

OH-3049, Scott Madsen, 6-17-2014, Sheridan, WY In Flight

JUNGE: [00:00:00] There's something on the front of this tape here. Today is the 17th of June, 2014. My name is Mark Junge and I'm in the Johnson County Library, right? In Buffa-- Buffalo, Wyoming. And I'm talking with Scott Madsen, who was the author of a book "The Bomber Mountain Crash: A Wyoming Mystery." And this is dedicated to a friend of yours, Patrick Dale [Jelly?].

MADSEN: Yeah

JUNGE: Yeah, OK. And it was done -- let's see, when was this done...

MADSEN: The writ-- the book was written in 1990.

JUNGE: Right.

MADSEN: So...

JUNGE: OK

MADSEN: That was back when I was in college, I took the first month off of summer break after college and spent a entire month in '90 writing it. Then I went to work the next month, so I basically had a full -- It started back in [00:01:00] my senior year of high school. I was in a class called "Advanced American Studies," and we had to do a research paper on a topic of local interest. And I picked the Bomber Mountain Crash because I'd been up there a

couple times and seen the wreckage with my family and with another group and I was curious about it, but there wasn't anything really printed about it, so, that I could find, so that was the best idea I could come up for the research paper topic, so--

JUNGE: Who's your teacher?

MADSEN: Teacher was [Gerald Kresge?].

JUNGE: At the university?

MADSEN: At the-- he was at the-- that was in high school here in Buffalo -- Buffalo High School my senior year. And I graduated in 1988 and the summer of '88, after several people had read the paper and were interested about it, I published a little 20 page booklet, which was basically the research paper typed up fancy [00:02:00] with about three or four photos. And I got a thousand copies of that pamphlet and sold them -- those in about two months -- sold out of that. And...

JUNGE: Really? What'd you sell them for?

MADSEN: But they were onl-- I think that those were only for like 3.50 or 4 dollars or something. It was pretty minimal and it was amazing how quick they sold out, but that was back in the days of the offset press and the old manual methods that it took -- I had to order a thousand just to

get the price break down to where I could make a little bit of money on them --

JUNGE: [laughter]

MADSEN: -- because it cost -- I was selling them, I think, for 3.50/4 and it cost me about 2.50 a piece to print them (laughter) so I didn't make a whole lot of money.

JUNGE: This is not something you went into because you could make money.

MADSEN: No, and even this book, I never have made a mint off it. I haven't made a whole lot of money, but I've covered my expenses. That was the summer of '88 [00:03:00] and I started college up at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana the fall of '88. And during college I did some odds-and-ends research for the next two years, and then in the summer, June of 1990 I wrote the current book and added some pictures and...

JUNGE: Did you get your degree up at Montana State?

MADSEN: Yeah, I have a degree in mechanical engineering up at Montana State. So that was kind of -- I took the five year plan because I soon figured out I'd have to work real hard to get out in four years with all the tough classes they had to take and I wanted to take a few fun ones, so. And I was involved with the music program and stuff, so, to fit all the fun classes in, I had to stretch it out to five

years, which was pretty common for -- a lot of people took five year plan.

JUNGE: On sure, for engineering? Of course, yeah. Did you play a musical instrument?

MADSEN: Yeah, I've -- my main instrument was [00:04:00] the tuba that was -- I -- towards -- I guess, in high school and college I played that and I also singing in the choir and I did some -- took some other classes on percussion and piano and whatever else just for the fun of it, so...

JUNGE: Why in the world would anyone want to play the tuba?

MADSEN: I don't know, I just liked -- I've got a low voice as it is for singing -- a bass voice -- and I just like -- I don't know -- I just kind of liked it and I started out on the trumpet in grade school and then moved to the baritone for a year or two and then ended up moving to the tuba because there wasn't that many people...

JUNGE: The baritone sax?

MADSEN: The baritone brass -- the brass baritone which is in between. And then towards, I think, my last two years of high school, I was playing the tuba in band, which was right before lunch [00:05:00], and then during lunch hour we had jazz band and I was playing the fourth trumpet which was going from a big mouthpiece to a small mouthpiece -- jumping back and forth. And that was kind of interesting.

Then up in college I -- I picked up -- I started playing the slide trombone, I think it was the like fourth trombone or something, in one of their little jazz bands too for something different to do to... (laughs) I've always been a major brass player -- whatever -- everything but the French horn -- I've played about everything else that's brass (laughter)

JUNGE: So, was your intent then to go into the business that you're now, which is construction?

MADSEN: Not really, but when I got out of college in '93 was when the -- there was -- that was part of the big defense shut down and there was a lot of out of work senior engineers that were vying for the entry level jobs [00:06:00] and basically everybody was overqualified for their jobs and they -- the new recruits had a problem trying to find a (laughs) job and I -- I came back -- I -- my dad's been in the construction business full time since mid-'70s and I was -- I worked summers all through high school and college for him in construction anyways, so... When I got out of college, I was able to -- to just continue that and just end up working full time from '93 on. And then -- and about '93/'94 is when the housing started picking up here, but... Before that time we built one house every other year and small stuff in between. And

then from '94 to about 2008 we were building two or three houses a year. It got pretty busy. And then [00:07:00] 2008, with the mortgage crash we kinda... (laughs)

JUNGE: Tapered off?

MADSEN: It tapered off again. We did more smaller remodel work and now we're finally -- this year finally back to building new houses (laughs) again. So, it's -- it's a cyclic business: depends on the economy.

JUNGE: Yeah, Did you -- do you own the company?

MADSEN: I do now, yeah, I've -- oh, what, four or five years ago I took it over from my dad. Basically, I just acquired the headache (laughs) part of the business doing the paperwork and the payroll and the government all that fun stuff to keep them --

JUNGE: What's the name of the company?

MADSEN: It's CTM Specialties, which was my dad's initials is how the name came about, but... you know, we've -- we've been building custom homes for many years in town and it's keeping busy.

JUNGE: For -- for like middle-income people? Rich people?

MADSEN: Oh, mostly middle to [00:08:00] -- income to a little above middle. We've been building anywhere from -- well, they start around the 250 range and now they're up to -- we've built them up to six/seven-hundred thousand dollar

homes, just depends on what people want and how fancy they want them, and it's...

JUNGE: Do your -- does your degree help you, Scott, a lot?--

MADSEN: Yeah, it helps some. I -- I passed the engineering training exam but I -- I haven't been able to get my professional engineering license because I haven't worked under a licensed engineer is about the only thing. But I've -- but it is -- it does help for as far as trusses and beams and some of the structural part of the buildings, I can understand a little more and easier to read blueprints and understand some stuff. We've also done a few small commercial projects for the -- we built an addition on to the museum over here, the carriage house behind [00:09:00] the main museum. We built that. We've --

JUNGE: On the Gatchell Museum?

MADSEN: On the Gatch-- on the back of the Gatchell Museum. We've build, oh, an addition on our church and a couple other things like that where that we're a little bit into the commercial realm but they weren't that big of projects. They were still pretty smaller.

JUNGE: Well, how does a gu-- guy of your background and your training get interested in -- in a plane crash?

MADSEN: Well, I guess the biggest thing, I've always been interested in the mountains here, growing up in Buffalo

with the mountains right next door -- right next to here. And every summer, my brother and I would spend two or three weekends up there backpacking and hiking in the mountains. And our church group would take a week long backpack every year with a bunch of people. So, I spent a lot of time in the summers through grade school, high school, college, I was [00:10:00] -- I probably spent a total of two (cough) two weeks a summer up there in the mountains in the middle of nowhere and that's -- and three or four times during those trips I went by the Bomber Mountain and was able to hike up and see the wreckage. And that kind of got me interested in it, to see how much of the wreckage was there and then I -- of course my inquisitive mind was trying to look at it, trying to figure out how it ended up the way it did and how it crashed and -- and that type of stuff. And it -- it kind of grew from the little research paper was -- covered most of the basics but then the next couple years after that, during the first couple years of college, I did some more serious research and actually was able to contact -- I think I'm up to six of the ten families. I've [00:11:00] contacted family members of the men that died on the crash, and they were all 18 to 23 year-old men and I was about the same age at the time when -- when I was writing it, so that was kind of interesting. And the -- my



