

OH-3006, Dick Perue, 5-9-2013, Saratoga, WY In Flight

[00:00:00]

BARBARA: This is Barbara Bogart, I'm interviewing Mr. Dick Perue at his home in Saratoga, Wyoming. The date is May 9th, 2014. We're going to be talking about the history of the Saratoga Airport, and we may talk about other things as well. So, and you go by Dick, but is your full name Richard?

DICK: No, my full name is Robert Richard Perue. And you'll see a lot of my stuff will be R. Richard. But when I started writing I used Dick and it's continued since then.

BARBARA: And how long have you lived in this area?

DICK: We moved to Saratoga in the valley on the Pick Ranch in 1938.

BARBARA: Is that you and your --

DICK: Eighteen months old. And that was my folks and my younger brother that was just nine months old.

BARBARA: And what brought them here?

DICK: They were ranchers. And my grandmother was born on the Laramie Plains in 1884. [00:01:00] My dad was born in Laramie in 1911. And then during the depression and after my dad and mother married, my mother was born in Ray,

Colorado in 1912. And so during the depression in 1936 they couldn't make a living on the Laramie Plains, so they went back to Iowa for two years. And that's as long as my dad could stand it. Because he loved ranching, but he couldn't stand farming. So then they came back and looked at a place in the Laramie Valley. And couldn't find anything suitable there. And then they came over here and he went to work at a ranch, Pick Ranch. Which is one of the famous ranches in the whole Wyoming. So we settled there in 1938. And then the bad winter of 1949 we couldn't get to school on the bus, so he moved us to town.

[00:02:00] And then we lived in town after that. So it's a ranch family, but I started in the newspaper business when I was 14 years old.

BARBARA: And how did you get started doing that?

DICK: By luck. Well, I was working for the man and woman, the Martins, Bob and Mary Martin that owned the newspaper. And we were pulling weeds and doing lawn care for them. And the printer's devil, or the trainee at the Saratoga Sun at the print shop tried to oil a press while it was running. And not only tore up the oil can, but it tore the press all to pieces. He decided to pursue a different career. And so after I just happened to go over to the print shop to ask him a question and the owner of the

newspaper and the print shop said, "Would you be interested in a job as a printer?" [00:03:00] And I said, "Yes, I would." Because I had such allergies that I couldn't go into agriculture. And pulling those weeds wasn't helping any. So I started as a printer in the newspaper business and I ran the print shop especially. And then by the time I was a senior in 1954 by then I was interested in writing and worked on the Mountain Echo and then wrote for the Saratoga Sun. And from there I went to the University of Wyoming, which Martins helped put me through. And I had an English teacher that I wasn't very good at English, but he knew I was interested in journalism. And so he got me a scholarship, a Tracy McCracken scholarship. And I don't know if you know Tracy McCracken.

BARBARA: I do know, yes, I know the name, sure.

DICK: Had the Cheyenne newspapers, the Rock Springs Rocket, the Daily Times, all the newspapers. And so from there I was editor of the Branding Iron. I graduated in 1958. Came back to Saratoga, started working for the Martins. [00:04:00] And we had an agreement that I'd come back and work for them while they'd sell it to me. And I'd work for them for ten years and then bought the newspaper in 1968. And then operated that until '82, and then kept the print shop separate. And then after that we went and sold the

print shop to the kids. And ever since then I've been doing just historical work.

BARBARA: Wow, that's great. Well, since the subject here is supposed to be aviation. Tell me, and I know you're really interested in history, and I want to ask you about that in a minute. But you were saying at lunch that you thought the airport was started in the 1930s.

DICK: It's right here, the airport history in 1934 a committee of local residents met with the federal airport inspections to determine the location of the modern landing field in Saratoga.

BARBARA: Had there been anything before do you know?

[00:05:00]

DICK: Yes, one existed up on the bench to the south of the main part of Saratoga. However, houses have now grown around it. But it was up there. So they went from that strip, which was from probably back to the late 1920s, and then by 1934 then they had the facilities that had a regular strip and a little hanger out there.

BARBARA: Now, what do you think was the impetus for creating an airport instead of just having an air strip, was there something going on in town that called for it?

DICK: Well, we had a lot of people that had airplanes. And then we had a lot of people to fly into it. Because the

tourist trade, you know, airports were an important thing when you do the tourist trade. And of course Saratoga is a tourist town. [00:06:00]

BARBARA: And it had been from the beginning? How did that happen?

DICK: Well, originally it started because of the mineral hot springs. And then also the river. And then it became one of the best fishing places in the world. And our slogan is "Where the trout leave in Main Street." And so we have a lot of history with the fishing. And a lot of those people would like to fly in and go fishing and then fly out. And it's just progressed from there. And also at that time agriculture people started with airplanes, you know, some of the crop dusters and the ranchers that would have those planes. And so it just kept growing and growing from that. Also, we had a big lumber and timber industry. And so that wasn't too much for the airport, but later years it became important for the airport, but in the beginning it didn't. [00:07:00] But it was mostly the local people wanted a better airport, because their friends would fly in and wouldn't have hardly a place to land.

