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I just... I left my.... [Interruption]. OK. I think we're working here. This is an interview with Bob Moffit, who jumped out of Cave Junction for 2 seasons in 1948 and 1949. OK Bob, and you're just telling me about, um... what you were doing in those years prior to becoming a Smokejumper back in... you said you started fighting fire in '43...?

'43, '44, and '45, I worked in a suppression crew near here because I was [inaudible] in high school. We fought fires in the old way, you know, you lined up 20 people with axes and hazel hose and saws and, you know... call it, kind of, a flying suppression crew.

Hazel hose... what are hazel hose?

They're a wide thing that you'd actually dig the your trail with. We'd take 3 or 4 swipes and the guy would come behind you... 3 or 4 and pretty soon you had a total trail. The ax-man led the deal, with cruiser's axes... cut the... like, a jungle, would cut the vines and stuff so you could move through. Then, you had the... some, pulaskies, or bigger axes, and then they used the hose, maybe 15 people. And last, 2 or 3 would be saws, that would cut the logs, so that you had the total trail. No chain saws, of course in those days. I fought fires for about 2 1/2 years. The third year I was on a lookout... '45. In the army for 2 years.

What year did you go into the army?

1945, and out in '47. And then, the year of '48, I didn't have a job. We were living in Grants Pass at the time which is near Cave Junction. So, I had heard about the smokejumpers, so I drove out there and went to the Ranger station. He says, "Yes, they're back down the hill there." So, I ran down the hill, I ran past the office, which was just a shack. And, um... Cliff Marshall interviewed me briefly along with... I think it was [inaudible]. Since I had had fire fighting experience and they had seen me jog down the hill, they hired me... went right to work that minute... had to go home and get my stuff later, and, ah... start their training program. They trained in groups of 10. So, if they wanted 20 new people, they trained 2 groups, sort of simultaneously. One would follow another. I think the jumps were 7 then... 7 jumps.

That you had done that day?

No. That you had to do before you could jump in a fire... training jumps were, 7.

How long was your training, before you jumped?
RM I think it was a couple of weeks. Well, no, you started right out. I mean, it was conditioning and as soon as they saw you were in semi-condition, I think it was 10 days to 2 weeks, you were starting to jump. It wasn't very long because the fire season was then upon us, you know... July.

SG What kind of techniques or equipment did they have for you to train on... to learn? Had you had any jumping experience before?

RM No, no... no, no... just started right out. I didn't even know I was going to get the job when I jogged down there. And no physical or anything, you know. And, I could get along without... get along without my glasses, so I didn't have to wear glasses... can't now. [Waitress interrupting]. So, I think it was the described training of that era. I can't remember exactly, but you know you have the fuselage of the airplane and you jumped out of that. And you learned the Allen Roll, and the most miserable thing of training of course was that "let down". Because you're in the suit... 120 degrees and you're hanging from these rods... They had a miserable let down technique, which went through the D-rings, backwards and forwards and so we tried to teach them the repelling techniques that we learned in mountain climbing. Where the rope went under you leg and over you shoulders and you just [whistling sound] whistled right down it... it didn't take you 2 hours to get out of a tree. So, we fought that for a while but Cliff didn't want to change because he was trying to set up a program, you know, of what he had learned in Missoula and what had to be done through the... I think the Derry's and some of those people had developed those [inaudible] techniques. Then, if you were too high, you were supposed to cut up your reserve chute and use the [inaudible] out of that and come down 80 or 90 feet... whatever. I guess the standard length rope was 80 feet. We had that business going, and it was really miserable... really hard to get out of those things and you'll see pictures of people... hanging there, you know, like their being crucified. Some guys couldn't get out. They'd get all tangled up in that let down thing.

SG Did they have any... like where did you practice your "let downs"?

RM That was all right there behind the Rangers Station, in that little tent village. They had everything set up in trees. Then we had the shop tower, you know, that thing you've heard about. And ah... just sort of jogged around and rolled around. It wasn't... wasn't like some of the things... those torture racks and things... we didn't have that. We didn't have too many fires that year, most of our jumping was in California... [inaudible] Northern California... Fort Jones area. We sort of have a lightning belt there. We spent a lot of time working out on the... on the airport... being on call.

SG What is that called... when you work on call? Is that...?
RM Oh, just being on fire call. If there was any kind of danger, we was all on fire call or had to be back at a certain time. It was pretty strict... military... paramilitary type of thing as far as hours were concerned. It was not uncommon to do 2 jumps a day. You'd jump at a fire, by the time you got going... working, the ground crew would be in and they'd pick you up either by horse or helicopter... bring you back to Fort Jones, load you up and jump you again, or sometimes we'd come back on commercial airliners.

SG Did you stay right at the Base there? Did you live there?

RM Lived there... I lived there.

SG After you finished your training, did you feel confident about jumping? Did you feel pretty good about it?

RM Sure.

SG What was that first training jump like?

