

OH-3255, Peter Wold, Casper, WY 11-11-2016 WY In Flight

BB: [00:00:00] OK. I'm Barbara Bogart. Today is November 11, 2016. I'm in the Albany County Library. I'm talking with Peter Wold and his wife, Marla, about aviation in Wyoming. So --

PW: Yes.

BB: There we go. So you're from Casper, then, originally. Is that right?

PW: Yes. I grew up in Casper.

BB: OK.

PW: And my first experience in aviation, as an activist in -- in aviation was -- was when I decided that I wanted to become a pilot.

BB: OK. How old were you?

PW: And that -- that was 1986. So, that would've been, what --

MW: Thirty years ago.

PW: Thirty years ago, yeah. And I went to ground school and did my pilot training at the -- at the Casper [00:01:00] Air Service where Fred --

MW: Werner.

PW: -- Werner was the owner, and Fred had owned -- Fred's family had owned -- the FBO in Casper for many years. And he had a number of flight instructors, and I -- I went -- I

did my ground school at Casper College, and then my flight training at Casper Air Service and -- and then shortly after I got my license, I bought -- I ran across a friend that had a p-- he had two planes. He had a Cessna 210 and a Cessna 182 with fixed gear. And I fell in love with the plane that was -- that had the fixed gear 'cause it was super to fly and a lot safer plane then for a new pilot [00:02:00] to work with, and so I negotiated a deal with him, and it was kind of a funny story because I had called him and told him that -- that I wanted to buy his plane, and he wanted to sell it. So, I went out and we took a few trips around the airport in his plane, and then we went back to his office and he was a small drilling company contractor that had a number of rigs, and he -- he flew his plane all over the state to keep up with his drilling rigs. And when I -- when I negotiated the deal with him, we were within five hundred dollars of a deal, and it was -- I wanted to buy the plane for \$21,000, and he wanted to sell it for \$21,500, and God bless him. He said, "OK."

[00:03:00] He said, "I'll tell you what, let's do," he said, "We'll just flip a coin." (laughter) So, he whipped out a quarter and he flipped it, and he said, "You call it." So, I called heads and it ended up being heads, so I bought the plane for \$21,000.

BB: Oh, that's a great story.

PW: Yeah.

BB: That's great.

PW: And he -- he became a friend until he passed away. No, he was a, quite a guy.

BB: So what -- what put that idea in your head to begin with? What -- what's like the first memory you have of seeing planes or being interested in flying?

PW: I think that when I was in college, I was working on my vacations in between school and during summers for a gentleman named John McGuire, and John had a B-24 bomber.

BB: Oh, my.

PW: And he had a helicopter. Might've had another plane. I don't -- I don't remember specifically, but [00:04:00] I can remember, he would fly over our survey crews when we were out in the Green River Basin somewhere, and I'll never forget the story. There was a crew that was staking claims, and so they had the -- the four-inch-by-four-inch clamp post that they were staking the claims with. You were -- these were uranium claims, and that was a time when uranium was hot and there was a lot of activity, and a lot of competition, and the companies were in a race to stake -- get -- get their claims staked, and there was competition. It was out in the Green River Basin, and they

called in -- one of the crews called in. He said, "We're out of claims stakes." And so [00:05:00] John loaded up his bomber (laughter) with a big bundle of claims stakes.

BB: Oh, my gosh.

PW: And he flew out over the crew and he dropped them, kicked them off the back of the plane. And of course, as soon as they hit the ground, they turned into a ball of splinters. (laughter) Completely busted and blew up, and they were useless. (laughter) But it was -- so --

BB: What a great story.

PW: -- working for him and hearing the stories, and every morning we had to meet out -- out at the Casper Airport in his hanger, and he had a -- a big hanger that he had, where he had his own plane, and he was running his -- his seismograph, or his survey crew, out of that hanger. So, we would go out there at 6:00 every morning and meet there, and -- and then go out to wherever our field operations were. But that's where I began to start thinking about, "Wow, this is really neat." And [00:06:00] in Wyoming, being able to fly to wherever you want to go is so valuable because the distance is a long way's away, and most towns, even the little ones, have got a pretty good airport.

BB: Right. Right.

PW: So, it's [just have memories?].

BB: OK. So, you bought this plane, and then what did you do with it?

PW: We flew it all over the place, didn't we?

MW: Mm-hmm.

PW: One of the -- one of the fun trips that I remember vividly was flying out to Reno, Nevada where I crewed with Jim Good, and Jim Good had -- he was out of Casper and he had, actually, he had the hanger that John McGuire used to have, where he kept a whole bunch of -- of planes and --

MW: Warbirds. They were --

BB: Oh, OK.

PW: Yeah. They --

MW: They were warbirds. World -- World War II.

PW: Right. And he's actually got [00:07:00] a collection there now, and if you get to Casper --

BB: Oh, OK.

PW: -- you should go. Now, Jim has passed away.

MW: But his son is probably --

PW: Yeah, I think his son is there, and --

MW: Ed. Ed Good.

BB: Oh, all right.

MW: G-O-O-D. And his wife, Kendra.

BB: Oh, OK. Do they still maintain that collection? Do you know [if he resigned them]?

PW: Yeah, they do.

BB: Oh, cool.

PW: In fact, parked out in front of the hanger are two MiGs.

BB: Oh, my gosh.

PW: From, yeah. I don't think they fly, but they're -- they're parked in the front.

BB: Wow. Wow.

PW: So you'll be able to identify that.