BARBARA: Now, early on where all did people come from to go fishing in Saratoga?

DICK: Well, of course, our big draw was out of the Denver area and the front range would come up here. We called the Greenies and they'd come up and they'd be in your fishing hole. We called the Greenies for two reason, one because of the license plate, and the other is that they brought enough money and it was green. But that was where a lot of the ones came in on the early ones. And, of course, they came out of Salt Lake and Omaha. And we had riders that could come out of Chicago, and lot of them would come off the trains at the Union Pacific, which is 20 miles away. And then we had a little train that used to run in here for the passengers. And so as it gained fame as a fishing spot, why then it became more and more. [00:08:00] And the airport fit in with that tourist type thing.

BARBARA: That all makes sense. Now, in 1934 when they decided to move from this little air strip, which I'm assuming was dirt, and build a real airport, is that the location that it is today?

DICK: Yes. And the other air strip was up there. But started out it was supposed to be an irrigated pasture up there back in the 1900s. And they were going to raise lettuce and celery and asparagus, and those type of crops. And they put the water on it and they could grow those crops. But the thing that you have to remember is lettuce,

you can't freeze it, you can't can it, you have to have a local market to do it. By the time they got to the nearest market in Denver, why it was too late. So that didn't run. [00:09:00] So here you had a nice real flat area up there. And so then they just had kind of an air strip there to start with. And then in '34 when they got together we're going to put the different things in it.

BARBARA: Do you know who was involved in the 1930s in that push to build the airport?

DICK: Yes, the basketball coach by the name of Deforest was involved in it. L.D. Donelan, Don Donelan, and he was the major one behind it. Tex Courtney, who later became a pilot in WWII. And Bob Martin that owned the Saratoga Sun, and he flew. And it was several of the local businessmen that were real interested in pushing to get that done.

BARBARA: And most of them, it sounds like, they had their own planes.

DICK: Yeah, some of them had their own planes. Others would go together. [00:10:00] Back then maybe take two guys would have to go together on an airplane, or something like that. But a lot of them learned to fly in the early days. And then as more and more pilots became involved, Ed Shively, and it's called Shively Field, and it's named after Jack Shively, Lieutenant Jack Shively that was killed

in the Second World War in France. But he was a fighter pilot and he learned to fly here before he went to flight school. And that's why he wanted to go to flight school.

BARBARA: So he is a local guy.

DICK: He was a local boy. And Shively Hardware, they started in 1928. And when Ed and Pearl Shively moved here, why Jack and his sister Jane were just small. And he learned to fly at this local airport. And from there then there's even one story, and it came from a pretty reliable source, is that during the Second World War before he went to France came out of flight school, why he flew his fighter plane back here and landed. [00:11:00] And then did kind of an air show and supposedly even flew it under the river bridge and did some rolls and stuff over top of town and then when he went to France. In fact, there's not only a marker memorial up here to him, but also over in France. And they pride him really highly. Hold on just a second and I can show you. Saratoga and then from flight school. And then here's where he was home for his sister's wedding to John Gload (sp?). And John Gload just passed away just now. And this is John and Jane. But this is Jack.

BARBARA: Now, you said he learned to fly here. Who was teaching, who was giving flight lessons? [00:12:00]

DICK: I think they started out pretty much on their own. But from what I can tell the coach by the name of Deforest was the one that was giving mostly lessons. And also the man that was also in the Second World War was Tex Courtney, Howard, Howard Tex Courtney. And he would give some. But as near as I can tell most of these guys pretty much just learned it on their own. And later on we had some, in fact, Donelan used to do some instruction and different ones.

BARBARA: Where would they get their plane, where did they buy their planes, do you know?

DICK: Most of them would come out of the Denver area. And there was quite a few coming out of Omaha at that time too. But we had to go someplace else to buy the planes, but most of them would be out of the Denver, Fort Collins area there.

BARBARA: So they built this new airport in 1934, or that was when it first got started. And what did it involve at that point? [00:13:00] How big was it, do you know?

DICK: Well, let's see, 1934. Well, it's 8,800 feet. It wasn't that long now. You know, I'm not sure, but I think it was only probably about 4,000 feet.

BARBARA: Just that one run?

DICK: Yeah, just one runway, instead of the big expansion now. And, of course, yeah, that was site for the local airport inspected and then in '36 and clear up to the Second World War, they kept expanding the airport and adding facilities up there.

BARBARA: Such as?

DICK: A hanger. And I don't have a copy of that hanger, but I do have a picture. [00:14:00]

BARBARA: So it was gradually expanding. And then after WWII, was there a big boom in recreation here in Saratoga? I don't know much about the development of all the fishing lodges.

