

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
LAWRENCE FEIA
U.S. Army, World War II, Cold War
1999

OH
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Feia, Lawrence (1921 - 2006). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 70 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 70 min), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Videorecording: 1 videocassette (ca. 70 min), ½ in, color

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Lawrence Feia, a Madison, Wisconsin, resident, discusses his World War II Army service in the China-Burma-India Theater with the famed Merrill's Marauders, as a part of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), and his combat experiences at Maingkwan, Walawbum, the Hukawng Valley, Nhpum Ga and Myityina. Drafted in 1942, Feia outlines his training that included Camp Wolters (Texas) for basic and Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, for jungle training. Assigned to the 33rd Infantry and suffering from the Trinidadian heat, the entire battalion volunteered for an unknown "special mission" only because they would go home on leave before being shipped to unknown places overseas. Feia tells of receiving new light clothes, jungle boots, and supplies for overseas duty at Camp Stoneman (California) and reports that he "damned near died" from the cholera shot he received. About 3,027 men boarded the USS Lurline, a plush cruise ship, around October of 1943, eventually docking in Australia and finally in Bombay, India. Feia says that the entire trip lasted thirty days, they had no idea of their destination, and that it was hot when they got close to Bombay. "Hot, holy man, it was hot." He also reports that "we got darn near torpedoed in the Indian Ocean" and after that, nobody slept much until they landed in Bombay. Feia reports taking a train to a camp where they learned how to take their guns and rifles apart in the dark "by fingers." Another train took them to the Ledo Road on the border of India and Burma where they worked on the road with mules. He describes digging "foot holes" for the mules to step into as they went up "the Hump" (part of the Himalaya uplift), the slow going this took, and losing quite a few mules that tipped over and rolled down the Hump, packs and all. He worked in the advanced company for demolition and speaks of receiving food and supplies by air drop and getting water from the joints of the bamboo trees. He characterizes Frank Merrill as friendly and sympathetic, but Joseph Stilwell as abrupt and rude. After they came down from the mountains, the monsoons came with the mud. That is when combat started and Feia describes the Japanese Imperial Marines as tall and very bad. He tells of talking to his buddy only to find him dead with a bullet through his throat. Feia's unit was always in a circle connected by foxholes and they kept in contact by voice. He says that the term, "hell high water" meant the Japanese were coming from all over and that they would "start hollerin" and sometimes his machine gun barrel was white from firing 250 rounds of ammunition. Merrill told them, "Shoot first, then ask questions" and they would start firing at anything in front of them, identified by noise or movement. In his second combat mission, Feia recounts being half-way surrounded by the Japanese for about three weeks; saved by their own machine guns and because the Japanese couldn't get their supplies fast enough. The American P-38s strafed both the Japanese and the elephants

they used to bring in their supplies. Feia tells of getting hit by shrapnel during the second mission and described how tiny pieces of shrapnel still work their way out to this day. He speaks about augmenting their K-rations with other food including going fishing with a grenade, killing peacocks and cooking them in his helmet, and eating jungle fruits. He reports that he went from a weight of 167 pounds down to 113. It took them almost two weeks to march over the Kumon Mountain range to his last mission at Myityina and he describes the battle as “scary,” undertaken during the height of the monsoon, difficulty keeping weapons dry, communicating between foxholes by string (two pulls would indicate that someone was out there). It was at Myityina that Feia got amoebic dysentery and was flown out, eventually ending up at the 28th General Hospital in Karachi, India. He details other health problems for CBI soldiers including malnutrition, dysentery, scrub typhus, and malaria. Feia reports he has had twenty-seven attacks of malaria over the years, saying, “I came home, I was yellow as a canary.” They broke up the Merrill’s Marauders during his stay in the hospital and he was sent home on the third load. He tells how they reorganized at Hot Springs, Arkansas, all the accumulated pay he received, and that during his train ride home, he was held over at the VA Hospital at St. Paul, Minnesota, due to another malaria attack. He reveals that he stayed in the service, limited by a physician to garrison duty, and was a driver for the General of the Fifth Army Headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska, for three years before attending CIA school in Baltimore. He was sent to Europe to investigate black market dealing among service personnel, initially working in the narcotics division in Germany. He relates a story where he was almost killed while investigating a forged GI ID case. He reveals that his twenty-five year military career ended in Madison working in logistics at the ROTC, while assigned to the Fifth Army Headquarters in Minneapolis. He says that he has never went to a Merrill’s Marauder reunion “because I know daggone good and well that I would probably go berserk because, like I say, it’s tough.” “It brings you memories and, boy, it hurts, it hurts.”

Biographical Sketch:

Feia was born in Bowlus, Minnesota, and drafted into the Army in September 1941. He was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for his wartime service. A twenty-five year career military man, Feia was assigned to the 3rd General Hospital in Germany investigating narcotics in the early 1950s. He was subsequently assigned to an experimental medical detachment in Texas before doing another tour in Germany investigating military black market involvement. His last duty was in Madison, Wisconsin where he stayed after his retirement from the military.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 1999

Transcribed by Dan Hudson, 2010

Checked and corrected by Channing Welch, 2011

Corrections types in by Lauren Kelly, 2012

Abstract written by Danielle Spalenka, 2012

Interview Transcript:

Jim: Okay, Larry. Where were you born?

Larry: I was born in Bowlus, Minnesota. B-O-W-L-U-S.

Jim: I've never heard of that town.

Larry: Yeah. It's about—

Jim: Bowlus, Minnesota.

Larry: Yeah, it's about—

Jim: That was 19—

Larry: '21.

Jim: 1921. And, so, when did you get in the service?

Larry: 2, September '42.

Jim: Where did you join?

Larry: Ah, I was drafted at Minneapolis.

Jim: They sent you to an Army base for basic training?

Larry: Yup.

Jim: Where was that?

Larry: Camp Wolters, Texas, infantry, yeah— thirteen weeks.

Jim: Thirteen weeks of infantry?

Larry: Yup, thirteen weeks.

Jim: And then what did they do after that?

Larry: Well, they kinda split everybody up, ya know?

Jim: Yeah, right.

Larry: So a bunch of us went to, ah— Trinidad, Port of Spain, overseas.

- Jim: What was in Trinidad? We didn't have any enemies down there.
- Larry: No, no, no, we didn't—
- Jim: Must have had advanced training then?
- Larry: Yeah, we were in the jungle training.
- Jim: Ah, so they had already designated you for, to go to the jungles then.
- Larry: Evidently so, but we was not aware of it.
- Jim: Oh, you didn't know what you were facing down there?
- Larry: Nope, nope, didn't know anything. Nobody said nothing.
- Jim: That's amazing.
- Larry: That's amazing. Yeah, we, ah—
- Jim: You mean you got on a ship and you didn't know where it was going?
- Larry: That's right. Yeah, we took the ship—actually when we left Camp Wolters, Texas [now known as Fort Wolters] we had a trainload, went to New Orleans. We were stationed in Jackson Barracks, Louisiana, New Orleans for approximately, oh, I don't know, a couple of months, a couple of three months. Done some like, you know, fatigue work and stuff like this here. And after that, why, then we boarded a train and went to Baltimore, Maryland, Chesapeake Bay. And we boarded a ship there.
- Jim: Well, that's amazing.
- Larry: Yeah, and the ship left there, and I imagine it was about seven, eight days later we wound up in Port of Spain, Trinidad. And then we were, I was assigned to the 33rd Infantry. 33rd Infantry and had more training, jungle training, you name it up the ying yang. And, ah, then all of a sudden, I imagine about a year later, not quite a year later, they kept the whole unit together and says, "We need volunteers."
- Jim: Oh, my.
- Larry: Yeah, for a mission, one mission. However, you will go to the — you will go to the States to get a leave before you go overseas. Oh, in the heat, everybody wanted to go home.

