

Interview with
LAINÉ EARL SEVY

July 14, 2018
September 12, 2018

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LAINE EARL SEVY

Laine Sevy was interviewed by Randall J. Bunn on July 14, 2018 and September 12, 2018 in Santa Clara, Washington County, Utah. He related his military experiences.

RB: I have asked Laine to tell about some of his stories regarding his time in the military in World War II. He is now ninety-three years old. I am going to have him go back in his memory about what he remembers. Briefly, tell a little bit about your childhood — where you grew up and your parents?

LS: I do not have much memory of my childhood until I was probably four years old. [When] my parents [Richard Earl and Hazel (Pollock) Sevy] married they lived in Escalante [Garfield County, Utah]. They moved to Panguitch [Garfield County, Utah] about [when I was four].

RB: That would have been about 1928? You were born in —?

LS: [I was born in] 1924.

RB: What is your birth date?

LS: September 18, 1924.

RB: What do you remember [about] Panguitch??

LS: The first [thing] I remember is [that] we lived in this little log house that we rented from, they used to call her Grandma Crosby. [It was] down in the northeast corner of town. [I was four years old.] The next door neighbor [boy] was Roy [Stanley] Barton [(1924-2012)]. He was the [my] age so we got acquainted early. The next I remember was probably the next year. We moved from there to our place in Panguitch; which was a log cabin at the time.

RB: What did the house look like inside?

LS: I really do not remember [much]. There was a living room, a kitchen and a couple of bedrooms; but that was about all. I remember at five years old we started kindergarten. There was a kindergarten in Panguitch at the Presbyterian chapel. It was run by two Presbyterian sisters, Miss Paul and Miss Grow. All the [children] in town [who] were five [years old] and wanted to go to school went down to the Presbyterian chapel [for] kindergarten. I remember there was another boy my age across the street, Morris Haycock. At Christmastime he received a three-wheeled bicycle. It was a larger one. It was big enough that he could ride it to kindergarten and back.

RB: Where was the kindergarten located? Do you recall?

LS: It was in Panguitch on about Second North and Main Street. It was a regular brick building with a steeple and [was] two stories.

RB: Did you walk there?

LS: Yes. Even years later, [I don't recall if] the two Presbyterian ladies had kind of a quorum. If they had services there, very few people knew about it. But they were great gals. They were loved all over town because of the work with the kindergarten. Later on, they did adopt a little girl who was the same age as my sister, Ardis [Sevy].

RB: Tell about your brother and your sister. What was your brother's name?

LS: My brother's name was Lyman [Sevy]. He was born the year before we left Escalante. He was three years younger than me.

RB: When was Ardis born? [June 11, 1927.]

LS: Ardis was born after we were back in the Panguitch house [on] October [19,] 1930. She was six years younger than me.

RB: After kindergarten, where did you go to school?

LS: The elementary school in Panguitch took [students] from first grade through seventh. In this one building, there were three stories and everybody in town went [to school there].

RB: Where was it located?

LS: It was located where the city offices are on Center Street and about Second East [Street]. It has been torn down and replaced; but that was where it was.

RB: You were growing up in The [Great] Depression era. Do you remember much about what life was like then?

LS: Everybody was about the same. The only people [who] had any money were the business owners or maybe a couple of government workers who [received] a paycheck. Most of the business between the other people was trade [or] barter. [If] somebody had a pig, they would kill the pig and trade it for chickens or butter or something.

RB: What did your father do for a living?

LS: When we moved to Panguitch, my father got a job with the [Utah] State Highway Department. He was foreman over the local road section that covered most all of Garfield County.

RB: How did he get a job with the highway department? Did he have experience?

LS: No. My grandfather [Milo Henry Sevy] in Escalante had a huge work team of horses. At times he would go to Marysvale [Piute County, Utah] and pick up freight for the local people. Marysvale was the end of the train station. My dad went with him one time to pick this [freight] up and on the way down he noticed this big machine-like thing over against the highway. He wondered what it was. On the way back he had my grandfather stop by it. It was a road [rock] crusher.

They were crushing rocks for gravel to put on the local highway. They were standing there watching this going [on] and all at once the crusher stopped. Everybody was wandering around trying to figure out what was wrong with it. My dad was with them and pretty soon he said, “You look right up there in the top [where] that chain is. There is something up there blocking that!” [A man from the road crew asked], “How come you know that?”

RB: [Laughter]

LS: “I used to work in a flour mill.” [Laughter] They got it going. Before he left, the foreman said, “Gee, that is a good-looking pair of horses you have there. We are going to be hiring horses and scrapers to feed our crusher here. Why don’t you take a job?” Dad said, “Oh, I do not know whether [I would] want to do that or not.” On the way back to Escalante, my grandfather offered to let him take the team if he wanted to go over there. At least there would be some money coming in. So, he did. He went over there and worked with them. After a couple of weeks, he got up one morning and one of the horses was ailing. He went to the foreman and said, “I have to quit. I have to take this team back home because one of them looks like he is getting sick.” The [foreman] said, “Gee, we hate to lose you. Why don’t you come over and work for us?” Dad said, “Gee, I would like to do that.” He took the team back home and then he [went] over and worked with [the Utah Highway Department] kind of like a mechanic around the thing [rock crusher].

At the end of the season, when they were getting ready to leave, this foreman came to dad and said, “The state is taking over the county roads and they are going to put a foreman’s office in Panguitch. Why don’t you apply for it?” My dad said, “I could never get [a job] like that. I have never worked for the state. I do not know anything about it.” The [foreman] said, “I will get the papers [and] you fill them out. I am sure we could put a little incentive in there for [you]. You send [the papers] in and see what happens.” That is what happened. He sent [the papers] in and they selected him to be the foreman over the Panguitch yard.

RB: Would that have been about 1928?

LS: Yes, that is when we moved.

RB: Great! Your dad had income from the state —

LS: Yes.

RB: — whereas a lot of people in town did not have any cash. Was he one of the few people in town [who] had cash?

LS: Yes. It did not pay very much!

RB: Sure. Tell about the rest of your school history. After grade school, did you go to [the] seventh grade?

LS: [I went to the] eighth grade.

RB: Then you went to high school?

LS: The [Panguitch] high school used to be up on the west side of town across the [Sevier River] on the hill, [but] about 1927 or 1928 it caught fire and burned. For the next [few] years they held high school [classes] in The Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] South Ward and the eighth grade in the top of the Social Hall. I went to the eighth grade in the [Social Hall]. There were two big rooms in the Social Hall where they had the eighth grade [students].

RB: Was the Social Hall on Center Street?

LS: Right. [50 East Center Street.]

RB: Was the high school built when you were ready to go to high school?

LS: Yes, [I] started my freshman year in the high school.

RB: And that was across the street from the Social Hall?

LS: That would be 1938. It was just east of the elementary school on the same block.

RB: What was high school [like] for you?

LS: It was kind of fun. We changed teachers every year. I do not remember too much activity until we [were in] about the sixth, seventh grade. We had a little basketball team. Did not do much.

RB: Did you [participate in] sports in high school?

LS: What?

RB: Did you play sports in high school?

LS: We had a little basketball team. Oh, in high school?

RB: Right

LS: Yes, we had a softball team and a basketball team.

RB: Did you like sports?

LS: I did. I played basketball on the high school team for two years. We only played softball one year. I graduated in 1942. I received a scholarship to the Branch Agricultural College in Cedar City [Iron County, Utah] [for] \$50.00! It took care of the first year's entrance fees. [Laughter]

RB: Great! [Laughter] You graduated in 1942. World War II had already started by then.

LS: Yes, 1941.

RB: Do you remember when Pearl Harbor [Hawaii was] bombed?

LS: We were seniors in high school. One of the teachers said, "Come up to my room. I have a radio. I want to turn it on." Four or five of us senior [boys] went up and sat in his room. We had the radio on and we listened to President [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt do his famous talk the day after.

RB: I think Pearl Harbor happened on a Sunday morning. So this would have been Monday morning, December 8, [1941]?

LS: Yes.

RB: You still remember that?

LS: I remember listening to the radio.

RB: What did you think about that? Do you recall? Did you think: this is going to be something big or what?

LS: Just before that, for some reason, I do not know [why], the [United States] Government had started a little army training program. The summer before that they came to Panguitch, did a little show of military training and how they were looking for volunteers. After we heard the radio broadcast, all us seniors kind of looked at each other and decided that is where we are going to end up. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

LS: In fact, two of the [fellows] went home and right after Christmas they took off and enlisted in the military before we graduated!

RB: Is that right? [Laughter] How many people were in your graduating class?

LB: [There were] thirty-seven [students]. Twenty-three girls and fourteen boys.

RB: Fourteen boys. You graduated in June of 1942. What did you do before college?

LS: My good friend and I, Daniel LeFevre, we decided to go to Salt Lake [City, Salt Lake County, Utah] and work.

RB: What did you do there?