friend that I dedicated the book to was -- he was - he was a classmate of mine in high school when he was in the -- I believe it was the marine corps - and he was -- well I -- near as they can tell I guess it was an accidental discharge or something. The firearm -- he was on guard duty and somehow firearm went off and it -- it -- and he shot himself or something and it -- he -- he was killed in duty and -- stateside in a marine base and that's -- that was in, I think, fall of '89 or something like that [00:12:00] and -- and the book -- I wrote the book like six months later so that was the reason I dedicated it to him because it was -- it was kind of a recent memory at the time and it was also kind of fitting because he was about the same age as the crew members of -- and that was one of the things about this crash that kind of was surprising too. Even the two, pilot and copilot, were only young 20s. They weren't very old. They were still pretty young and this was a brand new plane. It had just finished -- well they -- the crew had just finished training and the plane had gone to Oregon for -- and Washington for a couple weeks and they were just kind of getting used to it and then they were -- this was the first long flight. They were headed to Nebraska to -- with a [00:13:00] -- a whole group of -- of planes to stage to head overseas. And they were -- and

for some reason, that still hasn't been -- never has been identified -- they were -- for some reason they were a little bit behind the rest of the group. They were 15 minutes behind or something. They didn't quite get off the ground at the same time so they were trailing a ways, so they weren't in close contact with the rest of the group and their last position report was 120-some miles south of here -- south of Casper Wy-- er, north of Casper, Wyoming, between Casper and [Casey?]. South of the mountains is where they thought they were. And that whether it was human error, reading the instruments wrong, [00:14:00] instrument error, or miscalibration or something with a new plane that something wasn't set up right or -- that's one of the biggest mysteries is why they were off course, or why they thought they were down there, because --

JUNGE: If you -- go ahead, I'm sorry

MADSEN: -- and because of that that when they -- it went missing in June of '43 and the army spent quite a bit of time searching for them but they were searching down north of Casper, they were searching in the Wind Rivers Mountains, they were searching that area because that's where the -- where they thought they were, and that was not the case. So that was the problem. It took a couple years before they were -- before they found them.

JUNGE: How could they get a reading 40 miles northwest of Casper when Cloud Peak is a lot further than that, north and probably a little west.

MADSEN: Yeah, because they -- I -- yeah, that's what [00:15:00] baffles me but that -- why they -- that's the one thing that (laughs) never will be able to find out for sure because they only people that know for sure how the -- what the reading was are no longer with us. They all died in the crash. And that makes it real tough to know -- yeah, because that was -- and that position report, I don't know, I'm not sure when it was, it was -- they were flying in the evening and it was dark out so they couldn't see real good. I don't -- my science teacher in high school, he looked it up with a computer program at the time and that supposedly there was no moon that night, it was -- so it would have been pretty much pitch black, especially up in the mountains up there and when you get up there and look out up there, there were -- Bomber Mountain is the first ridge south of Cloud Peak, it's -- it's just -- [00:16:00] and from the way they were coming, the way they impacted the mountain, they were coming from the west and it looks -- looks like they saw the mountain at the last minute and tried to pull up. And they -- the first point of impact was the tail section of the airplane. They

clipped the tail as they tried to pull up real steep. And it looks like they broke part of the tail off. And then the captain's chairs and some of the stuff from the cockpit were -- are on the peak of the mountain. So they br-- I think they broke the tail off, they nosed into the top, and then kind of catapulted the rest of the plane over the mountain and it's all, oh, quarter to half mile down the hill on the other side, and...

JUNGE: Did you ever think to yourself -- I bet you've thought about it more than once, Scott, that if they were just a hundred feet higher.

MADSEN: Yeah, because they were -- I don't even think it was a hundred -- maybe 50, 75 foot -- it wasn't that [00:17:00] much. It was pretty close to -- they -- they weren't that far away. And when I was up there in, oh, I think it was four or fi-- probably about 2010 or 11, I went up there with a friend of mine and we tried to go in -- in August and got snowed out -- middle of August. End up going middle of September and had a beautiful day up there. We -- one of the few days I didn't get rained off or lightnined off in the middle of the day. And we were on top of the mountain till six o'clock at night. Then we had to hike down, till it was like 7:30. We rode horseback up there. And about 7:30 we got to our horses. Luckily, they

were some -- from the guy that I went with, he worked with an outfitter -- and they were some good mountain horses that basically -- we both had headlamps on to watch for tree branches (laughs) that would hit us but the horses basically just knew the way. They knew they were going back to (laughs) -- down to food, to camp, so they just [00:18:00], kind of went their own way in the dark. And I think we got back to the trailer 10:30, 11 at night. It was (laughs) -- it was a long day, but it was a beautiful day -- the best day I've ever had on the mountain that I was able to get lots of pictures and -- and I -- well that time, I took a bunch of digital pictures. The first time I got regular film pictures and then I've been up there since with my GPS a couple times and GPSed all the wreckage. Got every major piece of wreckage -- I got a GPS coordinate to try to help--

JUNGE: So the stuff -- the wreckage is still up there?

MADSEN: Yeah, most -- the majority of it is still up there.

The engines, a coup-- two of the engines broke off, and they're a little farther past the main wreckage, but the main wreckage field has the -- the whole center of the airplane: the wings, the center fuselage. The wings were basically ripped inside out, they [00:19:00], I guess from catapulting -- somehow the engines had enough torque they

twisted them and ripped -- the wings are upside down and inside out. The biggest piece of wreckage is probably only about 12, 15 foot long and 6 foot wide or something -- that's in once piece from plane that was, I believe it was 40, 50 foot long and 60 foot wide or something, it's -- yeah, it was a big plane and it was all pretty -- it got pretty well beat up because they were hit -- they hit pretty hard.

JUNGE: Is this up in a wilderness area? Cloud Peak Wilderness?

MADSEN: Yeah, it's in Cloud Peak Wilderness is the main reason that most of it is still up there. And it is -- well the closest place you can go -- the closest place you can drive is still eight or nine miles up to the wreckage site where you can get horses is about -- it's about ten miles from the -- where you can park vehicles [00:20:00] and hike in with -- from horseback it's a -- it's a quite a ways up there and it's the last three miles is in the wilderness area so you can't really take any wreckage. And I guess one of the strange things that happened to me that kind of surprised me, back in -- it was late 1990, early '91, after the book was published, there was a -- well a guy in Story, Wyoming, was friends with a guy in Denver that was friends with this br-- this guy that was working for technical

assistance or technical support for the movie *Memphis Belle* and I got (laughs) -- I got a call at college -- well, they finally called my parents first, because they were in the phone book in Buffalo. They called them and talked to them for a couple sec-- minutes, [00:21:00] and then they called -- called me up in college and, "Hi, this is so-and-so from Warner Brothers" and I -- "Yeah, right. Who is this, playing a joke on me?" After about five minutes he finally convinced me that yeah, he was -- he was from the Warner Brothers pictures, and he was -- they were looking for parts for their sound stage to -- to film the movie *Memphis Belle*. They had -- they had some pieces, but most -- the majority of the B-17s were scrapped in Arizona when they -- in the graveyard down there, they--

JUNGE: Mo-- Davis-Monthan.

MADSEN: They had a pile of them down there. Hundreds of them out in the fields and they ended up chewing them all up for scrap aluminum, so there's -- I believe at the time of the movie that there was only 10 or 12 B-17s in flying condition in the U.S. And one of them crashed during the filming, so there's one less. And there's -- but yeah, they were looking for parts for their sound stage to help, because they recreated the interior of the plane in -- in the sound stages and they ended up having to just build it

out of new materials, whatever they could find to -- to make it and paint it and make it look like the originals.

JUNGE: So, why are they -- were they interested in the wreckage up here? What was...

MADSEN: Well, they were -- they had heard about it and they wanted -- they just wanted -- it would have simplified their process if they could get the wreckage that was still in big pieces and mostly there, they could just add-on and build the rest of the pieces they need instead of just having to start from scratch and build everything.

JUNGE: Wouldn't it have been better just to get a -- find a B-17 that was flying?

MADSEN: Yeah, but they wanted one they could cut up and have only one half of the wall or something so they could get their lights and cameras in to film it. And the fires in Yellowstone in '88 or '89, whatever that was--

JUNGE: Eighty-eight, yeah.

MADSEN: [00:23:00] There was -- they uncovered a B-17 wreckage over there that was outside of -- several miles outside of west Yellowstone. It was in the park that was buried back in the middle of nowhere and people didn't even know about it and the fire went through there and "Surprise, there's metal here." But they ended up scrapping that like six



months before the movie wanted it and they -- that would have been perfect for them. They would have--

JUNGE: Was it in-- pretty much intact? Or was it...

