

CPL. LLOYD AND VIRGINIA EMERSON and their infant daughter Penny when he was stationed at the Madison, Ind. His wife was able to be with him at that time and their daughter was born there. The 1937 State Champion wrestling team (below) at Decatur Community High School included

(front, from left) Ray Lohofener, Bob Emerson, Tommy Townsend, Elden Cody (holding trophy), Pete Everist, Lloyd Emerson and James Vavroch, and (back row) Coach Bill Huey, James Montgomery, Ray Garver, Fred Helmkamp, Floyd Brown, Virgil Olson and Clyde Vernon.

World War II remembered by serviceman

By MARY LOU OLSON
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When those serving in the military, as well as veterans and their loved ones across the nation observe Veterans Day on Thursday, Lloyd Emerson, a veteran of World War II and one of those from "The Greatest Generation" will be among them.

He was drafted and entered the Army Air Corps on Sept. 23, 1942, at Fort Leavenworth and was sent to Shepherd Air Field in Wichita Falls, Texas, for basic training.

"I was supposed to be a gunner, but my vision was not good enough, so I received training in airplane and engine mechanics for aircraft," he said.

"My basic training class was leaving for Africa when I was one of two selected to be alternates, but we were not needed before the unit shipped out."

He was then sent with 17 strangers to Eglin Field near Pensacola, Fla., and they arrived to find six B-26 airplanes but no pilots and no gunners, so he spent two weeks pre-flighting the planes and waiting until time to do it again.

"I was then selected as one of 10 from different outfits to go to Madison, Ind., where a testing base was set up. There were only 50 to 55 military personnel, but 5,000 to 6,000 civilians who were testing guns and ammunition at this base. The civilians were mostly women and older men who fired samples of all guns and ammunition being used in the war, from pistols to a 16-inch Coast Guard guns.

"My military group had three airplanes: a B-25, an A-20 and a Piper Cub. We tested one bomb out of each boxcar load before they were shipped overseas. I saw very few bombs that did not perform as specified. My job was to get the airplanes prepared before taking off and checking them when they

returned from each flight.

"Frag bombs were dropped at 100 feet while traveling 350 miles per hour to keep from being hit by shrapnel."

They also tested 25-pound bombs and 500 pound bombs that were dropped at 3500 feet. The 500-pound bombs could be set to go off at impact or at any height up to 1000 feet off the ground and that was top secret knowledge at the time.

"Slicks were bombs used by the Navy to mark a spot in water where a plane went down. The slick bombs were dropped in a lake by Fort Wayne and two hours later the plane returned to see if the correct color and size of a slick could be seen. The slicks were usually red or green.

"I was allowed to ride along on the bombing runs and got an extra \$10 a month pay if I rode along 10 hours a month. I always made sure to get in my 10 hours as I had a wife and child to support," he noted.

While there, a top secret modified B-29 airplane was brought in by Captain Sweeney and he said that he and the other crew members were allowed to view it. They noted a large bomb bay and no bomb racks, but they were not told what the plane was going to do.