- Jim: Yeah.
- Larry: So the, everybody volunteered, the whole -- the battalion that I was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, and, ah, we all volunteered. They flew us into Miami, and they put us on trains, that, you know, split 'em up, you know, the trains. We didn't know where we was going.
- Jim: Did you -- did you have any special training other -- or what was the special training involved?
- Larry: The special training was beach landings in Trinidad, yeah, beach landing and jungle training.
- Jim: Jungle training, what does that mean, you[??] see?
- Larry: Well, this is Trinidad, that is jungle training.
- Jim: I imagine so, but I mean what was different about the jungle than, than in their training, then you would get ordinarily?
- Larry: Well, you had a rough time trying to find your enemy in the jungle.
- Jim: Right, that's what I'm getting at, you see. I'm giving you some special clues here.
- Larry: Well, they -- actually, what they did, was -- we didn't find any enemies. We was just going through the basics, you know, of jungle training. A lot of bayonet fighting.
- Jim: Did they give you special knives or any special equipment?
- Larry: No, that's -- you had your own rifle and light packs, you know, Army general packs.
- Jim: Do you learn to go through the jungle in a different fashion than ordinary?
- Larry: Oh, yeah. Yeah, well, it is pretty hard to get through the jungle.
- Jim: I know, that's why I want you to tell me what that was like. What did they train you? Did they train you to do this or that?
- Larry: How to cross water, how not to identify yourself by staying in the water.

Jim: How's that?

Larry: Well, if you walk on a regular path, you know, your tracks are there, see? The enemy sees 'em they know, hey, somebody went through here.

Jim: Right.

Larry: So down the river you go.

Jim: You learn to walk on water.

Larry: You better believe it.

Jim: How do you get through the heavy undergrowth and the foliage and through a jungle?

Larry: With a machete.

Jim: Wow, they issue those to everybody?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Oh, so there's one piece of special equipment.

Larry: Yeah, we had a machete.

Jim: Did you have any small weapons that you ordinarily wouldn't have?

Larry: Well, that's a small one, and we had our machine guns, BARs [Browning Automatic Rifle], you know and, uh, our rifles. That's about it.

Jim: Not a "grease gun" [M3 submachine gun]?

Larry: No, no, no, no, we didn't have any—no as a matter of fact there was an '03 rifle that I had.

Jim: Oh really, a Springfield?

Larry: Yeah, a Springfield. That's -- we didn't have the M— what is it?

Jim: The [M1] Garand [rifle], you didn't have those?

Larry: No.

Jim: Nobody had them?

Larry: We didn't— I'll tell you what, we didn't get rifles till we got on the next ship going over to India. And they uncrated them and out of the boxes and had all kinds of GI cans on there boiling water.

Jim: To get the Cosmoline [wax-like rust preventative] out.

Larry: You better believe it. I never cleaned so many daggone rifles in my life. [both laugh] Nothing but grease all over the place. But that was an M1.

Jim: Yeah.

Larry: The first I had ever seen one. Did not take it apart, didn't—

Jim: And this is after you got to India?

Larry: No, no, no, before. It was on the ship.

Jim: Oh, on the ship, right, on your way to India.

Larry: Yeah, well, to make a long story short we left Trinidad, we flew to Miami. We stayed there for about three days. They kind of separated everybody, ya know, go here and here and here, you know, and different trains. We boarded trains, and where we were going we didn't know. I didn't know where we were going; none of us in that train knew where we were going.

Jim: Amazing.

Larry: 'Cause nobody said anything, so there you go. We were going west, that I know, and we took the southern route, and by God, I tell you hey, hey it was hot, it was hot. [Jim laughs] And, uh—we wound up in Camp Stoneman, California. Yeah, Camp Stoneman. So we got off the daggone train, the first thing you knew there were a bunch of medics out there, and they, you know, whatever it is, started giving shots. Got your buddy got your two bags, bags out, see, and line up over there, and we didn't know what kind of shots we were getting. We got cholera shots, and that night—hey, I laid on the ground on [laughs] that street there, I bet you for two hours trying to come to, you know. Oh, I damn near died. Yeah. I think we stayed in California being processed. They took all our winter clothes away and gave us light clothes, fatigues and jungle boots stuff like this here, ya know. New mess kits, new clothes, but very light, you know. That was not a GI blanket; there was a blanket, but it was real thin, ya know. Still didn't know where we were going.

Jim: When they took your winter clothes away, you couldn't keep them?

Larry: No, no, no, they took everything away. Yeah, the only thing that you kept is something, your shoes, you know, your pair of shoes, but otherwise you got jungle boots that kind of remind you of tennis shoes, you know [laughs], hey, they're about this size, green, ya know, and --

Jim: Oh, they're rubber on the bottom.

Larry: Yeah, that's what we had, yeah.

Jim: Yeah, well, those aren't combat boots at all then. They're different.

Larry: No, no, no, they were jungle boots they called 'em.

Jim: Okay.

Larry: And like I say, they'd dry out faster [laughs]. Yeah, like hell, yeah. [Jim laughs] So anyway --

Jim: Did they have a canvas top, too?

Larry: Yeah, yeah, canvas top. Then later on while we were in combat they issued us combat boots. The combat boots with the straps on the side.

Jim: Sure, they went up about that high?

Larry: Yeah, yeah. We got them, ya know. They was a little better. You had more stable--

Jim: Sure.

Larry: To walk on, ya know.

Jim: Better for you ankles.

Larry: Yeah. So anyway, we left California. They took us by ship. The Army took us by, whatchacallem, the loaders on the ship.

Jim: When was this? Do you recall the date?

Larry: This -- the date -- no, I couldn't --

Jim: Just roughly.

Larry: This would be in -- let's see, this is '42, '43, latter part of '43. Yeah, I think this was probably in Oct -- September --

- Jim: Of '43?
- Larry: Of '43, yeah, that we boarded the ship to— the USS Lurline. Boarded that daggone thing, and we still didn't know where we were going. Nobody said anything. Hey, the ship was plush; it was not a GI ship.
- Jim: No, that's one of those general ships, right? The big ones.
- Larry: Yeah, the big one. We had our own staterooms and the whole bit.
- Jim: How many were there of you in your group now?
- Larry: Well, the total group was 3,027.
- Jim: On this ship?
- Larry: Yup. We picked some up, picked some troops up in Australia, I think that was part of one battalion. They come out of New Guinea; I don't know where they come from.
- Jim: And as far as you recall all those 3,000 were all riflemen? You didn't have—never were there any special—
- Larry: No, that's just -- we had heavy weapons, mortars and stuff like this here, ya know, that there, and we, well, let's see, we docked in Australia for, I don't know, a couple of days. There was something wrong with one of our propellers on the ship. I think the bearing went out. I don't know what it was. They kind of dry docked it, and let us, ya know, I think we was there for about two or three days. Yeah, and we know we were in Australia, that we knew. When we boarded the ship again, where are we going?
- Jim: Still didn't know.
- Larry: Still didn't know, that's right. I'm honest with you I didn't know it, and nobody else knew. If they did nobody [Jim laughs] said anything. And all of a sudden they made an announcement on the ship, "We are crossing the International Date Line." Now, *what?* Ya know, there we go, ya know. Hot, holy man, it was hot. Yeah, and we landed in— we landed in Bombay. Yeah, we landed in Bombay. That took us almost thirty days to get there.
- Jim: You had started from the United States, Australia, yeah.
- Larry: Like I say, I think we got darn near torpedoed in the Indian Ocean, very close. Boy, them horns sounded in that ship started going.

Everybody hit the deck, ya know? And that ship was going like this here, and I swear that it tipped over like this here. The water would come right on -- I was on the second deck. The water would come right up.

Jim: That was moving.

Larry: Yeah. So nobody slept, no, nobody slept.

Jim: That'd keep you awake.

