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Roger Savage interviewed by Floyd Cowles, June 14, 1984, for the Smokejumper Oral History Project. OH #133-95.

FC This is Floyd Cowles interviewing Roger Savage on June 14, 1984, at his home in Missoula, Montana. Roger could you give me a brief autobiography of yourself?

RS Well, I was a... I've lived in western Montana all my life... born in Kalispell. Grew up in Hamilton, and finished the high school in 1955 and then came down to the University, here in Missoula, and finished school at the University in 1960. I started smokejumping in 1957 and last year I jumped was 1966. I had 2 years off there... 1962 and 1964 that I missed, I was in the military.

FC What do you do now?

RS I am a pilot for United Airlines. Started work with United in 1966 and have worked with United for the last 17 1/2 years.

FC Did smokejumping help you get into this job?

RS Well, it did, yes. Being around aviation with the jumpers there, got me interested in flying. So, I joined the military and, ah... more like joined the National Guard... the Montana National Guard, actually. And went to different schools and finally got into their flight school, and I got into flying. Being around the jumper base I was around helicopters quite a bit and that's what I really wanted to do was fly helicopters. My intent was to fly helicopters because at that time when I was jumping, ah, you could only jump until you were 40 and then you would have to quit or do something else, and I enjoyed jumping enough that I was thinking about making a career out of it except for that 40 era. So, I was looking at a different occupation and flying seemed to fit right in. So I went into the military and flew and then I was still jumping and going to the guard, and flying on weekends, and things like that. But, it was also a 1966... was the year that the airlines were hiring and they happened to come through Missoula. I ended up going down for an interview and I got on at the airlines rather than following the bush pilot type of flying.

FC You started jumping in '57, did you work for the Forest Service before?

RS Yes, I got on with a private corporation, Northern Montana Forestry Association, right out of high school. I wasn't old enough to work with the Federal Government yet, but I worked the summer of '55 for Northern Montana Forestry Association on a lookout... Blacktail lookout up above Flathead Lake. Then in 1956, I worked for the Flathead Forest as a survey... on a survey crew.

FC What got you actually interested in jumping? How did you apply there? Did some friend tell you about it, or what?
RS No, I think, ah... like I say, I grew up down in Hamilton and so I knew a little bit about jumping. I think that one thing that really got me interested was watching the movie, "Red Skies Over Montana." I think I was a junior, or senior in high school, when I saw that. I knew that I wanted to get into smokejumping. I did a lot of hiking up in the mountains there in Hamilton when I was in high school. I was a member of the Boy Scouts and I did a lot of hiking and got looking at the Smokejumpers and geez, they jumped into the places that I wanted to go and they didn't have to pack their packs up there. I was pretty small at that time... when I was in high school and I used to carry these heavy packs and that sounded pretty appealing to me. Plus the fact that they didn't have to pack them all the way out sometimes. You just pack the gear out to the nearest trail and then they could hike on out to the ranger's station. That was pretty appealing. Plus, they got paid for it. And so I thought that was something I could really enjoy.

FC Can you discuss some of your experiences in 1957 when you started? Start out with your training... types of training, your training jumps and so on.

RS OK. That goes back quite a ways and I have a little tough time remembering all of the training era. I remember I enjoyed the whole 4 weeks. It was just an enjoyable job to me. And, ah....

FC That was at the Airial Fire Depot, after it had been dedicated?

RS Yeah, right... 1957 and, ah... [interruption]... I remember more than anything else, a few of the first jumps. My first jump I was out of the Travelaire. Like, just about all the practice jumps, they... everybody would kick in a $1.00 to a pot and the one that was the closest to the pot would win all the money. I think we had about 30... 35 jumpers in our class that year. I remember my first jump, I was coming down and I had a real good shot at getting the pot. I was guiding right down, right to the spot. And at that time, they had a procedure that when you get down close to the ground, you take you hands off the guidelines and put them on the risers and I was coming right down into the spot and I took my hands off the guidelines and put them on the risers and my chute changed about a 45 degree and sent me away from the spot, and I actually came in second and I... well, second doesn't buy you much from a pot like that. So, I remembered that. That was on Upper Sherman. We had, like, a couple jumps up there and then we jumped down in Lower Sherman and a couple on a ridge over by O'Brien Creek... timber jump which I don't think I hung up. That's probably why I don't remember it, too much. They were all just, a lot of fun. You just looked forward to going out and making that next jump.

FC Were you or any of the other jumpers on the first training jumps, injured?
RS There was, ah, 1 or 2 fellows that broke their leg jumping. I think the first day, there was a fellow that broke his leg and then on another jump. Those were the only 2 that I can remember.

FC What about training other than parachutes, what sticks out in your mind?

RS I just thoroughly enjoyed it. I went there, I knew you had to be in good shape and I was in good shape. I just kind of relaxed and just enjoyed the whole program. I can't remember any of the details but I do know I thoroughly enjoyed their 4 weeks of training there.

FC How about the tower or the obstacle course and some of the other physical fitness projects.

RS I don't really have any outstanding recollections.

FC What about fires in '57 then? How about your first fire jump?

RS Well, that was over on the Nez Perce. It was a two man fire which, you just couldn't ask for a much nicer fire than that. It was near Fish Lake down in the Dixie area. We... Al Cramer [Albert], was spotting out of the Travelaire, I believe or maybe a Twin Beech, I can't remember. But we jumped across the canyon from the fire because there wasn't a very good jump spot near the fire. So, Bill Murphy [William], and I were the two on the fire, and we jumped and gathered up our gear and took it down to the bottom of the canyon. Then we hiked on up to where the fire was and put the fire out. The part I really remember is, coming out of there, we hiked out to a lookout and there was road up to the lookout and, ah, Dixie Ranger Station had sent a pickup up to us... up to the lookout, to pick us up. Going back to Dixie, we went through a little old ghost town called Orogrande that I was really impressed with. First time I had ever been to a ghost town and kind of drove through there. Then we went on back to Dixie and there was a crew of about another 16 jumpers, that had just come off the Salmon fire... Salmon River fire and so, they took us up with... I believe it was a Ford Trimotor, I'm not sure... anyway, they flew us back to Missoula.

FC Any other particular fire jumps in '57?

RS Well, the next one I had was another two manner. It was on up at the head end of Bear Creek in the Bitterroots. Bob Herold [Robert], and I jumped on that. I remember he was... he'd been out partying the night before. We were jumping out of a Twin Beech and about the time we were about to jump out of the airplane, he got sick as a dog and so I went first. As I came down into the jump spot, I heard something bark. Like a dog bark, you know. Well, what it was was an elk barking down there. I never did see it but that had to be what it was because I've heard elk do that a lot of times since... the cows anyway. Then
Bob came out and he was well after a couple of hours and we went over and put out the fire and hiked on out. I think that year, I had about 7 fire jumps.