LS: We went to Salt Lake [City] and got a job in the brick factory [Interstate Brick at 33rd South and 13th East Streets]. We first started out with a crew of three or four other [fellows]. We loaded finished bricks into railroad cars. Pretty soon, we could contract for filling one of these cars and if we finished it early, like 3:30 p.m. or so, we were done for the day.

RB: Did you have to load them by hand or was there any kind of —

LS: By hand.

RB: — a forklift or anything?

LS: No.

LS: [For] \$.52 an hour!

RB: Wow! [Laughter]

LS: Big money then!

- RB: I bet! [Laughter] When you came back from the summer [work] you had some spending money and you had your scholarship. Then you went off to college?
- LS: Yes. I went to Cedar [City] to school.
- RB: What did you study in college?
- LS: I took a lot of the preliminary courses — chemistry and algebra. In chemistry I was really lost because some of the other [students] had already had chemistry [classes] in their high schools. I spent a few Saturdays up at the laboratory. The instructor usually would show up and he would help me out a little bit. Then I took math [classes]. When the second quarter started, I convinced my advisor that I could take second quarter algebra and trigonometry at the same time. He said, “Just because of the times, I will let you do it.” But he said, “If something happens and you cannot do it, you will have to give me notice and we will change it up.” [It] ended up [that] I could do that.
- RB: This is now the end of 1942, starting 1943. [Did] anything happen about [fellows] leaving college to go off to the war?
- LS: At that time most of the seniors around had already joined [military] service. The [fellows] in college were just waiting out their time. I did not know anybody [who] started school and then left right away.
- RB: How was it that you came to enlist in the military?
- LS: Well, it was odd. I came out of the main building one noon-time and this friend of mine from Circleville [Piute [County], Utah], [Thomas] “Tommy” [Howard Fullmer [1923-2008], was waiting there. He said, “Laine, let us go over to the gym. All the service academies are over there and they are having programs [about] their enlistments and [what] they have.” So, we did. We looked at the [United States] Navy, the [United States] Marines [and] the [United States] Army. They had a little section by the Army — the Army Air Corps. We talked to them. They said, “Yes, you come and join with us. We have a program that will let you finish school. When you are through school you can join the regular service — unless we have an emergency.” Tommy and I thought that was a good idea and so we signed [up]. I had just turned eighteen. This is 1942, but I had to have my folks sign. I convinced them that they should sign it. [We] signed it up and we were in.
- This was before Christmas [December 22, 1942] and our second quarter. The school year was divided into three quarters. The second quarter started in November and ran through December and into January. When I came back to school in January we started [classes] and all at once [fellows] would turn up missing. “What happened to them?” “They [were] called up!” “Oh.”
- RB: [Laughter] Wow!
- LS: [When the] third quarter was ready to start, I thought: maybe I should wait around and see what happens. There was no use in me starting school and getting called back into the service. So I waited around a couple of weeks and nothing happened

[inaudible]. I went and signed up. I came home that next Friday. [I had been] living [with] this family in Cedar City. There was a letter on my desk from the government. [I] opened it up. "You are to report to duty in Salt Lake City on Monday at seven o'clock at the Rio Grande Station."

RB: Did that surprise you?

LS: There I was on Friday night in Cedar City. I had to call my folks. In the spring, Bear Valley [road] was closed, [so] they had to take a roundabout trip to come over, pick me up and take me home. I was home Saturday. Sunday we loaded up and went to Salt Lake [City]! [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] How did you go to Salt Lake [City] from Panguitch at that time? Did you take Highway 89?

LS: We had a pickup.

RB: Was the route up Highway 89?

LS: Yes. I found out that [the] letter came to me in Panguitch. The postmaster saw it. He saw my brother go by so he hollered at Lyman to come in there and [asked him], "What is Laine's address?" Lyman gave him my address. He wrote it on the front of the letter, put it back in the mail. It took another two days to get from Panguitch back to me in Cedar City!

RB: No wonder it did not give you much time.

LS: No!

RB: [Laughter]

LS: I could have missed it altogether.

RB: How long of a trip was it from Panguitch to Salt Lake [City]? Would you say?

LS: How what?

RB: How long did it take to get to Salt Lake [City] by the pickup truck?

LS: Probably six hours [at] fifty miles an hour. The roads were not that good.

RB: This was Sunday and you had to report Monday morning?

LS: Yes.

RB: What happened when you reported?

LS: We went in the [Rio Grande] Station. We were all standing around there with family and [fellows]. They started calling people's names. One thing about it, a funny thing, they called, "Sevy" and I go and here was another [fellow] alongside me. [The man in charge said], "What is your name?" [I said] "Sevy." [The other [fellow] said], "Sevy." [The man in charge said], "What do you mean? Where are you from?" [The other [fellow] said], "I am from Richfield [Sevier County,

Utah].” [The man in charge said] “Oh?” [I said], I am from Panguitch.”
[Laughter]

RB: Was it a relative of yours?

LS: I never knew him. He was a part of the family, but a different group. That put us on the train out of Salt Lake [City].

RB: Where did you go from Salt Lake [City]?

LS: [We went to] Wichita Falls, Texas. They called us Aviation Cadets. We were all together in a group. I guess we just did the same things — marched, got all the shots, clothes and all [the] other [things].

RB: Was that your basic training?

LS: Yes.

RB: About how long did that last? Do you recall?

LS: At the end of thirty days, [we] were eligible for a pass to get off the base and go to town. But in order to get this pass you had to go to the sergeant and recite the army general orders. It was my turn. I went in and started reciting the general orders. The sergeant looked at me and said, “What are those red marks on your face?” I said, “I had not noticed anything.” He said, “You have some red marks.” I said, “It is probably caused by those damn wool blankets.” [He said], “No. I want you to —”

LS: — “go to the dispensary and have it checked out.” I said, “I do not want to go there. My friends and I were going to town!” [The sergeant said], “You go to the dispensary.” So I went to the dispensary and a little medic came around. I said, “I am supposed to go to town today so I would like to get out of here as quick as I can.” [The medic said], “You would?” [I said], “Yes.” He said, “You just sit right there. Pretty soon a man is going to come and take you to the hospital.” “What are you talking about?” He said, “You have the German measles.”

RB: Oh, no!

LS: [I said], “How the hell can I have the German measles? In fact, I have had the red measles. They always told me if you had the red measles you would not have the German [measles].” He said, “You have the German measles and you are going to the hospital!” I ended up in the hospital. Come to find out there were seven of us [who] were in there for the same thing. Actually, the German measles were like the three-day measles.

RB: Yes.

LS: We were there the third day and we were all together in this little group, but there were people with all kinds of problems in the other wards. The nurse came around and we said, “Our three days are done. When can we get out of here?” She said, “We cannot let you out of the hospital until you have your blood checked.” [We

said], “Okay. Let us get it checked.” [The nurse said], “We cannot do that right now because the corpsman is on vacation!”

RB: Oh, no! [Laughter]

LS: “What do you mean, he is on vacation?” She said, “All I know is they told us the corpsman is on vacation and we cannot do any blood testing.” [We said], “Isn’t there somebody else [who] can do that except this one [fellow]?” She said, “He has been training a [fellow], but I do not think he has [finished training] him.” One [fellow] said, “Go get him. Let’s see if we cannot get him to do this.” So they brought this [fellow] in. For our bad luck, the first [fellow] to volunteer was really muscular.

RB: [Laughter]

LS: Lots of hair all over him — big arms, big wrists. This little corpsman came in there and [he was] nervous as hell!

RB: [Laughter]

LS: Anyway, he sat in this chair. This [fellow] [put his arm] out there to him and he started trying to find [a] vein. [Laughter] Pretty soon there was nothing but blood on his arm. Finally, he said, “I cannot do this anymore!” He said, “I just cannot.” Nobody else was going to volunteer after they saw what he had done to [him]. We were stuck in the hospital until that corpsman got there. We were in there the rest of the week. Nothing to do! We played cards. We helped the nurse take the food around and did whatever little duties they needed done in there for a week. Finally, the [fellow] came, [checked] our blood and sent us back to the incoming area. By this time, our original group had been shipped out to California! They took us, seven aviation cadets, and stuck us in with a brand new bunch of recruits that had just been drafted.

RB: So you had to start over?

LS: We had a little Mexican sergeant that was meaner than cactus. Especially, he did not like us recruits because he thinks we have been getting special [privileges]. Man! He worked everybody. We were up at seven o’clock in the morning. We were on the parade grounds at eight and we paraded around there until noon. We came [back] and we would be busy. He just worked the hell out of us. We were there for about two weeks. Finally, we [were] called to another meeting and [they] told us we were going to be shipped to another location. The seven of us showed up down at the headquarters and they loaded us on a bus.

