

Eldon Down

11/90, T1, S1

JG: ...of how you got started in the flying business, you know.

ED: I went through the CPT training before World War II.

JG: Do you remember what date that was about?

ED: It was about 1941, '42.

JG: Whereabouts was that?

ED: That was at Pendleton, Oregon.

JG: Oh.

ED: Steam Brothers had the contract there for the...the Civilian Pilot Training is what that was.

JG: Then maybe goin' from there about where...a little bit of history of getting into the time...time that the...the \_\_\_ was it at La Grande?

ED: Yeah. After World War II I bought out Bessie Holiday...she called herself Holiday School of Flying...at Joseph, Oregon. And she also had a...a mail route and a freight route up and down the...from Joseph and the Snake River country and she hauled mail and packages and passengers and so on. There was a, as I recall, there was nine stops up and down the Oregon side there. And I would operate that for several years and then I...the La Grande airport became up for...for a bid for an operator so I bid that in and I got it and I moved there and that because it was a lot better for agriculture work and all that sort of thing. And then in 1958 they started sellin' off their surplus aircraft off of Davis Mountain in Tucson, Arizona and I...there's where we got the B-25. They put up one good airplane and one that you'd call it an old dog, they were just speculatin' to see what...if there was a sale for 'em and whatever and that was a North American B-25. That was the first...

JG: Was that the Air Force that was...

ED: What?

JG: The Air Force that was putting that up for sale that was...it was declared surplus?

ED: Yeah, the Air Force. Uh-huh. They... This one went for...I think we paid almost \$13,000 for it and, of course, later on I bought some more and they put 'em in lots of five and you'd bid on 'em and they'd go for all the way from \$1,500 to \$3,000 a piece. I think I bought eight of 'em all total. I tanked a couple for a fella the name of Red Dodge up in Alaska because I...we went through all the work of gettin' 'em...gettin' a...gettin' 'em licensed, you know, send it the FFA so you's could operate 'em and so on. Of course there's a lot of paper work and a lot of time. And then we started to... That same year we got this one goin' in 1958 and we introduced it to the Forest Service and they started usin' it, but they didn't know how to use it, the reason being is they'd fight the fire until it went over the hill then they'd call for a little bulrick and they figured, well, when he gets here and does that why then we can just throw our shovels down and go home. Well, it didn't work that way and it took several years to get 'em educated that it was a retardant, it was not to put the fire out. So later on as time went on and everything and they wanted different doors, you know, drop doors and stuff

like that and they come out with a couple of specifications. And I remember Cal Butler and I we built the doors like they wanted, they use 'em for a year and then, oh, we don't like them we want somethin' else. But there was no guarantee of anything, it was just a we'll use you if we need you and if you're available and that was it. There was no stand-by so one year we went down to the regional office in Portland, there was Bill Rosenbaum, Cal Butler and myself goin' and look, we can't keep doin' this. We don't get no guarantee, get it out on a contract and bid these bases. So that's the way it become, they finally did that. It was a pretty rough go up until that happened.

JG: With all the expense of do it all. [laughs]

ED: You bet. We had a stack of different drop gates behind the hanger and they were no good for nothin'.

JG: Good deal for the Forest Service, but not you.

ED: Right. [laughs]

JG: Then...so in '58 you started that was with the borate then.

ED: Yeah. And then that's another thing, you see, that borate they...that's...to my knowledge that's all that was available at that time other than water with a little package of somethin' you dumped in a 1,000-gallon, called it wet water. But that borate weighed fourteen pounds to the gallon. And if you mixed that up and left it in a 5,000-gallon tank for a while it'd kind of settle out and the first two or three loads that you got out of it, boy, it'd probably go sixteen, seventeen so you had to be pretty careful. And they wanted you to pack a 1,000 gallons of it, well, sometimes you couldn't because that stuff's weighin' sixteen, seventeen pounds to the gallon. You can't do it. B-25 that's pretty heavy load, seven tons.

JG: Then that picture you had that was the first time that you \_\_, but that was with water?

ED: Yeah. That was the first airplane that we just put water in it to test the gauge to see how everything was gonna manipulate and so on like that. And of course that...as you can see in the picture there, why, that caught me by surprise when I opened those gates. That airplane really jumped in the air. [laughs] Another thing too, there was no...there was no...it was so new, you know, that the operatin' procedures...they didn't have any specifications like they do now about emergency dumps and so on like that. And I remember one time I took care of that one evening we were over on the Umatilla Forest south of Walla Walla back up in that country and they had a load of borate they's gonna drop on a fire there. And went down in this canyon to drop it and I figured that I'd get rid of the load, why, there's no problem climbin' out over the ridge. Hit the switches and nothin' happened. And boy, I'm tellin' ya, we got out of there, but them pine cones on the trees looked as big as footballs. [laughs] Then come back to the La Grande airport and landed and I told my mechanic, I said, "We gotta figure out an emergency dump for that." He worked all night, the next morning, why, he had two, an air bottle and two bomb bay \_\_ rigged up for an emergency to open the door because we learned real quick like that we had to have that emergency.

JG: Oh yeah. You don't get too many second chances.

ED: But the Forest Service didn't require it. They'd never...you know, it was new to them, too, new to everybody. So it was kind of a...

JG: Do you remember where you were or what fire that might've been on?  
ED: No, I don't. I just...  
JG: Just south of Walla Walla down there.  
ED: I do remember it was over on the Umatilla Forest, but just where I don't...I don't recall. Then, of course...  
JG: What were you doin'? Was that flyin' that you were just solo, or did you have a co-pilot?  
ED: No, we had a co-pilot on at that time, yeah. Yeah, later some of 'em they rigged 'em up to fly just solo, but I never did. I always used a co-pilot because there was other duties for him as to seein' that the airplane was serviced and ready to go after you'd used it and there's always a washin' and that stuff off from, you know, and all this sort of stuff keepin' 'em clean. And he could help the mechanics with maintenance and so on so he had plenty to do otherwise.  
JG: Who'd you have co-pilot at that time, do you remember?  
ED: At that time... You're talkin' about the first year?  
JG: Yeah, when you first started.  
ED: There was a fellow the name of Bob Murphy was there for a while. And then Vern Draper was a co-pilot for one season. And Bob White, who worked for the Forest Service, he was...he worked for me as a co-pilot for part of a season. There was a turn-over there, I can't remember...  
JG: Yeah, it was.  
ED: ...just all their names because they'd kind of come and go and then some of 'em, you know, they didn't like gettin' down in these canyons and in the smoke and stuff like that. A trip or two like that and they figured this is enough of this for me. [laughs]  
JG: Change careers real quick.  
ED: And then \_\_\_\_later on they started losin' quite a few of 'em too and that kind of scared people out, you know. And like California was...they lost one. I lost a B-25 on the Anthony Lake fire. And the one down in California happened the same day. And then, I don't know, there was just kind of a rash of 'em. And that year Service they got into the retardant business and they lost one up there out of Wenatchee. And I seen where that went in and that was just a pilot's...he had made another approach on that and come over the ridge and down the hill, made his drop, he could've kept it slowed down if he'd put the gear down until he was about ready to gettin' onto his target, but they didn't. They got out there and got it up a lot of speed and went in figured on droppin' and havin' enough to go over the top and clear this ridge. And they dropped alright, but they just didn't have it. It...when they let go of that load they had too much speed, it broke the airplane up. Apparently, that's what I understood anyway. But now before...gettin' ahead of this story, we used \_\_\_\_ before the heavier airplanes come in for a couple, three years. Had 'em rigged up as a sprayers, you know. We had...put a dump door in the bottom and of course we could only pack 140 gallons of water or whatever. California when they had a lot of 'em down there at one time before they got into the TBMs and the bigger...bigger airplanes. And of course they so much more effective.