DICK: Yes. Well, it was, as most places, Second World War the guys came back, and of course, we had some pilots that came back too. And then also the business was expanding. Although, we've had a real good business core from clear back, first post office was in 1878. And I have the original postmaster thing, the postmaster commission. And then in '84 they renamed it Saratoga. Was going to name it Saratoga Springs, but the post office said we already have a Saratoga Springs, so you have to just leave it Saratoga. But that business core established there. [00:15:00] And of course, we had a lot of guys in the second world war. And then after, in about 1946, of course, they needed all

the lumber and stuff for these houses. And so our lumber industry had taken off. And the tourist thing picked up again, because people had more money and the veterans had been all these different places and they loved to travel. And they liked the friendliness of Saratoga. So you bring one fisherman and pretty quick he brings another. And pretty quick, why you have a lot of people coming on here. And then agriculture was booming, because you had all the veterans coming back and going back to their family ranches here. So that was going great. And then the mineral industry, particularly at Hannah, we didn't have any much in the valley, but Hannah was a big. But they didn't want to live in Hannah, so they'd live in Saratoga and drive that 40 miles back and forth, even back then. So our mineral industry was expanding. [00:16:00]

BARBARA: And that was coal in Hannah; right?

DICK: Coal, yeah. And then they tried in late 1800s and the early 1900s, why then of course they had the big copper boom and the copper smelter in Cambet. And just a little bit of coal and oil activity here, but that never did prove out in our valley. And so we're pretty much right back where we started from. But all those, and the availability of excess airplanes from the Second World War, and also people with money, why then they started. And some of

these pictures that I've had before, why you'll see they're all old planes that never got overseas or anything. And so they could buy those planes and they'd be pretty cheap.

BARBARA: So they would be military surplus plane do you mean?

DICK: Well, yes, to a certain extent. But you have to remember the fighter planes weren't the things that really did it. [00:17:00] It was the reconocense planes, the ones that took pictures, the trainers, the trainer planes, and those type of things. Because they never went across overseas or anything, or wouldn't be on a ship. But what are you going to do with all those one? And besides you had all the excess airplanes. And so you find a lot of these guys, the flying farmers and a lot of those groups like that, these ranchers, the government would probably even help finance that airplane if they were a veteran. And so they'd say I need this for my ranch. Well, that was a good excuse. And probably you did if you ran sheep from clear north of Hannah, clear up to down Steamboat Springs, Colorado almost in the mountains, fly an airplane was something that they could use.

BARBARA: So the ranchers did use planes around here, some of them? [00:18:00]

DICK: Oh, yes. And they still do. In fact, Chuck Sanger, that one I did a cross book about, why he's a pilot and he

just he's a year younger than I am. But I can remember he must've bought that plane, he graduated at the University of Wyoming in '59 or '60, and I think he had a plane by about '65. And had until just recently, and then he had some health problems and doesn't have it anymore. But ranchers still use the planes. And the Abaray (sp?), which is a dude ranch, they have their own airport up there.

BARBARA: Oh, really?

DICK: Yes. And then as it started to expand, the real expansion came with Old Baldy Club. And that would be George Storer and this A.D. Davis.

BARBARA: And Store spells his name S-T-O --

DICK: R-E-R. [00:19:00] Now, this happened in 1961, and he was building the Old Baldy Club at the time that he's expanding the airport. And bringing in his turbo prop. And also we had people that were interested that were flying, then this is Arthur Godfrey that flew in. And here's about the airport. I haven't ran down the exact date on this one yet, but I should get it. But it had to be the late 50s.

BARBARA: Oh, my gosh.

DICK: See, he'd fly in. And here's Arthur Godfrey there. And I have some other pictures I've found since we've made

this. But the reason that they would fly in was because of the good airport they had.

BARBARA: Sure. So you said Storer and Davis were the ones who put -- and this was in 1961. [00:20:00]

DICK: Yes, there's a date on it.

BARBARA: Oh, this is what you were talking about at lunch, they each donated \$20,000.

DICK: Yes.

BARBARA: Explain that again for the recorder.

DICK: Well, when I was editor of the newspaper, editor, janitor, line type operator, the only reporter. Just a little bit of everything. But anyway, when Mr. George Storer making these donations, and Davis, and I'd ask George Storer, I said, "My goodness, \$20,000 is a lot to donate."

BARBARA: And you said that was to pave the airport; right?

DICK: Yes, this was to pave the airport, and then that would come in the 1961 pavement and expansion. And I have the other ones here. But the real big thing that happened between '34 and '61 was that runway paving. But it wouldn't have happened if hadn't been for Davis and Storer. But they both had what they call turbo props at that time. [00:21:00] And I'd asked Mr. Storer about the \$20,000 donation, that was quite a bit. And he explained to me

that with that turbo prop that if he sucked up one rock into that turbo prop that engine would probably cost him more than 20,000. So the town of Saratoga took about 40,000 from the A.D. Davis and George Storer for the airport. The town put in 3,000. Other people put in additional money and finally obtained \$130,000 to do the project. Then Davis and Storer insisted that Graham and Associates out of Cody, Wyoming, they were aviation experts, and they knew how to do the grants. At that time the Federal Aviation Authority, if you could raise the money, they would put up 90% of the project. [00:22:00] The State of Wyoming, Wyoming Aviation, I think it was Commission at the time, I can't remember the exact one, that they would put in 8%. So with 2% of the money, \$130,000, we got a \$1 million runway with, well, it was two runways with an apron and lights and 8,800 feet long, one of the best jet airports in the whole country. And it was paved through that because of their generous donation. And then the knowledge that Graham and Associates their engineers had of obtaining that money. So those grant things are still available for airports to use. And quite a few of the Wyoming airports, smaller Wyoming airports took this outline and went with that. [00:23:00] Because Graham and Associates used this. I think the Cody airport