They took us to Dallas [Texas] and put us on a train. [We asked], “Where are we going?” We headed north. Somebody said, “I heard the rumor [that] we are going to school some place.” [I said], “What do you mean we are going to go to school?” [He said], “That is all I know. That is what I heard.” Anyway, we went north, kept going. This one [fellow] said, “We are going to St. Louis [Missouri].” I know St. Louis. We are going to St. Louis!” We kept going and sure enough the train stopped in St. Louis, but he would not let us off. We were there for about

two hours. Pretty soon [the train] started up again, but we were going in the other direction! [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

LS: We ended up in Fayetteville, Arkansas at the University of Arkansas!

RB: Is that right?

LS: Come to find out, it was a special program that they had because the regular cadet program was filled up and [they] had too many [cadets]. They decided to take mostly college students, put them back and send them to school. We are at the University of Arkansas.

RB: What did you do there? What was that about?

LS: [We took history courses [and] philosophy. I don't remember anything other than just general courses in the morning. In the afternoon there were some drills and then we would do P. E. [physical education] for a couple of hours. They transformed the gym into a barracks. Anyway, they had bunk beds [stacked] three high scattered all over there! Luckily, for me there were about twenty-five of us they put in what used to be an industrial class workshop. We had little cubicles where we had our beds, and maybe two or three [fellows] in each [cubicle]. There was a bigger room [nearby] we had a shower and bathroom facilities, everything right in there in our own little group. We were in there until the fall, probably September 1943, I imagine. Yes; because we were there while it was summer school.

RB: Going back, you went up to Salt Lake [City] about what time? Was that March of 1943?

LS: The last of March.

RB: So now it was in the fall, September or so?

LS: No. We were there earlier, from July to September.

RB: Okay. What happened after Arkansas?

LS: We went back to San Antonio, Texas. We started the aviation cadet program. We went to school and did the basic military [activities]. What they called pre-flight. We had a lot of meteorology classes and history in the pre-flight [classes].

RB: You were taking these classes and were you getting ready to go to flight training?

LS: Yes.

RB: How long was this pre-flight period? Do you recall?

LS: It probably lasted until about the end of the year. When we were finished with this, we had our final exam. After the final exam we went back in for some discussions by the headquarters [fellows] on what we wanted to do in the future.

There was a [fellow] I became friends with while I was in Arkansas – Ericksen, who was smarter than a whip. He had a photographic memory.

RB: Is that right?

LS: Fantastic memory.

RB: Wow!

LS: In fact, we were over in the industrial building one time and they were having a poker game. Ericksen — [let me begin by telling you that] in the physical education part [of our training] —you had to do at least do one pull-up. I got so I could do one; but Ericksen could not. He would come over and we would go in the bathroom. In the shower room there was a bar across there and he and I would practice. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Yes; to try and help him to get one.

LS: All he could do were chin ups. Anyway, we came out one day and were standing there watching these [fellows] play poker. One of them turned to Ericksen and said, “Why don’t you ever get into the game?” He said, “Because I always win.” [The other [fellow] said], “What do you mean you always win?” [Ericksen] said, “I know where all the cards are going, what they are and what is left. It gives me an advantage as to what I do with my hand. I just win.”

RB: Wow! That is incredible!

LS: The [fellow] said. “You cannot do that!” [Ericksen said], “Give me a number.” The [fellow] rattled off something. Ericksen told him. The [fellow] said, “I still cannot believe it.” Ericksen said, “Okay, I will tell you what. Let’s go over to the gym. Where all these bunks were, they have their barracks bag sitting at the bottom. These barracks bags always have to be in the same location and they have to be so that your name and your number is right there. Let’s go over to the gym for just a minute.” [We all] went over to the gym. We were standing there. There was one big row that must have [had] about seven or eight bunks on it with all the barracks bags. He said, “Just wait right here.” He took off and he walked down the aisle. He came back and said, “Give me a piece of paper.” He sat down and he wrote every ID number on every bag as he walked down to that end of that!

RB: Wow! That is incredible! [Laughter]

LS: The [fellow] could not believe it! He said, “Okay. I believe!”

RB: [Laughter] He believed him! That is great!

LS: Ericksen and I were through [and] we were sitting down on the porch waiting for the rest of the [fellows] to finish [so we could] go to this special class. At this class you decide whether you want to be a pilot, navigator or bombardier. We were sitting there and finally Ericksen said, “What are you going to do?” I said, “Well, when we were in Arkansas, we [had] about three lessons in a Piper Cub.” They would take you up. “I got so deathly sick in every one of [the trips]. I could not do anything. When I [was] through, the instructor told me, “Sevy, you are

never going to make a pilot! You cannot do anything. You get too damn nervous up there!" I said, "I think I am going to be set up for navigator. What are you going to do?" He said, "I have been thinking about it, too. I have a friend of mine who is in the service. He wrote me a letter awhile back [that] if [I] wanted to be a pilot, go ahead. He [wrote], "If you wash out being a pilot, you have a choice of going back to navigator or a bombardier. Just because you wash out as a pilot is not going to end your career."

He [Erickson] said, "I think I am going to try to be a pilot." I said, "That does not sound too bad. I am a little leery because I really had a bad experience in Arkansas." [Laughter] Anyway, I kept thinking about what Ericksen said. When it came time, after the meeting, we passed out these sheets. I picked pilot. Not long after that, they grouped us up [and] sent us to, what they called then, a primary flight school. I went to Corsicana, Texas.

RB: From San Antonio you went to Corsicana. Was that where your flight training began?

LS: Yes.

RB: What did they train you on?

LS: There was a little two-seater airplane called a PT-19. It was made out of plywood, but it had a cover on it.

RB: [Laughter] Is that right?

LS: At that time we had civilian instructors.

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

LS: This [fellow] I had was an older [fellow]; to me he was quite old. He was probably maybe forty-five or fifty [years old], somewhere in there. When we went to the flight line we had a study program and we would tell the instructor, "Today we are going to do this." We would get in the airplane and take off. Whatever was on their program was what we would try to do that day. I was still pretty nervous about things. About the third day I went out and I said, "Okay. Today we are going to do this and this." He said [to me], "Forget about that! We are going up and have some fun!"

RB: Oh, no!

LS: "What do you mean?" "We are going to have a lesson." We took off and were up there and he flew a little while. And [then] he said, "Okay, just settle down." Then there was just a stick. He said, "Take the stick and fly us for a little while." So I got the stick and I did this and this. [Gesturing with his hands.] After awhile he said, "Okay, let me have it." We are flying along a little bit and all at once we are upside down! And I said, "What is going on?"

RB: You are flying upside down? [Laughter]

LS: He said, "We are upside down." I said, "Well, well! What? What?" He said, "Do not worry about it. In fact, you have the stick." I said, "Well, well, well!" He says, "Just do opposite of what you would do right side up."

RB: Oh, no! [Laughter]

LS: I said, "I do not know how to do this!" He said, "Just go ahead. Do this."

RB: [Laughter]

LS: Pretty soon, he said, "Okay. I have it." So he flipped us back up on the side and said, "You are just too damn nervous about what is going on. Just sit back and relax for a minute. I want to show you something." I sat back, relaxed and he said, "Okay, we are level all around and doing fine. I am going to take my hands off the controls." [I said], "Okay." The airplane goes like this and this [gesturing as if an airplane is flying] and makes all these little movements and I am sitting there ready to grab a hold of things. He said, "You see, this thing will fly all by itself!"

RB: It flew because of the flight controls? It could just stay and go with the wind or go with the —.

LS: Yes.

RB: Wow!

LS: He said, "You do not have to fight this thing unless a particular gust of wind does something. When it is just sitting here, still, this thing will fly by itself. Do not worry about it!"

RB: That was an important lesson? Yes.

LS: He said, "Okay. You are in control. Take us back to the field!"

RB: [Laughter]

LS: That did it for me, really. It took the nervousness away. I guess knowing that I could enjoy what we were doing or I knew I could perform whatever the task was that we had to do.

RB: You did not get sick anymore?

LS: What?

RB: You did not get sick anymore?

LS: I did not get sick.

RB: That probably was caused by the nervousness?

LS: Yes.

RB: Did you graduate from pilot training?

LS: Yes.

RB: Did you just train on the PT-19s? Did you use any other trainers?

LS: Then we went to basic. That was the BT-19. It was a closed cockpit airplane.

RB: [A] bigger airplane?

LS: Yes, big radial front engine on that [airplane]. It was kind of fun to fly.

RB: Was that also at Corsicana?

LS: What?

RB: Was that also at Corsicana, Texas?

LS: No, we went to Enid, Oklahoma to do that.

RB: Who makes the B-17?

LS: What?

RB: Who manufactured the B-17 aircraft? Do you recall?

LS: This is the BT-19.

RB: The BT-19, I am sorry.

LS: It was [the] Curtiss-Wright [Corporation].

RB: Curtiss-Wright?

LS: I am pretty sure it was Curtiss-Wright.

RB: So you are at Enid, Oklahoma now and you are flying real airplanes?

LS: Right.

RB: What was that like?

LS: That was pretty fun. But you had to really get acquainted with what you did with the closed cockpit-type [airplane]. You were not worried. You opened the cockpit if you were not worried [and] if you had a map on your line it would suck it out.

