

OH-3088, Charles Ksir, 8-7-2014, Laramie, WY In Flight

BOGART: This is Barbara Bogart. I'm in the University of Wyoming's student union, talking to Charles Ksir about aviation in Wyoming, and the date is August 7, 2014. Well, let's start out -- I want to start out by asking you how you got interested in aviation to begin with.

KSIR: Oh, interested in, I'm not sure. I think I probably was from a kid, like a lot of people, but I started actually taking flying lessons in 1978, and there was a guy who had a little dirt airstrip out south of town here, and he had an old Piper Cub, and a newer Piper airplane, and he started giving me instruction in that, and I really kind of liked him, and I liked just that kind of an environment. It was an interesting place to be. He, unfortunately, just [00:01:00] disappeared one day, and we don't know -- the suspicion was that he might have been using his airplane for illicit activities or something, and he just -- I called out there, and there was no answer, and he was just gone, so...

BOGART: Oh my gosh.

KSIR: We don't know what really happened to him, but -- so at that point, I didn't continue my lessons, and then I did -- started back up again, and then 12 years later. So...

BOGART: Well, let me -- let me interrupt you just for a minute. The fellow who first gave you flying lessons, was it is his own airstrip that he had?

KSIR: His mother had a ranch out here, and it was a place that they had plowed out on the ranch, so yes.

BOGART: And that was south of Laramie?

KSIR: Mm-hmm, yes. Yes, so anyway then I started taking lessons from a couple of different people, [00:02:00] here in Laramie, one of whom was the pilot for the university for the atmospheric science stuff, and the other were all raised back here, he's still here, and he's -- he is a -- in the vet science -- he's a veterinarian and PhD, and anyway, he would just do a few students here and here, and he's the one who I actually tried to finish my lessons with, and I was just interested in -- I thought at the time I'd be able to use the airplane more for traveling on business--related things, or on -- I've always, for some reason, been really active on different kinds of boards and things in Wyoming, and meeting around the state and different places, and I thought it would be handier for that. I've really only used the airplane, my own airplane or airplanes that I had access to, for that kind of travel and maybe a handful of times. I'd have to look back, but it turns out [00:03:00) not to always be very convenient

because of weather and other things like that, to actually rely on, you know, a small airplane in Wyoming weather. So most of my flying has been recreational. I guess, a lot of it to visit family members in other states, and we -- my mother -- my wife's mother lives in California, and we've flown there many, many times to see her, and when my dad was alive, down in New Mexico, we would fly down there and see him.

BOGART: OK, and where did you grow up?

KSIR: I grew up in New Mexico, the southeastern corner, in Carlsbad, a little town that -- it's a -- really a lot -- in some ways, like a lot of Wyoming places, that it's sort of mining and tourism and agriculture were the main -- the main things, and a small -- a small community, about the size of Laramie, so.

BOGART: [00:04:00] Yes, my mother lives in Los Cruces, so I haven't been over to Carlsbad in a very long time, but I know what you're talking about.

KSIR: OK, yes. Yes, yes.

BOGART: So when did you come to Wyoming then?

KSIR: Nineteen-seventy-two, and so yes. Came here from Massachusetts. We were back there for just a year when I was doing a postdoc and we -- my wife is from California, and I'm from New Mexico, and we just sort of prefer living

in the west, so Wyoming was west, so that's about all we knew about it when we got here.

BOGART: So you came to the university here?

KSIR: Yes, yes, the job at the university, and loved it here. It's been a wonderful place to live, and raise our daughter, and just enjoy the outdoors, and which we do a lot. So a great place to be.

BOGART: Yes, oh, OK, so you took flying lessons, and you said Mel Railsback, is that his name?

KSIR: [00:05:00] No, Merl Raisbek, yes.

BOGART: No, I'm sorry. Raisbek, OK. So when did you get your first plane, your own plane?