RM Oh well, I think it was just like everybody else, you know, you didn't want to do it... weren't sure just whether you wanted to do it or not but as I remember, everybody did it except one fellow. He... by the time we got back to the Base, he was gone. If you didn't jump the first time, you were gone. They never gave you a second chance.

SG Where was that first jump that you did?

RM It was near Cave Junction. They had a place up the highway that goes to Oregon Caves, we used first, then we went down East of Cave Junction... large, farmers field.

SG Did you wind up... you know, when you were just talking about that technique that you learned in mountain climbing, with the D-rings... did you ever get to use that?

RM Well, we did... tried to explain that but as I say, Cliff Marshall was very, very intent upon maintaining the standards that had been set by the... whoever's. Smokejumpers of the time. So, he didn't allow deviation unless it was approved and I don't remember that we ever got it approved the 2 years... 3 years we was there. Of course now, repelling techniques, we use very frequently from helicopters with carabeners and things. But, threading that large rope and everything through the D-rings, is very difficult and had to go a certain way, the rope would twist.

SG What about when you were out jumping? Could you use your own technique or did you pretty much had to use the standard?

RM Very few... if anybody, as I remember, ever landed in trees. We really practiced accuracy. [Inaudible] those crosses we had out... those flags. Well, what you did was... you carried that
streamer in your pocket... leg pocket. As soon as you hit the ground, if you're OK, you waved the streamer and the pilot would see that and would know you're OK and that was enough. Then, we used them as crosses for target practice.

SG  Do you remember how you felt that first jump... when you jumped out of the plane window?

RM  No... no, because... I had... having been a mountain climber, I was used to heights, you know, and I kind of... I didn't have too much fear of heights or anything. You know, that initial opening shock was kind of fun and I knew the importance of keeping your leg straight and together and so on. So, I was really concentrating on doing well, more than I was being... concentrating on my feelings about it.

SG  You compare a lot... I've heard a lot, talking about mountain climbing... was that something you had done a long time before you jumped?

RM  Yeah... yeah, I started about 1940... with the people that I had mentioned... Unsoeld... Bill Unsoeld and Goodman Kaarhus... K.A.A.R.H.U.S. We were all in Boy Scouts together in the '40's. We had 2 planes. We had a spotter plane that a fellow by the name of Terry Fieldhouse... was the spotter. Flew around and looked at the fires and decided kind of decided who would need jumpers and who wouldn't. Then as soon as we decided what type of a stick, we always called them a stick, they needed, they'd load them up and take them out.

SG  And how many people did... there were 20 Smokejumpers?

RM  20... um hm, and it was a problem because if there were injuries, that meant we were always short because you couldn't go out and recruit anybody right away. I can't remember if it was the first year or second year... they were going into to register for the draft, which they instituted again, and the truck tipped over and 9 guys were injured, out of 10. [Laugh]. They were all sitting on the tool box and one side went of course the truck tipped over. So, they were 9 short and only 1 finished in that whole stick. I can't remember what happened to them. They took Marshall, kind of, unofficially, did away with this tree-jumps when Larry Lupper broke his leg.

SG  What's a tree jump?

RM  Well, one of the jumps was supposed to be landing in trees and do the "let down". And if you didn't land in the trees then your chute would stream or fold up and you would just streak to the ground because the branches folded the chute. That's what happened to him. He got what they called a streamer in his chute.

SG  So, Cliff felt that there was just too few jumpers to do it?
RM Well, he couldn't risk losing any more, so we just discontinued that. I can't remember specifically ever doing a tree jump. But very little equipment... he had to personally repair all the parachutes that were damaged so they could be used again. [Inaudible] all surplus.

SG So, is that what you call a rigger?

RM Yeah, he had a rigger, Terry Fieldhouse was a rigger and I think there was another one. We called them "rigger diggers". [laugh]. And, ah... but, he was up nights repairing the chutes for little tears and things so they could be used the next day. Bare bones type of operation.

SG So, he didn't train any of you, as the jumpers, to do any of that... the rigging?

RM No, he... the riggers were always designated and I never did learn that. They were usually a certain type of individual... more mature and cool that did the rigging.

SG What was the pecking order, kind of like... you talk about Cliff Marshall, he seems to be one of the...?

RM Well, he was the Foreman. He had an unofficial assistant I the name is... fellow... Green, who just sort of... he just sort of roamed around, you know, jumped and came... showed up each summer. There were these itinerant people... ex-army and ex-paratroopers... he didn't particularly care for paratrooper people. He didn't hire those if he could avoid it because they're more interested in jumping than fire fighting and he wanted fire fighters because he wanted to prove the fire fighting ability. Then Terry Fieldhouse was sort of another assistant. Then they had crew leaders or squad leaders who did the spotting, you know, the directing the pilot, the [inaudible]. There were 2 of those.

SG Where did they get those, the crew leaders and the squad leaders?

RM They picked them out of a group and trained them the fall... the preceding year.

SG So, you picked them from groups of jumpers?

