

OH-3021, Marvin Cronberg, 3-31-2014, WY In Flight

JUNGE: I'm going to put something on the front of this tape. Today is the 31st of March, 2014. My name is Mark Junge and I'm in the home of Marvin, Marvin how do you spell -- pronounce your last name?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Cronberg.

JUNGE: Cronberg. I'm used to saying Crone-berg, but that's not right, is it?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, it's not. (laughs)

JUNGE: OK. Marvin Cronberg and his wife, Aloma, here in Medicine Bow at 312 East Oak Street. So let's just start out by -- can you give me your full name and your birth date?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. Marvin Homer Cronberg is my full name. I was born April 14th, 1936, in Hanna.

JUNGE: So your birthday is coming up pretty soon?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Coming up I'll be 78 pretty soon. (laughs)

JUNGE: You know, Marvin, I got to put this on the tape, but I remember when my dad and I went fishing on the Medicine Bow one time, we got to your ranch and we asked if we could [00:01:00] fish and you said, yes. And that was one of the

experiences I remember, one of the best fishing experiences I remember having.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Really?

JUNGE: Yes. The river -- well, kind of wound back on itself and it was a little bit turbid and a little silty, but my dad caught about an 18-inch brown out of one of those holes in an undercut bank. I do remember that big, huge barn you had on your property.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, we did. That was the south ranch. We had another ranch north called North Ranch, which was lower on the river. But the south ranch was where the good fishing was. There were a couple of places on the north place where you could catch trout but there's a lot of trash fish on the lower river.

JUNGE: Where we were fishing?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I think you were fishing at south ranch it sounds like.

JUNGE: South ranch. OK. All right, so you were born where?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Hanna, Wyoming.

JUNGE: Hanna, Wyoming. [00:02:00] And your parents' names?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I'm sorry?

JUNGE: Your parents' names?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Oh, Ted and Pat Cronberg. They're both deceased now.

JUNGE: How many siblings do you have?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I have one, a sister. [Bobbie Verapt?].

She lives in Laramie.

JUNGE: Were you raised in Wyoming? Or how did you get to Wyoming?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, I was born up in the hospital in Hanna.

Momma married Ted Cronberg and I was raised on a ranch here at Medicine Bow.

JUNGE: So he had the ranch before you.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. My granddad homesteaded on the river in 1892 and then he turned the ranch over to his three sons, one of which was my father. Then of course they passed on and dad sold quite a bit of the ranch before he died, but I still have 640 acres of the ranch.

JUNGE: Why?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, because I just held onto it for years and years. [00:03:00] It's sort of a legacy, I guess.

JUNGE: You don't want it to go out of the family?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Not really. Gives me something to do, also.

But it's one of the original pieces of ground that was homesteaded, so I'm still hanging on to that.

JUNGE: Do you have kids that you'll pass it on to?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I've got three daughters but I don't think they're interested in the ranch. As a matter of fact, I

have a fellow that wants to buy it right now so I might be totally out of the ranching business one of these days (laughs).

JUNGE: In a way it's kind of a shame, isn't it?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, yes it is. But at my age it's more work than I can handle, frankly.

JUNGE: The six hundred and -- the whole section?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, keeping the fences up and taking care of the livestock and keeping the buildings intact. It's grueling work, too much for me.

JUNGE: You're still running the ranch?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: How many people you got helping you?

MARVIN CRONBERG: None. Well, my wife helps [00:04:00] me once in a while. In fact, I was out there yesterday working on the irrigation pump and the old truck that I drive -- which is a truck we've had since 1950, I kind of keep it because I like to drive it -- but anyway, it broke down on me so I ended up having to have Lonnie -- Aloma -- come and get me.

JUNGE: Now in the old days you wouldn't have been able to use a cell phone.

MARVIN CRONBERG: No.

JUNGE: Can you use a cell phone here?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Oh yes. It works good. And I managed to have it with me in this case. There have been a couple times that I've walked to town. (laughs)

JUNGE: Before we go on here and a little bit about your education -- I want to know, you could have chosen to live in Cheyenne, Laramie, Casper, Sun City, Arizona. Why are you here in Medicine Bow?

MARVIN CRONBERG: As a matter of fact, after I got out of the university I came back to the ranch and I worked here for several years. Then as the sheep industry [00:05:00] began to decline, I decided I needed to find something else. So I took a job off the ranch and ultimately ended up in Phoenix as the executive director of the Arizona Automobile Dealers Association. And I lived there for nine years and then my dad became ill. He was 84. So I moved back to Medicine Bow to assist him. Then he passed away a year later and my mom began to develop Alzheimer's after that. So then I became a caregiver for my mom and I just never got out of here since.

JUNGE: Is this your parents' home here that we're sitting at?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: OK. How about your education, where did you go to school?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I went to the University of Wyoming. I grew up here in Medicine Bow and went to high school here but I went to the University of Wyoming and then I [00:06:00] had subsequent classes at Arizona State University and also at Laramie Community College in Cheyenne.

JUNGE: What course -- what was your curriculum?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, at the Laramie Community College it was ecology. That was a period of time when this was just beginning to blossom, this environmental interest and I wanted to know as much about it as I could. Plus, at that point in time I had changed from my job here on the ranch to the State of Wyoming and I was working for the state conservation commission. So I took that course -- it was called ecology then, but it was an environmental, basic environmental course.

JUNGE: So you're an environmentalist?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I wouldn't say that. The environmentalists gave the environmental name a bad name in my opinion. I was a conservationist is what I was. I believed in wise use and [00:07:00] preservation, but they believe in no use and preservation. I wouldn't classify myself as an environmentalist. I have a pretty deep knowledge about environmental issues because of the fact that I was involved with it for so many years. But then I went to

Arizona and enrolled in Arizona State as it was just a part-time thing because I had a full-time job. That was in hazardous waste management.

JUNGE: And did you get your degree there?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. My degree came from the University of Wyoming. Those were just a series of classes I took. I didn't have a time to go full-time and it would have taken years to get a degree. So what I did was I'd pick and choose courses that applied to my job. Initially, it was hazardous waste management because the auto dealers had a lot of hazardous waste to deal with. [0:08:00] So I sort of became the hazardous waste guru for the new car dealerships in Arizona.

JUNGE: Well then why didn't you just stay in the auto business?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Because my dad became ill and he didn't have any help. He still had the ranch so I came up here and he decided that he wanted to sell most of the ranch. I helped him with that process.

JUNGE: How big was the ranch initially?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well at that -- at one time it was 120,000 acres but at the point in time he began to sell it he was down to six thousand acres or so.

JUNGE: So, 120,000 acres that's -- even for Wyoming -- that's a pretty good-sized ranch.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. It was pretty good, but Carbon County is home to a lot of big sheep ranches and so ours was nothing spectacular in terms of the size of ranches around here and Rawlins.

JUNGE: What was the range? What [00:09:00] were the boundaries pretty much.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, it was north of Medicine Bow we had about 60,000 and then we had about 60,000 south. That includes the BLM land, you know the checkerboard area? That includes those leases. Deeded land was actually 38,000 acres. Plus we had all these intermingled public sections.

JUNGE: Was that a sheep ranch?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. It was a sheep ranch. We ran eight thousand head of sheep.

JUNGE: Was that profitable at one time?

MARVIN CRONBERG: It was for a long time but like I said, in the '50s and '60s, when the environmental movement became active and we weren't allowed to keep the coyotes under control it was not profitable after that. They ate up 10 to 15% of your lamb crops.

JUNGE: That much?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. Sometimes more.

JUNGE: You know, when I first came here -- and this is off the subject again -- but when I first came to Wyoming, I came in '67. So I've only been here what, 47 years.  
[00:10:00] But there was a big hubbub, a big uproar about Herman Warner and eagle killing.

MARVIN CRONBERG: And the eagle killing, right.

JUNGE: You were around at that time, weren't you? Did you know Herman Warner?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, I knew him.

JUNGE: What kind of a guy was he?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I thought he was an OK guy. He was an older fellow than me at least. I met him at the wool growers meetings and I thought he was fine. I had no idea that he had people out there shooting eagles.

JUNGE: From helicopters, right? And maybe fixed-wing, too. So what was your opinion at the time?

