because I carried some of the stuff over from the University so that was nice that way, so I graduated from the Milwaukee Business College. And, then I

went to work for Standard Oil and worked for them for about ten years and then I went into business for myself. When I was running the Mobile Station in town, Ron Seeley came in and just then the eagles were coming out of the river and over the bank and I told Ron here is a chance to get a first-hand sighting of eagles.

Gasser: Who was Ron Seely?

Lyman: He was a reporter for the Wisconsin State Journal and he immediately got his book and made some notes and wrote an article for the State Journal. He put the article in the Sunday paper in January 1st, 1984, and that was the first beginning of our eagle days in Sauk City and it got picked up by other newspapers.

Gasser: Can you name some of those other newspapers?

Lyman: I have an article by-----?---- the Stevens Point Journal, January 3rd, 1984, I have the Daily Tribune of Wisconsin Rapids, that carried a nice article on the eagles wintering in Wisconsin. And it kinda got the attention of everybody around, and we were lucky enough on January 28th to get a nice article in the Milwaukee Sentinel so it makes it nice to have all these beautiful eagles around and the people-- We had a lady from New York came into the station--there were three ladies and they just couldn't find the eagles and they were mad they had come all this way and they couldn't find the eagles, and just then three eagles came over the bank and I said, "Ladies, there are three eagle right there." "Oh, those are eagles?" And another thing, a lady from Portage came in one day and she said, "The eagles are just gorgeous." And she came in the next day and said she had taken her son out of school because she wanted him to see the eagles. That made it real nice.

Gasser: Your station was located. Can you explain why your station was different? Your station had a lot of homespun hospitality.

Lyman: Well, we had a full service station and when you have a full service station, you have all your local people dependent on you to maintain their automobiles and we change their oils and filters and sell them gas and we had about three hundred to five hundred regular customer that came in all the time and all the work done by us. If they had engine work done they went back to their dealers, but the motor oils were getting much better, picking up by then and we had very little problem. They had improved them, some of the improvement because of the war; the government gave Texaco some money so that the motor oils would blend. In the service we had to be careful if we got some other barrel of oil and Standard and Mobile blended together would gel and not run properly, the two of them would not blend properly, but when I was in business, they were all blend-

able. Maybe one might be better than the other, but we didn't have the problems with engines that we had in the war.

Gasser: So you were an automobile doctor for many people.

Lyman: Yes, we solved a lot of problems. And after we went out of business, they tore the station down and ---

Gasser: What year was that now? Was that in 1985?

Lyman: Yes and after that I went to work in Middleton for Sheldon Wilhome[?] and I worked for him for two years. He works on Mercedes--

Gasser: You sold cars?

Lyman: No, we did all mechanical work, all mechanical work, and we had pretty good help and my part of it started to wind down and I didn't feel I was earning my keep, so I left him and went to work for McClellan's and I worked for him for six years, which was just wonderful. I got there at the beginning of their expansion program and they were real nice to me. I was a janitor and as they expanded, my duties increased so, they were wonderful people, and I thought as I got into the seventies, I wasn't as capable as I was when I was fifty, so to be nice to them, I thought I better resign. I was slowing down in my old age. It's something that happens as you get -----

Gasser: So what are you doing now? You retired from McClellan's in what year?

Lyman: In '94. And I got in the car and went to Myrtle Beach and I went to Laurie's in Atlanta, and Myrtle Beach and then I went home and then I decided we would go out to Oregon to see John, so we got back in the car, went through the Dakotas, and went through the mountains to Oregon, and we had a wonderful visit with John out there, and went down to San Francisco and came back, so we had a wonderful vacation in '94. And we did it in the car, which is a wonderful thing when you can do it like that, and you see all the sights because you travel in the day time, you don't travel at night. You are not in a hurry, and if you make three hundred miles in one day, four hundred and fifty the next, it doesn't make any difference. Everybody was real nice to us. I was working for the Ecumenical Council.

Gasser: Tell us about those

Lyman: Well, the Ecumenical Council. We try to keep the nine churches we have, coordinated and working as a team for our community and for the Lord-- kinda working as it should be and have the ----?----- Walk and we try to

have people walk for the churches and twenty five percent of the money we take in, we donate to the food pantry, and the other seventy five percent goes to orphans and church groups and places like that--

Gasser: And people get involved.

Lyman: And people get involved and it gives you a good feeling. We have had good weather, so we really have been lucky, and we enjoyed it and a lot of people in the community helped make it a success and we are real happy for that.

Gasser: Is there anything else you would like tell us about?

Lyman: No. That is about every thing.

Gasser: Have you any advice, you are seventy-five years old. How do you live until seventy-five?

Lyman: You don't sit down, you just keep going, if you think the world owes you a living, you'll never make it. You have to just keep going--go—go—go--all the time. My daughter lives in Atlanta, and it is nothing to get in the car and two days later you are in Atlanta and two days later you get in the car and you are home. We wander around and see different things and that's the way to live. If there are things you have to do, just do them. Don't put them off and say tomorrow we will do this. Tomorrow we will it.

Gasser: Thank you very much. It was nice to see you again.

[End of Interview]