RB: Really? [Laughter]

LS: You had to do that and we got into doing acrobatics — loops, stalls. [Gesturing.] Then you had to do a spin. Everybody was uptight when you did spins. They had that big engine in front and it seemed like it was going around [gesturing] and they would get bigger and bigger.

RB: Wow!

LS: Three turns and then you got out of the damn thing as soon as you could. In fact, one of our hot pilots and his instructor were finishing up [one] day. They were coming back to the base and for some reason they threw this [airplane] into a spin. They were going to spin down, then pull out and land. It got away from them and they just nosed right into the ground.

RB: Wow! Killed them?

LS: Killed them both.

RB: Wow! You had two pilots [in the cockpit] when you were training?

LS: No.

RB: It was you and one other trainer?

LS: Yes, they were military. Your last [session], you had to have a check flight. They were military, but they were like captains, majors or higher rank [who] gave you your final test flight. Before that, each year at the end of the year the cadets would have a basketball team and we would play the instructors. It just happened this time that we were playing the instructors. I was in the game [playing the] the center [position]. They gave me the ball and I whirled around like this and there was a little [fellow] standing there. My elbow smacked him right in the face and knocked his glasses off.

LS: They stopped the game.

RB: Was he an instructor?

LS: I ended up getting my test flight. We [went] out to the field and this little [fellow] shows up. I said, "I just broke my watch. Would you keep time for me?" "You bet. I hope you didn't break it on somebody's nose!" It was the [same [fellow]]!

RB: He was your test instructor?

LS: He was my test instructor. I thought: oh, God!

RB: [Laughter]

LS: Anyway, we went up and did the [required tests]. It was cloudy that day and the ceiling was like 2,900 feet. We went up and did these other acrobatics and got this done. Then he said, "We [have] to do a spin. Take me up as far as you can and let us do a spin." I said, "Sir, the ceiling is 2,900 feet. We are not to do spins unless we are at 3,000." [The instructor said], "You are right, but today I want you to do a spin." I had heard all these kind of stories about how they washed you out at the end. I said [to myself], okay, he is kind of tricky. I said, "Sir, the ceiling today is 2,900 feet and we are not supposed to do spins below 3,000 feet!" [It was] quiet for a minute. He said, "Cadet Sevy, if you want to finish this test flight, you have to do a spin — now! This is the last time I am going to tell you! Take this thing up as far as you can and do a spin." [I thought to myself]: oh shit! I really do not want to do this; but I really do not want to get washed out either. So I took it up and [was] just as far into the clouds as I dared, kicked that sucker into a spin, then got down, got it out and finished. He said, "Let us go land."

LS: I pulled it out, landed and nothing happened. [Laughter]

RB: Did you do the spin at 3,000 feet?

LS: Yes, at 2,900! [Laughter]

RB: You did it at 2,900 even though that was against the regulation? He did not fault you? You thought he was going to trick you?

LS: Yes, I had to do it.

RB: You passed?

LS: Passed!

RB: And he did not hold against you the fact that you had elbowed him in the face?

LS: What?

RB: He did not hold it against you that you had elbowed him in the face during the game?

LS: No, he even kept time for me. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Good.

LS: That ended up our basic training.

RB: Let's stop right now and give you a chance to rest. We will pick up, maybe, later on this afternoon, if that is okay.

LS: Sure.

[END OF RECORDING TWO.]

RB: Today is September 12, 2018. I am with Laine [Earl] Sevy and we are talking about his World War II experience. The last time we talked Laine, you finished your story about basic training. You had actually gone through a flight where you had to do some turns, you landed okay and you seemed to do alright. So what happened? [Did] you graduate from basic flight training?

LS: Yes.

RB: Where did you go after that?

LS: When you finish basic training, your next assignment — everybody wanted to go to fighter pilot. But you realize also that there are not that many [who] were going to go there. Your next choice would be a multi-engine B-25, B-26 [or] something like that.

RB: Did you want to be a fighter pilot?

LS: Sure! Everybody did! [Those] were all the famous ones.

RB: That was the top. Sure.

LS: I ended up at Frederick, Oklahoma and [the] twin-engine [airplane] school. Flying —.

RB: Why don't you look it up? I am going to shut the door.

LS: It was a Cessna twin-engine, a small airplane; easy to fly. You started out just learning to take off, land and fly some formations [in] the first section. Then [in] the second section you get into some instrument flying. [Learn] how to follow a radio beam while you were in the clouds or [how] to find a runway. That was a major part of the twin-engine school. When you finished that you graduated. You become a pilot! You were ready to go on a thirty-day leave, ready for your next assignment.

RB: Did you go on thirty-day's leave? Where did you go? Do you remember?

LS: I went back home [to] Utah. [I] caught the train to Salt Lake [City] and then to Panguitch and back. [I] opened my orders and my next assignment was Frederick, Oklahoma [as an] instructor!

RB: Instructor?

LS: I thought: the government [has] made a lot of dumb decisions in their life, but there is no way that they should send me back as an instructor when I just barely finished the school! I went up to the headquarters and told them. I said, "There has to be a mistake here because —." The only person there was a little personnel officer. He said, "Why don't you just go on leave and enjoy yourself? When you come back, come on up and we will take a look at it." I did. I got to spend about three weeks back home in Panguitch. But there was nobody there. None of my friends were around.

RB: [Laughter]

LS: What to do? My family was there and so we had some —.

RB: When was that? Do you recall what time of the year?

LS: [It was in] July.

RB: July of 1943? Would that be right?

LS: [In] 1944.

RB: In 1944, because you [enlisted] in summer of 1942?

LS: No.

RB: Summer of 1943?

LS: I [enlisted] in March of 1943.

RB: So now we are in summer of 1944. That is right. By this point, D-Day had already happened in Europe. Right?

LS: What?

RB: D-day.

LS: Yes, well, no.

RB: No?

LS: Oh, D-Day?

RB: Yes. The landing on [the beaches of Normandy, France].

LS: That was in June, was it not?

RB: Yes, June 6, 1944. Things were happening in Europe.

LS: Yes. I cannot think of anything exciting that happened while I was home on that leave.

RB: [Laughter] [Did] you see your brother and your sister?

LS: Yes, my brother was still in high school. I went back to Frederick, Oklahoma and saw one of the heavyweights in the headquarters office to straighten out my assignment. [He said], "No, that is where you have been assigned. Go get yourself settled in the BOQ [Billeting Officers Quarters] and show up at the flight line Monday morning. They will take care of you there." Monday morning I showed up. There were two of us — another [fellow] and I. The head of instructors came and [said], "Oh yes. We do not have a class for you right now. Go ahead. Just show up every morning and if there is somebody here, otherwise you are on your own." So we did. This went on for maybe ten days. In the meantime, this other [fellow] and I finally took an overnight trip to Wichita Falls, Texas because we had never been there. [Laughter] I came back one morning and this instructor came over and said, "This is your flight now." Wow! Five students. Four of them had already soloed. One was a little bit slow and had not soloed. There was an opportune time for me to —. The other four [fellows] I could ship out with other crews to practice either landings and takeoffs or some formations. Meanwhile, I spent time with the slow poke on the crew. After about a week he [was] ready so he could solo. Everything was going pretty good. I don't remember just how long, but maybe another week, we showed up and I [received] a little slip of paper, "You have been reassigned."

RB: Where to?

LS: I said, "What happened?" He said, "We are changing the planes to B-25s for training and all these instructors have been reassigned to [the] Tampa, Florida Replacement Depot. Go over to headquarters and they will give you some papers." We went over, they gave us papers and they gave us an airplane ticket on commercial to get from Dallas, Texas to Tampa, Florida. But we were Class C. We went to the airport and gave them our tickets. The [fellow] said, "If we have room for you we will put you on." Sometimes we would sit there all day long. One day we got on the plane and it was already to take off. [They] came in [and said], "You have to give up your seat." I said, "What do you mean?" "A higher priority is taking your place." We got up and got out of the airplane. There came a lady and a young boy to take our place.

RB: They are higher priority? [Laughter]

LS: Higher priority. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

LS: [Laughter] We ended up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

RB: Is that as far as you got?

LS: We were there for awhile and then all at once we got a ticket to get to New Orleans [Louisiana]. We had been up all night. We had not had anything to do. We went to the hotel, got us a room, went to bed and slept for a couple of hours. Then we got up and went down through the bar. We were looking for a place to eat. We ran into some of the [fellows who] were behind us. [One of them said], "You got a room?" [I said], "My hell, yes, we got a room." [He said], "Everything is filled up. We cannot find a room." We said, "Here, take our room. You can rest up until we come back." We got something to eat and came back up to the room. There were three more [fellows] in there!

