

OH-3055, Don Boggs, 11-20-2013, WY In Flight

Part 1

Q: [00:00:00] It has a nice voice tone. So I'm always happy with it. Don, our first question really is about your beginnings in aviation. Why did you get an airplane? How did you learn to fly? Where did you learn to fly?

BOGGS: I learned to fly on the GI Bill years ago. At that time I don't even remember who taught me.

Q: Did you do that in Buffalo or did you have to go?

BOGGS: Right here.

Q: So you had a pilot?

BOGGS: I think a fellow by the name of Frank D. Castro was the one that taught me most of mine -- and Dale Wright down in Wright, Wyoming.

Q: Dale was living in Buffalo for a while at that time. Do you think you just flew out of the Buffalo Airport then?

BOGGS: Yeah, we did. [00:01:00] Verl Addison was one of them that helped a lot. He was a good pilot and did a lot of teaching. But I think basically Dale Wright was the main one that taught me how.

Q: So that would have been in the '60s, late '50s-60s?

BOGGS: Mid to late '50s.

Q: Why did you want to fly?

BOGGS: I built two or three old airplanes -- rebuild them --
and I had to learn to fly to use them. (laughs)

Q: How did you happen to get your hands on old airplanes?

BOGGS: I bought two or three of them down around Arvada from
a guy, and just rebuilt them, [00:02:00] recovered them.

Q: So it was more like a hobby than a business?

BOGGS: Yeah.

Q: So the GI Bill helped you get those flying lessons.

BOGGS: Right.

Q: Can you remember your very first flight?

BOGGS: No. (laughs)

Q: Did you fly those old airplanes you rebuilt?

BOGGS: Yes. Hell, we'd go over the mountain in them.

Q: Can you describe that experience of flying over the
mountains?

BOGGS: Well once in a while we had to land and tie it up to a
barbed wire fence (laughs) to keep it from blowing away.

Q: Did you count elk or anything? Or were you just
sightseeing?

BOGGS: Oh we'd go [00:03:00] up and see where the elk were,
where we wanted to go hunting, which was probably illegal.
(laughs)

Q: Did you have anything -- I know the Bighorn winds are
really critical and unpredictable.

BOGGS: Well they weren't bad ever. You fly downhill.

(laughs)

Q: You mentioned to me that you -- had you gone to a fly-in out at Lake De Smet or did you help organize those fly-ins?

BOGGS: Yes, we did. In fact, I think the last one that landed on the runway out there, it was still about six inches of water when I did.

Q: [00:04:00] Was that [Seeney's?] Point? Was that their concept to bring people into the area?

BOGGS: They had a runway there. It wasn't the best one, but it worked.

Q: So did that mean you flew with Frank and Fred Seeney?

BOGGS: Yup. I flew around a lot with Fred Seeney. He was always scared to fly, (laughs) so we'd fly. I took him to California twice.

Q: In those early days of aviation, did you have as much regulation as there is now? You had to do the flight plans?

BOGGS: Yup, well, you didn't have to. It was wise.

Q: Nice to know and have some idea of where you [00:05:00] were going to be. Is that all instrument flying or did you --

BOGGS: No. We flew what they called IFR, I follow the roads.
(laughs)

Q: The other popular flyer in this area was Jack Meldrum.

BOGGS: (laughs) Yeah.

Q: Were you ever on any of the Jack adventures?

BOGGS: No. I tried to stay away from him. (laughs) He wrecked more airplanes than he flew.

Q: Over the years, how many airplanes do you think you built?

BOGGS: Oh three; three old J-3s [00:06:00].

Q: Is that tricky mechanically or structurally?

BOGGS: No. Just a lot of fun.

Q: Did you work out of your garage?

BOGGS: Yeah. I painted them out here in the yard. I've had three or four Cubs down that shop down there. One time I flew out and landed down here in the pasture and taxied up in the yard. The first thing I knew there was about five airplanes out here in the yard. Dale Wright came up, and Frank D. Castro stopped. We had a lot of fun.

Q: That's almost like a neighborhood visit, but via airplane.

BOGGS: (laughs)

Q: [00:07:00] You talked about the long distance flight to California. Did you do any other long distance flying?