BB: So you -- you were talking about going out to Reno.

PW: So -- so we -- we -- so we flew out to Reno. Marla was with us, and we had --

MW: Joe.

PW: Joe McGuire, who was John's son, and we fl-- it was a long flight because we had headwinds the whole way.

BB: Sure.

PW: And my Cessna 182 just, (laughter) it was slow. It was a [00:08:00] long trip, flying there. But I crewed for -- for Jim, and he had a T-6. It was called "The Wildcatter" and that's sort of a -- sort of a famous airplane. You'll hear about that. I think there's lots of pictures of it.

BB: It sounds familiar, yeah.

PW: And -- and so we crewed for Jim, and we were down on the flight line, and it was a lot of fun.

BB: Was that for --

PW: At the big Reno Air Races.

BB: That was [where you stayed?]. Yeah, 'cause I know that that's a big event.

PW: Yeah. We did that for two or three years, and we always had fun doing that. So, then it wasn't until about, what was it, two years ago? Two, two and a half, years ago, I bought another plane with Joe McGuire, and that was a retractable 182 that was turbocharged, and that was a great airplane. It was a really nice airplane, but that was the plane that unfortunately [00:09:00] Joe and I were on our -- were taking a trip to Jackson and the engine stalled on the plane, and we crash landed it and destroyed the airplane and --

BB: Oh, my God.

PW: -- and we were all, to one degree or another, hurt, but we all kind of walked away -- dragged ourselves away --

MW: There were -- there were three of them. It was June 27, 2015.

PW: It was right out at the Casper Airport.

BB: Oh, OK.

PW: Right after we'd taken off.

BB: Oh, my gosh.

PW: And that was -- that was an unfortunate situation. But that's -- that's kind of -- kind of the -- the activities

that I've had. I've been involved with bringing an air show into Casper. We've had an airshow a number of years ago that I was actively involved with. Marla has a family history that goes back [00:10:00] far beyond my time in Casper for the past, for aviation, but I guess the long and the short of it is, is that I bought the airplane in '86 and I still have it to this day. I love the airplane. I promised a friend of mine that I would never sell it.

(laughter) He said, "Don't ever sell that airplane. It is a great airplane and you will love it," and it's true to heart. It's, I -- I --

BB: That's great.

PW: I absolutely love it and we -- we fly it around. I -- I have a dirt-strip and a hanger up at our ranch --

BB: Oh, OK.

PW: -- which is southwest of Kaycee (BB coughs) at the hole in the wall. So I fly -- we fly up to the hole in the wall frequently when we don't have too many dogs, and --

MW: Often, I would drive with the (BB coughs) dog, and the three kids, and the cooler.

BB: Oh, OK.

MW: And he would fly, and then we'd -- we'd pick him (BB coughs) up or he'd be there, and then it's like, yeah. "We'll take you to the air strip," and then I get to drive

with the dog (BB coughs) and the kids, and the cooler.

[00:11:00] (laughter) Yeah.

BB: Oh, gosh.

PW: Yeah. Yeah. So, we've seen the transition of the FBO through a number of hands in Casper. We've always been -- it's always been a good FBO. (BB coughs) The Atlantic Aviation is there now and they've re-- completely redone the building, and it's -- it's very nice. We've been frustrated with, quite frankly, with the Air Service and we really appreciated the work of the University of Wyoming when they did an aviation study. And you may have seen that study that they did. I can't remember how many years ago. (BB coughs) It was probably about eight or nine years ago.

BB: I don't remember exactly, but they've done a number of them --

MW: Even --

BB: -- over the years.

MW: Even longer than that. That was a long time ago.

PW: Yeah. Well, the --

MW: The feasibility of -- of [00:12:00] getting charter flights within Wyoming, you mean? That one?

PW: Well, not charter flights but the commercial flights.

MW: Commercial flights.

BB: Yeah, commercial air service now.

MW: Because still, to get --

PW: Yeah. With -- with the --

BB: Right. I know.

MW: -- to Jackson, if you wanted to fly commercially, you'd have to fly to either Denver or Salt Lake to get to Jackson. There's no intrastate travel.

BB: Right. Yeah.

MW: Commercial, anyway.

PW: So we were disappointed that the legislature didn't fund that study, thinking that with the small subsidy, and they had it staged out for a few years, and -- and I think that that would've been an interesting experiment to have seen. 'Cause the pro-- (BB coughs) problem you have in Casper is that -- that it's a four-hour drive, and then you're down in Denver with a car. And if you fly, you have to get to the airport an hour early. It takes basically an hour to fly if it flies on time [00:13:00] and then you get there, and if you need to go anywhere, well, you have to grab a cab that costs you 50 bucks to get into downtown Denver, or rent a car.

BB: Right.

PW: So, it's kind of a tradeoff. (BB coughs) When you feel like it, if there was a -- if people could depend on that

service, more people would fly than -- than -- than are now driving.

BB: Right. It's kind of chicken-and-egg. It's the same way in Laramie. We're not as far from Denver, but our airport gets closed regularly in the winter. I mean, pe-- you can't fly out (coughs) and then you're stuck trying to get the Green shuttle or drive down there yourself. So, yeah, and I know every community in Wyoming is -- is --

PW: Has that -- has that problem.

BB: (inaudible, overlapping speech)

PW: Yeah.

BB: So, you -- you had drove a plane. So, you flew it mostly for pleasure? Did you use it for business at all?