RM Um hm, from the [inaudible] in the group.

SG So, your people who were your superiors, were people who had jumped and...?

RM Yes, um hm. There wasn't really much because he wanted everybody, really to be taking care of themselves because we say he dropped us... quite often just 2... 3... maybe 4 and you had to do... everybody had to do their job. There was not necessarily a boss.
SG Well, when you jump, like with... say 4 people, how did you decide who was to take charge or didn't anyone take charge?

RM No... nobody really took charge.

SG It was just something unwritten, I guess, you just knew what to do?

RM Well, if there was 2 people, you knew you had to, ah... you know, ring the log or the tree that was on fire and you set about doing that. And then, there was very rarely, if ever, water available, so you had to use dirt to put the fire out. You got to get everything calmed down and you'd rest for a minute and they'd fly over and drop us food. USE a little... they used burlap chutes. And then they, of course, they, of course, dropped the equipment that way too... 190 pounds of equipment... saw and things.

SG In burlap chutes?

RM Um hm.

SG Did you get a lot of broken equipment?

RM No, they dropped them very low. The planes fly over... the chute would open... then it would hit the ground, you know. They dropped us low too. [Laugh].

SG How was that... hitting the ground using the...?

RM I was never injured... never sustained any injuries. There was guys that sustained injuries, were very the muscular fellows, you know, huskies.

SG What about just that initial impact of when you jump out of the plane and the impact of the chute opening and the...?

RM Well, that's noticeable... the landings noticeable. But usually you're concentrating on you technique... at least, I always was. I suppose if I had continued many, many more years, you'd get some more feeling than I have. But, you didn't really have much emotion about it, all because our job is to fight fire, [inaudible]. Parachuting was just the truck, or vehicle, that got us there. We had to [Inaudible] a great deal. We were always protecting the equipment because we was short of equipment all the time. Particularly parachutes and [inaudible] that she had to personally make. There was no sur... ah, we used surplus stuff... surplus military... What is it... 28 foot chute for reserve and a 32 Derry chute for the main.

SG Now what is that... the Derry Slot chute?

RM Derry Slot chute... we had about a 5... 5 mile an hour floating speed and you would turn to hit your target. We jumped
in the Redwoods, the Sequoias, and, um... we always got in the fields... nobody ever got in the trees.

SG That's lucky... [laugh], [inaudible]... skilled, I'm sure. Do you remember what your first fire jump was like?

RM No.

SG Any particular more memorable jump that you did during those first 3... 2 years?

RM No. I went... everything went well. I never had any problems. Never had any problems. Once, I touched the reserve chute, on the ground, before we loaded up. It was spring loaded, [popping sound]... chute was all over the ground, as I remember. Cliff grabbed that thing and put another on me and I was in the plane before anybody had anything to say about it. [Laugh]. He added just the 2 clips and ["fth" sound] put another one on and that, uh... But I had to leave a mess on the ground.

SG So, you didn't really have a...?

RM Everything was all business... all business, all the time... no fooling around. No prank... oh, maybe at night or just something, you know, but he was right on us all the time.

SG You were mentioning it before how Cliff Marshall wanted it to be kept very business like because of...?

RM Low key. No distributive establishment in the Forest Service, proved that this was a sensible way to fight fires. Because, of course, his job depended on it. Apparently people had really thought out and thought that was the way to go.

SG Did you have fun when you worked.

RM Oh, yeah, we had a good time but we worked hard, you know. As soon as we hit the ground, you had your stuff and you'd... put you right on the line. Some of the fires all ready had people on them and they just used it to show. Went to Porterville, California... the Trimotor, about 13 of us I think, and jumped... we were over 10,000 feet when we jumped... really came in pretty fast. We got to the fire line, there was about 160 guys all ready on the fire. So, we just, sort of surplus there, but they wanted to see how quickly we could respond. That was out of District, so we were trying to prove in California it could be useful too. Then they developed a system where they had a team starting in New Mexico, Arizona, and many of them move into California, and then on up to the northwest, and follow the lightning. We started March in April. They brought the same people north, our plane and our pilots... Green and those people, worked the whole season, started in the spring.

SG Did you ever jump in New Mexico?
RM No... no, because those people move north. You know, like crop workers.

SG You're just mentioning, how... when you're jumping down in Porterville, California...?

RM Yeah, that was in [inaudible]... we landed there and picked up supplies and then we [inaudible] it up to the... along the Kern River... Sequoia National Forest fire.

SG When you got there and you found they had 160 some people, how did...?

RM They was just looking at us... everybody's watching because the had the big timers up there... the fire bosses, you know.

SG What did they think of you?

RM Well, I think they didn't say anything. We actually didn't have too much to do. We had the grounds... and sort of joined in on the fire lines that were being made, and none of these guys... it's pretty well calmed down, so they took out on the horses... 14 miles. [Laugh]. I walked out of it. You always had that 90 pound pack to carry out... much of your junk, you know, your chute and tools. Everything went with you, no matter you took, you took out... never left anything.

