

OH-3038, part 1, Victor Ohman, 6-12-2014, WY in Flight

MARK JUNGES: [00:00:00] OK, Victor says we might have to watch out for gunman.

VICTOR OHMAN: Oh, no, they only attack stuff while you're not here.

MJ: OK. Now, do you need that? Let's get a little air flowing through here. You want to -- you want that down a little bit?

VO: Fine with me.

MJ: OK. OK. So today is the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, 2014. My name is Mark Junges and I'm talking with Victor Ohman. Is that how you pronounce it?

VO: Uh-huh. Yes.

MJ: Can I call you Victor or Vic?

VO: Either one.

MJ: OK. And we're sitting here about a mile south of the interstate -- Interstate 25 about six miles west of Glenrock --

VO: In the historic big, muddy oil field.

MJ: -- in the historic big, muddy oil field. And Victor, what the heck are you doing here today?

VO: Well, I'm preparing a unit pad for a well -- to get a well on production.

MJ: OK. And [00:01:00] this is something that you do for a living?

VO: Yes.

MJ: How long have you done this?

VO: Forty-two years.

MJ: Is that all?

VO: That's all.

MJ: How old are you?

VO: Sixty-one.

WY: You've been doing this since you were 19?

VO: Yeah, I went to work for Conoco when I was 19.

WY: Well --

VO: My parents even had to sign for them to pay me because I was a minor to send me the check, yeah.

WY: Really?

VO: Yep.

WY: Wait a minute, at 19?

VO: Uh-huh.

WY: You were a minor at 19?

VO: In 1972 yes, you were still a minor.

WY: When and where were you born?

VO: July 19, 1952 in Gillette.

WY: OK. At the memorial or the hospital up there?

VO: Well, in those days the hospital belonged to the doctor, in a sense. So I was born in what they -- it was Dr. McHenry. So I was born in the McHenry Hospital.

WY: But it was more like his office?

VO: Yeah, I suppose -- I don't suppose he -- [00:02:00] had but eight beds maybe, you know, who knows? I never did ask. But they wouldn't amount to much. When they were pointed out to me, they said well, I was at such and such. Well, it's just somebody's house now, you know, and so yeah, it wouldn't have had too many.

MJ: So you were raised in Gillette?

VO: Well, south of there at 30 miles on the ranch.

MJ: Where at?

VO: Well, 30 miles southwest of Gillette on Clark Allen Road about in the middle of the dam thing. It's eighteen miles north to highway 50 and 22 miles south of 387, right north of it.

MJ: Is that near Wright?

VO: Yeah, 387 would be what, maybe eleven miles west -- that intersection being eleven miles west of Wright.

MJ: Oh, OK. OK.

VO: It would turn -- you could go straight south in a place they call Turner Crest down --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- south of there and --

MJ: Were you raised on a ranch?

VO: Uh-huh. Yes.

MJ: So tell me how your parents got to Wyoming? Just a little background here.

VO: Well, I'm not too clear [00:03:00]. My paternal grandparents were Swedish immigrants and they immigrated to Lincoln, Nebraska, and actually met in Lincoln, Nebraska. They were -- so apparently, that's where a lot of the Swedes immigrated was, like, you know, you get your German enclaves in north of whatever, and apparently, a lot of Swedes landed in Lincoln, Nebraska.

MJ: Well, there were probably farmers, I would imagine?

VO: Well, they worked -- my grandfather actually worked for the railroad. They were -- he was a machinist for the railroad, and my grandmother was a housekeeper.

MJ: And --

VO: And they met, you know, in their community there then. Then the tale I get from the son of another one that homesteaded was they were five Swedes working there anyway or five in their group. One of them [00:04:00] was sick and unhealthy and the railroad wanted to get rid of him because he was

unhealthy and he came up to Wyoming to homestead, you know, and he came up and homesteaded there in Campbell County. And then went back down and talked the others into doing the same thing, convinced them to come up and homestead. And so they did. They did homestead there in 1917. And then my grandfather worked for the railroad, continued to work. See, he was a fireman for the railroad then for three more years after he homesteaded. And then started expanding his homestead, I guess.

MJ: What kind of a homestead can you have in that country; a 160 homestead --

VO: No --

MJ: -- or was it --

VO: -- it was 320.

MJ: Was it 320?

VO: Yeah, you got 320. And then you got a little more because see there were two of the others -- 960 acres. That's where they stopped [00:05:00]. They got the original 320 and then whatever to get to the nine -- another 320, I guess or 340 to get to the 960, something like that.

MJ: Yeah. By what --

VO: They -- my dad would describe the other two where kind of they would pick on my grandfather. He was a pretty ambitious, aggressive man apparently, and he would -- he started picking up land and they were, you know -- they were like well, oh boy, you capitalist pig, you know, he would say, but he did. But he died in 1933. He had appendicitis and peritonitis infection got him, and he died in 1933. So, but at that time, he'd already put together a pretty good holding. See, it's just one of those things you don't think about until you're now entering your golden years you're [00:06:00] going, you know, I mean what did it take for a relatively young widow, 40 years old, you know, with two kids. Hey, out here, you know what I mean, I mean you look and you think how did somebody pick this piece of heaven and drag their stake in the ground and go this is it, you know, my claim and, you know, so for the short period of homesteads and, you know, how many didn't survive, but whether that was just kind of whether that was

just kind of open land and so that's where you went, you know, I don't -- you know, and --

MJ: Was that a farm or a ranch?

VO: It was a ranch, all sheep.

MJ: They raised sheep?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: OK. I was going to say they wouldn't be able to raise them much out there that's --

VO: No.

MJ: -- thunder basin.

VO: Some people, you know, tried and, you know, and that's good, and there's still people there that grow a little wheat, but those days [00:07:00] they probably just, you know, I think some of them -- there was some requirements that maybe you were supposed to till so many acres. And so some of them had some crested wheat fields. We didn't have that, but I forget.

MJ: So you guys raised cattle?

VO: Well, Sheep --

MJ: Sheep.

VO: -- for the most part. We were primarily sheep. We had very few cows.

MJ: So your grandparents had how many kids?

VO: Two, they had my aunt and my dad, my paternal grandparents.

MJ: So your dad inherited the ranch?

VO: Essentially, yeah, as a --

MJ: Thirty-three --

VO: -- it worked out when he was dead -- died he didn't have a will so his sister and him had a quarter and their grandmother had a half. That might have been part of what made her hang on, I don't know, you know, and not sell and

go, who knows, you know, but she weathered it out and filled in blocks too. She continued to pick up land and work on it as homestead [00:08:00]. Well, my dad talked about going to these sales -- so some of the homesteads people left and they would have auctions. And he talked about going with his dad to these, being there as a pretty little kid, and when he would be bidding on these homesteads or buying them because my dad was 11 when his dad died. And then my aunt was 15. So, you know, and --

MJ: So what is -- how did he describe them? I mean that must have been some heartbreak involved in these things?

VO: Well, he -- I don't know. He never said too much about it, I mean he just -- you just kind of got a little pieces, and then, you know, waited too long to ask, you know -- ask.

MJ: Isn't that the problem?

VO: Yeah, you know, he would -- he'd be -- you know, he just might, I mean his story about going to auction when his dad was buying his land wasn't so much about his dad buying the land as they were at the homestead and he was standing on the post [00:09:00] pile and the auctioneer goes and the cud cows with it, you know, so that was his story about it. It wasn't really what they went through to buy these --

MJ: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

VO: -- as much as, you know --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- what he got out of it as to --

MJ: Yeah, so you -- let's see, how many siblings do you have?

VO: I have one brother.

MJ: Was he older?

VO: Yes.

MJ: Is he older, I should say.

VO: Yeah, yeah, he's six years older.

MJ: Joel. That's Joel?

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: And let's see, he's up in Gillette?

VO: Yeah, he's on the ranch.

MJ: Oh, OK, the ranch that --

VO: That the --

MJ: The original?

VO: -- homestead ranch.

MJ: Oh, I see.

VO: Yeah.

MJ: I see.

VO: He's still takes care of that.

MJ: Why didn't you stay?

VO: Well, at the time it was one of those economic lessons. Dad looked at me because here the show, my brother went into the Army right out of high school, got that out of the way, and went to college. So when I finished high school I thought well, I guess I'll do the same thing, you know, got pretty obvious you're going to go anyway, you know, why not? He said no, [00:10:00] go to college. He said, "Go two years. Those two years of college will make so much difference for you in the service." He said, "You don't understand it now, but when you're in there you'll be head and shoulders above 99 percent of the rest of them poor kids in there," you know, and make a difference. So I did and that just put me right out to the end of Vietnam, basically. In '72 they were pretty much winding down and so my lottery number was 100 and they stopped at 95.

MJ: I'll be darned. That's --

VO: And so --

MJ: -- why I'm talking to you today.

VO: So I didn't go in the service. I -- well, I should back there. I did try to get in. I wanted to go in as a ward officer in the helicopter; didn't have the eyes for it. So

when they wouldn't -- because of the correction you needed for my eyes well then well, you'll have to take me then. You dirty dogs, you know. And they didn't.

MJ: Did you want to fly?

VO: Oh, yeah, I wanted to do the helicopter [00:11:00].

MJ: When did you first get interested in flying?

VO: Well, I don't know, you know, we basically my dad, you know, of course was a World War II student pilot. He had a passion for flying and he flew. And then of course, after the war when he comes back there was the economic situation. And his mother said OK, I've been here, you know, 13 years, whatever I've got, you know, your sister's to 21, you're to 21, everybody's the majority and I've taken care of -- you know, and we've looked back in some of the records, you know, the accounting she had to do to the IRS and that stuff as far as number of livestock and their share because they each had a quarter, you know, and all the stuff she had to document through and then once my aunt was 21, she bought her out. And that put her on another ranch north of Gillette, and, you know, it really worked wonderfully for them. They did well [00:12:00], her and her husband, Aunt Elise, you know, they did fine. So --

MJ: Go ahead.

VO: -- and, but any way, at that point she, according to my dad she was like OK, I've done it all I'm going to do, you know, I mean if you want it get busy. If you don't, you know, it's going. He had a girlfriend or yeah, I guess at the time they hadn't quite got married yet, you know, my mother that wanted ranching, come from the ranching family, you know, so he said yes. I think too in his heart he'd have probably liked to have gone fly for the airlines, but he did pick the ranch.

MJ: Now who are we talking about here that --

VO: My dad.

MJ: Your dad?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: And he had a girlfriend?



VO: Yeah, with my mother --

MJ: Oh.

VO: -- which became my mother.

MJ: OK. I was going to say.

VO: So he came back to the ranch -- when he got out of the service in '45 [00:13:00] he came back to the ranch. And then my mother and dad were married in January of '46.

MJ: OK.

VO: And grandmother moved to town. And then dad --

MJ: Took over.

VO: -- took over, yeah and then [inaudible - 00:13:14] whatever the contract. My mother now to back to my maternal grandparents I'm a little less clear where they really came from. My -- I've got a cousin that's done some research, but our -- we know our great grandfather was out around JM, I think it is [inaudible - 00:13:34] JM down there. And he decided to go to Oregon with his family. And they made it to the Pulikin Buttes in the spring and started cabbings, and never left. They just stayed put right there in the Punkin Butte country, and then it's -- he is -- my grand -- then my grandfather was more of the homesteading era [00:14:00], you know --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- because he was married, him and my grandmother were married 1913. And then, you know, they homesteaded and my great grandfather well, he stayed until he died, you know, I mean he stayed there, but they had -- was more of a -- in open range more and more of whatever you can defend you can run on, I think you know, I -- you know, stories of how they did things, you know.

MJ: That Punkin Butte's country is uranium country.

VO: Yes.

MJ: Did they have uranium on their land?

VO: Oh, yeah, there's a funny story about my Uncle --

MJ: Yeah?