PW: No, I used it a little -- little bit for pleas-- or for [00:14:00] work. Not too much. I would -- I -- I -- you know, we -- we had a project that we were actively engaged with, permitting a trona mine down in Green River, and I can remember multiple times flying from Casper to Green River because that was -- that was a long enough drive that it -- it justified the hassles of getting a shuttle, or whatever, renting a car or whatever, whatever was necessary. But most of the -- most of the time that -- that we used the plane, why it's -- it's for recreation.

BB: How -- what's the farthest trip you've taken? Reno sounds like it was a pretty good jump.

MW: Reno was --

PW: I think Reno was probably about as far as --

MW: We've flown to Jackson --

PW: -- we've been.

MW: -- several times. We went to West Yellowstone for a fly-in --

BB: Oh, fun.

MW: -- with our [00:15:00] friend, Joe. That was really fun. We slept under the wing. (BB laughs)

PW: Yeah. Yeah. This winter, I'd like to go to Tucson. We have a little place in Tucson. We'd like to do that. I think that'd be something that'd be fun. One of the challenges that -- that I have, quite frankly, is I'm still very active in our business and -- and I don't have the time to devote to flying that I should. I'm a private pilot. I don't have an instrument rating. So, that's something that I have started and stopped, and it's been interrupted so many times, and it's crazy, but I'd like to get an instrument rating. I think that just the process of doing that is good. I'm not so sure that I would really want to do a lot of instrument flying, or under instrument conditions, but -- [00:16:00]

MW: It's a good skill to have, I'm sure.

PW: Yep.

BB: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And then, OK. So, you've been flying for 30 years, you said?

PW: Thirty years, yeah.

BB: OK. What kind of -- and you've had the same plane the whole time.

PW: I have. Yeah.

BB: But what kinds of change, you said, you've seen in general aviation over that 30 years, going in and out of different airports?

PW: Yeah. That's a good question. That's a great question. The thing that is so incredible now is the -- the GPS systems that are available to you, just off handheld devices, and that's what I have. On my iPad, I've got the ForeFlight program. It'll give you everything! I mean, it'll tell you if you're getting too close to the ground. It'll tell you what the weather is. You can -- you can [file?] a flight plan with your iPad. So, you know, it's just [00:17:00] absolutely -- and you've got, you know, routes that are identified and -- and that show your plane the whole -- whole way. So there's, you're n-- you're not gonna get lost. It tells you everything that you can imagine, and that's just been phenomenal, that change.

Going into the airports, I -- I really haven't noticed all that much of a difference as far as flying in. Airports are pretty much the same (clears throat) but that medium that -- that now is available to pilots with the GPS has just made a world of difference for general avia-- and commercial aviation, too.

BB: Oh, sure. One of the things that people, other people, have told me, who have been private pilots like you and had to go on planes, was that it just got too expensive for [00:18:00] many people to maintain their own planes, and that there's a lot fewer of the private planes and private pilots than there used to be. Do you agree?

PW: Yeah. I think that that is true, and it is expensive, and the regulations are -- are serious, as they should be. As somebody that's -- that's gone down in an airplane, I appreciate the strictness and the requirements for maintaining your plane, and following flight plans, and -- and doing all the procedures, and doing it correctly, and staying on top of all those types of things. Keeping your insurance up, and keeping your medical up, and -- and your right-away access permits and codes and everything else that you have to have, just get through the TSA gates and so forth, for general aviation is -- it's important, but it

takes [00:19:00] time, and it's always amazing to me how -- how strict things are, but (laughs) I appreciate it. They need to be.

BB: Yeah. Well, it sounds like you've flown mostly in and around Wyoming.

PW: That's true.

BB: So what are -- what are the big challenges for a private pilot flying in Wyoming?

PW: Weather, I think.

BB: (laughs) Well, yeah. I guess that's always in my -- in my mind.

PW: I think weather's -- weather's always the one. Wyoming's a great place to fly because as I said, the distances are pretty long and you've got an airport that's generally [right to?] town or very close to town, and so most FBOs have got a little old beat-up rental car that -- or actually, is not even a rental car. They'll let you use it. And so that's -- that's great. If you're gonna spend the night, well of course, [00:20:00] then you need to work out some other arrangements, usually, but if you just got to go to a meeting or something, if you've got a meeting with the BLM office over in Lander or something, why you can fly over to Lander, grab the -- the shuttle car that

the FBO will give you, and go to the meeting, come back, and fly home.

BB: It seems to me that, from talking to other people like this, and describing the FBOs, that it's almost like a club or a -- that they're sort of --

MW: It's fraternity. Yeah.

BB: -- generous -- yeah, yeah.

MW: Fraternity. They -- they are --

BB: They're generous with their resources and (clears throat) if you're in that group, then there's an automatic trust and friendship and --

PW: Yeah. Yes.

BB: That's interesting to me because it's -- there's -- it seems like there's not much of that left anywhere in our society, but this is a special kind of --

PW: It is. No, you're absolutely right. And so, there's also a common courtesy that [00:21:00] if you, for instance, fly over to Thermopolis. Now, they've changed the airport, unfortunately. I think it's really too bad. They moved the airport way out of town, but the airport was right there in town and it was right by the golf course. So, if you wanted to go over and play a round of golf (BB laughs) you can get out of your airplane with your golf clubs and walk over to the tee box. It was that [happy?] and or --

or the FBO would give you your car, and go down to the -- to the hot pool and (BB laughs) jump in, and soak, and then get back to the car, and -- I did that a number of times.