Larry: Yeah, so, but anyway we landed in Bombay, and from Bombay we took trains. And I don't recall the name of the town that we went to, but we traveled a couple three days by train, ya know.

Jim: Wow, that's a long trip.

Larry: Well, the trains are actually -- the engines are about the size of a Cadillac around here, you know. And, uh, well, we were split up so then they split us up some more. We got there into a training camp. That was [unintelligible] I ain't kidding you. They -- good mess hall, ya know, we had a good mess on the ship and everything.

Jim: That was the end of that.

Larry: That was the end, and then from there on you had K-rations. K, yeah.

Jim: So what did they teach you at the training camp?

Larry: Well, there was again, we --similar to basic training, long marches, fast marches, night marches, you know, and whatever it is. Just kept us going, and then we had firing ranges, you'd fire weapons, you know. That's when we found out we got our new M1s and stuff like this, the new machine guns, ya know, and the BARs or whatever it was, so. We had quite a bit of training in that how to take them daggone things apart at night, ya know, and [unintelligible] parts.

Jim: With your eyes closed.

Larry: Yeah, oh yeah.

Jim: That was important.

Larry: Oh, yeah, you better believe it was important.

Jim: As it turned out that was very important.

Larry: You better -- if not for that I'd tell ya we would all have been dead.

Jim: If you were unable to disassemble and put your weapon back together at night that would have been serious trouble?

Larry: Yup, you had to do it at night by fingers. You made sure you knew what parts they were, ya know, whatever this is, whatever that is, ya know.

Jim: Right.

Larry: Yeah, I, one time took my rifle apart, and then I lost a spring. And, hey, I couldn't find it. You know, how am I gonna feel it on the grass, [thumping sound], you know. Here -- nothing, you know. So I just stopped till in the morning, you know, and then they issued me a spring. A little, little stinkin' spring like this here, you know. Huh!

Jim: So after all this training, then what?

Larry: Then we went to-- we boarded another train out of there. We went to Assam, Burma. That's the border of India and Burma.

Jim: Burma.

Larry: Yeah, in fact it's called the Ledo [Road, later Stillwell Road]. I mean, ya know --

Jim: The road[??]?

Larry: Yeah. There we got hooked up with the mules.

Jim: Mules?

Larry: Mules, yup, we had mules. We had mules that would come out of your ears. All over the place because that's, that's when we started hoofing the Burma road.

Jim: No trucks, mules?

Larry: No, no, no, trucks, no, no. Mules.

Jim: Mules and your feet?

Larry: That's right, but then mules, -- well, like I say, we had packs, ya know. We had parted the ammunition -- not all the ammunition, we didn't because I know whenever we got to a destination after we crossed that

hump. I don't know how long it took, holy cats anyway. They was working on the Burma Road, the engineers were, but so far, and after that then, hey, you're on your own. Because they climb over the mountains you had to go and dig holes for the hoofs for the mules to get by, to crawl over on top and to go down.

Jim: You had to dig holes?

Larry: You had to dig holes for the mules to hoof it, ya know.

Jim: Oh. Oh.

Larry: Oh, for yourself too, like I say, hey, sometimes it's like this here. How are you going to get up there? You know --

Jim: Mules had required those steps, amount[??] of steps going--

Larry: Oh yeah, those steps, it was the steps there. You got your old pick and shovel and go at it.

Jim: That's slow going.

Larry: Yeah, it took, one or three, four thousand feet up. One night and the next night or next day go down, same thing, digging holes there so you had breaks, ya know.

Jim: Oh, same holes but different reasons.

Larry: That's right, yeah, we lost quite a few mules that went away like that, you know. They--

Jim: How'd ya lose them?

Larry: Well, they tipped over, lose their balance—

Jim: And?

Larry: Start rolling. You know, hey, you look down there, hey, that's way down there, you know.

Jim: Mule and a supply—the packs that was on 'em?

Larry: Hell, yeah, whatever you had on it.

Jim: That's gone.

Larry: That's gone, yeah.

Jim: You never made an effort to retrieve that?

Larry: No, how can you, you know?

Jim: Right.

Larry: I don't know. Some of it if it was close by we could retrieve what it was. We couldn't carry a pack, a mule pack, so we took what ever he had on it, ya know.

Jim: Sure.

Larry: Hopefully and we'd try to divide it up. If the mule was hurt , both legs broken, the only thing you could do is shoot them then. Hey, that's the only thing we could do.

Jim: Right. How did you get along with the mules? Were they reasonable?

Larry: Well, no, I was not attached. We had mule people that took care of the mules. But I was in the, ah, in the advanced company for demolition.

Jim: What was the name of your outfit by this time?

Larry: They called us Merrill's Marauders.

Jim: They designated that when you got to India?

Larry: No, when I get –

Jim: When got back south?

Larry: When we got into Burma, way into Burma, ya know, after our first battle that we had.

Jim: Oh, well, we didn't talk about that.

Larry: Oh, no, I'm just starting here, you know.

Jim: I know. So anyway, you were known as Merrill's Marauders then?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: And did you ever meet him?

Larry: Oh yeah, I met Merrill, yeah.

Jim: You did?

Larry: Sure, shook hands with him and everything[??], yeah. You didn't know who he was, ya know. The only thing you knew is that he was General Merrill because he don't -- there was no rank. There was no rank identified no place. The only thing you had your rank on is you had it on your dog tags in the Army.

Jim: Did you ever meet [General Joseph] Stilwell?

Larry: No, I did not. No, I did not meet him. I seen him close by, but I never went over and shook hands with him. He was in a hurry. He said he had to go meet part of a -- Madame Chiang Kai-Shek or somebody like that. [laughs] Him and his pipe, you know, and, boy, he was gone. Real nice guy, though, but he --

Jim: Tough guy.

Larry: Very rude, though, oh --

Jim: Was he?

Larry: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Jim: Very abrupt?

Larry: Oh boy, was he ever. At least Merrill was different.

Jim: Merrill was friendly, cheerful?

Larry: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he -- like I say, he'd sympathize with you, ya know.

Jim: Right. Now, how big was your outfit would you say? About 5,000?

Larry: No, no, there was only 3,027 of us.

Jim: I see, I thought maybe they added some others.

Larry: No, no, no. They -- what we did once we left Burma, once we left Ledo, Burma, or Assam, India, to go to the Burma road they broke us up into columns. See, they took one battalion -- the battalion that I was in was the 2nd Battalion was broke down into two columns, the green and blue column. Because, one or the other, you got your mules and everything, you're stretched out—

Jim: Several miles?

Larry: You better believe it, ya know. And then the other battalion was red and white, and the 2nd, 1st Battalion was red and white, the 2nd Battalion was green and blue, and the 3rd Battalion was orange. I don't remember what the other color was, but they were all broke up. We were in different areas.

Jim: So there was about a 1,000 men in each one then, roughly?

Larry: Yeah. Yeah, about 1,000.

Jim: You had your own food supplies?

Larry: By air, everything come by air, yeah.

Jim: You had contact then by radio?

Larry: Oh, they had – ya, they -- we had regular radio.

Jim: So they knew where to drop off the food?

Larry: Oh, they knew, yeah, yeah.

Jim: So then you just set off in this god forsaken jungle and –

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Once you got down off the mountain then it was pretty level?

Larry: Yeah, it was level, but we hit the monsoon.

Jim: Then there was mud.

Larry: That was mud, that's when the combat started.

Jim: Mud and Japs at the same time.

Larry: Uh! I never seen—

Jim: What was your first contact with the Japs like? Did they suddenly appear, or did you know that they were out there?

Larry: Oh, we knew they was out there because we had --

Jim: Scouts?

Larry: Scouts, Japanese scouts.

Jim: Oh, really?

Larry: Yeah, they were Japanese. They were Americans, but they were Japanese soldiers.

Jim: They could understand the language.

Larry: And yeah, the language and what they would do is tap the lines, whatever lines they could find, telephone lines.