MARVIN CRONBERG: At the time I thought it was kind of a dumb thing to do because I had never been able to prove that eagles actually killed lambs. I had -- we had eagles here of course and I used to keep a pretty good watch on them. We had golden and we still do and we had bald and we still do. And I have seen the eagles [00:11:00] eating the lamb carcass, but I had never been able to see an eagle kill a

lamb. So frankly I didn't believe that they were actually killing the lambs.

JUNGE: And you were a neighboring sheep man, really, in a way.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, in a way. They were over by Casper and we were down here.

JUNGE: And as far as the Overland Trail, too. Weren't they over there on the Bolton Ranch?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: The Bolton place.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, I remember that.

JUNGE: Do you remember Charlie Vivian?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I didn't know Charlie well but -- this is odd because I went to wool grower meeting one night in Rawlins and the weather turned kind of nasty and we were in the Ferris Hotel and there were no rooms available. I was visiting with Charlie downstairs and I said, "I'm going to have to drive back to Medicine Bow, no matter what the weather is." He said, "Well, I've got an extra bed in my room, why don't you just stay in my room with me?" And I did. But I knew Charlie and I knew Vern real well.

[00:12:00]

JUNGE: Are they both gone now?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, Vern's still alive. That's his son.

JUNGE: Right. Where's Vern?

MARVIN CRONBERG: He's in Rawlins.

JUNGE: Is he still in the sheep business?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, I think he's retired. In fact, I think the Vivians have probably sold all their land by now. I don't know whether they've got any property left.

JUNGE: I remember working for the recreation commission as a historian and my old boss, Ned Frost, had got Herman Warner and Charlie Vivian together because they wanted those guys to give some of their land at Forbes Field to the state for a state park. And they wound up doing it. But just before this whole transaction occurred, somebody burned down the barracks. Remember that?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, they burned. There's not hardly anything left there now. Vern was a civic lineman. He was a good guy. I mean, he still is. But he and his wife I think they go to Scottsdale or some place in the winter time.

JUNGE: Would you see these guys much anymore? [00:13:00]

MARVIN CRONBERG: I run into Vern every once in a while, either in the city market up there or I play in a little country and western band, play guitar, and we played at one of their events up there at the Sinclair Golf Club. Vern and his wife were there. They had kind of organized this

birthday party for, gosh I can't remember his name, another old sheep rancher. But I see him every once in a while.

JUNGE: You play in a country and western band?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: What instrument?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Guitar.

JUNGE: And do you sing?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I sing, right.

JUNGE: Aloma, is he a good singer?

ALOMA CRONBERG: He's a very good singer, and he also plays bagpipes.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. I do that too. (laughs)

JUNGE: You play the bagpipes?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: For what? For funerals or something?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Funerals. I play, traditionally, every year at the Carbon cemetery on Memorial Day. And I've done weddings and once in a while I'll play at church. They're awfully loud in a small building [00:14:00] so they don't work too well for that. I was in a parade group, we played in frontier days several years in a row. I haven't done that the last two years, but it was a fife and drum corps. I played the pipes in that. It's kind of fun, you know. Takes a lot of practice.

JUNGE: Do you do this free of charge?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Old Carbon Cemetery. He plays at the Old Carbon Cemetery the Sunday before Memorial Day every year.

JUNGE: Really?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. We had a big crowd last year, all the churches -- it was on the Sunday before -- and all the churches had their parishioners come up there.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Don't let him. That's going to show up on that tape.

JUNGE: OK. Well let's talk a little bit about aviation, your career. Did you have a career in aviation?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, I was a private pilot. I was never a commercial pilot but I had my own [00:15:00] airplane and I've flown all over the United States and parts of Canada and Mexico. My home base for a long time was in Phoenix. Then I moved my plane back up here. It was difficult to keep up with your training when I came up here, moved back to take care of my father. So I eventually sold my plane because if you don't fly you get rusty and you take a good chance, you raise the risk of killing yourself.

JUNGE: When did you first take an interest in aviation?

MARVIN CRONBERG: My dad was a pilot and my uncle was a pilot. In fact, my Uncle Bill had a flight school here in Medicine

Bow back in the early '40s. He had about eight or nine of the local guys here that he taught how to fly.

JUNGE: Were these ranchers?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Couple of them were. Or business people that had businesses here in town. Before the interstate opened, Medicine Bow had 40 or 50 [00:16:00] businesses. We had a lot of -- because of the highway, because of US-30. But once they moved that highway everything just went flat.

JUNGE: Did you fight that location?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: Did you?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. I was just a kid, really. Well, a young man, I was in my twenties at the time. My dad, who was the mayor here in town -- in fact, he was the mayor for 23 years -- he fought that tooth and toenail and so did the other business people. But the federal government had their minds set on that route over there.

JUNGE: Why did they do that because there's still criticism today about what they call the "Snow Chi Minh Trail?"

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, what happened was one of the guys on our highway commission had taken an option on some land over there along that route. And so it was through his efforts combined with the bureau of public roads -- bureau of public roads' interest was strictly mileage. It cut off

12 or 14 miles and so that's [00:17:00] why, the cost of building a highway -- I don't know how many million it was per mile but it was expensive. They thought that would be the best route even though I don't think it turned out that way because of the terrain over there.

JUNGE: But this guy had property interests on the commission?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: He was on the highway commission?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. Chairman.

JUNGE: Wasn't that a conflict of interest?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, most people thought so and when he ran for governor later on he was defeated and that was the issue that defeated him.

JUNGE: Really? I'm trying to think of who this was. It's in the history books, I'm sure. He ran for governor on the Republican ticket? Are you willing to say his name?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I don't think so.

JUNGE: OK. I can look it up. When did he run?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Gosh, I don't know, must have been in the late '70s, somewhere along in there.

JUNGE: That's when the highway was built through there?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, it had been completed and I was told not too long ago by Phil Roberts [00:18:00] -- who's a historian at the university -- he told me that they opened

that, the first year they opened that highway it was closed 128 times because of accidents, blizzards, and that kind of stuff. So it's been a white elephant ever since the start. We told -- I say we, collectively Rock River, Bosler, Hanna -- all these people told him, "You'll not be able to keep that road open in the winter time." I remember the high school used to be right across the street here and they had an auditorium and the bureau of public roads and one of the highway commission members came to Medicine Bow and held a so-called public information meeting, supposedly to take input from the public but right towards the end of it the bureau of public roads got up and made brief remarks and he said it's already been decided anyway. So that was just -- just to let us spout off. But what was fairly interesting is [00:19:00] when one lady from Rock River -- dozens of people got up and spoke and told them they were idiots for putting it over there -- but this lady from Rock River said, "You'll never be able to keep that highway open in the winter," and the guy from the bureau of public roads got up and said, "We have to keep it open, federal law says we have to keep it open." Well, federal law doesn't mean anything when you got a blizzard and stuff here in Wyoming. (laughs) So anyway, it was a futile thing. They had already decided that.

JUNGE: You know, you were on a panel recently regarding the Lincoln Highway, the showing of the teaser or the trailer of the movie in Rawlins, right? And you were on the panel. Isn't it interesting, when I went to the one in Cheyenne, I found out that there was a guy here in Medicine Bow that did everything he could to get it through Medicine Bow, the Lincoln Highway. Who was it?

MARVIN CRONBERG: August Grimm.

JUNGE: August Grimm. [00:20:00]

MARVIN CRONBERG: They called him Guff Grimm.

JUNGE: Is he the guy that built the Virginian?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, my uncle actually built it, my great uncle. But Grimm, it was his dream to have a first-class hotel in Medicine Bow. He didn't have the money and he had a partner from Laramie by the name of George Plummer. They couldn't raise the funds and the banks in Rawlins or Laramie would not lend money in Medicine Bow. So he approached my grandfather who at that time had built his herd up, his sheep ranch, and granddad and his brother, Raff, gave him \$65,000 to build a hotel. And then they had to give him another four thousand a little later. But anyway, they financed the construction. My uncle, Albert Cronberg actually built it, he was the project engineer on the hotel. They drilled down to bedrock. Uncle Albert

said in order to keep this thing in tact -- when they first dug the [00:21:00] basement they dug into a water table and there's water flowing under Medicine Bow, the river kind of straightens out the bends. What they did was they drilled down to bedrock and they poured concrete and reinforcement and all of these pillars that the hotel sits on now. We've had two earthquakes here and there are no cracks in the main building and all the doors upstairs swing freely. I mean that thing is solid.