MADSEN: It was -- it wasn't totally intact but it was -- it was broke up, but most of the plane was there, so they could have had a real easy job of building the sound stage. But, because that one got hauled out the park service wanted to get that wreckage off their land so they just hauled it off to a scrap yard -- it's just kind of sad.

JUNGE: You'd think -- yeah, you'd think that they would investigate it a little bit.

MADSEN: Yeah, but there's [00:24:00] -- I've been to the Pima Air Museum in Tucson, Arizona, when -- when I was in high school and college my grandparents would go down there in the -- in the su-- winters to wi--

JUNGE: Snowbird?

MADSEN: --snowbird, and ended up, they were down somewhere south of Tucson, but yeah, we end up going down a couple times to that Air Force base and see-- they had a B-17 on static display that was -- I don't think it had the full engines in it or something. It was more of just a shell of a plane, but it was kind of interesting to see that. And then in late -- I think it was '91, '92 there was a B-17 that flew into the Sheridan airport that was kind of neat

that -- I was over there selling my books (laughter). And while people were taking tours of it, and...

JUNGE: So, tell me a little bit about the crew and the you -- you took a personal interest in these guys.

MADSEN: Yeah, it was [00:25:00] just a basically just another research paper for the longest time until I finally got the -- got in touch with the crew and got the first couple of pictures of the crew and realized, yeah, that they -- they looked just about like me, about my age at the time and that -- that's when it kind of hit home and one of the guys -- I think it's Newburn, he was a -- I think he was a co-pilot or something -- but, yeah, his -- his picture almost resembled (laughs) my family. I could almost see myself in his picture, and that really kind of --

JUNGE: Freaky.

MADSEN: -- sent chills up my spine. Yeah, that -- yeah, am I (laughs) -- am I related to this guy somehow? Or yeah -- even know it still sends chills up my spine just thinking about it that that -- that that -- that -- when that happened, that's when it -- that was during the couple years of research after the first pamphlet, before the booklet, [00:26:00] before the full book, and I -- that just kind of hit home. And then I was able to take -- get more interested to find more families. I've actually met,

oh, relatives of four different crew members have come up here to the Buffalo area over the years to -- to see what's going on. And that's -- and that's kind of interesting, and we've -- I've --

JUNGE: Taken anybody up to the site?

MADSEN: I haven't taken any of the family up there. A couple of them wanted to go, but they -- most of them ju-- the timing didn't work out and they were -- and some of the brothers and stuff of the crew members were getting up in age at that time. Because basically -- yeah, '43, it's 70 years ago now. And it was -- it was even -- it was 50 years after when I wrote it -- after it was crashed or something. Yeah, it was quite a while (laughs).

JUNGE: So, what kind of -- what were the factors that [00:27:00] -- you -- you describe in your book some of the factors that were -- there were a number of things that could have gone wrong. What do -- what do you -- what has your research turned up?

MADSEN: I guess the biggest thing is that -- I think, for sure -- is that they were -- I don't know if they were flying off course, because their direct course would have been straight, almost over Casper if they would have flew direct. I don't know if they were flying too far north or if their instruments were off and they were -- they -- they

might have been supposed to fly up here, but they didn't know they were this far up and -- the biggest thing is they didn't know exactly where they were -- they -- they weren't -- they didn't realize they were flying over the mountains and they were on cruising altitude -- or -- or cruising speed and altitude. And they had set their altitude for not having any mountains around, so they were only flying like 12,000 foot or something, and Bomber Mountain is 12,800 (laughs) [00:28:00]. And they were probably -- whatever height they were flying was just a little bit too low. If they would have set their elevation another 500 foot, they would have sailed right over the mountain without any problem and -- but that -- yeah, that's the number one thing that -- that -- that I think that happened is just they weren't positive where they were, or what height they were or -- and it was a new crew, they were only -- I believe they had only been out of training a month or two. They had -- they just -- they just finished training for -- to fly the plane and the plane was -- it was only a couple months old. It was just fresh off the assembly line. There was -- yeah, a new plane, a new crew. There was a lot of chance for something not to be quite right and -- and an experienced crew, an older crew that [00:29:00] flown many missions might have caught something

that -- or a reading that wasn't quite right or something wasn't right, but a new crew might not have recognized that -- that -- that the -- the instruments weren't feeding them the correct information.

JUNGE: But if each one of these guys was trained, and there were how many aboard?

MADSEN: There was 10 -- 10 crew members: pilot, co-pilot, navigator, radio operator, gunners, and -- yeah, there's four or five gunners -- and a couple people had multiple jobs, but yeah, they were spread out throughout the plane, so, yeah, there was...

JUNGE: So, you would just think, wouldn't you, that all these 10 guys, the way they were trained, somebody in there would say, well, I guess it would be the pilot and co-pilot who would know what the...

MADSEN: Pilot, co-pilot and --

JUNGE: Navigator.

MADSEN: -- navigator are in the front -- the front part of the airplane in the cockpit area and the radio operator and one other guys are behind them in another little room [00:30:00], and then the waist gunner, tail gunner, ball gunner, ball turret gunner, there -- in another -- they're in the back of the plane when it's flying, so they're not - - there's only three or four of the that were actually up

front, that could see the instruments, and there's a -- I think there's one other guy besides, I think it was bo-- the bombardier or somebody, in addition to the navigator there's four people up front -- and -- two of them were -- two of them were flying the plane and two of them navigating, and...

JUNGE: So, there were windows or bubbles or plexi that they could look out.

MADSEN: They could see --

JUNGE: But there must have been some kind of weather condition or dark or that they couldn't see out those win--

MADSEN: Yeah, because it was probably pitch black. It was -- the way -- the way my research indicated there wasn't any -- there was no moon at that time to -- because I've done some research since on some newer computers that try-- go back and the lunar cycles, [00:31:00] that's pretty consistent, you can go back that far and it's pretty accurate, but yeah, it was, the point where there was no moon at all, so -- and up there there's no artificial light whatsoever for miles around. The closest (laughs) artificial light's 50 miles away up there, so, yeah, you...

JUNGE: What about weather conditions?

MADSEN: And the weather it -- I believe it was -- I -- It wasn't raining or storming, but it was -- I think it was

just cloudy and they -- the army gave the weather report in their -- in their crash report. But, yeah, it's -- I think it just said, yeah, I think there was just light clouds and -- but it was -- it was still pretty clear and visibility was good.

JUNGE: Do you think there could have been something mechanical gone wrong?

MADSEN: Yeah, very well could be, [00:32:00] because it -- one of my -- well, one of my science teachers from -- from high school, he -- there was, what -- four, I think, three or four students and -- and my teacher went up there the summer after graduation. We ended up climbing Cloud Peak and going up to the Bomber Mountain and -- and his dad or uncle or some-- one of his relatives was a crash investigator for--

JUNGE: National Transportation Safety Association?

MADSEN: --yeah, for NTSA, and he -- he took some pictures back and the -- from the control panel, the four engine controls it -- it looked like what -- I -- well, three engines were on full power and one engine looked like it was feathered. Which -- the -- the propeller was feathered, which means that engine would have been shut off. And the way it, the wreckage hit, from the propeller blades, [00:33:00] most of them under power they'll bend sideways, but there's one

that bent straight back that would -- would probably indicate that was -- when they're feathered, they just put them parallel to the front and back of the plane so that they don't dr-- so there's no drag on them and that -- there's one bla-- yeah, one set of blades bent different than the rest and that's what leads me to believe that one engine was not functioning at the time, or, for who knows what. There's no (laughs) hard to tell why or how but that -- and I since been up there and -- and taken more pictures of that control panel -- it's about -- it's only about a foot wide and three foot long, but its -- you could -- some of the handles are broke off but you can still see all the -- (inaudible) with all the cable linkage and mechanical linkage it (laughs) there was a little bit of [00:34:00] hydraulics but mostly cable and stuff that controlled that, so it was -- there is a good chance that there could have been something wrong with that or something not connected properly, or, just an error in something, because it -- the way the research indicated this was the first main flight - - first long flight other than short training flights that their home field, this was the first time that they'd flown over a couple hundred miles in duration, so there's a very good chance there could have been some type of mechanical error. And if they were on -- only on three engines and



they -- when they saw the mountain, that would limit their climb rate. They wouldn't have as much power to climb up on three. They can -- there's reports of many of them that getting smashed up and -- and -- and shot up in [00:35:00] war flying home on one or two engines. They -- they could do it, but it was (laughs) -- they couldn't get to speed or power on two engines.

JUNGE: Yeah, when you talked to the -- to the family members, and you did, didn't you?