Jim: Oh, yeah.

Larry: They'd tap 'em and find out, ya know. The first mission we had was Walabum, was a ammunition dump, a Japanese ammunition dump. That was the biggest one there. And after they found out where it was at and outside of the -- I had never seen B-24 before. I saw P-38s, P-51s going twenty-four hours a day. But when them B –

Jim: Where'd you see those?

Larry: In Walabum, Burma.

Jim: Oh, when you got there you had to take that airfield, though, first. didn't ya?

Larry: We didn't take -- there was no airfield there.

Jim: Oh.

Larry: Our planes were flying in to do the bombing on that ammunition dump. That was what they call "Hell High Water," when the Japs come up from all over. The Japs, the ones that we were fighting, they were not little pints like that. They were Imperial Marines is what we was fighting. They were as tall as I was, taller than me. Yeah. They were bad, though, they were bad.

Jim: Because their firepower was so great?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: A lot of guys got killed during that.

- Larry: Yeah, you better believe it. We lost a lot of men.
- Jim: But they outnumbered you all the time; they always had many more than you.
- Larry: Yeah, oh yeah, they always did. I, like I say, I myself, I don't like to get into real details of actually, you know, who got killed how they got killed. That bothers me.
- Jim: Sure.
- Larry: And I'll tell you one thing – I was talking to -- I might be digging foxholes tonight under the bed. That's the truth. I ain't kidding you. That's why I never went to my reunion. The Merrill's Marauder reunion that they have every year, I never went to them because I know daggone good and well that I would probably go berserk because like I say, it's tough.
- Jim: You were scared all the time, every moment?
- Larry: You never know what's going to happen, you know. Primarily[??], I was scared for the people that I was with, you know, for the simple reason they'd get bumped off. I had good friend of mine a very good friend of mine, sitting on the machine gun. I said, "Hey, Teddy," I said, "The turkeys are coming over. They're gonna shoot us over here. You turn that machine gun around. He never did. Come to find out he had a bullet right through his throat, see, and I didn't know it. So that's enough of that. Yeah, I don't like to push it, that's tough.
- Jim: I understand.
- Larry: Yeah, I came home on leave. My mom said I was digging foxholes, and then my brother says, "Hey" -- this is in fall of '45, he said, "Come on Larry," he said, "we're gonna go pheasant hunting." Okay, but I had no weapon. I didn't want no weapon, nope. So he -- a pheasant flew up, he shot it and turned around, and I went home.
- Jim: The noise –
- Larry: That was it.
- Jim: The noise did it[??].
- Larry: Yeah.
- Jim: When you came in contact with the Japanese, how did you set up your perimeters to protect yourself from them coming in you at night?

Larry: No, they -- we were always in a circle.

Jim: You stayed in a circle?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: How were you connected? Did you connect by a rope or a line?

Larry: No, no, no, by foxholes all the way around.

Jim: How far apart were those foxholes? Twenty feet?

Larry: No, no, no, less than that.

Jim: So you could speak to one another if you –

Larry: Well, yeah, oh yeah.

Jim: So it was by voice really you kept in contact with the rest of them?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Tell me about the Japanese. Were they prone to try to come at you at night?

Larry: Oh, yeah. One thing that the Japanese did, is they -- when they started an attack they would always start hollerin', ya know.

Jim: To get the spirit up.

Larry: To get their spirit up to get going, so we knew where it was at. I tell ya, I never -- sometimes that daggone machine gun, the barrel was white. It was 250 rounds of ammunition in a case like – “brmm,” that was it. Just like Merrill said, “Don’t ask questions.”

Jim: Just shoot.

Larry: “Shoot first, then ask question.”

Jim: That was the rule?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: At the what --- at the first noise?

Larry: Anything that's in front of you.

Jim: Yeah, but I mean, what would set it off? A noise or a movement?

Larry: Yeah, or anything, anything.

Jim: Whatever it was.

Larry: Whatever it was.

Jim: Just start shooting.

Larry: Yeah, we'd just say, "Daggone it" -- all that noise down there. We said, "What the heck is going on?" till they start shooting. Come to find out it was one of them sacred cows, you know. So there ya go. You don't know what's out there. The jungle is, hey, that far away, sometimes it was less than that.

Jim: Would the Japanese come at you with knives or just guns?

Larry: No, no, rifles.

Jim: Rifles --

Larry: With bayonets.

Jim: Any trumpets or anything like that?

Larry: No.

Jim: No, they didn't use those. That's a Chinese trick. Yeah, they had that in Korea. We had a lot of noise with their trumpets. Their weapons -- you thought were pretty good? Japanese guns?

Larry: Oh yeah, they had good weapons. As a matter of fact I think they even tried to use our ammunition. A lot of times we had airlifts ya know, to drops, airdrops, and the wind would be just right or not right and pick up the chute, and we'd be outside of our perimeter. Say, what are ya gonna do?

Jim: But our ammunition was larger than theirs so it wouldn't fit in their guns.

Larry: No, that's right.

Jim: How 'bout when you are in the jungle like that? How'd ya eat? How did they get food to you? Just use K-rations?

Larry: K rations, come out of the air. Airdrops, that's what they were.

Jim: That was it all the time you were in the jungle was K-rations?

Larry: Three you got – well, we got -- every drop we had enough for three days rations. So we ate the four days rations, hopefully you got that.

Jim: I see. Water?

Larry: Water, well, it was pretty hard. That's why we use a lot of -- what do you call it— Atabrine.

Jim: That's for malaria, Atabrine is for malaria.

Larry: For malaria, yeah, but I mean the –

Jim: Where did you get your water? From the streams?

Larry: Well, streams, or else you got it from the bamboos. You know, the bamboos grow like this here, get your machete knife, held like this, turn the knife, and put your canteen under it there.

Jim: There was water in those bamboo trees?

Larry: In the canteen cup, yeah, in the joints of the bamboos.

Jim: They had a lot of water in them?

Larry: Oh yeah, they had quite a bit of water in there. The smaller the bamboo the better the water. The thicker ones like this were pretty stale down there, ya know. But we used a lot of chlorine, though. Holy Christ, we used tablets down there. We'd throw –

Jim: In the water?

Larry: Yeah, half a dozen tablets in there.

Jim: A lot of guys get sick?

Larry: Oh boy, yeah.

Jim: Malaria, or how about dysentery?

Larry: Oh yeah, I had the -- I was evacuated out with dysentery. I had amoebic dysentery, yeah, and I mean to tell you, I didn't know what was going on.

- Jim: It really dries you out, boy.
- Larry: Man, you drink and drink and drink water.
- Jim: It's how you can't keep up with it.
- Larry: Well, yeah, that's right, yeah. So that was mission number one. Mission number two --
- Jim: You mean they brought you back?
- Larry: No, no, they -- after we got the ammunition dump in Walabum --
- Jim: Yes.
- Larry: Okay --
- Jim: And then you stopped for a while?
- Larry: Yeah, we rested for a couple three days or whatever it was then took off again for another mission. I thought we were through with the mission because **[End of Tape 1, Side A]** your general says one mission.
- Jim: Right, and you had knocked their ammunition dump out so --
- Larry: Yeah, we thought[??], you know --
- Jim: Goin' home [laughs].
- Larry: Right. So we started going for another mission. Where was that? I didn't know. But it turned right around. The Japanese kind of half way surrounded our battalion. We were surrounded for, oh, what, three weeks or better by the Japanese. Yeah. And we stayed in that area for I guess about three weeks.
- Jim: What saved you from them overrunning you? Your machine guns?
- Larry: Well, we had our machine guns and then of course the Japanese couldn't get their supplies fast enough, ya know, to get us. So in the meantime we had our P-38s. They strafed, and all the elephants and anything they could see down there they blew the hell out of them.
- Jim: Elephants?
- Larry: Oh yeah, they use elephants and bring ammunition in and whatnot.