KSIR: Oh, well, actually about -- I think it was around 1991 or '92. I hadn't had my license for very long. There was an airplane that had five partners, and I bought one partnership, and Merl bought one partnership in it, and then over the next two or three years, the other partners either moved out, or sold, or quit flying and we bought up. So, fairly soon, it was just the two of us, and we had that plane for about 10 years together.

BOGART: And what was the plane?

KSIR: It was a 182, Cessna 182, really, just sort of a solid workhorse plane. It was a 1975 model, I think, a '75, yes, so it had a lot of [00:06:00] -- a lot of hours on it, but

-- you know, we -- we maintained the mechanical parts of it. Merl was much less interested in the cosmetic aspect of the airplane, and over time my wife got more interested in trying to sort of fix it up a little bit and make it nicer. Anyway, eventually, we decided to just get our own plane. We did in two--thousand and -- we bought at the end of 2001, actually, not long after the 9/11 thing, and so it turned out that we kind of bought at the peak of the small airplane market, you know, when things were still fairly pricy, and over time, the value of these planes has decreased. It's gotten more difficult and more expensive for people to fly and -- yes.

BOGART: That's what I understand. So what was the plane that you bought?

KSIR: It was as 182, but it was a turbo-charge retractable one, and so it would fly faster and higher, [00:07:00] and that was good for our long trips from California or New Mexico.

BOGART: Does your wife fly also?

KSIR: No, she's never shown an interest. I tried to get her to take at least one of these pinch-hitter courses for people who -- you know, in case somebody has a heart attack, that you could at least land the airplane, and she just never was at all interested in that, which is funny.

She -- she would go out with me on trips, but she wasn't interested in learning about how to do it herself, so.

BOGART: And where -- where did you -- where do you keep the plane?

KSIR: In Laramie at the airport. There's a private hangar out there. And so we kept it there, and it was handy, and -- anyway, and we -- over the last, I would say four or five years, we were flying less and less. My father died. We found it not as convenient, sometimes, to fly out to Bakersfield, California [00:08:00], really, really hot along the way. You know, hot when you get there, and -- anyway, one reason or another, we weren't flying the plane as much, and so last August we sold it, and I haven't really flown since then, so I've let my license lapse, and I'm -- so maybe I'm not a real great advocate for private flying at this point, because I really don't miss it. I mean, there was as long time when, if I didn't fly, I really felt like I needed to get up in the air and do it, but I haven't -- I haven't missed it. I thought when we sold the airplane, because it was -- you know, you have all these ongoing expenses of annual inspections and this insurance and things like that, and I thought, well, I can join the flying club here, and I could continue to fly if I wanted to, that way, or buy a smaller, less expensive

plane, that would be cheaper to maintain and cheaper to insure, but we didn't do that, so -- and like I said, I haven't really missed it, so. [00:09:00]

BOGART: Well, you said that you were like a lot of kids interested in flying when you were a kid. How did -- what form did that take?

KSIR: Well, I don't really know. I mean, I don't think I was different from most kids, you know, who were interested in everything from military airplanes to just -- you know, going out to the airport and watching airplanes come and go, and so I didn't know a lot about it. I had a friend in high school who had his pilot's license and I went up with him a couple of times, in a Cessna 170, I think it was. We actually flew it down to El Paso one time and then went over to Juarez, you know, just to mess around and then flew back, but yes.

BOGART: Oh, sure, well, that's cool, well, what did you enjoy about it when you had your own plane and were flying?