FC Any other fires that stick out in your mind... jump fires?

RS Ah, let me think for just a minute. [Interruption]. The... I think about the fourth fire I jumped, was over in the Nez Perce also, a fire called Archer Point. It was down by Shearer Guard Station up pretty high off the river. There was 4 of us that jumped on that. I remember coming off that fire all dirty and hot, and we were coming down to the Selway River and jumping in the river and cooling off. That was the highlight of the fire. Then we hiked on out to Shearer Guard Station. Probably one of the best fires I ever had, was the last fire of the '57 season. It was a late fall fire. Everybody had gone back to school and it was actually on the 27th of September that they called us out of school. We went up to the Flathead on the Grimpley Park fire. It was a fire that had been started by a hunter and it was started right down on the creek bottom and [had] just gone clear to the top of the ridge. It was just a nice beautiful fall weather and the temperature was great. It wasn't too hot or anything and it was just delightful being around that beautiful country. I think there must have been around 16 of us that jumped up there and then they hiked in a bunch of the Blackfeet Indians. My job on that was just picking up all the cargo that they dropped in there. It was a project fire and they dropped in a lot of cargo. It was hard work but it was just really enjoyable, and I just remember that. Then to top that off, it was just, oh... I think we hiked out about 22 miles down to Sceafer Meadows where we were flown back to Missoula. But, it was a nice hike and just beautiful country there. And that's about all I remember of that year.

FC Did you have any project fire assignments that year, not necessarily jumping... jump fires?

RS Ah, no. I can't think of any.

FC ... As a crew? How about project work on Districts?

RS I was very fortunate. I, ah... coming from western Montana, I knew all the good projects, you know. And some of the jumpers didn't have that advantage, they were from out of state and everything. So, whenever they asked people to go on projects to certain places, I was always volunteering for what, I thought, was really good projects, and I was able to get them.

FC You're talking about location geographically speaking, not necessarily the type of project?

RS Yeah. Well, I liked areas that would get you back into the wilderness areas, you know, like Big Prairie.

FC Trail maintenance, telephone lines?
RS Yeah, that type of project work. And so, during my career I ended up in Big Prairie. I remember spending a couple of weeks at Spotted Bear, a week at Schaefer Meadows and Black Bear, and 4 weeks at Moose Creek one year. Then other projects were... had a real nice project over at Red Ives where we were building helicopter spots. We stayed at a lookout and just went around... had the elk... or not the elk, but the goats, coming right up to the lookout and everything. It was a good project. Had a project at, ah... Seeley Lake. Nine Mile was a good project because there you were actually doing work just like you were working out on the ranch. You were out bailing. It was always varied. It wasn't always, you know, doing the same thing. All the different projects, you'd go out and one place, you be trail work and other places you would be fixing telephone line. And like I say, the next place, you might be bailing hay or something. It was always varied and never getting monotonous. So, I always enjoyed a project.

FC Do any of your supervisors stick out. Do you still remember them pretty much, or were you mostly under a squad leader, or foreman, for the jumper outfit?

RS When we went out on projects?

FC Yeah.

RS No, we weren't. One of us that went to project, would be in charge and, ah....

FC Then you'd be working for the Fire Management Officer for the District?

RS Yeah, usually. One project that was interesting, was we worked up in Glacier Park. And it was interesting in that... Glacier... it was West Glacier that we worked at, and they had had some problems with their sawyers up there. They were bickering back and forth. And so, the project... one of the people in charge up there had decided that they'd just not use their own sawyers and so they were going to call the jumpers up there and use them. Well, we went up there and little did they know, we didn't have very much experience with a chainsaw and here we were... our project was to saw down some of these big trees that were growing around their houses there and their administration buildings. And they were big trees, you know. If they had realized how little experience [chuckle] that we had had, they would never have had us up there doing that.

FC You mean you didn't drop one on somebody's head?

RS Well, as a matter of fact, we did fall one across the telephone lines and it pulled all the lines out of the houses for about 3 houses in each direction. That was kind of interesting but it was really good work. We enjoyed. Like you say, we didn't fall anything across any of the houses so I guess we
didn't do any real harm, but for them to substitute us for some real professionals, that was an error on their part.

FC How about the fire season in 1958?

RS '58, ah...

FC Anything in the training... refresher training that sticks out? [Interruption].

RS The... '58, ah, refresher training, we had two refresher jumps. One of them was out of the Ford Trimotor and the other one I had was out of the DC-3. Then I got sent to Moose Creek for project work. The work we were doing at that time was extending one of the runways at the end of the... we were cutting the timber at the end of the runway so that it could give it a little longer landing to it. All we had was just cross cuts. We'd go out there and cut down all these trees. Finally the last few days we were there they gave us a couple chain saws. But we got our exercise there and it was all good work.

FC What did you think of Moose Creek the first time you landed there?

RS Ah....

FC You weren't a pilot at that time?

RS No. No, I didn't become a pilot until '65 but, ah, as far as the strip goes and everything?

FC Um hm.

RS I think the one thing that impressed me more than anything else was the approach down through the canyon going upstream on the Selway. The old planes would come down that canyon. It's pretty narrow and you'd just wonder if those tips of the wings weren't going to hit the canyon sometimes. But, the pilots all knew what they were doing, so, we never had any problems. My first experience with horses was on that project. I... we went up out of Moose Creek there about oh... 10 or 15 miles and stayed at a cabin and we were working trail. We had a packer that packed us up there, and he was supposed to stay with us. There was 4 of us jumpers, and he and his wife. And the first day that we were in there we went out and cleared trail. Then we came back to the cabin and the horses were there but the packer had up and quit. He just walked out. He had had some dispute with the Ranger or something, he just decided to quit. So, that left us with the horses. And once again, we were very unexperienced with horses and I knew what he did the night before. He put the horses across the creek, and that's all I knew what he did. So, I did the same thing that night. Well, you know what happened. All the horses were gone the next morning [chuckle] and they ended up back in Moose Creek. Anyway, we stayed up there the rest of the week and cleared trail and then we went back to Moose
Creek on the weekend. But the horses were there about 4 days ahead of us. An interesting thing that happened, I remember they called us back to Missoula and they were going to send a Ford Trimotor in for us. We were sitting there and waiting for the Ford to come in and there were also 3 jumpers that were working up at Shearer and they came down the trail about the time the Ford was coming in, and so they went back to Missoula with us. But, they told an interesting story. They were working for a guy that was... oh, he was in charge of the guard station there at Shearer. He was working for the Moose Creek District. He was an older fellow and he was a pretty hard nosed guy. He expected a full hard days work out of everybody. These jumpers that were up there... their names were Hewitt [Dr. Robert W.], and Picket and Fischer [Herbert ?]. They were all good jumpers and get them on a fire, they'd work real hard, but out on District they weren't gonna, you know, break their backs. Well, this Shearer employee, the fellow in charge there. He got mad at them, and he told them... he called them in one day and he told them that either they put their heart into their work or down the road they were gonna go. So, the next day, they were supposed to build a hole for an outhouse. So, they went out there and they dug a heart shaped hole. [chuckle] And so when this fellow saw that hole, he just didn't have any sense of humor and he just sent them on down the road and that's about the time they came into Moose Creek there, and they caught the Ford back with us. With the fire bust and everything going, they didn't get in much trouble back in Missoula. So, that was, ah... then we going out on a fire, and my first fire that year was up on Whitecap Creek in the Bitterroot. It was a two man fire. We jumped out of the Ford. Then the next fire was back in the Bitterroot again. It was up on Prospect Ridge, which is just up off the Salmon River and there was... I think there was 6 of us jump there. A fellow by the name of Cooper landed and broke a couple of ribs so, we built a helicopter spot for him. If I remember right, and they took him out by chopper. And also, Herb Oertli [Herbert M.], did something to his little toe when he jumped. He spent the whole time, ah... one day he'd hop around there saying his little toe was broken and the next day he'd say, "No, no, it's just sprained." Well anyway, he walked out of there 27 miles, so, I guess it wasn't too awfully bad. But it was, ah... we walked 27 miles out to McGruder. I think that was probably about the longest walk out I ever had. Saw a few mountain sheep on the way. [Pause]. One of the next fires I had was Doris Mountain fire, which was on the Flathead. It was right up on the side of the mountain in the Flathead Valley, just right across from the airport. I know the people that ordered the jumpers, they sat right down in their office there in Kalispell and watched us jump. There was 2 of us, and we put the fire out and came on down the next day.