was one of the first ones that they did with this, Cody. But then after that Graham and Associates were known all over the Rocky Mountain region where they could raise the money locally and get the rest of it financed by the Federal Aviation Authority. And so they played an important role in it. And George Storer knew what he was doing, because he'd worked with him and he'd been in aviation most of his life. And so he knew about that. But he had a real good thing for Graham and Associates.

BARBARA: Now, tell me quickly what the Old Baldy Club is. I have heard of it, of course.

DICK: The Old Baldy Club was a private fishing and golf club started by George Storer, and he started it in 1961. And he went until, I think it opened in '64, but they built it here. And this was their 50th, yeah, 50th anniversary of opening it. And we are right in the midst they're writing a book on the 50th anniversary and I'm helping with that. And I just happen to have my Storer book out. I think maybe is that my tour book?

BARBARA: This says Old Baldy right here.

DICK: Yeah, both those are Old Baldy Club. This gives you an idea. This was a story written by Larry Balleppi (sp?) of Cheyenne, and for the Empire Magazine. And there's all the history that you'd need. And when I do, not tours of

the club, [00:25:00] but club members like to have river tours. And what we'll do is get maybe three rubber rafts full of Old Baldy Club members, and I'll go down the river and tell them about the history of the Old Baldy Club. And also the history of the river and then the guys that are rowing, why they know, we work together and they know the animals and the different things and questions people ask. But this is how it was established, but it was a private club. And there's a copy you can have. And as it said, this was not named after all the bald men up there. It was named after Kennedy Peak. And before 1911 it was called Bald Mountain or Old Baldy. And so that's where it came from that it was named after.

BARBARA: And this was Storer's enterprise.

DICK: Yes. [00:26:00]

BARBARA: So then he could advertise to his clients that they could fly in.

DICK: They weren't clients, they were friends. So what they did is they formed a club and it was a membership thing. And they'd bring other friends and that type of thing. And when it first started it was almost an exclusive men's club. And then it expanded into now that the women have their own golf tournaments and that type of thing. But the real kicker on the thing was that he loved the fishing.

And he'd been fishing here for years before he came up here. And then he wanted to settle in Estes Park. But they weren't very receptive to the idea. And he'd thought it would become too commercialized. So then he came to Saratoga and thought he made a deal to buy the Saratoga Inn. And that deal fell through in 1958. [00:27:00] And so that didn't happen. So then he decided, well, he still wanted to be here. So looked at it and he bought four local ranches that had great fishing on them, good water rights, and then that turned it into the Old Baldy Club. See, with the water rights you had enough for the houses for domestic use, you had enough for the fishing, and you had enough to irrigate the golf course. And like I say, there's a book coming out on this after while. But the reason he wanted the airport was because he was flying in here all the time.

BARBARA: Sure.

DICK: And so as that expanded, and then a lot of his friends were also in aviation. And most of them were well to do, and so they had airports. [00:28:00] And then what also expanded was that years ago Wyoming you had to register that airplane and pay tax dollars every year. Wyoming and Saratoga did not have any tax on airport registration. Most of them had a big one. So they'd fly in here the

first of January almost every year and register that to this local airport. And so that way they didn't have to pay taxes. But it also gave us, because they bought their fuel here. And then that's where we could add a fixed base operator and then more people had planes. And then the Conquistadores, and I don't whether you've heard of them or not.

BARBARA: I haven't.

DICK: That's a national aviation fraternity. And guys like Howard Hughes, all the big airplane manufacturers.

[00:29:00] Bob Six of Continental Airlines, all these guys they belong to an aviation fraternity. And they'd come to Saratoga and park it up here, and then they'd go up the Abaray to do it. And a lot of those were friends of Storer. But some of them have been coming here even been Storer had. And there would be at one time there'd be all the modern airplanes right up here on this airport. And they'd go up to the Abaray for a week of festivities and that type of thing. And in fact, when Bill Lear brought his first jet up here, the Lear Jet, why he came up here to meet with all these, because these were the guys, McDonald and all those guys that were selling airplanes. He brought his jet up here and I got to ride in his first jet.

BARBARA: Oh, how cool. [00:30:00]

DICK: And he told me, I can't remember was it Tulsa, Oklahoma, I think? But he started building it in the garage. And it just got bigger and bigger, and finally he had to tear the doors out of his garage and he moved it out to the airport and then expanded it into that Leer Jet. And I was going to get those, but I don't have them now. But I have photographs of my ride with Bill Leer. And that had to be in the early 60s. So when things were really hopping there.

BARBARA: So in the 60s then you had this new airport basically, or new facility, the turbo props and the jets starting to come in. And then what has happened over the past 50 years?

