

OH-3260, Jay Lundell, Gillette, WY 11-14-2016 WY In Flight

BOGART: [00:00:00] This is Barbara Bogart. Today is November 14, 2016. I'm in Gillette, Wyoming at the airport talking with airport manager, Jay Lundell. That's L-U-N-D-E-L-L. Is that right?

LUNDELL: That's correct. Yeah. One of my cards is over there, too.

BOGART: Oh, good.

LUNDELL: You can just grab one of those.

BOGART: OK. I'll put that in my file, as well. Well, what I like to ask people, first of all is, where are you from originally? Where are you from originally?

LUNDELL: I'm from Kennedy, Minnesota which is in the northwest corner and it's a farming community, so I grew up on a farm.

BOGART: Oh, OK.

LUNDELL: Yeah.

BOGART: And how did you get to Wyoming?

LUNDELL: Well, I went to flight school when I was in college in Minnesota, and I wasn't getting enough flying time. And, of course, I wanted to be a pilot. To get more flight time, I went to Colorado. Colorado Flying Academy is where I graduated from. [00:01:00] I got all my commercial

instrument, flight instructor, multiengine ratings at that school. And then I was fortunate enough and once I graduated with my certified flight instructor certification, they put me right to work flying. Typically, in the past, you had to, back in the day, work about six to eight months in the ground school just teaching at the students. I just went from that to getting right in the airplane and having students. At that point in time I had about, close to 40 students, I believe it was. The --

BOGART: This was still in Colorado?

LUNDELL: Yeah, yeah, I was.

BOGART: Where is that academy?

LUNDELL: Well, it doesn't exist anymore but it was at what we called Arapahoe County Airport which is now [00:02:00] Centennial Airport and I can't even recognize where I even worked. The runways looked familiar, but other than that, everything's built up so much in that part of the world. Then I had a friend that, he was actually my roommate and he was actually a fellow student. He graduated about, oh, six months prior to me, and so he moved up. He took a job up here in Gillette flying flight instruction and charter. An opening came up and I was kind of at a dead end right there in that point in time. Just keep flight instructing,

I guess, but I did go and I had an interview with United Airlines which, at the time, was when they brought in affirmative action, so they basically had to lower their requirements in the sense of time requirements. [00:03:00] So that opened the door for me, and so I was able to at least go in and get an interview and I actually got to fly.

BOGART: About what year was that?

LUNDELL: It was probably 70 -- I'm thinking '78 -- '77, '78, that timeframe. And of course, they were just -- I think really what was going on was the affirmative action. Of course, they wanted minorities and females so that kind of -- they won't tell you that, but that's what it was all about.

BOGART: Of course.

LUNDELL: Anyway, that didn't work out so I did come up here and take the job and I was a flight instructor here, and then I worked myself into the charter department. So I started flying charter, so I got anywhere from single-engine aircraft to multiengine aircraft. I never flew any jets. [00:04:00] Just the typical part 135 air taxi.

BOGART: OK. What does part 135 mean?

LUNDELL: It's just, it's a regulation that the FAA has out there that encompasses those that like, they want to fly charter for hire. So you basically, if you want to go from

A to B; say you want to go to Cheyenne you'd charter me because I'm certified part 135 and you have to meet all the requirements. It's a fairly, very involved, I guess, way to get that. Even, I guess, Guardian, for an example, they're an air taxi air ambulance, but they comply with part 135, as well. But it is a complicated regulation and it's nothing that just any fly-by-night can [00:05:00] get in and get a certificate. You have to take check rides with the FAA. There's an involved process there.

BOGART: Let's back up a little bit because I want to ask you how you got interested in flying to begin with.

LUNDELL: When I was a young man, probably about 14, 15 years old, I'm in the field plowing. I don't know if you're familiar with what I mean by plowing.

BOGART: Yes, I do.

LUNDELL: I was plowing up the stubble and the grain and I -- my dad's best friend was a crop duster and I got to see him flying all the time and I'm going, wow. That would be a lot more fun than sitting here on a tractor going up and down a field and falling asleep. That's kind of where I first got my interest. Then I believe it was about my 15th birthday, I believe it was, my mother, [00:06:00] we were in Bemidji, Minnesota and I got a floatplane ride. My first airplane ride ever was in a floatplane. That kind of

hooked me right there, too, and long story short, I went to college. I really didn't care for a lot of it, but I started taking ground school. All of a sudden, I'm getting A's and my dad's going, "Well, you must be serious about this flying stuff." I just -- that's where one thing led to another.