FC '58 wasn't a particularly severe fire season, then?

RS No, I think I only had about, ah, 4 or 5 fire jumps that year.
FC Most of them were two manners?

RS Yeah.

FC You didn't get any project fires that year?

RS Ah, I did have one 16 man fire, looking at my log book here, but I can't remember... just a minute... [interruption]... Well, I did have one fire that was a project fire. Once again, it was at the... after we had all quit for the season and they called us back. It was the on 11th of September and it was a fire over in the Okanogan Forest, over in Washington. We went over there and landed in Winthrop, I believe it was. We went from there up to the fire. We had a Winthrop spotter and I remember the fire because it was a real good jump spot but for some reason, each time he'd carry us too far and everybody was landing in the rocks. It was the choice of either the rocks or some small snags there. And I remember, I came down, and one was as bad as the other. There wasn't much of a choice there, snags or rocks are both dangerous. I lit in the snag, and unknown to me, the base of that snag was burning. And when I hit the snag, the chute pulled the tree over, and I went down, hit the ground. And then the snag came over on top of me and fortunately the top of that snag was a school marm... it was a v-type top and each side of that "v" came... or that top of that tree came down on both sides of me, and didn't even touch me.

FC That's miraculous. You're lucky.

RS Yeah, I felt very fortunate, like somebody was looking out after me. I know Robin Twogood came down right next to me and landed in the rocks the next stick out. And he hit his ankle... broke it up pretty good, so, it wasn't a... I think out of about 16 of us, there was only 2 people that went into that meadow and there really wasn't that much wind. It was probably the worst job of spotting I've ever seen. One other thing I remember about that fire, is that they brought a lot of pick up fire crewmen, a lot of wino's out of Spokane up on there and walked them in or helicoptered them in, that's what they did. That was the first experience I had had with anything like that but it was a total waste. They just weren't worth a damn and in fact one of them had a... I think he had a heart attack up there and had to be taken out. That was the last fire of the '58 season that I was on.

FC Any incidence beyond fires or jumping in '58 come to mind?

RS No. Not that I haven't already mentioned.

FC How about 1959 fire season?

RS OK. Looking at my log book here, I had 2 practice jumps that year, both out of the DC-3. Then it was a pretty slow year. Only 3 fire jumps that I had that year. All of them were, ah... actually all of them were in Idaho... St. Joe, Nez Perce, and
Salmon. The Salmon fire, I can remember, that was the... in August, 17th, and it was down on... it wasn't in Region 1, it was in Region 4. It was not too far from Salmon, Idaho. It was a pretty good sized fire and I remember sleeping on the ground there. I don't know if I recall it, but I remember the next morning the other guys talking about feeling the earth shake. That was the day that they had the earthquake over at West Yellowstone.

FC That was August... what did you say... August 18th?

RS Yeah, that was August 17th that we jumped there. I think that would probably be the 17th or 18th that that happened. But, that was the only... that's only a memory of the fires I had that year.

FC How about 1960 then? It should have picked up a little bit.

RS OK, yeah. In 1960, I was squad leader that year. [Pause]. I had 3 practice jumps that year, all out of the DC-3. Ah... my first fire jump that year was early in July... the 3rd of July which was on Welcome Creek on the Lolo Forest right here near Missoula, up the Rock Creek. I remember that was the first time I had ever hung up on a big old tree.

FC Did you have any trouble getting down?

RS No... no, they always taught us pretty well how to get out of those trees. We had a 100 feet of jump rope and you'd skinny down pretty fast. Then, the next fire I had was, ah... 1960 was a real barn burner. It was a real hot year and a lot of fires. The next fire I had was a large fire over in the Nez Perce by Riggins. It was called Cow Creek fire and, ah, we jumped on it. It was a dry old hillside that we jumped on and it was mainly a grass fire. But, they also had a fire nearby a up in the Seven Devils Area that some of the jumpers from Missoula jumped on and also Grangeville. Then they helicoptered some of us up there to help them out.

FC Was that a large project fire... in Seven Devils?

RS Ah, wasn't real large, I don't believe.

FC About that time, I was on one... the Seven Devils... 6... 7... 800 acres. Real steep and they dropped paracargo and it rolled down the hill a quarter of the mile. But, that's pretty steep country, wasn't it.

RS No, this wasn't... this was real high up and it wasn't that steep as I remember it. Then on the 14th of July, I jumped on the Bitterroot again, over on the Burnt Fork area on the east side of the Bitterroots. That was interesting in that, Hugh Fowler and I were the first two out of the airplane. I think it was out of the DC-3. There was a little meadow that Al Cramer was spotting us into and as we came down, we could see elk down
in the meadow. Both Hugh and I started to yelling. You know, to... because there was some bulls in there and we didn't want our chutes to get hung up on those antlers or anything and, ah, so we started yelling but they didn't spook any. They didn't know where the sound was coming, I guess and they just stayed right there until we were almost down into the meadow and they saw us, I guess, and they took off. But, it was interesting. It makes something memorable if you got some wildlife in there, it seems like. [Pause]. Then, ah, we jumped a fire in Lolo, which I can't remember too much about. Then on the 19th of July, I jumped on a fire over in the Nez Perce again, on what was called Meadow Creek #1. There was 3 of us that jumped on it. I remember landing in a alpine fir and it was a fairly tall alpine fir. My chute came down over the top of that tree... a alpine fir is very skinny at the top and when my chute hit the top of that tree, it broke out the top of it, and collapsed and came on down. Well, when that happened, my feet ended up above my head so I was... my head was down....