JG: Yeah, \_\_ didn't have that much. Do you remember... 'Cause I had a picture of one TBM I think was out of McCall, would that sound right? Was there any stationed over there?

ED: Yeah, there was several out of McCall.

JG: Okay, 'cause that's...

ED: They belonged to Johnson Flying Service.

JG: Oh, were they Johnson's?

ED: Yeah, Johnson Flying Service at that time...that's what it was, but they had the base in Missoula and McCall.

JG: 'Cause that...well, a couple things, one the color they were droppin'...let's see, I think that \_ on that one because I'm quite sure if I recall the picture was red, it would've been the \_\_.

ED: It could either been firetrawl, bentinine or \_\_, any of those. But they come along quite a bit later. After the first two or three years, why, it was borate.

JG: Yeah. About borate, I remember until they started figurin' it sterilized the soil and then they started gettin' into some of the other materials.

ED: And then the weight of it, too, that was a bad one, too. But now I think all that stuff...as I remember when I left the Forest Service it's all liquid now and you meter so much of that in and so much water and that's it. They really come a long ways on that.

JG: Do you remember, Eldon, how they spelled the fire-trol?

ED: Fire-trol? Fire-t-r-o-l, fire-trol. And that...

JG: Would that be like a hyphen in there, or was it just...?

ED: I think there was a hyphen in it, yeah. But that...that took over from the borate and they used that for several years. It really done a good job on the ground and it was more or less a fertilizer, too.

JG: Yeah. 'Cause I remember they were gonna end that because the sterilization of it.

ED: Yeah.

JG: But I remember you had that one picture, a lot of it was just all this white billowing smoke from the fire and then the TBM was comin' in, you know, it was colorful and it had that red comin', so it's kind of a neat picture so I'd like to try and use that.

ED: Yeah, sure.

JG: I can't... I'd have to go back to see what fire that was on, but over there out of Wallowa someplace. It seemed to me it was out of McCall where that was supposedly come in from.

ED: Yeah, that first year that started usin' that B-25 they called...sent us over to McCall. We were on fire over there. They had their... They had their tanker base set up there and they were...Johnson was usin' some TBMs. And I think we only flew two or three loads out of McCall, but that was the first introductory of a twin-engine airplane that those people over there had for droppin' the retardant, you know.

JG: Do you remember any particular story of...or experience one way or another...you mentioned, of course, that little bit of the problem out of Walla Walla where it didn't, you know, the doors didn't open, didn't get that \_\_ with all

that load...of any other particular fire or situations that would've been kind of memorable?

ED: I remember one situation out west of Baker out there towards...out from Sumpter back in that country. I dropped a load down in there...a couple loads on a fire, it was real smoky. And, oh, this was after the fire was over with...a month later I run into this fella that was down on the ground on the fire. I can't remember his name. But he wanted to know, he said, "How did you miss that fire line that you had?" And I said, "What fire line?" And he said, "It looked to me like you went under it two times." I could've, I don't know, but I didn't know anything about it. But I flew up there one day and sure enough he's right.

JG: \_\_\_\_ [laughs]

ED: It was there. There wasn't any smoke then and I could see it.

JG: Scared you to death after you'd seen it? Was that somebody from the Forest Service that was on the ground?

ED: Yeah. I can't remember his name now, but he...he was kind of shakin' his head. He said, "It looked to me from where I was standin' it was awful close." No doubt it was, too. There's been quite a few of 'em. Clipped the top of trees and stuff like that, you know, but you still come back in. I remember one time it was Jim Courtright he had a...he come in there and set up a tanker base at Baker. And he hit a tree and almost knocked the horizontal stabilizer off of the B-25, but he got it back into Baker. And someplace I have pictures of that, but I...I couldn't find 'em when I was lookin' and they may be with Sylvie's and I think that's where they are. He was lucky. He drove wood into the one...the left engine and into the drop doors. He's just damn lucky to have gotten back.

JG: What was that? On 25? B-25?

ED: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that was on B-25. Yeah, and then later I got two B-26s and tanked them and used them up until I sold out to Hillcrest. Then Hillcrest sold the two B-26s to Cal Butler, as I recall, and then one of 'em burnt up over there in his hanger a year or two afterwards over at Redmond. But that was after I had left and sold out to Jerry Wilson and went to work for the Forest Service then.

JG: Do you remember what year that was that you sold out?

ED: '61. Yeah, I was goin' up to build me a huntin' and fishin' lodge in Canada and I run into Wally Tire one day and he wanted to know if I'd fly a helicopter for him for...they were gettin' one, the one and only the Forest Service ever bought. The reason being I had enough time to qualify for their requirements and they had including Wally had been through the Fort Rucker school, but he only had the eight hours, he didn't have the other helicopter time to qualify. So I started flyin' that and then I was with the Forest Service for eighteen, twenty years after that up until I retired. Of course I flew smoke jumpers and infrared and all of that.

JG: When did you retire, then, Eldon? Remember which year?

ED: In September of 1980.

JG: But after the helicopter you're doin', of course, the lead plane there...

ED: I flew lead plane and helicopter, too. Had 'em... They had 'em both over there in Baker for one year and then I flew lead plane for quite a...two or three years there and then I went to...over to Missoula and I worked with Bob Buanson over there on this infrared mapping. And I was with that over there for about two-and-

a-half years till they got it out of research then they brought the airplane and \_\_\_ a fella by the name of Bob Cooks had operated the equipment for Boise. And I flew it there for a year or two and then I turned it over to a fella by the name of Dale Matler came and he flew it for two or three years and I went back in the DC3s and smoke jumpers and some lead plane and things like that.

JG: \_\_\_ Do you remember anything particular like remember when you had the...what was that, a Navy trainer, wasn't it, on the lead plane?

ED: Oh, the T34.

JG: Yeah, T34 that you always had trouble to get out of the way.

ED: Yeah, they were not really what you'd call a good lead plane, I didn't think. And they...they were underpowered for the weight of 'em. And, of course, you couldn't...you'd leave before the tankers and they'd beat you there and they'd be settin' waitin' and that cost money when those guys are up there waitin' for somebody to get there, you know. And speakin' of costin' money for things like that, the Forest Service and the State Forestry seemed they could never get their heads together. I remember one time up out of Baker...now this was the Bureau of Land Management, I guess, and the Forest Service and they each had a \_\_\_ south of Baker, it was on Duley Mountain. They each had a fire goin' up there and they were burnin' together. And I got there with a load of retardant...this is back before I went to work for the Forest Service...and I circled around there and kept circlin' waitin' and they didn't...said just keep holdin' and I finally found out later that all this time down there they're payin' \$485 an hour for that airplane circlin' up there and they're down there arguin' among themselves who's gonna pay for the drop, the 'tardant.

JG: [laughs]\_\_\_

ED: \_\_\_

JG: I don't remember probably about that particular one, but I know I really found...one time I was down...they said like is anything threatening the forest 'cause it started on BLM. Somebody touched a match off or cigarette outside down by Sparta. And I just called in with retort, I said, "Hey, that thing...the way that's goin' and as dry as it is out there you got one drop and a second drop would've just knocked it right down. They wouldn't and then afterwards they really got onto me. It was on BLM land and they say, "Hey, who's gonna pay for it?" I was like, who cares!

ED: The State Forestry was the same way.

JG: Same way. They'd never call in anything until was goin' so damn...

ED: No.

JG: You know, so just raging inferno then they'd decide, well, we need some retardant.