KSIR: Well, I mean, it's -- I think the perspective is one thing. It's just interesting to see things, you know, from that perspective, from the air, but close enough where you can actually see things. [00:10:00] You know, it's different from being at 30,000 feet, so I like that aspect of it, and there were several times when I got a chance to

take -- working at the university here, I'd have colleagues who had research projects, or interests, or whatever. So, geologists. I'd take up a geologist and fly around. They will tell you the most fascinating things about the terrain and the mountains, and everything. I -- you know, I've driven over, from here past Arlington, I don't know how many times, and I was up with this guy one time, and he pointed out the Arlington Shelf to me, where they had all of the wind towers up on top of it, how it was formed, with the Rock Creek flowing out there, and leaving all that kind of stuff, and so it was just really -- really interesting stuff, and then I had a colleague in the botany department who was doing some research up in the Bighorns, [00:11:00] and I flew him and his graduate student up, and we -- we just circled around, and he -- he studies sediment in ponds, and so he was looking for ponds in the mountains that looked like they'd been there for thousands of years, and weren't artificial things, so that they could then mark down where they were and go back, but as we flew along, these guys could look down and tell where one kind of pine tree changed to another kind of pine tree, and you know just from a thousand feet above him. He -- they could do all this stuff, so I found that kind of thing really interesting, too.

BOGART: Oh, I'll bet, because then you look at the landscape differently afterwards.

KSIR: Sure you do, yes, and then -- you know, the area out around Rock Springs where the sand dunes begin, and then all the sand dunes. I mean, you can see that, all the way across the middle of Wyoming, where the sand blows across, once you're aware of it, you know, and [00:12:00] that's the sort of thing you can see from a small airplane, really well, that it's impossible, really, to see it from a car, and certainly not from an airliner. So, yes, I think that's it. I mean, I remember the thrill I had the first time when I was taking lessons and we flew out over Lake Hattie, here, and there were -- we were flying here and there were these seagulls flying above the lake, but I mean you just look down and you see these white birds flying over this blue lake and it -- it just, I don't know what it was about it, but it just really got me, and so anyway. Yes, I think that -- that sense of being up there in the air, and flying, right? That's what it is. So I can -- I, that part of it, I can see. When you get in a plane to fly to somewhere like Bakersfield, California, it's just droning along. You're in a cabin that's about the size of an old Volkswagen, and it's about as noisy [00:13:00], and often about as bumpy because you're -- particularly when

you're coming back in the afternoon over the mountains and stuff, you know, you get bumped around a lot, so it's really not -- in some ways, that kind of just getting from one place to another isn't really all that fun after a while. It just gets to be routine and kind of boring, so that is if the weather's OK. Yes.

BOGART: Yes, it gets exciting when the weather isn't --

KSIR: Right.

BOGART: Did you ever have experiences with bad weather?

KSIR: Quite a few. I think most of it was as I was beginning to try new things. Not too long after I started flying, we made our first trip out to California. We came -- we got to -- we used to go out by following the interstate. We'd fly I-80 to I-15 and go down that way, and so when we were coming back, we flew up I-15 and there were clouds over the mountains there by -- [00:14:00] by Salt Lake, and then I -- I didn't have an instrument rating, and so I couldn't fly legally where I couldn't see, and so -- but we saw some gaps through the clouds, and so we started up that canyon, you know, sort of looking underneath clouds and between clouds, and you know we kept saying, "Well, there's a little blue spot there," and we'd go for it, and I was getting increasingly nervous and worried about it, but we made it to Evanston, and then

there was -- and then it was snowing, and so -- all right, well, we're going to stop. Well, we got to Evanston and landed, and there were all these helicopters there, and these army helicopters had been sitting in Evanston for three days, waiting to do what we had just done, and so -- you know, it was something that we shouldn't have done, and I didn't really realize how dangerous it was until after it was over, you know, that kind of thing. So that -- but it -- no harm done, and then there were a couple of times after I got my instrument rating [00:15:00] where I thought, "OK, now I have this instrument rating, that means I can fly in the clouds." Well, yes, you can, but it turns out that in Wyoming, with all these mountains around, if you're in the summertime and it's cloudy, that means probably thunderstorms can build up very quickly, and you don't know where they are, and in the wintertime, of course, it means there's ice in the clouds and the plane can get iced up. So I never really flew much in the clouds in the winter because I was always kind of afraid of ice and got -- I was going to Jackson one time for a meeting, actually. This was one of the times that I was going to go to a meeting using the plane, and it was in Jackson, and I got up by Dubois, and was flying in the clouds, and the plane started to pick up ice, and I just turned around and

went back to Riverton and then I wound up not making it to the meeting at all, just couldn't get over there, and so [00:16:00] I wound up going home.