MADSEN: Yeah.

JUNGE: Did a little oral history yourself.

MADSEN: Yeah, I've done several interviews with them and...

JUNGE: Do you get the impression that these families are interested in knowing if it was like pilot error or if it was a mechanical failure or does it matter to them?

MADSEN: I think the biggest thing was for them -- most of them were just happy to -- to hear what happened and to be able to read the story of it because the only written reports that I've found when I did my orig-- my initial research were the newspapers, there was probably four or five articles between the time it was lo-- went -- went missing and when it was found and there was only a [00:36:00] -- maybe a half dozen articles total between the two times in the newspaper that -- and they just told minimal details.

I did send to the Department of Defense -- one of the librarians of my high school was able to work through the -  
- the --

JUNGE: The bureaucracy of it?

MADSEN: Through the Air Force base over in Rapid City -- went through them, and then went through a couple other people, and finally figured out how to get the crash report and once we had the tail number and stuff, we were able to get the initial -- the army's crash report as of, well, '43 when it was missing and '45 when it was found, that -- what they had at the time, which was pretty minimal and even then it was kind of funny because there was still -- yeah, it was '45, and I did in '88 when I requested that, 43 years later, [00:37:00] and there was still parts of that that were still blacked out with a marker that were (laughs) and I don't know if there was anything that confidential or that -- or something -- that was able to be released or something because it -- the cover letter said that "we're including the releasable portions of the report" and OK, there's just a few, half a dozen lines that are blacked out, and I -- I've been thinking about it, I need to resend a new request through the Freedom of Information Act which was passed after that, maybe I -- I can get the rest of the documents. But, all these were on

microfilm or microfiche and I had to -- and I got basically, photocopies of that, so the quality is not the greatest. You can still read most of it, but some of the - - some of it is difficult to read.

JUNGE: Can you get it online right now?

MADSEN: I'm not sure. I -- when the World War II Memorial opened [00:38:00] in Washington, D.C., they had online about all the people killed in the World War II, and I was able to go online then and -- and get the -- more of the bios and backgrounds of some of the crew members. I was able to find them online, which was kind of neat, that they've -- But I -- I haven't done much lately. I need to do some more research and update it. It's been out of print for several years. I need to reprint it, but...

JUNGE: Why's this a continuing interest with you?

MADSEN: I -- I don't know--

JUNGE: Is there something unanswered or something?

MADSEN: It's still unanswered, yeah, it's -- it's still a mystery to me, even though I'm -- I'm by far the biggest expert on it because I've done the most research on it. There's still a lot of questions I can't answer. Yeah, I can -- there's -- I've still got a dozen questions that -- I think that a lot of them are in the book to that I don't know. I don't know the answer to. [00:39:00] I can't

figure out why it crashed or -- or what was the cause.

There's still so much speculation that it's -- it'd be nice to be able to actually just get some closure and say, "OK, this is why it crashed," and -- and solve the mystery, but yeah it's -- it's tough when you're going back that far, and..

JUNGE: I got a feeling you'd wind up with more material that would just get you more enmeshed in mystery, you know? I mean, one of the things you could probably do, I guess, is to -- is to get complete, or, the most complete records you could get on the individuals, so you might know a little more about their condition. You know, if they had any conditions, or if they were just a green crew, like you said.

MADSEN: And some of the -- a couple of the family members -- one of them was -- he was -- I guess he was engaged and he was writing letters back and forth to his fiancé beforetime. The family actually sent me a [00:40:00] couple copies of the -- some of their correspondence at the time, which was kind of neat because -- that's when it -- before I got in touch with the families, I'd basically just kind of had it -- everything I knew up to that point was in the book and that was it, and no big deal. That was like the ori-- first paper in the pamphlet, but then once I got

in touch with the families, I -- every time I find a family, I get more -- a little more information and a lot more questions (laughter). I saw one or two mysteries, and opened up 50 more, and that's...

JUNGE: Well, didn't in your book was really interesting to me that they found a guy -- they found some letters that he had written. Who was that? Was that the pilot or co-pilot? Who --

MADSEN: Yeah, that was -- I'm not positive -- I'm not positive -- it was one of the -- I think one of the officers there, and I, yeah, I can't -- can't remember quite now because it's been a while since I've...

JUNGE: Yeah, but you wonder, don't you, [00:41:00] if you could find the letters, themselves? Somebody must have kept those.

MADSEN: Yeah, because there's a lot of -- well, when I -- I guess it was after I wrote the book in '90 then I ended up, the first display at the Jim Gatchell Museum I kind of put together myself with pictures of the crew members I had and pictures of the plane and some of the wreckage I had -- that people around town had -- had hauled off over the years. Back in the early days before it was wilderness areas, before it was -- yeah, back in the '40s and '50s, it's -- some of the propeller blades and machine guns had

been hauled off of there and -- and then I guess there's at one point the museum actually had a machine gun that was donated to them by somebody and...

JUNGE: From the plane?

MADSEN: From the plane. And the Department of Defense actually came by -- they'd heard about it -- and they came by and looked at it but it was -- it had been damaged in the crash [00:42:00] and the receiver was broke and smashed up so it was -- there was no way it could be made operable, but I believe it's still the case that you're -- individual is not allowed to have a machine gun -- not to own a machine gun that can be -- that can be used. And these were true machine guns, and that was part of it, and...

JUNGE: And why would that -- this is the Air Force that did this?

MADSEN: Yeah, and this was like in '70s, '80s or something. It was not too long before I wrote the book and -- yeah, 30-some years after the crash they were actually -- came and were investigating it.

JUNGE: Did you talk to anybody who was at the site -- first at the site?

MADSEN: Yeah, I talked to -- not the very first people, but I talked to several people who were -- they were at -- well a [00:43:00] couple of them were there when they brought the

bodies out and a couple others were there within the first, I don't know, six -- six months or year after it was found. It was initially spotted by two sheep herders from over the mountain. In the Ten Sleep Basin area -- they were up there from (inaudible) -- yeah, somewhere up there, they were up -- they were tending their sheep on the far side and that was in -- two years later, they just happened to spot something shining in the sun up there. And they'd seen -- they saw some of the wreckage. And this plane was the -- the earlier B-17s where they were still painting them olive green. The late-- the late B-17s were just left aluminum because they got tired of painting them or they didn't want to spend the time to -- they needed them quick enough, they didn't have time to paint them, [00:44:00] but this one was painted green. So, it took that two years for the paint to wear off so they could see -- see something shining in the sun.

JUNGE: This is two years after the accident?

MADSEN: Yeah, it was -- because it was -- it went down in June of '43, and this was in August of '45. And they found it - - or they saw something up there and I think they actually hiked up there and saw a wreckage and they reported it -- reported it to the authorities, and people from the Rapid

City army air base and from the Casper army air base  
actually went up there to -- to recover the bodies and to..

JUNGE: What kind of shape were they in after two years?

MADSEN: They were still in (cough) -- amazingly in good shape, 70, 80 pounds, because up there it's -- I've even been up there in mid-July when it's still half covered in snow and glacial fields and it's [00:45:00] so high in the mountain it doesn't get even in August, the hottest part of the summer, it's still -- still doesn't get much more than 50 degrees up there because it's so high up and a lot of it's covered in snow most of the year, and it's cold, it was basically -- so the bodies were pretty well preserved and when I was up there in '90 or '91, I actually found a piece of wool pantleg from clothing that was still in pretty good shape, and I kind of wish I would have brought it down but I didn't (laughs) -- I left it there and never have been -- it probably got packed off by a varmint or something, but...

JUNGE: You did this out of respect?

MADSEN: Yeah, because I didn't really want to bring much down. There'd been some people from Gillett were up there sometime in the late-80s early-90s and they took a yellow paint pen up there and wrote their names all over the wreckage [00:46:00] and all sorts of stuff. There's --



there's one big -- well it's one of the main landing gear -  
- the tire was blown off the rim at the impact and over the  
years, people have scribbled their name in the aluminum rim  
and from dating back to the '40s and '50s all the way up to  
the '90s -- they -- you can -- there's still a history in  
there of people that have left their mark up there. But  
most people haven't, yeah, that haven't been able to pack  
off much wreckage.

JUNGE: Has there been a -- like a coroner's report, or, you  
know? Like, what I'm thinking is, how could the bodies  
even be identifiable -- well -- first of all there wasn't a  
fire, OK. But how could they even be identifiable if the  
plane in the pictures in your book show this plane is  
almost just like almost disintegrated. How could these  
guys even be -- how could you even have full bodies, I  
don't understand that.

