

**Theodore Lucas  
Veteran**

**Philip Leonard  
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on July 31st, 2003  
Hoosick Falls Historical Society,  
Hoosick Falls, New York**

**Q:** This is part of our veteran service and today we have someone with us. What's your name please?

**TL:** Ted Lucas

**Q:** And where do you live ted?

**TL:** Over on Clay Hill, on Eldridge Street.

**Q:** Were you born in Hoosick Falls? Did you live here all your life?

**TL:** For all my life! I was born in March of 1928 and besides leaving the country for World War 2, I've lived here all my life.

**Q:** Can you tell us a little about what you did before you went into the service? Where you graduated, where you went to school, and so forth...

**TL:** I graduated in June of 1942 from Hoosick Falls High. The week before graduation I went down to the Watervliet Arsenal to apply because they were screaming for help, machine operators, with the war coming on. While going through I saw they had a defense course and there were several of the older men working the arsenal. After school hours they were giving machine training and machine operating training. Which was great and I love doing anything with my hands anyway. So I did that. Then I went down to Watervliet to apply for a job there. They wanted to know my history and what I know. I was only 18 years old so I didn't know too much. They're real interested in what I'm telling them. It was the Friday before graduation and they said be here Monday morning 8 o'clock sharp. I said Monday I graduate from high school and I'd like to participate in it so I don't miss it. So they said make sure you're here Tuesday morning at 8 o'clock. I said okay I'll be there and sure enough graduation night everybody was celebrating a little bit, trying to have a good time. I had to go home and go to bed so I can get up at 6 o'clock the next morning and go to work. So I did and I worked there for about a year. And then of course my draft number came up and they deferred me for about 3 months and the arsenal didn't want to let anyone go who was doing they're work.

**Q:** A lot of people I interviewed worked there and have the same story

**TL:** After 3 months I was drafted in January of 1943. Anyway we went to the induction center and off to boot camp in Miami Beach, Florida.

**Q:** Air force?

**TL:** Yes that's where they're basic training was. The civilians moved out and the civilians moved in without touching any of the buildings of surroundings. You wouldn't believe it. All these hotels. Plush carpets an inch deep. Everything is gleaming, glatering, glass, and shiny silver. I remember my first letter home. Hey if this is the service, I don't know if I'm coming back home or not.

**Q:** How long were you in Miami?

**TL:** Miami was just a good start. Right on the Beach. Calisthenics, you're right on the beach. Swimming, along with all of the rest of the people just below us. 15 and Collins right on the corner I'll never forget the hotel. Anyways, from there we went to Salt Lake City Utah in the desert. The next letter was that I changed my mind I guess maybe I will come back.

**Q:** Salt Lake City, what were you doing there?

**TL:** It was just all part of the assembling of groups that were needed. They were building air groups and fighter groups in the air force. They probably read that I worked at the arsenal a year prior to going in. We want him in ordinance. So that's probably how I got in to the air force.

**Q:** So what happened after Salt Lake City?

**TL:** After Salt Lake City we went to Dyersburg, Tennessee that was a B17 outfit training there. From there we went to Alamogordo, New Mexico. That was a B24 outfit so it looked like we were going to end up with 24's. We had to learn everything. The whole procedures. The munitions, the bombs, everything the air force needs to function.

**Q:** So you load the planes?

**TL:** With bombs, ammunition, and 50 caliber machine guns. It was our duties to have those planes ready for takeoff the next morning at daylight. So most of our work was at night.

**Q:** So you're in the United States getting with these bomb groups, and then what happened?

**TL:** From there, we assembled and we headed for Newport, Rhode Island to ship out overseas. That was the first of December 1943. All the crossings had to be done in convoy. Because the German submarines were still pretty active in the Atlantic and along the whole coast. That's where we shipped cruisers and destroyers. Escorting us. There was one casualty. As we came closer to the African Coast we lost one ship. There

was a monstrous convoy, it was so big. Word got around that one ship was lost and we said I hope god it's not number 2 we're on. We made it safely.

**Q:** Where did you guys land?

**TL:** We landed in Bari, Italy on the Asiatic side. The Germans had just bombed a munition ship that was in that port the week before we landed. So there was some espionage work somewhere. How did they know what ship out of all of them that were coming in was the munition. When it blew it just annihilated the whole harbor

**Q:** (Unclear name) was on that ship bringing in munition to Bari.

**TL:** Anyways, we went back New Year's Eve, December 31st. It was about the middle of the afternoon, we unload, and they made a temporary dock just to get us off that thing. To get us to whatever base were going to be assigned to. In fact, we were assigned to a big olive orchard and there wasn't much of a base there. But the corps of engineers were already ahead of us. They were building airstrips and the bunkers for the planes. It was a systematic affair that really worked. I mean there was no monkeying around.