FC Inverted... upside down?

RS Yeah... It was upside down. The chute caught on a tree again and it broke out again and it did that about 3 times. Each time it would break my fall. I'd stop and then the chute... tree would break and I'd start falling some more so I wasn't coming down very fast, but when I finally hit the ground, I hit the trail... I actually hit on the trail on my head. It wasn't any injury or anything because, like I say, I wasn't going very fast, but it was kind of unique. [Pause]. The next fire was over on the Helena fire, ah, Stemple Creek.

FC That's out of Lincoln... between Lincoln and Helena?

RS OK.

FC Nothing on that fire?

RS Ah, I got in my remarks here that, ah, Bates had a concussion, Graff [Dale E.] had a broken vertebrae, and that we came out the same day. Also, the very tricky winds, so... it sounds like it....

FC Two injuries out of how many jumpers?

RS Ah, it was out of a DC-3, so, there could have been, probably 16. But you get over on that Helena country and a lot of times it is tricky winds over there... you get in the afternoon. The next fire jump was 29th of July, was back in the Bitterroot town at Black Bear. It was, ah, up the Skalkaho, and it was, oh... within about 2 miles of where I'd been on several scout camps. This country I knew very well. We jumped on that and one fellow... Severs, he broke his ankle on that fire. What happened, I remember, he hung up in a tree and his chute was... hadn't hung over the tree, it was just caught on the side, and so he fell on down to the ground there and hit pretty hard.
FC Did you have any blow up fires that year that you were on?

RS Later in the year, ah, well, my last fire we had one, when we were down in California.

FC [Inaudible]?

RS Yeah, we had one blow up at the end of the year and I'll get to that a little bit further down the line here. On the 13th of August, they... I went on a rescue. I think it was the only rescue that I ever went on, like... of this nature, where I jumped into it. But it was a situation down in East Fork of the Bitterroot where a couple of... I think there were probably 3 forest employees that were working trail or actually building trail, up the East Fork of the Bitterroot. They were about 10 miles back from the road. They were up near Ripple Lake. A couple of the fellows decided that they were going to set a trap for a bear that had been getting into their garbage dump. They had some dynamite, that they were using to blast trail. So, they took this dynamite and using a mouse trap, they were rigging up a trap for the bear. But, somehow, the dynamite went off in their face as they were setting the mouse trap. I remember we got there just at dusk. We could just barely see the ground and there was about 6 of us. Al Hammond [Albin], I believed, was in charge. We jumped in there and when we got to these 2 fellows, they were laying there on the ground and one of them had quite a few of his fingers blown off and that was about the worst of his injuries. But, the other fellow... I looked at his face and he was... I couldn't even recognize him as a face. His nose was split and was peeled back on both sides. We gave him a cigarette and smoke would just come out through his cheeks, and different parts of his face. But, he was a real tough customer because he didn't seem to panic, or go into shock or anything. One thing that probably helped him a lot was that one of the fellows that jumped in with us was Dick Carpenter [Roy] and Dick knew this fellow. He worked with him, and Dick's kind of a cool calm collected guy anyway, and he seemed to calm him down quite a bit. Al Hammond worked with him all night, giving him first aid and plasma....

FC And demerol, I suppose?

RS Demerol, yeah. And myself and several of the other jumpers went over and built a helicopter spot. Then the next morning, they came in with a helicopter and got both of these men out to the hospital in Missoula.

FC It wasn't fatal for any of these?

RS Both of them survived and the one fellow that was so bad off that I said had a nose split... he also had an eyeball that was hanging out. I guess that they gave him an artificial eye. He looks... I've never seen him but I've heard that he came out of it real good.
FC Pretty hard way to learn a lesson.

RS Yeah, sure is. [Pause]. The fire season ended in Montana, I believe, in August that year. We didn't have too many fires after that. But anyway, they sent a lot of us... I don't know how many, about 16 of us, down to California for some late fall fires, that actually went clear into October.

FC Redding or where abouts?

RS Into Redding, is where we went to, yeah. We had several... let me see, I had actually... had 1... 2... 3... 4... 5... 6... 7 fires down there in California during September and October.

FC One of those blew up?

RS The last one of the year that I had down there was one that was in the brush. It was caused by a hunter. He got lost and he just didn't know what else to do, so, he wanted to signal for help. So he started some brush on fire and that really took off. We jumped up on top of the ridge. I think there were probably about a dozen of us and....

FC Was this in Chaparelle?

RS I believe it was Chaparelle, or Mansanita, probably. Anyway, the fire took off and came right up and burned up 9 of our jump gear.

FC It didn't burn anybody?

RS None of... no, we were out of the way.

FC How large of fire was that before it was controlled?

RS Well, geez that's... I can't remember how large it was but it was oh... I'd say 6... 700 acres... something like that, anyway... probably larger. Some of the other fires they had down there were... well, I can remember one of the others where we jumped on a fire. There was 3 or 4 of us, and we fought the fire and then some ground personnel came in and they told us to hike on out. So, we started hiking and it was almost dusk when we started hiking and for some reason we didn't have any flashlights. I can't remember why, but anyway, we were hiking down in the dark and brush was so thick when we got down towards the bottom there, that it was just miserable. I remember, ah, Brown walking across a log and he stepped off the log and he just hung up in all this brush with this heavy old pack on his back and it took him about 10 minutes to get out of that mess. It was just miserable. But we went about 10 feet further and found the trail and everything got rosy after that. [Pause]. One fire we jumped on down there was right on the Trinity Reservoir. They were clearing some brush and... for the reservoir that was being built then, and, ah, it got away from them, so, we jumped on
FC Anything about that fire that sticks in your memory?
RS No... no.

RS But, let me back up just a minute. One thing it does ring a bell here... on my first fire down in California, we jumped on the Shasta Trinity on a fire called Butcher Knife fire. We got down to the fire and put the fire out and we started looking at the map and nothing connected. They had given us the wrong map for the area we were going to... first time we had ever been in California. So, here we were [chuckle]... didn't have a map or anything. Fortunately when we were jumping we remembered seeing a lookout as we were circling to jump. So, we headed back towards where that lookout was and we got up there. There was actually a gal up there on the lookout and she pointed us in the right direction from there. I think maybe she gave us a map, even. So we didn't have any great problems there but it was kind of a...

[END OF SIDE A]

[BEGIN SIDE B]

RS ... [repeat of part of dialogue at the end of side A]...a uneasy feeling being in the middle of a fresh new area that you don't know anything about and not having a map.