BOGART: Where was the flight school?

LUNDELL: Well, Colorado Flying Academy (inaudible).

BOGART: Oh, you said that. It wasn't in Minnesota. You came out here for that.

LUNDELL: Well, I did. I should say, I started at the University of Minnesota Crookston. That's where I actually soloed for my privates. But after that, I just said, I want to do this fulltime. They were only getting us in two, three times a week at the most. You were lucky if you got two times a week. I begged [00:07:00] for three. But, yeah. I just wanted to fly every day and start getting my licenses. Because, you know, you fly once or twice a week, it takes forever. You almost forget what you learned the previous week.

BOGART: So, how long did it take you to go through that training program?

LUNDELL: Let's see. I think it was probably -- I moved up here to Gillette in 1979. I started there in '77, so I

probably, I'd say, a good year-and-a-half, but half of that year was spent flight instructing. Yeah.

BOGART: And so, when you came to Gillette you were continuing teaching flying?

LUNDELL: Yeah. That's correct.

BOGART: Was there a big demand for it?

LUNDELL: Yeah. Yeah, there was. At that point in time, of course, there's a lot of disposable income here in Gillette, Campbell County. Coal miners. They were off. They'd get on their days off and [00:08:00] either bored, or whatever, but they took up -- a lot of them took up flying. And of course, when their days are off they could fly any time within like, a seven or eight-day period, so I had a lot of students that way. So, we had quite a few students enroll more and more and then finally, I got actually another -- I hired another two flight instructors. Then I developed what was called a part 141 flight school which, I developed that. The FAA will let you have, I guess really, you have to have a chief flight instructor which I was. I was qualified for that. And what you would do is like, you'd test students in phases. So, long story short on that, what normally took you 40 hours, minimum, to get a [00:09:00] private pilot's license, you could do it in 35 so it saves you, theoretically, five hours. But it

never did. I mean, people wouldn't graduate until they were 55, 60 hours, depending on how often they could fly and how, obviously, sharp the student was and how they kept up on all their ground school work, and so forth. Then, as time went on, we had quite a few students. We probably had close to 75 students at that point in time. And then I went and became a flight test examiner, an FAA flight test examiner. I was a designated flight test examiner, to be exact terminology. And so, I went to Oklahoma City to the academy and came out of there with my credentials to actually go ahead and give flight checks. So, I could actually issue licenses [00:10:00] to students. And so, yeah. I did that.

BOGART: OK, and you generated lots of questions in my mind when you were doing that. So, were most of your students during that period -- we're talking about the late 70s or early 80s -- they were mostly men, then? Young men, or?

LUNDELL: Oh, yeah. There were, but we had -- we certainly had women that would come through our program. I can think of possibly about three to four that I personally instructed and one of them, actually, she went on to fly for UPS. Of course, she went overseas, you know. I'm talking Boeing 757 and stuff. She went on and she did a really good job in that career.

BOGART: And then, the flight instruction school, is that kind of a freestanding operation like an FBO would be? A freestanding [00:11:00] operation in an airport?

LUNDELL: It can be, but most of the flight schools are associated with a fixed base operator, typically. Not to say that there's independents out there that certainly can do flight instruction.

BOGART: OK. What planes did -- did the school, then, own its own planes?

LUNDELL: Correct. It did, yeah.

BOGART: What kinds of planes did you use?

LUNDELL: Well, where I went the academy used primarily Piper PA-28/140s and PA-161s and 181s. And so, then they started taking -- I think they incorporated some of the 152s, Cessna 152s. But I did fly -- I did instruct for a flying club that was down there, too. Kind of did that on the side to make some extra money. When they pay you \$600 base salary and then give you [00:12:00] \$8 an hour flying time, it's tough to -- so, I didn't make a whole lot. Of course, I was single and didn't really have a lot of, you know. I did have, I had a car payment and my rent and that was probably about it. So.

BOGART: Did -- Have you ever had your own plane, then?

LUNDELL: Never. Never. No, I never did. I knew better.

BOGART: And why do you say that?

LUNDELL: Because they're expensive to maintain and it's -- yeah, it's difficult to -- I would think that you'd have to have some -- well, like right now, for example. My interest is more boats. I boat, so I kind of transitioned into that, so instead of the airplane stuff I went the other way. Yeah. I think it's expensive and a lot of the folks that can [00:13:00] afford it, that's their, I mean, that's their hobby. That's what they do. It's not that they're rich people it's just, that's where they tend to focus their disposable income.