MADSEN: But it's -- but some of the -- [00:47:00] like, that -  
- partially that depends on the way -- way the plane  
crashed because during a flight like this, noncombat, all  
the tail gunner, waist gunners, the ball turret gunner, all  
the auxiliary people would be more in the middle of the  
plane in jump seats or something, but -- I think right  
behind the bomb bay. And then -- then in the radio  
compartment, there'd be a couple people in there, and

everybody up front, they were kind of in three -- three little areas. And that -- that's one of the biggest piece of wreckage that's left is the top half of the radio compartment that -- the roof and stuff where the life rafts were and stuff that's still -- still in a pretty big piece, and it -- and the way it hit, I -- I -- when I was up there in, oh, 2000-something, I was able to actually see some of the granite boulders where the impact took place. You could see [00:48:00] scratches where the plane actually dug grooves in the boulders and a couple places -- I think one of the -- one part of the tail, the horizontal stabler -- stabilizer, something -- it's -- one of them is kind of accordioned and then there's a rock on top of it kind of -- it went -- it hit hard enough it bo-- bounced a rock on top of the -- the wreckage. But that -- the initial point of impact was the back of the plane where there nobody was in that section. And then it looked like it nosed into the peak where it was basically a big Plexiglas bubble on the front end and the people -- the captain's chairs, they had armored plated -- steel plating on the back and sides of them and that's what you can -- what's identifiable right now that steel armored plate is up there on top, and it -- it looks like the way it probably hit they probably -- it probably hit that spot and opened the front of the plane

and those people fell out [00:49:00] there and then the rest of the people were catapulted down to the rest of the wreckage where the center part of the plane, the wings, the -- that spot where everybody -- basically the rest of the crew would have been probably centered over top of the wings in the fuselage area, the strongest part of the airplane and that's -- so they were probably pretty much in...

JUNGE: Intact?

MADSEN: Intact, and -- because it was -- it kind of -- yeah, the -- when they hit the peak, it -- it spit the front people out, they fell out and then the -- everybody else was in the middle of the plane and it got thrown till it hit the big wreckage field and they were probably -- the way it was split up, they were probably just thrown out from the plane and..

JUNGE: Didn't -- wasn't there -- in your book you mention that there was a possibility that somebody lived.

MADSEN: Yeah, that was one of the -- that's one of the biggest mysteries that still has me [00:50:00] kind of wondering about. But, one of the guys that was up there at the time, he was a -- I believe he was a teenager or something -- his dad was hired to bring up one of the pack teams, they -- they brought the army -- air force hired locals to come up

with teams of horses and pack horses to haul the bodies out and they were in this -- he was one of the kids up there at the time. And yeah, he was the one that said that he'd seen somebody sitting up with a bible opened or something there, and -- and like he might have -- somebody might have survived for a short time. Then again, in August of that time, it's been -- I've been up there several times (laughs) in the mountain at a thousand foot lower when I got snowed on and pretty cold and -- and even that high-- that much higher, it would have got down close to freezing [00:51:00] at night, so if anybody did survive, if they were injured at all, the weather conditions would have basically taken care of the-- taken care of them, it would (inaudible).

JUNGE: They couldn't have walked out?

MADSEN: No, because it's basically, where they hit, it's just a boulder field, and anything from, yeah, small boulders the size of tennis balls or up to basketballs up to some of the big ones -- some of the biggest boulders up there are the size of a bus (laughs). A lot of bigger ones on -- lot of the medium sized ones...

JUNGE: Scott have you ever put -- put -- put that moment where they crashed -- have you ever thought about that one moment, what those guys -- I mean, do you think that they

knew it was going on, or was it so close that it was painless basically?

MADSEN: Well, it -- the way it hit and the way it looks -- I -- it looks like they noticed -- they had to see that they were [00:52:00] -- that the mountain was coming up because it was -- they had to have been in a pretty steep climb because the -- the hill's not flat it's -- it's -- it's a pretty steep mountain as it is, and to hit the tail first, they had to be pretty steep rate of climb. They weren't -- if they would have been flying level, they would have nosed in with the -- or just slightly up -- they would have -- the front of the plane would have hit first, and been down lower, but no, the back end's down the lowest on the mountain. So, they probably saw it, and they probably tried to pull up at the last second and were unable to, so they probably knew something was going to -- was happening at the time but -- and that's one of the biggest things for me is I've (laughs) -- well, I've -- I had to laugh because I've been -- the movie *Lone Survivor* came out this year and that's -- that's kind of been my idea for the past 10, 20 years is [00:53:00] the -- work and maybe working on a novel of the -- my working title is *Lone Survivor* just -- the guy that was there with the book opened up because there's -- this book is nonfiction, which means all I can

tell is the truth. I can't (laughs) speculate much and there's -- there's speculation that it was a pay plane and had a bunch of money on it and I can't confirm that, but there's so many rumors about what happened and all this stuff that I can't confirm and some of the stuff with the family members and stuff I can't -- there's so much I can't tell because I -- I -- I--

JUNGE: (inaudible)

MADSEN: I can't back it up so I -- I've thought about, yeah, maybe writing a novel and tell my side of the story, what I think happened, you know, a more dramatic way that I could explain it better without (laughs) -- without having that -- the restriction of the -- of being a nonfiction book (laughs). There's only so much you can [00:54:00] print when you got to -- when you can't (laughs) -- when you can't add that fiction element.

JUNGE: Do you think given -- given technology today that they'll ever really know? I...

MADSEN: Yeah, there -- there's a lot more technology today in some of the -- some of the fancy stuff they can do for crash site re-- reconstruction for some of these places, they -- they've done some pretty amazing things on some of the more recent wreckages and been able to -- to find out stuff, and one of the things though on that -- in my book,

I think it was in 1943 alone there was like, what, 10,000 noncombat accidents in the U.S. So this is just one of a whole bunch in that year. There's -- there's always -- there was always planes going down in training or whatever. There was one in Florida that somebody [00:55:00] contacted me after a couple years, he -- he wrote a book on one that crashed in a swamp down in Florida and they found it -- I don't know -- 20 years later they -- actually -- somebody actually found it buried in the mud down there or something and they were able to dig it out. But yeah -- there's -- but there's so many ones the one west Yell-- Yellowstone that crashed, they knew a plane went down but they never could find it until -- till the fire went through and actually uncovered it because it was -- it must have crashed in some heavy timber or something and just buried itself in the timber. And there's -- there's still planes -- there's still a couple planes up here in the Bighorns that are missing that went down years ago, and...

JUNGE: Really?

MADSEN: When my dad was on -- when he was younger in his thirties and stuff, he was on Search and Rescue for a while. And there's one plane that went down, they think that it -- looking at it, they think [00:56:00] that it probably went into one of the lakes up there, and probably

-- down deep in the lake and never been able to find it, and... There's -- or some of them, there's some pretty big crevasse and pretty big rock elements where they could -- stuff could fall in between the big rocks. You never know where it is.

JUNGE: And -- and who would actually, except people like you, would be interested. Maybe a family member.

MADSEN: Yeah, and most people don't -- most of the time, they -- they search for a couple of years. That's what they did here. They searched probably three or four times in the span of two years, looking for it, but they were looking everywhere but the Bighorns, because they were -- all they had for information was that it was farther south, so they were looking down there and they didn't know it was up here and just happened, somebody had to find it. And, a lot of the other plane wrecks, or wreckages, or bodies, or anything around, [00:57:00] or, a lot of them are found by hunters or hikers or people that just stumble on it years later because it's -- yeah, there's a lot of stuff hidden and you don't (laugh)...

JUNGE: Well, what about this -- this kid -- or this person who found this body with a bible nearby. Is that person still alive?



MADSEN: Yeah, he's still alive and he's -- because I actually did, I think there's, oh, about eight or ten oral history interviews for when I did the research paper then I did a couple more for the book too that I -- I have those -- I think I still have them on cassette tape and video tape, years ago, but yeah, where I actually did the -- several of those I did oral interviews of some of these people. So, it'd be kind of interesting to go back and basically I -- I can probably dig those up and -- and get those to yo-- for your project. You could --

JUNGE: Could you?

MADSEN: -- you could add to your --

JUNGE: oh, that'd be [00:58:00] fantastic.

MADSEN: -- they're all -- because they were all done in '80-- '87 to '91 or something, a bunch of the early oral interviews and I think I even did some with the family members after they -- some of the ones that came here, I think I videotaped some of them and had asked some questions and I've got some correspondence with some of them that have some more details, but...