SG You just mentioned also, that before that day just began, using helicopter transports to take you out?

RM Yeah, there was one time in Northern California, that they said the plane couldn't operate above 5,000 feet and that's about where we were, in a small funnel. So, we turned and landed on the ridge. Then pilot says, "You know I can't get off of there, unless guys cut this and that tree." So, we spent about an hour cutting all these trees. Then he took off 2 or 3 feet and just dove down the slope, you know, maybe 500,000 feet. Went right on the tree tops, he took us out. It was pretty exciting. He was out of that bubble [inaudible]

SG Was that in '48 or '49?

RM I can't remember exactly. I think it was '48 and it was in the summer of '48. It was a Bell helicopter with no jet, or turbo or anything.

SG Did you prefer that to packing out?

RM Oh, it was exciting. But, we usually packed out and the truck would meet us... took us to the nearest airport where we were picked up by commercial, or the plane, you know, the....

SG Did you find that when you jumped on fires, you usually worked with... with your group of jumpers or did you tend to jump in places where... like down in Porterville where you had a...
RM No. That was unusual... that was a "show me" trip for them... for that Region... whatever it was down there. We were Region-6 I think. Most the time, we were on the fire until somebody came on the ground, either by forest or hiked in. That might have been from... the Trent tried to drop us earlier, of course. That might have been in the mid-afternoon [Loud noise]. We'd just sleep on the fire until they came... once we had it circled and quiet.

SG So, you weren't on that fire for very long?

RM No. Very rarely over 24 hours. Because, you see, the principal fire fighters were those people in the area and they were the ones who were in charge and we just a sort of a shock troop type of thing. We never were expected to totally put it out as I remember.

SG Oh, so you were just a... you were just a...?

RM We quieted it down, so it didn't spread. It might have been 1 snag or 2 logs. We'd circle it and then [inaudible] it, chip it out and do as much work until they came. Sometimes we worked, you know, all night.

SG What do you think those fire fighters thought of you as a shock treatment.

RM Well, I think they probably thought there was competition. [Laugh]. It was competitive... between the ground forces and the smokejumpers. But it was gaining momentum... you know, momentum was starting to grow and I think they could see that would be the way to do things in the future. A lot of these fellows were old timers, that had been Rangers in the '20's, and '30's, and '40's and they didn't really want to change much. Then a new breed came out. Most of the Rangers now were maybe raised as smokejumpers or some kind of advance fire fighting.

SG Did you have friends at the time who were fire fighters... not necessarily smokejumpers or people who worked with more the prevention crew rather than what you called the shock treatment?

RM No, we didn't have any. They had a little bit of a suppression crew, that lived in the Ranger's station, but I think we were their suppression crew. We fought ground fires... we'd go to fires by truck, too, that were local... they didn't fly us.

SG So, how many times did you get to jump during those 2 years?

RM 22... maybe. We didn't have that many fires. Interesting thing, the fellow that became head of the jumper base at Redmond, which is a big base, lived in Cave Junction... his father was a druggist there, Al Boucher. We used to go round and round... he was a high school kid and he was all wide eyed about this jumping. Then the year after I left... I can't remember if it
was a year after I left or the next year... then he became a jumper because I think then he was 18, you know, he could do it. The next thing I knew, he was a laborer, then he was head of the whole thing over there... the Redmond base, which is a... kind of a [inaudible] base. I stopped in to visit him briefly and it was much, much different of course. Had chain saws all boxed up and things that we never had.

SG What'd you think of the changes that you saw at the base?

RM Well, I'd never seen them jump, I'd just heard about it here around the area. And they jumped them pretty close to population where they could get them in a hurry. They might get... if they could get them there in 20 minutes, I don't think they send a ground crew right away. Because, sometimes you'd have 10... 15 fires and you couldn't spread your people. Then they had helicopters, too. They'd land people near the fires. Up at McKenzie, where they have heliport, with a helicopter crew, and it's 4 or 5 people that go out. And they'll land on the ridge. And [Tape squeal] fight the fire down here. They don't jump.

SG So, you just thought that a lot of the techniques just made things quicker...?

RM Oh, yes... made them... the helicopters, when they used the let down techniques. I think over at Redmond, you have to work on the ground a year or two and then you're assigned as a jumper if you qualify or the helicopter crews.

SG You worked on the ground for a year before you can become?

RM I think at Redmond, they do now. But, most the fellows that worked with us fire never had any fighting experience at all.

SG Oh, that's interesting. So, like when you jumped that first year and there were 20... 20 of you, most people didn't have fire fighting experience.

RM Hm mm, but, you see we did fight the fires locally, so we learned it there, too, because he taught us fire fighting techniques on the base. He didn't [inaudible] trails.

SG What did you think was the attraction? What attracted you when you said you hear about being a smokejumper?