VO: -- Franklin Brown that was in the 50s and the uranium guys were out there running around and of course they didn't like them trespassing too much. And my Uncle Franklin was a big, stout man. He [00:15:00] caught up with this uranium guy and then proceeded to, I don't know bad mouth him a little, I guess you might --

MJ: Cuss him out is what you're saying.

VO: -- aggravate him enough to get the guy to take a swing, and then he let him have it, you know, and so the guy went on his merry way. And sometime later, the sheriff showed up and got arrested for assault and battery. [inaudible - 00:15:29] went to court for this and when he come back the old gent is what he always called my grandfather this [inaudible - 00:15:37] my grandfather, his dad the old gent. So old gent ask him what it cost and oh, it's \$50 and four dollars cost, and said wow, for that price you could hit him two or three more times.

MJ: Well, it was really, I don't see how they could get him for assault and battery [00:16:00] because it was his word against the other guy's.

VO: Oh, yeah, well, unless the other guy was missing teeth, I don't know what he said.

MJ: Well, that just proves he wasn't a very good fighter.

VO: Yeah, it just proves that my uncle had packed a punch that'd knock you in the dirt. My brother said one time when he was little the most impressive thing he ever saw -- we have a cousin that lived in Colorado, one of my other sister's boys and he was a year younger than my brother, and so they were like maybe five and six and they were discussing -- then his mom -- aunt and uncle were grandfather's for a summer visit and so my brother was down there to visit the cousin. And one of the aunts caught a Shetland pony and they were going to ride the Shetland pony. And she went out to get this Shetland pony and it kicked at her. So she told Uncle Franklin, which we never called him Uncle Franklin, he was just Unc. And he said [00:17:00] Unc went out there and got behind that Shetland and went, kind of egged him on and said that horse let back with both feet and he said he just caught him and held him

like a lamb. And he said, "Wow." Settled the horse down and, but he was always impressed with that.

MJ: Yeah, I guess. Oh, my God.

VO: But any way, yeah, I've -- that's generally how my parents' parents got here, you know, they --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- I have a -- we have a second cousin that would tell the tale of stopping there in the buttes and, you know, and the winter was I don't [inaudible - 00:17:51] maybe the winter of '87, I don't any way he just describes it after that winter they were too broke to leave, you know, [00:18:00] I don't know, and they did have this -- great grandfather did put together a pretty good size empire, you know, and they got divided to two sides of the family down his daughter's side and his son's side.

MJ: Yeah. Well, you went to school where then? I mean your from elementary on, I guess --

VO: Well, elementary of course, we just had the old one-room schoolhouses yet so.

MJ: God, I'm just amazed. Gene Hardy told me he went to one too.

VO: Yeah.

MJ: I -- it just seems to me like you're 64, right?

VO: One.

MJ: Sixty-one, oop, I didn't mean to make you --

VO: Still.

MJ: Still. OK. I didn't mean to make you older than you are.

VO: We're crowding the hell out of these two. We're not quite there yet.

MJ: Oh, OK. Well, so you went to one-room schoolhouse, you're 61, he's 84, he went to a one-room schoolhouse. It seems to me like it'd be more apt to find somebody who went to a one-room schoolhouse at his age. And I told him I said, look, I think it's another generation beyond yours

[00:19:00] that went to one-room schoolhouses, people that would be 100 now. And he said no, he says, that's the way it was in Converse County, but you go into a one-room schoolhouse, I guess it was just the environment, the ranch environment. There was no school nearby.

VO: Pretty much, in a sense even like my brother he went the first four years in the same location, one-room schoolhouse him and a neighbor girl. Well, then she was eighth grade finished. So then I really don't even know what they did with that schoolhouse, but it vanished. So he went north oh, gosh eight, 10 miles to another one. Well, there were several kids, still a one-room schoolhouse, but there were half a dozen kids there for a year. And then I started school, and then they moved that school down to where he first started and him and I went because a big -- a lot of the kids he was going with went to school with up there were eighth graders and they were done. [00:20:00] So that school -- that area --

MJ: Oh.

VO: -- was kind of finished up. And so then they --

MJ: Oh, I see.

VO: -- moved that schoolhouse down there, and then him and I went until he was finished with the eighth grade.

MJ: Tell me what that schoolhouse was like?

VO: A quonset.

MJ: A quonset?

VO: Yeah, just a little quonset school, a little building.

MJ: And with --

VO: There were like three windows in the back, and then, yeah, you know.

MJ: Wood floor?

VO: Oh, yeah, wood floor. We had -- now his first school they still used coal heat. We had a propane heater in the corner of the --

MJ: So you didn't have to go out and get the coal?

VO: Yeah, we didn't, no.

MJ: You just turned on the gas.

VO: Yeah. Yeah, you know, and they had a little -- then they had a little tinier little thing they called the teacherage, you know, a little building, the shack that the teacher lived in, you know, out there so.

MJ: Well, he said -- Gene said the teacher lived in a sheep wagon next to the school.

VO: That was possible.

MJ: This was a little like a [inaudible - 00:20:54]?

VO: It might have been nicer than what ours had to live in.

MJ: Usually they were women?

VO: Yes.

MJ: [00:21:00] And your teacher was a woman?

VO: Yeah, all mine were women. I never had a man teacher until I got to high school. They were all women.

MJ: She good?

VO: Must have been, I guess, you know, you don't you think well, gee, I had Miss [Resack?] for first grade, and then Miss [Renick?] for second grade, Mrs. Hoover for third grade. Mrs. Hoover was a real excitable lady. We could stir her up, I guess, you know.

MJ: She was easy pickings for you guys?

VO: Yeah, so we -- and then after that when I went over to Savageton for the last five years, you know, of course there again there was still a one-room. It was a trailer house by then, which they left the kitchen in it, and then the rest was wide open and still a one-room school, but there were what nine kids there.

MJ: Do you got any stories about that school or interactions?

VO: Well, the funny thing with maybe like Mrs. Hoover third grade and at that time [00:23:00] the Air Force was sending these little 10, 12 rock things to do in their radar or

whatever trying to fly under the radar and literally looked straight out those back windows of that schoolhouse and there went a B-52. And she went under her desk, back up out of her desk, grabbed those kids and run out of the school. And actually it was in like March of the year because Willy Wright, the neighbor was shearing and they, you know -- they just went by and disappeared over the hill and they're like just waiting for it to explode, you know, in a big cloud of smoke and it was out here doing this under the radar thing.

MJ: Now who is this, Wright?

VO: Oh, his name as Lee Wright, Leroy Wright.

MJ: Was that who the town was named for?

VO: No, it -- of the same family.

MJ: OK.

VO: There was a number of Wrights, but it would have been like an uncle of his [00:23:00] that -- Lester Wright would, you know, [inaudible - 00:23:03] Wright owned the land where Wright is now.

MJ: So when you got into high school then you went where?

VO: Gillette.

MJ: OK. And I was going to say, you know, if I was a total stranger to this country I would have said well, why don't you go to Wright?

VO: There was no Wright at that time. It was Reno Junction then.

MJ: Yeah, that's right. Arco, that's an Arco town isn't it?

VO: Probably was yeah, I don't know.

MJ: Right.

VO: Because I was -- I would have gone down here by the time they started building Wright, so.

MJ: Where, down here in Converse County?

VO: Yeah. I was working for Conoco then.

MJ: For the refinery over there?

VO: No. No, that refinery had been closed since the mid-50s. I was right down here in Big Muddy, [inaudible - 00:23:44] Big Muddy between the highways here, the old oil field.

MJ: Oh, OK.

VO: It's all plugged out now except, you know, Link re-entered a couple down there, but yeah, it's all gone.

MJ: It is all gone, pretty much?

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: You went to Campbell County High School [00:24:00] then for what, three, four years?

VO: Four years.

MJ: Four years. Tell me about the classes, one in particular?

VO: One in particular? Oh, they're all just a blur. It was [inaudible - 00:24:15] much excitement in them, I don't know. They were -- well, yeah, I guess you got to have one. We had this -- I was a senior, an economics teacher, loved math, really good. I mean he told you what he was going to teach you, he taught you that, and then he told you he taught you that, you know, you knew it, you know, and he was really good, I mean he had it laid out there. He didn't fit in so well [inaudible - 00:24:46] he was a little too much Chicago, I don't know I forget where he come from but had a big, old scar on his cheek. And he talked about well, my car would hold six people. So I carried six [inaudible - 00:24:58] chains, you know, and he come from the rumbling end of town wherever it [00:25:00] was, you know, and --

MJ: Tough guy.

VO: But yeah, but God, you could, you know, he was a good teacher and enjoyable and fun. He was hip, I guess you might say in a sort of way, but he was, you know, but he was real defined and, you know, tell you like I say literally do what they tell you.

MJ: Well, that was tough country, I mean there were oil -- that was during the oil boom, right when you were there or was it during the coal boom?

VO: Well, they had an oil boom about '68 that we really had an influx of people into Gillette. They couldn't build [inaudible - 00:25:38] fast enough hardly. We'd get a new kid every week somewhere from Rifle, Colorado, or Farmington or Aztec, New Mexico, you know, just bing, bing, bing, bing, you know, and of course [inaudible - 00:25:49], you know, northwest called Recluse. There was quite a bit of oil activity there and, you know, and then so yeah, there was a little [inaudible - 00:25:54]. The coal didn't really hit until the late '70s.

MJ: Yeah, what was the name of that bar downtown [00:26:00] where if you needed a job you could go to it?

VO: The Center Bar.

MJ: The Center Bar.

VO: Yeah, that was pretty much where you went for your sheep herders or your rough necks, yeah. I mean I listened to my dad talk about trying to, you know, go in there you had sheep herders and bring them home, and some of them, you know -- some of them he'd think they were so dam drunk they'd take a week before they'd, you know, get straightened up and hold food down, and you can get work out of them. And the next week bounce right up and go, and, like, yeah, I probably didn't miss anything there.

MJ: Were these (bass?) or Mexicans or?

VO: No, I don't know necessarily what nationalities they might have been, you know, I wouldn't -- hard to say.

MJ: Yeah.

VO: Because, you know, even some of the people up there, you know, I mean that was there first job was herding sheep for the neighbor with whatever. There was kind of a funny incident [00:27:00] in '83. I took a little trip to Europe, kind of a -- it was actually a kind of thing geared for high school kids. There was a couple high school teachers here who'd take high school kids. Well, that particular year whether they have any interest they decided to take a group of teachers and Mrs. Valentine down there her kids had gone on those. So she kind of got me in the group and went on this tour. And then after that, three weeks there, I took a week and went to Sweden. I had one great aunt still living in Stockholm, and I went up and met, you know



-- seen her. I met her as a kid, she had been to this country when I was young. And so I went up to Stockholm and seen her, but was in a barbershop getting a hair cut, and there's this guy in town named Albert Johnson, you know, around, didn't know much about him. He had a little sign on his little one-room house that he lived in, maybe it was two rooms [00:28:00]. It says need -- got a mouse, need a hand, you know, and by God, the old boy got him a hand and then he bring in the sign, and got him in. But any way, he comes in the barbershop and the barber acted -- quizzing him with something. Well, it turned out he too was his dad was a Swedish immigrant, and he made some comment he said, "Well, Vic here's been to the old country." Well, then he got kind of perked up and we got to talking. Well, then he got really interested. He said, "Well, I herded sheep for your grandfather, 1926." He said my brother, Arthur was actually herding for him and then he took a couple weeks off, and I herded for him, you know. I said well, there's the first guy I've ever met that worked for my grandfather, you know?

MJ: Yeah.

VO: And then he would -- and then he got to talking about my other grandfather, Grandfather Brown and he had some recordings of him [00:29:00].

MJ: Really?

VO: Yeah, he tried to get him to talk about some of the Indian things he would find around the buttes there, you know, and where he thought --

MJ: Sure.

VO: -- maybe there had been kind of forts or battle sites, and, you know, and he would quiz him, but he would -- he sheared sheep for a lot of years this Albert Johnson did. And it was what he was doing when he'd be up there shearing for my Grandfather Brown and he tried to quiz him. My grandfather Brown was really kind of tightlipped. He didn't let much information out, you know, but he would -- he had his stolen tape recorder and he had it kind of hid, I guess and you could barely understand him, I mean the voice is like yeah, I know that voice, you know, but --

MJ: You still got the tapes?