JUNGE: When you did the tapes, di-- were they actually tapes, or were they dig-- they weren't digital interviews, were they?

MADSEN: No, they were -- it was just a regular cassette tape recorder back the -- state of the art technology for '87 (laughter).

JUNGE: OK, well, if -- if it's possible, is -- is it possible for sometime to put that analog to digital and put it all on a DVD?

MADSEN: Yeah, that's -- that's pretty easy because I basically -- I need to do that anyway to [00:59:00] -- to -- just to preserve it and...

JUNGE: Well, if you ever come down to Cheyenne, I've got an ION tape -- it's called "Tape 2 PC." And I put a tape in there, of an interview for example, close it up, hit the button, and boom, it converts it to a .wav file. I save it out as a document -- a .wav document and there it is! You know, and -- how long were these interviews?

MADSEN: Oh, mo-- there's several of them were -- I don't know, they were 15, 20 minutes, fift-- 30 minutes, yeah, they were -- and most of the -- quite a few of the people probably, two-thirds of the ones I've interviewed, are no longer living. They (laughs) -- several of them have passed on since then, but a few of them are still around, but, and...

JUNGE: So, OK...

MADSEN: I -- I guess, "Slats" -- Slayton -- Lowell Slayton was on -- he was a prisoner of war over there in Germany and I -- he -- I didn't interview him for the book, but I have talked to him -- I talked to him several times [01:00:00] afterwards to get his perspective on the B-17s because he was -- flew on one of those and when -- when he -- he had an auction sale a couple years ago when he was moved from his house to the -- a care center. And I -- I actually bought(laughs) his collection of books on the B-17s and stuff because I had to pay a lot more than I wanted to for it (laughs) -- it was a bidding-- there a couple of us wanted it and it was one of those things that, yeah, pretty unique to have -- have -- the -- pretty -- I've got a pretty complete history on the B17 and the World War II planes of that era, I've got quite a few books and -- and Slats, he was actually mentioned in a couple books over the year.

JUNGE: Who was Slats?

MADSEN: He was a -- a -- he was a -- he passed away a couple years ago but he was a prisoner of war in [01:01:00] -- in Germany for I don't know -- a year or two over there. And he fina-- he escaped and -- and got into some -- some locals there kind of sheltered him and helped him survive a little bit till he was finally rescued, but his story's in

a couple of books and there is -- of the -- his, I think -- there was only two people out of his plane that survived when it was shot down or something. He was a prisoner of war for a while, but those books I actually bought ahead of time, while he was still living I -- I found copies of them on the -- online and the internet and bought some so, I -- so, I've got pretty (laughs) -- pretty extensive collection of some of these -- but, yeah, he was a local Buffalo resident that had been here for many years.

JUNGE: Oh, he was a Buffalo resident?

MADSEN: Yeah, he was a Buffalo resident here that -- he was pretty active and one of the other people I interviewed for the book was George Grace [01:02:00] which was -- he was my high school principal when I started and he was -- he'd been around for many years, and he's still -- he's still living but he flew B-17s in World War --

JUNGE: Oh, did he?

MADSEN: -- II and so he was -- it was kind of neat to have somebody who actually flew the planes to interview.

JUNGE: Well, I hear you got Appendix A "Technical Data on the B-17F aircraft." So, yeah, you've done some research.

MADSEN: Yeah, I've got quite a bit of research, and actually, there's -- yeah, that -- well, the plane that flew into Sheridan I crawled all over that when it was there the

first couple years and then I -- the one in Arizona, I've -  
- I looked all through that and then actually about four  
years ago I was actually able to fly on a B-17. The  
Confederate Air Force had -- it was in Nebraska and a  
friend of our -- the family, he -- he has a small private  
plane and he -- he flew me down there and then I paid the  
[01:03:00] 350 or 400 dollars it was to -- to go for a 30  
minute ride in a B-17 so I got -- I -- it was kind of neat  
and I've got some pictures of that with -- you could -- we  
didn't get very high but we flew around and you could walk  
around inside while they were flying, and you could stick  
your head up through the -- well, you can see the top  
bubble on the plane, there's -- right behind that there's a  
big sliding opening for the -- where the radio operator had  
a gunner, he could poke a gun out the back and so I -- you  
could stick your head up there in the airstream while it  
was flying. And I stuck the camera up and took some  
pictures, but I think that was still -- I think that might  
have been digital camera. Yeah, I got a lot of still  
cameras. When I first went up there I took -- I took a  
camera with color film I had -- I gave my brother a bunch  
of black and white film. He had his camera so we -- I  
probably got 500 or more pictures of the crash site

[01:04:00] over the years. And, it's pretty -- been kind of neat but, yeah -- one of the reasons I--

JUNGE: Yeah, yeah, that's what you're talking about, on top.

MADSEN: One of the reasons I haven't reprinted it lately because it was all done -- this was all done in the late '80s, and early '90s on the offset press where they had to get everything set up and do the -- do a dual tone for the -- or--

JUNGE: Half tones.

MADSEN: --half tones for the pictures and on the -- I've still got the old -- the blue line prints where they shot the printing plates from, but now that the office in town that printed them, they -- they no longer use their old offset press because it's -- now everything's gone to digital. The last time I reprinted it, there was like -- they printed most of the book on their press here in town, but there's like five or six pages changed that they did digitally down in Casper at a printer. But now, I have to -- to reprint it I've got to start from scratch [01:05:00].

JUNGE: Which would be good because you've got -- you've got these slides, you say?

MADSEN: Yeah, I've got...

JUNGE: And the co-- it's going to be a much better quality.

MADSEN: Yeah, because I've got to start over and even the text on it, I have, is -- I've got it saved on a floppy disk which (laughter) -- but the problem is it's in...

JUNGE: Some kind of format...

MADSEN: It's either Wordstar or WordPerfect that -- that is no longer used -- I -- I'd have to get a 20-year-old computer to -- and 20-year-old software to install to actually read the floppy disk now (laughter).

JUNGE: You know -- you know what I'd do? Well, wait a minute, you can't even read the floppy disk?

MADSEN: Oh, I -- I think I can read it, but it's -- it's so old that the -- the new word processors won't import that file because it's so old.

JUNGE: Well, I'm thinking is there's companies that work on stuff like this if you're that interested, but I -- one way to do it would be, if you can read it on your [01:06:00] old machine, is just to dictate it into your computer, and now, like my Mac has a translation thing. If you train your voice to the machine, you know...

MADSEN: It'd work.

JUNGE: It'd work.

MADSEN: And also -- I've also thought to that some of the optical recognition anymore is getting pretty amazing that just scan it and I could probably get it pretty close.

Just scan the original text and, yeah (laughs) because that -- that's something I never thought of at the time I was printing it that -- I actually have a few books and a -- the copy of the floppy disk and some other stuff are in my safety deposit box at (laughs) -- at the bank next door, which it was a good idea at the time, I tell you, " I better make a copy of this and keep it in the safe deposit box to always have one," but I never realized that that technology would be outdated that (laughter). My last three computers don't even have a floppy drive anymore.

JUNGE: No, heck no. [01:07:00] In fact, when you said floppy, I almost laughed. What -- what did your dad have to do with this? Harold?

MADSEN: Yeah, that was my grandfather.

JUNGE: Oh, that was your grandfather.

MADSEN: Yeah, and he was basically -- he and a couple other of his I guess his brother in-law and one other friend of the family were up there in, I believe, '46. It was found in August '45 and they were up there the next summer. And they act-- he actually hauled off a -- one of the machine guns. They had a -- he had one -- I saw that as a kid when I -- he had it hidden near downstairs in the basement, and every once in a while we'd -- he'd bring it out and show it to us, and...



JUNGE: Do you -- do you still have it?

MADSEN: It's one that -- that was when I put the display together for the museum, it was -- we actually -- at first we'd loaned it to the museum and then it ended up a couple years later, we did a -- it was basically gifted to the museum, so it's now [01:08:00] property of the Jim Gatchell Museum, and it's, I believe it's one of the -- of the ones that's on display over there--

JUNGE: Oh, is it?