Jim: The Japanese did?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: You didn't?

Larry: No, no, unh unh. I was evacuated out on an elephant.

Jim: Oh, you were.

Larry: Yeah, I never was so seasick in my life [Jim laughs]. They were terrible, they were terrible. But anyway --

Jim: So the second mission?

Larry: The second mission, well, like I said, we were surrounded so we had the 1st Battalion and the 3rd Battalion working from different areas coming in towards us, ya know, trying to break through. The 1st didn't break through. The 3rd Battalion broke through and got us out.

Jim: In about three weeks?

Larry: Ah, it was about three weeks, maybe less than that. I don't know, but I know we buried[??] a lot and the perimeter that we were in, ya know, what are ya gonna do? We had to dig holes there for the doctors to go ahead and do their surgery and whatnot for patients. You know we had our own doctors and everything --

Jim: Yes, how did they -- what kind of an operating room did they have?

Larry: Well, just litters or not litters, boxes, or trees, or anything you can get a hold of, you know, to lay a patient down.

Jim: What did they use for anesthetics?

Larry: You know the truth, I don't know. I know that they give me a shot, and that kind of numbed me.

Jim: What were they doing?

Larry: Well, they were getting some shrapnel out of me.

Jim: Oh, you didn't tell me about getting hit by shrapnel.

Larry: Oh, yeah, I got hit by -- not only me, it was several others, treetop.

Jim: Was this in the second mission?

Larry: Yeah. Yeah, because that's when we were surrounded.

Jim: Right, you got a mortar?

Larry: [coughs] Artillery, Japanese artillery.

Jim: Oh, really?

Larry: Artillery come to -- they had them timed. So they'd blow up --

Jim: Oh, you [unintelligible] fuses.

Larry: In the treetops.

Jim: So where did you get hit?

Larry: I got hit in back, right here just above my cheeks and whatnot.

Jim: Superficial wounds with a lot of pieces of shrapnel.

Larry: Oh yeah, I still got some yet.

Jim: Oh, really?

Larry: Oh, yes. I went down to Great Lakes and had some taken out later, and they used that magnet, ya know, and I said, "You keep that magnet. [Jim laughs] I don't want any part of that." Oh, did it hurt. But like I say, it's there. Every once in awhile I scratch it, and what the heck is this, ya know. I feel a little sharp thing. Stop my wife and say, "Get a pair of tweezers and see what that is."

Jim: Little tiny thing, huh?

Larry: Little tiny thing, yeah.

Jim: I'll be darned. So while you were in the jungle they took most of the shrapnel out?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: They used local anesthetic on your skin?

Larry: Yeah. They were, like I say, used an awful lot of—what's that powder they used?

Jim: Sulfa.

Larry: Sulfa. They used an awful lot of sulfa. Yeah, and a bandage, you know, like I say.

Jim: But they didn't evacuate you?

Larry: No, no—

Jim: They couldn't really.

Larry: No, they couldn't, no. So they—when we finally broke through, you know, the two battalions ahead helped us out. Then we took off. You know, they started evacuating us out. I mean getting us out there to a rest area.

Jim: Where was that?

Larry: Oh, that was, I would say, roughly maybe a couple three days of hiking.

Jim: To your rest area?

Larry: To where it was, yeah, you just stop along the river. That's the only thing—hey, at least you could get a bath there or a shower or something, ya know, clean up, shave. Well, I didn't shave. I had five month beard, you know, hey.

Jim: But they still didn't have food there?

Larry: No, no, no food. All they had were K-rations.

Jim: Tell me again how the last day you came out (??).

Larry: Sure, we did, like I say, we was torn up (??), by god, but we was next to a river down there, and there's some fish in there. So we threw a grenade in there [Jim laughs] and blew up and got some fish, you know, hey.

Jim: [unintelligible] food.

Larry: Ya, we killed peacocks, you know, get your helmet.

Jim: How did you cook them?

- Larry: In the helmet, took your helmet off, your steel helmet off, you took that off. Build a fire, you put your meat, cut up meat in the water.
- Jim: In water.
- Larry: In water.
- Jim: And then really boiled it, right?
- Larry: And really boiled it, yeah. Seasoned it—we got them little—in Burma enough of them little red hot peppers like this, oh a couple three, and, oh, that will wake ya up.
- Jim: [laughs] They're growing then in the jungle?
- Larry: Yeah, yeah. I mean, like I say, there were bananas there, tangerines, ya know, if you were lucky, get in other stuff to eat. You get tired of C-rations, I mean K-rations.
- Jim: How much weight did you lose, Larry?
- Larry: Well, I'll tell ya, when I went into the service I weighed 167 pounds. When I come home I weighed 113 pounds.
- Jim: And that's in six months?
- Larry: No, that's in, I don't, lets see, I left home in 1942 and didn't get home till '45, three years. I was never home on leave or nothing.
- Jim: So after you had your rest period, then what?
- Larry: Then we reorganized, reorganized the whole structure. I mean the battalion we were in, we got replacements in and whatnot. They flew them in in some of those—then little L5 planes [Stinson L5 sentinel trainer plane], ya know? And one more mission, this is for Myitkyina.
- Jim: Ah, yes.
- Larry: That was a scary one there.
- Jim: That was a big mission.
- Larry: That was a big one. Well, we never hoofed so long, so far, and so fast—
- Jim: How'd you get—yeah, I was going to say, that was a long walk to there?

Larry: Oh, oh, oh! Well, actually come right down to it, according to the book when I read it that we made 2,700 miles.

Jim: When?

Larry: In that the tour that we had.

Jim: Oh, in the whole thing or—

Larry: Yeah, about 2,700 miles we hoofed.

Jim: For all three missions.

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Okay. So how long did it take to get to Myitkyina? Two or three days, four days?

Larry: No, no, no, it took longer than that. Oh, yeah. I vaguely remember three drops. We got drops every three days. We'd had ten days, maybe two weeks.

Jim: And how many were there of you at this time?

Larry: There weren't quite enough, enough of us there, you know?

Jim: About 2,000 instead of the 3,000?

Larry: Well—

Jim: Because you said you had some replacements.

Larry: Yeah, we had some replacements there but not many. They didn't get many replacements. No, what they did is just—instead of having six or seven machine guns in a platoon you only got four. So, hey, you know, the people are gone. So kind of shortened up everything.

Jim: Now, where did you meet Merrill?

Larry: Where did I meet—I met him in Walabum, the first mission.

Jim: I see.

Larry: Oh, yeah. Then I met him when we were surrounded, ya know? Once we got through I met Merrill again at the camp, I mean at the bivouac area we stayed at next to the river. He come over and shook hands with us saying

the dentist is busy twenty-four hours a day, pulling teeth and whatnot. Ya know, hey, people had problems, ya know. Malnutrition, boy, hey, I'll tell you, dysentery, ah! Boy, malaria, jeez.

Jim: What did they give you for the dysentery?

Larry: Nothing.

Jim: Malaria, of course, you had the Atabrine.

Larry: Atabrine, yeah. I came home, I was yellow as a canary.

Jim: Did your ears ring?

Larry: Oh!

Jim: You know what I mean?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: It's 10 percent of the people who took Atabrine had ringing in their ears.

Larry: Yup

Jim: You did have some?

Larry: Oh yeah, you better believe it. I had malaria twenty-seven times.

Jim: You mean attacks? One malaria, twenty-seven attacks.

Larry: Yeah, twenty-seven attacks.

Jim: And your last attack was how late after the war?

Larry: Oh boy, lets see, I retired in, ah, 1964, I retired in '64 and, uh, in '62.

Jim: You had your last attack?

Larry: Yeah, and I went over to—because I was stationed here in Madison. And I went over to Great Lakes for a physical, ya know, and I took the malaria shot or malaria treatment whatever they had there. So I took that shot I had—I was actually I had to spend overnight there, and I got three shots. Yeah, and then I couldn't drive home.