BOGART: Are there a number of those in Gillette now? People who own their own planes.

LUNDELL: You know, you've seen a really, a large decrease in general aviation nationally and I think a lot of it has to do with the cost of fuel skyrocketed, and then you have a lot of the -- the aircraft just became almost unaffordable to purchase. And it was, certainly a lot of it was due to a lot of plane accidents that ended up in a lot of lawsuits, so the manufacturer like Piper or Cessna, they were the ones who were really -- I mean, they had the deep pockets so they're the ones getting sued. So, every time they got sued, the cost of an aircraft [00:14:00] went up because product liability and all that good stuff.

BOGART: Of course. You mentioned a flying club. Were there flying clubs or other flying clubs in Gillette?

LUNDELL: There's one here. It's probably only about five, six members presently.

BOGART: Do they share a plane, then?

LUNDELL: They do. They share all the expenses. Yeah.

BOGART: But has it been -- one of the things I'm that interested in this project is, change over time. So, you've been in Gillette since 1979, so you've talked about a decline in general aviation, but tell me what other kinds of changes do you see and, especially, at the airport.

LUNDELL: Well, you know, I think the whole industry's changed and I guess that's one thing why I've always been attracted to it because no two days coming to work are the same, really. There's always something changing, whether it's a new regulation or just new procedures, [00:15:00] policies you have to do either locally. We've been very fortunate here because we've always had, you know, a good economy, really. I mean, we've had our ups and downs, but for the most part, it's been pretty level, at least from my perspective. So, when I first came here we just had -- we had the same amount of runways, but not as long and not as wide and not all the sophistication. So, from an infrastructure standpoint there's been a lot of changes.

As far as the flying, even back to the general aviation, the decline in that and we've talked a little bit about that. So, you see now, at one point in time we had 100 based aircraft. Now we're half of that. So, and Sheridan, however, they've kept a very good general aviation base there. A lot of private pilot [00:16:00] folks that have been there for years and now they're starting to kind of retire or pass away, and so I don't see a whole lot of people coming in and replacing that group that really was really dedicated to a private, general aviation business. General aviation primarily is anything other than airlines. That's the way I look at it. It can be the small, little private pilot up to the corporate type folks that are flying. Even the corporate, you can see the change there corporate-wise. I talked about why the cost of aircraft and the fuel and the cost of maintenance just went up exponentially, so you saw a lot of people drop out of there or didn't even get into it. Then the corporate side of it, a lot of those folks went into what we call fractional ownership. So, if you fly a jet [00:17:00] in here and you look at the -- we can look up the n number, if you will, and see, who is that? Is that some corporation? Is it -- we have kind of a guess at who it is, but you look up the N number and it's some company back in New Jersey that's

leasing it to several companies that either have ownership in that aircraft and/or they have some kind of a corporate contract that they're flying for these different corporations.

BOGART: When you begin to see that in a substantial way?

LUNDELL: I think, you know, it became -- I'm sure it was happening. It seemed like, I'm going to guess and say probably mid to latter 90s and then it became very commonplace after that.

BOGART: Is there a quite a bit of corporate and industrial [00:18:00] aviation in Gillette?

LUNDELL: Mm-hmm. Yeah, not based here, but we do have of course the coal mines come in and out; Burlington Northern, Santa Fe, Union Pacific. Like, even -- oh, let me see who I want to say here. Maynard's. They've come in quite a bit with their corporate jet, which is huge. And Burlington Northern's got a huge aircraft, so plural. So, there is that and that's just kind of more of a local thing. But because of our coal industry, you know, and the gas and oil. And you see, of course, that go down in recent months because of the economy. Yeah, I think now you're seeing it kind of pick back up a little bit. I can't say for sure, but [00:19:00] the only economic indicator I have is my parking lot in my ramp. So, I've

even been misled. You know, a lot of times I go out in the parking lot. Wow, there's not that many cars out there and lo and behold, you've set a record months for passengers in and out. So, it's not really a foolproof way of doing it.

BOGART: Is there commercial service in Gillette?