BB: Oh, that's great.

PW: You know? It was really -- it was really nice, but there was that -- that recognition that, "OK." You know, "We're gonna [top?] the plane off to help the guy out because he's letting us have his car."

BB: Yeah. Oh, I see.

PW: Yeah. So that was -- that was something that -- that is part of a fraternity function.

BB: OK. A [00:22:00] little reciprocity.

PW: Yeah!

BB: Of course.

PW: Yeah. You need to give back.

BB: Yeah, that makes sense. Well, let me -- let me turn for a moment and talk to you because here's (clears throat) Pete is -- is hinting that you have this [rich history?]. So, now let's hear what that is too.

MW: Well, my -- my father was in the Air Force, actually, Army Air Corps. And he came back from World War II and married my mom and -- and he loved to fly, loved to fly.

BB: Now was this in Casper as well?

MW: Yes. James Speas, S-P-E-A-S, Junior. And one night, or one day, he took his father up in the plane, my grandfather, and crashed (pause) and it killed my grandfather.

BB: Oh my --

MW: And this was in 1948, I believe. I didn't ever know my grandfather because I wasn't even born yet. And it broke my father's neck, and he was in a body cast for six, seven months and they had to cut a hole in his [00:23:00] cast for his stomach to be able to eat as much as he needed to, to go to do the ranch work. But his beard grew up out of this and (laughter) under his -- oh, I guess, I've seen pictures and pretty rank-smelling after all those months --

BB: Oh, my.

MW: -- but he had been -- had to continue working on the ranch, and then when my sister and I got older, he would take us flying, or we'd go out to the ranch with him and be in the pickup, and he'd say, "Don't tell your mother we're going." Of course, we -- he'd take us up --

PW: This was in a Piper Cub, too, wasn't it?

MW: Yeah. A little one. Little Piper, little -- little plane. And he would have a pencil and say, "OK, you ready? Let go of the pencil." And he'd put it in a dive and the pencil, we'd be getting off the ceiling, you know? And he thought

that was so funny and he, "I'm closin' my eyes, now, girls," and oh, we would just freak out (laughter) but, yeah. He was not as cautious as we would've liked him to have been.

BB: Or [00:24:00] your mother would've like him to, yeah.

MW: Right. 'Cause then if we'd get home, "Mom, we went flyin'!" Of course, out of the -- now's the (inaudible) but then he ended up having a plane crash right by the Alcova Powerplant in 1958 and died.

BB: Oh, my gosh.

MW: I was six years old. My sister was nine, and my brother was five months old. So, airplane -- airplanes have always been kind of (makes shuddering noise) but when Pete became a pilot, I thought, "Well, I'll take the pinch hitter's course," which is to be able to land the plane if he were to conk out while flying. So, I really got into it --

BB: That's interesting.

MW: -- and I -- I got to the point, I soloed several times. Then, I was always pregnant, so it wasn't really just soloing (BB laughs) and one instructor told me I wasn't cautious, and I thought, "Uh-oh. I quit." So, I can still navigate [00:25:00] but they have changed a lot of the navigation. Just the headsets and the -- it's way more

modern now than 25, 30 years ago, but yeah. I -- I love it, but I haven't been flying much lately.

PW: So Marla's family history was -- was pretty intense in aviation, when you think about it, her father having been a World War II pilot, coming back. They had their own ranch. It was a sheep, basically sheep ranch.

MW: Sheep and cattle ranch.

PW: And -- and both times when he had his accident, he was out --

MW: Ranching.

PW: -- looking for sheep and doing ranch work. And the second time, the time that -- that when he died, the power company was stringing some new power lines and he wasn't aware of them, evidently, because he clipped a wing on the -- on a brand-new power line [00:26:00] that was being strung. It wasn't even active. It was just being laid out there, and so he hit that and he had a dog with him.

MW: Yeah. [Tucks?], a border collie, and there was a picture of the plane crash in the paper, and then three days later, the dog showed up at the ranch, which was 30-some miles away. The crash was by Alcova Powerplant, and then Alcova, you know, [path finding?] I don't know which way the dog went, but he ended up back at the ranch. And we wanted the dog to live with us in town, of course, but every time a

man would walk by or the mailman would come, the dog would run to see if that was daddy and I remember (voice cracks) the dog hit the mailman in the chest one day, and he went back. Like, just letters flew everywhere.

BB: Oh, my.

MW: And then, so anyway.

BB: So were you living in town?

MW: Yes.

BB: When this happened?

MW: Yes. I always lived in town.

BB: Oh, OK.

MW: He would [00:27:00] drive. He had a little dirt-strip at the ranch, too. He would drive to the airport, rent the plane, land at the ranch, and then go on from there.

BB: OK. So he didn't have his own plane, then.

MW: No.

BB: Oh, OK. So what was the Piper Cub that you were fl--

MW: He had rented that.

BB: Oh, I see.

MW: It was a rental [plane?].

BB: Oh, I see.

MW: Yeah. 'Cause I don't think we could afford even \$21,000 then.

PW: It would've been cheaper back then, though.

MW: But my Uncle [Bunky?] used to tell us during about his brother, [Milo?], who was an adventure. And he was going along some land that he owned, and a motorcycle came along this airplane in the field, and the pilot got out and said, "Hey! Come on over here!" And [Milo?] walked over, of course, and he said, "I'll trade ya straight across. Give me the keys to this (laughter) airplane for your motorcycle." [Milo?] went, "OK!" (laughter) That's how he got [00:28:00] his first airplane.