DICK: Well, at one time we were considered, because of all the jets landing here, we were the third busiest jet airport in the state of Wyoming. [00:31:00] And Cheyenne and Casper were bigger. However, now I think Jackson has overtaken this and probably Cody. And there's probably some others that are there. But this is still one of the top airports in the country and operated. But then see '83 they installed the apron lighting and runway visual vertical guidance system. And then 1984 installed runway lighting system. '87 did a an airport master plan. '89 expanded the airport apron area. 1990 they extended the

runway. Because what was happening, those big jets at this altitude had to take more on it. It helped with two things, our fixed base operator would sell more fuel, because they had longer (inaudible) ready to take off. [00:32:00] Otherwise they'd have to take off less fuel here then go someplace else. But these people wanted to keep the airport going. And it also helps the town, because we get the tax off that.

BARBARA: Right, the town owns the airport; right?

DICK: Yes, the town owns the airport. However, it's operated by a committee. And then 1988 extended the runway. And then 1998 they constructed the taxiway. '99 extended the runway again. And then 2001 installed weather reporting equipment. 2004 constructed a parallel taxiway. What was happening was even though we had two runways we had too much traffic that you had to have a parallel one. And then rehabilitation program on the taxiways in 2006. They put a new beacon in in 2010. [00:33:00] And now 2012, why there's a new master plan. And so just a real asset to the town of Saratoga, because not only the Old Baldy Club uses it, the Conquistadors fly in, the Abaray, although they have a runway up there. But if they have a bigger one, why they fly in. We have several ranchers now that have airplanes. And they have probably a dozen or

more hangers up there with big expensive airplanes in it. The Brush Creek Ranch, which went from a ranch to one of the finest dude ranches in the country just a few years back, they built a brand new hanger with two big airplanes in it.

BARBARA: At the airport?

DICK: Yes. And they fly in from Chicago with that. So that's a great asset. And I suppose, I can't tell you for sure, and if you have time we can talk to Kim, or you might have to come back. [00:34:00] But he operates that and he can tell you what size the planes that are coming in and that type of thing. He's the fixed base operator.

BARBARA: Good. Now, you promised to tell me some stories.

DICK: About what?

BARBARA: I don't know, about planes, or flying, or pilots. And you've already told me some too. And I understand that's not your area. Are you a flyer yourself?

DICK: No. I enjoy flying and I was in the Wyoming Air National Guard. But I was a photographer and putting out a little newspaper and doing press releases for the Wyoming Guard for six years. But I do fly some, but not much lately.

BARBARA: So the rule of the airport in town it sounds like it's a big economic asset for the town.

DICK: It is, yes. Because when those guys fly in not [00:35:00] only buy fuel, but they bring a whole crew with them. And now a lot of the Old Baldy Club members go to the Old Baldy Club, but then they'll have a pilot and a co-pilot and a crew. And most of those stay at Saratoga Inn or other motels here. Because the facilities at the Old Baldy Club are limited to members and guests. But then that's a great economic thing. And it fills up the local motels and they go around and hit the restaurants and do that. So it's, yes, it's a good economic boost for the town.

BARBARA: And do the people in the town know that, do they recognize it?

DICK: Yes, most of them know it. However, you always have a few that they look and see how much it costs, the airport made cost on it. They don't realize that the fixed base operator is paying a fee to the town to put his base there. [00:36:00] Plus they're getting all the fuel tax. And that aviation fuel is a lot more expensive and a lot higher tax than regular fuel. And then almost everyone, even at the newspaper, we always, a lot of those would have subscriptions and would do some printing with us. And the restaurants, the motels. And with most dollars that come in from the outside like that they'll turn over seven times

in your community. Where the other ones will only turn over, the ones generated from the mail say, because of the tax and the people that are here and the payroll and that type of thing, will probably only turn over four times in your community. Because you've got to provide schools for them and all the things. So tax dollars. And probably you being aware of that, why you're probably --

BARBARA: Well, I used to be a small business owner, so I understand that about local dollars and how they turn over.

[00:37:00]

DICK: And most all this was cash type thing.

BARBARA: Right. So maybe this is a question for the manager, but how many planes do they store there, do they keep there?

DICK: I can't tell you for sure on that. But Kim could probably tell us on that and give you the information there. This tells about when Don Donelan and Pick Walker and Martins and all those were expanding the runway. And this is where they're trying to get Don Donelan into the Wyoming Aviation.

BARBARA: Oh, the whole thing.

DICK: The whole thing.

BARBARA: And you said you were collecting information about that. Well, tell me a little bit about him.

DICK: Don Donelan?

BARBARA: Uh-huh.

DICK: He was a pharmacist that owned the drug store and he became interested in aviation. [00:38:00] And they were flying a lot. And the drug store actually had the radio and the whole thing. Somebody would come in and radio, why then he'd give the instructions out and then they'd run it. That one picture I showed you with the little Jeep Wagoneer.

BARBARA: Yeah.

