

Veterans Interview

Name Ed Lawson service under Edwin D. Levin

Birthplace: Chicago, 12-23-23

Army Air Force Highest Rank: Technical Sergeant

Where Recorded: Campus SUNY Fredonia, August 8, 2007

Interviewer: Thomas Morrissey. Video Colin Plaister

Purpose: Library of Congress Veterans History Project

About Family:

Father: Abraham S. Buyer at Spiegel's Chicago.

Mother: Anna Cooper, former bookkeeper in Boston.

Before Service:

Attended Boston Latin School-Graduated in 1942

**Civilian Volunteer: First Fighter Command Headquarters
Bowdoin Square, Boston 1941-1942**

University of Illinois: Urbana Sept 1942-March 1943

Enlisted for an Enlisted Reserve Program: Nov 9, 1942.

Called up March 1943.

Service:

**Camp Grant-Basic Training Keesler Field, Mississippi.
1500 men in large hangars.**

Colorado-Buckley Field, Lowry Field, Armament School

Las Vegas: Gunnery School.

Lowry Field, Denver, Colorado: Central Fire Control School

Walker Field, Victoria, Kansas.

Joined Major Hurlbutt's crew, Trained on B-17s, then B-29s

Remember flights from Kansas to Texas, over Gulf of Mexico, over Dry Tortugas, up Florida, and return in one flight.

After training on B-29s, off to Lincoln, Nebraska,

Sacramento, and off to Saipan. Stopped at Hawaii, Johnson Island, and Kwajalein on the way.

I remember Ciardi. He was popular with the women. At Lincoln, they were at the gate waiting for him when he was out on pass.

Arrived in Saipan in November. Bombed Truk.

First Raid on Tokyo, probably November 27.

At the briefing, we were told that if went down, we were to go to Emperor's Palace. He would protect us (we should ask directions in English?)

We took off but two tires blew. So we aborted.

Second Mission. Tokyo. December 3, 1944.

Warned of possible 650 fighters.

When we first got over Japan, I was shocked to see Colonel King's plane go down to our right. Then parachutes opened. It was upsetting to see the group commander go down before we even dropped bombs (he survived POW camp but lost a tremendous amount of weight).

We reported 65 fighter attacks on our plane. Hedges and I thought we helped shoot down one plane.

Next morning I was given a bill for having burned out two machine gun barrels. They charged me \$130 (a lot of money at that time). We appealed and the charge was erased.

Japanese air raids on us. Several B29s were destroyed on the line. One night a Japanese plane came right over our barracks. I will never forget the tracers coming at us. I fought with Ciardi to get under the canvas cot (he had the next bunk to mine. Later, we laughed because a canvas cot wouldn't stop a bullet.

Another memory on Saipan. There was a lieutenant in the 883rd who had served in WWI. Because he had a Medal of Honor, they waived requirements so he could serve. He roughed just like all the others.

During some of the Japanese raids on us, I remember Ciardi sitting off in a corner writing poetry! I asked him what one of his poems meant. That's what the teachers asked about in high school.

Did he ever get angry! He explained that it wasn't the meaning but *how* the thought was expressed. Little did I know that he would use that explanation on the lecture circuit years later.

Early raids on Tokyo: We were scattered all over the sky for 40 miles. We had pickup formations to protect each other from enemy fighters.

Besides targets over Japan, we also bombed Truk and Iwo Jima.

It seemed that on Sunday afternoons B29s would turn right or left over Fujiyama. If we turned right, it would be Tokyo, if left, it would be Nagoya.

On December 28, 1944, I flew my last flight with Hurlbutt. It was a Weather Strike Mission. That meant we went over at night alone.

What looked like fields of searchlights were turned on us. I remember counting 250 laid out in rows with distance between them. When we got caught, you read a newspaper. Hurlbutt put that plane in tremendous maneuvers and we finally broke away. He and Omilian must have been soaked with perspiration.

When we landed, we had, as I understand it, less than 100 gallons of fuel. I remember Hurlbutt had put the engines on "Full War Emergency." That must have used a great deal of gas.

January 1, 1945. The enlisted men served on guard duty for the planes. I was sergeant of the guard that night. At about 4:00 am, we heard some sirens and guns. I thought I saw a Japanese plane being shot down. When an earlier plane we shot down, some people managed to get souvenirs.

So when I saw the lights, I was watching until I heard a strange whistling. At that point, I tried to get in the shelter

with the others but the entrance was jammed. My legs were sticking out.

Walter Type. Soldier's Medal, 369th Station Hospital.

Dr. Milton Greengard. Nurse Hazel Mount.

Tendons.

Crew down over Nagoya. Hedges, tail gunner, only survivor.

Recovery. Back to flying. Cast slow time.

**30 missions more. Mostly with Captain Cordray
Carroll Haygood, Morton Gold. Clint Cator**

Not a scratch

Creeping flak

Colored flak

Fire raids, smoke clouds

Iwo gold dye

Religious service

Illinois scholarship before GI Bill.

R & R picket boat

500 plane formation to Yokahama

Sub in Tokyo Bay Lifeguard

Return to US on APA-three weeks

Back to Boston. Saw Ciardi. Visited families of my original crew.

Back to Illinois

Hedges survived prison camp. Hap Halloran told terrible stories about the prison camp.

Ciardi: Posthumous book "Saipan Diary."

Lost 13 crews. Ciardi to wing headquarters to write up citations for medals.

Reunions:

Active with 73rd BW. Have a website-

Propaganda leaflet, cartoons

Closing remarks