RM When I went to Oregon State... I first started in forestry. So, I wanted to get a job in forestry. I kind of looked around and, [inaudible] till I looked down there.

SG So, that was the first thing that you saw that...?

RM Just for fire fighting... Forest Service experience... Terry Fieldhouse was a forest student, several of them were forest students.
SG What kind of qualifications did they want you to have?

RM Didn't have any in particular. Just got to look healthy. He individually sized the people us, you know. Some of the guys quit... very few he hired [inaudible].

SG Did they tend to be college students, veterans, any social...?

RM I think he probably got a third college students and veterans. The rest were just some local people and somebody who didn't... I don't know how they got the jobs. Never asked.

SG So, you think, pretty much you had to be in really good physical condition and fairly tough?

RM Um hm. And a lot of people who were farmers... probably could get in. Fact is, several... a lot of the people... it was quiet and they would get jobs in the neighboring farms pitching hay. [Inaudible] would leave the base at 5:00 and maybe go a mile or 2 down the road... they'd pitch hay for people, you know, to keep in shape. Those days, that's what they did.

SG Well, you actually mountain climbed, too?

RM Um hm.

SG And, then you had friends at the base who mountain climbed? Is that a kind of popular hobby that people had?

RM No, it just all just started then. Mountain climbing wasn't much until after WW II.

[ Interruption, wife leaving for antique sale].

I was interested in reading here, a lot of the techniques developed by the Forest Service, were used in the Army... in the old... for the paratroops, so this is apparently, a pioneer group.

SG Were those the same techniques that you were using?

RM Oh, I don't know. I get the idea, [interruption] the Germans got onto it early and then the U.S. jumped into it in a hurry. Shows some of the same ideas, were used apparently.

SG You were mentioning before, where you'd heard something about the Black 555th...?

RM Just, them and old folk tales. I didn't have any details at all.

SG So, you never actually got to meet or get with any of them?

RM No, because I think, as soon as the was was over, they were
discharged and I didn't work until '47, so there was that interum... '48... 3 year interum in there. My folks moved to Grants Pass in '45 and I was in the Service then.

SG Had you heard anything good or bad, or just...?

RM No. I didn't even know anything about it until I jogged down the trail and was hired, as I thought to be, a firefighter and you got there by jumping... was how I understood it.

SG Oh, you didn't know that you jumped when you were there? You didn't know that you actually jumped out of airplanes?

RM Well, I had a vague idea, but I didn't know anything about it, you know. I didn't have any foreknowledge of the history or anything. I only learned after I was there.

SG What did the people in town... what did your friends think about you being a smokejumper?

RM Well, I really wasn't from town because, you see, I'd been in the Army... didn't have any friends in Grants Pass and there was no Grants Pass people in the jumpers. The Supervisor of Siskiyu National Forest lived up the road from us and, um, he was kind of indifferent... he was an old timer. We were under a separate command... we weren't under the command of the local National Forest. We... I don't know where we came out. Here's Orville in, ah, '60... '59. He's right there. So, he must of been a Squad Leader because he's not in uniform.

SG Squad Leaders didn't wear any official...?

RM Well, they... you know, they were sort of... the trainers and the packers and the office people.

SG Did the Squad Leaders jump, too?

RM Oh, yeah but by this time, I imagine he was... let's see, this is '59... that's 10 years... 11 years after we started... after he started. So, he must have had some, you know, promotions. This was in Alaska, so I suspect he is probably in charge. They were at Anchorage and then moved to Fairbanks. Up there the territory is so vast and this is... happened to us a lot, our chutes would hang up in low brush. This how they got ripped and Cliff Marshall had to spend the evening repairing the chutes. We had the orange and white ones, too.

SG So, he was the only one that could repair those chutes.

RM Well, he seemed to be super interested, you know, in what was going on and he didn't want to have any problems and he didn't want to have any injuries and he wanted the program to succeed. So, ah, he was heavily and personally invested.

SG Did you feel that his leadership was...?
RM Oh, very positive. Yeah, it was... he had just come out of
the Army and he expected people to move and he gave us that
impression and we did it. There was no fooling around and if
there was, they were... they were fired. If they did not jump
the first jump, they were let go before they... they went
directly back, turned their stuff in got their suitcases packed
and they were gone. I only remember 1, that [inaudible]. Here's
the torture chamber that we used to do... hang out and try...
[inaudible, chuckling].

SG That's what this is called... a torture chamber?

RM Well, I don't know... because it was hot down there in
Southern Oregon, you know, 120 in the sun. If you're all hung up
in one of these rigs, you know, it was really hot. I was trying
to find the base, here... the equipment was very much as
inscribed in here. We had nothing unusual. [Pause]. I never
did see this movie, did you?

SG No, I'd like to.

RM Is it available?

SG I... not at the smokejumper... "Red Skies Over Montana". I
think they're probably going to get one for their history...
historical library, but...

RM Show at reunions and stuff?

SG I'm not sure where it is? I've been trying to locate it
myself through some of the libraries. I'm going to have to....