JUNGE: Solid. Why didn't he go for money to the Medicine Bow bank?

MARVIN CRONBERG: It wasn't here then.

JUNGE: Oh, it was a relatively recent --

MARVIN CRONBERG: It came along in the 1920s when they first established the bank here. This was in 1909.

JUNGE: So who was it that lended him the money, your uncle?

MARVIN CRONBERG: My granddad. C.F.R. Cronberg, his name was Chris.

JUNGE: Why did he do that?

MARVIN CRONBERG: He was a believer in Medicine Bow. My whole family was. They just thought that [00:22:00] Medicine Bow was going to grow and at that point in time, Grimm had already heard rumors of the Lincoln Highway. And he convinced my granddad if they could get that highway

through here that they'd have a real booming business. The other thing that helped convince him was the Union Pacific stopped their trains overnight in Medicine Bow at that point in time. So Grimm's idea was that people would, instead of setting in an uncomfortable passenger car, they would get off the train and rent a room. He put a card room in the basement -- Grimm was actually a gambler -- and he thought that he could probably fleece them out of some dough at the same time. The problem was the year after the hotel was completed the trains, UP stopped stopping their trains, they just went blasting right on through here. So Grimm went broke and my grandfather got the hotel back in 1916. And he paid off all [00:23:00] the debt, I can't remember the exact amount but it was substantial, four or five thousand dollars back in that day, because Grimm had never paid anybody for -- in fact, I talked to a guy in Rawlins the other day and he said that his great uncle was the person who put the plumbing in the hotel and he said he never got paid. I said, "Well, I don't doubt that because Grimm never paid anybody."

JUNGE: What happened to Grimm?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Sorry?

JUNGE: Where did he go? What happened to him?

MARVIN CRONBERG: From here he went to Rock River. I have tried everything to trace him after that and I don't know what happened. I can't find him. There are a lot of August Grimms in the United States and none of them are him or his family.

JUNGE: Did the Virginian then turn out to be a white elephant for your grandfather, Chris?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. He then turned around and sold it again. That guy defaulted two years later. Granddad never had in mind being an innkeeper, he was a rancher. Then he leased [00:24:00] it out a couple of times, leased it to a fellow here by the name of Frank Boyd. He had moved here from Texas, he was another gambler. Gambling was wide open then in Wyoming. Boyd said we can't make it work unless we put a bar in. There was no bar in the original hotel. The reason there was no bar is because my grandfather's sister said, "I will not have the Cronberg name associated with liquor."

JUNGE: She was a teetotaler.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, she was a temperance person. So for years and years the hotel operated without a bar but then Boyd convinced my grandfather -- who now had sole ownership of it, he bought his brother out or his brother threw his cards in after the second failure -- "I'm through with this

thing it isn't going to work!" So anyway, Chris, he had to -- he made a deal with Frank Boyd and Boyd put the bar in. Then Boyd couldn't make any money in there either. So then granddad placed it out [00:25:00] to the Scott family. Vernon Scott was a promoter. That guy he made that hotel work. Of course, his grandson owns it now.

JUNGE: I suppose he overrode his wife's objections then?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. His sister's.

JUNGE: His sister's objections.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. He never got married.

JUNGE: I suppose there was a place to drink anyway in town, wasn't there?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Oh yes, there were two or three other bars. But in fact, Gus Grimm owns a bar, Home Ranch, which sat right behind the hotel. And when they constructed the hotel he made sure there was a back door that you went out of from the lobby that you practically walked into his bar when you went out that back door. He managed to keep his liquor business intact for a while.

JUNGE: So your grandfather eventually sold out to this Boyd?

MARVIN CRONBERG: He leased it to the Scott brothers.

JUNGE: Or Scott brothers, yeah.

MARVIN CRONBERG: [00:26:00] They had the hotel for several years under that lease and then they bought -- they paid

off the balance and assumed full ownership of the hotel. I owned it for a while.

JUNGE: You did?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. Back in the '70s. Myself and a fellow from Saratoga, friend of mine, we bought it.

JUNGE: Who was the guy from Saratoga?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Dick Mowry.

JUNGE: I remember him. He was a biker.

MARVIN CRONBERG: YEah.

JUNGE: He was a Hell's Angel wasn't he, at one time?

MARVIN CRONBERG: (laughs) No. He wasn't a Hell's Angel.

ALOMA CRONBERG: (inaudible)

JUNGE: What?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Marvin was (inaudible).

JUNGE: I'm sorry, so Marvin's a Hell's Angel?

ALOMA CRONBERG: No, no, Marvin's a biker. There is a difference. (laughs)

MARVIN CRONBERG: Dick and I used to ride bikes together. We used to go out and chase coyotes when we were young.

JUNGE: I'd fish in his riv-- in Spring Creek, on his ranch. Way up there, we call it Little Brookies. I took my relatives from Iowa out there, they loved it. He was a good host. He was a nice guy.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, he was. I don't [00:27:00] know what he's doing now. The last time I saw him he looked like a mountain man. He had a huge beard and he was pretty big.

JUNGE: Where is he?

MARVIN CRONBERG: He's still on that ranch.

JUNGE: Is he?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: Dick Mowry, I'll be darned. Well, OK. You talk about -- I'm here to talk about aviation, believe it or not, but I know a little bit about this, just enough to be dangerous. So when did your -- your grandfather didn't fly, it was your father?

MARVIN CRONBERG: My dad.

JUNGE: When did he start flying?

MARVIN CRONBERG: When Uncle Bill had that flight school here in the '40s.

JUNGE: So your Uncle Bill taught him how to fly?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: And then he decided to get an airplane.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, he never actually owned one. The club owned an airplane, the flying club they had. There were seven or eight people that owned this airplane. They bought -- I think it was an Aeronca, I'm not sure. And so they all used that plane [00:28:00] from time to time.

There's a flying club in Laramie now, or there used to be anyway. But these clubs they get a bunch of guys together and they all chip in and they all own the plane and they all maintenance is a heavy-duty application in flying.

JUNGE: How much did your dad fly it?

JUNGE: How much did your dad fly it?

MARVIN CRONBERG: He flew around. He was one of those -- what I would refer to as pea patch pilots. They like to go up and get in the airplane and fly around a circle, not too far away from the airport and shoot landings and stuff. That's what kind of flying he did.

JUNGE: By shoot landings you mean practice them?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Practice them.

JUNGE: So he didn't really use it in his ranch business?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. Well, yes he was a rancher but flying was just a hobby for him.

JUNGE: He never really used it for any purpose -- any ranch purpose?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No.

JUNGE: Well, there are people who do that today. [00:29:00] Did he know -- the people that were involved in this little club, did he know people who did use it for ranching?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I don't know -- Richards, Warren Richards was one of the members. He may have used it. His ranch

was about 20 miles north of here and he had a little airstrip out there so he could fly back and forth between town and the ranch. But I don't know anybody in that group that used airplanes for their business.

JUNGE: Who taught you how to fly then?

MARVIN CRONBERG: A fellow in Salt Lake. I lived in Salt Lake for a while. I left Medicine Bow and the National Wool Growers Association, which is another trade association, they contacted me and asked if I'd be interested in managing their association for them. And as much as I really debated whether I actually wanted to leave my family and the ranch and everything, I did take that job in Salt Lake City [00:30:00] and that's where I learned to fly. And I did use the plane because I had to go to a ton of meetings. I spent most of my time sitting around listening to people run their mouth off. (laughs)

JUNGE: Were you the head of the Wool Growers Association?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I was. I was the president and chief executive officer.

JUNGE: Of the American Wool Growers --

MARVIN CRONBERG: National.

JUNGE: The National Wool Growers Association.

MARVIN CRONBERG: That organization doesn't exist anymore.

JUNGE: It doesn't?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, they had two. They had the American Sheep Producers Council and they had the National Wool Growers Association. The Sheep Producers Council was supposed to promote the consumption of lamb and wool and the Wool Growers was a lobby organization, that was their lobbying arm. I did a lot of lobbying then in Washington and around in several Western states.

JUNGE: Did you fly to Washington?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I did one time, yes. But it takes [00:31:00] too long in a little airplane, eight-hour flight.

JUNGE: So why did you learn to fly in Salt Lake? Simply because you were head of that organization?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Actually, I learned to fly because of my interest that was in my family. I had flown with my dad and I had flown with my uncle and I thought it was kind of fun. It wears out after a while, but it was fun for a while.