BOGGS: Oh yeah. I've been to Minnesota. Took Tom Carpenter there one time. Not a lot, really.

F: Napa.

Q: You went to Napa?

BOGGS: California.

Q: I think that's a -- was that an expensive hobby or was it just a lot of work?

BOGGS: It wasn't too expensive. The gas was cheap in those days and we didn't worry about it too much. It was a lot of fun [00:08:00]. A lot of good times.

Q: Did you ever fly with the Flying Farmer group?

BOGGS: Yeah. I have been back -- where did we go?

F: Oregon.

BOGGS: Oregon one time; a whole bunch of them.

Q: How do you organize group flying? Do you all takeoff from the same airports and head to the same airports?

BOGGS: No, just go to the same place.

Q: So it has to be sort of happenstance. If it happens it does. Then you said your son Dennis has the airplane now. Did he start working with you at a young age on those machines?

BOGGS: No. That was before his time of flying really.

Q: [00:09:00] Did you teach him to fly?

BOGGS: I don't remember. I don't think I did. He just started flying I think. (laughs)

Q: Do you have any stories of being frightened, or having a scary flight?

BOGGS: No, not really. One time we were going over the mountain and got into the pass up there. The wind was blowing so hard we had to just cut the throttle and back up and get out of there. (laughs)

Q: Who were you flying with at that time?

BOGGS: I don't remember.

F: Probably Dennis.

BOGGS: Yeah, probably.

Q: [00:10:00] Is that little plane you were flying, was it a two-passenger?

BOGGS: Yeah.

Q: Is that what most of the guys flew around the Buffalo area?

BOGGS: No. We've had a little bit of everything [coughs]. I think the old Piper Cub was probably the main one.

Q: You're going to make me get into my list of questions now. Did you fly in and out of any other Wyoming airports?

BOGGS: I've been to Dubois, and Jackson, and most of them.

Q: So back in the '50s I imagine they were all pretty similar and not very advanced.

BOGGS: [00:11:00] Yeah.

Q: Did you see improvement over your years flying, as airports grew and improved?

BOGGS: No, not really.

Q: Did you ever serve on the Johnson County Airport Board?

BOGGS: Nope.

Q: How did that happen?

BOGGS: (laughs) Oh I just never asked.

Q: How long has it been since you've done any flying now, Don?
Do you go up with Dennis?

BOGGS: Oh yeah. I go up and I still land and takeoff once in
a while.

Q: Does it still give you that thrill?

BOGGS: No. It's just kind of natural. (laughs)

Q: Is it? Just like driving the care. Do you think aviation
in Wyoming is different than it is in other states
[00:12:00] like Midwest, or even further West?

BOGGS: Well you have a lot more regulations back there than
there are here. They don't -- you know you've got to get a
physical every year and everything. Around here people
don't pay much attention to it.

Q: Would you call aviation Wyoming more a recreational or is
it becoming more business?

BOGGS: No I think most of them have a purpose for it. They
use it in their work.

F: The ranchers.

Q: What do you consider the biggest challenges to aviation
work [00:13:00] in Wyoming? Do we need better airports?

Do we need more business flights in and out, or commercial flights?

BOGGS: No, I don't think so. There's so many different airplanes anymore that they all seem to land. The jets and everything else land right here. We haven't changed that airport in a long time.

Q: I'm going to put that down because I think it will pick it up. So Don, I need to give you a cup of coffee because I know you can chat more than this.

BOGGS: (laughs)

F: Do you want a cup?

Q: Did you get out to have coffee with the boys this morning?

BOGGS: Yup, sure did. Every morning.

Q: [00:14:00] Do you go out at 7:00?

BOGGS: Six.

Q: Well you wouldn't want to disturb that early rise image that we have of you. (laughs) I thought last time I went out to the Buffalo Airport they had done huge amounts of changing out there.

BOGGS: Well they built a lot of hangers. Some of them are private. The Garlands have a big, beautiful hanger there. It's even got compass roses imported the floor. It's beautiful, but not very many people can afford that kind of hanger.

Q: Well Garlands must use theirs for business.