LUNDELL: Yeah. We had commercial service, really, I think back in the early 80s it started up. The unfortunate part about that is, we never qualified for what was called an essential air service airport. So, we're non-EAS, so we didn't have a schedule air service when deregulation occurred in October of 1978. So, if you had air service at that point in time then you were [00:20:00] guaranteed by the federal government that you would continue to have at least two flights a day. When I moved here I remember picking up, at that time, let's see -- Senator Cheney and Senator -- oh, what was his name? Simpson. I remember flying their twin engine from here to Sheridan, because they had essential air service and that's the day they were still flying in in 737s, of all things. You know? Yeah, that had to be expensive, but they had that air service and so did, I think, Worland. I don't think Rock Springs did. Maybe they did. Sheridan, I mentioned that. Casper, certainly. I think even Laramie. Laramie did and they're EAS today. So, anyway. [00:21:00] Yeah. It was quite a

transition. So then, we were not qualified, so we really had to go out and market our airport and as the years went by, we've had, oh gosh. I can't think of all the airlines we've had in and out of here, but currently the biggest thing we had -- hurdle, I should say, we had to overcome was, we had to transition from the turboprop aircraft into the jet aircraft. And the turboprop aircraft, they're just going away. They're just too old and they're just taking them out of service. In fact, SkyWest Airlines, they took their aircraft, all their turboprops out probably about a year-and-a-half ago.

BOGART: Oh. That recently?

LUNDELL: Mm-hmm. And so, they brought in the jets, but you had be, you know? And Laramie gets the jets [00:22:00] simply because they're still an essential air service market. And you see Sheridan. Of course, they lost their service for a period of time because the Great Lakes pulled out and then, of course, they pulled out here just, I think it was the end of September they pulled out of Worland permanently. So, Worland's EAS just completely went away. The Riverton market, that was one where the 737s went in, actually. They were an EAS market at the time, so was Sheridan, but now neither one is no longer in that program because they

had too many passengers and they just kind of phased out of that program.

BOGART: When the transition to jets as a kind of, the usual kind of plane, I'm interested in the changes in the Gillette airport. You said there had been construction [00:23:00] over the years. Tell me how that proceeded. How was it funded? What was the driving force behind it?

LUNDELL: Well, when I first moved here I wasn't involved very much with the airport as far as I am now; management. I was just a pilot. So, I remember, though, that because the community was growing so quickly that the City of Gillette owned the airport and they just -- it came to the point where it was just too much for them to take on as far as financially. So, they went and talked to the county and the commissioners then said, yeah, we'll take the airport over. So, there was a transfer. A quit claim deed for that. So the county ended up running the airport, but the stipulation was, they still wanted to have it [00:24:00] called the Gillette Campbell County Airport. That was the City wanting that. And quite honestly, people associate your airport with the city, not the county. That's just -- they're not going to Google Campbell County. They're going to Google Gillette. So, anyway. But when I first moved

here it was Gillette Campbell County Airport and Golf Course.

BOGART: (laughs)

LUNDELL: I think we still have that sign. I kept that. And so, eventually the golf course went away. It was just, I think, just clay greens, anyway. Every once in awhile I'll find a golf ball out there somewhere. I mean, they never deteriorate it seems like. The dinosaurs, they'll still be here with the dinosaurs. I guess [00:25:00] because of that fast growth; the coal mines were being built and employees. It was just really a boom time and to keep up with it, we couldn't get enough federal money to build what we needed. We did get some federal dollars. Our maximum, I think, at that time was like \$800,000 a year. Now it's a million a year. But what we had to do is go out and do a bond issue. So, we did a bond issue to build the runways and they were all concrete, because concrete at that point in time was cheaper, believe it not, than asphalt because the oil prices were so high. It was kind of, maybe not so much cheaper, but it was just the lifecycle cost, obviously, of concrete are better than asphalt. Anyway, it was determined that they may as well go with the concrete. We've kept that [00:26:00] concept since then, so we don't do any asphalt out here. But anyway, then there was a bond

issued for that that built all the runways. I mean, we had runways, but the crosswind runway was not paved. It was just a turf runway. The main runway was asphalt. But anyway, they came in and just completely, brand new runway, 7,500 feet wide -- or long, and 150 feet wide. Then, because we did such a good job the FAA came back and said, hey, you know, do you want to pave your crosswind? They go, yeah, sure. So, they paved that. And, so that was concrete. The other thing was their instrument landing system. That is owned by us, [00:27:00] the airport and the county. So, we had to put in our own instrument landing system which is maintained like the Sheridan, Riverton, Casper. All of those are maintained by the FAA and their facilities, but we don't. We have to hire somebody to come in and test and do our stuff. Our approach lighting system and then our instrument landing system. And then, all of our navigation aids were bought locally and maintained locally. Our air traffic control tower. Very rare is it you see that they're a non-federal control tower, but they're my employees employed by the county. And so, we have an air traffic control tower. Which, at that time back in the day, it was very, very busy here, number one. Number two was, you couldn't get radar coverage until you're about 8,000 feet above the ground and

so, [00:28:00] that was another reason. We had such a backlog of aircraft trying to get in and out on instrument flight plans, and so forth.