JUNGE: What do you mean it wears out?

MARVIN CRONBERG: You get so used to it it almost becomes boring. It just doesn't appeal to you like it did --

JUNGE: Wait a minute, Marvin, are you telling me that flying in Wyoming is boring?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Flying anywhere can get boring. It's like they say, it's three hours of boredom and 10 minutes of sheer terror. (laughs)

JUNGE: So did you have any sheer terror moments?

MARVIN CRONBERG: One time, I had trouble finding an airport [00:32:00] in Pennsylvania. I was preparing to land on the highway because I couldn't spot this thing. It was low and the clouds were low and I had filed an instrument flight plan. I come down through the clouds and where I came down the runway, the airport wasn't there. It was actually, I'd say, about two and a half miles from where I actually thought it was supposed to be. So when I got down there I couldn't see it because it was hilly in Pennsylvania. So I kept flying in a wider and wider circle and hoping that the clouds didn't get down any lower. And I was running low on fuel so I thought well I'm going to have to land on the highway, but in one of those circles I saw the beacon flash. So then I landed on the airport. Then I had to set there for 8 to 10 hours until the weather cleared out of there so I could get out of that place because there was ice in those clouds.

JUNGE: Did you fly by sight or did you [00:33:00] fly by instruments?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I had an instrument flight rating. I flew quite a bit by instruments. I liked instruments. I'll tell you there's no feeling like coming out of those clouds and seeing that airport stretch out in front of you. You get a real feeling of accomplishment when that happens.

JUNGE: I'll bet. So you didn't have any wrecks or anything like that.

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. Never even had what you'd call a close call. Just that one instance. And that was really because I was trying to make my approach with the instruments and when I popped out of the clouds I decided to go visual and that was a mistake. If I'd have stuck with the instrument flight plan it would have led me right to the airport.

JUNGE: Yes. Of course, flying out of Medicine Bow it must have been hard to get access to the runway with all the traffic, right?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. (laughs) Have to be really careful [00:34:00] here. Have to get in line.

JUNGE: Were there any accidents over here at the airport?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. Every once in a while somebody -- they ran a twin through the end of the fence one time and tore it all up and then a guy come up here one time to visit his girlfriend and I don't know exactly what happened, I think he forgot to turn the fuel on or something but he took off

and made about a half-circle and the engine quit and it killed him. There were other accidents, too. But that's the only fatal I know of.

JUNGE: OK. This Medicine Bow is an interesting place in the history of transportation and communication. You've got the interstate to the south; you've got the Lincoln Highway; which became US-30; and you've got the first transcontinental airmail route. Can you talk a little bit about that?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. That [00:35:00] started in 1924 when the department of commerce decided that they were going to fly the mail transcontinental, across the country. And at first, it was strictly visual and a lot of times as guys would get trapped somewhere they'd have to put the mail on the train anyway because they couldn't fly. There were no instruments that allowed you to fly in the clouds then or under instrument flight conditions. And so they decided that what they needed to do was establish a series of airports across the US, or airfields. They numbered them from San Francisco east to St. Louis and Medicine Bow was actually site 32. It was what was called an intermediate airport. There were principal airports [00:36:00] and there were intermediate airports. They had different equipment at each one. The intermediate airports didn't

have as big a beacon as they had at these other smaller airports and they didn't have 24-hour service, set out lanterns at night so they could land and so forth. But that's how it all started and that's why the airport was put here at Medicine Bow because it was on that airway that ran across the United States.

JUNGE: Which purposely followed the Union Pacific?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. They started out by basically following highways and roads and so forth that they could see and follow. Then when they went to this system of lighting with beacons and airports they just maintained that and they stayed right along the Union Pacific Railroad.

JUNGE: And they established this airport in '24?

MARVIN CRONBERG: In '24 that's when it started. [00:37:00] There was another, smaller airport just east of town and then it was too hard to see, so they moved it up on top of a hill out here south of town.

JUNGE: Did it get moved after that? Or did it stay?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, that's -- it's the only original airmail airport left in the United States that's in its original configuration and with a dirt strip and the whole works. It's the only one. Now, a gentleman by the name of Steve Wolff, whom you may know, he had started an organization of which I'm a member, I'm a vice president: the United States

Airways Heritage Association. It initially was comprised of people from about five or six different states. We had trouble getting our 501(c)(4) application approved by the IRS for whatever reason and it's still pending. But [00:38:00] we need that before we can go any further ahead with soliciting contributions and putting material together. The organization's mission is to preserve as much of the airway as we can before people -- before it completely disappears. And one of our focal points is Medicine Bow because of the fact that we want to use it because it's in its original configuration and it's just like it was when the Department of Commerce established it back then. There were three or four houses -- there were three houses up there. There was a superintendent and two airway keepers that lived up there. There was a power plant house, there was a garage with a snowplow and some other stuff. We want to restore that to as close to its original configuration as we can and we want to make it into an educational thing for people [00:39:00] who are interested in the airmail airway. Most of those beacons are gone. Ours is still here but it's been shot up, it's been badly damaged but we want to get that restored. It's a slow process but if we can just get our application approved then we can set about

doing programs, you know PowerPoint presentations,  
brochures, and we can get busy to start soliciting funds.

JUNGE: Are you expecting a horde of tourists?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Not a horde, really. But our interest is  
more in just the preservation of the airway system because  
it's practically gone, you know? I don't know -- I doubt  
there are any airmail pilots still alive, they'd have to be  
really old but even older than me for gosh sakes.

(laughter) But I would -- I'm sure it will [00:40:00] draw  
some tourism, especially with people that have an interest  
in flying.

JUNGE: So this isn't a deliberate attempt to increase tourism  
in Medicine Bow?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No.

JUNGE: This is from the love of the place yourself?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. And to preserve as much of the history  
of the airway system as we can. Now, obviously it's going  
to draw some tourism to Medicine Bow. It shouldn't -- I  
think anybody that has an interest in flying would be  
interested in seeing one of the original replicated, or  
restored, airmail airports, and that's what we're trying to  
do.

JUNGE: What's your vision for a restored site? What would  
you like to see?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I want -- and the other guys, I'm not speaking for myself I'm speaking for our group -- we want to see the buildings rebuilt, the three houses and the other associated buildings. We want to put the beacon back in working [00:41:00] order. We want to reestablish the -- there was a tetrahedron down in one corner. We found the circle in concrete. We want to put that back there.

JUNGE: What's a tetrahedron?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Oh, it's kind of a pointed thing, a long pointed thing, it's flat on the back and it points into the wind all the time. Pilots that fly over the airport they can immediately tell which way the wind is coming from so they can -- there are two runways up there -- they can select the runway that is the right one.

JUNGE: What's the tetrahedron made out of?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Oh, probably back then it was probably made out of plywood, I don't know for sure. That's probably why it's gone, it probably fell apart.

JUNGE: Do you know what it looks like then? Is there a blank spot in the grass where --

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, there's a big concrete circle and the arrow pointing due north, straight north. They were all painted yellow at one time [00:42:00] with a black edge around them and then in the center there -- at one time

there was a pivot -- and the thing sets on the pivot and points into the wind whenever the wind blows across it because it's triangular shape.

JUNGE: So what kind of a runway was it?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, it was a dirt runway, 3,900 feet long. Pretty good runway, I mean I've landed up here, I don't know, 50 or 60 times. The only problem is prairie dog holes, you have to -- before you use the airport you have to take a quick trip down the runway and fill the holes in. Now I think most of the prairie dogs are gone now, I hope they are.

JUNGE: What does a prairie dog hole do for an airplane?

MARVIN CRONBERG: If you drop a wheel in there you're probably going to tear it off, those holes are big. You come in at 70 or 80 miles an hour and drop your nose gear in there [00:43:00] you're probably going to take it off.

JUNGE: You ever have to clear cattle off the site?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. Never have.

JUNGE: Because it's fenced?

MARVIN CRONBERG: It's fenced.

JUNGE: And no sheep?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Antelope. But antelope are really, they're really skittish. When they hear an airplane, they're gone.

JUNGE: So how big a plane could actually land at this airport?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Like twin can land there. I don't think they can put a heavy twin in there. Not because they couldn't land there, they might not have enough runway to get back off is the problem.