RB: [Laughter]

LS: We rolled two of them off our bed. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

LS: [Went] to bed and slept until the next morning. We went back to the airport and waited for a ride. We waited and we waited. Nothing happened. Finally, we went up to the desk and said, "Is not there some way we can get to Tampa, Florida? Maybe out of the way or some place." [The clerk said], "I do not think so. Let me check. There is a little commuter airline that goes from here to Pensacola [Florida]. I think there is a connection from Pensacola to Tampa." I said, "Gee! That would be great!" [I thought to myself]: we do not have to spend any more time here.

RB: [Laughter]

LS: We found this little commuter airline. They had room for two so we got on that airplane and landed in Pensacola. The pilot taxied the airplane over into a parking spot, got out and turned off the engine. I said, "Are we going to Tampa?" He said, "We are done. This is all we are going to do." [I said], "How are we going to get to Tampa?" [He said], "I do not know. Go check the desk." We got out and walked into the main office. There was [a] girl in there and she was scratching around on her desk, putting things together. We said, "When is the next plane to Tampa?" She said, "In the morning at nine o'clock!" [I said], "What do you mean in the morning? Call us a cab so we can get into town." [She said], "There are not any cabs."

RB: No!

LS: [I asked], "How about an eating place? Is there something close by we can walk to?" [She said], "No." [I said], "Nothing?" [She said], "No." [I thought]: wow! We looked around. The only thing was one of those [vending machines] that you put money in. [I thought to myself]: we are stuck!

RB: [Laughter]

LS: Before the lady left we made her give us all the change she had.

RB: [Laughter] So you [could] take from the vending machine [for a] meal.

LS: [Laughter] [We] spent the night with this vending machine [and] sleeping on the benches.

RB: That was awful.

LS: At eight o'clock the next morning, an airplane came in and we finally got to Tampa. That was Sunday morning. We did not have to report in until the next morning. We finally got us a bed, a shower, slept and straightened ourselves out. We were ready to go to the replacement depot. We went out there and signed in. [They] took our names. "What do we do now?" "Find you a place over there in those tar-papered shacks. Check with us every morning. When your name comes up we will let you know." In about three days [our] names came up and [we were] to report to this particular area. [We] went over there and there was a captain, a second lieutenant and a bunch of enlisted men. When I got there the captain came over, introduced himself, and [said], "You are so and so?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You are the co-pilot!"

RB: [Laughter]

LS: I said, "Now wait a minute. I have never, hardly, done anything, but [looked at] a B-17! I have never been in one! I have never done anything." [I said] "There has to be a mistake." He said, "It is easy to fly. You will not have any trouble."

RB: [Laughter]

LS: He said, "We will not be flying for about two to three days." He said, "If you have time, go down, get in the cockpit, look at all the instruments and make sure you find out [and figure out] where they all are. Day after tomorrow, I will come and get you. I will blind fold you and you can point out where these instruments are."

RB: [Laughter]

LS: We do this. [The captain said], "Okay. You pass. We are going to fly tomorrow!"

RB: You memorized where all the instruments were? Were they that much different than the other airplanes you flew?

LS: There was one instrument for each motor.

RB: I see; and that was different because you did not fly a multi-engine plane before?

LS: There were just two.

RB: How many on the B-17 are there?

LS: Four!

RB: Four. Now you multiplied that? You memorized where they were and you passed.

LS: [I knew] where they were. You have gasoline, oil pressure, temperature — about four different valves for each engine.

RB: For each engine?

LS: Then you have a switch for the tail, wheel, ignition switch, [switches] like that.

RB: On the B-17, does the landing gear stay down or does it come up?

LS: It comes up.

RB: You had to learn how to pull the wheels up, too?

LS: Yes; but that was just a switch.

RB: Alright. So you knew where all those switches were.

LS: I guess I [had] enough of them!

RB: [Laughter] Good.

LS: Then we went out to the flight line. I thought maybe the instructor would get into the co-pilot seat because the pilot — this is his first time since he got out of school; but no. They shoved me in the co-pilot seat. Around and take off!
[Laughter]

RB: Wow! Alright. Were you nervous or not?

LS: Quite!

RB: Yes. [Laughter] Okay.

LS: But when we got up, moved around and settled down; the instructor was really a super [fellow].

RB: Good.

LS: He just made it easier on you, to do this — no problem. [He said], “This is easy to fly. You will not have any trouble. Anybody can fly one of these.”

RB: [Laughter]

LS: I said, “What about landing?” He said. “That is a little different story.” “We will get to that later.”

RB: [Laughter]

LS: Then we just started training; [had] some altitude training. The gunners [were able] to try their [training]. We had different systems we had to go through to make [sure] everybody was [trained] within the group, all down the line. After awhile, it came to be pretty good. I guess after about two weeks we had been out some place and were coming back. The instructor came up and said, “Okay. Take us home!” I said, “Okay. I know how to get to Tampa.” He said, “When you get there land it.”

RB: Oh no! You had never landed before?

LS: I said, "I never landed this plane."

RB: [Laughter]

LS: He said, "You have watched us. You have been right there when it has come down. You probably even had a hold of the wheel and —." Anyway, this runway in Tampa — I do not know how they —. That sucker was so wide you could put a B-17 on each side and still have two pass in between. It was like 10,000 feet long!

RB: Wow!

LS: It went right from the water clear out across this island.

RB: You did it?

LS: Anyway, we got back. We landed!

RB: When you land or when you take off does the wheel go forward and back?

LS: When you take off — forward.

RB: You bring it to you and that takes you up? Then when you are trying to land you just gradually — [gesturing].

LS: Yes, you just kind of mother it down.

RB: Yes.

LS: You have to control your air speed all the time so that you start out at 120 mph and then you come down. When you get ready to land you are running around 80 mph.

RB: I see. Then you try to get your wheels to touch smoothly — not too hard or — you [have] to —

LS: You just —.

RB: — make it smooth. Was that hard to do? Was it hard to get the wheels just so it does not have an impact, but it is a smooth landing? Does that take effort or skill?

LS: It is mostly feel.

RB: Yes. You finally get to the point where you can feel it and you know you are doing about right.

LS: You can see to the side.

RB: Yes.

LS: Where you can see the ground coming up to you. When you get to a certain spot there you can see the ground, and you are there. Then you just cut the power and [glide in].

RB: And then glide in. How long were you training on the B-17?

LS: We trained there through October 1944. On our last flight there, we went out to the flight line, took off and pretty soon there were six of us in formation. The instructor was there and I said, "Where are we going?" He said, "Havana, Cuba!" I said, "They are having a war down there!" [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

LS: He said, "No, we are going to be alright." We flew to Havana and landed. We couldn't get off the base. He said, "Yes, you are right. There is a lot of disturbance in town, political problems, so we are confined to the base. You have to stay here. We have a restaurant, a bar, a bowling alley and a bunch of [facilities] the troops [can use here]." We stayed there that night and went back to Tampa the next day.

LS: And then we were done!

RB: That was the end of it. Were you waiting to get orders to go overseas?

LS: Yes. I am not sure what we did for the next week or two. Finally, in the middle of November [1944] we [received] our orders to head north. We flew from Tampa to Georgia. [We] stayed overnight. Then we headed for Bangor, Maine!

RB: Bangor, Maine! Yes. Were you flying with a group?

LS: No, we were [flying] solo.

RB: How many in the crew? How many people were on the airplane with you?

LS: There were nine of us.

RB: A whole crew of you were flying solo. [Were] you going over to England?

LS: We didn't know.

RB: You are going to Maine at that point.

LS: Anyway, we are headed for Bangor, Maine. We got up around, midway, up there and we looked out and there was a P-47 on each wing. What the hell is going on here?

RB: [Laughter]

LS: [Fellows] were waving to us. Come to find out we [were] a little too close to the restricted air [space] over Washington, D.C.! [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

LS: They flew with us a little while, waved at us and left. We went on into Bangor, Maine. [At] Bangor, Maine we were issued new clothes — heavy-duty coats, pants, vests and everything for wearing apparel.

RB: It was going to be winter soon.

LS: What?

RB: It was going to be winter soon so you got your cold weather gear?

LS: Yes. We are in November.

RB: They issued you your gear —

LS: What?

RB: — that you needed to take with you.

LS: Right.

RB: How long did you stay in Maine?

LS: I think we were only there a couple of days, probably overnight, then we went to Goose Bay, Nova Scotia. At Nova Scotia we received our orders to continue our flight [to] our final destination; but we could not open [the orders] until we were two hours into the flight.

RB: Is that right? [Laughter]

LS: But we knew where we were going.

RB: Where was that?

LS: We were going to England!

RB: Yes, where else would you go if you are going the northern route?

LS: We opened our orders and [it was] not England — Italy!

RB: Oh! [Laughter]

LS: [I said], “What do you mean? What have they done? They have tricked us again!”

RB: [Laughter]

LS: Anyway, we were out flying around. We had a special balloon-type tank in the bomb bay filled with gas. We were supposed to go from Nova Scotia to Iceland. We were out flying around and kind of discussing what we thought we were going to do in Italy. We were out three or four hours and one of the engines ran away.