VO: No, he had the tapes. I don't know whatever became of them.

MJ: Oh, that's --

VO: Yeah, well, he played them for me and of course, he's died --

MJ: Oh.

VO: -- and cleaned the house up and --

MJ: Oh, that's a shame, isn't it?

VO: -- it's all gone, but yeah.

MJ: Did you know the Oslins?

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: Were they from Sweden too?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: OK. So they were one of those Swedish immigrant families?

VO: [00:30:00] [inaudible - 00:30:01] fashion because the story is -- now my grandfather lived here. He immigrated, you know, and homesteaded. His dad, my great grandfather Ohman came over later right in the middle of prohibition --

MJ: Oh.

VO: -- and stepped off the bus in Gillette in front of the Billings Hotel and pulled his flask out and took a nip and promptly got thrown in jail. And Axl lost one. He was the interpreter to explain to him what happened. So my dad says, you know. So he swore off the booze until probation's over, and then back on the booze.

MJ: Geez, God.

VO: But he acts like -- I don't know that he homesteaded. He might. I always had the impression he just bought a homestead and bought some land and had a -- he had some land for a while, and then shortly after my brother was born, he sold that [00:31:00] and went back to Sweden, and then within a year was gone any way.

MJ: So what did you think of your European trip?

VO: Well, you know, see a lot of -- you spend a lot of time looking up to cathedrals, you know, that kind of thing. And it's kind of, like, boy, you guys going to do this, he really ought to just pick one spot and look it as trying to hit seven, you know, take a little more time maybe, but yeah, I had an interesting -- when I went to Sweden I'm on the ferry out of Dover to Austin, Belgium, and sitting here with this guy that's say your age, maybe. Well, he was still working so he could have been maybe late 50's, maybe wasn't quite 60 yet. And he happened to work for an office supply company in Brussels, you know, we just got to chatting and where I was going, and that was probably the best tour than when we got to Belgium, you know, he go come on with me, stay with me [00:32:00], you know, and we went, and he kind of took me around Brussels, and pointed out things. And then, I guess the most impressive thing was in -- I went to his house to spend the night -- his -- there was also another kid there from like [inaudible - 00:32:19] or some dam place, a college student. He just kind of run a boarding house in a sense, I guess and well, we had supper, we're taking and sitting in his living room and his furniture had been in his family 300 years, you know, and you're, like, hell, you know, we don't have anything 50 years --

MJ: The country's not that old.

VO: -- old, you know, and yeah, you know, this little couch and chair kind of thing. Yeah, it's been in my family 300 years, you know.

MJ: God, well, the Oslins went onto bigger and better things, I guess. I interviewed John Oslin [00:33:00] one time about 20 -- more than 20 years ago, and, I think he did talk about Axl, but did they get right into heating and air conditioning; is that what they did?

VO: Yeah, they were plumbing and heating --

MJ: Plumbing and heating.

VO: -- was done, I think Axl Oslin would be like old man Henning was to Casper. Henning laid the first sewer and water lines in Casper. I probably could tell you that Axl Oslin probably laid the first water and sewer lines in Gillette, you know, who knows.

MJ: Yeah.

VO: Off the top of my head, that'd be about, you know, might not miss it by much, but.

MJ: Now you had a teacher in Campbell County named Mayer.

VO: Bud (Mayer?).

MJ: Bud Mayer.

VO: Uh-huh, or Al. Bud, I don't know, what -- Bud would probably be a nickname. I assume he had an actual name, but I --

MJ: Yeah, I can't --

VO: Mr. Mayer, he was the algebra teacher, wrestling coach, you know.

MJ: What kind of guy was he?

VO: Oh, I don't know, easy going enough, I guess I don't know [00:34:00], not -- didn't have any, never got crosswise with him particularly, I guess so, you know, I mean [inaudible - 00:34:10] didn't say he didn't do this ground school class, you know, he did do a private pilot class.

MJ: Yeah, what was that all about?

VO: Private pilot class.

MJ: I never heard of that before.

VO: He must have been something he talked him into doing to see if, you know, there was enough kids with interest to taking it and of course, he was in the flying club, you know, there was a little flying club out the airport that had a Cherokee. And so, and he was the flight instructor. And so he just probably twisted an arm or two to let him do it. And how long he did I don't know, you know, I mean he did it when I was there and I took it and took my written, you know.

MJ: Well, what year was that that you took that, do you remember?

VO: Well, I would have taken them probably in '68. Sixty-eight or, like, '69, because I actually I started flying [00:35:00] July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968.

MJ: You can remember that day?

VO: Oh, yeah, [inaudible - 00:35:07] all my -- the deal was of course, you know, here we are all off track of how we didn't end up on the ranch too, but dad wanted me to learn to fly and he's like there's no way anybody's going to take the time to drive you to town to take flying lessons. So he owned a Blanca, and they're made in Alexandria, Minnesota. So he would always go back to Alexandria with it every year for the annual. Well, he got acquainted with the guy that run the flying service there. And then he was a World War II C-54 pilot, you know, a transport pilot and he decided this is what I'm going to do. I'm gong to take you back there and drop you off, and you're gong to live with him, and you're going to work for them, and you're going to learn to fly, you know, and I'll be back and get you.

So, I -- yeah, I went back on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. And of course, my birthday's the 19<sup>th</sup> and I soloed on [00:36:00] my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and he was waiting and back home we went. But he got --

MJ: You soloed at 16?

VO: Yeah, and so we --

MJ: Did you get your license then?

VO: Well, no, I couldn't get a license until you're 17. So then the following year, went back again, you know, and then, you know, got all brushed up and took my check ride with him for a private license at 17. And then again in '70, went back and did the commercial at 18.

MJ: Now this wasn't Mayer you're talking about?

VO: No --

MJ: This is the guy --

VO: -- this is a guy named Harold Chandler.

MJ: Up in Minnesota?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: So your dad wanted you to -- your dad or Mayer wanted you to go up and stay with this guy?

VO: My dad.

MJ: Well, that was pretty liberal of him.

VO: Yeah, he wanted to fly and, you know, it's, like, OK, you need to learn to fly. And well, you know, that sounds like fun, you know, and, you know, he said the only way he knew that anybody, you know, for you to take the time away at the ranch to run you to town and wait for a lesson, you know, it's going to wipe out [00:37:00] too much time. I'm just going to take you back here, and drop you off. And I could still tell you today if you wanted to learn to fly it'd be the best way to do it. Just go somewhere and that's all you do. Go do it.

MJ: Really?

VO: Yeah, to try to work, and then fit it in and that and pretty soon it gets all screwed up and it's gone. And you've been three, four years trying to get this done, and it's tough if you can't just go do it.

MJ: It's kind of like learning -- immerse yourself in it, you know, you're going to get it a lot easier if you immerse yourself in it. But then you got to keep it up. Are you still flying?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: OK. What kind of a license do you have?

VO: I still have a commercial one, all the engine and instrument and, you know.

MJ: Did you get those right away after you --

VO: I did the multi-engine between the private and the commercial, you know, and got that in the spring of '70. And I did the instrument rating later in 1982. Actually, I did the instrument rating myself and [00:38:00] --

MJ: Well, were you -- was it a hobby at that time, Victor, or what?

VO: Yeah, pretty much, it's like a hobby from about '79 through '87 thereabouts this fellow right here at Ballantyne. He

had a plane and he flew it some. And then I flew it for him a fair share. And then I actually ended up quitting Conoco and going to work for them so I could fly more, you know, smart.

MJ: Yeah, I'd say.

VO: So yeah, I -- so while I was working for him, I did the instrument rating and when I got the instrument rating. And then -- so that was my little bit of what you might call hired flying or commercial flying was just a few years for him. Of course he had the ranch, you know, and flew the ranch, and then he had a construction business doing a fair amount of work that [inaudible - 00:38:53] in Denver. And so, it was real convenient for that. You could just fly into Stapleton, walk through combs, cross the street, and you were in a office building [00:39:00] [inaudible - 00:39:03]. You can deal with them, and then just walk back across. You really didn't have to go through all the --

MJ: Oh, yeah. Well, in those days nobody did, right?

VO: Well, there was, you know, had some, but yeah, for there, for the most part you could walk by and look at the lady at the desk, you know, the receptionist or whatever hi, I'm going across the street, I'll be right back, OK, and, you know, remember me? Yeah, I remember you. OK, fine.

MJ: Yeah, those were the good days [inaudible - 00:39:27].

VO: Yeah. Yeah, well, you could -- yeah, you were -- yeah, there wasn't any of this like it is now, but there was, you know, some, I guess.

MJ: So did you -- was your full-time job flying for awhile?

VO: No, that was just the benefit of the job. My full-time job was dispatching.

MJ: Where at?

VO: Right here for Ballantyne, I mean he had the construction and, you know, like you say so --

MJ: Oh, I thought he had a ranch over here?

VO: He did, you know, well, like I say the flying was just a sweet break in [00:40:00] dispatching, you know --

MJ: What is --

VO: -- if he needed something flown, well, I usually got to do it so.

MJ: What is it about flying that's so attractive to you?

VO: I don't know, I'm kind of -- well, Mrs. Ballantyne said at one time, you know, I said I don't know, I guess the reason I like it is because that I don't have to do it for a living, you know, if I did it -- if it was my job, it might in turn feel the same way, but it's always been something you got to do that was a nice break, you know, and it wasn't dirty. I don't know, whatever, you didn't have a hassle too much, you know, so, it was always, you know, a glimmer but to yeah, you know, it allowed at the time, you know, I think maybe my dad's probably hope was that I would do, like, corporate flying or something, you know, pushing through the flying. But we'd go to Denver and you'd see those guys sitting down there [00:41:00] in the King Air, you know, laying around. And it was, like, yeah, I don't think I'd like their job, you know, it had a -- well, in fact, he was in Gillette when I was in high school. Flew up there. He flew for a guy named Paul (Truckatractor?) and then he got a job with True. And that's when he told me about flying True. He said, you know, I'd rather fly the pipelines, you know, had the lear jet and then a [inaudible - 00:41:28], you know, he said, but here's how it goes in that jet. He said you got it from here to Phoenix, you spend two days. Then you go to Houston, and you spend two days. Then you go to Lafayette, and you spend two days. Then you back track the same hump. He said the most you ever fly in one day is two hours, you know, I'll just go fly a pipeline, you know, has to do all this sitting around.

MJ: So what was your job then besides you were a dispatcher for a while [00:42:00] --

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: -- for who?

VO: For Ballantyne, the guy that [inaudible - 00:42:05].

M: OK. OK. So when you flew for him, did you just do pick up stuff in Stapleton, come back, or did you fly like --



VO: Yeah, kind of like that, I mean crazy things like fly to Torrington and get a new sickle for the swather. Try to put a 14-foot sickle in an airplane sometime, you know, or they had some land up at [inaudible - 00:42:27], we don't have any hay, you know, put hay in the plane, fly it up there, and give them hay for the horses.

MJ: Are you kidding?

VO: Nope.

MJ: What kind of a plane was it?

VO: A Maule. It's a, you know, just a four-seat Super Cub-type bush plane, and it's got, you know, the side opens up good, double doors and you can get stuff in. And so, yeah, it's -  
-

MJ: Did you fly pipelines too?

VO: No, I didn't. I mean I'll fly these lines like say around for these wells, gathering here now. If I'm flying, I'll always take a circle around and just make sure there isn't [00:43:00] something seeping up somewhere yet, uh-huh.

MJ: Well, if the field's dry you shouldn't have any problems that way.

VO: Yeah, well, it's water. Water wet.

MJ: Oh, water. OK.

VO: If it still has water and water will carry, you know, a little bit of oil in the water the water will cover a lot of country in one path.