MADSEN: --at the -- at the museum. And also, I guess my dad, he was up there in high school, I guess, in the '60s, sometime. He was up there, and he had -- he -- he was up there with some friends and they -- he actually packed a propeller blade down off the top of the mountain to the -- down to the lake down below, and then he didn't know any way to get it any farther, so he buried it down in the bottom behind a rock or something and -- and then never got back up there till -- for -- well, 15, 20 years, when I -- I went up there when I was a little kid and we went up there, he couldn't find it then because it (laughs) rust-- but there's actually other people that have found -- there's several people that have found wreckage down, [01:09:00] that people carried part way and got tired and then, left it, and other people have picked it up and so,

actually, I think one of the blades over the might be one of the ones that he packed down because there was another, I guess, a friend of the family, that he wa-- he was a -- he found one I guess in the '70-some, he found a blade somewhere that somebody'd buried and he ended up packing it down. He was just backpacking up there, and those blades are 30, 40 pounds. So, that was quite a feat to get it out there by hand.

JUNGE: So, do they have a display at the Gatchell Museum on this whole thing?

MADSEN: They have a display over there that they just rebuilt it a year ago, but this is the third or fourth display now they put in there of the Bomber Mountain crash, so they've -- it's a pretty unique little thing. It's one of the -- one of the things of local interest they've got quite a few things from the different wars around here and stuff and different notable [01:10:00] things in this area and it -- that's one of the things they've chosen to...

JUNGE: So, Gatchell -- the way I look it as a historian is, OK, this was a local event. It's in a local Jim Gatchell Museum. It's important to the community historically because it was an occurrence that was out of the ordinary, but in the whole scheme of things, how do you view that crash? I mean, you just told me a little while ago.

MADSEN: But it -- I guess in the big scheme of things, there's a lot of people interested about it because there's, I think it's -- of this book -- I believe it was -- I think it was three printings I went -- three or four printings of 2,000 a piece so there's -- I think there's six -- almost 7,000 copies of that book in print out there, and...

JUNGE: They're expensive.

MADSEN: Yeah, if you go online, look at Amazon. They're up there expensive, and I --

JUNGE: Seventy-five bucks!

MADSEN: -- I wish I would have kept [01:11:00] the last hundred of mine instead of selling them for 10, 12 bucks a piece. I should have kept the last big pile of them and waited 10 years and I could have made a mint and paid for the reprint (laughs) -- selling those. But I -- I never knew that, but there's -- it -- it's one of those things, it's just enough of a mystery that I've got people, well, some people that -- I'm -- there's some -- a guy coming this summer that's -- he's from out of state and he's travelling through and he -- he's already called the museum ahead of time and he's -- when he comes through, he wants to get ahold of me so I can come and autograph his book for him (laughs). And I -- for a while, I was selling them on eBay and Amazon, and I was selling quite a few books there,

all over the country. I've sent them overseas to different places, to Europe, to -- and -- some of those were to family members of -- of currently enlisted military and they -- I don't -- it's -- it's a -- although it's a local event, it's a [01:12:00] bigger -- it's bigger than local because there's so many people that have heard about it and they've seen about the museum and -- tourists have travelled through here over the years, past 50 years, people have come by and heard about Bomber Mountain. Some people have hiked up there and now the -- it's second and third generation are -- people are wanting to tell their kids about it. They went up there as a young adult and now their kids are old enough to go up and there -- they want more information. It -- yeah, it's one of those things that it -- I never expected a research paper to (laughs) turn into a life-long project (laughter). That's (laughs) -- that was the biggest thing that kind of surprised me how -- how long it -- how -- and how in-depth it's become and how much I'm still -- in-- invested in trying to find more information about it this much longer, because it's -- it's...

JUNGE: How many -- how many [01:13:00] investigations like this -- I'd call this an investigation -- a book or a booklet -- but it's an investigation, and you've done a lot

of work -- you've done a lot of work on this, but how many more have you seen like this, where they've investigated a crash?

MADSEN: There's actually...

JUNGE: In-depth, I should say.

MADSEN: There's actually quite a few. There's about -- I think there's four or five different ones where other people have invested -- investigated wrecks and they've actually found my book online or somehow or I've found theirs and ended up -- I've got copies of other people's books on different wrecks around the country and all over the place and there's a -- a guy out of California that was "Wreck Chasers" I believe and he -- he put out a video of -- he's -- he does this -- and he actually searches for quite a few of these wrecks, and...

JUNGE: Is that a TV series?

MADSEN: It -- he did a -- a couple [01:14:00] shows for TV. There's a couple books too on investigating wrecks like this and -- where I'm listed in the Appendix of the -- this book is along with a couple hundred other books that people have investigated for different wrecks or different mishaps -- aviation stuff over the years, it's -- the number of these is quite amazing and...

JUNGE: You -- you could do a -- you could do a documentary or you could even do a series of -- of like -- almost like reality.

MADSEN: Because that was actually back in college again, back in -- well, it was probably the mid-'90s -- I guess, two or three years after the book came out, I had a -- a fax from the History Channel, when the History Channel was first getting started that they'd heard about it and they wanted to -- they wanted more information about possibly doing something on their TV network about it, but they [01:15:00] -- I guess, they ended up not doing it at the time, but it's kind of interesting, but -- yeah, through my contact with Warner Brothers for the movie *Memphis Belle*, I actually -- the director of the film had actually contacted me in a letter to or something so I -- I sent a book to them (laughs). I sent a book to all sorts of people. Last summer when we had Longmire Days here in Buffalo, I actually found a box of first edition books, a couple years -- about a year ago. Some that I had set aside that -- that -- well originally they were for some wagon train back in 1990 for the centennial. They had -- I had them consigned, and they came back and a few of them were marked up and stuff. And I kind of -- they were in a box and I had some other stuff on top of them I didn't even know I

had them, but... (laughter) It's kind of funny. But yeah, during the Longmire Days last year, all the actors, when they -- that was one of the parting gifts I gave to him. I gave him a signed copy of [01:16:00] my book.

JUNGE: This is pretty good for a guy who was building houses and wasn't trained as a historian at all.

MADSEN: Yeah, and Craig Johnson, that is author of the Longmire series, he's -- his dad's real interested in the aviation stuff, too, and he -- he bought his dad a copy of the book years ago. And so, I -- and I gave -- oh, about three years ago, I -- I -- or a couple years, when I found that box, I -- I gave Craig a signed first edition copy of that -- of my book, just because I've got (laughs) his books I -- at the library auction here a couple years ago, I bought the -- his hardcover set of first -- signed first edition, first printing, hardcover of the Longmire Series.

JUNGE: Isn't he from Buffalo?

MADSEN: He's from, yeah -- a little outside of Buffalo, towards -- towards Sheridan out at Ucross, 15 miles out of town. The little town of Ucross out there, but... That was kind of a mistake, though, because I bought the first [01:17:00] six books of him, but now, to keep my collection going, I have to keep (laughs) -- soon as the new ones come

out, I have to buy a new first edition, first printing so I have a complete set (laughter).

JUNGE: Well, you're lucky the guy lives in the area, and...

MADSEN: Yeah, he's a pretty good friend now, too. Working with him over the years, so that's -- that's kind of fun, so...

JUNGE: He -- you know, he talked to a -- a group in Cheyenne, it was -- oh, it was the Book Fest. The county library puts on a big dinner, they have a guest speaker, and then I think they have an auction to, but Longmire -- not, Longmire -- Craig Johnson (laughter) -- Craig -- Craig Johnson spoke, and it was entertaining.

MADSEN: Yeah, he's a pretty intr-- interesting speaker. And actually --

JUNGE: He did a great job.

MADSEN: -- because actually -- well, one of them -- the former librarians from here, she was in Douglas for a while, back in the '90s and that -- I actually went down there to -- for one night to, [01:18:00] speak to their historical society about the -- the book. So, I've actually (laughs) done a couple speaking engagements on the book. Never really -- never really got paid for it, but, yeah, this is one of those things where, yeah, it's been a life-long project, but (laughs). Haven't made a lot of money yet,



but I'm thinking, well, if I could get a -- I can get a novel written, then I'll push it to some of the contacts I have in the film and TV industry, and maybe get a movie made (laughter). That's my long-term goal.

JUNGE: Why don't you talk to -- to Craig Johnson about a -- about a book. He's -- he's got experience in writing -- he's -- he's supposed to be a good writer, I've never read any of his stuff, but...

MADSEN: Yeah, he's pretty good, and one of my -- well, my third grade teacher Gene [Galliano?], who -- Buffalo -- he's also a published author and he's got a bunch of children's books and he writes for a bunch of different plac-- people, too. So, he's -- he's got cont-- I've got friends that have got contacts in industries (laughs).

JUNGE: Sounds like -- it [01:19:00] -- it sounds like this -- this interest in this -- in this -- in this paper to begin with has changed your life.