PW: Where was -- was that in Wyoming?

MW: Oh, I don't know.

BB: This is a family story you've heard.

MW: Yeah. Yeah, my --

BB: Oh, that's great.

MW: Yeah. So then, he learned how to fly and his -- his daughter went on to be a stewardess with Pan Am or something that -- and she was injured when a portable concourse collapsed or something, and she had back injuries, and Pan Am gave her, instead of a settlement, gave her and her whole family unlimited Pan Am mileage anywhere in the world.

BB: Well, that's not bad.

MW: So, [Becky?] and [Milo?] used to go all over as a result of that. That's about --

BB: So, I'm curious how your mother felt about you taking up flying (inaudible).

MW: She wasn't real keen on it, at all. And [she'd say?], "Aw, I wish you wouldn't do that," but I didn't -- I didn't, [00:29:00] lately anyway.

PW: Although (inaudible, overlapping speech).

MW: I clearly went -- I did solo --

PW: I did --

MW: --several times.

PW: -- take your mother up. Your mother, she went up with me a number of times. So, she wasn't -- she wasn't concerned.

BB: That sounds like --

PW: (inaudible, overlapping speech)

BB: -- your style was a bit different, then.

MW: Right.

PW: Yeah. You know, one of the things that I've been very, very conscious of is to not fly in bad weather, and make sure that, you know, if there's anything wrong with that airplane, I don't fly until it gets fixed. That plane has gotta -- gotta not have any kind of issues. And I've been very sensitive, quite frankly, about the accident that we had because normally, whenever you have some kind of a plane accident, why people immediately look at you and kind of eschew and think that, "Well, you did something stupid."

And in this case, we absolutely did not and the [00:30:00] NTSB verified that, that it was a -- it was failure of the engine, and it went down, but it was -- it was a horrible thing.

BB: Well, of course. So does that agency investigate every single --

PW: Yeah.

BB: -- plane accident, private --

PW: Yeah, they do.

BB: Oh, OK.

PW: They do.

BB: How does that work? Is there a -- do they have a base in Wyoming somewhere, a regional base that they work out of?

PW: Yeah, they do. There's an NTSB inspector in Casper.

BB: Oh, OK.

PW: Yeah.

MW: And he came to the hospital.

PW: Yeah, he came to the hospital and -- and interviewed me.

BB: Oh, my.

PW: And then they shipped the plane down to Greeley, where they have a -- a yard down there where they keep, the NTSB keeps the planes until they can go through them and -- and determine what the cause was. And it's important because

there's insurance on those planes and the insurance company wants to know, too.

BB: Right. Of course.

PW: If [00:31:00] it's [pilot air?] and the pilot was doing something stupid, then that voids their insurance.

BB: Of course.

PW: And so it's -- it's -- that's kind of a critical deal.

BB: How long a process was that?

PW: It was a long process. It took -- it was probably nine months before the NTSB got to the plane, and I think one of the reasons for that was that there was -- there was no mortality with the accident, and there was no lawsuit. And because of that, there was no rush for them to make a determination as to what happened, but within a matter of about two weeks, we had all of our -- 100 percent of our insurance for the -- for recovery and the plane.

BB: Oh, OK. So they made that determination, the (inaudible, overlapping speech).

PW: Yep. Yep. So.

BB: What about the -- you mentioned being pregnant, so I'm assuming there are -- you have children.

MW: We have three children.

BB: OK. And --

MW: Our oldest is married [00:32:00] and lives in Snohomish, Washington. Her husband's an engineer with Boeing, so we always say, "If it ain't Boeing, we ain't going!"

(laughter) And they have two daughters. And I have a son in Denver, who's always married with a wife and two daughters. Another son in Boston.

BB: Oh, OK.

MW: So they're coast-to-coast. He's married with a dog. No kids yet. We're working on grandkids, grandsons.

BB: I've heard that that's kind of the starter --

PW: [Draft?].

BB: -- for a family.

MW: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

BB: So did any of them follow up on the aviation? Did you take them flying, too?

MW: Mm-hmm.

PW: Took 'em flying all the time, but none of them have! And frankly, I've been a little bit surprised, but they're -- they're -- I understand. They're preoccupied with trying to establish their careers and get their families started, and so --

BB: Yeah. Well, so were you. (MW laughs) That's interesting.

PW: Yeah. Yeah, it is. I'll [eventually see?], in [00:33:00] what '86, I would've been 30 years -- I would've been 38, so.

MW: Matt was born in '83 and Joe in '86.

PW: Yeah, so they were young. Yeah. I don't know.

BB: But again, talking to other people, it sounds as though 30 years ago, it must've been a lot easier and less expensive to buy a plane and maintain it than it is now. 'Cause I know the airport managers I've talked to, especially the smaller airports, they say you just don't see the general aviation that you used to see, a lot of business traffic and (coughs) not commercial so much, but a lot of business traffic rather than just general.

PW: Yeah, charters and so forth.

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

PW: Yes. Yes.

BB: Yeah. I talked to the [fellow?] at the Saratoga Airport and while I was talking to him, here came one of those charter jets and the pilot all dressed up. Oh, my gosh. They're so --

PW: [Hmm?]. Yeah.

BB: He said that's the most of our traffic, is the [00:34:00] charter jets.

MW: But he had the private jets at --

BB: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. (coughs) Those, yeah, those business charter things.