JUNGE: So they're usually coming in from the south to the north? Southeast to northwest maybe?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. Southeast to northwest mostly. And if you've got wind, which we almost always do here, that shortens up your takeoff run quite a bit.

JUNGE: Yes. Are you -- will you have an access road?

[00:44:00] Let's say that your dream came true, Marvin and that you have everything restored the way you wanted it, even the runway fixed and the tetrahedron in place, how would you get people to it, isn't it still private?

MARVIN CRONBERG: It belongs to the city right now but they have agreed to donate it to our association if, in fact, we get it setup and in operation, which we've been struggling with.

JUNGE: Well, who maintains it?

MARVIN CRONBERG: The city sort of maintains it.

JUNGE: Sort of?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I don't think they do much of a job on it, but I don't want to accuse people of not doing what they're supposed to do. I used to be the airport manager here when I was young and I took care of it. Sometimes I took the blade -- the city grader up there and bladed it off.

[00:45:00] Other times I used to drag on it a couple pieces of rail iron. And I kept it in good shape, picked the rocks up off of it and all that stuff. But when I left Medicine Bow the maintenance of that runway went to pot.

JUNGE: So you took a personal interest in it? And of course, you took a cut in salary then when you left? For maintaining the airport?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. Fifteen dollars a month really hurt me.  
(laughs)

JUNGE: Is that what you got paid?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: Why did you do this? You were trying to run a ranch and do other things.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, I don't know. I was just interested in flying and I visited with a lot of guys that landed up there. Every time a plane would come over I'd go over there in a car and pick them up and take them down to the hotel and whatever and record their landing and their airplane number.

JUNGE: How did you know they were going to be there?

[00:46:00]

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, in the flight guides it said make a circle over the town and so before you're going to land in Medicine Bow you'd go around the town and sometimes five or six people would show up. Everybody wanted to help out.

JUNGE: Everybody wanted to see that plane land and take off?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. They wanted to -- it was just a courtesy thing with everybody.

JUNGE: How often did it get used?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Oh, gosh, when I was young, when I was the manager there were seven or eight landings everyday sometimes.

JUNGE: That many? Who would land there, for what reason?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, a lot of guys flying across country just stopped here. They were tired or flying or hungry or whatever. In some cases they landed because they needed some sort of mechanical assistance. Something wasn't quite right with the airplane.

JUNGE: Did you have aviation fuel out there? [00:47:00]

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. No fuel.

JUNGE: No fuel? So what if a guy was out of fuel?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well he'd have to go to Laramie I guess and get some. But that rarely happened. When the crop dusters

-- well sage spray and so forth -- came in here they'd always bring a fuel truck with them. But we didn't have facilities for fuel. There's no way. And you'd take a huge risk if you put a barrel of fuel up there and it condenses moisture in it and so forth. So we didn't deal with fuel.

JUNGE: What would the moisture do, if it condensed moisture?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Kill your engine. (laughter) It's heavier than -- water is heavier than the gasoline.

JUNGE: So you were maintaining the airport, that was your job.

And you ran a taxi service to the Virginian? [00:48:00]

MARVIN CRONBERG: To the Virginian or wherever else they wanted to go, yes.

JUNGE: Wait a minute, was your ranch nearby?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Our ranch is seven miles out here on the river but like I said, there's always somebody that would go up there. My mom would go up there a lot of times and pick people up. And there were a couple other people in town that were -- it was just a courtesy thing.

JUNGE: They didn't get paid for this?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. They would just go up there and give them a ride downtown or give them a ride back up.

JUNGE: Gosh. This is sort of like the epitome of a very very small airport, isn't it, in Medicine Bow?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: And it's unique in that respect, maybe?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, it's probably unique in that respect.

I've landed in a lot of small airports, a lot of them were like Medicine Bow. I mean they're just local people [00:49:00] that come out to the airport to see if you need anything or what's going on, generally. But I think it might have changed now, I haven't flown now for five or six years. But I don't know. It's just a courtesy thing.

JUNGE: You haven't flown for five or six years? Why not?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I have a hearing problem and although the AMA were approving my Medicaid -- my medical -- it concerned me because when you're going into a busy airport -- and I've flown into Denver and Phoenix, Salt Lake, a lot of different airports -- you've got to be able to hear everything that's going on. I was always concerned that I would -- if my hearing began to fail -- I was concerned that I wouldn't correctly interpret one of my instructions and, you know, smack somebody [00:50:00] or land on the wrong runway or do something. I always wore a headset and I could hear clearly with the headset but I just didn't want to take the chance, that's all.

JUNGE: What does it take to be a competent pilot?

MARVIN CRONBERG: A lot of common sense is basically what it takes. I had my own set of rules, for example, I think a lot of guys do. I would never fly if the wind was over 35 miles an hour because it's dangerous to do that, you can get in to downdraft and bounce off the ground. I had other rules about fuel. I had two tanks on that airplane and I would not ever fly beyond the point where each of them were down to a quarter of a tank. At that point, you find an airport. You cannot stretch that gasoline once it's gone [00:51:00]. (laughs) And once it's gone that little windmill stops turning.

JUNGE: I believe you're talking about the propeller.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. (laughter)

JUNGE: What's the biggest plane you've flown, or have you just flown that one plane that you --

MARVIN CRONBERG: Most of the time I flew my Comanche, which was a 250 horsepower Piper retractable.

JUNGE: What does that mean, retractable?

MARVIN CRONBERG: The gear came up. That makes it a little more complicated, especially if you forget to put the gear down when you're getting ready to land. You can get some awful scabs from that. (laughs)

JUNGE: You know, flying's pretty expensive these days it would probably be pretty hard to pay for everything now.

MARVIN CRONBERG: It would be a lot more expensive. I don't even know what aviation fuel is, probably over five bucks, I don't know. But when I was flying, it was \$3.50 to \$4 in a lot of places. [00:52:00]

JUNGE: You were a conservationist and you studied ecology. In '69, in the summer of '69, I worked for Big Horn Airways and I was a flagger. They were spraying sage and also spraying malathion in fields to kill the bugs. But why did they stop spraying sage, for what reason?

MARVIN CRONBERG: It became a rather large debate over whether that was a wise thing from an environmental standpoint because they were concerned that this stuff was going to wash into the water streams. And there was a dispute over whether you were supposed to do that. My training in agriculture and in ecology told me that the normal population -- for a piece of rangeland in Wyoming at least -- was a sagebrush population of 15%. If you had [00:53:00] more than that then what you had was an area that had been abused. I can tell you on a number of occasions when they sprayed -- and you probably noticed too -- that grass would come back like crazy and eventually the sagebrush would move back in to the general 15% population category. So I thought it a good thing and it was fairly limited and it was tightly controlled. So I didn't see the

hazard of it. The problem is, again with the environmental groups, is they think pesticides are bad, period, and it doesn't make any difference how controlled they are or how specific they are to certain genus species. They're bad. They kill people. I think it was that kind of pressure that forced the bureau of land management primarily -- forest service maybe, in some cases -- [00:54:00] forced them to abandon that as a means of increasing forage. And there's a general anti-livestock feeling right now, anyway. And there was back then. They've kicked most of the cattle out of the forest now and there are no sheep in the forest that I know of anymore. So I think the whole cultural change brought about, generally, by the environmentalists, in my opinion, is what's caused that. But, gosh, Mike, I've been on ranges that have been sprayed, the brush has been sprayed. You cannot believe how that grass comes back. You get a canopy on a sage bush and its roots go out in all directions and they just suck that moisture right out of the soil and put it in that plant. There's nothing left for grass to grow. When you kill that sagebrush that grass comes back wonderfully. [00:55:00] Then, of course after that you have to manage it right. You can't overgraze it. Again, there were at one time, 800-some thousand sheep in Wyoming and there were an additional 170-some thousand

cattle and in addition to that there were wild horses and ranch horses. And they pulverized areas. When you go west of Rock Springs, down toward Craig and so forth, there are areas that are nothing but sagebrush. Those areas have been badly overgrazed in the past and they've never really recovered and probably never will because of the sagebrush population.

JUNGE: So that's a statement about some of the people who are in ranching who weren't very good caretakers.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Right. [00:56:00] Right. I was always proud of my dad. The soil conservation service said the Cronberg ranch was the most under grazed ranch in Wyoming. And dad was very, very concerned about the maintenance of the rangeland. And we moved our sheep camps on a regular basis and we never, never let the shepherd continually herd his bunch over the same piece of ground day after day.