ED: I think they were kind of short on funds to pay for that sort of thing. And the only one time that I remember that the State of Forestry, Oregon State Forestry, they really used the retardant and the railroad company started the fire down in there in the Grande Ronde someplace down in that area down where the train went up the branch line. I forget the name of the... Anyway, down in there, but the railroad company started it and the railroad company had to pay for it and I know that

brought some fellas out of Omaha, some railroad officials. They spent a lot of money there. [laughs]

JG: Then the twin... Let's see, let's go back a second. One the lead plane what was that Ralph Rensig was it that bought the Mustang? Was he the one that owned that?

ED: Yeah, mm-hmm.

JG: 'Cause you used that once or twice, didn't ya, for lead plane?

ED: I used it...

JG: Was it quite a little bit?

ED: I used it quite a little bit there for I guess maybe a couple of months I kept it there in Baker. But the Forest Service figured it was too costly for...

JG: Yeah, what was that per hour, do you remember?

ED: I think he was...at that time he was lettin' 'em have it for \$50 an hour and he furnished the fuel. So really that was a bargain, you might say, so to speak.

JG: Oh \_\_.

ED: 'Cause I remember one time I had it up at Wenatchee and they had two fires goin', one was over the top of the hill from the other one, and I was lead plane in both of 'em.

JG: Yeah, I remember you sayin' that, you'd actually work two fires compared to like the T34s.

ED: Yeah. 'Cause it was fast enough performance enough I could know the airplane's comin' in on for one fire and I'd drop them and then swing over the hill and catch the others. And while I was doin' that I had one tanker pilot that he was a time biller, he'd take the long way home after he'd drop his load. And I come up along the side of him and I asked him, I said, "You're pretty well lost, aren't you, off your course?" He wouldn't even answer me. [laughs] He got caught.

JG: Yeah, that's what I remembered...believed or understand why the Forest wouldn't use that thing because it was so dog-gone fast. You just get out there and be able to, you know, like I said, the retardant wouldn't be waitin' around circlin' waitin' for ya, or you could work two fires at one time. It's just real...real speedy.

ED: I don't know. It was the cost and then they figured, well, it's not as safe as a T34. That class it's safer than a T34 because...

JG: It seems like it had the power there.

ED: Yeah. And those engines in a T34 they just run oil temperature and head temperatures it was right on the red line or above it, you had to be careful with it.

JG: I just... You own the jumper, don't you? The twin beach...

ED: Yeah, that was mine, yeah. Yeah, I had that on contract with 'em for quite a few years.

JG: Do you remember when you got that?

ED: It was back in about...about 1955, '54 or '55. I bought that surplus from the military and I got it all from Hill Air Force Base. They were moth ballin' back there at the time. And I had to convert that, do a lot of work on it and cut the door out and make a larger door because the door that was in 'em was too...really too small. We used it a year or two with the small door, but the jumpers'd bump their shoulder on the side of it and bounce back and they wouldn't get out the second

man, you know. So as soon as I could I got...I had...that had to go through engineering too, and a lot of paperwork. You had to prove to the FAA that you...was structurally strong as the original and that took quite a bit of doin'.

JG: Do you recall any particular experience there of droppin' like the cargo, the jumpers on any fire of any special, oh, situations you got into that were nasties or memorable, funny? Funny one's been goin' out the door. [laughs]

ED: Yeah. You go... You goin' out the door followin' the jumper, but you were just takin' the picture, you weren't goin' all the way with 'em. [laughs]

JG: About all I had in was my ankles. Felt pretty foolish hangin' out there boppin' around right behind the engine there.

ED: Then...oh if... One time I remember I was over at...it was out of John Day there someplace and this Skinny Beals was a smoke jumper, he'd been there and jumped for a long time. And, boy, it was a hot afternoon, you know, and this was high altitude. He jumped over there...it was in the Strawberry Mountains there someplace, you know, in there probably eight, nine-thousand foot, but real hot day and the dense of the altitude was way above that. And this was back when they had the old twenty-eight foot shoots. And he jumped on the fire and got back a day or two later and of course they stayed there at the airport at La Grande, you know. And seen Skinny walkin' down the ramp a-limpin' and kind of \_\_ up and I asked him, I said, "Did you hurt yourself on that jump?" And he said, "Boy, oh, boy," he said, "I hit the ground so hard," he said, "I actually bounced." [laughs] Kind of crippled him up, didn't break no bones. But now they got all kinds of improved parachutes and all that stuff so I guess it's much better. And of course \_\_ a lot of the times you didn't know what caused it either, a parachuted streamer or somethin' like that, you know. Of course the guys down on the ground when they steamer like that, you know, that's dangerous.

JG: Oh yeah!

ED: You don't know whether they're gonna hit somebody or what, you know.

JG: I'm sure that was Goat Mountain fire, too, they kicked that one out and I was behind a rock and I got the picture comin' right at me and they're comin' in so low that all that stuff...the chute was just started openin' when it hit. I remember string beans comin' all over my head. [laughs] They were droppin' hot meals in there at that point.

ED: Oh yeah.

JG: The stuff would come in just like rockets. One funny one, too, the coffee cans. 'Cause they had some of these old guys in there that if they didn't have their coffee they just had the shakes awfully bad. They got down there, they didn't have any coffee for quite a while. We walked clear out from, you know, down the end of the road there in Bear Creek clear up on top. That was a miserable long trip.

ED: I remember...I remember that fire. I think that a fellow by the name of Horsefield had some sheep...a sheep camp in there and they moved they're camp and they didn't put their fire out and that's what started that to begin with.

JG: Oh, is that what it was? I didn't know just what...

ED: Yeah.



JG: Do you remember... 'Cause I think didn't they drop jumpers on the \_\_\_ 'cause there was so many people on that thing. They were flyin' \_\_\_ were walkin' in and all kind of jumpers, I guess, too, weren't there?

ED: Yeah. There was a load of jumpers came out of McCall and I got there was a load just about the same time as a... Bob Fogg was flyin' this airplane for Johnsons out of McCall. And he come in there unannounced. See, they were on a different frequency radio and he didn't have... nobody could talk to him. And Red Myler was out there with his Comanche and kept flyin' in front of me... in front of me and cuttin' in front of me. But he couldn't talk to me, so I looked and here comes this guy down on a parachute and I thought, "Hell, we haven't dropped anybody yet." I got to lookin' and here's another airplane up there so pulled out, you know, until... till they was through and made sure that he was headed away from there before we even jumped. But things like that, boy, that... pretty uncoordinated and send him out there with no radio.

JG: Yeah, where there's no contact...

ED: No, no.

JG: ...know what the other one's doin'.

ED: Boy, that... I assume that probably the dispatcher in McCall figured, well, no other airplanes around there, see, and so just go drop 'em and that's what he did. [laughs]

JG: Who... What was Red Myler, what... do you know the spelling of his last name?

ED: It was m-y-l-e-r, I believe. Red Myler, he was with the Forest Service in the regional office at... at that time in... out of Portland and then he later went to... down in Atlanta, Georgia, I believe it was, and then I think he retired down there is what I heard, but he never came back... back to Oregon. Another one was Red Myler too that was kind of funny. One time... this was back to air tankers... Hay Steamers was flyin' a PBY and we were workin' on this far out of... flyin' out of La Grande and then the... an ace was over there on the fire, too. Red was... I don't know, he would get out there, you know, and he was tryin' to be a lead plane, but he flyin' around ya and between ya and so on and so forth, you know. I looked one day and he was just... airplane was approachin' the fire, the old PBY, and here's retardant comin' out, the whole load. I think knowin' \_\_\_ that he tripped it on purpose because Myler was down below him and he got quite a bit of it on him, big drops, you know, big blobs on his airplane. He head back to La Grande and he jumped all over old Ace and "What the heck is goin' on?" He says, "Well, hell," he said, "I brought the humidity up quite a bit, didn't I?" He was just laughin', he was just... you could just tell... I think it was all purposely done, but then I couldn't say for sure. [laughs]

JG: One of those things nobody knows for sure, but \_\_\_.