BOGART: Right, so it's not just by -- it's not just ground transportation that stops you in winter, but air too.

KSIR: No, well, it -- it's actually easier to get places, probably, on the ground. It's not pleasant, but at least it's not -- you're not going to die from it, you know?

BOGART: Usually, no.

KSIR: Usually, not, and then -- and then one time we were going out to California and my wife was working at the hospital then, and she couldn't get off until around noontime, and so we -- and it was late April, I think, and we hadn't really had any thunderstorm activity around yet, and -- but it was sort of cloudy and anyway we got up and I was flying along pretty high up. I mean, I had -- with an instrument rating, you can fly up in the near 20,000 feet and this turbo-charge plane would do that, you know. It's very efficient when you're going on long trips. So we were up there and, you know, all of a sudden it started to get cloudy, and I thought, "Well, OK," and I -- I called on the --[00:17:00] the radio and talked to Denver Center and said, "Do you see any weather on your radar?" and at this -- they really don't have a weather radar, exactly, but

they can -- anyway, they didn't see anything that looked bad, so I thought, "Well, I can fly through this cloud," and well it turned out that it was a developing thunderstorm that was just starting, and the next thing I knew, the plane was literally on its side. I mean, it was -- you know, the knife edge, up -- you know, and going up at 1500 feet a minute. I mean, I -- you know, I couldn't control it at all. It was -- I thought, "Well, this is it," you know? Here's the plane on its side going up at 1,500 feet a minute, and anyway we -- I had just read an article in a magazine about -- you know, flying at unusual altitudes, and it said step on the sky. You know, you use your rudder and you push on the side of the plane that's got the blue showing, and so I found a little indicator. So I did that and it turned -- it got the plane turned right side up, [00:18:00] and only a throttle back, and anyway we made it. We got out the other side of the thunderstorm, and landed in Rawlins and said, "OK, that's the end of that," and we went back home and got a plane ticket and flew commercial to California, so.

BOGART: Let somebody else deal with it.

KSIR: Have somebody else deal with it, right. Well, I just wasn't -- I think, you know, wasn't feeling like I wanted to fly the plane at that point, so it had been a couple --

and one other time when I sort of got uncomfortably caught up on top of the clouds and so -- you know, I -- and there were thunderstorms building up. I mean, I learned after that, that even with an instrument rating, you know, it's really much, much better to just stay down where you can see what you can see, and if you can't see, then land. You know, so I got more cautious, but part of that is, naïveté, I guess. When you first are flying you don't realize, or when you first get your instrument rating, you think, "OK, I can do this," you know, [00:19:00] so anyway, but yes. So, we had a few adventures like that, but -- you know, after it's over, you think, "Well, it worked," and then there was a time when I actually ran out of fuel in the plane and landed it in an alfalfa field down -- did really a stupid thing, but I -- it just quit running, and I was coming back from New Mexico and I'd gotten as far as between Greeley and Fort Collins, and I was intending actually to land in -- there used to be a little airport in -- called Downtown Fort Collins, which was nice for people like us. We could fly down there, and land, and it was fairly close to the middle of Fort Collins; you could either borrow a car, or something. You know, you could -- but anyway I was going to land there and get fuel, but I didn't quite make it, so I landed in this guy's alfalfa

field, and I was fine but the plane got bent a little bit and [00:20:00] it had to be in the shop for quite a while getting fixed and so, anyway.

BOGART: So you've done a lot of things once.

KSIR: A lot of things once. Yes, and survived all of that, and you know, but.

BOGART: Well, your wife must -- how does your wife respond to those kinds of situations?

KSIR: Well, she wasn't with me when I landed in the alfalfa field. She was with the other ones, and I -- you know, she was -- I don't know, she just -- she's pretty good about that kind of thing, I guess.