MADSEN: Yeah, because it has -- it started -- yeah, when I first started learned about Bomber Mountain was probably when I was, I don't know, five, six, seven years old or something. When I was real young and saw the machine gun my grandfather had, that kind of piqued my interest. And then, when I was probably in my early teens, probably still in grade school or maybe junior high, my family went up to

the -- we went up to the wreckage with some friends of the family from Cheyenne that my mom's college roommate and their family went with us, so we had a group. We went to the wreckage as a -- as a young kid, 12, 13 or whatever. So that kind of interested me. And then in - when I was 17, 18 in high school, I got interested more in doing the research paper [01:20:00] and then it -- then I started getting in contact with the families and started getting more information. And then it -- yeah, it just kept growing (laughs) and growing and I never -- never thought I'd do that. I formed my own publishing company just to -- to print it and I learned everything I learned about publishing the hard way, basically (laughter). I printed up -- luckily we had a good guy down here at the local printer and he was able to help me get it set up and they had -- they -- I typed the text up and then they set up the rest of the pages and stuff. And they were -- but yeah, I learned all about how to market it, how to -- that the bookstores want a 40% discount. I didn't know that to start with --

JUNGE: I didn't either.

MADSEN: --because I didn't, I priced (laughs) -- but yeah, and I had to buy 2,000 copies at a time to get the price down to where I could actually make a little money when I sold

them. I started selling them for 8 bucks a copy, then 10 bucks, and then 12 bucks [01:21:00] a copy. And that was still pretty cheap for -- because I was paying -- I was paying 4, 4.50 a book and wholesaling them out at 5 bucks or something. So I was making 50 cents a book, when I was (laughs) wholesaling them to...

JUNGE: So you learned a lot about the publishing business.

MADSEN: Yeah, and I was selling them to a distributor out of Basin over -- in Basin, Wyoming, he --

JUNGE: Aviation Maintenance Publisher? Big Horn -- Big Horn Books?

MADSEN: Well, Wolverine Publishing over there. And then when I had some -- all over the state, I had Sheridan, Casper, different places I -- local -- bookstores I had talked to and I'd send them books directly and then some through online sales and yeah, I -- I learned every (laughs) -- I learned all about that the hard way. I -- yeah, I -- how to run a business -- how everything is a -- yeah, started out as a teenager and OK, and I just kind of jumped in with both feet. My family helped with some of the [01:22:00] initial money to -- to do the first printing. Two-thousand copies, 5 bucks a -- or like 4-some, 4.50 apiece, that's like 10,000 dollars. So I had to -- between them putting a little seed money down, and me going to the bank to get a

big loan, it was a big gamble for the first year -- I was -

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JUNGE: And then you had to work your butt off and sell them!

MADSEN: Then I had to start pushing them to try to sell them to -- and by the time I broke even and got the first set of books paid off, then I was about out again and I (laughs) - - yeah, I made money on the last 2, 300 books, but then I had to print another 2,000 and oh, I had to print that many just to get the volume discount to get the price down, because with the offset method, as the quantity goes up, the price goes down. Nowadays, with the digital, you can print a lot smaller runs without having to pay the -- it's more efficient to -- you can [01:23:00] print 500 books instead of having to...

JUNGE: Well, I think a company like Blurb that I went through recently to do a book up for my granddaughter. I think that they would probably do a lot of books for you as well as a small amount of books, at a pretty good price.

MADSEN: Because there's several places now -- yeah, there's places that'll print books on demand. You -- you give them a -- you basically give them the digital file and -- when you sell a book, they print it and ship it out, and next time you sell another one, they print one and ship it out, and it's -- because they -- it's all automated by now. So

I need to check into that. Now I need to relearn all -- everything I used to know was old technology, so now I have to start over and learn how the modern technology works (laughter).

JUNGE: Yeah, when you say, oh, you're talking about going back to floppy disk (laughter).

MADSEN: Floppy disks and cameras and half tones and...

JUNGE: What do you -- what do you think about this plaque that -- where is that plaque?

MADSEN: That -- the plaque for the -- was put up there by the [01:24:00] Sheridan War Dads and Auxiliary and that was put up -- I think it was the next -- in '46. I think the next summer, they put it up and it's right at the base of Bomber Mountain. The -- Bomber Mountain is right -- it's basically there's -- Florence Pass goes right directly to the south of Bomber Mountain and Florence Lake is right in the pass. Basically, Bomber Mountain drains into Florence Lake and then the -- right next -- Florence Lake is the pass, basically and the -- and the plaque is right down there, around the lake, so, it's kind of..

JUNGE: On the trail? I mean, where the people can actually...

MADSEN: Yeah, it's a major -- that's one of the four sides of the major Solitude Loop trail up in the Bighorns, there's a -- you can start in Sheridan -- it starts about Sheridan

and above Red Grade and Penrose Park is one location, to west [01:25:00] Ten Sleep. On the other side of the mountain where I go in, sometimes to go to Bomber or Hunter [Coralls?] is the -- and those are like three access points and it's a four-sided trail that kind of -- you can go from any-- anyone of those to anyone of the others and just kind of circles around the whole mountain up there, and kind of gives you the main -- that's the main loop trail to hike on up there the -- the biggest one that leads to all the big attractions and big lakes, Lake Solitude and Cloud Peak and several other.

JUNGE: Is that a horse trail or a pedestrian trail?

MADSEN: It's both, it's -- it's a forest service trail that they've kept up over the years. It's main -- it's horse and -- horse and pedestrian and the little bit of the trail that's outside of the wilderness area, you can ride a mountain bike on, but you can't take a mountain bike in the wilderness area, but...

JUNGE: What's the last time you were up there?

MADSEN: I think about, oh, what -- two [01:26:00] -- and I think it was 2011 or '12 in September the -- when I was up there the longest time and that was -- yeah, a friend of mine in town wanted to go up there. He'd never been up there, so, he -- he went with me and that was the

motivation to go but that was -- but then that was only a couple years ago and it -- it was -- it was still intriguing for me to go up and get more -- that's when I had truly digital -- a good digital camera -- a better one that every time I go up there, my camera equipment gets better. The -- the first ti-- I went up there the summer of '90 after I -- after I got the book printed -- all -- everything done in June, I had everything written, then it didn't come out till late-September, October by the time it -- it got -- they got everything set up and proofread and printed and bound and stuff, [01:27:00] so during that -- later on summer I went up there with my video camera and -- and still camera and I -- I bought a video camera, it was only a black and white display but it was -- back then it was one of the ones -- it was one of the few ones that you could actually, instead of the battery pack, you could put in AA batteries to keep going, so... I think I had about 20 pounds of camera gear between all the cameras and video cameras and everything else I took with me up there. Yeah, I was short on food and clothing but I took enough camera gear so I (laughs) could get more pictures and GPS stuff (laughter).

JUNGE: There's a -- there's a devoted fan of this event, I'll tell you what. Well, I -- when you went up there last --

2012, two, three years ago, anyway -- was there much left up there?

MADSEN: It's -- most of the big wreckage is still there. Most of the stuff in the pictures is there. That big -- the big vertical stabilizer, it's still there. [01:28:00] That one, I think, it gets stood up every now and again for people to see and then it -- wind blows it back over, but the neat part about that one you can actually read the serial number on it, or part of the serial number -- four, or a three-nine-nine -- the last few digits.

JUNGE: Who's this young kid (inaudible).

MADSEN: Yeah, that's me back -- way back when, in '80...

JUNGE: No white in your hair there.

MADSEN: No, (laughter) -- no actually had hair back then (laughter). Now my -- I can't see my bangs anymore, they're behind my head, so... but yeah, I used to have thick -- a thick head of hair, but I -- I guess they say grass doesn't grow on a busy street, and I've been too busy so my -- yeah, my receding hair line is done receded.

JUNGE: Well listen, thank you very much Scott --

MADSEN: Yeah, thanks a lot.

JUNGE: -- this has been a real pleasure. Well, I would encourage you to go after it and continue your plans, [01:29:00] but I don't know how you'd have enough -- you



know, the older you get the less stamina you have. And I don't know how you can build houses all day and then be expected to go home at night - or, are you married? No kids?

MADSEN: Nope. None that I know of (laughs).

JUNGE: Well, all right. So -- so there you go you've got -- you've got nobody to be responsible to but yourself so you've got no excuse for you to not finish this up. All right, listen. I want you to fill out a couple forms for me, OK? Let me turn this off...

END OF AUDIO FILE