PW: The charter -- the private charter is a tough, tough business. Von Flatern, you're gonna interview him at Gillette.

BB: Oh, actually, I didn't have his name. I'm --

MW: Michael. Michael Von -- he's --

PW: [Vaughn?], I think it's Mike Von Flatern. He was the -- he was the --

MW: He was the moderator --

PW: -- moderator today --

MW: -- at the Heritage Forum.

BB: Oh, OK.

PW: I wonder if I got that. (inaudible)

BB: And he's in Gillette?

PW: Yep. He's in Gillette and he has, to my knowledge, he has the only air charter business in the state.

BB: Oh.

PW: He bought Mickey McMurry's [00:35:00] planes.

BB: Oh, OK. OK.

PW: And (inaudible).

BB: Oh, please [that'd be good to?] know, 'cause I have an appointment with the airport manager in Gillette, but I didn't have any other contacts.

PW: [Know that guy?], he's a state senator, so. He will be somebody you should talk to.

BB: Sure.

MW: And if you need another person from Casper, Joe McGuire?

BB: Yes, I was just thinking that.

MW: He was in -- he and (inaudible) owned that plane together, and he was a passenger and then we have a friend, [Laughn Whitman?], but he was just a passenger. He broke a couple ribs and fractured his foot, tw-- I bet I can find it before he can. (BB laughs)

PW: Here it is. Mike Von Flatern.

BB: Oh, OK. [00:36:00] OK. I got it right, except I had two T's.

PW: And here's his bio.

BB: Oh, OK. There's his (inaudible). Great. I will get in touch with him. Thank you. (clears throat) And this might not be a bad time to r-- get a hold of him before the legislature is in session.

PW: Yeah. He will be, yeah.

BB: That's good. Well, how long did it take you to -- well, of course you didn't have your plane and after the crash, so.

PW: Well, I had a half-interest in two planes.

BB: Right.

PW: So, the first plane I bought, I had for 25 years where I owned 100 percent by myself, and then after that, I had a young friend that -- that contacted me and said, "Would you be interested in me buying in on your plane?" And I was only getting 20 or 25 hours a year on that plane, [00:37:00] and I thought, "Of course." You know? And he -- I know that he's a conscientious type of person. In fact, he's the state legislator now, and a good, young man. He's in his late thirties, I guess.

BB: Oh, we have to move around. That's -- the lights went off because they don't know we're here.

MW: Oh, OK.

BB: I guess it's motion-sensored. There we go. OK.

MW: OK.

PW: So, I sold half interest in my plane to him, and then this other opportunity came up where a gentleman had -- had this Turbo 182 RG. He passed away and I was able to buy the plane from -- from his wife, and we bought that airplane. Oh, that was such a nice airplane 'cause it was so much faster.

BB: Oh, yeah.

PW: You know? It's just.

BB: Yeah, the Turbo would make it --

PW: Oh, yeah, and the RG. The retractable gear was [00:38:00] you know, it would cruise at 160 knots, whereas mine cruises at about 120, 125. It makes a big difference. So, but it --

BB: So after, after the accident, how long did it take you, well first to recover from your injuries, but then to want to get back in the plane and fly it again?

PW: I think I -- I think probably it was about eight, eight or nine months, because I -- I had -- I broke my back, and so they -- I've got a lot of stuff in my back now, and so it took a while just to recover from that. And then, but it's strange. I had no (pause) fear of getting back in an airplane, probably sort of like having a fender bender in your car. You know, when you have a car accident, you don't quit driving. And that's kind of the way I looked at flying, because I felt good that it was not anything we did. It was the engine. [00:39:00] And that's what [a mean deal?], and it was just bizarre, but at any rate, so about eight or nine months.

BB: So you said that now you're -- you're taken up with the business. So, how many hours are you able to fly now?

PW: Still only about the same.

BB: (laughs) OK.

PW: Yeah, not much has changed. I think if I ever do kind of slow down and retire, why then I would -- I would love to do a (pause) some longer trips and maybe make some, you know, do a two-week type of a trip down through the southeast United States or something. That would be fun to do.

BB: And you mentioned the fly-in that you had in Thermopolis, you said? I'm sorry.

MW: It was in West Yellowstone, the fly-in.

BB: Oh, West -- (clears throat) do you belong to any flying clubs or organizations like that?

PW: I don't. [00:40:00] You know, I'm a member of AOPA, and I can't tell you exactly what that stands for, but it's a -- it's an aviation association, and --

MW: American Organization of Pilot, A-O-P-A, I don't know. (BB laughs)

PW: Whatever.

BB: I can look it up.

PW: Anyway, it's a -- so but that, that's really about all. There are some -- there are some clubs and then there's also the, the air patrol --

BB: Oh, the Civil Air --

PW: Civil Air Patrol, and I've got a good friend who's active in that, but I'm not. Part of the problem I have is that -

- that I feel like my business demands me to be there, and you know, if you're gonna be in the Civil Air Patrol, you need to be kind of almost like a doctor. You get the call. [00:41:00] They -- they -- they want you to go, and I'm not in that kind of a situation where I want to do that.

BB: Right. I did talk to a gentleman in Laramie who's in the local Civil Air Patrol and he talked about that, being on call.

PW: Yeah. Joe Feiler is a guy that, in Casper, that's in the Civil Air Patrol.

BB: Oh, OK. Is that "F" or "Ph"?

PW: It's "F" and it's F-E-I-L-E-R. I can give you his phone number.