ED: Because I know they didn't get along. [laughs]

JG: Yeah, 'cause I think down that Gold Mountain it seemed to me there's about ninety-some firefighters up there with everybody, if I recall right. We thought it was just a great big fire with that many people goin' in and, you know, all the air stuff and everything 'cause they dropped I don't know how many loads of retardant in there. That whole place looked like it snowed. [laughs] Just completely whitewashed \_\_\_ got through moppin' it up.

ED: That was borate then.  
JG: Yeah, the borate.  
ED: Yeah, the borate.  
JG: Yeah. I remember one guy woke up in the morning...we had those paper sleepin' bags and you woke up...no, he just had a parachute and he woke up in the mornin' just shivering to death and he looked out and he thought it was snow because there was all...everything was just covered with white and it was about two inches thick.  
ED: Yeah, I remember that. It seemed to me that was late in the fall, but it was dry, we hadn't had any rain.  
JG: Yeah, it was cold, I know, when...  
ED: We hadn't had any rain and they were...they were pretty jumpy. And I think...Orval Cary was a fire control \_\_\_. Boy, he through everything he had onto it. The stuff was available and he used it. [laughs]  
JG: \_\_\_ We thought it was a big fire so many people were there. We started moppin' up and it was just a short time and here we were to the other end of the fire. I think it was only thirty-eight acres, or somethin' like that. It wasn't very big. That was the damnedest thing I've ever seen.  
ED: Yeah, that Anthony Lake fire, that was a bad one.  
JG: Yeah.  
ED: That took it's toll. There was one Forest Ranger and a helicopter with Quay Jergesen...Jorgesen was flyin' it and they had a tail rotor fail.  
JG: Yeah, I know they went down, yeah.  
ED: But they didn't think the Ranger was hurt too bad, but apparently he had a skull fracture and formed a blood clot. He died. Then there's a B-25 that I lost. And I guess that was...that was all the accidents there apparently.  
JG: But that was a nasty one.  
ED: Yeah.  
JG: Who was flyin' that, the 25, do you remember?  
ED: Larry Englert. Englert.  
JG: e-n-g-l-e-r-t?  
O: Yes.  
ED: It that what it was?  
O: Yes.  
ED: Yeah, Englert. And the co-pilot's name was Corbet, they called him Corby. That was kind of a...  
JG: Do you remember what it was, or what caused that one? I remember seein' the crash up there, but I never got around...  
ED: We really don't...don't know. He...Larry was a type of a guy, you know, he didn't like to hold things up. He'd come in over this ridge and you couldn't see the fire until you come over the ridge and he wasn't lined up with the fire. He dropped down in there and it's pretty smoky too so he said on the radio he said, "I'm not lined up." He said, "I've gotta pull out and come around and try it again." And he pulled up and he racked that old B-25 right up like this and she went over the top into a spin. Of course that was it with a load in it. But Lyle Flick, you remember him...

JG: Yeah.

ED: He seen the whole thing happen and he said that there was no pieces come off from it or nothing. He said that he just pulled her up too steep and in too steep of a bank. And then I found out later from the...that wasn't till after, you know, that winter I was talkin' to Dick McClellan...you knew him...see, he was gassin' airplanes there. He was runnin' the fuel truck and stuff. And I don't know just somethin' come up about it and he didn't realize what he'd done, but he said Larry come in and he had half of his time in, see. That was kind of a bottom like there, there was eleven or twelve tankers workin' out of there and they had two fuel trucks, but still if they pull out of line, see, another one'd pull in in front of 'em and he didn't like to do that so he was in line and he had...Engert had McClellan top everything off, that included the Tokyo tanks too and then he put a load of borate in on top of everything. He was way over gross so that aggravated that too.

JG: The problem, yeah.

ED: Yeah. So I think a combination of that two that brought the thing on. But anyway, after that accident there the next year the Forest Service put a load...cut B-25s down, I think, to eight hundred gallons was all they'd let 'em pack. And they used 'em, I think, for a year or two after that and then they cut 'em off completely. I don't know, I always figured that was the most forgiving old airplane if it was flown right and after you got used to the droppin' on it, why, you slowed it down to about a 130 miles an hour with a quarter flap and a lot of time maybe even put the gear down if you had to lose a lot of altitude pretty fast. Then just as you were approachin' your target ready to drop, why, have the co-pilot start to gear back up...retractin' it and it took nineteen seconds for it to fully retract. And so then all you'd see was just a slight raise. There was none of this shakin' and the whole airplane, you know. Of course if you had a lot of speed that's what happened and that's hard on the airplane, there's no question about that. But the technique...some of 'em weren't usin' the right technique on 'em. But kind of an interesting story that...of this Engert and Corbet. Engert's wife was a schoolteacher out of Portland, that's where they lived, and so did Corby live in Portland. And so the insurance I had for something like that you could either take a lump settlement or they'd pay you so much a month till the kids were eighteen years old. And he had two small kids, one of 'em I think was probably seven, the other one maybe eight, nine years old. So she...she took the monthly salary, she didn't take the lump sum payment. And this was more than the State compensation, quite a bit more, would allow for a death like that. And the other woman, Corby, the co-pilot's, why, she was off someplace with somebody else, I think, but anyway, I walked in the hanger one day and she was there. This was about, oh, fifteen, twenty days after the accident. And she walked up to me and she said, "Have you got insurance?" And I said, "Yes, I have. Why?" I didn't know her. She was...I found out later that she'd already talked to the agent out of Portland...[end tape]

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- ED: But anyway, she elected to take the lump sum. I heard a year later that she went through that and they had about five or six kids.
- JG: Oh gee!
- ED: She'd went through the money.
- JG: You mentioned, Eldon, I guess you had one of the first helicopter that was used...talkin' about on the phone there.
- ED: Yeah. Yeah, I had the...
- JG: Give me some background on like when you got that, what...what it was.
- ED: I bought that in 1958. It was a Bell47-G2. It had a 260 horse Wycomin engine in it, but it wasn't supercharged so it was pretty weak when you got up to altitude, you know, the density of altitude. But it was the first one in the whole area in Eastern Oregon. So, of course, that was new...another thing that was really new to 'em and I used it quite a bit for agricultural work, sprayin' and dustin' a bit, and then on fire work. But there was another story where they had to get used to it or learn about it and know how to use it and so on. In the first was it, well, it just cost too much an hour for what you could do with it. And one time, oh, I'd had it about I guess the first fire season and there was two fires up...and this was south of Baker, too...one of 'em was BLM and over a ways was a...Forest Service had one and they were both in the mop up stage. So I was up there where the BLM had called me...and that's no contracts in those days or anything, it's if you were available and they needed you you'd come, why, that's it. And so I was over there haulin' the guys up on this hillside when these tufts of sagebrush and juniper and stuff like that they're still smokin' and burnin'. And settin' one out and I wouldn't land, I just put the skid against the hillside and let the guy out, you know, and take the other one on up to another place. And they seen what was goin' on over there so that evenin' I got a call "we want you up here in the morning daylight." I said, "Well, I'm workin' for the BLM. They want me in the morning." You'll have to... "You guys get together and you'll have to decided who...who needs me the worst. 'Cause," I said, "otherwise I'm goin' back to the BLM." So they kind of seen the light there then that there was a use for that and started usin' it more and more and more and then it just come to big demand for it, you know.
- JG: Remember what that was runnin' per hour at that time?
- ED: I believe I was chargin' \$160 for that time. See, your insurance on them tankers back then was a really a big, big item and the cost of the machine was \$44,000. And those two big items, then if you hired a pilot he wanted another \$20 an hour, too, see. I try to fly myself, but then a lot of times I couldn't. But it was...we convinced him that there was a place for the helicopters use on forest fires and now they really use 'em now. They use the big Bertalls that they log with with buckets on 'em, packs about eight hundred gallons. They use 'em a lot now, especially down in California in that area.
- JG: Yeah, in that brush country \_\_\_ all over the place.
- ED: Yeah.