FC No idea of which direction to even head out for.

RS That's right.

FC 1961 was a pretty hot fire season in Region 1. The Bitterroot had Sleeping Child and the Helena had a lot of fires and I'm sure that some of the other forests [interruption].

RS Well, I got on a few of those big ones... I think we all did. You mentioned the Sleeping Child fire, I remember that one because the day that started, I was on my way in a Twin Beech to drop a couple of jumpers down near the Big Hole area. I remember spotting that fire, and it must have been about an hour or 2 after... probably an hour after it started, but it was huge. We were flying south and I had two jumpers in back that were sitting on the floor and I saw this big old fire there, you know, and it must have been... I don't know how many acres at that time but it was huge. I called them up and I said, "Hey, there's your fire down there." [Chuckle]. They had a very sick look on their face but we went right on by it and dropped them on a little nice little two manner which was more to their liking. But, that was really a growing fire and later I dropped cargo on it a number of times.
Any incidents in cargo dropping that were particularly hairy?

Well, it... in that... dropping on Coyote Meadows, where we were dropping the cargo on that particular fire, it was up on the northeast end of the fire. It was a pretty long hot summer that year and jumpers were doing a lot of work. You were always out on fire and you were just working all the time and the pilots were the same way and I remember dropping on, ah, that Coyote Meadows and we were in a DC-3 and one of the pilots... Johnson's pilots was flying around. And we're making our first pass at the... dropping the cargo and I couldn't get the cargo down and out by the time he got to the jump spot. The bell went off and he wanted me to push it out and I wasn't ready so it didn't go out. Well, he snapped at me and I snapped at him and it was just that kind of year, you know, where things had been going on long enough and was starting to work on our nerves a little bit. So, we went up and talked to him... we cooled down a little bit.

Did you ever have a tail hang up with cargo?

Ah, I can't remember if it was in the plane I was in or... I think I was in a spot... lead plane when it happened on a C-47... C-46 rather, over in the Helena Forest. And the cargo did hang up on the tail.

I remember that incident, I think, but I can't remember what year it was.

Well, that had to be, ah... I don't think they were using lead planes quite yet in '61... probably about '63... probably when it was.

It shook me up when I heard it on the radio.

Yeah. I was in the lead plane, I'm pretty sure at that time and we went on in and landed at Helena. It was just south and, ah... just south of Helena and west... southwest there, if I remember right.

Was that on a project fire or just a regular jumper fire? The Westover Clancy fire was about that time, which was about 2 to 3000 acres.

I can't remember the name of it. But I was just, ah... gotta get my directions. [Pause]. It was between Townsend and Helena and a little bit west... or a little bit south, maybe, towards Butte then. That's one time I remember of my chute hanging up on a tail of a C-46 and I think that was the one plane that they had that happen several times on. But, ah... the other big fires that I dropped cargo on that year was up on Saddle Mountain up on Lost Trail Pass. I think that was the same year but there weren't any jumpers on that fire, either the [inaudible] or the Saddle Mountain Fire. Ah, I got on a... I jumped on a fire in the Clearwater... well, it was a project
fire, on the 31st of July in '61. I remember that because it was my birthday and it was also the hottest day ever recorded in Missoula. I think it got up to 108 or something in Missoula.

FC  What fire, in what District?

RS  That was Ashpile fire and it was, ah... oh, it was right there along the Lochsa. So, it'd be the Powell District probably. Is that Powell in Clearwater?

FC  Powell and Mineral are... farther on down the river is Lochsa Ranger Station.

RS  OK. It'd be one of those two. But, ah, we jumped that day. It was the first time that they had had jumped 32 men out of a C-46. It was the first time they had ever done that and they... then they followed it in with a DC-3 and dropped all of our cargo. But, ah, we jumped there and it was right in the brush that we jumped into, I remember, and it was kind of scary because that fire could really come up through that brush sometimes.

FC  No one was injured though?

RS  No, uh uh. But, we were working right down there in that brush and you are always very cautious... keeping a close lookout because that... just kind of pretty hairy. In fact, I think on that fire a couple of cat drivers got caught, and I don't think they got burned but they....

FC  It overran the cat?

RS  Yeah... the fire overran the cats and the drivers. [Pause]. That fire was one where they... it was kind of mass confusion. We jumped way up high and we were fighting the fire up there but then they would walk us down to the road, at the bottom, at night to sleep. We had all our bags and everything up there so it was a little bit discouraging to do that but I remember them doing that to us. Another one I had over in Helena was Casey Peak fire that year.

FC  Was kind of rugged country if I remember it right.

RS  Ah, then I jumped one up on the Flathead Indian Reservation that, ah... Indians got there about the same time we did so we just packed up and walked off. Early in '61 I spent up in Alaska and, ah, that's a different type of fire fighting up there. That's, ah... they do have a base up there and we were working right out of Fairbanks there, helping... supplementing their crew.

FC  For the BLM?

RS  For the BLM. I think I had about 3 or 4 fire jumps there. But, it was very interesting to get out on a fire up there and you were generally out there on the tundra. So it was a
completely different type of fire fighting. You'd take a gunny sack and fill it up with some of that wet peat moss and just go around and beat out the edges of it and that's the way you'd fight the fire up there.

FC Did the locals help out on those fires or if there were locals near there?

RS Yeah, we jumped on one clear out near the ocean there on, I think it's Norton Bay. The bay that's right across the waterway is Russia, so, it's clear out in the western part of Alaska. It took a long time to get there. We jumped on that fire and that same day, a bunch of Eskimos or Indians, whichever they were, walked in and helped us... or we were helping them. But, it's very important to them, because their reindeer live off that... that moss, and so, they do walk out and....

FC And some of those fires threaten their villages?

RS Yeah, I suppose that's true. But, I do remember, they were on that fire and they were still there when we left. But, in order to get back from that fire, they had to come in with a helicopter, a military helicopter, pick us up, took us to the nearest river and then they picked us up with a Grummen Goose and then they took us to the nearest military base. And then they met us with a DC-3 and flew us back to Fairbanks.

FC You said earlier that you were bird dogging some retardant drops. Have any particular experiences in that as air attack boss?

RS No. I didn't do very much of that. That, ah... I think they must of started bird dogging about '62 or '63. This was '63 that I was involved in it and... could have been '65, even. But I didn't do very much of it. The one incident I do remember is the one over in the Helena then.

FC Any other fires in '61?

RS Well, it was either in '60 or '61 that I had a... we went over to South Dakota and walked into a fire there. It was a large project fire and had a lot of Indians on that fire. I remember... I guess it was '60 because it was the first year I was squad leader. And I was in charge of about... oh, must have been about 60 or 70 Indians, and the first time I had really been in charge of a bunch of Indians and worked closely with them. I had, oh, 6 or 7 jumpers and I put each jumper in charge of about 10 Indians.