RB: Oh, no!

LS: It cut loose and it was really spinning. There were instructions on how to stop this [it] and [how to] do it. With our flight engineer, me and the pilot we decided [that] you turn the blades so that they are directly into the wind and they do not [inaudible]. We messed around with that and got it stopped. But we only had three engines now.

RB: Were you flying in the day or at night?

LS: [In the] day. [I thought to myself]: what are we going to do? The pilot said, “I do not really want to go back.” The chief engineer said, “I don’t either but, it is a

long way to Iceland. If we happen to lose another engine we could be in real trouble.”

RB: Really?

LS: He said, “Let’s try and start that thing.” [We said], “Okay.” We went back through all this gyration [instructions], got the propellers changed and hit the start button. I will be damned if it did start!

RB: Wow! That was good.

LS: Now we have four engines. But the flight engineer said, “So it started. This is a new airplane. It has never had a lot of [air flight] time on it anyway. I am a little bit leery. I hate to get up on that ice pack in Greenland and have something go wrong.” I was looking at the map and said, “There is an emergency field on Greenland.”

LS: [One of the crew said], “Oh? Where?” Finally, we decided [to] try and see if we [could] land there. We were not that far away. We got them on the radio and asked permission to land. We said, “We are not sure where you are.” [Laughter] [Along] that coast of Greenland there are fjords which are just canyons that go back into the innards [inland parts] of the country. [They are] full of water and they are all alone. They told us how to pick out this one fjord to get to the base. They told us, “Okay, get down to a certain altitude and slowly decrease until you get about 5,000 [feet]. Then look for us.” We do this and [are] about 5,000 [feet], are looking around and down for an airfield. There is no airfield.

RB: Oh, no!

LS: We were going to have to get this [airplane] back up and get out of there. Finally, we got [them on] the radio. [They said], “Oh, you are okay. We can see you.” [We said], “What do you mean, you can see us?”

RB: [Laughter] We can’t see you!

LS: He said, “Look down to your right, right down to the water.” There was this little black spot! That was the runway. So we lowered down, got on the water, came in [and] pulled back into this, [but] it ran uphill! It ended up at the foot of a glacier!

RB: [Laughter]

LS: We went into the maintenance area and explained to [them] what happened. The maintenance supervisor there said, “Okay, we work nights anyway. We will go over this [airplane] tonight for you. We will know one way or another tomorrow.” They had a place for us to stay and a place to eat. We spent the night in Greenland. We went out to the flight line the next morning and checked with them. [They said to us], “We cannot find anything wrong. Everything is good. We checked every engine. We checked all the fuel lines; everything. We just could not find anything.”

LS: [We said], “Okay. We will head for Iceland.” [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

LS: That morning we took off and arrived in Iceland the day before Thanksgiving. We spent Thanksgiving Day in Iceland. Cold!

RB: Were there other Americans there?

LS: Yes. I don't remember how many.

RB: You spent Thanksgiving 1944 in Iceland?

LS: Right. I think we spent a couple of days there. Then we went to Wales, in England. [Spent] another day there. Then we went from Wales to Marrakesh in North Africa. It used to be Morocco.

RB: [Laughter]

LS: We stayed an extra day in Morocco. We were supposed to go from Marrakesh to Italy. We got in the [airplane] and [were] ready to take off and they said, "There is a heavy rainstorm in Italy, so stop in Tunis."

RB: [Laughter]

LS: We landed in Tunis, Tunisia and stayed overnight. The next morning we went to Italy.

RB: Where in Italy did you end up?

LS: We ended up at Foggia; which is just about fifty miles south of Naples, but inside it was raining!

RB: Was there a large Army Air Corps contingent at Foggia [Airfield Complex]? [Foggia was located in the east near the Adriatic Sea.]

LS: The bomb group consisted of four squadrons, each stationed there in Foggia.

RB: Let me ask you this about your airplane. I had heard that it was customary to give a name to your airplane. Did you do that?

LS: No.

RB: Okay; but some did.

LS: Some of them early on in England [did]. We brought this brand new beautiful silver colored airplane into Italy. The next [time] we saw it, it was a green camouflaged-type and there wasn't any room to put a name on! [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] The maintenance folks painted it?

LS: You did not fly the same [airplane] each time.

RB: Okay.

LS: Like they claim in the movies that they do.

RB: That was not true for you?

LS: I do not know.

RB: When you got to Foggia, did they in-brief you on what your mission was going to be?

LS: We got in the truck and went out to the squadron area; which was one operations building and the rest of it was tents. It was raining like everything [when] the truck got there. We unloaded all our luggage and everything we had on the airplane into a pile in the operations building. They came out and welcomed us to the area and pointed out where the mess hall was. We went and got something to eat; came back. It was afternoon so it was probably two o'clock. We were standing around in the operations room and [a fellow said], "Your tent has been delivered down there for you on this particular lot." [We said], "Okay." We wandered down to look at our tent and there was the bundle! [We thought]: okay. When are they going to come and put it up? [Then we realized], there was nobody that was going to come and put it up. [Laughter]

RB: You had to make your own tent? And it was raining?

LS: We had a [fellow] from Brooklyn, [and] a [fellow] from New Hampshire. The pilot and I knew something about a canvas or a rope.

RB: Oh, no? You had to figure out [how] to build a tent?

LS: We struggled around [and] finally got something up. It was kind of flimsy.

RB: [Laughter]

LS: At about that time, here came another truck. It had folding cots, a bunch of blankets [and] pillows! Another bunch came around and in back of the tent they put up a couple of cross bows like that; stuck a fifty-gallon barrel of gas in it and ran a copper tube inside the tent. Oh!

RB: What was that for? For heating or what?

LS: That was the heat!

RB: Wow!

LS: There was another little barrel, about that big around [gesturing] and about that high, with a hole in it to stick this plastic tube in it. Just ahead of that was a little piece of rubber hose with a clamp. You could loosen this clamp to let gasoline out — strike a match and get a flame.

RB: [Laughter] That sounds a little dangerous to me.

LS: Oh, it was! Of course, with this barrel it also came with a stove pipe and you could stick it out.

RB: And did it keep you warm in the tent?

LS: After awhile. Anyway, it was still raining. We finally [were] squared away. We had a chance to go to town, found a table and maybe a chair or two and some

[items that would be] useful inside the tent. We checked with some of the other [fellows] next door to see how they [did] it. After a week or so, it was habitable, I guess.

RB: Sure. When you were there, there were other [fellows] who are finishing and they [were] going back to the states. Right? Or somewhere else? Did they leave some of their gear behind that you could use?

LS: Not at that time.

RB: Okay. You [were] there and are setting up your tent operation. How soon after that were they going to have you start flying some missions?

LS: And it was still raining.

RB: And it was raining!

LS: This was [in] December, Christmas time.

RB: You spent Christmas in Italy, 1944? What was that like? Do you remember that Christmas?

LS: No.

RB: No? [Laughter] It was not much of a Christmas to remember?

LS: What?

RB: It was not much of a Christmas to remember?

LS: I just have no recollection. The next day, [December] 26, [1944] was our first flight. But when they took a new crew for the first flight, they split it up. They put somebody with an older crew and one of the older crew with the new.

RB: That makes sense. Were you still going to be the co-pilot?

LS: Yes.

RB: So they put an experienced pilot from Italy there with you?

LS: I went as a co-pilot with this other [crew]. The pilot was going on his fiftieth mission! This was his last mission before he went home.

RB: The final one, yes. The swan song.

LS: We took off and got in position. The flight path out of Italy goes up. You have the range of those heavy mountains right all across the north end of Italy.

RB: Yes, those are the Italian Alps, aren't they?

LS: Yes.

RB: You had to get high enough to get over the snow-covered Alps?

LS: Our route was over the west coast of Italy along the Swiss border. There was less chance of German artillery.

RB: Right, anti-artillery.

[END OF RECORDING THREE.]

RB: We were talking about your first flight up the west coast of Italy to the western border of Switzerland and France.

LS: Alright. In a formation, you had your number one [airplane] out front with one on each wing — two and three. Number four sets just slightly below number one as close as you can get, with five and six on your wing. If you have a seven, why he sticks back behind four.

RB: One is up in front, two and three are next, then four, five, six and seven. Seven planes in a formation?

LS: The four is directly behind [number] one.

RB: Right, between two and three.

LS: No, they are above you.

RB: Okay, so one and two, three, then four is right there, then five and six. Where is seven?

LS: They are right on the side of four.

RB: Alright.

LS: Anyway, we were going along fine. I guess we might [have] been to probably 20,000 feet or so. We had our oxygen [masks] on, were cruising along and all at once the plane just drops 5,000 feet!