RM It may not be available, yet.

SG Ah, let's see, that was a little bit after you had stopped
jumping, I guess. What did you think about them making a movie?

RM I wasn't aware of it because I was in medical school and you
know, when you're in medical school, not much else happens. The
Korean War was on, they were making movies, I wasn't even hardly
aware of those things, except my brother was in the service.
Because you really... you're really into it when you're in
medical school... 24 hours a day. This is the building we built
here and part of this one. This is new... then they have a loft
in there someplace. Then we... we had this building and I think
we slept around in tents in the background for the first... for
the second year.

SG So, all that time you weren't jumping, you were working
mostly on these buildings at Cave Junction?

RM Mm hm, always working, yeah, we worked 18 hours a day. A
lot of the guys had other jobs... pitching hay and stuff where
they could be reached by phone or... within a few minutes. There
always had to be 10 people there... dead even, we'd split it. We bought an old 1924 Hudson Touring car for $25. We'd whip into town and back you know, it would go about 90 miles an hour. It had a great big engine. Sold it for $25. [Laugh]. Merv [inaudible], he was a law student, so he knew how to manipulate that high finance. The only way you made any money on smokejumpers... extra, was jumping because then you got overtime throughout the fire.

SG  Was there lots of overtime? How much overtime typically happened on a fire?

RM  Oh, if you're on a fire overnight, then you get overtime for that. I don't know, Cliff Marshall was watching the budget, so, he says, "Well, if you're sleeping, you don't get overtime, for that." He would sort of pop it down because he was not only watching the equipment, he was watching the budget. He didn't want to have these... you know, national emergency type budgets. The Forest Service, if they get a good fire going, it's a... just like the war. You can spend anything you want. But he didn't want to do that. He wanted to keep everything tucked in, you know, tight. And historically, the men used to throw their shovels in the fire, and their sleeping bags and come back at night and pick up a new ones, you know, they'd waste a lot of stuff, just so they'd have a big budget for the next year. The previous fire season determines your budget for the next year and so, the more junk you used... the more stuff you got rid of, the more you got. It was a few cats and, you know, a few things like that, I don't know [inaudible].

SG  So, that was the policy... that was kind of unwritten policy it was sort of in effect...?

RM  Well, I didn't know that and then the last year, I was scaling logs and I wasn't working in the smokejumpers... they had a big fire not too far from base. So, I... they pulled me off scaling logs, and all the loggers, you got... picked up all the logger to come to the fire. They had to respond... if you're working in the woods on government timber, they had to go to the fires. They'd bring their cats out and everything. So, I was in charge of equipment, so, I was writing their names down and issuing these things and everybody was kind of looking at me, you know. And I said, "Well, if it's back tonight, you know...," and apparently that was something unusual. They didn't really watch the stuff that closely. I was issuing axes and shovels and sleeping bags and things... water bottles.

SG  Did Cliff feel like this reflected better on the jumper program?

RM  Yeah, he was really watching the budget. He wanted to keep with... keep his equipment in order and look good to the Forest Service and to the government. It was a trial program as far as he was concerned and he wanted it to succeed. He was very matter of fact, you know. There was no hokus pokus about it.
SG So, his budget for next year wasn't determined by how much he had used the year before?

RM I don't know unless it was on fires. That was when the thing was activated. As soon as when the fires came, then you started spending money. And a lot of Rangers and Supervisors spent all they could, so they would have money for the next year. I think that's still they way things work... in the government work. So, if you can pitch out a lot of junk and get rid of old stuff... that's what they did and charged it to the fire. Of course, I think the smokejumpers really took off after the Mann Gulch thing. We got a lot of publicity, you know, there was publicity for 2 months... 3 months... national headlines.

SG What kind of things did you hear about Mann Gulch?

RM Oh, just, you know... blurbs in our newspaper. We didn't have enough communication in with Missoula to know really what happened until after the fact. It was very low keyed, [inaudible] keep you posted. We were really kind of out in the sticks, you know, down there in the corner of Oregon.

SG Does that make you nervous at all to think you might have been...?

RM No, because we don't have those kind of fires... very rarely if we ever had them. Most of us felt we could deal with it if we had it. We didn't know that but we thought we could.

SG So, you felt like you were trained enough and knew...?

RM Well, the timbers different, you know, have these pines and they're all hot and full of pitch... in Montana. And I knew that when we drove through. It just looks dry and a lot of junk on the ground. Over here, the forests are wet except the 3 or 4 months... 3 or 4 weeks of the year when we get East wind and then when they really burn, they very rarely crown, they go up the ground slowly. But, if you get a crown fire, it's likely to go 80 miles and hour with it's own draft. [Inaudible] don't have those kind of fires. It was described but very rarely occurred... we never had it. We were on the fires sometimes an hour after lightning struck. Many times we'd go up and couldn't find the fires. We go up after an lightning storm... follow the spotter plane around and... oh, 3 or 4 times, you're all suited up and ready to go to the fire and you couldn't find the crazy things because it died out and if it did come up, it would be 2 or 3 days later. We generally put 4 people on the plane so it was no big thing except the for gasoline.