Jim: That was nineteen years after your first attack, your first time. From your first time in the jungle to your last attack, that's a long time.

Larry: Yeah, and I got a good hoof of the typhus fever, too, ya know?

Jim: Out of your back?

Larry: Oh, yeah.

Jim: It was a backache that was a characteristic symptom of that.

Larry: Yeah, yeah.

Jim: How long did that last? Not long?

Larry: About two weeks, yeah, about two weeks. I couldn't get out of bed, ya know, oh, my.

Jim: But how could you get along? You were in the jungle, weren't you?

Larry: Well, no, I didn't—that there is after I got out.

Jim: Oh, the typhus?

Larry: Yeah, I got the typhus. As a matter of fact when I got the anemic dysentery at Myitkyina, this is where I got it at.

Jim: I see.

Larry: After we captured Myitkyina—on the way we surrounded Myitkyina and everything, and I had the pleasure of going into some of the bunkers that the Japanese had there, ya know, and the British golf course. The British had a golf course there, see. But the Japanese had built bunkers in there, see, tons of them—my God, you go in there, there's hotels down there, the Japs. That must have been their home station or something, you know. I just got in to just look. Yeah, I got the hell out of there. [laughs] I didn't need anything there. Yeah. But when I got the dysentery, that there boy, they didn't hesitate one bit to evacuate me out.

Jim: Where to?

Larry: Ah, I got evacuated out to, ah, Ledo, Burma, just—that was a hospital there.

Jim: Oh, back to where you originally started.

Larry: Yeah, yeah.

- Jim: They had an American hospital?
- Larry: Oh yeah, they had American—yeah, it was a field hospital.
- Jim: Right. Now taking of Myitkyina, what was that like? You said it was difficult?
- Larry: Yeah, it was difficult because the monsoons were still on, see? And the river, the Irrawaddy River, you know, it's about the size of the Mississippi River ya know.
- Jim: How the hell did you get across that?
- Larry: Way up there, it's miles.
- Jim: How'd you get across that?
- Larry: No, we didn't got that far.
- Jim: Oh.
- Larry: No, we just—because we were on this side. The Japanese were trying to get across the river to Myitkyina again, but they never made it. My understanding was they ran into a Japanese gas dump or something. I guess they broke some barrels open and let the water run, figured they could let the gas run on the water, and then they took napalm bombin' 'em (??). So, I guess there was a Fourth of July there. I heard that.
- Jim: Bang?
- Larry: You better believe it. Even in my foxhole, even the damn dirt went like this here, you know.
- Jim: In the rain, did that deter the Japanese from attacking?
- Larry: No, no, no, they'd go right at it.
- Jim: That's what I wanted to ask you. That wouldn't—
- Larry: No, unh unh. That's one thing we had to be alert on because they, you know, hey—
- Jim: Even though the weather stinks that isn't going to make a difference?
- Larry: No.

- Jim: Well, that was kind of hard to keep your weapons dry in all this.
- Larry: Oh yeah, yeah. Like I say, if it was rainy you had a foxhole. You took your little shelter hat that you had, put it over the foxhole, see. That was your bed, and that was everything else there, ya know. You had—
- Jim: You kept your gun pointing out at the ready?
- Larry: You better believe it. It had holes in there, put your grenades in there and everything, you know, hey. Every once in awhile you hear something out there, “I ain’t going to shoot, I don’t think.” A guy had to pull a string on the—[unintelligible] behind a finger, ya know, at night, you know.
- Jim: Oh, I was just going to ask about that. They said we had voice control—
- Larry: Well, like I say, yeah, something out there, they pull two times, see. That’d indicate, hey, there’s somebody out there, ya know. So that passed on to all around the perimeter then, see.
- Jim: Then you did keep in contact with other than voice.
- Larry: Oh, yeah. Yeah, oh yeah.
- Jim: With a string?
- Larry: With a string. You had to do it that way because then—you couldn’t get out of that daggone foxhole if they could probably see you, you know. You never know, hey. Once in awhile the noise got a little harder and a little harder and whatever. You didn’t know what was out there. Somebody’d start shooting, somebody else start shooting—yeah, so me I’d go in there, and I says, “It’s closest to me. I can hear it here.” I’d take a pin and pull the pin out of the grenade and lobbed it out there, and all of a sudden it quit. No noise, but I’m not going to go out there and check.
- Jim: No, no reason to.
- Larry: No, no, no way. Unh unh. Anything in front of me, I don’t ask questions.
- Jim: Nighttime was really a major problem.
- Larry: Yeah, that was a major problem, yeah. Daytime, like they say, ya know, it was pretty quiet, ya know. They either hit you at sunrise or sundown.
- Jim: That was their favorite time?

- Larry: That was their favorite time unless they was pinned down or something that they wanted to get out, ya know, but during the day we had an awful lot of artillery.
- Jim: That was back of you, but when you were surrounded you didn't have any artillery with you, did you?
- Larry: No, no, we didn't have any artillery at all.
- Jim: You just had machine guns or your—
- Larry: The machine guns and 81 mortars, that's—and the 60 mortars, that's all we had. Yeah, there was nothing else.
- Jim: Did you fire those mortars?
- Larry: Yeah.
- Jim: Yeah. Everybody could use—
- Larry: Everybody could use any, fire machine gun, anything you could get over. You got air cooled, water cooled machine guns, your BARs—
- Jim: Whatever.
- Larry: M1s, yeah.
- Jim: What was the difference between the 81 and 61? Just in distance or firepower?
- Larry: Oh yeah, yeah.
- Jim: It's a bigger shell, of course.
- Larry: Oh yeah, you dropped one of those, hey, they'd take off. We used to fire the daggone 60 mortars. Instead of having the tripod you'd just hold on to the barrel itself because those Japanese were so close you couldn't get at them. You didn't know where it was at. You kinda—you had your plate, ya know, mortar plate there, and you had your barrel stuck into this thing, ya know, into kind of a socket affair, and you held your whatchacallem, your barrel. Okay, I drop it in there, and pretty close to us, ya know. You just don't pull it too far.
- Jim: Right.
- Larry: Yeah. You had to use your own judgment.

Jim: Everyone was sort of on their own, weren't they?

Larry: You better believe it. Everybody is watching out for everybody else. As soon as the battle or whatever attack was over with right away, ya know, hey, you okay? So you're okay, everybody okay, ya know? That made my day because boy, I tell ya, my best friends.

Jim: How would you string this alone? How did you get that done?

Larry: Well, actually what it was, was a fishline.

Jim: I see, a long, long fishing line that would go around the whole perimeter?

Larry: Well, no, you got strings. You know, you dug your foxholes out so many feet apart, you know. In other words you got probably fifty feet of string or something like that. You carried it with you, though. Hey, you rolled it up during the day, ya know, put it in your pocket. At night, 'cause I was right-handed so I usually—everything was rolled up to inside, see.

Jim: You could still use your weapon, then.

Larry: Oh, yeah.

Jim: It wouldn't interfere with that.

Larry: Yeah, yeah, you had enough slack there to maneuver.

Jim: So then taking Myitkyina was that just, just an assault, a regular assault, and you just—they were all lined up in this town, and then you just went house, to house door to door?

Larry: No, no, no, there was no houses there, no doors, nothing. They—

Jim: So the Air Force—

Larry: The Air Force kind of—they done the trick.

Jim: Softened it up, right.

Larry: Yeah, they softened it up, yeah.

Jim: And so you then just moved in on them.

Larry: Yeah, moved it. Yeah, we moved in on 'em, and everything was over with. Finally the radio, I mean they announced that the mission is

completed. So of course I went to—the first thing you do is go to the dispensary, ya know. And they called ya out, ya know, “Hey, Larry, blah, blah, blah, so and so.” The wounded went out first. And anyone that was wounded got them out first. And we flew out of there in C-46s.