JG: But even on before there I remember we used to, you know, just cut a little spot out and when Bill was in there with those Bells and like that he could, you know, he of course knew the country, too, but we'd get him in and bring people in and haul stuff out. And I know some of the other, you know, if they came in they were spooked at it 'cause there's just be a little hole here set up on top of the ridge someplace.

ED: Yeah. Yeah, the Bell and Heller that was the two that the popular ones and, well, I think that's about the only ones that were available.

JG: Yeah, available real early.

ED: Yeah, that's the only one.

JG: Hellers always seemed like they were pretty rickety, though, at least they sounded that way a lot of times.

ED: The Heller?

JG: Yeah.

ED: Oh yeah. It shook and rattled. But they's a lot of Boltons come out on that. That's what the Forest Service built was a Heller. A lot of Boltons come out, but they finally got the...that thing taken care of and it turned out to be a good machine. And now the...there's a quite a few of 'em around that they put the Alicen turben engine in it, conversion for that, and that makes a terrific machine, they're really performin' then. \_\_\_ and it'll put out 420 horse, but then they have to derate it because of the rotor transmission and rotor head and stuff like that, but...see, they can go up to 15,000 feet and they still got their...their derated horsepower where it's redline, see. It's still available where as before...as I remember the old rule of the thumb, if you put a load in and settin' up in pretty high altitude with the reciprocating engine that was not turbo-charged, why, you could pick up whatever you had in it to a hover and...first you would look to see when it would shut where your manifold pressure gauge was settin', if it was settin' on thirty-four, thirty-seven, whatever. And then you picked it up to a hover and if you had three inches left, why, you'd go ahead and go. That was a rule of the thumb that I always used. If you had less than that you were askin' for trouble, you know. And if you matched 'em and then you went ahead and took off well then you probably didn't live to tell about this. [laugh]

JG: I remember old \_\_\_ we had...I think they had...I can't remember the guy's name. I guess he'd been up in Alaska, a bush pilot or with helicopter. He came in there really a strange guy that came in one day to work on some of the fire, we had a lot of lightening strikes all over the place. And saw him down there at the Forest Service building, that thing was just poppin' and rattlin' like that and \_\_\_ was supposed to go out with him like that. Had this \_\_\_ around, walkin' around, the guy said, "Oh, it's just a Heller, you know." [laughs] But he was a character. He knew the machine, but, boy, it sure...'cause he tried to lift me out from up there in \_\_\_ these real tall spruce right up out of the bottom. I had the little...just a little pack with the camera and I think a jacket in there and he said no, I'd better leave that. [laughs] So, it was...I don't weigh that much. We started out of there, you know, we about half-way out and he just...I didn't know he could stop with that quick, but he, you know, \_\_\_.

ED: Bob Buerenson...this is on the Anthony Lake fire...and he was a fire boss on that, you know. I took him from down at that...picked him up at the...there's a garage station back in there and I can't remember...it was on the La Grande district.

JG: \_\_\_ Porcupine?

ED: Porcupine, that's it. I picked him up there and he wanted to go up above Anthony Lakes up in there and that's high back through there.

JG: Oh yeah.

ED: And I told him, I said, "If I land there you're gonna have to walk back because," I said, "I can't get you out. I can land." He said, "I don't want to... I just about gotta get in there." So I went in and landed and he said, "Wait around for me for a little bit." He said, "Maybe you can try to get me out." So I said, "Okay." So I shut down and waited. And he come back in about an hour and I made one try. I just picked it up and try to keep stayin' ground as I picked up speed, you know, get through transition. But once I come up just a little ways she started settlin' right back down and I set it down. It convinced him, he walked out. [laughs] He didn't ask me to try it again.

JG: Do you remember the guy that was on La Grande there, Walter, \_\_\_ I think he was co-pilotin' with \_\_\_?

ED: No. I know who you mean. I taught him to fly. He's around there. He had an airplane of his own, bought a J3 \_\_\_.

JG: 'Cause I heard he went on and was flyin' helicopter \_\_\_ Montana or someplace.

ED: He... I sent him down to...to Evergreen and Del Smith and he worked down there and he got his helicopter rating and then he went to work for Bill Rosenbaum. He had... Bill had bought some of these canements, you know, they were the inner section of the rotor. There are two rotors and this...this set on a mask side by side, but they sloped like this, but they come acrossed each other. Kind of a funny lookin' out fit. He'd gotten 'em surplus and then he worked...he had a contract down and out of Tucson there with someplace. And Daryl was...flew it for him down there. And I remember up \_\_\_ what they call Lemon Mountain, that's that big mountain there east of Tucson. The Game Commission or somebody that had some goats up there and they wanted to keep 'em on that mountain for some reason or another, but they had this big trough, a waterin' trough is what they wanted to have a spring up there. And they wanted to get that up there and it was pretty heavy and I guess they'd had a military chopper, I don't know just what it was, try to pick it up in a sling, you know, and take it up there. They had to drop it, they couldn't...couldn't make it. So I heard later that old Walker went in there and they hooked him onto it and by god he set it up there for 'em. [laughs]

JG: He was kind of crazy.

ED: Oh, he was...he was a daredevil.

JG: He was, yeah.

ED: Yeah, he was.

JG: 'Cause I always went out there he had the...what was it, 206 \_\_\_. And he took off and he said, "Well, I took the door off, thought you might want to take a, you know, take some pictures." We're goin' up over Mt. Harris the next thing I know he's patten' me on the shoulder, "Hey, you fly this for a while here. I want to take

a look out here.” Here we were just goin’ up over the mountain. [laughs] Oh, he was terrible!

ED: I remember Ray Zander and him, this was at the airport one afternoon. Ray had fixed up a parachute and they’d hook a rope on to about a hundred or two hundred feet of it and then take a car and start down the runway and this would bring the chute off of him. And Walker was ridin’ this, see, and he was up about, oh, fifty, sixty feet in the air. The rope broke or whether the snap or whatever was hooked to him and of course he just...that chute...he come down, oh, he hit the ground, boy, he did hit the ground.

JG: I’d heard somethin’ about that. \_\_\_\_ [laughs]

ED: I figured it’d killed him. I went out there and he was just gatherin’ himself up and you could tell he was hurtin’. He did have enough sense of humor about it. He says, “Well, back to the drawin’ board.” [laughs] But the last I heard of him he had a couple of \_\_\_, he was down in Arizona someplace where they grew a lot of cotton down there and he was a sprayin’ and dustin’ there. But I...that’s been a long time ago.

JG: I’d heard somethin’ about that where he had that chute out there and airborne.

ED: Yeah, Zander rigged that up for him. He’d try anything.

JG: Do you remember anything special of any story with \_\_\_, at all, Baler? Any particular experience he had?