SG How many planes did you have flying out of Cactus Run?

RM I don't know that. The more fires... he flew more. [Laugh].
SG  Was there 1 pilot?

RM  Moyer [J. Allen]... he was a fellow from Grant's Pass. I think he... they had a crashed with one, too. I think that was prior year. I don't know the details, he didn't talk about it. He was in shorts and moccasins when they crashed and survived. I think, he and Cliff Marshall, but I would find out for sure who had the details about that because we didn't talk about it much... [chuckle]... no jumpers on the plane as I remember.

SG  Did he jump solely for the smokejumpers or did he also fly for other people?

RM  No, he flew for us. He cleaned his planes and flew around.

SG  Seemed like everybody had a real specific job to do.

RM  Yeah, except the firefighters. They did everything... we did carpentry, we dug fire trails, and septic tanks, and put up tents, and packed equipment... we never packed chutes... packed equipment, practiced, a lot.

SG  Everyday, did you practice?

RM  Well, not necessarily jumping, but we might have a full, 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 days where we just did construction work.

SG  Of all the different type of things you did during your season as a jumper, what kinds of things did you enjoy the most... the jumping, or the project work, or the construction, or the packing out, or...?

RM  Oh, I was really very interested in forestry and I liked it all. We had a real crusty old Dean of Forestry at Oregon State by the name of McCullock. All these guys lined up with their slide rules, their Colonel's wings [inaudible]. So, I get lined up, I'm just fuzzy faced, I'd just started shaving... I was 20. He says, "Well son, you look a little young. You better go back and get some math, and science." Before he would let me into school... you know... Forestry School. He had all these guys that wanted to be foresters and here I am. So, I went back and started math and here's all the pre-med in the math classes. They're all hoping it up and so I thought... well, heck with them, I'll just take pre-med... never got back into forestry at all. That's the way they did in those days because the colleges were just booming, you know, with veterans. Here's all these big guys that had been officers, bomber pilots, command squadron leaders, engineer officers, captains, company commanders in the service, growing out into the colleges. Those were the guys he taught.

SG  But, you were also a vet?

RM  Well, yeah, I was just an enlisted man and I hadn't had any college. Some of them had had prior college before they went
into the service. He wanted mature people in his forestry department... no fooling around. It was Forest Engineering. It wasn't Forest Management and Forest Tech and all that stuff. It was just strictly Forest Engineering. So, you got an engineering degree in forestry and you could take your Civil Engineering test. Many of them did which is [inaudible]. So, it wasn't a Mickey Mouse course in those days. Now they have about 10 Forestry courses. Probably the same in Missoula, too or wherever they have their school.

SG Yeah, that's the way they have the forestry school in Missoula, too.

RM Yeah, they have Tech, and Management, and Business, and you know, all these sort of lesser type courses, as far as he was concerned because he wanted to turn out engineers. So, I just never got back into it. I had been working in the Forest Service by that time, 6 summers... 3 for Eastern Lane Fire Patrol, a state agency tax supported through the county forestry, and then 3 years for National... Siskiyu.

SG Part of which was as a jumper?

RM 2 years as a jumper... 1 year as a scaler... 3 other years as a suppression crew.

SG During that time... let's see, you were jumping in '48 and '49... when was the time you decided to not go into forestry and into pre-med? Was that while you...?

RM Well, probably in that interim because I started college in '47, and you know, you don't know, your first year in college, what you're going to do, so. I just kept at the forestry jobs because I had had that experience. I would have jumped in '50 if they wouldn't have had the height restriction because he had trained me as a Squad Leader and Spotter. Jumpmaster type job. He trained people that were promising to do that and look like they would continue. So, I lived in Grants Pass, he knew I would be around for a few years.

SG But, you decided not to go back or...?

RM No, I decided not to go back because they wouldn't pass me on a physical... too tall.

SG That was the first year they had those restrictions?

RM First year I took a physical... well, I think I took a physical the second year and the guy said, "Yeah, you look, OK. Have a good summer." It was one of those type of physicals, you know, that you get from some people. [Chuckle]. I don't think he took my clothes off, as I remember.

SG Gee, that must have kind of disappointing?
RM Yeah, this fellow was really strict. He just went by the book and then... "Do you recommend this person as a smokejumper?" and he said, "No." Because of my height. So, I was really kind of depressed. Went back down there and talked to Cliff and I said, "What will I do?" He said, "Well, maybe we can find you up something." So, he sent me up to the Ranger's station and they set me up as a log skidder for the District.

SG Was that OK with you did you...?

RM Oh, no, I was kind of interested in jumping because that was where all the fun was, you know, but I learned a lot. Then on my way home to Grants Pass each evening, I'd stop off and visit with them... saw some of guys that I knew but gradually drifted away from them... Orville Cooper was there.