JUNGE: What's the -- now I've read this and read more than once, but what's the story of sheep with their pointy hooves and cropping close to the ground can really destroy the pen? That's BS?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Pure BS. If you put any animal, I don't care if it's a llama, or a cow, sheep, horse into a confined area they are going to graze that sucker [00:57:00] right down to the ground. And sheep are no

different. I know that was a story that went around and that was a total crock.

JUNGE: But it used to get people mad enough, cattlemen and sheep men, mad enough at each other to kill each other?

MARVIN CRONBERG: They did for a while, but that was stupidity, really. That was basically concern for "It's my grass and you can't have any of it" type thing. Especially during the day when it was open range, everybody could run everywhere.

JUNGE: Did your grandfather remember those days?

MARVIN CRONBERG: When granddad came here it was pretty well already being fenced off.

JUNGE: He probably was here when [Owen Wooster?] was here.

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, not quite. (laughs) It came along after that.

JUNGE: Well, let's see, how much time we got here? What time do you have to get out of here?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I'm supposed to be [00:58:00] gone by noon, a little before. What time is it?

JUNGE: It's 24, 25 after.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Eleven?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Actually, we have to be gone by 10:00 so we have to be there by noon.

JUNGE: All right. Well, I'll get out of here. How about can I plan 15 more minutes?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Oh, sure. No problem.

JUNGE: So when you think about (laughs) -- these two dogs are trying to get up on me.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Hon?

JUNGE: No it's OK. It's OK. It doesn't bother me a bit. This whole area in here declined when the interstate was filled. What's the population now, Medicine Bow?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Supposedly it's 284.

JUNGE: And the altitude is over six thousand, right?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Sixty-six, yes.

JUNGE: Sixty-six. So what's the future now for you and this airport and do you think it's going to happen [00:59:00] what you're looking at?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes, it's going to happen. I'm not sure whether I'll be around when it happens, but it'll happen. We're going after some major donors. We're going to talk to some of the major airlines who may have an interest in preserving the airway or at least a portion of it. And big companies like UPS and there are certain individuals, wealthy individuals that own fixed base operations, which is where you get gas and so forth when you land. We're

going to approach them and see if they would help us --  
hey!

ALOMA CRONBERG: I'm taking him in the other room with me.

JUNGE: I'd love to pet him but I'm thinking I would distract myself and you, too. What is unique about flying in Wyoming? Is this like -- you've landed in Pennsylvania, you've landed in Washington, DC, [01:00:00] and as you mentioned you've been to some of the bigger airports. Are there problems that are unique to Wyoming and flying or is -- are problems pretty much the same everywhere?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. First of all, this is pretty high-altitude flying. A lot of guys in the east and in the south, they never fly over three thousand feet high, they don't have to. Up here, you have to go 12 or 15 thousand to clear the terrain. I think weather's a big factor in this part of the country.

JUNGE: The wind blows a lot.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Wind blows a lot and these squalls that have been coming through the last -- they're killers. You take somebody from Texas that flies up here and they run into one of these squalls and they think well, I can make it through this. They don't make it, they ice up and crash because they're just not aware of [01:01:00] the danger that exists there.

JUNGE: Well you had two rules. One was to have enough gas and the other one was to not fly when the wind was over 35 miles an hour. Was that it pretty much? It's just an altitude thing and a wind thing? (loud crashing noise) Whoops, what was that all about?

ALOMA CRONBERG: The dogs.

JUNGE: Oh, OK. I think we're still recording.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Are we still recording?

JUNGE: Yes, we're still recording.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Honey, get Gizmo out of here.

ALOMA CRONBERG: I've got him. I'm taking him.

MARVIN CRONBERG: OK. Icing is a problem, of course. And I think that occurs anytime of the year in this country because if you get high enough, even in summer. You have to be careful of lightning, of course that occurs every place. One advantage of flying in this country is the visibility you have. You get east of the Mississippi and you can't see the ground from 1,500 feet. [01:02:00] It's just a general haze. But it's fairly easy to get lost in an airplane if you're not careful.

JUNGE: What would you do if you got lost in these surrounding hills?

MARVIN CRONBERG: If it was me I would simply turn -- tune my radio to a known point and then locate myself.

JUNGE: And if you didn't have that, if your radio failed?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Follow a road, I guess, see where it went.

(laughs)

JUNGE: Have you ever had to land in a pasture?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, I've never done anything like that.

JUNGE: Never had?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. Never wanted to.

JUNGE: What do you see as the -- there are problems like in Cheyenne, Casper, some of the major cities in this state with flying, they can't get enough passengers. What do you think the future is for flying in this state? Or what are the problems? Let's put it that way.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, [01:03:00] I don't think that -- with our current population of 550,000, I don't think that commercial flight is going to be a profitable reality unless it's subsidized in some way or another. We just don't have enough people. There have been a lot of start-ups in Wyoming and I applaud these people for the risks they're taking like Antelope Airlines and some of those little outfits. But they just can't seem to -- it just doesn't work for them. There's not enough travel.

JUNGE: There's a lot of people in Wyoming critical about the federal government and you've had some criticism yourself

because you've had to deal with people who were maybe not as on your same wavelength.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. True. (laughs) It's a good way to put it.

JUNGE: OK. I try to be diplomatic. But -- what was the question I was going to ask about these -- oh, [01:04:00] do you believe that the federal government ought to step in at this point and subsidize?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, it worked a lot better when they did. At least we had air service. We had air service in Casper -- well, we still got some there but some of these smaller towns, even Rock Springs and so forth, had air service when they were subsidized. As soon as they went -- they dropped those subsidies and went de-reg, most of those little outfits couldn't survive anymore. I don't know what your experience is, but if you try to fly from Denver or Laramie, it's going to cost you more than flying from Denver to Chicago, you know? (laughs)

JUNGE: Or Cheyenne. Yes. It's ridiculous. I could give you an example of my wife and I trying to fly to Denver so we could take a flight to get to Florida and it was ridiculous. [01:05:00] And we didn't want to pay it. But isn't it interesting, we've got this attitude in Wyoming where we don't want the government telling us what to do and we

don't want the government interference, too many rules and regs. But what you're saying, in a way, is it would help if we had the government interfere here.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, it would help if they could figure out some means of subsidizing these smaller airports. It would provide additional transportation for Wyoming and probably cheaper transportation. The question is where does that money come from? Do the taxpayers in Biloxi, Mississippi, want to pay for an airplane ride between Rock Springs and Cody, for example? I don't think they do.

JUNGE: So what would you do, if you were the king of the forest?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I would form a co-op, which would consist of several different [01:06:00] organizations or people and -- just like a flying club -- and you would spread the cost of that operation out and people who belong to the co-op would probably get certain benefits from it, discounts or whatever. But the expenses connected with maintaining these airplanes and keeping them safe it just eats those little airlines up because they can't get enough people on those planes to make it pay.

JUNGE: That's the point. That's the problem, right? You can't get the traffic on the planes, so if you had a co-op

or a club of some sort statewide, would the dues be enough to sustain the operations?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, I certainly think it would help. In my opinion, if you have businesses in a place like Cody or Sheridan that needed [01:07:00] flight service and they were willing to cooperatively partially fund that service in addition to the passenger revenue and the fuel revenue and so forth, then I think that it probably would be worth it to them. But I don't know. I'm just saying that flight clubs seem to work OK. Maybe that's the pattern, I don't know. You have to do certain things in order to keep an airplane in the air. That's one of the problems I ran into. I couldn't find anybody around here to do my annual inspection for me. I finally flew my plane to Torrington and a guy came over from Scottsbluff and he did one of my inspections for me. It's a problem just keeping an airplane airworthy and it's an expensive problem. And on a commercial airplane it's even more expensive, plus there's pilot training and all that stuff [01:08:00] that goes into it.

JUNGE: And now, according to what I heard in Cheyenne, that the pilots are needing more experience before they can get up in the air, which means they've lost some pilots, Great Lakes Aviation. They've lost pilots because they don't have

the kind of hours that the federal government is requiring and they don't want to mess with getting the hours or they can't get the hours so they lose their jobs.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Wow. That's interesting.

JUNGE: Yes it is.