BOGART: That's a good thing, because that would so add to stress if she's over there worrying, or whatever.

KSIR: Yes, no, no, she wasn't.

BOGART: Now, you said you would fly colleagues from the university around, would -- did you offer that, or people just knew you had a plane and would ask to be taken up, or?

KSIR: Well, sometimes, yes, it would come up in conversation, or something, yes. They would know I had a plane, yes. Yes, and you can't -- you know, since I didn't have a commercial license, there wasn't any -- I mean, some of these people said, "Well, if you would do this for me more I could pay you," and stuff, and you can't do that,

[00:21:00] but -- you know, usually this was just a one-time kind of a thing, but.

BOGART: Now, I don't know if you -- I know the university had a program, I'm not quite sure when, but I know it was going in the '90s, of flying faculty around the state.

KSIR: Right.

BOGART: Were you part of that?

KSIR: No, I never -- I never flew to teach. I did -- right after I got my pilot's license, I flew up to Riverton one time because there was a guy up there teaching a class and he asked if I would come up and give a guest lecture. So, I thought, "Well, this will be a great opportunity," so I flew up there, and it was at night, and then I gave the lecture and then flew back that night, so yes I did do that, but I never was on that plane that went around and dropped people off and picked them up, yes.

BOGART: Right, who could I talk to about that program, do you know?

KSIR: Gosh, I would think most likely somebody in the College of Education, and someone who's been around awhile.

[00:22:00]

BOGART: Was it a -- it wasn't just an outreach program, it was regular faculty.

KSIR: Well, that -- yes, that's -- it was an outreach program, yes, but the people who did probably more of that than anyone were the education people because they would go out and -- you know, give -- give classes for practicing teachers who worked toward their graduate degrees and that kind of thing, and I'm not sure that they didn't actually fly around to meet with the student teachers, too, but I think it was more giving classes for practicing teachers in other parts of the state. Now, before we had all the video conferencing capabilities and things that we have now, but yes some of the old--timers over there -- Michael Day, who is the current dean there, probably did that. I'm trying to think of a -- [00:23:00] Jim Rush, he recently retired. I'm almost certain he would have done that. [Ed Parady?] is another one who might have done that, so yes.

BOGART: I'll ask around over there. That's great. That would be really interesting to have their experiences too.

KSIR: Yes, yes.

BOGART: So, private pilots. You used the plane sometimes for business, pleasure. Tell me about your connection with the Aeronautics Commission. How did you get appointed there?

KSIR: OK, well, Dave Freudenthal was someone I had known when he was the US Attorney for Wyoming. We were on the Governor's Advisory Council on Substance Abuse together,

and so I knew him from that, and the first time he was running for governor, I actually flew him once to [00:24:00] and back, so that he could attend an event in Riverton and then get back to Cheyenne the same day, and that worked out OK. We did that. At any rate, he appointed me to the Aeronautics Commission. I sort of asked if he would do that. I thought it might be interesting, and I didn't really know what it was all about, but now I do.

BOGART: So when were you appointed?

KSIR: Hoo, it's got to have been around eight years ago or so, I guess, because I was reappointed by Governor a couple of years ago, so and they're six-year terms, I believe, yes, yes, so.

BOGART: Well, tell me about -- I know a little bit about the work on the commission, talking to Vince and Chuck, but tell me about your experience [25:00:00] with the commission and what -- what -- and since you've been on it for so long, what kinds of trends have you seen in -- in Wyoming aviation over that period?

KSIR: Well, if you talk to them, you know that the current trends are all pretty scary, and for in the future of commercial aviation in Wyoming, and I think also for -- for the kind of flying that I did, you know, but let's talk

about commercial aviation. You know, one of the big things that's impacted these airlines is fuel costs. They're very high, but then there's this recent ruling about pilot training that somebody might have mentioned that has increased that.

BOGART: No, I think I heard something about it.