BOGART: Did local industry; the coal mines and oil, gas, and the railroads, were they involved at all in putting pressure on the commissioners, let's say, to upgrade the airport?

LUNDELL: I don't know the answer to that. I would guess it would be almost the opposite because, certainly they wanted an airport and everything, but anything that -- certainly, any improvements like what we did in the past like the bond issue and that sort of stuff, who was paying for that? Well, the tax payer. Well, who's paying for most of the taxes in the county is the coal mines and the energy industry. So, I don't -- I can't answer [00:29:00] that. I'm just kind of, I would guess in the back of my mind that at that time they kind of raised their eyebrows a little bit in the sense of, OK. Is this more that we're going to have to pay for? And yet, it's fine the way it is. I don't know.

BOGART: That's interesting. The reason I ask is, the airport manager in Pinedale was talking about how eager the energy companies in Sublette County were to upgrade the airport. That they were so busy over there in the 90s.

LUNDELL: I'm sure the corporate aircraft coming in and out, they definitely, definitely wanted the approach lighting system and the instrument landing system just to get in and out. But as far as a lot of the higher cost of the infrastructure, I don't know. I just wasn't privy to really knowing what the pulse was at that point in time being a pilot, so. [00:30:00]

BOGART: Sure. OK, so back to your own career now. You ran a flight instruction school and then what happened? Because now you're a manager, so what happened in between?

LUNDELL: Yeah. Then I went through several company buyouts. So, you had -- I worked for one, two, three, four, five -- five fixed based operators that just kept changing ownership and I was kind of like the old furniture. I got to go with the next company just because, I think at that time, they wanted some kind of stability. Because I -- most of the customers knew me and the pilots and that sort of stuff. And, so anyway the last two companies I worked for, actually three, I was promoted from a flight instructor to assistant [00:31:00] manager of the fixed based operator because I knew about how fueling. I had a very, very well-rounded background because when I went through flight school I put my way through flight school by pumping gas in the airplanes. I worked two jobs. I did

that and pumped aircraft. Worked on the line doing that, selling fuel, putting fuel in the aircraft. Then I worked hanging drywall on the weekends and then when I -- that was just when I was going through school. And then, I would go to ground school probably half a day then I'd fly once or twice a day. So, it wasn't cheap. It was a lot cheaper back then than it is now. But, I don't know where I'm going with this, but anyway, I had a well-rounded background in aviation, general aviation. So, that's how I kind of fell into the management part of it. [00:32:00] I did have like, two years of school, and so I knew eventually if I wanted -- I came at a crossroads. I either had to really pursue the airline career or stay where I was and get my college education and become a manager. And so, it was really a crossroads in my life. I had a young child and one on the way, and so it made it pretty clear to me that, finish your degree which I did through Sheridan College and eventually I finished my four-year degree.

And that's really the stepping stones that led me to - - the assistant airport manager quit here and I knew the airport manager quite well. He was the former tower chief. And then, anyway, he hired me because I had an accounting - - accounting [00:33:00] was kind of my thing. It was really my minor in college, so I was pretty good at that

and, certainly, he was -- I'd had a lot of bookwork, a lot of accounting to do at the fixed based operator's that I worked for and that sort of stuff. But a lot of inventory.

BOGART: When did you become manager, then?

LUNDELL: So, it was 1989 I came to work for the airport, the county airport as the assistant manager, so I walked in as the assistant airport manager. Four years there later then they fired the airport manager here and then I was fortunate enough they hired me, and so I've been here ever since.

BOGART: So, you've been here a little more than 20 years now, it sounds like.

LUNDELL: Yeah, 22 years. Yeah.

BOGART: What would you say [00:34:00] are -- this ties to the changes you mentioned in private plane ownership and that kind of thing. Talk about the changes over those 20 years.