MJ: Yeah. So how much flying do you do these days?

VO: Oh, I bet I -- if I hit 25 hours a year, I'm -- I've had a banner year it seems like, you know. For a while when I flew for Ballantyne, you know, I might get an hour a day average so to speak --

MJ: Really?

VO: -- you know, I get, you know, 25, 30 hours a month, you know, oh, that was great, but. But now, no, everything I do and I think oh, I'm going to try to figure out how to make

this where I can fly more out of it. I end up more on the tractor.

MJ: Well, it probably pays a little more.

VO: Well, yeah.

MJ: Well, let's go back just a step, and I want to talk a little bit more about your flying, but --

VO: I should tell you the economics. You said --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- why did I not stay on the ranch [00:44:00] --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- at the time? OK, at the time then as I said, my brother had been in the service and then college and I was just finishing college Casper, he was finishing the university. My dad said OK, this place ain't big enough for everybody. What are you boys going to do, you know? Well, my brother had a desire to come back. I'm going well, hell, I'm going in the service, you know, there's no need for me to making big plans, you know, whatever. I just go whatever he does, I said if Joel want to come back, I'll leave. And if he doesn't, I'll stay. Well, Joel wanted to come back. And I'm mulling around in my usual, haven't paid close enough attention to everything, and Conoco offers me a job and OK, I'll go to work for you and so that's how -- got me in the oil field too.

MJ: Sounds like you have --

VO: But I took the petroleum class at the college --

MJ: Oh, OK.

VO: -- I mean. So that's why, I mean.

MJ: Oh, you did?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: With the intention of what [00:45:00]?

VO: Well, to -- fulfilling the desire my brother did say you need two years of college, you know, and he goes I'll just

take liberal arts. I thought that don't even sound like it ends up anywhere. I want to take something that leads somewhere. Well, this looks interesting and at the time they had just drilled a couple oil wells on the ranch. I thought maybe I'll learn what that stuff's about, you know, and I'll see the world, you know, go around the world --

MJ: Oh.

VO: -- whatever. So I'll just take -- I got a little flier about this petroleum technology class. So that's why I took the class.

MJ: So you're talking about oil on the ranch, meaning your ranch?

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: So you should be a rich man, you know, you should be, you know, in Las Vegas gambling or something?

VO: Well, yeah, well, the mineral rites weren't ours.

MJ: Oh, they weren't?

VO: You know, actually, it -- interestingly enough part of, some of those ultimately did end up with, you know, some fraction of the minerals. This aunt in Sweden had minerals. Some of this [00:46:00] ended up was from land my great grandfather had had, when he'd sold he kept half of the minerals. And then [inaudible - 00:46:08] this great aunt and uncle that had had them and, I guess, but then the uncle had passed and it was just an aunt living. So, you know, as they [inaudible - 00:46:19] ultimately, finally got the mineral [inaudible - 00:46:21] part of what they had, you know.

MJ: Was it a rich field?

VO: No. Well, no, I don't think anything barn burning thing, but, you know, the wells are still there today.

MJ: Are they?

VO: Yeah, and --

MJ: Still producing?

VO: -- Mr. M. John Kennedy [inaudible - 00:46:38].

MJ: M. John Kennedy?

VO: Yeah, down in Gillette, yeah. [inaudible - 00:46:45] he flies [inaudible - 00:46:46].

MJ: Oh, OK.

VO: M. John Kennedy [inaudible - 00:46:49] give me aviation history, but he could probably give a doozy oral history.

MJ: M. John Kennedy?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: What company is that?

VO: Kennedy Oil. He sold out a big share of what he had [00:47:00] here. Kind of a good time and, I think he may have done as well as [inaudible - 00:47:10], who knows, you know.

MJ: Well, you know about the McMurray's then?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: Did you work for them at all?

VO: I'm doing a little work for them, the McMurrays.

MJ: The construction outfit or the --

VO: No, for the oil. For McMurray Oil and --

MJ: Well --

VO: Yeah, the original -- when Neil McMurray, the dad [inaudible - 00:47:28] some odds and ends for him and then when Mickey retired and decided to dabble in oil and got involved in, you know, where he was involved, you know, right at the time when they went and bought those four drilled but unproven wells and --

MJ: And so, but yeah, [inaudible - 00:47:52] --

VO: You know, and I mean that's a kind of an interesting story of somebody just looking for something to do because he was kind of a young, retired man [00:48:00], you know, the early 50 maybe, 48 to 50, and I got to do something and

I'll -- no market, so he had to lay 11 miles of pipeline to get in the market. So he did that, you know, just --

MJ: And now look at him, he's a billionaire.

VO: Yeah, you know, it's, like, wow, but he did, yeah, he was just staying busy, I mean, you know, he said one time he -- when he sold that he had been in construction too.

MJ: That was a [inaudible - 00:48:35] McMurray.

VO: You know, that was his dad and he had McMurray brothers. It was him and his brothers --

MJ: Oh, OK.

VO: that had McMurray Brothers Construction and they sold. So he set aside x amount to live on, and held x amount to go dabble in the oil business to keep himself occupied.

MJ: What did you do for him? What kind of work?

VO: What I call -- what you call [inaudible - 00:48:57] work. And that would be like well, this he would come in, set off a CO2 charge down the well and it's an acoustic that goes down and it reflects an [inaudible - 00:49:09] volume increase and decreases and you count your tubing joints down to your fluid. You just want to know where your fluid level is in your well and get your -- get it pumped down, you know, like you should or if you're not, you know, or, you know --

MJ: Well, I might --

VO: -- it gives you -- you know what I mean, you can kind of get a rough idea of [inaudible - 00:49:27].

MJ: OK, so I might add we're parked opposite your truck and there's a great big, old steel --what is that collecting tank?

VO: Well, that would be referred to sometimes as a frack tank or something, just a temporary tank they put on location to swap into, you know, just fluid while you're messing with the well.

MJ: Oh, OK. And then there's a well. And you didn't have anything to do with putting that in?

VO: No.

MJ: OK. And that -- did you say that was a water well with some oil in it?

VO: Well, yeah, there's a humungous [00:50:00] water drive in the second oil creek zone that they're protecting, just a huge flood of water so. They say you got a, you know, all sand but it's 30 feet thick. Well, maybe the top five feet is this or two feet is real permeable and porous and oil will flow. Well, when they originally drilled well then they get good fluid flow through that, but the rest of the input is tight. Well, that's the kind of work they're getting today. There still this water, and when water pushes through you get just a little bit comes out of that tight stuff, you know, you say you can sit here and make this 28 or 30 barrels a day for years and years and years and years.

MJ: On this on well?

VO: Well, you know --

MJ: Oh, this whole area?

VO: -- this section here, so.

MJ: That's not very much, is it?

VO: No. Well, that, you know, it adds up, you know, it's about \$100,000 a month gross [00:51:00] numbers.

MJ: But it costs --

VO: And then --

MJ: -- to supply electricity.

VO: Oh, yeah.

MJ: I see these little black ducts out here going up and down. And I'm thinking well, that takes money to run these things and to service them, right?

VO: Yep, it does.

MJ: And you're doing work for these guys by using a backhoe to what did you say you're doing here?

VO: Oh, I'm whittling a pad through a pumping it.

MJ: OK, OK. Going back a step now, this class that you took this was on a whim or you really, really thought this was an interesting class? Is there [inaudible - 00:51:35].

VO: Well, I had to take the class. You needed to do something because you have to take a written exams to if you're flight, you have a written exam and a practical.

MJ: Oh, so you --

VO: So --

MJ: -- didn't take this on a lark. You took this because you wanted [inaudible - 00:51:48].

VO: Necessity, yeah. You had to have it, yeah.

MJ: OK.

VO: So you take -- that's a good way to take the class, otherwise you're doing it at home on your own or whatever, you know, kind of another one of those things. So yeah, you're -- well, you're doing it hand in hand with flying [00:52:00]. So, it -- that time your young and your mind isn't so full of other things, and, you know, it kind of soaks in, yeah. You're not calculating OK, now, I got to get to this, and I got to be over there, and he wants me [inaudible - 00:52:15] and I got -- you know, you don't have that -- you don't have those problems when you're 16.

MJ: No. OK. So this class was it like a ground school?

VO: Yeah. Uh-huh.

MJ: OK. What did you learn?

VO: Well, there again you -- that part is a lot of your weight and balance calculations on aircraft, you know, maps, flight planning, you know, how to plot courses, and make wind directions, and, you know, and how to do it.

MJ: And then it culminated in a ride?

VO: Well, you -- that culminates into a test. You take a written test and then once you have the written test than if you're of age, you can take [00:53:00] the ride, yeah.

MJ: Well, I thought he took all of his kids up?

VO: Oh, Mr. Mayer?

MJ: Yeah.

VO: Well, we did spend, you know, one day we went out yeah, and he'd take the Club Cherokee and take three of us and pile us in and go fly and land and trade and go fly, you know, everybody got their turn, you know, because I was --

MJ: Did you know this --

VO: -- already flying, you know, I knew that. And my turn came, I just -- he just had me do touch and go's. Everybody else would go out and he would like do [inaudible - 00:53:31] flight for them, you know, and everything, but I was already soloing whatever. So he just had me do touch and go's.

MJ: Oh, OK. See, I was a little bit confused there. I just thought you too the course just because it was a course that -- an elective course that you could take, but this was something that was going to help you become a pilot?

VO: Yeah, I had --

MJ: Some of those others kids, it wasn't that way, was it?

VO: There's probably one other one in there that ever that flew also or did fly [00:54:00] subsequently, yeah.

MJ: Who was that?

VO: His name was Robbie Gibbs. But I don't know if any of the others that were in it that did, but he --

MJ: So what did --

VO: -- did fly I think. He did.

MJ: Do you remember the grade you got on this course?

VO: No, I can tell you that I -- what I did is I took that, which was a private pilot ground school. I took the commercial written first because my dad was the opinion well, if he'll take that commercial written that's good for both rides. Turns out that's not so. You have to have a written for each ride. It doesn't matter what it is.



MJ: What do you mean a ride?

VO: The check ride for your --

MJ: Oh, OK.

VO: -- license, the practical.

MJ: OK.

VO: So here I have a commercial written out of the way, and they're good for two years, so you know what I mean, I've got, you know, and I'll be 18 and, you know, before it expires and I can get my commercial ride on it. Or I [00:55:00] can waste it on my private ride and have to take a commercial written again. So I thought well, all right I'll take the private written, you know, hell, I passed that. Flunked it bigger than shit. That's --

MJ: You did?

VO: Yeah, cocky.

MJ: You didn't study for this, did you?

VO: No. Just ran -- actually, had taken the one up in Sheridan. Sheridan, when you went up there the flight service they'd take you off in a room by yourself and sit you down and here you go and see you when you're done. Gosh, I went down and took the private down in Casper and they -- you're sitting right out front, the traffic and I'm watching the airplane go by and I'm breezing through this thing like hey, I got it made. I've already done better than this. And it proved I hadn't. So --

MJ: That must have been --

VO: -- Mr. Mayer --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- well, has been -- had to wait a certain period of time to re-take it, or get somebody to sign off that they had given you extra instruction. So then went to Mr. Mayer [00:56:00] and said I need to get up to Sheridan to take this again. And so OK, he asked me a few questions, all right, fine, and then he wrote out the deal and said I've given him additional instruction and sent me to Sheridan

and I passed that one. And probably in the 80 something, I don't know, but.

MJ: Did he give you instruction actually?

VO: Well, yeah, he honestly did ask me a few questions, you know, and but yeah, it wasn't -- a little bit, you know, not --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- super all right, set you down dead serious, but he did throw a couple of questions at me like I say. And say OK, I have now given you additional training, you know, smartass, now go get it done, you know, kind of, you know, under your breath maybe, you know.

MJ: Yeah. Victor, what does it take to be a decent pilot, to be a competent pilot?

VO: I don't know.

MJ: I don't think I could be a pilot [00:57:00].