DICK: Well, they'd run that up there, pick you up and bring you downtown. And so he kind of ran the local airport. And he was instrumental in getting money for it. And he also gave flying lessons.

BARBARA: Oh, he did?

DICK: Yeah.

BARBARA: Now, how did he learn to fly, do you know?

DICK: I don't know for sure on that. I think it was just a whole bunch of those guys had kind of a flying club in the 30s. And the one instructor, it gets back to that Deforest was the one that evidentially was kind of the person behind that. Let's see. I saw Saratoga grow from a dirt and sage brush to a beautiful airport. Let's see. When Don started his great effort to grow the Saratoga Airport there was

just one lonely hangar. He kept his beautiful little Lescom 880 there and flew it on a regular basis. So he had a real nice airplane. And I can remember his son and I were good friends and he'd fly me sometime. I would've rather flown with dad than Jerry back then. And they just took it kind of out there and knocked it off the runway. And probably one of the biggest stories was that Iran where they had the soldiers and that airplane. [00:40:00] This I probably need to get more accurate information on. But anyway, one of the executives was either at the Old Baldy Club or at the Abaray with the Conquistadors. The biggest plane that ever landed in here. And it took off from here because it picked up the President. I think it was in Iran and they killed a sailor and threw him out of the plane under the one. Well, the president of the company that owned that plane was here. And they flew a big airplane in here and picked him up at two o'clock in the middle of the night. And when that plane went over the top of this house it rattled everything in town.

BARBARA: I'll bet.

DICK: And so it took all that runway to get it up off there. Because they had to have enough fuel from when they left here with the President, because they wouldn't talk with anybody else. When they left here they had to fly clear, I

think they had to refuel once between here and there. But it was one of the biggest planes that ever landed here.

[00:41:00]

BARBARA: And it could, that's amazing.

DICK: Yes. And they had confidence that it would. Because he had flown in here several times in a smaller plane and realized that it could do that.

BARBARA: Now, Mr. Donelan, is that his name?

DICK: Um-hum.

BARBARA: How do you spell that?

DICK: D-O-N-E-L-A-N. I'll tell you what, some of this is not all that literal, but I can make you a copy of it, if you want it.

BARBARA: That would be great. Let me turn this off for a minute. Okay, you're going to tell me about a helicopter and a glider experience.

DICK: Well, the group, there was two, maybe three [00:42:00] glider clubs that were out of Loveland and around Fort Collins and down around that area. And they would always come up here two or three times a year off this airport, then they'd glide the mountains and that type of thing. Probably one of the best airplane rides that I ever had was they had a two-seated glider. And we glided and went clear around Elk Mountain and back. And there's no airplane

noise, there's nothing. In fact, it almost is very few are going to drop off anything, because other airplanes, particularly the little ones around here made a lot of racket. Because in order to climb the elevations that they had to get over 12, 13,000 feet from the 7,000 foot airport, why it made a lot of difference. But that was one of the greatest experiences. And then, of course, I write the stories for them and do things like that. And they've had actually races and all kinds of things from our Saratoga Airport. [00:43:00] But that was one of the best rides. And then, of course, the ride with Leer in the Leer Jet was something special. And then when Abrey (sp?) Aviation from up at Grable, and this name will come a lot too in the aviation, when the Forest Service was putting in a new bridge at Hog Park across the Encampment River about where Hog Creek comes in and the Encampment River, a sheet bridge, why they couldn't, there was no way to get in that except maybe by pack mules or helicopter. So Avery would, I was taking pictures and reporting the story for the newspaper, and when he didn't have too much of a load, why he lifted up all the stuff and fly it in to where they were building the bridge. So if he didn't have too much of a load, why then I'd get to go along. And each trip coming back, why we'd need to go down by steamboat and come back

around that way, or we'd go down by Walden, Colorado and all that. [00:44:00] So with the helicopter not only got all the Encampment River, but also got all the territory and things. And that was my first ride in a helicopter.

BARBARA: When did you take your first plane ride?

DICK: Well, let's see, I was a kid and there was an air show up here, and that must've been probably, I think I was about a sophomore, that must've been '51 or '52. Because they used to have these big air shows. But then they had two wrecks. One of them this hillside right here, stunt plane, and another one up on the airport two years in a row. And so they discontinued the air shows.

BARBARA: And so they would give people rides as part of the air show?

DICK: Yes, after the air show was over so much to get a ride. And I think I saved up my money and it might've been a couple bucks, or something like that, but anyway got to ride in an airplane. [00:45:00]

BARBARA: So who put on the air shows, do you have any idea?

DICK: Probably the Lions Club and the local organizations. I was just like they do with circuses nowadays is you get the Shriners or somebody to sponsor it. And probably the Lions Club, because that's the most active organization in town. Or it could've been these guys from the airport just

got together, but they're all Lions Club members anyway.

And under that I believe you had to have some group sponsor it. Because if there was anything like that their insurance covered it, you know.

BARBARA: Of course. Is there any kind of annual open air fly in show at the airport now?

DICK: No.

BARBARA: I know they do at Burns Field in Evanston they have an annual fly in.