MARVIN CRONBERG: There may be an overregulation factor here, too. I've always kind of felt that way. They made me take a flight medical examination every three years and I know a lot of instances where -- well, a few instances, at least -- where shortly after the medical examination the guy has a heart attack or something. I think that is a total waste of time. Unless you're at the point to [01:09:00] where you're practically debilitated, I don't see the purpose of it. I quit because I recognized my own disability.

JUNGE: But other people might not be as smart as you?

MARVIN CRONBERG: They shouldn't be flying.

JUNGE: Yes. Remember Kim Krueger? Does he fly?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I don't know, does he?

JUNGE: I don't know. I did an interview with him about 20 years ago down in Green Valley, near Tucson.

MARVIN CRONBERG: He's in Green Valley?

JUNGE: Well he was at that time. And I think -- actually, he was thinking about running for governor at one time. Did his property -- was his property adjacent to yours?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. His property was over by McFadden's.  
He was a heck of a nice guy.

JUNGE: Yes, I had a good interview with him. Do you know any  
pioneers or people I should be talking to in aviation?

[01:10:00]

MARVIN CRONBERG: You know, I think the ones that come to my  
mind are all gone. I wasn't really mixed up with the  
aviation community here. I can't remember the name of the  
guy, Marv Stevenson was the head of the aeronautics  
commission when I was flying. They used to -- I worked for  
the state of Wyoming for a while -- and they used to fly me  
around. Fact of the matter that's another thing that  
piqued my interest in flying. But one of their pilots, and  
I can't think of his name, he used to turn the controls  
over to me when we were going to one of my meetings or  
something, so I got a little experience in handling an  
airplane. But I don't know.

JUNGE: Marv -- who is Marv Stevenson, he was on the  
aeronautics commission?

MARVIN CRONBERG: He was the head of the aeronautics  
commission.

JUNGE: Is he still around?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I think he's still alive [01:11:00] in  
Cheyenne.

JUNGE: Marv Steven--

MARVIN CRONBERG: Stevenson.

JUNGE: S-T-E-V-E---

MARVIN CRONBERG: N-S-O-N, or S-E-N.

JUNGE: OK. All right. Have you had any -- what's been your most satisfying experience in a plane, Marvin?

MARVIN CRONBERG: In an airplane? Well, like I said, the most satisfying experience is flying in to a busy airport under instrument conditions and actually getting on the ground without getting your butt chewed out. (laughs) Where you going?

JUNGE: What's been the most horrific experience?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well, I think it was pretty tense that time I couldn't find that airport in Pennsylvania. That was the only time I got a little tensed up. My pucker string tightened considerably. (laugh)

JUNGE: Your pucker string?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I didn't know where that airport was!

(laughs) [01:12:00]

JUNGE: What is it about -- I'm curious because I'm going to ask everybody I talk to about this: what is it about flying that's so -- now, you said it was boring after a while -- but what is it about flying that's so fascinating to you or to any -- let's say to you?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I may have a little different viewpoint on this, I see flying as a practical way to get from point A to point B with -- in a lot less time. It's a convenience. I was not one of the pilots, like my father, for example, who flew just for the joy of flying. And I know a lot of my friends, that's why they fly. They never get more than one hundred miles from their home airport. But they love to go out and get in their plane and cruise around. That's fine, but flying was not a passion for me like it is for some people. It was a convenience and [01:13:00] a means to an end. So maybe that's why I thought that things could get boring.

JUNGE: Are you ever going to fly again? I mean, fly your own plane?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I don't know. I would fly an ultralight now if I had one.

JUNGE: You would? Aren't those pretty dangerous?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. I don't think any different than any other airplane, you just have to know the limitations.

JUNGE: Wouldn't you have to get into a snowmobile suit or something for one of those?

MARVIN CRONBERG: In this country, absolutely. And a helmet with a windscreen on it. No, they make them with canopy now. They're neat little outfits.

JUNGE: You know, I would love to talk to you some more about things like the Sunset Cottages. I interviewed the lady that owned those one time, she moved to Laramie. What was her name?

MARVIN CRONBERG: You're probably talking about --

JUNGE: Ruth somebody.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Dalgarn.

JUNGE: Ruth Dalgarn. Is she still alive?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No. Her daughter lives there.

JUNGE: What's going to happen to the Sunset Cottages

[01:14:00] on the Lincoln Highway?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I think that eventually -- I don't have much to do with this, frankly -- but I think eventually those things, somebody will purchase that ground and put something else there. Some sort of a highway-operated business.

JUNGE: Now see, I love those kind of things. There's only one other -- well, not one other -- but there's another set of Sunset Cottages in Evanston. And they've been sort of held together if not restored and there's a sign or series of signs out front that direct people to those cottages so you can take a look at how people used to travel.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Oh, I saw -- I read something about that.

JUNGE: I'd love to see these restored just about as much as you'd like to see the airport restored. Is that wrong thinking on my part?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, it's a possibility. The thing of it is is that the people currently in charge of the town of Medicine Bow [01:15:00] none of them have much of a deep history here. And so they don't have a penchant for historic development like I do and like some of the older people in town do. My opinion is that one of the reasons people come to Medicine Bow is strictly for the historical aspect of it. The romance of the name, the Virginian, Owen Wister, and all of that bundled together. So they come to this little western town and they expect to see a little western town and what they see is a dump and I think that's wrong. I'd like to see that changed. But you'd have to have a lot of -- you'd have to have a lot of people behind you to get something like that done.

JUNGE: You going to let me go fishing on your property some day?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Sure. Anytime you want to. You can fish out there [to the old waterwheel?] that's where the -- that's one the holes that have pretty good trout in them.

JUNGE: Really? This is in the Medicine Bow? [01:16:00]

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: OK. Well, I'll look you up maybe this summer.

(laughter)

MARVIN CRONBERG: Give me a call.

JUNGE: Well yes, it's been great.

MARVIN CRONBERG: I'm sorry. Did you get everything you need?

JUNGE: Yes, yes. Sure. Someday, I'd like to talk to you a little bit more about your family history and your ranching history because it sounds like you did a lot more than that but just the same, the Cronberg ranch was pretty significant to Wyoming history.

MARVIN CRONBERG: It was. The Cronbergs were pretty well known outfit for a hundred years.

JUNGE: Were you Germans? Cronberg?

MARVIN CRONBERG: No, Danish.

JUNGE: Danish?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes.

JUNGE: When did they first come to the country?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Granddad came here in 1886 as a 12-year-old boy and he actually went to Potter, Nebraska, because there was a little Danish community there. And he got a job cutting stones for a guy that built [01:17:00] rock houses.

JUNGE: We're done.

ALOMA CRONBERG: You might also mention Marvin has a book at the publishers now. He's adding some more footnotes to it.

It's the story of Medicine Bow. It's called *Good Medicine for the Bow* and it starts when this town started and it ends now. And it has -- how many pictures have you got in there?

MARVIN CRONBERG: I think there's 96.

JUNGE: Who's doing the publishing?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Friesen.

ALOMA CRONBERG: FriesenPress.

JUNGE: Friesen. Where is that?

ALOMA CRONBERG: It's in Canada.

MARVIN CRONBERG: They're out of Vancouver, actually.

ALOMA CRONBERG: British Columbia.

JUNGE: Good.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. They're guiding him through it and they told him he needs more footnotes in it. So he's going through now and putting more footnotes in it and that's going to take a long time because they're getting real picky about it.

MARVIN CRONBERG: I've been working on this thing for seven years.

ALOMA CRONBERG: This is the publication.

JUNGE: It's about an inch-and-a-half-thick manuscript.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. [01:18:00] And then this is page 10, so he's going through it page by page. They've already got the book on disk up there but --

JUNGE: When will I be able to buy a copy of this or when will public?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Summer. June, July something like that.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. Coe Library already -- we've already talked to them, they contacted us. I was a professional tailor in Laramie and I'm also a practical nurse, licensed practical nurse. But one of my clients ran Coe Library at the University of Wyoming and she said we want a copy of that as soon as it's done. And the state historical society, he got ticked off because somebody said there is no history in Medicine Bow.

JUNGE: Who said that?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Well --

ALOMA CRONBERG: It was in Ghost Towns of Wyoming. They said we're a ghost town.

MARVIN CRONBERG: We have 284 ghosts here. (laughter)

ALOMA CRONBERG: It's true.

JUNGE: Aloma, just before you go: when and where were you born?

ALOMA CRONBERG: I was born in [01:19:00] Stafford, Kansas, April 13th, 1943. Our birthdays are 13th and 14th of April.