VO: [inaudible - 00:57:03] oh, yeah, really, I think so, I don't know. Hard to say, I guess. I wouldn't -- I couldn't tell you what it takes to a decent one, you know, the same thing that makes a decent driver, you know, pay attention. Don't get too cocky or whatever, you know.

MJ: Pay attention.

VO: Yeah, go to sleep, whatever, but yeah, pay attention, I mean I look back at things I did and think man, you know, at this age I'd think no. We would -- the other calamity of a getting a license was having to get glasses. I could get a private license without the correction, but I had to have a correction for the commercial license so. Well, my glasses come in one day, and we'd gone to eye doctor in Casper. So my glasses were in Casper and I need to go get that. Well, I'm -- I work out at the airport after school and then that's where I do my flying there to let -- forgetting [00:58:00] John B. Thelen, the most colorful aviator in Wyoming history.

MJ: Who is this?

VO: John B. Thelen.

MJ: How do you spell it?

VO: T-H-E-L-E-N, something like that.

MJ: Oh, OK.

VO: And I've -- there's the ultimate, never a dull moment man right there, I mean there's action when you're around there. So I'm -- I work out there, you know, line boy, sweep the shop, whatever, you know, and then I'm flying in a 182. And so I got to go down to Casper. It's really a long story, you know, so at the time he was running back and forth to Casper like three times a day on a scheduled run in a 206.

MJ: Between what and what?

VO: Gillette and Casper.

MJ: Gillette.

VO: And then he was hauling freight, you know, [inaudible - 00:58:54], but, you know, people and freight, you know, you go back and forth. And so if it looked kind of quiet [00:59:00] in the evening when they made the evening flight, and they didn't have anybody scheduled, you know, passengers or had enough room well, I'd ride -- tag along down there, and come back, like, get to fly, but I didn't have any passengers. If we had passengers [inaudible - 00:59:16] to fly, you know, because I wasn't a commercial pilot, and at the time. So an Avis Rent a Car down there had, like, to rent a Volkswagen seven dollars a day. So I got to go down to get the glasses.

Well, you know, can't go by yourself. I've got the ultimate friend who's got the ultimate mom who all I got to do is call her up and say hey, I got to go to Casper, get Randy out of school, and he can go with me. OK, bye. She called the school, send Randy to the office. He's like what did I do now? He got to the office, get out of here, your mom wants you. You're going somewhere. Oh, OK. He comes out. I'm waiting for him. Let's go, we're going to Casper. Oh, OK. So he got in the -- the battery was dead [01:00:00] so he had to jump it, get it started, you know, take off, lie down, I guess. Go get my glasses, do a little looking. He had -- his dad had dozers. So we did stop at [inaudible -

01:00:13] machinery and look at some things, you know, and he did kind of checked some stuff out and had a little bit of business that he wanted to check on. So by the time -- well, what's really funny is the for seven dollar Avis Rent a Car, I go down there and I tell the gal I want that Volkswagen for seven bucks, you know, and she said, "How old are you?" I'm 17. Well, you got to be 24. You got to be this big to rent a car from us.

MJ: No.

VO: Well, how the hell am I going to get to town? And he's looking at her and he lips off about well, we just flew in here ourselves, you know, and now what am I going to do? This is where having a prominent father pays off, a known [01:01:00] -- interesting. And he had mentioned that the state had this old rambler up at Casper Air Service as a courtesy car. Well, we've got a plan B. We'll go up and get that old rambler and get on our way. Got up there and a guy named Dutch Warner run the Casper Air Service. He'd been years and years. And then announced that kind of like to have that courtesy car, need to get downtown. And you're a kid. I don't know the rules on that car he said, I don't know. He said, "Who are you?" I said, "I'm Victor Ohman." You Eric's boy? Yeah. Take my wife's car. We went to town in a New Yorker --

MJ: Really?

VO: -- free.

MJ: Yeah.

VO: And I said you know [01:02:00] -- later, you know, that's a lot of trust.

MJ: Sure, but your dad had a good reputation.

VO: Yeah, I think.

MJ: Apparently.

VO: Apparently, he figured the kids better behave too.

MJ: Yeah. Did -- now this Maher, this Bud Maher, did he -- he didn't die in a plane wreck, did he?

VO: Oh, yeah.

MJ: He did?

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: What was -- do you know the circumstances of that?

VO: Half-assed, I mean from my brother. I mean he was out cow hunting -- cow hunter and he whatever, I don't know what they did and they had shot something, was looking to see if they got it, what, but basically, I think he hit a set of power lines like that. He hit some power lines and took him down and it killed him. The other guy lived but that's all I know about it.

MJ: He wasn't very old then was he?

VO: No, he couldn't have been too old then, I guess. I don't know exactly know how many it's been a few years back [01:03:00], you know, quite a few years back now so.

MJ: Yeah.

VO: He was -- you know, I don't know he -- you know, say maybe he had retired from teaching but that doesn't mean you're old necessarily.

MJ: No. No, it doesn't.

VO: He had was flying, you know, and doing this cow hunting and whatever.

MJ: Did you realize at the time Victor, that you were in a class that was like a one of a kind class? Did you have any idea?

VO: Didn't give it a thought. It was just class I needed and they had it.

MJ: Yeah, but to think that you could take it in high school, I mean I would imagine you could taken a class at the airport, you know, or you could have taken a class --

VO: I'm not sure, you know, maybe somebody around there might have tried to put together some ground school. Oh, that was kind of infancy kind of thing, you know, at that point people were still kind of on their own to home study it or whatever, I think.

MJ: Yeah, I don't think from the news article I read the Gillette News Record [01:04:00] article there was -- that was the first class of its kind in the state.

VO: Could have been.

MJ: And, I think this -- the Campbell County has a little history of aviation, I mean the first plane to land in Wyoming was in Campbell County.

VO: Was that right?

MJ: Nineteen eleven.

VO: Oh.

MJ: Somebody drove it in for a celebration, I think it was a county fair or something like that.

VO: Yeah.

MJ: And then of course the next, the adjoining county somebody landed or parachuted up on top of Devil's Tower.

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: Do you remember that incident?

VO: Well, I heard people talk about it, you know, somebody parachuting at Devil's Tower and --

MJ: Yeah. Yeah.

VO: -- at the time, yeah.

MJ: It was kind of interesting that you should have some aviation history --

VO: [inaudible - 01:04:40] all that and now you can't even circle Devil's Tower.

MJ: Oh, is that right?

VO: Yeah, hey, you got to stay away from it, national parks you can't have all these airplanes buzzing around.

MJ: Yeah.

VO: Whatever.

MJ: Yeah, right. So OK, so you got your license, it was a private license. You didn't get a commercial license --

VO: Oh, I did.

MJ: -- right away.

VO: Yeah, right.

MJ: Ultimately [01:05:00] you did. OK.

VO: But, you know.

MJ: How much do you -- are you flying today, did you say?

VO: Like I said maybe 25 hours a year or something. I've got, you know --

MJ: Have you had any close calls?

VO: Oh, I wrecked one.

MJ: What?

VO: I wrecked one on flying, I guess.

MJ: Have you had any close calls?

VO: Oh, I wrecked one.

MJ: What?

VO: I wrecked one on flying, I guess. Let's see, controlled the crash.

MJ: What?

VO: Flew that into the crash as far as I could as Bob Hoover would say, eh.

MJ: Who's Bob Hoover?

VO: Oh, man that's the most -- the world's most famous pilot from the United States, [inaudible - 01:05:29] Air Force pilot, test pilot, airbag showman, yeah, he's --

MJ: Wow. Can you --

VO: But he's the one that will tell you yeah, you know, if you're going to crash you fly it as far into that crash as

you can. He was a prisoner of war. The Germans broke out, stolen the planes, flew to freedom and, you know.

MJ: He wasn't from Wyoming, was he?

VO: No.

MJ: OK.

VO: California or Washington or something.

MJ: What do they mean fly into the crash?

VO: Keep control of it. Do everything you can --

MJ: Oh, OK.

VO: [01:06:00] Don't throw up your hands and go shit. You do everything in your power to keep it, you know, say, like the airliner that went down in Iowa that time, you know, you could say those guys, because I've been told that they have never been able to duplicate that in a simulator. Everybody crashes.

MJ: What do you mean, that Iowa flight?

VO: Yeah, when they --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- lost their hydraulics --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- and they well, as they got down, I mean they were coming in and he went for power to rotate so to speak and only one engine powered up 60 percent and one powered up 100 and that started them rolling and that's what stuck their right wing in the ground on them. But they say they've tried to duplicate that in a simulator and nobody's even saved the plane [01:07:00] like they did.

MJ: Wow, amazing. Well, all right, well, I want to hear the story about this crash of yours.

VO: Well, I was an interesting deal. We were -- I was working for Ballantyne and the plane was hit. I -- the plane I fly today is the same plane he had. I bought it from him, you know, some years ago but -- the Maule and we were up in KC



up the Hole in the Wall and we tried -- he tried to drill an oil well up there and just [inaudible - 01:07:32], you know, we got a dam good artesian water well for Doug Taylor. But anyway, I flew up there was a, you know, hay meadow right there and just land, you know, so I don't even remember why I was up there I mean thigns were pretty much wrapped up and I came in and landed and the right wing went down, you know, then just initial reaction was full power [01:08:00], brought the wing back up and then I'm thundering through a hay meadow that's, you know, got limited length going all right now, you pull far back and or do you go on, you know, it's -- you're a long ways to go [inaudible - 01:08:17] here. We took off, I looked down and it's got drooped tips on the wings and I look out and OK, the paint's gone. It didn't just drop, it's been in the dirt, you know, that's -- so I flew around and I flew over the meadow, I don't see anything there I'm like huh, I remembered to take my glasses off that time, got to open the right hand door, passenger door and stick my head out and my wheel's just hanging there. I'm going I've got all my parts that's -- I don't know, this is puzzling [01:09:00] which means [01:09:05]. So I threw a note out for him when they were gathering cattle one day or sheep and stuck my head out and threw the note out in a can and my glasses blew off at the same time. That's why I say I remembered to take my glasses off this time and look out. All right. I'll come down to Casper [inaudible - 01:09:24] something odd. So when I get to Casper I call the tower and then, you know, had to convince him, you know, I'm [inaudible - 01:09:33]. Something's wrong here I said I've dropped the wing and there's something wrong in my landing gear I think. I don't know. I need, you know, to make a pass and you take a look, you know, well, of course it's got the landing gear and then the shock of, you know, the suspension, except for when I went by I well, it looks like your right landing gear support is broken [01:10:00], it wants to take it down. OK. Now we got an answer. We know something here so. So then, you know, you come around and he said OK, you know, cleared for 2-1, you know, would you land beyond the intersection, you know. OK, fine, you know, and they send the fire trucks out and I'm kind of like I go the plane was pretty new. It only had 300 and some hours on it, you know, I said this is probably '81 maybe. I said well, are you going to foam the runway? Oh, no, we don't do that. Oh, hell, I always heard about foaming the runway, you know what I mean. I said OK, bye. So I practiced it in your mind. And you're like OK, when I set down I'm going to

drop the power and, you know, and pull the mixture  
killiage, you know, [01:11:00] come [inaudible - 01:11:03]  
kind of got, you know, too much concentration on the  
landing coming in, you know, you're on one wheel, OK,  
everything's good, you know, ought to lay over here. So now  
we're sliding on the wing, you know, and we're doing good.  
And we forgot to stop the power so it's like clop, clop and  
the prop took a couple hits, the asphalt took care of  
itself and stopped.

MJ: Dag.

VO: Slide down there nice and straight. I was fortunate that in  
that the landing gear when I landed folded under the plane.  
So it was rolling on the wheel [inaudible - 01:11:43] and  
sliding on the wing and the step, you know, and you just  
and then when it stopped I guarantee you it felt like it  
was standing on its nose, you know, like just to stop, you  
know, and kind of comes up. It must not have come up much  
but when you're in there you're like I'm going dam,  
[01:12:00] I'm going on my back, you know, and it just  
settled back down.