DICK: Well, the only thing we have it's called the Flying Farmers. And quite a few of those come in a lot of times. But I don't think they do that as much now as they used to, because most of the ranchers and farmers are not organized in groups like that.

BARBARA: Yeah, I've heard of that, the Flying Farmers.

DICK: Flying Farmers. And that's one of them. And the guy at Rock River, what the heck was his name? But the guy at Rock River was kind of the state president, and he loved to search over one. Gibbs, Fred Gibbs. And I flew with him several times.

BARBARA: He was from Rock River?

DICK: Yes, had a ranch right out of Rock River.

BARBARA: Oh, I see, okay.

DICK: And then the University, why, you would go on some flights and things. And then up here at the airport, why I'd get some private flights, go with guys and take aerial shots, or something of the town. We'd just go flying around. Because a lot of my friends had airplanes. Some of them I'd fly with and some of them I wouldn't. Or at least once and maybe never again. [00:47:00] Because they always thought they had to give you a thrill ride or something.

BARBARA: Right, right.

DICK: And then when I was in the Wyoming National Guard, why then if I wanted a ride, why after we got out of the jet, they first had jets, then they got into the transportation, the C-118, the C-119s, the C-130s and the C-131s. Why being a reporter and doing a little newsletter and taking photographs, where I had another friend of mine was a photographer, actually, why we'd just get up and want to go for a ride, well, all you had to do is just go get your notepad and your camera and they'd go and they'd give you a ride in the airplane, or wherever they were going, you know, training.

BARBARA: So you never took flying lessons either or flew yourself?

DICK: No, never did.

BARBARA: A happy spectator.

DICK: Oh, yeah, or passenger.

BARBARA: Yeah. [00:48:00] Now, I want to switch topics completely because I'd like to hear you talk about how you got so interested in local history that you've amassed this huge archive here. How'd that happen?

DICK: Well, that came from the newspaper job to start with. Dad Martin, that was R.I. Martin, that was the father, and then Bob Martin was the son. And Dad Martin came here in 1917 and bought the newspaper. He had been here in 1903 and then he came back in 1917 and bought the newspaper. And he would write a lot of the history columns and they'd do these things 100 years ago or 50 years ago, like that. So I picked up some of that from him. And then Bob Martin, the son, the ones I actually worked for, why he was really interested in history. And they kept gathering this. [00:49:00] and the Saratoga Sun still runs a lot of history from past files, and I write a column sometimes for the paper here, but I write one every week for the Livestock Roundup. And it's just part of a history project. But when I went to the University of Wyoming, why I took a minor in history, because I had to through the newspaper I had to do this every week. You know, you go back and research the old newspapers, 150 years ago. And so I

became interested in it and started interviewing some of the old timers and writing history of the area. And then particularly from the photographs. I like the photographs and getting up the old photographs. So that kind of sparked my interest in history. And when I bought the paper in 1968, why Bob Martin it had been in their family for 50 years. And he spent all these years collecting this history, [00:50:00] because he was going to put out two pictorial history books on the Saratoga and Encampment area. He was really interested in history. I mean he helped to establish history clubs and things in Carbon County and Rock, they called them Rock Hounds then. You know, when they get up all the arrowheads and all that stuff. And he was interested in geology, which has a lot to do with history. And then the old dinosaur bones and things that they used to find west of town. And so he'd spent a lot of time in history there. But also we put such an emphasis on history that if you had a 50th wedding anniversary we went to take your picture and it went on the front page.

BARBARA: Oh, wow.

DICK: And then what we did with it, we'd put the history along with it. And then years back almost every paper he'd ask somebody that's been here, old timers, or something

like that, would have some type of history story in it.

[00:51:00] Immigrant's Crossing, or the Overland Trail or whatever it was, and so he'd gather those up. Well, it kind of rubbed off, because I was doing a lot of the writing and interviewing on that type of thing. But in 1968 when I bought the paper he was going to write two pictorial history books. He had two real serious heart attacks and he couldn't continue with that. So he had a piece of paper comes in, see those boxes over there?

BARBARA: Yeah.

DICK: Well, there's my grandmother, and there's one history and photos. He gave me 60 boxes full of this. It has glass plates, it had manuscripts. It had photographs, everything in the world. It was just like Christmas for a historian. And he said, "I know this is a burden," but he said, "would you either donate this to a museum or do something with it someday?" [00:52:00] I promised him I would. I said, "Well, right now," of course, he financed the paper for me too when I bought it, I said, "I'm so busy trying to make a living and pay you for the newspaper I don't have time to do it." And he said, "No, just promise me that you will preserve this." And so I did. And a few years back I started sorting. Of course, by then I'd had

40 boxes of my own, so I had 100. But I've got about 10 more boxes to sort, so I'm getting there.

BARBARA: You're making progress.