Jim: Was it before or after you got the dysentery?

Larry: After I got the dysentery. Yeah, they flew us out. Yeah, flew the “hump” again.

Jim: Then they sent you back to Ledo?

Larry: To Ledo, yeah.

Jim: And how long were you in that hospital there?

Larry: I wasn't there too long. No, I was not there too long because what happened there is that even though when I got wounded, ya know, I got shrapnel in one, I had stitches in there or whatever it was, ya know. But still I could walk, but from Ledo they took us into the 28th General Hospital in Karachi India. See, it's Karachi India. And that was when they got hot, 127 degrees. They were looking on my back over here to make sure everything was okay.

Jim: Oh, yeah.

Larry: But, you know—

Jim: But you were pretty well healed from that.

Larry: I was pretty well healed so they—oh, I had a couple, three spots that had pretty good gashes like this here that they had to cut open again to make sure, you know, but they took and reseeded it and everything.

Jim: Took some more metal out.

Larry: Yeah, and to top it all off it was so stinking hot over there that I broke out with a damn (??) heat rash. Then the heat rash they had to bandage, it got so hot that all my stitches popped. [laughs] Oh boy, it sounded like, you know, popcorn. It sunk in—I had forty some stitches in my back when they'd done that. Well, then from there then on, hey, USA, they started getting us ready to go back. I was the second, I was the third load out of there because we flew.

Jim: They break up the Raiders [Merrill's Marauders were also known as Merrill's Raiders] then after?

- Larry: Oh yeah, yeah.
- Jim: That was the end of the Raiders really?
- Larry: Yeah, then we reorganized the Raiders after we got back to the States at Hot Springs, Arkansas.
- Jim: The war was over or not?
- Larry: No, no, the war was still on yet. Oh yeah, this was in '45. We stayed in a hotel there for about ten days if not longer. But we lived high on the hog there. Oh boy, we got paid off, you know. Hey, we didn't know money—
- Jim: It's all that money you accumulated, right?
- Larry: Yeah, oh, I had—and to top it all off they pay you in cash, you know, and I thought, "What the hey? How am I going to—here, cash?" So I tried to get checks and whatnot, ya know, tryin' to get stuff put away. Took some money with me, ya know, the personal checks that I had, not the personal checks but the draft checks, ya know, that when I got home—because from Hot Springs, Arkansas they sent us on leave, thirty day leave. Everybody had a thirty day leave. They dispersed us, ya know. They got trains, I got a train out of Hot Springs, Arkansas, went to Minneapolis, ya know. Not only myself, there was a bunch more, people from Pennsylvania, from all over, ya know. So while I was on a train, I was about six miles, six hours from Minneapolis or Saint Paul. The train took us to Saint Paul, I started running a fever. I knew exactly what was wrong. So they didn't hesitate one bit. They, ah—
- Jim: That was an attack of malaria
- Larry: Yeah. So they took me out of there. I had an ambulance out there, GI ambulance come and pick me up at the train station, took me into the VA Hospital over in, ah—
- Jim: Saint Paul.
- Larry: Saint Paul, yeah. I was in there, what, ten days. They wouldn't let you out until your blood was negative, positive, whatever it was, ya know. Okay, then they sent you home again, see. So while I was at home for thirty days I got malaria twice. I was ready to get out the next morning, and I figured, oh boy, this is [sounds of hands rubbing together] going to be it. You know, they say, oh—next day, that son of a gun, he was—I don't feel good. I ache all over, you know, I had a relapse. So I spent two weeks in a hospital in Saint Cloud, Minnesota at the VA.

- Jim: So then you were discharged shortly thereafter?
- Larry: Yeah, they discharged me, and the VA made arrangements—for a week I had to extend my leave. See, because they gave us thirty days leave. See, no charge to the leave. If you got thirty days, this is your own. I spent three almost weeks in the hospital.
- Jim: But so you never went back to the outfit? You were discharged from the hospital?
- Larry: Then I went back, then I went back to Hot Springs. Went back to Hot Springs, and that's where we got reassigned. I got reassigned to Omaha, Nebraska. I was in the Fifth Army Headquarters, and I was a driver for the general.
- Jim: You mean you sort of finished your career there?
- Larry: Well, yeah from there then, like I say, from then on, you know, hey—
- Jim: Piece of cake.
- Larry: Piece of cake then, yeah. Well, like I say, I was in Europe two tours. I had to send (??) my family there in Europe for two years.
- Jim: Wait a minute. You're goin' to Europe?
- Larry: Yeah.
- Jim: How did you—you stay in the Army?
- Larry: I stayed, yeah, I retired from the service.
- Jim: Oh, so after Omaha you weren't getting out of the service.
- Larry: No, no, no, I—
- Jim: You signed up for a regular (??).
- Larry: Yeah, because I tell you what happened there is I had a doctor. I will never forget him as long as I live, a little sawed off guy about this tall. His name Colonel Tabor (??), a full colonel, a doctor. I was his patient. One thing led to another, ya know, and then we kind of shot the breeze. I told 'em, ah, I said, "I don't know, myself I wanted to be a farmer, dairy farmer." That's kids, ya know, of course kids, you know. He says, "Larry," he said, "I'm going to give you my honest opinion. I think, and

I'll help you out," that's what colonel told me, "I'll help you out." He said, "Number one," he said, "You're not fit for combat anymore." He said, "I'll put it in your record that you will be a"—what did he call it now? General duty, you know, in garrison. So that's what I did I—he said, "You reenlist." I reenlisted for three years or enlisted for three years garrison duty, and I was stationed in Omaha for three years. But then Fort Omaha closed up, see, so then I had to go someplace else. So I went to the disciplinary barracks in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Jim: You were a staff sergeant then?

Larry: Yeah, and I stayed there till, let's see— I applied for school is what I did. And they didn't have the school in Milwaukee so I had the school in Baltimore, Maryland. I went to the CIA school.

Jim: I see, in Baltimore?

Larry: Yeah, into Baltimore, yeah.

Jim: How long a course was that?

Larry: Ah, it was thirteen months.

Jim: What were they teaching you there?

Larry: Well, like I say primarily it would be black market, you know?

Jim: Oh.

Larry: Yeah, black market and you name it. Then I didn't do any investigation like this at all, you know, I mean as far GI's. They're all over the place ya know? I'd rather not discuss that. That still that kind of bothers me, you know.

Jim: Which part bothers you?

Larry: Well, what we had done to the guys, ya know, that we caught.

Jim: Oh, your, that's your primary mission there was to pick up guys who were dealing in the black market?

Larry: Black market, yeah.

Jim: Where would you find these guys? Where—in the United States or in Europe?

- Larry: In Europe.
- Jim: They sent you to Europe?
- Larry: Oh, yeah.
- Jim: Where did they send you?
- Jim: Well, the first time I went to there I went to Kaiserslautern, Landstuhl, Germany.
- Larry: And what was year was this?
- Jim: I was assigned to the, ah, 3rd General Hospital there. I was assigned to the headquarters of Landstuhl and the narcotics division, but I was attached to the 3rd General Hospital, see.
- Larry: What year was that?
- Jim: 1950's, early '50s. I stayed there for three years, came back home, went back to Texas, stayed there for three years. I was assigned to an experimental medical detachment that was experimenting airdrops and medical supplies there for three years. And from there again I went back to Europe. So we went back for three more years. I had the family included, ya know. We went there, and I was there with—I was stationed in Frankfurt, Germany. I was stationed at headquarters Frankfurt, and they made me the logistical officer for all the embassies in Europe. You know, make sure that everything was functioning, ya know. I was primarily in the furniture business, not furniture but, you know because embassies had families there, too, see. So to make sure everybody's—
- Jim: When you're dealing with this black market how did you pick these guys up? I mean how did you find out about 'em? People reported to you—
- Larry: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Jim: That there was something going on?
- Larry: Yeah, that there like—I'll give you one incident, though, but that was my first one and my last one because I darn near got killed. But anyway to make a long story short. Had a GI that married a German girl, okay? She came to the States, and she had a son. Well she [unintelligible] him, but she had a boy that was born in Germany there not by the husband that she married, and, ah, he **[End of Tape 1, Side B]** took and told his mom, he said, "I'm gonna enlist in the Army," the United States Army. I guess he was a citizen, I don't know. And he done that, took his basic training,

wherever he did and come to find out in—well, then they needed interpreters, American interpreters in Germany. So he went to Europe to be an interpreter. Okay, well, come to find out just off the cuff, he, this German guy, was selling, got hooked up with some Germans and selling ID cards. You know, pretendin' a regular GI ID cards. And the Germans are so—you can buy a uniform anyplace.