MJ: This was a twin engine?

VO: Oh, no.

MJ: Single engine?

VO: Yeah, it's --

MJ: All right.

VO: -- the plane I fly today yet.

MJ: So did you fess up the prop on that?

VO: Oh, yeah, it just bent the tips, I mean it was that idle  
and, you know, it turned out it apparently didn't hurt the  
engine and so --

MJ: Was this the worst incident you've ever had?

VO: Yeah, I think it's good enough, isn't it? Hang on.

MJ: Good enough.

VO: Hello? Not too bad. I'm doing a little interview here so  
I'll be a bit, but I'll be a long. I don't know, aviation

history in Wyoming. All right. I don't know, six maybe. All right. OK. Uh-huh. Bye.

MJ: You --

VO: So, yeah, you know --

MJ: You're [01:13:00] --

VO: -- and you step out. I'm like oh, yeah, there shut the switch off. Reach back in, kill the master, and then the fireman and they come over there and take a look. Oh, looks good, go on in their trucks and everybody leaves. And you're just standing out there on a runway on a Sunday afternoon all by yourself. I'm going like oh, boy, this is fun.

MJ: Yeah, what do you do then, you know?

VO: Well, as it turns out then the guy's in they went to call hangar six up there we're there. So they come motoring out a little Ford Courier, oh, what do you got and OK and they had to -- they ended up repairing the plane so they went back in, got a sheet of plywood, laid in the back of the -- laid across the back of the bed of the pickup and a mattress and then we just picked the wing up and they backed under it and set it back down so that carried that side and they drove easy and we took it to the hangar.

MJ: Do you know Marvin Robinson?

VO: [01:14:00] No.

MJ: He worked -- I don't know if he worked in hangar six or not but he's a mechanic, had been there for years. When did this take place?

VO: Probably, I think about '81. Eighty or '81. It could have been '80 because like I say the plane was pretty new. Ballantyne bought that plane in '79. It could have been yeah, I was working for him. So it could have been '80 because I went to work for him in '80. So it could have been 12/80.

MJ: So you've been working for him ever since?

VO: No, I worked for him for five years and then I've been on my own since then.

MJ: Oh, you're a private contractor?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: So you're not doing a whole lot of flying? I mean nobody's hiring you to fly anywhere?

VO: No, nuh-uh.

MJ: Wouldn't that be nice?

VO: Yeah. Well, you know, you're almost now at an age where you're like hey, there's those young guys, you know, let them have at it, you know.

MJ: Well, you still trust yourself, don't you?

VO: Oh, yeah.

MJ: On a plane?

VO: Yeah, just don't know [01:15:00] that I want to stop what I'm doing now. I don't know, I mean I've thought about it at times. Some of them, you know, when they were looking at all this pipeline flying jobs, you know, I might just get money doing that and I don't have all equipment to take care, yeah, maybe so.

MJ: So you own your own equipment?

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: This backhoe and then what else?

VO: Water trucks, blades, backhoe and tools, piping tools, [inaudible - 01:15:30].

MJ: Do you have [inaudible - 01:15:31] and drive all that stuff?

VO: No.

MJ: No?

VO: Well, you got to -- you know, on the highway, I mean you're DOT kind of stuff. You got to have a commercial license, but in that sense, but yeah, otherwise no.

MJ: Well, how do you like doing this? This job?

VO: I must like it. I've been doing it 29 years and I might as well finish it out, I guess.

MJ: Now you don't have like a lot of people have from my generation had jobs that had pensions [01:16:00].

VO: No.

MJ: So you don't have a pension?

VO: No.

MJ: You're self-employed.

VO: Yeah.

MJ: Yeah, so you're going to have depend on Social Security?

VO: Yeah, or my savings.

MJ: Or your savings, yeah, personal savings. Well, what do you think about this muddy oil field? Is this just about used up?

VO: I don't know. They're going to -- no, they're -- the technologies out there, you know, there is so much oil still in place to --

MJ: Really?

VO: Because they figured out, somebody will take a chance on it, crack it open, that's how I ended up here with Conoco. They were doing the down here all this -- down here was producing then and of course they have what you call tertiary recovery, I mean water flooding is secondary recovery. So they've done that and they knew all the mistakes they'd made doing that, you know, and we did -- so we went into what we call a surfactant flood, which is detergent [01:17:00] and break the -- like just getting it out of your clothes which you know to get it to turn loose of the rock, you know --

MJ: Oh, really?

VO: Yeah, so we did a pilot plant there, like a two acre pilot plant and that thing, you know, had five producing wells, just like a five on a dice and then four injected wells in between. And that field when we started pre-flushing, you know, getting the brine conditions and levels that they

wanted to know through there, what -- hat middle well made like a barrel a day and the four outside wells made a barrel a day. Between the whole group of them and at our peak of that surfactant injection we were made 125 barrels a day. So, you know --

MJ: So that's -- that era is through now?

VO: Well [01:18:00], they did it and, you know, that's all that ever became of that. Well, they did an expanded area, but one of the problems in big money is so old, there's well boards and holes they don't even know where are, you know, you just go get a wet spot in the ground and start digging you might find oh, this big round going down in the ground --

MJ: Really?

VO: -- old well.

MJ: You'd think they'd have all those surveyed in and records on those?

VO: No. Back in those days --

MJ: It was just --

VO: That all stuff started in, you know, like 1972, you know, they just drilled, you know, [inaudible - 01:18:35] whatever you want to call it, you know, lots of wheeling and dealing and blowing and going I'm sure in between the prominent companies, you know, because they did talk about the Ohio camp and the Texaco camp and I'm sure there were some, you know, majors in there but --

MJ: Why did they --

VO: They would just drop a timber in them and call it bugs you know and cover it up and they were gone, you know, they probably never even get real serious about plugging hills.

MJ: No, there were [01:19:00] no laws? There were probably no, you know --

VO: Per se, you know --

MJ: You don't what do you call it reclamation laws or laws that make you reclaim the land?

VO: Yeah, they just pull the pipe and leave, you know.

MJ: Is this -- why do they call it the Big Muddy because it actually this is -- there's a lot of [01:19:17] in this?

VO: Yeah, because it's a big, old muddy gumbo. So somewhere back in the wagon train days or whatever, you know, you got the name Big Muddy for buildup o your shoes.

MJ: Do you ever have problems with getting through it?

VO: Oh, yeah, you can. It can get wet enough, but, you know, here, you know, you sort of got roads that are not really graveled and you got -- we got to be careful about where you're going but.

MJ: This spring it was wet, right?

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: That's why everything is still so green?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: I mean I'm looking out here and everything looks green. Well, it's even more green as you get towards Cheyenne.

VO: Uh-huh.

MJ: But this looks like good grass country. This looks like good grazing country.

VO: It can be like [01:20:00] this year. See because like this is a winter pasture. The guy that has this deal. He'll come in here in December. So, you know, I mean, you know, he wintered here, but now he got a good growth this spring here so he'll kick his old cows in here December and run them.

MJ: Do you blade the roads out here for him?

VO: Yeah, kind of when I get the time and they'll allow it.

MJ: Yeah. Well, listen --

VO: That's one of those things. I've got permission to do it and I don't have time, yeah. I got to get this done tonight, but yeah, they do that.

MJ: But, you know, it must be nice to be your own boss. You can --

VO: Well, you are to a degree, you know, but it is -- you are kind of a service business. So, it's going jock you too somebody calls and I want -- can you do this and well, I hate to turn people down they might not call you again so.

MJ: Yeah.

VO: You try to figure out so you don't spend all your weekend. So it's pretty much seven days a week [01:21:00], you know, you're out here some of every day. Now, like, yes, today I flew my plane to Gillette and left it for the annual, you know, so I blow a big hole in the middle of the day. So I really don't accomplish much today and in the scope of things when they start going when are you going to get that on, when you going to get that on, you know, yeah.

MJ: So are you married?

VO: Yes.

MJ: Do you have kids?

VO: No, I don't. She had some kids, but I don't have any kids.

MJ: Oh, OK. So are they grown up?

VO: Oh, yeah.

MJ: Yeah. Well, so you're on your own. You don't have to worry about raising your kids and sending them off to college.

VO: Nope.

MJ: Which is kind of a -- in a way it's kind of a nice situation to be in; isn't it?

VO: I guess, yeah. I don't have to worry about it.

MJ: Yeah, right. Well, listen, we've spent an hour and 21 minutes here.

VO: Didn't learn anything about airplanes, though.

MJ: Well, wait a minute. We didn't talk about the Maule. Is that your plane?



VO: We talked about wrecking it. Yeah. Yeah, it's mine.

MJ: OK, and where is at; Gillette now [01:22:00]?

VO: Yeah, well, it's in a place called [inaudible - 01:22:06].

MJ: Oh, yeah.

VO: There's a guy out there with his own strip and I just keep it right down there by that white building. It's just -- the hangar's just off to the part west of there, yeah.

MJ: Oh, really?

VO: Because that's where Ballantyne had it. That's where his ranch was. So I got to keep it right there.

MJ: When you worked -- you worked for Conoco?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: For how long did you work --

VO: Eight years.

MJ: But you say you didn't work in the refinery?

VO: No.

MJ: That was gone before you got here? That was quite a building. Did they knock that down or did it just all fall down?

VO: No. Well, yeah, they came in and cleaned all that up. Conoco's been reclamation. There was a stack and all that stuff there and here. That's probably five or six years ago they, you know, blew the stack over --

MJ: Oh.

VO: -- and they're still doing cleanup work there, redmed -- you know, underground remediation type stuff and things. It's still kind of ongoing [01:23:00] there today.

MJ: I always like that building. When I worked for the state in the '70s I started working in the 70s I should say and we'd come up here once in a while. We'd take this road to Casper and this back road off the interstate and that

building I thought to myself would remain a really nice mall, you could have fixed it up, you know --

VO: Did you ever get a peak in there? I mean --

MJ: No.

VO: -- Conoco, you know, I mean that kind of goes back in the day, you know, it was a day in the 20's or something Conoco was on its back really and they got a guy named Dan Moran for president and the way they talked the old timers talked, I mean he was a tough son of a bitch, but he believed in cleaning, fixing and keeping it looking good. And that building, I mean the tile in it and everything inside that refinery was like wow.

MJ: Wow.

VO: They -- there's [01:24:00] a story that old Moran he'd come around inspecting fields and refineries you know, and the guys talked about this. This was up into the 40s, you know, so some of the guys that were working when I started, you know, talk about, you know, they'd -- I'd take these guys and hide it. They'd haul 'em over the hill and just leave them outside because Dan Moran was coming so they just had a few of them around like the superintendant and the foreman to whatever, you know, to kind of greet this guy and all kind of cowered in fear of him. And it was kind of that way when I went to work for them, you know, fear of your division manager. They'd come around when they did their tours and you go hide. And supposedly, stopped and went to look on the -- had a bus in those days, you know, tour and one guy didn't even get off the bus. And he asked him he said well, aren't you coming in? He said well, no, I'm whatever he was in accounting or something. Really, you know, [01:25:00] this isn't my department. Fired his ass right there. Get off the bus --

MJ: Really?

VO: -- kick her down the road, you're done.

MJ: Really?

VO: Yeah. He -- you don't tell me you don't have an interest. And then in the same time they talked about when they used to have a huge barn down here and they still use the horses in teams and they were drilling this and of course, this is

all a big cellars under these old wells, they go 20 some feet in the ground all timbered up, you know, and of course there are so many strings of casing in those days, you know, and pound so far and drop in, pound some more in the next size, and, you know, you have this stack of casing, you know, and they claimed old Moran when he decided hey, we're in the gas business, we're not in the hay business, you know, when he come around and said shoot the horses, thrown the harness in the river, and burn the barn.

MJ: I can't believe it [01:26:00].