RB: Why? [Laughter]

LS: Everybody was looking at each other. What happened? The flight engineer came up. He looked at all the engine instruments. Nothing was different. What happened? Nobody knew. We couldn't figure it out. The flight engineer was talking to the pilot and said, "What do you want to do?" [The pilot said] "What do you mean, what do I want to do?" He said, "We had three situations. We could abort and go back to the base because we had a long way to go yet. It will tax us to finish. Or we're not too far from Switzerland, we could jump over and land in Switzerland." They have an agreement with the rest of the world if [a] military person landed in Switzerland he could stay, but he could not leave until the war was over.

RB: Oh! [Laughter]

LS: The pilot said, "I do not want to spend the rest of my life in Switzerland!"

RB: [Laughter]

LS: The [fellow] said, "Okay." The only other thing we could do is try to catch up. The pilot said, "I know we will be taxing the field, but we have to do it! Throw everything forward and let us try to catch up." So we did. We were climbing

along and I was watching the altimeter and soon we were at 25,000 [feet]. We could see the formation up ahead of us. Then we were at 27,000. All at once we were at 30,000 and we had almost caught up to them.

RB: That was pretty good.

LS: Just a short time later, we were at 31,000. [I thought to myself]: good hell. We have never been [at] 31,000 before. I did not know this plane could ever go that [high]!

RB: [Laughter]

LS: We got a hold of the lead [airplane] and we were back in formation. Five and six get back to us. We were going along fine. I looked over to my right [and] there was this huge black cloud! Just sitting there all by itself. The flight engineer was there. [I said] “What is that?” He said, “That is flack!”

RB: Oh, no!

LS: I said, “Boy! I am sure glad we missed that!” We were going along [and] a little while later the formation started to turn. The flight engineer came up, handed me a flack vest, an apron and a steel helmet. I looked around and we were still turning. I thought: oh, yes.”

RB: You were going into the flack area?

LS: That was the target! We were turning on the IP [point] headed in there. The point where the bombardier is actually directing. The lateral flight is called the IP point.]

RB: Do you recall what the target was?

LS: Yes, it was one of the main oil refineries in southern Germany, Blechhammer. We turned around and went down. The Sherman anti-aircraft guns are 88s and 105. The 88s had an altitude [ceiling] of about 25,000 feet. [The 8.8 CM Flak was a German 88mm anti-aircraft gun from World War II. The 10.5 CM Flak 38 was a German anti-aircraft gun used in World War II.]

RB: You were still at 31,000 feet?

LS: If you can get to 31,000, you had just reached the range of 105s.

RB: It cannot reach [31,000 feet]?

LS: We just hit the edge of this smoke that was in there. I happened to look down to the left and there was an air plane with one of the wings shot off going down. Then all at once about three parachutes came out. That is a no-no, because they keep telling you, “Do not open that chute that high because it will freeze you to death right [there]!” It was like 35° below.

RB: Oh, gosh!

LS: We started into this black area. The airplane was bumping a little bit. I just pulled that helmet down over my eyes and looked at the instruments.

RB: Yes! [Laughter]

LS: Never pulled my face up. [Laughter]

RB: Just hoped for the best?

LS: I just covered like this [gesturing]. We were jumping around a little bit. I did not want to see anything else.

RB: Oh, man!

LS: Pretty soon, we made a turn and we were out of there!

RB: Did you drop your bombs then?

LS: Yes.

RB: [When] dropping the bombs, who gives the order to drop? Does it come from the pilot?

LS: The bombardier.

RB: The bombardier knows when [the airplane] is at the right position so it will drop —.

LS: With the Norden bombsight.

RB: Right.

LS: When we [were] straightened out from the IP point to the target, the bombardier throws a switch and he controls the airplane. He can sit there and [with] his eyes he can see the target. He had some kind of an indicator [of] where the route was.

RB: Yes, because he has to start the dropping of [the bombs] right above it [the target], but he is seeing it over there [ahead of the target]. So he has to know when to flip the switch so it will drop on target?

LS: Yes. He can see this in his bombsight. He is guiding the airplane. All we had to do was keep it level.

RB: I see.

LS: He does this to [the airplane] and we just keep [the airplane] level. [Gesturing.]

RB: How did the bombardier know if he had hit the target or not?

LS: He could see it.

RB: Okay.

LS: A lot of times it was covered with smoke, if you were behind, because a lot of airplanes were ahead of you. He knew about where it was anyway. When we got

to a certain point, [the instrument tell him] to let them go. Then he dropped them. Once he dropped them —

RB: You [fellows] turn and got out of there. Right?

LS: — then it cut him off and we [the pilots] had [control] of the airplane again.

RB: Alright. Do you know how long it takes, at 31,000 feet, for the bombs to hit the target? It would be awhile, I would imagine. On that mission, you dropped the bombs, then you turned out, you just kind of circled around and then flew back?

LS: We were still in formation. We got down out of the position over the target and headed back. The pilot and the flight engineer started looking at the fuel gauges. They were a little bit concerned, so they called the number one pilot in the lead airplane and requested that they turn [the airplanes] loose. They could fly back by themselves and conserve fuel, because when you are in formation you are moving around all the time and the gas and the charges.

RB: It takes more gas?

LS: Takes more. He gave us the okay. One of the good things about Italy was that you had the Adriatic Sea that follows right up the east side almost the full length of the country. Our flight plan coming back — as we hit the top of that Adriatic [Sea] we stayed out over the water. There [were] not any land based guns that could reach us.

RB: That makes sense.

LS: Our path then, was just to hit [the coast of Italy on the Adriatic Sea] and with minimum fuel [we made] a slow glide all the way back down.

RB: How long would it take to get to Germany?

LS: It was an eight-hour flight.

RB: About eight hours and then about eight hours back?

LS: I suspect it took five hours to get up, then [hit] the target and maybe three [hours] back.

RB: Oh, eight hours total. Is Foggia is on the west side of Italy?

LS: Italy is not that wide right there.

RB: At some point, [did] you cross over the countryside to get to your base?

LS: Not much. You come down the Adriatic and on the east side of Italy there is a little seaport-type vacation spot there. We were just inside of that. Anyway, we came down [and] moved over, hit the base and let us go right-square in, pull up in a hard stand and turned around when [one of] the engines stopped. [Laughter] Welcome back!

RB: Was there a bathroom in the airplane?

LS: You had a tube.

RB: You had it to go with you.

LS: If you had to do something else, you had to go stand in the bomb bay.

RB: [Laughter]

LS: Usually you did not have to do that.

RB: You got back and that was your first mission. That was a success, but a little scary with the airplane losing altitude.

LS: They finally decided that, sometime in there, with the fumes from the lead plane and the nature of the climate that we could have picked up some ice on the wings. That would disrupt the air flow and drop it. Other than that, that was the only thing that they could figure [had happened].

RB: When you do a mission, how much rest do you have before the next mission?

LS: It started raining again. We did not fly again until the first of February. A whole month!

RB: Wow! A whole month that you were just stuck [in] January of 1945 waiting for the rain to stop or conditions to get better?

LS: Yes. As I recall, you had to do a total of fifty missions for your assignment there. That was the original deal. All the B-17s out of England used the bases in England. As the Germans moved further east, the Americans did not move any of their bases. All the B-17 flights out of England started with England and as the Germans moved east they [were] longer. At the time, if your flight lasted – I do not remember what it was – six and a half, seven hours, you [received] credit for two [flights]! As the Germans moved east, the flights got longer and statistically, the [fellows] in England could finish fifty missions with only twenty-five [flights]. The powers that be said, “We are not going to do that. We are going to change that to thirty-five sorties – no matter how long.” Along [about] first of the year, I do not know, whenever, then the mission total was thirty-five sorties.

RB: Even when you were flying from Italy eight hours, was that still going to be a thirty-five sortie requirement?

LS: Yes.

RB: Do you remember some of your other missions?

LS: They were all kind of similar. Some were shorter than others. Sometimes they would send us to – the Germans would be transferring a lot of stock and we would hit a railroad yard, or something that they felt was necessary for the [mission]. Most of the time we were [hitting] oil refineries, munitions factories [and] a few trains.

RB: Okay; but you were not a part of any of the urban bombing?

LS: What?

RB: You were not a part of any of the city bombing. Were you?

LS: What?

RB: Some of the missions were actually to bomb in urban areas.

LS: That was the British.

RB: Okay.

LS: They were mad because Germany sent all the bombs to London.

RB: Right; but the Americans were not a part of that?

LS: When they bombed [the British], just blew up towns like Cologne, Germany. The Americans picked targets. The Germans had some artillery places in the Italian Alps. The Americans were getting ready to cross what they called — you have the mountains on one side of Italy, then you had this big valley, the Po Valley. The Americans were getting ready to cross [the] Po Valley to start on the Italian side of the Alps. The Germans were entrenched up along it. We went a couple of days [and] bombed their munitions or their lookout towers.

RB: Kind of soften the target then?

LS: Gun placement [activity].

RB: At one point, when you visited us in Germany, we went to Nuremburg [1994]. You said, “I remember the last time I saw Nuremburg I was 30,000 feet high.” Do you remember a mission [where] you were flying to Nuremburg?