FC Were these trained Indian crews?

RS Yeah. They were... I believe they were from out of Billings. They were probably the....

FC Crow... Cheyenne from Fort Peck?
...Crow... yeah, Cheyenne. And, ah, the Indians I'd been around before on fires, I wasn't too impressed with, but these people really worked. They really did a good job.

FC Did they have any cultural features that seemed unusual to you. Did you notice anything about that?

RS No. [Interruption]. The... you know, these Indians were very good workers and... the one thing I... reminds me back in the Grimpley Park fire that I mentioned earlier where we had Indians on, back my first year of jumping in '57. We were working along with the Indians there and at night we would play stick games with them, gambling with them. That was an interesting event.

FC What did you win?

RS Well, I don't remember if I even won or lost but I just remember the game. It was... kind of stands out. But, ah, they were... this fire in South Dakota was up on a high bluff and there was a lot of wild turkeys there and they would... they were being chased by the fire there, I remember, and you'd see them... they'd go over to the edge of the bluff and then they'd set their wings and fly off down... way down the canyon there... interesting. [Interruption]. One other fire that I dropped cargo on and it was a Higgins Ridge fire, which was a fire over on the Nez Perce that had a lot of jumpers on it. I remember that. I can't remember if it was '60 or '61 that this fire occurred in but, it was one of those years. We were dropping cargo to the crews there on the Higgins Ridge fire and it was quite vivid in my mind because the pilot... Johnson's pilots would fly right down a canyon and we'd drop the cargo right at tree top level. You could look up and see the jumpers up on the ridge above you, you know, it was so close. It was just, ah, kind of a neat experience. [Interruption]. At the end of 1961, ah, after all the big fires, I was able to end the year with a small fire on the 25th of August... in Hidden Lake fire, it was near... oh, it's on the Nez Perce, I believe or the Clearwater... it's probably the Clearwater and it's over behind... up behind Blodget Pass up from Hamilton. It was just a nice little two manner. Another squad leader and myself, we jumped on it and had a relaxing fire. It was a... no rush or anything. Just took our time and put it out and enjoyed the trip out.

FC Did you do any fishing in Hidden Lake?

RS Ah, don't think we did. I'm not too much of a fisherman. But, ah, it was sure pretty, I mean, the country back there is just beautiful. [Interruption]. OK, in 1963, I jumped on 3 fires. The first one was up Pettybone Ridge on the Nez Perce which was... which always been hammered by lightning. Seems like every year we get a fire down on the Pettybone Ridge country. I remember, must have been about 12 of us jumped on that. One fellow, Roy Williams, got injured on that as a rock rolled down
and hit his leg... it didn't break it but it was bad enough they took him out by helicopter. And then, a fire that I'll always remember was Longfellow fire up in Glacier Park. My whole career, I wanted to jump up in Glacier Park and I finally got to that... in '63. I guess the reason I wanted to jump up there is it's just so... such a beautiful part of the world up there. The fire that we had was just... you couldn't have asked for a better fire. It was, a... oh, I think there were probably about 16 of us jumpers up there and they had the ground personal in there and it's just a nice fire. It wasn't... a lot of hard work but it was in a beautiful setting. Then... in August went down to California on several fires down there again. [ Interruption]. Ah, I take that back. We didn't go down to California. On the 28th of September, I jumped on a fire over in the Clearwater And it was a fire that had a lot of snags... tall snags. They were tall larch snags and definitely don't want to hang up in them, but I did. I remember hanging up on that snag and, I believe it was Al Cram... Al Hammond that came up and looked up at me from down on the ground and said to me... he says, "Savage, you got cheated out of half your jump," and I think he was right. [Pause]. On, ah... in... I guess we had a late fire season that year and in October, I jumped back on the Nez Perce on a fire that was in the very same exact location as my first fire jump, right near Fish Lake. I even found an old water can that we had left there, and it was in the exact same location. And I might add that I also, a year or two before this, dropped a couple of jumpers down by Fish Lake and they hiked up to the very exact same location. So, evidently, that one spot was getting hit by lightning pretty hard. So, that's 3 fires that were in that very same exact spot. [Pause]. And also, it's interesting to note that all 3 of the spotters picked different jump spots for that. Like I say, when I jumped, it was on the first time, it was clear across the canyon and when I dropped the fellows, it was down by a lake, and then when Doug Getz [C. Doug], dropped myself the last time, here in '63, it was right in the snags right at the fire. So, each spotter had a different place that he thought was a good jump spot.

FC It wasn't because of wind or anything... the drift?

RS No, uh uh. It was just just different ideas... different choices. [ Interruption]. In '64... in July, I jumped a large fire up on the Kootenai... Parsnip Ridge fire. Doug Rayburn broke his back on the first day, I guess he must have done it on the jump. I have it written here in the remarks.

FC Was he paralyzed for life or just...?

RS No... no, he wasn't.

FC Broke a vertebra type thing?

RS Yeah. He came out of it. Then in the middle of... oh, it was the 20... it was in August, I went over to West Yellowstone to head up that crew because Billy Hester [Billy K.] left and so
the last half of '84... of, '64, I spent over at West Yellowstone.

FC Well, you mentioned about the broken back... about this period of time, in the late '50's... early '60's there was a Dale Sweden, did you know him?

RS Yes.

FC He dropped on the Helena and as oscillating and rolled on a rock about as big as your fist and broke his... near his neck. I was up at the hospital when Dr. Little was touching his arm and leg with a sharp instrument, and he was permanently handicapped from there on... a student from the Dakota's. But you did know Dale Sweden [tries different pronunciations of the name]?

RS Yeah, that sounds right... that sounds close.

FC Did you have any jumps with Dale before he was paralyzed?

RS No, but I can tell you about that jump because I... I was the one that was spotting that. I think... that had to be in 1960 and I was just getting checked out in spotting at that time and we were in the DC-3 or DC-2, I can't remember what. But, there were, ah... we went over there and I picked out a jump spot and I think Len Krout [Leonard], was with me, he was checking me and he didn't want to jump there. So we went over to another spot and we decided to jump there. There was a fairly good wind and I started dropping the guys and I noticed, I think it was Al Hammond that was on the crew, that jumped first and he landed in the trees. So, I moved over and corrected. I got a couple of guys into the meadow and then they started going back in the trees again... landing in the trees.

FC Change in the wind... speed... direction?

RS No. Well, that's what I thought, you know, and I'd correct a little bit and then they'd come and land in the trees again. I couldn't figure it out. Come to find out, the fellows on the ground were telling the guys to land in the trees because the winds were squirrely and they felt it was better to land in the trees than into the meadow for some reason, as I remember it. And, this Dale Sweden, I think that's his name, landed there and hit against a rock and broke his back.

FC It was a real small rock.

RS Was it?