BOGGS: They're going [00:15:00] every day down into South Dakota.

Q: Does Purdy have any property out at the airport? Does he have a hanger, or does he all do ranch work?

BOGGS: No I don't think he's got a hanger anymore. He could have, but I don't think so.

Q: He had runways both south of town. Does he have a runway north of town? Does Jim have a --

BOGGS: He's got a helicopter that goes where he wants.

(laughs)

Q: Well that was a little step up wasn't it? Dale Wright was in Buffalo about the time I was finishing high school, and married the cute, little, blonde school teacher, but everybody talks so nicely about him. [00:16:00] I just thought it was just unusual that he came to Buffalo to teach flying.

BOGGS: Well I don't think he came here to teach. He just came here to spend time. He was a good guy to have around because he'd do things that you wouldn't try to do and teach you how to do it.

F: He taught Dennis, didn't he?

BOGGS: No I don't think so. I think Verl Addison did most of the teaching to Dennis.

Q: Do you have any favorite flight memories when you were flying with Dennis? Any trips or adventures?

BOGGS: Not really.

F: California.

BOGGS: Well we've been everywhere.

F: With Seeney and Dennis. [00:17:00] He was little.

Q: Well flying into California must be a whole lot different than flying in and out of the Buffalo Airport, or landing in the mountains.

BOGGS: No, it's not different. They've all got good airports. You don't have any trouble.

F: You've been to Vegas.

Q: Do you get good directions? Is that tower directions when you come in from the --

BOGGS: Yeah. They'll chew you out if you don't do it right.
(laughs)

Q: Well they probably should. (laughs)

BOGGS: We went into Minneapolis one time and after I landed, they came over and gave me hell because I went on the wrong runway, [00:18:00] but it worked. We got there.

Q: I keep thinking about the increased number of flights in and out of those big airports, those hundreds and hundreds.

BOGGS: It's just amazing.

Q: I guess we don't have to worry about that in Wyoming at all, do we?

BOGGS: No. Here we just try to write down how many landings we had to see if we can get enough to be legal. (laughs)

Q: That's a log book, isn't it? Is that what you keep for that type?

BOGGS: Well that's a log for the airport; how many touch and goes they have.

Q: Did you keep a log book for yourself?

BOGGS: Yup. Every place you went.

Q: [00:19:00] So that's what, 40 years of flying?

BOGGS: Yeah. It doesn't seem possible, and now I can't do it anymore. (laughs)

Q: Well thanks, Don, for spending the time with me.

BOGGS: Oh yes.

Q: And I'll probably be sending this in sometime in the next couple of weeks. So if you think of anything you want to visit about, let me know.

BOGGS: OK, I will, Patty.

Q: All right. Thank you.

BOGGS: Yes. [00:19:45]

END OF AUDIO FILE

Part 2

BOGGS: [00:00:00] I can't think of where it's at now.

F: You were going to Napa when we almost run out of gas.

BOGGS: Pardon?

F: Going to Napa when we almost run out of gas.

BOGGS: Well that airport down there -- Dubois, that's where it is. And there's a great big hill. And you get all ready to land and the wind comes off of that big old hill and just knocks the hell out of you.

Q: That would be a problem for takeoff as well, wouldn't it?

BOGGS: Yup.

Q: We forgot to talk about the Crazy Woman Omni. Did you use that for directional for yourself? I mean I know you were a highway flyer and probably didn't, but was that a signal [00:01:00] that you would get in your airplane?

BOGGS: You could get it and if you were coming from a long ways, you always tuned it in to get a little direction to see what the wind is doing and what's going on there.

Q: I wondered about the Lowell Ferguson crash. It wasn't really a crash, but the mistaken airport landing, and why, if he was using that Crazy Woman Omni, why he would have landed here.

BOGGS: There was a reason to that. I don't remember exactly what it was, but something wasn't working at the airport. So he just got turned around.

Q: Well that's good. I didn't want to blame it on [00:02:00]
the crazy woman.

BOGGS: No. (laughs) CZY.

Q: That was the code?

BOGGS: Yeah.

Q: CZY, OK. [00:02:16]

END OF AUDIO FILE