ED: He was a...I guess that I’d say he was the best...best smoke jumper spotter that I ever worked with, one of the best. I do recall he...he’d come up front lookin’ things over when we’d get to a fire where he’s pickin’ out the spot and droppin’ streamers and stuff. He always battin’ his eyes and chewed Copenhagen. He’d look things over and tell you what he decided and what he wanted you to do and that was it. He hung in back and we done it. But he...he was really good. And he was a good...he was a squad leader, too. In La Grande there, why, he was the boss of the smoke jumpers, you know. But he...he was really a proficient guy.

JG: Yeah, he always seemed to be \_\_\_ around there and like that.

ED: Yeah, but we never had any... We had one time that I guess it upset him pretty much, I didn’t see it until it come loose. But one guy jumped out, he jumped ‘em two at a time, and his chute opened and the static line and the other one was right behind him and was really too close and he went through his...through the other guy’s \_\_\_. And there was... I didn’t see ‘em until they were both hangin’ one chute out this way and one out this way and they were together just goin’ into the trees. But they didn’t hurt either one of ‘em. One time...this has been a long time ago...back over on the Imnaha back in there. This guy’s name was Wilson. I think he was a ranger or somethin’. I great big guy and pretty...pretty cranky. They had a fire back in there and this is long time back, back in old J3 days and so on, you know, and the burlap parachutes...burlap...a wool chute, wool sacks for parachute. He had a radio and he told...he told us the guy that was droppin’ they’d dropped...got the stuff out on the little flat away from the cook tent and stuff. It was supplied. And he said, “I don’t wantta spend half a day walkin’ after that stuff.” He said, “I want it up here where I can get at it.” The next drop he got was a sack of spuds right down through the tent on onto the cook table. [laughs] He got it close. He never said anything about it.

JG: That shut him up pretty fast.

ED: Yeah.

JG: What were you throwed out...or what plane was it that you were droppin' out of?

ED: This was all Larry Solver. Later... He was off workin' for the Forest Service then, but he...he's flyin' an old \_\_\_. And later he went to work for the Forest Service and then that's when they Forest Service bought their Nordines and stuff. And he's the one that kind of pioneered that. I think he got two of 'em. And at the time I guess Larry they told him he had his choice, he could get Trimorefords or Nordines, whichever one he wanted. And he choose the Nordines. They used them for quite a few years, you know. And then \_\_\_. They might've had three of 'em, I don't know. But anyway, they had one out of Kay Junction, too, I know, \_\_\_. But then he...he retired and then that's when Monte Pierce come into the picture.

JG: Yeah, this gives me some background. Just the only other thing was were you droppin' on that...I talked, I think, on the phone there about on the Minam when Ray...or \_\_\_...I'm tryin' to think whether that was the same year as Anthony Lakes when that...

ED: It was.

JG: Yeah, it was the same time 'cause we heard that on the radio about Anthony and they were...you know, when that fire was goin' or the fire's a-burnin' that night we could hear 'em over there in the Minam.

ED: That was... That was Ray and I and we had got these...

JG: \_\_\_ Oh, yeah, it's got a little bit.

ED: We had dropped these jumpers that morning and we were back in there droppin' them somethin' to eat and some more cargo and it was gettin' pretty late, it was gettin' dark. By the time I got on down the canyon \_\_\_ about the time I come up to the crest of the canyon east of La Grande to pull out over the ridge and that's when we hit this wind and, boy, it was a strong wind. And you could see the lightening and it was dry lightening all back through that Anthony Lakes country. Boy, the next morning we got up we had fires every place.

JG: Yeah.

ED: Yeah, that...that same fire was when...and this was a couple, three days later...it was back over it again and we dropped some cargo, meals, the evening meal, and then the guy out of Joseph, Sid Wencher, and the ranger of the Wallowa district...I can't remember his name...was in this 180 and they were gonna drop some sleepin' bags.

JG: Oh, I remember, yeah.

ED: But they didn't have the door off or anything and they were gonna shove 'em through the baggage door. It just sucked 'em out there and went back and they caught the horizontal stabilizer and that's where they hung.

JG: Yeah, right over \_\_\_.

ED: I heard this voice on the radio a-callin' "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday." And it was dark, see, because it was dark when we left. He was circlin' around there just waitin' for us to get out of there. He come into La Grande and landed and of course when he slowed down on the runway, why, the sleepin' bags dropped off. They were layin' out there on the runway. But he wouldn't of went too much



further because it had cracked the front spar in the horizontal stabilizer and it wouldn't 've been but just a short time till the other one went and he'd of lost half of it, that'd been it. But that was a pretty foolish trick. I guess that ranger I think old Cary, I believe he was there then, but he really caught it. [laughs] He thought he was gonna lose his job.

JG: 'Cause that's what I was sayin', you know, we were right up...I can't remember exactly where on the Minam there, but it was right up real high there. I'm sure that was Ray that was droppin' the cargo 'cause he dropped the water cans and I know one went right out through the burlap sack \_\_ down there.

ED: Oh yeah. Mm-hmm.

JG: And \_\_ down and collect the water out of it. That's when he made that second pass with that box of little fruit juice cans...[laughs]

ED: Broke that. For some reason we had some problems with chute malfunctions there. That was on that fire that that sheep camp started. \_\_ pretty high up there.

JG: Oh yeah. That was way up on top of that ridge.

ED: Yeah, it was. Up Bear Creek and then...it was on top from Bear Creek.

JG: Yeah.

ED: Yeah...

JG: You're right up, you know, this is about the highest elevation \_\_ in there. 'Cause that was what I was talkin' about, those guys that needed their coffee that chute came in and it went right out...I think it was a five gallon can of coffee...went right out through the burlap sack...no, the chute only half opened, that was it. 'Cause it took a \_\_ out of an old pine fir about that big, just smashed it. The \_\_ these guys are down there wringin' the coffee out of the burlap sack. [laughs] It was, oh, that was a classic that whole thing. These guys...one guy said he had to have his coffee. I'd love to have a movie on that. It was one of a kind.

ED: Who ever attached those chutes was doin' something that wasn't...'cause that's...that's about the only trouble you have a occasional streamer, but just to have one after another like that there was somethin' wrong with it. One time...this was over on the Umatilla and I was gettin' the...the cargo was bein' packaged there at the warehouse in Pendleton and I was pickin' it up there and takin' it out back down in there to where on the Grande Ronde River back in that area. And that...that was the worst mess, but that wasn't chutes. The chutes were open, they weren't packin' in, but it was the way they strapped the package of cargo. And I remember I had watermelons, about four crates of 'em, you know, pretty good sized crates. I threw them out and it just jumped the chute, they didn't have it secured right, wasn't packed right. Jerked it right out and of course a crate freefall hit the hillside and of course watermelon pieces went all over. [laughs] Those guys were really...really put out. They didn't have any supper that evening. [laughs] Everything was busted. Nothing got to the ground. So then they says, well, cargo it out of La Grande, forget about... Because the people over there that were doin' it didn't...weren't...

JG: Know how to pack it.

ED: Didn't know how to do it, see.

JG: Yeah, 'cause I know we had, oh, I was tryin' to think...it was ham in there and they had...there was some \_\_, but the heavy stuff was packed on top and it went

right down. When it hit all this stuff, the heavy stuff, went right down through it. I remember \_\_\_ he was taken and here everybody their hands are just black from fightin' fire. He's out there with his ham slices just \_\_\_ like decks of cards across everybody's plate. [laughs] There was one guy that came back and he said... 'cause they dropped some ice cream, too, \_\_\_. One guy come back says, "Well, you can have \_\_\_." Don't know why \_\_\_ over here this guy \_\_\_ he just... we didn't have any utensils he just taken like puttin' scoops on the \_\_\_ plate. [laughs] Oh, it was terrible!

ED: It was easier.