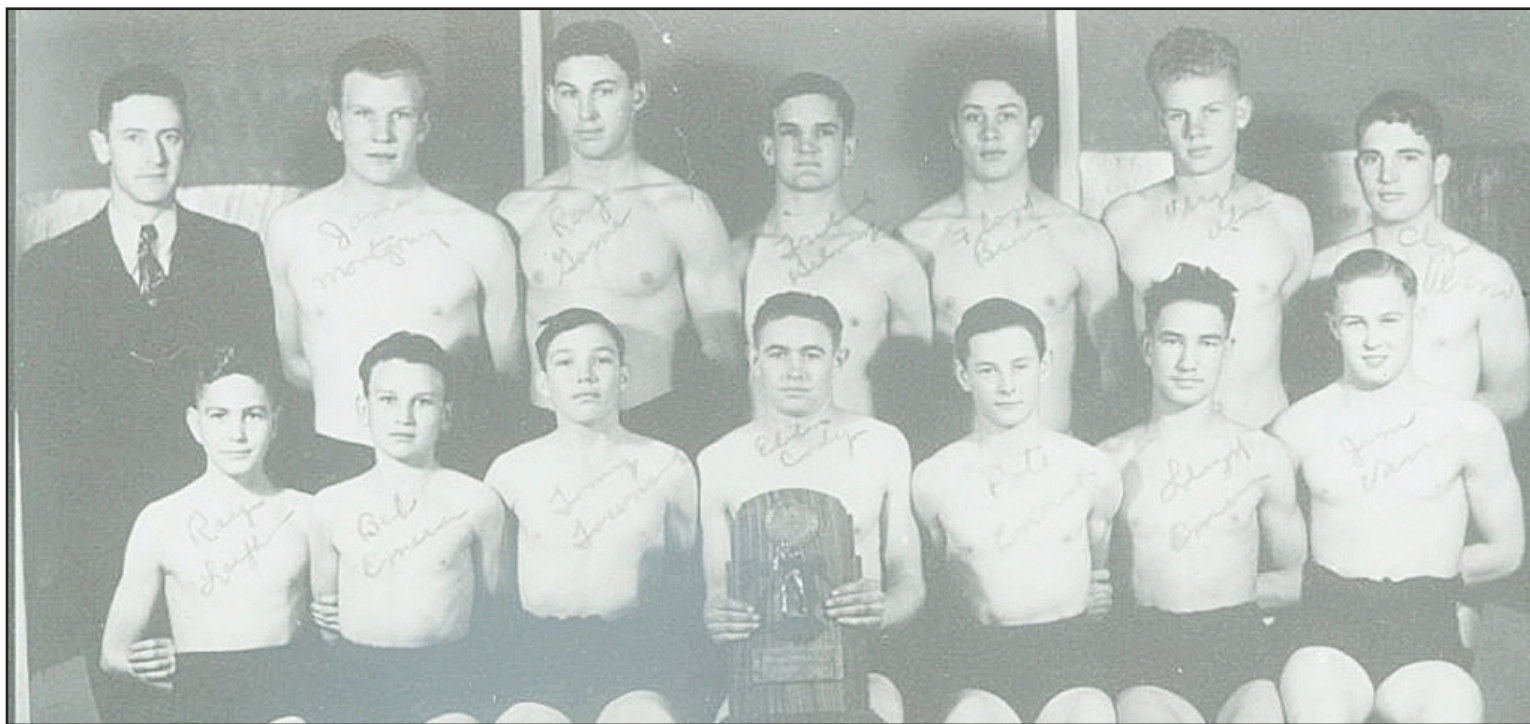
"After the war, I found out that it was one of those which dropped atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Captain Sweeney had been the head navigator on that run.

"Once the bombs were dropped, the war was over," he said.

He was discharged out of the military on Dec. 1, 1945, and was sent to Barksdale Field, La., where he recalled that many German prisoners of war were being held.

"I hitchhiked to Norcatour where I bought a bus ticket back to Oberlin," he said.