LUNDELL: I believe that we've been inundated with regulation and by that, I don't mean just federally. I mean locally, statewide, and federally. I mean, we work with so many different federal agencies; the EPA, DEQ. Then you have the FAA and then you have all the different branches and subdivisions of the FAA that you have to work and deal with, as well. So I would have to say, I've seen regulation really be one of the largest increases that I've

had to deal with. In fact, anymore, I don't do a lot of [00:35:00] stuff outside of this office. I mean, I sit here. I do grants. I do, you know, keeping up on the regulations. We have our airport security manual which, I would say 9/11 really, really kicked us that way, too. I mean, the regulations really came in then. So, then you had the transition from the FAA to TSA, or Homeland Security. So, you had to deal now with another federal agency that was created, so I'd say regulation. 9/11 changed a lot of stuff and a lot of it's for the good. I mean, you look at the safety record now of airlines it's just incredible. Quite honestly, when you think about it.

BOGART: It's definitely considering the increase in traffic.

LUNDELL: Oh, yeah.

BOGART: Yeah. Let me ask you one more - to think about

[00:36:00] one more topic and that is, you mentioned flying Cheney and Simpson somewhere. Tell me what incidents or stories or funny things kind of stand out in your mind?

LUNDELL: I think most of them occurred when I was flying charter. One comes to mind. I remember I'd flown most of the day here just flight instructing, and then of course, when the charters would come up I'd get called out on doing that. I had a charter. It was late at night and I don't remember what the deal was. Somebody had an emergency and

I had to get them to Denver, and so we hopped -- I was flying twin engines at that time, so I hopped in our 310. And I believe they wanted to go to Jeffco, which is Jefferson and now it's Front Range. They change the names all the time kind of like stadiums [00:37:00] in football, who gets the naming rights. But, so anyway, I dropped my passenger off and you can imagine, I'm tired. It's like 3:00 in the morning now and I'm taking off. I file my flight plan and I'm in the clouds, you know, and I'm really tired. I put it on autopilot and kind of dozing off, you know, and everything's going fine. All of a sudden, it's like, there's this huge light that's coming right for me and all I can do is just go -- it's a 747 with its landing light on ready to crash into me and I kick off the autopilot, and I dive over to the right. Then I kind of, after my heart rate gets back down to normal, I look at it and, oh. It's the moon. It's the moon showing through the clouds and it was just like this prism, light prism come down. It just, you know, it just freaked me out.

[00:38:00] So, that was kind of a comical one. I kind of had to laugh at myself on that one. But you get tired and, you know, you can just -- you just -- I don't know.

BOGART: (inaudible)

LUNDELL: And one other time was kind of interesting. I'd say, we had an airplane that had a mechanical. It was in Dubois and so, I get a call from my buddy who was -- who got me up here. He was the best man in my wedding and he crashed and died over here by Upton a few years -- several years ago now. But anyway. He had a turbocharger went down on his airplane, so I went in to Dubois and it was getting dark [00:39:00] and I remember him telling me, "OK. Follow the (inaudible) lights coming in because it's going to be dark when you get here and it's certainly, you know, it's going to be a different than what you're used to, because it's in the mountains." I'd done a lot of mountain flying and I knew what I was doing. So anyway, I come in and it was just -- oh, man. It was just horribly turbulent and I'm sitting there and I couldn't even, when I'd reach down to put the flaps down, I'd hit a bump and it would hit my hand and my flaps would go, you know. I'm sitting here with two hands, you know. Just sitting there. Boom, boom, boom and finally it smoothed out and I got in and landed and it was dark at that time. So, Steve and his passengers got on my airplane, and so we had to drop him off. I think we had to go fly into then Casper, drop him off, and he was back to then [00:40:00] Gillette. So anyway, he said, "I'll fly us south because I know the terrain here and there's some

mountains (inaudible)." Then, OK. I'll take your word for it. Just kind of one of those one way in, one way out airports, anyway. So anyway, the next day the mechanic and our chief pilot and I, we flew from Gillette with a new turbocharger to put on the airplane and then fly back. So, we did that and I was flying alone and the chief pilot and the mechanic were flying in the other aircraft. I'm coming over the Bighorns and I feel like this really funny sensation and it's just this, like this hand came from behind me and just pushed me like that. And I'm looking at my ground speed and go, wow! [00:41:00] It's just, WHEW! I was smoking. So, I'm doing like 300 knots just ground speed. Man, oh, man. This is like double my indicated air speed. Anyway, I was in contact with our chief pilot and I said, "Hey, Bob? What's this deal? I mean, what's going on here?" He says, "Do you feel it, too?" I said, yeah. He says, "Well, you're in the mountain wave. I went, no kidding. So, it was the first time I really felt it that low coming over. I've felt it higher up altitudes, but not that low. And so, that was quite interesting.