VO: Yeah, well, I think, you know, there again you go all is that and they pull it back. One of the guys, the old timers he said well, you know, most of the ranches around they got the horses, you know, nobody seen to it they didn't -- and the harness, you know, and they got it to somebody that could use it and torn down the barn and --

MJ: Oh, so that's what --

VO: -- for the lumber and stuff, but basically, they, you know, will quote that that was his wording, you know.

MJ: Well, this guy was mean or tough and that's why everybody stayed away from him. They didn't want to get fired? Is that why they stayed away or they --

VO: Why they keep all the extra hands hid when --

MJ: Oh.

VO: -- he come around, yeah, they just got to.

MJ: We're doing all this ourselves?

VO: Yeah, you just got to keep them out of sight and he never asked to see them, I guess. We were Lynch -- I worked and started for him in Lynch and the guys the first year I'm there I had [inaudible - 01:26:55] and he's like within the first month I had an inspection, the president is coming around and they did [01:27:00], you know, I mean you had everything all cleaned and [inaudible - 01:27:04] it was all and then you just -- it was kind of like, you know, they come through with a division manager and the superintendant and really need to see you, you know, so we're -- we thought we were I guess me and the guy I worked with he thought we were -- well, the beaten path just kind

of sit there in the truck waiting for to watch him go down the ridge and know they're done and get about our business and they drove right up beside us. Get out of the truck. What? And I don't know, you know, that was kind of I just kind of looked at him kind of humorously and thought [inaudible - 01:27:38].

MJ: Why did they ever abandon the Continental Oil Company, Conoco? Why did they ever abandon this?

VO: Oh, economics, you know, didn't have the -- the production was gone, you know, to support it and the age of the equipment and whatever, just [inaudible - 01:27:58] feasible to do that.

MJ: Did [01:28:00] you get laid off or did you just quit?

VO: I quit.

MJ: Because you saw the handwriting on the wall?

VO: Oh, no, I wanted to fly the airplane. Worked for that guy, flying a plane, hell, what's to -- well, you know, I don't know, at the time I was reading your little financial Kipling or type --

MJ: Right.

VO: -- whatever it is standing there going like, you know, there's only one person going to take care of you and that's you and there's only one way to do that and you got to get out there and do something and I'm like, OK, so we're hanging on here and the contractors are just having a heyday, you know, the oil activity. Got to get in on that. And I got in on it just as it went bust. I never have really enjoyed it, you know, and I know, you know, and I don't even chase it now, like, all this new stuff out here. The expense in the household and the stuff you got to have to work for those guys is [01:29:00] -- a one man show doesn't even stand a chance. I mean you're going to have to be seriously in the contract doing business by the time you cover all the costs you got to have.

MJ: But you don't seem to me like a dog eat dog I'm going to grind you up and spit you out type of guy anyway.

VO: I don't know.

MJ: I was going to ask you about something else. Oh, shit. Oh, you know, I usually ask everybody this but I'm kind of curious, when is it -- when is the best time for you when you're up in that plane, you know, do you have any like I hate to use the word but aesthetic memories of flying that really?

VO: The best time in flying I ever had?

MJ: Yeah.

VO: Was I bought a car in Bozeman, Montana, which is my wife's son-in-law. And it was in and then I needed to go get and so it was [01:30:02] how do I get there, and I get a hold of my brother and I forget he had a 180 of course at the time and I forget what it was down for, doing something to it, getting [inaudible - 01:30:14]. So he took Super Cub ad we flew to Bozeman and I think that was about as much as I had, just get in and go puttering across the country in that Super Cub dinking around, you know, a couple hours into Cody or whatever and then on into Bozeman.

MJ: What is it about -- go ahead.

VO: I just I don't know I just enjoyed the, you know, whether it's just with my brother, you know, you're just -- we weren't in a hurry, there ain't no need to be in a hurry.

MJ: No?

VO: Never, you know, it's -- it was just, I don't know it just kind of really enjoyed that. It's kind of the fun of just -  
-

MJ: Now Joel is two years older than you?

VO: Six years.

MJ: Oh, he's six years older than you are? Is he still flying?

VO: Uh-huh. See, he's six years older than I am and got to start flying six years after [01:13:00] I did interestingly enough, but.

MJ: Yeah, why?

VO: I don't know, it's just the way economics and things turned out, I guess I don't --

MJ: Now where is he at exactly? Where's he living?

VO: Well, he actually lives in Gillette and drives to the ranch but.

MJ: OK. So I could find him in Gillette.

VO: Yeah.

MJ: I think it's on the east edge of town a little bit, isn't it?

VO: West.

MJ: Oh, west.

VO: West. Yeah, right up in like the yeah, the interchange right there where, you know, you would come off the interstate from Buffalo or the first one into Gillette there on the west and then kind of [inaudible - 01:31:39] because of south and west from there.

MJ: South of town?

VO: Yeah, there's a golf course there. He just kind of lives off to the north -- south edge of that, I guess.

MJ: Now tell me what questions I should ask him then that you would like to ask him?

VO: Ask him if he remembers making [01:32:00] [inaudible - 01:32:01].

MJ: OK. OK. Sounds like you guys did this together, right?

VO: Well, let's see [inaudible - 01:32:14]. Pretty much idolized my brother my whole life so yeah, I [inaudible - 01:32:20] whatever he was doing had to be the greatest thing going, you know.

MJ: Yeah. Well, listen I think we should cut it off but I want to get a picture of you and I see one right here in the cab so don't move. I'm going to turn this off. Oh, thank you very much.

VO: And say hi to Gene Hardy.

MJ: I will. I will. I told him I'd like to talk to him again about -- that man's been involved in so many things in

agriculture. He's been a leader in the agricultural business.

VO: he sure did, yeah, you know, I mean there was a guy when we first met, I guess, you know, of course she was a young man and wife, you know, and yet a Super Cub and they would the Flying Farmers organization was --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- very active [01:33:00] and they would motor across the state in that Super Cub to all these fine farmer gatherings, you know?

MJ: How come you didn't join that group?

VO: Well, I was a kid, you know, I was a fine farmer team but I didn't -- by the time say I was an adult I had pretty well fizzed, you know, the interest -- I don't know, I mean you could look back at life, you know, the same way as community halls went away. I don't know people get off and then they're roping, I don't know team roping or that were kids with [inaudible - 01:33:36] or who knows what caused it to just kind of disintegrate from the people that were doing it.

MJ: Well, economically too, it's harder to own a plane and just be convivial, you know, and go around and visit with your friends, I mean it takes money.

VO: Yeah, I guess, you know, you got to think I suppose dollar for dollar hell in 1962, you know, could you muster [01:34:00] up \$6,000 you know, I -- that's what I think back -- just Philip right up the way here well, he's passed away now a guy named he was Cactus McCleary, right?

MJ: You know, I heard about him.

VO: Brian was his name. Well, he flew for a short time but and hew was telling me one day he said well, in this 180 and he said I bought that in 1962. It was a new 180, I mean he didn't buy it new but he said I paid \$7,000 -- oh, in '64 he said I paid \$7,000 for it and I sold it in '74 for \$14,000. And now they want \$85,000 for the same plane.

MJ: For the same plane.

VO: Yeah.

MJ: God.

VO: You know, but it's '64, you know, I mean who necessary had \$7,000 cash either, you know, in a sense I'm thinking in well, in '74, you know, I was able to buy. Yeah, right, I didn't have two thousand dollars, let alone [01:35:00] \$14,000, but [inaudible - 01:35:02] an airplane, you know, so yeah, you, you know what I mean there -- it seems disproportionate now, you think four hundred thousand dollars for a new airplane and it's like yeah, it's just so far out of sight I mean I remember dad talking about it it's 1955 his first Cadillac was \$5,000.

MJ: Really?

VO: A new D4 Cat with a scraper in 1954, \$5,000. They've got way more expensive than the Cadillac's, you know, even, but we had a welder down here one time that went by him and his dad and bought a grand new D4 in can in 1955, \$5,000. They were doing irrigation work somewhere you know down [inaudible - 01:35:47]

MJ: In those days you could afford \$5,000. It was not easy to come up with \$5,000 but you could find aunts probably.

VO: Well, you could make it work.

MJ: Yeah.

VO: I guess would be the words, you know, you could --

MJ: Ouch.

VO: Yeah, you could buy it and make it work [01:36:01], you know, make the money with it, you know, so.

MJ: This Cactus McCleary he was kind of a legendary guy, isn't he? Or is that just something I heard?

VO: Well, I don't know. Yes, no, I mean fair -- kind of a quiet, you know I don't know if you had -- you know, if -- maybe he was more of a behind the scenes kind of guy, I don't know, you know, I mean he was flamboyant I guess.

MJ: Well, what was his claim to fame?

VO: I don't know, he [inaudible - 01:36:32] square dances.



MJ: But, I mean in terms of flying what was his claim to fame because I've heard his name more than once?

VO: It's funny [inaudible -01:36:41] ranch up here. Oh, you're from the ranch? Yeah, I did a little flying Farmer for a while, you know, just kind of [inaudible - 01:36:48] did that for a spell and --

MJ: Yeah.

VO: -- I don't know anything beyond that and just --

MJ: Did you know him pretty well?

VO: No, just knew him, you know, from the early days [01:37:00] of flying, you know, and then a little bit after I moved here you might bump into him and say hi, you know, and he knows yeah, you're Eric's boy, whatever. I would think just [inaudible 01:37:12] a little bit and off you go, you know.

MJ: Have you met any flying air aviators?

VO: Well, yeah, maybe I don't know. One old timer God, he's got to be dead by now. He was an old son of a gun then at the [inaudible - 01:37:27] up at the little Buffalo ranch there he had a picnic occasionally and --

MJ: I heard that.

VO: -- this guy was there. And Kramer was his name. He lived in a place called Nemo, South Dakota in the black hills there. He's a little community called Nemo, kind of like Big Muddy, but Gary said the only reason he always hated him he said because he, I think his dad had had this little [inaudible - 01:37:59] back and then it was sitting in the hangar and Gary used to play in it as a little kid and this guy came and bought the thing. So anyway he hated him because he took his toy away but he was an old timer then. It seems like he got [inaudible - 01:38:13] about flying DC-3's in Alaska and then the story, you know, they're out there, they're in a hail storm and I think it was pounding on the plane and they've got sled dogs in there and they're sick and the dogs are yelling and they're puking and a pregnant Eskimo and I mean it just gets on and on and on, you know, and this whole turmoil while you're fighting weather. And then another interesting little boy we -- see what at this time it was Air Lifeline, they call it like Angel Flight now where you volunteer to fly somebody for

medical treatment and this guy was 82, 3 years old and he was bringing a guy up -- a guy and his wife and his kid because the kid was sick, the little kid. Bringing them into Casper and I was to fly them on up to Laurel.

[01:39:00] Well, I get and it's just raining cats and dogs, you know, I'm not flying any -- not in this shit, you know, and I call down there and get a hold of his wife, and oh, yeah he's on his way and sure enough then I'm sitting there and [inaudible - 01:39:19] and there was a hole in the sky you could see -- they went by it and of course they vectored him around and approach and he finally come in Aisle S and he was madder than hell at him. He said have you seen the dam airport, you know, I could have just -- oh, no, they vectored me around and he's just cussing up a storm and I said well, you know, I'm not flying in this. And he said well, you know, that's all right. He said if you're not comfortable there's nothing wrong with that. He said I'll take him on. Are you sure? OH, yeah, I'll just go on and no problem. He said the only thing he was worried about, I mean I'm sitting there thinking lightening and rain storm and he's -- the only thing he was worried about was ice, if there was a freezing low. And then but as it turns out he's one [01:40:00] of them old time [inaudible - 01:40:02]. he started flying for whatever airline when they flew Boeing 247s, and DC-3's and on up the line and he flew until he retired from them flying 707s.

MJ: Oh.

VO: And then he went over to Europe for awhile and trained European crews, I think in 707s. And he had taken this 180 and put the fuel tanks in it and flew it to Europe just a few years before, you know, and I know where to visit, you know --

MJ: A 180 he flew over the ocean?