LS: You mean Nuremburg?

RB: Yes. It is kind of in southern Germany

LS: We really did not bomb many places in Italy itself. Bologna —

RB: Nuremburg was in Germany.

LS: — Udine, an airbase, troop concentration and a railroad yard. Most of the other [missions] were in Germany and Austria. A lot of [missions, bombings] around Vienna.

RB: Is that right? You started back flying in February of 1945. When did you finish your last mission?

LS: [On] April 26, [1945].

RB: That is shortly before V-E [Victory in Europe] Day. I think in May of 1945 was when [World] War [II] in Europe ended.

LS: I think you are right.

RB: Were you in Italy when the Germans surrendered?

LS: After our last mission there, the last day of April. We did not do anything until the middle of July.

RB: Is that right? You just stayed in Italy?

LS: We stayed in our regular camp. They had to go through the process of figuring out how many points you had. Depending on the number of points you had, you were designated to return to the states. If you did not have enough, you stayed there, like our bombardier. Later on, instead of using him they used what they called a togalier [a position on the B-17]. He would just watch and when the lead [airplane] dropped their bombs, he would hit the switch. Our bombardier [was] shorted a few missions. It turned out when the war ended, he was the low man on the totem pole in flight [points]. In fact, he stayed over there and worked with the camera crew taking the [equipment] around. Checking up where the destruction had taken place.

[Early on the bombardier in effect flew the airplane while on the bomb run. Later it was changed so that only the bombardier on the lead aircraft targeted the central aiming point and the other airplanes in the bomber stream coordinated their bomb release with him. Thus, came into being the “togonalier” — a combination of bombardier and nose gunner — whose job was to “toggle” or release the bombs by hitting a toggle switch or signal of the lead airplane bombardier.

— Added by Randall J. Bunn during editing.]

RB: [Laughter] In the time that you were staying in the camp, did you get mail from home at all? Letters?

LS: Yes, [and] packages.

RB: What was the food like?

LS: What?

RB: What was the food like? Was it okay?

LS: It was not bad. It was packaged [food rations].

[END OF RECORDING FOUR.]

RB: I was asking you what it was like to live there at that location from November-December [1944] to July [1945]. Did they have any kind of entertainment or things to do to get your mind off of things?

LS: Earlier we did get a rest leave.

RB: Okay.

LS: Our crew was assigned to spend a week on the Isle of Capri!

RB: Is that right?

LS: Which was different than Army life.

RB: Yes!

LS: [We were] living in a motel; free to range [roam] around and do what you [wanted].

RB: That was nice.

LS: Capri was quite a different little island.

RB: [Did] you take a boat or ship to Capri?

LS: Yes. We came out of Naples [Italy] and you go over. On Capri there was only one little village sitting over on that east side. The boat came into this little harbor at the bottom of a cliff! You got out [and] got your baggage. They put you over in a little basket there and called a fu-nic-u-lar.

RB: [Laughter] Is that right?

LS: It was like a railroad going up a cliff! You got in this basket, sat there and it raised this basket up to the flat spot on the island! [Then] you got off. There was a little courtyard and a couple of mansions. The Woolworth family had a big mansion there that they opened to the GIs.

RB: They did?

LS: They had a few things to do to keep [you entertained]. It was a fun week.

RB: Good.

LS: When we went to the other depot to get ready for our turn to go home, they did start some classes that you could take that were run by Army personnel. A couple of [fellows] took advantage of that. It was hard to get into [because] you did not know how long you were going to be there! It seemed like we were there forever!

RB: Did you make some friends in Italy that you kept in touch with over the years?

LS: For quite awhile [I kept in contact with] a bombardier.

RB: What was his name? Do you remember?

LS: Conrad. He was from New Hampshire. I [have] felt sorry all my life that come to find out [later], he ended up in Los Angeles.

RB: Is that right?

LS: I did not go to Los Angeles very much when I worked. One time while I was down there I looked him up in the telephone book and called him but I could not get a hold of him.

RB: Really? You never had contact with him?

LS: I never did get contact with him.

RB: That is too bad.

LS: I always felt sorry about that.

RB: Yes. Tell about your return back to the United States in July?

LS: Your name came up and you went over to headquarters. They said, "Okay. You are assigned to this crew and you are to take off at a certain time on a certain day." Like July 20th. [You] went down to the flight line and got on with this crew and we flew from Foggia down southern Italy and then down to Marrakesh –

RB: The same way.

LS: — Morocco again.

LS: I think we were just there overnight. We took off and —

RB: Were you flying the B-17?

LS: An old one!

RB: An old one! [Laughter]

LS: [Laughter] And our next destination was the Azores!

RB: You took a different route.

LS: Now the Azores were just a bunch of rocks sticking up out there in the ocean with nobody around anywhere.

RB: [Laughter] Yes.

LS: I always wondered about those. When we were flying missions all over Germany [and] Austria we carried a navigator. If you ever got lost up there, you could find your way out. We headed out of Marrakesh for the Azores and we only had a radio compass!

RB: No navigator?

LS: No navigator!

RB: Oh, dear!

LS: No nothing! All they did was start you [in] that direction.

RB: And then it was just water?

LS: Then it was just water!

RB: Wow!

LS: Water! Water! It was a long trip! Over six hours. Finally, after you were out there for three or four hours you would start phoning on the radio, trying to catch a word from this airbase there in the Azores! Finally, they came online. Then once you [had] their radio contact, your compass automatically pointed to the radio signal.

RB: That was good.

LS: Once you made contact, all you did was put your airplane on that heading and go for it.

RB: You made it to the Azores?

LS: To the Azores.

RB: How long did you stay there? Just overnight?

LS: Yes, just overnight. Then the next day [we] headed for North America someplace.

RB: That was a long trip.

LS: That was a long trip! Same thing; but you had some assurance that if something probably happened to you, you were going to be in halfway-friendly water.

RB: That is true.

LS: Anyway, we were ten hours from the Azores to Gander, Newfoundland. I think we just stayed there overnight. Yes. We got the airplane the next day and flew into Boston [Massachusetts]. [We] unloaded at Boston and went through nominal administrative duties. I thought: they will give us a ticket on the train [so] we can get out of here. No, they had [the] train already booked up.

RB: Oh man!

LS: They put everybody on the train. We were full of twenty-two year old pilots headed west! We spent three days on that train between Boston and Salt Lake [City].

RB: Long trip! [Were] you discharged when you got to Salt Lake [City]?

LS: No, no.

RB: No?

LS: No, I was still in the Army!

RB: Yes.

LS: [Fighting] was still going on in the South Pacific.

RB: That is true.

LS: Yes. We got to the Army base [Fort Douglas] in Salt Lake [City] and went through administrative duties while all of them received their next orders. I got a thirty-day leave. I was supposed to report to Dayton — where were you [living] back in the mid-west?

RB: At Wright-Patterson [Air Force Base] in Dayton, Ohio.

LS: Dayton, Ohio! To be checked out on the B-29.

RB: [Laughter]

LS: I went home and there was still one other [fellow] there that I knew, that I grew up with, that was out of the service. There was not much to do, except [be] with the family. Then Lyman decided to join the Navy.

RB: He did?

LS: He had just [finished] high school and he joined the Navy. He had to be in Salt Lake [City] like the 12th or the 13th [of] whatever [month it] was [August 1945]. I told the folks, "I will take him up to Salt Lake [City] and put him on the airplane." I wanted to visit one of my friends up there anyway. I took him to Salt Lake [City and he] got on the airplane. That night I got a room in a motel. The buzz was around that the Japanese had surrendered! [I thought to myself]: good. I thought: I will go home tonight. No, I will wait and go home in the morning. Anyway, I got up the next morning and [that] was all the news. The Japanese had surrendered. I got [on] the bus and went back to Panguitch.

RB: [Laughter] Was there a lot of excitement in Salt Lake [City] with the end of the war?

LS: There could have been if I had stayed another day.

RB: So you went back to Panguitch. Did you end up going to Dayton or not?

LS: I was sitting there [in Panguitch] and finally, I [received] a letter from the government that said, "Go to Santa Ana, California and be discharged."

RB: [Laughter] So you went to Santa Ana?

LS: Yes, Santa Ana.

RB: When were you discharged? Do you recall?

LS: I had a bunch of leave coming. I think I got home in time for the deer hunt; which is usually October 20th.

RB: [Laughter]

LS: [The] final date on my papers was November 26, 1945.

RB: Right, because you had some leave saved up?

LS: Yes.

RB: You started in March of 1943 and ended in November of 1945.

LS: Yes.

RB: About two-and-a-half years or so. More or less.

LS: Yes.

RB: I am going to let you rest now. We will kind of end it right here. Maybe we can meet one more time and talk about a few other [topics]. Okay?

LS: I have a scrapbook in there.

RB: I would like to go over some of the things in your scrapbook.

LS: Okay.

[END OF RECORDING FIVE. END OF INTERVIEW.]