BOGART: That's a phenomenon called mountain wave. Can you explain to me what that is? I hadn't heard that before.

LUNDELL: Well, really what it is, mountain wave and the jet stream are kind of -- I guess I would say, I was more in

the [00:42:00] jet stream and I had some mountain wave effect there, too, because I even felt a little bit of this, too. But, mountain wave could be more of a turbulent type of thing, but this was very smooth. So, I'd have to say I was really in the jet stream. And again, to be that low in the jet stream and into some of the mountain wave; again, now when I think about it, he said, "You're in the jet stream." I correct myself. Mountain wave is kind of when you see those almost lenticular clouds that kind of do this. You see them coming over. Because, you know, when you think about it, the mountains are almost like an airfoil. So, it creates up and down drafts. It can be kind of (inaudible). The other one was probably, I got in the jet stream one other time. I flew out of Gillette. It was like 35 below here [00:43:00] and it was clear; clear, blue sky and I had a charter to take at that point in time. They were some coal mining executives. They had a meeting up in Butte, Montana so I flew them up to Butte, Montana and it was like 45 below when I got there. And so, we land and I talk to the people in the FBO. I says, "We're not even going to get out of the airplane. Can you get us in a heated hanger?" He said, yeah. I said, "Well, I'll shut the engines down and you tug us in." And so, they did. Because I knew if I left that airplane outside chances are,

after even an hour, it would not start. So anyway, they went to their meeting and about an hour-and-a-half later they came back and then I was to take them from Butte, Montana to Denver. And so, I had a full plane. I mean, I had seven passengers. So I get up, [00:44:00] smoke it on up to like 25,000 feet and again, I'm feeling this kind of -- and I look at my ground speed and I go, huh. I'm going 425 knots and it's like, I don't know. It was like 999 below zero at that attitude at 25,000 feet. And so, I smoked from Butte, Montana to Denver; Stapleton at that time in an hour and 45 minutes in my small twin engine. I looked out and I could see -- I was just throwing out contrails like the big airplanes. And so -- yeah, that was pretty cool. Yeah, stuff like that. I think probably the weirdest thing that ever happened phenomenon-wise was St. Elmo's Fire. [00:45:00] That was really strange. Static electricity builds up and most airplanes, well all airplanes have what's called a static wick, static wicks and they're just carbon and that's where the static electricity will congregate and finally zap off. Well, sometimes it doesn't do that, especially on windshields and props. And it's nighttime and I'm flying and it's like the props are on fire. Yeah, OK. I knew what it was. I'd heard about it and was taught about it. Don't freak out.

But they didn't tell me this part; that it can come into the cockpit and sit there and dance around in your windshield. I knew I wasn't going to touch it because I knew I probably would get zapped. But, anyway. That was very, very, very strange. First to see this fire in [00:46:00] your -- in your propellers and then it would -- started coming in. Yeah, so then it would go out and you'd hear this (inaudible) and it would zap out. It's just the, you know, the atmosphere had to be probably the right relative humidity and temperature and all that to create it. But. Yeah, those are the three that come to mind. I could go on and on for hours.

BOGART: Yeah, we could, but I know you have an important meeting coming up and I don't want to distract you from that. I think that's about all I've got, unless you want to talk about where you think things are heading.

LUNDELL: I think, from my perspective as an airport director, right now the most challenging, other than the regulation part of it is air service. And really, to keep an airport or a community [00:47:00] viable economically, I really, truly believe 120% that it needs to be -- you need to have good air service. I think right now we've got really great air service and we've got to maintain it. And yeah, we subsidize air service to Salt Lake. Nothing to Denver, but

I think to -- it's just the new norm for smaller airports. If you want air service, you're going to pay for it and there's no way around it. The state certainly has a good program, air service enhancement program. But as the funding has gone way, way down simply because of the economy of the state. And now you're got Sheridan and Riverton participating in the program, so they are taking a lot of that money out of that pot [00:48:00] for their air service and it's understandable. If there, I would do the same thing. But it's the challenge of keeping good air service in your community and so, the transition to the jets was great, but now these jets that are flying in and out of Gillette, the smaller ones around the country, they're reaching their useful life. So now, we're going to have to grow into the even larger jet aircraft, because they're not making these type aircraft. So, we're going to have to graduate into the 76 seaters. Right now, they're 50 passenger. That's one thing you've got to do. Right now, I'm expanding our passenger seating area so we can accommodate, hopefully in the future, that size aircraft.

