

Lawrence Rushenberg, 98

June 15, 1905 - June 9, 2004

OMAHA, NE – Lawrence Rushenberg was born on a farm in Shelby County, June 15, 1905. He grew up on several farms his parents owned. Together with brothers, Leo and Alvin, he farmed until 1933 when he began his flying career at a flying school operated by the Rapid Air Lines in Omaha, NE. He purchased his first airplane, an OX-5 Travelair in 1935. He became the first flying farmer in Shelby County and also paid the first tax on an airplane in Shelby County. He subsequently purchased an OX-5 Curtis Robin and an OX-5 Monocoupe. From 1939 to 1943 he instructed Army Air Corps contract schools in Omaha, NE, Mitchell, SD and finally in Wayne, NE, where he served as chief pilot over 15 instructor pilots. From 1944 to 1950, he operated the newly-built Carroll airport, giving flight instruction and handling a dealership for the Cessna and Aeronica Aircraft Companies. From 1952 to 1964, he flew in 37 states with an exclusive nationwide low-altitude waiver, taking over 65,000 aerial farm photos for the Zekan-Robbins Company. From 1964 to 1969, he operated the Harlan Municipal Airport, later dedicated Rushenberg Field. He logged over 20,000 flight hours and soloed over 600 students in his career. In 1997, he received a letter from a former student, former U.S. Senator and Presidential candidate George McGovern, who recalled his wartime training, and what a good instructor Lawrence had been. Senator McGovern related that he went on to become a B-24 Liberator pilot, and flew 35 combat missions, winning the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. Lawrence held an Aircraft and Powerplant mechanic's license and was a member of the OX-5 Club of America's Silver Wings Fraternity. He died June 9, 2004, at age 98.

Lawrence is survived by his wife, Netha (Ardis); son, Bob (Maureen), all of Omaha; and grandson, Robert, of Washington, D.C.

Funeral services were held June 14, 2004, at Holy Cross Church in Omaha, NE, with burial at Resurrection Cemetery. Heafy-Heafy & Hoffman Funeral Home in charge of arrangements.