DICK: But I'm keeping my promise to him, because it's preserved. And I've helped supply two museums and some at the University of Wyoming. But I still have all this stuff, you know, every place on it. And I don't necessarily consider myself a historian, because I don't study the history thing as much as I should. I'm more a collection to this type of thing. And then I tried to collect all the facts and make them line up. [00:53:00] But also I don't ignore the legends or the stories that go along with it. And the times when I do downtown walking tours I say, "Legend has it." Well, you'll kind of want to watch me, because I'm not too sure how true this may be, but this was the story that was passed down. And you're going to find your oral history, you're going to interview me and I'm going to tell you one story. And the same story by somebody else is going to be a little bit different. And so that's one of the things. But you are preserving the events and the history. So that, and then after I sold the print shop, Marty and I sold the print shop, then I went into custom mounting framing of things. And I wasn't too interested in that. Finally I established a business

called Historical Reproductions by Perue. And so now this is my office. And so I do history business. [00:54:00]

BARBARA: Oh, good, thanks.

DICK: So I do that. And then that appears in my books and all that stuff. Now, let's see, I just had this out the other day. And then in the 70s when the two women were starting the Encampment Museum, why they asked me to serve on the committee, for two reasons, because I had this great collection, and also because I had the paper that would provide publicity for them. And so we worked on that. And then the Saratoga Museum I was on the Board of Directors of that. And so it just kind of kept on going each year. And so what I would do is we'd do a living history of the Platt Valley Lyre was the first newspaper. [00:55:00] And this guy that established it in 1988 in Saratoga was a real big storyteller.

BARBARA: So there's a pun in there somewhere; right?

DICK: They would refer to him as the Lyre of the West. And so every once in a while he'd run a little spot in the paper there that the Plat Valley Lyre spelled L-Y-R-E, and meaning to hold harmony and music, let's see, is to hold harmony and music, and anyone referring to it in any other vein will be shot immediately. But they used to call him (inaudible) of the West. But each year we do these history

projects on different things and different things. And there's the book. Here's the first in 1987. [00:56:00] Why that's when we started printing at the Grand Camp Museum. I actually moved the press, the whole press shop up there. And so we have that. Here's Strings from a Wyoming Lyre. And this was a book. I have the original copy on that. And this is one we reproduced as a fundraiser for the Surgical Museum. But this is all his old tall stories in there.

BARBARA: Oh, I see, okay.

DICK: And so that's a reproduction of that.

BARBARA: So those are the kinds of things you do with this business?

DICK: Yes. And the only reason I do that business is because it has to be charged off part of my income tax. But I don't make enough money now to make any difference. And then I also do, I used to have a camera, recorder and I'd do that. Most of my stuff is vest in this. [00:57:00] But I researched all the lookout towers in Wyoming and put it on there. And then I had a video program, and I have those for that one. Then when they moved the lookout towers, see, this is Ron and Dick at (inaudible) Museum. This is my brother and he also worked at the print shop down there. But then he went into engineering. But see

this is when they moved this tower, here's Grand Encampment Museum. I tried to find two copies of each one that I've done. Now, here Dick, Pat, Pat was the first woman union printer in the state of Wyoming. And she was really a nice gal. And Fred is her son that would have lunch with us in the day. And he helped us. He just came out of the Navy was in a car wreck and extensive brain damage. This is Pat Cronk (sp?). [00:58:00] And when Pat passed away we did a special tribute to her. And there's Pat. There's Freddy who had the brain. There's her obituary and there's Pat. But she used to handset type for me. Here's the one that started the Encampment Museum, these two ladies right here.

BARBARA: So all of these are for Encampment.

DICK: Well, no, these back here, some of them are for the Grand Encampment and some are for the Saratoga.

BARBARA: Oh, I see.

DICK: And some of them, if I do a program, why I always do handouts, as well as the program. And then most of these were done at the Grand Encampment Museum for living history day.

BARBARA: You don't have any that deal with the airport in there, do you?

DICK: I haven't, no, I don't. There's Encampment's 100th anniversary. No, I don't. And then also I do calendars

for those. [00:59:00] And what we did on this one, we went back 100 years ago and put whatever happened on that day. Except this one is what was going to be one of the events. And then we put those in bold face, or something like that.

BARBARA: That's cool. Well, listen, is this fellow Kim expecting us at the airport?

DICK: Yes. But we're just right.

BARBARA: Maybe we should get up there.

DICK: There's the Riverside history. There's our hobo pool. And there's the river. See when we do local points there's all about the river history. And here's other state wrestling thing. Here's the Old Baldy things that I do for the history.

BARBARA: That's great.

DICK: And Ryan Park. And I do a downtown walking tour and here's my brochure for a walking tour. You can either take it and do it yourself or put it like that.

BARBARA: Wow, this was great. [01:00:00] Anything else that you want to tell me that I should know about the airport, or I'll just talk to Kim, I guess.

DICK: Well, you can talk to Kim. And then if I find some additional information, why I'll be more than glad to do it.

BARBARA: We need to do some paperwork here.

DICK: Do you need a file folder?

BARBARA: No, I'm good. I'm just trying to figure out. Okay, I
guess we're done.

DICK: Um-hum.

BARBARA: Thank you so much, and signing off.

[01:00:31]

END OF FILE