JG: But there's no organization. I think about three rangers like that, but everybody when the food come in everybody just... it seemed like a bunch of barbarians, they're just grabbin' stuff. One guy, I remember, had a whole plate like this he was reachin' for somethin' else and somebody else \_\_\_ off his plate onto his. [laughs] Oh, I said, if we could've had a movie of that it was just \_\_\_ just a classic.

ED: You know, that's really too bad because those guys are work like the devil down there and I knew they were hungry, you know, and then to have that stuff break up like that. That wasn't a moral builder, I'll tell you for sure.

JG: The worst we ever got on the Silver Creek fire out of Lostine. First of all... well, we started out about eleven at night we left the ranger station and they sent us the wrong way. We were clear up south of the fire there. I think... good grief, it must've been at least a couple miles. 'Cause when we came up over the ridge it was just a little glow to the north, we're that far away from that fire as big as that was. We hiked all night out that ridge and it was real spooky 'cause there's all those bluffs in there.

ED: Oh yeah.

JG: And we're just like a bunch of hams runnin' all over with flashlights, we only had a couple flashlights, not everybody had one. I remember old Don \_\_\_, I don't know if you ever knew Don or not, but he had that one \_\_\_ arm where the... was crippled. Had one guy slip and he was slidin' down right out over one of these bluffs and down there and down there and just jammed a shovel into, you know, what little dirt there was or rock and stopped him just before he went over. The guy... he actually... he died because he got clear back... we probably took him back to the pick-up before he actually come to to realize that he's still living. [laughs] The next morning we got out there, we're sittin' right out on this thing that looked like and eagle'd perch. I remember carryin' this guy there's a helicopter come flyin' by, "Who are those guys and how in the world they got there?" 'cause we're still a big canyon across the fire itself. So we got some food in there and they carried this... here's all these sandwiches and oranges, candy bars. And somebody packs aviation fuel in with all this stuff. Everything was just saturated with the gas and we're sittin' there just starvin' to death, you know. [laughs] \_\_\_ all that gas \_\_\_. It was probably... I think it was about five in the afternoon before we finally got to the fire the next day. Who was the engineer... I could've killed him because he's sittin' there givin' me a bad time about, you know, bein' late to comin' to the fire and I was about to strangle him after all we

had to go through to get there. It was terrible. That was another one that was real classic.

ED: I wonder... I wonder what ever become of Livingstone there that used to be the ranger there at Union?

JG: He died.

ED: Did he?

JG: He had cancer here...it must be about ten years ago.

O: Lyn was tellin' us about it.

ED: Was he? I guess I forgot.

JG: I didn't know... I hadn't heard about it, you know, live right there...I didn't...I think it was a year-and-a-half before I even found out about it. Of course it seems like we always...[tape interruption]

ED: I guess she took up scuba divin' and he was out with his daughter, accordin' to what she said, and they were scuba divin' and Ray went down wherever it was and he just didn't come back up. They figured he'd had a heart attack or somethin'.

JG: Yeah, 'cause I didn't... I was talkin' to Lee Walton here this summer... \_\_ operating and I hadn't heard anything about it at all. What... I think he went down to Arizona, wasn't it?

ED: He had retired, but he was livin' down around Detroit, Oregon.

JG: Oh, is that where it was?

ED: Yeah, that's where it was, back in there someplace in the Cascades.

JG: 'Cause you just, you know, kind of lose track of a lot of times people \_\_.

O: He was a nice guy.

JG: Oh yeah. \_\_

ED: Yeah, he sure was. Neagle, you know, his brother, I imagine he's retired now, but he was a fire control office up there on one of those districts...

JG: Pomeroy, wasn't it?

ED: Pomeroy, yeah. It was on the Umatilla Forest, I think.

JG: Yeah.

ED: But he had a battlin' too. She was tellin' me that his boy...I don't know, he was fifteen, sixteen years old...he wrecked a motorcycle and killed himself.

JG: Oh gee.

ED: I remember \_\_. Them are zucchuni, made out of zucchuni.

O: Zucchini.

ED: Zucchini.

O: [laugh] Zucchie's back...[laugh]

ED: I got my mouth full.

JG: Is that from the garden out here?

O: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I bake a bunch of those cupcakes and then when little kids come, why, I stick 'em in the microwave.

JG: Oh yeah.

O: And they freeze just real good.

ED: You plant one zucchini plant, just one, and we get...[tape interruption] And I had a \_\_ tester, they're a deal about so long with a real short needle on 'em and then they keep gettin' thicker as you go back and then a meter on it. And it depend on

how much pressure pounds to check the \_\_\_\_\_. So he come up one day and he wanted me to take that thing down there. It was an expensive darn thing even though it wasn't very big. And I said...just put it up to the side of the fuselage like this, had it in my hand, and was kind of usin' my knee, you know, to move it as evenly as I could and poke a hole...[laughs] It was rotten.

O: But he flew it.

ED: But he flew it that way.

JG: I don't know how they... This guy had to have a charred life, I think, you know. It just...for all he went through like that.

ED: He come out there one time in the wintertime and the fog was movin' in and you could see it comin' up through up the valley, you know. There was just a breeze and it was just movin' it in. And he was gonna go flyin' and I told him, I said, "You're gonna get in a fog in and you won't get back." "Oh, no," he said, "I slip in under it." So he goes out, gets his airplane and goes up flyin' and he comes back and it had moved in, but there was a little end of the runway, I guess, that was still...wasn't fogged in so he landed on that, but he was still goin' pretty fast and I heard the tires a-screachin' and rrrr, you know. [laughs] He was headin' in the fog and he didn't know which way he was goin'. And then pretty quick I heard a thump. He ground looped it and stuck way in the ground. Pretty quick here he come a taxiing in. He'd had his wing tip all dinged up just grinnin' from ear to ear.

JG: Got that one \_\_\_\_.

ED: Yeah. [laughs]

JG: That first time I flew with him \_\_\_\_\_. 'Cause, you know, you get a real good feel of it. When he started out he didn't even know how to start the thing. He was sittin' there readin' the instruction book on how to start that. \_\_\_\_ like that \_\_\_\_ tore that door off and left the seat in, which I never \_\_\_\_ in there, you know, compared to bein' on the floor. And we're just takin' up over the \_\_\_\_ towards Indian Creek up over Mt. Harris there and I went to fasten the seatbelt and the whole thing went right out the door, nobody fastened it to the floor. So I'm sittin' here on top of this seat just right next to the hole door off like this and I just \_\_\_\_ give me a good viewing whatsoever. [laughs]

O: \_\_\_\_ out in the airplane \_\_\_\_ doin' the operating.

JG: I know it. That's what I was wonderin'. [laughs] That was the first time I flown with him. I said, "What am I doin' here?" 'Cause that...that \_\_\_\_ was, you know, he'd sit there and he'd tap me on the shoulder and nobody in the, you know, up there in the pilot seat at all. You know, he's back there, "Hey, go fly this thing." [laughs] Just as we're goin' up over the hill. He's one of a kind.

O: He's got a cat \_\_\_\_\_. I think he's got more than nine lives.

JG: He'd have to, I think, \_\_\_\_ like with that parachute, you know, survive high altitude \_\_\_\_ bounce off the...

ED: Yeah, one...the Chambers that was a mechanic that worked for me he was kind of a daredevil, too, but he'd told old Walker he said, "I bet you can't make..." it was either two or three complete loops...I mean spin, turns, from a thousand feet above the ground...excuse me...and come out of it. So Red Myler had came up from Portland for some reason. Anyway, we had...him and I had went into La

Grande and had a sandwich. We's comin' back out the highway and we seen this yellow cub go into a spin. And Red said, "Gee, he's pretty low to be spinnin'." He said, "I wonder who that is?" And I said, "Well, I know who it is." And I said, "When I get out there I'm gonna have a talk with that young man." [laugh] He was still goin' down...went behind the outside of the hanger from right we were on the highway, see, and I figured that was the end of Daryl. Then pretty quick here it come. [laughs] Old Red he...he's just a-shakin' his head. He said, "You better have a real good talk with that guy." [laughs]

JG: Yeah, like you said, I don't know how he ever lived so long, really.