FC As I recall from the people telling me about it, it was as big around as your fist.

RS Was it in the trees that...?

FC I don't know. I didn't get over to the fire but when he was
packed... coptered in with Dr. Little and somebody told me it was a real small rock... as big as a tumbler glass or something like that.

RS  But, ah, that's what I remember about that incident there. It was sure a shame and I haven't heard what's happened to him since.

FC  No... his spinal cord was severed and that was really terrible.

RS  Yeah, that was about one of the worst jumps that we ever... one of the worst accidents that we ever had.

FC  How about the...?

RS  There was also something that should have been done there, that I'm sure that they do now days that they didn't do then, was, they should have had a signal to stop a jump at that time.

FC  Well, they put... one of the air ground signals, I think was broken back... I still have my billfold but... or any Smokejumper injury obviously. But our air patrol reported an injury, too, and we were over the fire about the same time.

RS  I remember seeing the signal for a broken back but there wasn't anything that prevented us from continuing the jumps. I'm sure they have something like that now. [Robert excuses himself].

FC  How about the '65... '66 fire seasons?

RS  Well, '65, I was in the military that year. But, when I came back in '66, I once again went down to West Yellowstone and was a squad leader down there. We had the... we were jumping out of the airport at that time, whereas in '64, we were... we had a barn that was our headquarters on the old field. But, in '66 we moved over to the new airport and was working right out of the terminal building there.

FC  You had a dozen jumpers over at West Yellowstone?

RS  No... I can't remember exactly how many but that sounds about right... about a dozen at that time. They... we had a pretty good number of fires down there that year. We were dropping them over in the Tetons and in Yellowstone. One interesting situation occurred down there. I was going out on a spotting run, and we were going to the eastern part of the Park. We were over by Mt. Washburn, I think it is, it was the highest mountain in the park, or one of the highest. It was a Twin Beech and George... we called him "Shakey George"... I can't remember his last name right now, but, he was a Johnson pilot for us down there. He was flying the airplane, and we had 3 jumpers on board. And we were going along and all of a sudden we lost one engine. So, I threw the 3 jumpers out and, ah, then I threw all
the cargo out to lighten the airplane up and I... for some reason we had 2 spotter chutes on the plane that time. We normally just carry one... just for the spotter when he's pushing guys out, for his own protection. But, we had 2, so I asked George if he wanted to use a chute. I didn't know if he thought he could land it or not, but he said no. He wanted to ride it in. I though, "Well, if he's gonna, I'm gonna." So, he took a left there and went over and landed up by... just north of Mammoth at Gardiner air strip.

FC Blow a jug or what happened... why'd it...?

RS I think it was a blown jug. But, later I talked to George and I asked him if he ever thought about using that chute and he says, "Well, not very long." He says, "I just couldn't bear going back and telling Mr. Johnson I left his airplane over in the middle of Yellowstone Park." So, that was my last year of jumping and my last fire jump was up there out of Yellowstone.

FC You mentioned, you were involved in 1960 with Walt Disney's, "Fire Called Jeremiah", movie. Can you tell me your experiences with that production?

RS Well, yeah, I was involved in training that year. I was being a new squad leader, so I was operating the... the, ah... [interruption]... I was operating the obstacle course that year and the [interruption]... the Disney production spent a lot of time taking pictures down on the... as we were training the new men in the obstacle course and the different phases of the new men training. So we were always involved there somewhat, and then we'd make a practice jump once in a while for them so that they could get some shots of people coming down. But, they were very cordial people. They treated us real well. If they saw us up town at night in the bar or something, they come up and buy us a drink or something... just very nice to work with.

FC Were you in the film?

RS Yeah, I was in the film in a couple of places.

FC I've seen that, perhaps a dozen times at the visitor information center and so on, but I still can't remember exactly the sequence. What did you portray in the film?

RS Well, I was a... like I say, I was in charge of the obstacle course, so, I was... I think a place that I remember being in the film was where the men were on the torture rack. That's the place where they bend over backwards, and I was... the squad leader instructing them to do that part of their training. I think that was about the only place I was in the picture.

FC You weren't on a fire in the film though?

RS No.
FC Did you meet any dignitaries from the studio?

RS No... no, all the actors of course, were just local people. Cliff Blake was a jumper, who was a star and then the gal was a Miss Missoula at one time, so.... The only people that were, you know, were the Disney people themselves... the movie producers.

FC Well, during your tour out at the fire depot over these number of years, can you recall any dignitary visits... VIP's?

RS No. [Interruption].

FC You mention another incident where a Ford Trimotor lost it's engine. Can you elaborate on that?

RS Yeah, this was in... I believe, in about 1960. And, ah... the, ah... [interruption]... it occurred in 1960 on a Ford Trimotor was on it's way to a fire down on the Nez Perce down on the other side of Elk City. Ted Nyquist [Charles T.], was the spotter. The Ford Trimotor was almost over Elk City and it lost one of it's engines. What really happened was the tip of the blade broke off of the right engine and when it broke off, it went sailing right through the fuselage and normally a jumper will be sitting in there on a chainsaw... there's a seat there for a jumper. But, fortunately this day, there wasn't any jumper sitting there, and the piece went right through the fuselage and right through the other side of the airplane and up through the wing and just missed some of the wires that are sitting outside of the Ford Trimotor that go back to the horizontal stabilizer and verticle stabilizer. And it missed those, fortunately.

FC Didn't hit a vital part of the aircraft?

RS Really didn't, but it sure could of. It was just very, very precarious area.

FC Yeah, I've sit in the backseat in a Arrow Commander quite a bit... the one we used to have here, and the props are right along side and if they ever let go, I know they'd go right through my knees. I've thought about that. Of course, when they drop ice off, flip ice....

RS Yeah, it really makes a terrible sound, doesn't it. No, this could have been a very bad situation but it didn't... wasn't any worse than what it was. But, when that piece of prop broke off, then it threw the whole system... that whole engine out of balance, and set up such a vibration that the engine fell off.

FC It actually fell off?

RS It actually fell off, yeah. And when it fell off, right below the engine is the right landing gear. And it went down and hit the right tire, blew it out. And then it fell right on down to the earth below. But, about this time Ted Nyquist [Charles T.], who was spotter, and he was sitting up in the right hand
seat of the Ford Trimotor and he turned around to tell the jumpers to jump out. He turned around and he was talking to an empty airplane because they were already gone. Like I say, they were right over Elk City when all this happened and there was a little short airstrip there and the pilot just turned and put it right into the airstrip there. I guess they just both got out and hugged each other, they were so happy to be on the ground.

FC Well, was he able to land on 1 wheel... 1 tire that easily? It's a wonder he didn't cartwheel.

RS Yeah... yeah, he knew his tire was out and so, he kind of kept it over on the left tire as he touched down, and... until he got down to a slower speed. I don't know if they did finally ground loop a little bit but it really wasn't bad.