**Q:** So this was real business?

**TL:** It was real business. They made every hour count.

**Q:** So they got the field ready and what kind of planes flew out of there?

**TL:** B24's. That's what we ended up with in Alamogordo. So that's what we were going to be assigned to.

**Q:** So this was after Anzio so the Germans were pushed up not too far.

**TL:** Yeah not too far behind. I don't know whether they were still in Rome or being pushed out of Rome.

**Q:** Okay, now you stayed there at the same base for a while loading planes?

**TL:** We were there for the duration. We were anchored there, our base grew bigger as more planes were being built. Rosie the Riveter was really over here working overtime.

**Q:** They were making a real big airfield there.

**TL:** Everything kept expanding as much as possible. So our group grew and our squadrons increased. Along with a number of planes. We were in a position where we were in Romania, the oil fields. We were close, relatively close, to the bombers. We could reach a whole bunch of targets. In Germany, in Munich, the plains. All the essential places that Hitler needed to keep his war machine.

**Q:** And what you did when the planes came back you would get them all ready for the next day from an ordinance point of view.

**TL:** The nice part of that is we could go to early chow and get an early supper because we had to work through the night.

**Q:** How long would it take you take a plane and get it so it was ready to go with bombs and munition.

**TL:** Everyone of course was different. It depended on the mission or what size bombs they needed. 100 pounds, 250, 500.

**Q:** You'd get an order when you come out?

**TL:** Oh yeah we'd have an order when we'd come out and when we went on the field.

**Q:** And you'd get those planes ready for whatever type of bombing they were doing?

**TL:** When we first started we had to work in the dark. German planes did fly over and...

**Q:** Strafe run?

**TL:** Yes on our field. They knew where we were because they were building a mess hall for us so we didn't have to eat under the olive tree on our lap. We'd listen to Axis Ally every day. She played the best music (Unclear name of Musician), and Benny Goodman all the good stuff. She played everything we wanted to hear! And they thought they were demoralizing us and it was making us feel better. That's what we'd go home and listen too. From there they built a mess hall and one day she came out and said you guys in the 450 don't sleep too soundly at night. We know about your new mess hall being built. And just maybe we'll do something about it. It did make some of the guys weary but a few days after that an alarm went off it was an air attack. We heard them but they weren't over the field they we just far enough away. Maybe they had another target. Assigned to them and it wasn't us.

**Q:** Yeah right.

**TL:** So you did that you were in that base right through the time you were shipped home?

**Q:** Yes we were there when President Roosevelt died. That was sometime in April 1945. We had a lot of Italian civilians there working on our base. In the southern part of Italy, our base was in Toronto, Italy and its any instep of the boot so you can't get much further south. In fact the Northern part of the country, consider that Africa. They were the undesired or whatever. Anyway they were all good people and the day that word got around oh my god you think it was their own parents, their own father's that died or something. They just come right out and wept over it because they knew that what he's doing is saving their country and all the rest of them.

**Q:** That's interesting. Now its Roosevelt died then how long the war ended after that.

**TL:** The war ended. We heard about it May the 6th and I don't think it was given out until either the 7th or the 8th officially. We knew it because everything Germany had finally surrendered. So we knew it was over for us. It was like the 6th. Now it's all done, we don't have to wade around in the mud and out there in the bomb dumps and all the rest of that work that went on.

**Q:** Now you're getting points to come home.

**TL:** Yeah, well we didn't expect to come home as quick as we did. Maybe in a month or two because we'd probably have to disassemble the whole field or part of it, or something. The 14th of May that's 8 days after it was over, we were headed to chow like we did all the time. 11:30 in the morning, nothing else to do. We watched the orderly running out of the office. Okay everybody in the 720th bomb group here. Back to your barracks. Well, we didn't have barracks but I had a little house built. We built it ourselves, me and another guy. Back to your barracks anyway. We're leaving. It's 11:30 and the planes are going to be here at 1 o'clock to pick us up to fly us to Naples. The U.S.S. America which was converted to a troop ship. That's the big boy American airliner. And trucks will be ready there off of the fields in Naples. Down to the docks, and onto the ship. And we left the pier at 5 o'clock that same afternoon

**Q:** That same afternoon?

**TL:** That same afternoon as long as some service it never moved anything like that. It was always hurry up and wait.

**Q:** Well gee, within a day you were on your way home?

**TL:** Oh yeah, less! From 11:30 that morning to (unclear) all went in the air. And says oh, yeah everybody is happy to help pack their toothbrush.