ED: Then one time I was goin'...we were goin' into La Grande in the car one evenin' and Daryl had a motorcycle. He passed us then he slowed up and we passed him. And pretty quick here he'd come, he's standin' up in the seat and he passes us, see. [laughs]

O: No more, Eldon?

ED: No, I don't want...

JG: Do a whole book or movie just out of the life of Darly Walker. [laughs]

O: That's right.

ED: Yeah, and those parachutes, you know, that old parachute he had, you know, he jumped a lot. And anybody that'd take him up he'd jump. It took too long to pack that thing if there was another chance to go up to jump. Why, he didn't take the time to put it out on the packin' table and pack it, he just wadded it up \_\_ get back in the airplane and go again. It had holes in it. I wouldn't of trust it. Where he got that...

O: You got the one Vander put the bottle in and smoke? Who done that?

ED: I think Ralph Rensick did that to him. He put a... He had a pack that time, but when he opened it, why, here come all these tomato cans. [laughs]

O: Bottles.

ED: Bottles \_\_\_\_

JG: Now there's a real crew.

O: \_\_ had a lot of fun out there.

ED: He was askin' me about Ralph Rensick. The only thing I was thinkin' afterwards, if you're ever over around Lewiston look up Jerry Wilson. You knew him, didn't ya?

JG: I remember the name. I'm tryin' to...

ED: He's the one that I sold out to.

JG: Oh, okay. Yeah.

ED: And Hillcrest there. But he's got a...don't call it Hillcrest anymore, but he's got a...he's got an airplane...there's kind of a hangers are out there in kind of the center of the field. And he's a vice-president or the president of some bank over there now. \_\_ But he's the only one I can think of that might know the whereabouts of Ralph. But I know he isn't flyin' anymore. But if you're ever through there you might just have a little extra time, why...

JG: Like I was sayin', 'cause I had. I know I've got some shots of him droppin' back in on the Minam and some of that.

ED: Oh yeah. But he'd... Jerry is the only one I can think of because he worked for Jerry, see, quite a lot a long time before ever I sold out to him he flew spray plans

and stuff like that. One time up at St. Mary's they was circulated, they was puttin' on parathion and you know that stuff's real dangerous. It's poison, real poison. They was circulatin' this stuff and they had it runnin' through kind of a vat and around and through a hose and old Ralph he thought that hose was fresh water. He goes over there, picks it up, takes a couple of swallows of it. He damn near died. [laughs] He was sick all summer.

JG: Oh, I bet. [laughs] I think some of those guys they have a charred life. [laughs]

ED: Yeah. Quite a Ralph.

JG: Yeah, I can remember that one summer, it didn't...you know, they're all sittin' around there wasn't any fires at all that summer and I think Daryl's in with 'em there and they're in there...

ED: That's when Rosenbaum had a contract there probably. That's when...

JG: Had the...yeah.

ED: Yeah.

JG: He had those \_\_\_...whether it was \_\_\_ oxygen makin' little bombs \_\_\_ like guns. [laughs]

ED: Oh yeah, he was awfully good...good stuff like that.

JG: Just anything to keep 'em occupied without hurting people. [laughs]

ED: Yeah, I remember one time a long time ago Slim I took the three...three of 'em into the horse ranch. It was a little far goin' up the river there so they'd sent Slim and two other guys in there and I flew 'em in to the horse ranch and then they were gonna get horses and ride up to the fire. Old Red, you know, he kind of an ornery old crust.

JG: Oh yeah. [laughs] \_\_\_

O: \_\_\_ too.

ED: He give ol' Slim a horse. Slim got on the horse and was ready \_\_\_ and right away he got off. \_\_\_ says, "You red-headed son of bitch! I'll kill you!" [laughs]

JG: Red's standin' there just laughin'.

ED: Tickled the hell out of him. But he was \_\_\_ to do things like that. I was up there elk huntin', Norm Dennis and I, one time up at his upper camp. And these two or three dudes that he had in there was, you know...he had the...he put up with a lot of crap from people like that, you know. They would just really give him hell because they'd think that it should be one tied up for 'em and they don't get one. And he was at the supper table he was belly-achin' about damned old crow bait horse he's got. He said, "You can't get him to move." And he was really complainin'. So the next morning, why, Red put him on one. It was cold, it was in November, and it was a cold, cold mornin', snow on the ground. And it threw that guy off right about in the middle of \_\_\_. [laughs] He never said no more of that. [laughs]

JG: \_\_\_ Yeah, 'cause old Red, you know, anything like that it'd just tickle him to death.

ED: Yeah. He... He just... He wouldn't pay his help anything, you know. So he'd have... He'd have one cook \_\_\_. The guy that \_\_\_ he got his clientele to place him, you know, as \_\_\_ so he was off of skid row. There'd be one cook leavin' \_\_\_, one cookin', one leavin' the horse ration in the back, of course, you know there \_\_\_ very long. [laughs]

- JG: I come in there one time I was workin' on survey back in there and had a horse. And it just really got nasty, I'd been out like all week, so I thought, well, I'll come down there and just stay at the horse ranch one night. So \_\_\_ how much he'd charge, I think six dollars, it would got just a little bit of oats for the horse there and then the cook was gone so I'm sittin' there, doin' the dishes and everything else. [laughs] 'Cause \_\_\_ I was comin' in, you know, otherwise I'd already got mad and left.
- ED: That guy, I'll tell ya, he...and he'd get mad at them cooks. Up at the horse...or up at the other camp...I don't know whether that was the same time the guy got bucked off the horse, it could've been...but that one night it snowed about a foot-and-a-half of wet snow and the cook tent just collapsed, went in. So the next morning, why, here come this cook, he'd get up earlier, see, and he'd go in, well, his tent was all smashed down so he wakes up Red. We were in the same tent, big tent, five or six of us in there, sleepin' bags. And "Red, the cook tent fell down." "We'll see if we can't get it put back up." Well, they did. But then he had another bad habit. The hunters would come in, you know, and they'd be...break out their bottles and be sittin' there drinkin' and dryin' out and restin'. And he'd stick his head in the tent door and he'd say, "Fellas, supper'll be really in about an hour." "Well, fine. Here, have a drink." So he takes a drink and then he goes to the next room and makes the rounds and when he'd come, "About forty-five minutes, fellas, we'll be ready to eat." Another drink, you know. This one evenin' he got too many rounds and he was layin' on the cook table sleepin'. Red come in and Red was wet and cold and tired and after dark, not even a fire goin' in the cook stove. [laughs] Oh, he just beat the hell out of that poor damn cook. His was black the next mornin' and he was gonna leave. All he had on was a pair of those little old sandals with straps around the toes and the snow's about that deep, see. [laughs] Red said, "You so-and-so," he said, "You can quit if you want to, but," he said, "you don't get no horse," he said, "you walk." The guy couldn't. [laughs]
- JG: Yeah. If I just could've had the video, you know, these camcorders or somethin' like that, a movie back there, got all that...
- ED: I gol, I wished...
- JG: You couldn't stand to watch it all in one settin'.
- ED: I wished they had video cameras then.
- JG: Yeah.
- ED: Back then. One time I took in a load of groceries in there and he'd buy mayonnaise in these gallon jar...[end tape]