BB: Oh, OK. (coughs)

MW: I think it's (inaudible) Feiler. (pause)

BB: And he's in the Civil Air Patrol there?

PW: Yes.

MW: I'd like if he could go ahead and get his jet pilot license. (laughter) I mean, really. If we're gonna do it --

PW: It's (307) 267- [00:42:00] 2411. It's F-E-I-L-E-R.

BB: OK. And may I use your name, then?

PW: Yeah, absolutely, and I'll tell him that -- I'll tell him that you and I have had this conversation, what you're doing, and that you may call him.

BB: OK. That's great. Well, what -- this is a question that just occurs to me, but what happens when you go on a commercial flight? Are you -- what kind of a mindset do you have being in an airplane that you're not in charge of?

PW: Yeah.

BB: Or is it so totally different as an experience?

PW: It's, one of the things that does cross your mind a lot is it would be really fun to go up there and sit in the co-pilot seat and fly that plane, as I can only imagine what it'd be like to fly a big, heavy plane like -- like the commercial planes are. It would be -- it would be [00:43:00] a real thrill, but I've never -- never done anything close to that.

BB: So what is it you like best about the flying that you do?

PW: There's a satisfaction that you get from -- from successfully making a nice trip and the time that you save, and the sights that you see. I mean, it gives you a whole different perspective of the country and you see so much more. You get there faster, and then the satisfaction of, "Hey, you know, I did this and it was -- it was

exhilarating," and -- and you love your little, little plane. (BB laughs) It's just, yeah. It's --

BB: I wonder, it sounds almost like it's the equivalent of a sports car experience in a way. There's something special about it, the plane and you're bonded with (laughs) it, and --

PW: Yeah. [00:44:00] We were -- we were in Seattle with our daughter here a few weeks ago, and a friend of her next-door neighbor has an MG, a 1956 MG or something like that.

BB: Oh, cool.

PW: And he's just spent a long time working on that airplane -- or, on that car, and it reminded me sort of, of my love of [golf Mike?]. My plane is 444 [golf Mike?] and he is just devoted to that car, and we -- we got in his car and we drove all around some real windy roads, and it was a lot of fun, and he -- he just, you know, it's his baby. And we'd get to a mud pile and I'd say, "Slow down. Slow down." (laughter) OK. So, yeah. So, it was -- it was a -- yeah. And you know, I feel the same way. We have a dirt-strip up at our ranch, and I go in there, and that's probably the trip that [00:45:00] I take the most, but it bothers me that every time we -- we come in and get back to Casper, and I taxi the plane in, get out and look at it, and make sure it's OK, there's usually -- usually grass in the --

(BB laughs) that's got hung up in the wheel wells and so forth, you know. And you've got to clean it out, and lots of red dirt from the strip, and so forth. Yeah, you love 'em. They're just -- they become a part of you.

MW: Yeah, it's fun. It's really fun, and quicker, and you get in a car, and you assume the wheels are gonna stay on the ground, you know? But you really respect the airplane because there's that other element that -- that's -- it's not necessarily dangerous, but there's that element that I always feel, anyway.

BB: Of course.

MW: So.

BB: Of course.

MW: But it's exciting [00:46:00] therefore.

PW: Yeah. One of the trips that I do look forward to this winter, I hope to -- Marla and I go down to Tucson.

BB: Oh, yeah.

PW: Make that trip. We haven't done that ever.

MW: Nn-nn.

PW: And we should.

BB: Oh, that will be interesting.

PW: One of the things that you do have to be kind of cognizant of is the weather, and typically, particularly like when we go to Jackson, I don't like to take the plane up there if

I'm gonna be gone for, say, four or five days because you don't know -- you can't forecast what the weather's gonna be like, and I've been stranded in some airports where you wanted to get home, and you needed to get home, and that's when you get yourself in trouble is -- is you know, people say, "Oh, I've got to get home. I've got to go, so I'm gonna go." You don't wanna do that. So --

MW: So it's not -- it might be faster in one way, but it might be non--

BB: Because it's unpred--

MW: [00:47:00] Non-productive that you're going for speed and have to stay somewhere for two days, especially without an instrument rating, but when no one's taking off, you know better than to go.

BB: [Stay where?] you should.

MW: And a couple --

PW: Yeah, we always --

MW: -- stories I've heard that said, "Aw, we can make it."

PW: Well, we -- we ascribe to the adage, "If you've got time to spare, go by air."

BB: (laughs) Yeah, I've heard that before.

PW: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

BB: Applied to commercial flights, but I can see where it would apply to general aviation, too.

PW: Worse, worse with the -- yeah, general aviation, too.

MW: We flew into Cheyenne one time, a long time ago, and it was during the Frontier Days, and the private pilot area is different. You know, it's a whole different hangar and George Strait's plane was there. I said, "That's a nice little plane!" So, it's always fun to, in Saratoga, yeah, [00:48:00] [Ralph Lauren's?] plane was there last time we drove by there, and that's -- that's pretty cool.

BB: Just to see what other people are flying, right? (laughs) Like looking for (inaudible, overlapping speech).

MW: Mm-hmm. Well, we were -- he was looking at airplanes when I was in labor, just about, with our 32-year-old son. End of July, July 27th, he said, "Let's go out and walk. Yeah, let's go walk. Let's go to the airport and look at some planes." So, we're walking on the tarmac and it is so hot and I start, well, you know. So, yeah. (laughter)

PW: You did --

BB: Maybe [he was trying to bring it out of you?].