What happens, though, is usually you lose what we call frequency of flight. [00:49:00] If you've got two flights a day it might go down to one. If you've got three, it might go down to two. That's just the way the economics

work with these airplanes. But those airplanes can go on forever. The 76-seater (inaudible). They can -- it seems like they can go on forever. They're just not -- they're just not limited like the current, smaller jets are.

BOGART: I know we think of this as being a Wyoming issue and ongoing from the very beginning, but I imagine other rural states have the same issues maintaining service.

LUNDELL: They do. They do. When you think about it, we're so fortunate for, you know, what are we? Gillette's, what, 30,000 and for a community our size to have jet service, even air service, is pretty incredible [00:50:00] because you go to a lot of other communities that have, gosh, 500,000 population and they don't have air service. They're driving to a closer metropolitan area. But, I mean, it's just -- it's just one of those things and we're used to driving down the highway in Wyoming. So you've got to keep the people flying out of our airports and then, of course certainly, marketing our airport and the air service is very important. Airfares. Of course, if it was free somebody would complain about free air service. Free airline tickets. There'd be something wrong. They didn't have enough peanuts, or something. So, the consumer's always looking. They're very educated now in the sense of, you've got all the web-based Expedias. Even we've got our

own booking engine on our website. So, you know, the traveler is [00:51:00] very, very aware of airfares and they'll shop, they'll shop around. The fortunate thing is with us, we've been able to keep our fares actually cheaper than Rapid City, but you can't convince people that have gone from here to Rapid City back and forth for the last 15, 20 years that we're cheaper. Well, go on and look at it. "Oh, I never thought of that." And so, they go, "Wow, yeah. You are cheaper." So, you know, it's kind of -- you've got -- air service takes up, I'm guessing, a majority of my time along with the keeping up on the regulations and grant management and that stuff.

BOGART: OK. I so appreciate this.

LUNDELL: You're welcome. I hope I didn't give you too much.

BOGART: Oh, this has been great. This has been great because it's -- [00:52:00] every community is different and that's why I try to focus on -- I start with the airport managers.

LUNDELL: Yeah. We've got, what is it? There used to be only two of us were accredited airport executives. It's an accreditation that is in our industry. It's a national -- well, actually international accreditation program we go through. It's like, we consider it really our master's in our industry. It's really -- it takes about three years to go through. So, we go through. Of course, we have to do

the written, written test, pass that, and then we go and we have to write a paper. And then after the paper's approved then those two processes are down then we go and we are -- we go to our final interview which is our peers drilling us with questions. And so, yeah. It's quite a process, but now you've got [00:53:00] Glen in Casper. He's accredited. Jim in Irondale. He's accredited. Devon Brubaker. He's the new airport manager in Rock Springs. He's accredited. Let's see, who else? Oh, Jim Elwood who's the airport manager in Jackson Hole. He's been our national chairman in the past, too. A sharp kid. In fact, I taught him how to fly when we were down in Denver. He was a metropolitan student. We had the metro contract, the two students fly. That's where I met Jim and I've known him for years, you know. And so, it's quite interesting. I think there's about four or five of us now.

BOGART: You're including yourself in that count?

LUNDELL: Yeah, yeah.

BOGART: That's great.

LUNDELL: So, and even my [00:54:00] operations manager. He's going after his accreditation, so he's got his written part done, so now he needs to get his paper. I've got to get on him to do that.

BOGART: So, it sounds as though there's been -- (inaudible) in professionalization of the industry, including airport management.

LUNDELL: Very much so. Before it was just kind of -- you had some basic knowledge and you'd kind of learn about how to do the grants. Any more, you've really got to have gone through the process. I mean, you've got to have gone up through the ranks. You don't come out of college and go right into that. But, I was going to share quickly with you, if I can find it. [00:55:00] And I think, you know, really, the important thing for us older guys -- I say older now. I still think I'm 25.

BOGART: That's what I would have guessed.

LUNDELL: So, I think it's very important for us seasoned veterans to do a lot of coaching and mentoring for the folks that are coming up. A lot of airports or even counties or cities don't have a lot of succession planning. That's what I try to do. And these are really, a lot of that kind of list highlights a lot of the stuff that I do. That you have to have knowledge in and that's part of my coaching and mentoring my colleague. So, you can look through there. There's some stuff that we obviously never talked about that might be of some interest to you.

BOGART: Oh, that's great. [00:56:00] That's great. OK. I'm
shutting down now and we'll do the paperwork.

END OF AUDIO FILE