Jim: Oh, really?

Larry: Oh, yeah, they make them, the Germans, ya know? You take the big German, big shots, you know, whatever it is, they dress up in an uniform, they got an ID card, they go into the various caserns [barracks] that they have on base you know? A military base, our military bases, which is classified. Get all the information, and this guy was selling the ID cards. Finally got him, I got him in Nancy, France, from Frankfurt, Germany to Nancy, France. And, uh, he knew he was gonna get caught, I think. So we were out there, me and my buddy was out in the car one side watching in the hotel—he was in the hotel there, see. We knew who he was, had pictures of him and everything, and another car or whatever it was—all German cars we had, see, you know, French cars, and, uh, I was the driver of the car. We got a call on the radio that says, “Okay, Larry,” he says, “you slide over a block and a half.” So, okay, I first of all, you know, I reach in my pocket to get the key—never had the keys in the car because you don't know what'd happen—got in like this here, get the keys out, come with a bullet right through the damn windshield. If I'd a been like this here, I'd a got it.

Jim: Your poor head (??).

Larry: Hey, that was it. I said to myself, “Hey, I been shot at before, hit at and everything else, but this is it. I don't want any part of this.” I got out of there.

Jim: They spotted you.

Larry: They spotted us, and, boy, I tell you one thing, what, within an hour and a half I was at damn airport. They flew us out, flew me out and my buddy, yeah. But they got him.

Jim: They did?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: How did you pick him up? I mean, how did you find out it was—

- Larry: Well, there was other people there. They were more FBI and whatnot. They were more involved in there, see, but we were primarily on the military side, you know.
- Jim: Ah, yeah. So then where did your career end?
- Larry: My career ended right here in Madison.
- Jim: Oh, really?
- Larry: At the ROTC, I was in logistics at the ROTC here.
- Jim: For how many years?
- Larry: Ah, when I stopped in, when we came back from overseas I stopped in the Pentagon, 'cause I had friends over there, and I go in there and I see generals over there, a little office, ya know. Hey, I had a bigger office than that, and I was just [Jim laughs] only a sergeant, ya know. But anyway, I talked to Murphy, and then Murphy says, "Yeah," he says, "Larry," he said, "we'll assign you to Fifth Army Headquarters in Minneapolis but your duty will be in Madison, Wisconsin, ROTC." So, okay. So here I was for just about two years. He told me a three year tour, see? So I was working on where I could go ahead and retire at twenty-five years, and all of a sudden the MOS [Military Occupation Specialties] that I had they needed a logistical guy in Saigon [?] in Korea [Vietnam?], ya know, and I said, "Hey, you know what." I didn't need anything (??) in Korea. "And I'll tell ya what, Murphy," I said, "I got my hat off now." So I milked them for three months, and I get that extra addition of 2.5 percent and I retired from here. And I had kids in college and [unintelligible], but hey, I'm on my best pay (??).
- Jim: That's a long tour, long tour of duty.
- Larry: Yeah.
- Jim: So what are your regrets of your twenty-five years?
- Larry: Well, I have no--the only regrets I have is I can't that daggone stuff out of my system yet. Ya know, still kind of bugs me, ya know. And this--well, you know, all that violence you got on TV, all them damn movies, you know. I don't watch any war movies.
- Jim: You don't watch that stuff? You can't watch that stuff?
- Larry: No, no, I've got a tape of Merrill's Marauders, you know, a regular tape of the movie called *Merrill's Marauders*. And my wife found it

[unintelligible]. I had it in the closet or somewhere my wife was cleaning up. She says, "Here. Here's your movie. Why don't you go ahead and put it on?", ya know. Then I kind of sat there wondering--right away the wheels start turning. So I said, "Well, I'll put it on." So I put the daggone thing on. In three minutes I shut it off. And I took the daggone thing out, I said, "Vi [Viola] I'm gonna burn this damn thing." I said, "I can't hack this." So I said, "Well," well, Vi says, "I'll tell ya what, why don't you go ahead and I'll ask the kids, if any of the kids want it." So one of my sons have got it. So I said, "Well, you go ahead and show it to the grandkids. I don't want to see it anymore." So--

Jim: Just too unpleasant?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: But you're never in--so that's the main reason you didn't want ever to keep in contact with any of the folks that were in the service or in the jungle with you?

Larry: No, no, no, because like I say, it brings you back, it brings you memories, and, boy, it hurts. It hurts. I'll tell you I could cry, you know, I feel that bad.

Jim: Yes, I understand. You feel bad because of the friends you lost mostly?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Is that the biggest?

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Yeah, yeah.

Larry: Because when you shake hands with somebody a friend of yours, you take care of me and I'll take care of you, and then you can't shake hands. There's nobody there, you know. What the hell happened?

Jim: I suppose you have some quit feeling with that, too?

Larry: Oh, yeah.

Jim: As though maybe I could have done something?

Larry: Yeah, that's right, even though that I was the sergeant, that I was outrankin' some probably chewed their ass out, whatever it is. But, hey, wait a minute, you know, the job has got to be done.

Jim: Well, in the jungle like you say, it didn't matter what your rank was.

Larry: No, that's right.

Jim: You didn't take--nobody, none of the officers wore any--

Larry: No, no, the only thing you had was just the ID card, I mean you had dog tags. That's it. Yeah, and your machine stock (??).

Jim: Yeah, I know it.

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Well, I think we've sort of run the end here. I think we've got almost-- unless you have something else to offer?

Larry: No, I don't. That would probably be--but I don't want to talk about it. I don't know. I don't. I'll be honest with you.

Jim: Sure, your choice, not mine.

Larry: No, I--

Jim: We're just trying to learn, try to get as much of your experience as we can on record, you see.

Larry: Did you--have you anybody else from Merrill's Marauders that you had?

Jim: Yes, a guy named Bay. He was an officer. He was a major.

Larry: I wonder what--

Jim: He went on to the State Department and was in Vietnam for several years afterwards.

Larry: Huh, Bay?

Jim: Yeah, he's a Madison guy.

Larry: A Madison guy? Is he around here yet?

Jim: No, he just moved down to South America. He married a South American girl. Yeah, but he was here for several years.

Larry: I wonder what the--

Jim: I can't tell you--I mean, I don't have it on paper. I have it on--I have the tape of his.

Larry: Yeah.

Jim: Yeah.

Larry: His might be, this is my personal experience now, I'm giving you right now, I'm giving you the rock bottom truth.

Jim: That's what we want.

Larry: That's what happened to me.

Jim: That's just exactly what--we don't want a bigger view--

Larry: No, no, no I--

Jim: Than that. We can get that out of books, ya see.

Larry: No, no, I didn't exaggerate nothing.

Jim: Good.

Larry: Because I tell ya what, if I started exaggerating I'd [unintelligible]. Where's the nut house over here? [Jim laughs] So--

Jim: Well, I think that's fine. Good, thank you.

Larry: You're entirely welcome, and you go ahead--uniform there--you got that patch on there--that says--

[End of Interview]