MW: I remember I felt -- I felt the baby's head move down.

BB: Oh. Oh.

PW: Yeah.

MW: I thought, yeah.

PW: I think we went to the hospital from there, didn't we?

MW: No, we went home but --

PW: Oh, OK.

MW: And then it wasn't long after that.

BB: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh.

MW: But that was the last thing I wanted to do was go walk on the tarmac (laughter) [00:49:00] but we did.

BB: In July. I'll bet. Yeah, I would think you wouldn't want to fly down to Tucson in the summer. Do they have the -- the same thermals there that they get like in Denver coming down --

PW: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I'm sure -- sure, yep.

BB: -- from (inaudible)?

PW: Yeah, and you have to -- have to pay close attention to your density altitude and -- and all of that type thing when you've got a lot of heat because the planes just -- they don't like to fly very well when it's really hot, and it's -- you can sure tell the difference, too.

BB: Mm-hmm, when you're --

PW: When it's a nice, cold day, the planes -- the planes fly so much better. They take off at much shorter distance and then they perform a lot better.

BB: Yeah. I took off from Denver in July. It was 100 degrees and they -- they weren't letting the planes take off until -- it was late. It was the afternoon so it was starting to cool off, and I know our flight was delayed [00:50:00]

because they said, "Too hot," you know? There's not enough

--

PW: Yeah. Yeah, not enough lift.

BB: And I was thinking it was thermals, but I know nothing about it, so.

MW: By having to take just enough lessons to get through the pinch hitter course, the little I did, it's always fun to watch the planes if you're on -- on the tarmac and in line to take off. And you watch them, and you can see the [prop?] turbulence, the -- the wake turbulence, and -- and there's -- there's, you know, they don't just go, "[Tk, tk, tk?]." They give them some time, and to sit there on the plane. "Oh, yeah. He's putting down the flaps." You know? (BB laughs) You kind of know what, what they're doing.

BB: Is there a little bit of an insider -- yeah.

MW: One airplane on the way to Italy, they had a -- a cab, what do you call it? A cockpit camera, so [00:51:00] you could watch on the back of the seat. On the screen, you could see the map, or you could do so you could watch where we were flying --

BB: Oh, that's cool.

MW: -- from the pilot's viewpoint. It was really fun.

BB: That's cool. And that's what you're talking about, going into the cockpit and being able to see what they're seeing.

PW: Mm-hmm.

MW: Yeah.

BB: It's [not?] the same on that little screen. Well, I so appreciate you doing this. Is there anything else you wanted to add?

PW: Well, I think we've kind of -- kind of told you. I appreciate that Tom Rea suggesting my name, but as I was thinking about it, I thought, "I'm not sure that I'm the person that -- that Barbara should be interviewing because, you know, I have kind of a specific history with the airport and with aviation, not to the extent of a lot of other people," but I think we've given you some names of some people --

BB: Yes, and that's great.

PW: -- that I'm -- Joe McGuire, who was [00:52:00] a co-owner with the plane that went down, has a long history and it was his father who originally got me interested in flying, and Joe has every kind of instrument rating that you can imagine. He's a certified mechanic so he can do the -- the annuals on the planes, and --

BB: Right. Do you have his phone number handy?

PW: Yeah, I do. I sure do.

BB: That would be great, 'cause yeah, I would really like to talk to him. That would be great. No, everybody has their own experience and their own perspective to bring out of it. That's why I'm trying to interview as many different kinds of -- or people with kinds of aviation experience as possible [because it's?] just fascinating to me.

PW: Joe's (307) 333-3653.

BB: OK.

PW: And I'll tell him also --

BB: Oh, that would be great.

PW: -- that we've had this discussion and --

BB: That would be great. [00:53:00]

PW: But of everybody in Casper that I can think of, he's also on the airport board.

BB: Oh, OK. Good.

PW: So he's got lots, many years of experience. His brother, actually his brother, I believe, works with General Dynamics. His brother is a stunt pilot --

BB: Oh, my gosh.

PW: -- and he had an accident. Broke his back, but he wasn't as fortunate as I was 'cause it paralyzed him, so his brother John, who works for General Dynamics and is a research engineer with them, patented -- built a plane that he could fly with -- with his hands --

BB: Wow.

PW: -- in stunt planes. And he's gotten a number of patents and so forth on designs for -- for paraplegic. [00:54:00]

BB: Wow.

PW: So, their family is really, deeply engaged in the history of Wyoming aviation.

BB: Right. And their dad is the one that had the warbird collection?

PW: Yep.

BB: OK. OK, yeah. I'll definitely give these people a call.

PW: He had the -- he had the --

MW: No. No, the --

PW: No, not the -- that's Good.

MW: That's Good. That's Jim Good.

BB: Oh, then -- OK. All right.

PW: But -- but Joe's father was in the hangar that -- that Jim Good is in.

MW: Yeah.

BB: OK.

PW: That the Good aviation warbird collection is in, and I don't think it's any -- a really large collection. I think he's got a few planes, but Joe is somebody that, yeah.

BB: OK. I will definitely give him a call.

PW: OK. Well, good.

BB: Thank you so much.

MW: Thank you.

PW: Good luck with your project.

BB: This has been a pleasure.

MW: Nice to meet you.

PW: Yeah, thank you.

BB: Yeah. This has been great. I so appreciate it. Oh, we
have to do paperwork. Let me -- [00:54:59]

END OF AUDIO FILE