KSIR: Yes, so there was a -- an accident, oh, probably 10 years ago in northern New York, Colgan, I think was the regional airline that was flying a commuter plane, [00:26:00] and they wrecked it and killed everybody on board. And, after that, congress of course was going to do something, and they did.

BOGART: Eventually.

KSIR: Well, what they did was they passed this law that said that copilots had to have, I think, 1,500 hours of experience before they could even be in the right seat of the airplane, and before that, it had been about 400 hours, so it's a huge difference, and the question is, how do they get that experience if they can't fly as a copilot long enough to get that, and it's really a catch-22 situation, and there were a couple of other things, too, about rest because these pilots are tired. So they increased the rest requirements and other stuff, and so it put a lot of pressure on these small regional airlines like Great Lakes,

in particular. And Great Lakes is in serious distress right now. I don't know if they're going to make it, at all, and they've announced, for example -- I don't know if somebody [00:27:00] mentioned this that, in Sheridan, they're going to stop service the first of September, and so Sheridan will probably lose their commercial air service, starting in September. Well, they can fly out of Gillette, or you know, Rapid City, or someplace, but it's not going to be the same thing, and then we thought Laramie might be in the same boat. For several years, I thought it might make logical sense if Cheyenne had a more viable air -- air thing for people in Laramie to just have some kind of a bus -- a shuttle bus to get them to Cheyenne, and then go from there. You know, that seemed like it would make sense and Cheyenne's a bigger market area. We even -- when I first got on the commission, there was even talk about making Cheyenne a kind of a -- a regional hub for northern Colorado and there were people in northern Colorado who were talking about building us a new airport up -- you know, in northern Colorado and they were actually [00:28:00] looking for support from us, from Wyoming, and we said, "Well, no, we've got it. It's in Cheyenne." You know, people from Fort Collins, and Greeley, and whatever could easily get there, and even from the northern part of

Denver, but you know we hadn't really counted on a number of things that -- first of all, because DIA is north of Denver, it's more convenient than the old Stapleton was. And then, secondly, DIA has become one of the most attractive places in the country, or maybe in the world, to fly out of. There is a lot of competition there. So fares are low and lots and lots of flights going everywhere in the world, all the time, so Denver has just become this enormously attractive hub for people to fly out of. And at the time when we were talking about this, Colorado Springs had started -- you know, having more flights coming in there because people didn't want to pay the high fees to fly into the new DIA, and the Colorado Springs airport had increased its thing quite a bit, and a lot of folks were -- even [00:29:00] in the southern part of Denver, were driving down to Colorado Springs to fly, so that was the model we were thinking was going to work. You know, and you could have a regional airport, say in Cheyenne, and it would attract people from all around the area, get -- you know, at the time Southwest wasn't flying into Colorado, and we thought, "Boy, if we could get Southwest to fly to Cheyenne," because they tended to -- at that time, to pick these second-level airports. They weren't flying into the big hubs like everybody else. That didn't ever work out

and, right now, Cheyenne is actually in terrible shape. They're going to lose - they're probably going to lose -- you know, there's this thing about 10,000 of them planes -- I thought I should at least mention that -- but if you don't get that, then the FAA drops you down to a lower category and you get a lot less federal money to help you with your (inaudible), and they planned to build a new terminal in Cheyenne, and do a lot of things, but now they're -- they're probably not going to be able to do any of that, so -- meanwhile, in Laramie, where air service here was just terrible, [00:30:00] and we weren't getting, you know, very many people and we were below the 10,000 planes a few years in a row, working with the state division of -- the aeronautics division, and SkyWest, they were able to talk SkyWest into bidding for that service into Laramie. So we replaced Great Lakes with SkyWest and they're flying in here with a slightly bigger airplane. It's got a flight attendant on it. They are much more reliable because they are linked with United. If you fly from Laramie on a United flight somewhere you can often get a ticket for maybe only \$50 more to fly out of Laramie. Ridership has just gone way up in Laramie, so now Laramie has a viable air service with SkyWest and Cheyenne is not. They had a thing with their -- it -- American Airlines that

we helped them to promote. American Eagle started service from Dallas--Fort Worth into [00:31:00] Cheyenne and we thought, "Oh, this is good." Business people could fly in, oil people, whatever. A lot of the military people used it, and you know it was good because then you could connect with American in Dallas and go wherever, but it -- you know, then American went through bankruptcy and they reorganized everything and part of their reorganization was a new pilots' contract. All this stuff is so incredibly intertwined and complicated.