FC You also mentioned another incident where a pilot hit the wrong toggle switch and bellied in.

RS Yes, this was in... also, I think, about 1960 or '61 and it was at Missoula. It was in the Twin Beech. And I had just dropped 3 jumpers on a training jump over on the Upper Sherman, and we were returning to the Missoula airport to land. We were just coming in for approach, and I was standing right behind the pilot watching him make the approach and everything. He touched down and as soon as he touched down, their procedure was to reach over and hit a toggle switch to raise the flaps. Well, in this early model airplane, they also had a toggle switch that raised the landing gear. He got the wrong toggle switch and it raised the landing gear and of course the plane just settled down over the gear and it was just a sudden stop. I went sailing forward against the bulkhead and cracked a couple of ribs. We came to a real sudden stop there. The pilot actually broke his back on that... that sudden....

FC Who was the pilot?

RS Ah, it was a Johnson's pilot and I can't remember his name right now. He died a couple of years later.

FC Because of the accident?

RS No. I think he had a heart problem, later on.

FC Was the ship badly injured? The props would be.

RS Yeah, the props were bent.

FC And, of course, that's an impact on the engine.

RS And, ah, probably a little damage to the belly. Wasn't the first time that's happened on a Twin Beech.

FC How about recreational activities during your years jumping after the 8 hour day?
RS Well, it, ah... seems like there was a lot of activity downtown. Everybody that was... most of the jumpers were young and single and so, they would head down to the bars downtown after work a lot of times. Either find a girlfriend or hunt up one. On weekends, a good place to go was Glacier Park. There was always a lot of girls up there, so, that seemed like a favorite place for the jumpers to go.

FC What bars here in Missoula did they mostly go to?

RS Oh, ah... popular ones at that time... I think there was a couple down on Woody Street... Spider's Bar.

FC Spider McCallum.

RS Spider McCallum's bar there. And ah... oh... there were a few others... I can't remember.

FC How about you termination parties in the fall?

RS Well, they'd get pretty wild.

FC But friendly?

RS Yeah, wild, but friendly.

FC Well, besides going to the bars, while you were in camp or on detail to Stations... Ranger Stations, what types of recreational activities... sports?

RS Well, some of the Districts... if you were out working on project... I remember working in at Spotted Bear and, right next to Spotted Bear, there was a couple of dude camps. So every night we'd play the Forest Service guys, and get a 8 baseball team or we'd play the dudes every night. Or, out on project a lot of times, if you had a day off, I remember going and climbing a mountain in at Big Prairie or....

FC Photography too?

RS Yeah... a lot of photography work, fishing... I remember doing a little fishing in at Big Prairie. Of course, these places are always... it was always good fishing in at Big Prairie and all these backwoods places. So, a lot of people did take their fishing gear along.

FC Any overhead or other acquaintances who really stick out in your memory... nicknames, and why are they... well, the particular characters that every organization has.

RS Ah, yeah. Probably the most person that really stands out as a true tough jumper. One that you might imagine that epitomizes a jumper, would be a guy by the name of Dick Carpenter [Roy]. I went to... grew up with Dick although I didn't know him
very well, he was from Hamilton. And he jumped, several years before I did. But, he was just one of those guys that was just as tough as you could be and you had to use... he had a calm demeanor and just very nice guy, just... hard worker. Yeah, but he was one guy you wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of because, he was just about as tough of guy as I could think of. He was just... have you ever thought of somebody that you'd want to depend on, well, he was. That was Dick. As I mentioned, he was on that rescue that I was up near Ripple Lake and he knew the 2 individuals there. And he just had a soothing calming way about him and I'm sure he put those guys at ease.

FC  Do you know where he is now... what he's doing?

RS  Yeah, he works for the Fish and Game over out of Dillon. He's always been a person that has either been a trapper, or a outdoorsman, all his life.

FC  Any other characters, both good or bad?

RS  Well, we had a lot of characters jumping. Ah... there are some with names that would stand out, like Dick Tracy, Paperlegs Peterson.

FC  That wasn't Pete Peterson?

RS  Pete Peterson, yeah.

FC  Why did you call him Paperlegs?

RS  Well, I think he got his leg... his name, he broke his leg one year and, ah, I think that's where they gave him the name Paperlegs Peterson.

FC  He used to work in the dispatch office quite a bit when I first met him, but I didn't know him when he was a jumper.

RS  That was probably pretty early... before '50... early '50's... early '40's.

FC  He's a school teacher somewhere in town if were talking of the same one?

RS  Oh, no... no, that's a different, ah, Pete Peterson. Ah, Pete Peterson's actually jumped out of McCall. I think maybe one time he jumped out of Missoula but the time that I knew him, he was a McCall jumper. [pause] But there were 3 brothers by the name of Griner, that were characters. It seems like we got... there was probably more jumpers from Montana. But the state that provided the next most number of jumpers was Oklahoma. It seems like Okies are characters anyway. There was 3 brothers from Oklahoma by the name of Griner. Tom was the oldest one and then he had 2 brothers that jumped, and they were twins. They were Claud and Sam. So, you had Tom, Claud, and Sam. Tom would say something and Sam would turn around and say the same exact thing,
and the Claud... the other one would say the same... they'd always repeat each other all the time. But they were always characters.

FC That'd be funny at first, but I think it would probably get on your nerves after a while.

RS Yeah, but it really didn't. They did it in such a way. It was just natural, you know. But, they were always very loquacious... they were always talking. There was a story around that the 2 twins were walking out of a fire one time, and a bear chased them up a tree. Claud... one of them was up as far as he could go and the other one was trying to get him up higher and the bear [laugh] was right behind him.

FC Was this a grizzly or just a black bear?

RS I think it was probably just a black bear. Yeah. And the one up on top, I think he had a pistol, and he had to reach over the other one and fire down at the bear and I don't know if he ever hit it but finally he scared the bear away and it went off. But I always heard that story about them.

FC Did you have any experiences with wildlife that come to mind while you worked for the [interruption]?

RS No. I can't think of any wildlife stories that, ah... right off the hand. But, there's a couple of other fire stories that I recollect now. One of them was a fire down in California. It was in the big tree country, down there. Some of those trees are... grow up as high as 200 feet I think. But, anyway, it was right near one of the National Parks. And Erik Hansen hung up in one of those big trees and he got down OK, we fought the fire. Then he went back to get his chute out of the tree and he climbed up. Got his chute to loosen and out and he was climbing back down and he got down to the lowest branch. And he was still about 50 or 60 feet up off the ground and he slipped and fell. When he fell, he tumbled and fortunately he lit right on his back or his stomach... one or the other. He was hurt pretty bad. He didn't know how badly he was hurt. He just layed there and we got a helicopter in for him. Not knowing how badly hurt.... [End of tape].

[END OF INTERVIEW]