VO: Yeah, he flew that up, you know, he tanked it up and away he went.

MJ: Sort of like Lindbergh, right?

VO: Yeah, he was flying in that.

MJ: What was his name?

VO: Oh, man, I can't think of it now. I don't --

MJ: He was from where?

VO: He lived in Evergreen, Colorado, at that time, you know, let me see he was 87 and he had a steer man too. He had the -- 1971 to '80, [01:41:00] can't think of the name, and he talked about landing DC-3's at Madison Bow. He said if we was coming up and the headwinds were too strong we'd have to land in Madison Bow and they had fuel barrels there and we would have pump more fuel into the DC-3 and then continue on to Cody.

MJ: Have you been to Madison Bow?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: There's no transportation into town from Madison Bow. You land there you got to walk.

VO: There ain't much there when you land either. There are now --

MJ: That's right.

VO: -- maybe now it's pretty good, because nobody had the asphalt, but yeah. But if you want a comparison of runways you could ask my brother this, some years ago he was pretty close with the sheriff in Campbell County and they wanted to get a guy to -- they wanted to do a little drug bust. And they needed a chase plane. And we need you. Oh, yeah, he'd do that. He'd take it up [01:42:00]. And so what they did is they had their guy and they wanted to buy enough from him he would have to go to his supplier. That's what they wanted. So they wanted to buy enough to force him to find out where his buyer was. They kind of had some ideas. Kind of a unny story, I pull up in fronto fmy house and my brother flying over town and circling and circling, well, what the hell he'd want, doing? So he kind of went north and there was a little bit of a strip north of Glenrock what's called Rolling Hills and there was a guy that had a drilling company that had a little piece [inaudible - 01:42:36]. Why he is going up here? I went up there and he wasn't there. Come back down the house, my wife calls me. Casper Howard's one the phone and your brother wants to know if you got any shoe on? Yeah, I've got a shoe on. OK. So I come out here to the hangar well, he's here and he landed him and this deputy. Of course, the hangar wasn't were it is now. It was down below [01:43:01] by the barn and you were down kind of and the runway went in a little

corner in it and you're right down in shooting range. Anyway they had lost the guy. He came into Glenrock and he went under a shady tree and they missed him. They didn't know where he was. And kind of like crap, we don't now where he's at. An as it tail car hadn't found him either and so the deputy's telling my brother he said well, that's -- I'll just go into town and I'll just ride back with those guys and you can go on about your business, you know. So I go into town. My brother goes we lost him when he turned on this street, you know, so he turned down that street, bingo, there's the car. And OK, we found our guy. So he goes over and turns him loose at the police station. And then he, you know -- we're on our way, but he said when we coming down that that guy was -- he had his foot in that car and they were coming down 59 like a bat out of hell. And he said if I had been in a Super Cub I'd have never got -- caught that [01:44:00] guy, you know, but he said we're going long and then when he gets to Bill us just screech. Pulls into Bill and like holy cow, change cards. He's cutting off [inaudible - 01:44:17] attract his attention but anyway the guy is in Bill and they followed this guy around Gillette for over an hour before he ever left Gillette and so the deputy needed to pee. So he landed on the county road down there, took care of business. About then the chase guys go then they're off on the road again, you know, jumping in the plane and away they come. And they come down here and like I say we end up in there. And he goes back. Well, he writes his report and he puts in there that they landed down there on the road and then they landed out here on my strip and he said the road was better. He said like going down the pathway of equipment and had the runway in the middle.

MJ: So what [01:45:00] happened to this guy then? Did they nail him?

VO: Yeah. Yeah, they arrested him. He posted bond and skipped the country and left the county supporting his old lady and kids and they finally caught up with him in California a few years later and send him to the pen. And the guy here in town went to pen too but [inaudible - 01:45:27] he went for a while, which is, you know, fun and if anybody ever tells you don't worry about it, they'll never know about you that's a line of crap. Because we were getting out -- it was kind of a little bit in the civil air patrol and they were talking about doing some of these kind of drug things and don't worry about it, your name don't come up.

This guy when they took him through court down there Joel sitting in the café in Gillette somewhere and lady comes in and she was on the grand jury. Sure heard you name a lot. What? Yep. And she says they did, they had to spell out who flew the plane. They had to spell out me. Whose strip did you land at? Whose fuel did you get, you know, and they got all that out there. So it's like OK, not really anonymous in this stuff.

MJ: Yeah. You think you are.

VO: Yeah, you think you are, yeah, they'd don't give a dam about that. They want the names.

MJ: Well, OK.

VO: We're still going?

MJ: Yeah, let me turn this off.

VO: Goodbye.

MJ: Goodbye he says.

VO: Over and out [01:46:42].

END OF PART 1

**Wyoming State Archives - OH-3038, part 2, Victor Ohman, 6-12-2014, WY In Flight**

MARK JUNGES: All right, we're back on.

VICTOR OHMAN: All right. But anyway, you know what I was talking about, we took the New Yorker to town and then -- yeah, and then got my glasses and did all that, and then came back to leave and it was dark by then, you know, at night. And the battery was still dead [in that sky?].

(laughter) Hey, I need a jump! Well, you know, the guy [working in the line?], I was a senior in high school and the guy working line. Now they're going to college was Lockheed Chrysler one of -- one of [Neville's?] sons, you know? So the only one that I kind of knew until this one surfaced, and this guy, he was working for the same people, you know? But that -- you know, and I think, you know I wouldn't -- I mean, he just jumped in, got her fired up, and never give it a second thought, and just took off into the night, you know, and back to Gillette we go. Well, hell, the generator, he carried it, you know? You had lights, radio and says, "Well, I just went to touch down and chopped the power and it just went black," you know? And Randy got a little excited. (laughter) [00:01:00] Got his attention. But, we were there. And of course, we had runway lights, I mean, we were landing in the dark.

MJ: Now, this is going way back, though, to your -- when you were...

VO: Yeah. This is -- 1970, yeah. Or '69. Yeah, it could have been '70, yeah, early '70. Yeah, it would have been '70, because Lockheed was a year ahead of me, so he was going to Casper College at that time.

MJ: Victor, why didn't you go to college?

VO: I did.

MJ: Well, why didn't you graduate then?

VO: I did.

MJ: From UW?

VO: No, [OK, just Casper?]. I we-- I'd had enough school by then. I'd -- (laughter) wasn't that excited about school. I really wanted to do the helicopter thing, you know? So I mean, yeah, and then, I did go down and took the test.

MJ: The helicopter test? Fixed wing?

VO: No, the -- the entrance exams you know, for the Army and the physicals with the Army. And then they had me go over to the Air Force to do the flight physical part of it. You know, I went through all of that stuff. I met a colorful character down there on skid row, you know, in Larimer Square.

MJ: Really?

VO: Yeah. [00:02:00] I was just down there to get -- I went in to get my physical, the flight physical, and they go, "We don't have any doctor today. You'll have to come back tomorrow." Well, gee whiz. I'm just kind of [barefoot?] down here in Larimer Square, and -- with a room in the Oxford. And I would say we're just starting to kind of decide to rejuvenate Larimer Square. I had nothing to do all day. I'm wandering around, and go into a 3.2 bar. Yeah. [Sitting there?], having my beer. This little boy

comes in and it's the first time I ever seen snuff, anybody with actually snuff, you know? [And I'm kind of sitting there?]. That's kind of [out there?], but this little boy comes in and he goes "I want to buy you a beer." "OK, have at it," you know? And he -- here's -- I have no idea, 25 cents, 50 cents, then, you know? And gives him a \$20 bill, and he gets the change. And he said -- he said "I got to go to a crap game," and he said -- "and I need change, and they won't just give me change," so he would (laughter) [00:03:00] [buy to get his?] change [carved up?] to go to his crap game, you know?

Well, and then he got to talking and he was from somewhere in Texas. And he was, you know, an elderly guy, you know? Maybe an old guy, and I don't know, you know? I mean, you look at a grandmother today and look at my grandmother, you know, they don't look the same. OK? (laughter) So, who knows.

I'll tell you that story. And he said, "Well I got a little place down in Texas, and I -- I hit some oil on it, you know?" And I don't know just how long ago it had been, but he said they -- he said, "I'm getting about \$800 a month," so I thought, well, hell, I'll just moved to



Denver. And he said, "Ah, come up here," and got me a room [in the Brown Palace?]. There, and life's good. And I get drunk, (laughter) and I woke up down here one morning, and these people were taking care of me. And he said, "I've been here ever since." (laughter)

MJ: [00:04:00]] And you were drinking 3.2% beer.

VO: Yeah, because you do 3.2 beer at 18.

MJ: At 18. Yeah, you could. I remember that.

VO: Yeah. See, so, and --

MJ: What year was that?

VO: That would have been in '72.

MJ: OK, because I was raised in -- pretty much in Denver.

VO: Oh, were you? Yeah.

MJ: Yeah. We had 3.2 beer. We had it before we were able to have that, actually.

VO: But yeah, he -- that was -- kind of got interesting, you know, you [go see it?].

MJ: You never found out anything about him, huh?

VO: That was all he said, you know? And he -- he's still getting royalties from living down there with the poor people or whatever, I guess, you know? (laughter)

MJ: What an adventure. And you were at the Oxford?

VO: Mm-hmm.

MJ: Yeah.

VO: And my dad goes, "Well, that's a nice place." "Yeah, I'm 45, but..." (laughter) Not now. (laughter).

MJ: Yeah, is -- well, Larimer -- like you say, Larimer Square was starting to be preserved, the historic buildings there, but really, it was still [00:05:00] a focal point for the skid row people. You know, and not very far north of there, of course, it was -- it got really bad.

VO: Oh, did it?

MJ: Yeah, but I still -- when I dated my wife in '66, we went to the -- I think it's called the [Shipultavek?]. It was a -- it was a Mexican, or Latino, bar. And the music was great, the food was good, the beer was good. I mean, you could go to places like that if you knew where you were going. I mean, you wouldn't want to just hang out and then just wait for somebody to, you know, ask you for a buck. But that was -- those were good times down there, too. Anyway, listen, don't -- are we done?

VO: Oh, I don't know, yeah. I already forgot what -- remind me of, I'm telling you that story, so who knows?

MJ: Well, [it was Chrysler].

VO: I just got -- I just got lots of stories like that.

MJ: You do, By God. We should...

VO: Tidbits of people you run into over time. And yeah, Chrysler, now like this kid running the rig, you know, he

talked about, you know, growing up and working with his dad and the ["Connies?], and when his dad was spraying with them and he was part of the crew, [00:06:00] and [it was pretty warm down on the?] (inaudible). (laughter) Yeah.

MJ: Now who is this you're talking about?

VO: This would be Steve Chrysler, the adopted -- one of the adopted boys. But yeah.

MJ: Yeah. Is he still around?

VO: He's -- well, lives in Loveland. [He's back?]. They took the rig back to Colorado and he's back down there.

MJ: Yeah, those -- those Connies were something. I guess they restored one that was the Eisenhower's.

VO: Yeah. They got one, yeah, that Eisenhower had. And because old Mel had five of them, you know? And they -- you know, and then his idea, you know, he did spray with them. But I think he was kind of looking for those firefighting contracts, but they ended up, you know, with some interesting things. Buzzing potato fields all night with them to keep the potatoes from freezing in Idaho.

MJ: (laughter) Buzzing the potatoes?

VO: Yeah.

MJ: What, [what?], though? The air? The air would -- the turbulence?

VO: Fly low and keep the air stirred up so it wouldn't freeze.

Yeah.

MJ: Dang.

VO: Because if you ever noticed in California, some there, you know, on some of those, they got the little windmills things out there.

MJ: [00:07:00] Wind turbines.

VO: Yeah, well, I guess they must be the same deal, you know?

MJ: Well, same thing with the orange groves in California.

It's supposed to keep it so it doesn't freeze up, I guess, that's the whole point.

VO: Yeah.

MJ: Well, let me s--

END OF AUDIO FILE