BOGART: Right, yes, it sounds like it.

KSIR: The new pilots' contract said that they were going to fly more bigger planes and fewer smaller planes, so they started spinning off a lot of their American Eagle service and getting rid of it, and so -- finding that a lot of this regional service, all over the country, it's just disappearing, and people have to drive to the big hubs now, more and more, to get anywhere. So, and that may happen to all of us in Wyoming at some point.

BOGART: Sure, [00:32:00] so the employments are passengers of planes?

KSIR: That's what -- yes, therefore we have this --

BOGART: Not generally.

KSIR: All that I've been talking about is commercial stuff for a while now, yes, but it -- general aviation is also going way down. You know, I mean, as far as the people like me, the private pilots who flew partly for fun and partly -- you know, for whatever, I think -- in 1978, when I took my first lesson, it was probably the peak of that kind of activity. Cessna and Piper were cranking out airplanes as fast as they could manufacture them, and they were inexpensive. You could buy a new plane for \$25,000, which was -- you know, more than a car, but not a whole lot more. Those same planes now would be 10 times that, and so -- anyway, it was a -- sort of a really hay day of private aviation. Lots of people in flying schools, [00:33:00] learning to fly. That's just all gone away. I think a lot of it is that people who are looking for a motorized hobby have a lot of other choices these days, with ATVs, and boats and jet skis and -- you know, all kinds of stuff like that. If you want to burn gasoline, make noise and go fast, you can do it in a lot of things that cost less than an airplane, and you don't have to have a license to do most of that stuff, so.

BOGART: Exactly, it's the lessons and the license.

KSIR: Yes, so the barriers to entry are very low for those other kinds of things, and so I think -- you know, a lot of

the people who would have been attracted to aviation, just for the -- oh, I don't know, the mechanical, or the whatever, but that part of it, or maybe even -- you find it easier to do other things, and then the cost of it. Flying schools have a hard time keeping going because the airplanes are so expensive, and the maintenance [00:34:00] of them is expensive, and the fuel is expensive, and so -- you know, just not many people learning to fly, and if -- I have a hangar still out at the airport here, and you know I've told people it's for sale. There's no one that wants to buy it, but there are I think a couple of hangars out there that are -- you know, are going to be for sale, or are for sale, and nobody's interest, and --

BOGART: Did you build that yourself?

KSIR: No, it was -- it was something that was -- it had been built. I bought it from another guy that had it, so.

BOGART: Oh, I see. Is that the usual arrangement at the airport that they own the hangar, or are there also leases?

KSIR: There're both. Some airports own the hangars and lease the hanger itself to people. The way this one works is there was a -- a private -- a group of private investors who built a series of hangars, and then they leased the ground from the airport. So I have -- I have to pay every

year, [00:35:00] ground lease to the airport, but we own the building, so it can work either way.

BOGART: OK, yes, and you mentioned the Laramie flying club. Tell me about that.

KSIR: Right, well, it used to be called the University Flying Club, and they changed the name of it because it wasn't all university people and -- you know, it never had been, really, but less and less. I remember, years ago -- it was some time, putting one of their planes on a trailer and bringing it down here to -- we're sitting across from Prexy's Pasture. Yes, they would actually put it out there, at the beginning of the school year when they have a -- they have all the students and used it as a way of advertising. They'd have students who would then -- you know, get interested in flying and come out and join the flying club. So I was a -- it used to be that they recruited a lot of university students who would then either start taking their lessons, and maybe they'd finish and maybe they wouldn't, but they have one airplane. They have [00:36:00] a few people flying it. I don't think very many.