"I am a native of Oberlin and when I was born on July 17, 1920,

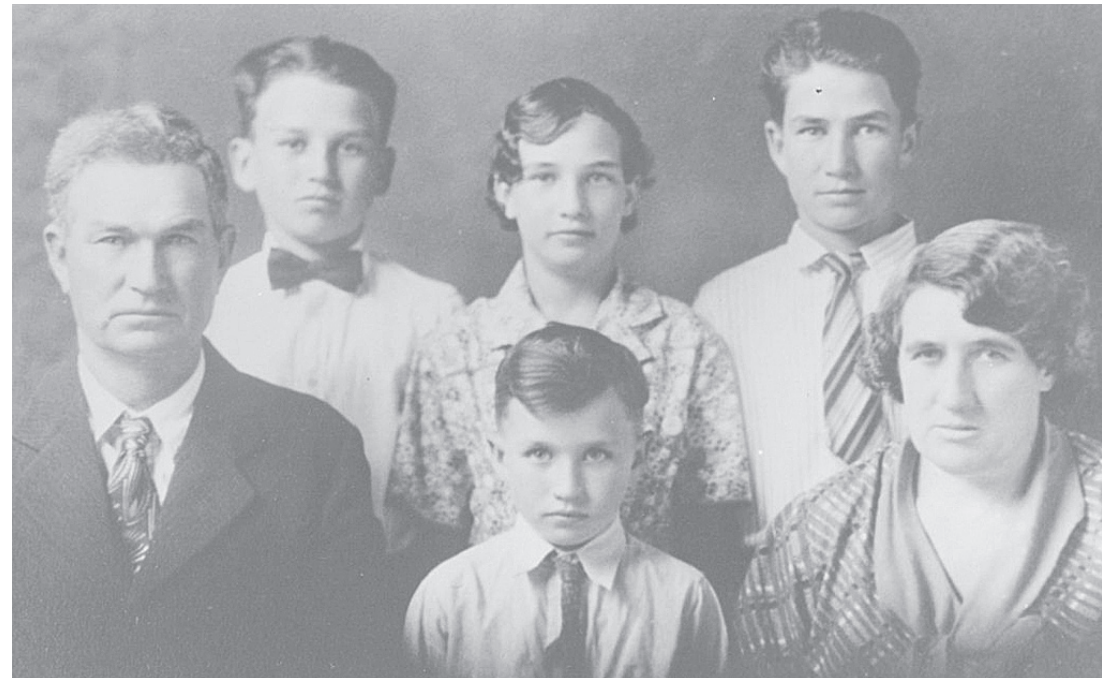


my parents, Charley and Inez Emerson, lived on a farm south of Oberlin. I attended Oberlin schools, graduating from Decatur Community High School in 1939. One of the highlights in high school was being on the wrestling team, where I wrestled in the 115-pound and 135 weights. I placed all four years at the regional. When I was a freshman, I took third at state; first my sophomore year; second my junior year and first my senior year. Our team also won state when I was a sophomore and a senior.

"My first job after graduation was running a 60 Caterpillar tractor for my dad, building township roads from Oberlin to Jennings and Lyle.

"I started dating Virginia Landau when we were sophomores and we were married on Dec. 22, 1941, right after Pearl Harbor, at the home of her mother, Belle, and her step-father, Joe Winter, at their farm north of Hoxie. Her father was Earl Landau of Oberlin.

"After we moved back to Oberlin after the war, I worked for the county on the road department, starting at 25 cents an hour. I then was hired by Dane G. Hansen to work on roads from Norcatour to Norton for \$1.25 an hour. Junior McCalla was manager of the gas company in Oberlin at the time and he asked me to go to work for the Kansas-Nebraska Gas Company. I took the job and worked in Oberlin a little over year, then we moved to Leoti. I was manager when we piped



THE EMERSON FAMILY included (front, from left) Charlie, Raymond and Inez, and (back row) Robert, Alice (Hunziker) and Lloyd Emerson.

Leoti, Hoxie and Lakin.

He retired on Aug. 1, 1980, at Lakin after working for the gas company for 34 years. At that time, he and his wife, along with their daughter, Penny Arnoldy, and her children, decided to return to Oberlin.

When his granddaughter, Andrea, needed a job, she told him that she would mow lawns if he would help.

"I bought a new lawn mower and we were mowing over 30 lawns before she graduated."

A staunch believer in always keeping busy, he said he was "too dumb to quit." His wife decided to join him in the business and they worked together until she became ill. Since her death in 1980, he has continued mowing, but now, at age 90, says he only mows eight yards.

"My Jack Russell/Rat Terrier dog, 'Captain' and I go for a walk every day and we also enjoy going to the country and Sappa Park, where my dog enjoys hunting pheasants and other birds.

His family includes two daughters, Penny Arnoldy, who started the Head Start program in Oberlin, and Nikki Truskett of Longview, Texas, who recently retired after working for a doctor for 25 years, and a son, Lloyd Patrick, who has a government job. His six grandchildren include: Paige and Scott Gawith, Andrea and Gary Schuette, Harve Aaron Truskett, Tom and Van Truskett, and Emily and Ian Emerson.

Reflecting on his military service during World War II, he said, "Actually, I had it pretty easy."