**Q:** How long were you overseas?

**TL:** Well, from December of 1943 to May of 1945

**Q:** Well that's quite long

**TL:** Well yea it was quite long

**Q:** So you took on for home?

**TL:** Yeah, they took off for home it as 11,000 of us on that ship.

**Q:** You took off for home, 11,000 men on that ship.

**TL:** Yeah we're on our way home. It took us 30 days to cross over because you can only go as fast as the slowest ship in the convoy. And everything was slow. So now they can takeoff on its own 5 days. 5 days were back at the Newport News in Virginia. That's where we left from. We're back there but then we find out why we were rushed. We were

picked. They gave us a 10 day furlough and we were going back to a B29 base. Work there for a couple of weeks to acclimate ourselves.

**Q:** They're not going to send you to the Pacific?

**TL:** Yeah well, yeah we're headed back for the Pacific, Whoopee! Well it has to be done so we're ready to go. We get out to Pueblo, Colorado that was the B29 base. We got there and we were like lost souls nobody really knew what to do. We got into barracks and we down for a couple days, we were on the field, looking over most of it. But then all of the sudden everything came to a screeching haul. What do we do? Do anything you want to do, go to town... just come back don't take off. They already got word that the atomic bomb was dropped. It was actually built in Alamogordo where we were based we knew it was going on in the white sands. We left there in November of 42 and there was activity happening in the white sands. We said what are they doing out there there's nothing but just mounds and mounds of white sand. But that's where they were testing.

**Q:** The bomb was dropped, the war was over September 2nd, they signed the peace thing on September 2nd in Missouri.

**TL:** It was over August 26th or something like that

**Q:** That's when they surrendered but the signing took place on September 2nd. We had 4 guys in Missouri from Hoosick Falls. Alright, what else.

**TL:** Well, we had a heck of a time. This is in June of 45, we had nothing to do. If our pay only caught up to us we would've had more fun. All this rushing around. They said they'd catch up to us.

**Q:** So when did you get discharged then.

**TL:** We didn't get discharged until 2 weeks after the war. About the 10th of September.

**Q:** You were discharged from the service?

**TL:** We were discharged. We had to come back to our induction center. It was Dick's.

**Q:** So you came back, got discharged, and off you went to Hoosick Falls. What happened to you after you got home to Hoosick Falls?

**TL:** I got back here, now I got to look to settle down and be a civilian again. The war had just ended there wasn't much going on. In fact all the munitions and all the military work just came to a screeching haul. After a year I said I'll go to (Unclear) its right in my backyard. I lived on Oakley Avenue at that time. At least it's close by until I find out what's what. Or what I'd like to do. I was there for a little over a year then I said this isn't for me I have to look further. So anyway, in the meantime M.D. Kincaid was there. So I went to see him and they were ready to take on anyone that had...

**Q:** Quite a few guys mentioned that they went to work for Kincaid.

**TL:** There was 13 of us working there and that was the high mark because he was the only plumber left that was active in the village.

**Q:** So you worked for him and...

**TL:** I worked for him for 10 years and things were not progressing very well or fast. Maybe I should try it on my own and go at it myself. Alone wasn't too kid so there was a little guy, Louie, there he worked for Kincaid around the same time I was. He was into the oil burners and plumbing and I had everything else and we went at it.

**Q:** And that's what you did until you retired?

**TL:** And that's what I did until I retired.

**Q:** You got married when?

**TL:** I got married on May 6th, 1950. So our anniversary is coming up this year.

**Q:** So you've been married 50 years?

**TL:** Yeah I always said if I got married on an even number, a half of a century, I'll never have to count back how long.

**Q:** How many children did you have Ted?

**TL:** Girl was first, then 3 boys, best kids in the world. Never an ounce of problem or trouble or anything. Till this day if anything's going on they're right there to help.

**Q:** Real good family that's what counts.

**TL:** It would've been easier if I had the choice of picking them.

**Q:** That's great, now is there anything else you'd like to say about the service or about Hoosick falls before we call this a take?

**TL:** What could I say here about Hoosick Falls? I've lived here all my life. I've always worked for the village and always knew what was going on. And I tried to work for the people in the village. I was on the village board for a dozen years. I'd always try to swing anything beneficial to John **Q:** Public. The taxpayer.

**Q:** We've got a good picture of your life and we thank you very much for coming it was a great story.

**TL:** You're welcome!

**Q:** Thanks again!