BOGART: So it's on the decline too.

KSIR: Oh, yes, definitely smaller than it used to be, less active than it used to be, yes.

BOGART: Was there an established flying school in Laramie?

KSIR: Well, there were commercial flying schools. A Cessna dealer that was out at the airport, when I first -- when I first took lessons in '78, there was a person out there who operated -- they call him an FBO, fixed base operator, and the model fixed base operator is somebody who would have flying lessons available, rent airplanes, maybe even sell airplanes, have mechanic services available to repair. We've not had that in Laramie for years, and years, and years.

BOGART: Oh, really?

KSIR: There's not a -- no, the so--called FBO out there is owned by the city and all they do is sell fuel. They don't -- they don't have repair services. They don't -- [00:37:00] no maintenance. No flying lessons through them. The city just sold fuel and that's it, and so...

BOGART: Yes, I'm a little surprised, I guess, that all airports offered maintenance services, one way or another, or repair, but you're saying that that's not available here.

KSIR: No, no, there -- there are people who will. There are mechanics who live here and who will repair airplanes, and there's a guy who -- he teaches parttime at Laramie County

Community College. He might be someone interesting to talk to, a mechanic.

BOGART: What's his name?

KSIR: Dave Lambert, and he maintains a lot of the people's airplanes around here. He always took care of mine, did the annual inspection and so on, but he would come to my hangar and work on my plane there, bring his tools and -- and do the work there. So, yes, but as far as -- anyway, back in '78, you know, we had that. The guy was a [00:38:00] Cessna dealer. He had instructors on his -- you know, payroll, I guess, or whatever, and they had mechanics there. It was -- in fact, Dave Lambert worked with them as a mechanic, and so but it just became -- you know, it wasn't viable after that -- after a while for people to keep that going any more, so.

BOGART: Sure, right, if general aviation is declining, then there'd be no call for that kind of services.

KSIR: Right, so if you go out now and just hang around out by the private hangars at the airport, it's -- it's dead out there, a lot of the time; there's nothing going on. Very few planes taking off and coming back, and so it's much, much slower than it used to be, yes.

BOGART: Oh, now, just one more thing. This has been great. Oh, this is fabulous. It's exactly what I wanted.

KSIR: Good.

BOGART: You mentioned the atmospheric science people, and who would I talk to about that?

KSIR: I wish I knew [00:39:00] any of the pilots over there, any more. I don't. You could just call the flight facility. It's listed in the UW directory. I'm sure, but even in the -- maybe even in the Laramie phonebook, the UW flight facility and ask to talk to someone out there. They have their own mechanics, and they have a couple of pilots, you know, on staff.

BOGART: OK, are they based at the airport?

KSIR: Yes, they have a separate hangar out there. They keep -- they keep -- they have a King Air research airplane that they fly all over the world and do research with them, and then they also have -- have the university's airplane that they still -- they use it to fly around the state, still. Some of the administrators use it. They use it to fly the trustees in and out, things like that. I don't know -- I don't know that they ever use it any more to get instructors around, but it's the same -- the same operation that used to do that, and you could do that. [00:40:00]

BOGART: OK, well, all right, that's great. Since I'm -- since I'm here, and all these people are here, they're logical candidates to talk to.

KSIR: Yes, yes.

BOGART: As much as I enjoy driving around Wyoming, it's nice to do some of the work at home, too.

KSIR: Of course it is, yes.

BOGART: Well, this was great. Anything else you want to tell me about your own experience?

KSIR: I can't think of anything I haven't already talked about, I guess.

BOGART: OK, oh, this has been wonderful.

KSIR: Good.

BOGART: Thank you so much for your time. Now, of course, we have paperwork to do.

KSIR: Oh, yes, yes.

BOGART: Let me shut this...

END OF AUDIO FILE