We've been married six years now. I met Marvin seven years ago.

JUNGE: Really?

ALOMA CRONBERG: We're newlyweds. The oldest newlyweds in the country.

JUNGE: Well, congratulations! (laughter) Oldest newlyweds. I was born in 1943.

ALOMA CRONBERG: You're the same as me.

JUNGE: June.

ALOMA CRONBERG: June?

JUNGE: You got me by a couple of months.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Got you by a couple of months, yes. I have a granddaughter in April, a daughter in April, a son, and another granddaughter on the 28th of April. April's my month.

JUNGE: It must have been some special month nine months before.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. It's either really hot or really cold, one of the two. (laughter)

JUNGE: OK. Well I know you guys got to go. By the way, you said you've only been married seven years?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Six. Six years September 30th. We've known each other seven years.

JUNGE: From Medicine -- you're living in Medicine Bow?

ALOMA CRONBERG: I lived in Lincoln, Nebraska, for 47 years and I had been single [01:20:00] for 20 years, I was never getting married again as far as I was concerned and my sister introduced me to Marvin when I came up -- she lives in Rock Springs -- came up to visit her, and the rest is history. Put myself through nursing school in that 20-year period and did all kinds of things.

JUNGE: Are you retired now?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. I gave up my nursing license a year ago this last December. I was 69 years old when I retired.

JUNGE: So how many kids do you have between you then?

ALOMA CRONBERG: We have seven.

JUNGE: Seven kids.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. I have two daughters and two sons. He has three daughters.

JUNGE: See, it'd be handy to have a plane, just so you could go visit everybody.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Oh yes.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. I sometimes regret that, but I still think you got to really be on things when you fly and if you're not flying enough then you forget little things and there's some things like switching fuel tanks that you can't forget about. [01:21:00]

JUNGE: Yes, and do you find, like me, that you start forgetting things?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Oh, yes. I look at nursing things now, and I've only been out of it a year and a half, and I can't believe what I don't know already.

JUNGE: Or maybe just even remembering what you learned.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Absolutely. I kept an anatomy book the other day -- we were going through the house and getting rid of things we don't need -- and I kept an anatomy book the other day and Marvin said, "I don't think you need that anymore." And I said, "Yes, I do. I have to look stuff up every once in a while." And I do.

JUNGE: For what reason?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Just for my own knowledge, or if somebody in the family gets sick or if I forget, like I got my old lab books so I can look up the lab tests and everything and remember the values.

JUNGE: Do you guys have a computer here?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Oh, we've got three of them.

JUNGE: What kind of service do you get here?

MARVIN CRONBERG: Good.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Very good.

JUNGE: Really?

MARVIN CRONBERG: We have Vistabeam.

JUNGE: Oh, so you got a dish?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Yes. Well, Vistabeam, they came in here from Norfolk, isn't that where they're headquartered, in Nebraska? [01:22:00] Or is it Scottsbluff?

ALOMA CRONBERG: No, they're in Nebraska. Norfolk, Nebraska.

MARVIN CRONBERG: Anyway, they put a broadcast station in here and it's really good.

JUNGE: Is that what most of the people here have?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. I've even got a smartphone. It's smarter than me. (laughter)

JUNGE: I know. My wife knows more about my phone than -- I got it in my pocket but I don't know how to work it really.

ALOMA CRONBERG: I had two weeks when I didn't get any incoming calls, my first two weeks. And I thought I set something wrong. And I went in, she said, "Oh, you did this." Click. Done. (laughter)

MARVIN CRONBERG: This is my phone. It's old-fashioned.

ALOMA CRONBERG: I gave him my old phone.

JUNGE: It's all you need.

ALOMA CRONBERG: I gave him my old phone because he didn't think he wanted a smartphone.

MARVIN CRONBERG: I dropped one of them in the river and I stomped another one and so I just --

ALOMA CRONBERG: Oh, that's another thing around here. Even if the dog eats it, which he did with his hearing aids not too long ago and he got my glasses, the schnauzer is a puppy. Or, it gets dropped in the river, dropped down a well, [01:23:00] ground under some piece of equipment. (laughs) He goes, "I can't believe it!"

JUNGE: Where did you live before this?

ALOMA CRONBERG: I lived in Lincoln, Nebraska. I had an alteration shop there for quite a few years. I started being a professional seamstress in 1967 and I did the work for Tom Devaney -- or Bob Devaney, Tom Osborne, University of Nebraska, Governor Orr, Governor Exon, I had five employees and needed 20-something stores.

JUNGE: Why did you give it up?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Well, I wanted to be a nurse. I had been a CNA when I was a kid and I wanted to be a nurse. So after I got my divorce, my kids graduated from high school, we all went to college at the same time.

JUNGE: How do you adjust to Medicine Bow from Lincoln?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Not easy. (laughter) Total cultural shock. I come from a town of 300,000 people, up here it's like.

JUNGE: Do you go back once in a while?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. I went back right after Christmas and I'm going back this summer. My son's a doctor in

[01:24:00] Omaha and my daughter-in-law owns a company called Veer Health and Wellness Center. So I'm going to go back and take some of Kim's classes. They do acupuncture, hypnosis, and with that hypnosis is called hyp-yoga, they have a yoga store. And I'll tell you, that hypnosis and yoga combined you can lose a lot of weight.

JUNGE: Really?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes. (laughs)

JUNGE: Well I can see by your pink shirt too that you're a Big Red fan.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Oh, absolutely.

JUNGE: You can't have worked for Devaney and Tom Osborne --

ALOMA CRONBERG: Tom Osborne and not be a Big Red fan. I'm not a great fan of their coach now.

JUNGE: Bo Pelini?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Bo Pelini. He jumps up and down and screams and looks too mean all the time. I wouldn't let my boys go to a football camp with him because I don't want them learning a lot of new language.

JUNGE: Don't you think they'll -- oh, a new language.

(laughter)

ALOMA CRONBERG: If they were little.

JUNGE: Don't you think it would make difference to Nebraskans if he won or not?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. It's just not working out. [01:25:00] Tom, well he came out to Nebraska Heart Institute -- and I also worked there -- and he came out to Nebraska Heart Institute, Dr. Gangahar did a bypass surgery on him several years ago and when they opened Nebraska Heart Institute, a new hospital, he said, I would like to thank Deepak Gangahar for saving my life a few years back. And then when one of our athletic directors left, Tom took over as athletic director for quite a few years. We've got a different one now.

JUNGE: Then he went to Congress.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Yes.

MARVIN CRONBERG: What else is there in Nebraska besides their football team?

ALOMA CRONBERG: Nothing.

JUNGE: Corn? (laughter)

ALOMA CRONBERG: Hey, wait a minute.

JUNGE: OK. We'd better knock this off.

ALOMA CRONBERG: I'm sure there's something else besides football.

JUNGE: There is. There's the Lincoln Highway, don't forget that.

ALOMA CRONBERG: That's right. I am also a Cowboys fan now. So when they had the Cowboys playing Nebraska the first

time up here, I took [01:26:00] a red shirt and a brown shirt, Wyoming and Nebraska, put them together, and I wore a red and a brown shoe because my kids came up here and we had a tailgate party. They're all dressed in red and Marvin's all dressed in brown. I was neutral.

JUNGE: Pretty hard to be neutral, isn't it?

ALOMA CRONBERG: I know, it is when you don't dare to yell for anybody. You just sit there quietly during the game.  
(laughter)

JUNGE: I remember that game because I went to that game.

ALOMA CRONBERG: That was a fun game.

JUNGE: A lot of people from Nebraska. Oh, excuse me. I didn't go to that one, I went to the one from Texas. There were some good people there. Good fans.

ALOMA CRONBERG: Nebraska it was plum packed because we got the panhandle just right over here. All the people that normally don't get to go to university games could get here for a game.

JUNGE: And it's only -- from Cheyenne to Lincoln it's only five hundred miles. You guys got to get going. So thank you for inviting me into your home here. Marvin, again, thanks very much.

MARVIN CRONBERG: You bet. I'm sorry we had to shorten this up. [01:27:00]

ALOMA CRONBERG:       Sorry my dogs stomped all over your [naval  
                          candle?].

JUNGE:        It's OK.  I brought an extra one.

ALOMA CRONBERG:       That's good.

                          END OF AUDIO FILE