SG Did you spend... like, when you would be working there during the day, and you say you bought that car for $25 and you went off into town with it...?

RM Well, we were 5 miles out of town. There was no way to get into town because the Forest Service wasn't going to furnish us transportation... so, we had to either hitchhike... so, for 14 or 10 of us to buy the car it was no problem. I just didn't know how to do it... how to buy a car. [Laugh]. Big city boys figured that out.

SG Did you all party together, have fun together...?

RM Well, most the guys weren't drinkers. They were in bed by 9 o'clock... 10. I don't remember anybody being in trouble, except maybe one guy.

SG So, you were mentioning, before and others, a concern to keep it... keep everything real low key?

RM Low key... low key.

SG Did you feel like you were trying to be low key, like when you'd went into town?

RM Um hm, I would just visit the local people we knew. There was Shady Drug Store. We'd go in and get a candy bar and you know, just sort of poke around like kids do. But there was very little use of alcohol except in a few rare cases. There was no macho drinking or whooping it up. Cliff was right on the guys... if they were in trouble, he'd go right in and get them and bring them back. If it was the second time or something [inaudible] screw up, he got fired. I mean, that... he was the boss, there was no fooling around... no board of appeal, or nothing. There was no second chance, in many cases, if it was a severe punishment. Of course, the police system in those days were sort of low keyed too. They were watching out for their guys. We had some interesting experiences up around the Ranger Station... the city was kind of expanding and they were kind of cutting some
trees And when they cut the trees down, we'd top them. Then we would have... they may be say, 80... 90 feet tall, so we always had to learn how to use the spurs. I don't if we still have them or not. We carry a set of spurs to get down or up to get our stuff. They had races to see who could get and get the hat fastest and get that down to the ground. We'd do that sometimes in the evening and the locals would sit around. He didn't want us to yell, "Geronimo" or anything when we got out of the planes. As far as anyone knew in town, we weren't even there, except they'd hear us practicing in the morning.

SG So... but the local were aware of you?

RM Oh, yeah... they could see the planes. You know, it was industry... it was business in the town. It was a really small town then. It was just a couple of stores, no doctor until the second year... it was small.

SG Were you kind of celebrities in the town, do you think?

RM No. We just felt we were fire fighters... they had had fire fighters around there for 50 years.

SG So, you don't feel like you got any special treatment or...?

RM No, except like any worker from out of town, they kind of look after you as long as you work in the community because they know you're spending money in the community. They probably allowed us a few liberties we didn't realize.

SG When you say liberties, what kinds of liberties?

RM Oh, I think the guys would, ah... they'd go into the bars and talk to the locals and if there was any kind of fights, I think they'd kind of shoved them out the back door.

SG Kind of took care of them?

RM Yeah, because they didn't want to get them hurt. Because... people in those communities had a lot of power, they could drive a group out of town. If they had bad reception in a small town, they'd go elsewhere to set up their stuff because we weren't that set up. We were just in tents. So they could move them to any other airstrip, anyplace.

SG Were there other fire fighters in town that were not smokejumpers?

RM As I remember, there were 5 or 10 in as employees of that Ranger District. They did road work, and log scaling, and Forest Service job... you just didn't have that many fires. As you noticed in the book, there just weren't that many jumps that year, overall.

[END OF SIDE A]
RM [Interruption]... jumps, in '48 only 1600 jumps. In '50 there was only 1400 jumps and that was done by 250 Smokejumpers so there was about... 10 [inaudible].

SG How did you decide who would jump at your base... your 20 people?

RM Ro... rotation... strictly rotation. Nobody had any preference. The spotter never jumped. The spotter spotted the jumpers and then went back, dropped the equipment, made sure they were OK. One person would have a radio and the flags. Then he would go back and load up the next stick.

SG So, he never jumped the whole season?

RM Oh, yeah, he'd jump but he didn't jump on the fires. He was sort of in charge of [inaudible] and maybe the last guy out on occasion if they needed extra men because they were always short of people and those things.

SG Oh, so the spotter would jump if they needed extra men?

RM Oh, yeah. But, he would usually go back, suit up and come back out again. We didn't exceed 5000 jumps until 1966. That's before they got to 5000... for the year... '40... 99, '41... 193, you know it was low... low volume of jumping... and 10,000 jumps were exceeded in 1948... went from 9900 to 11,000. So, it was pretty much an observation.

SG Your first year as a jumper, did you notice when you first started was there any kind of... today they call the new jumpers, new men.

RM No, we didn't have that. No, because there weren't many guys that came back... I'd say maybe 3 out of 20 or 4.

SG So, pretty much everybody was new?

RM Yeah, um hm. It was very unusual to have more than 5. [Pause]. It was usually guys out of the Army, bumming around, working their way through college, going to do this for a year and do that for a year. It wasn't that big of a thing. There was no glory.

SG No glory?

RM No glory.

SG So, what would you call the kind of work... that was the seasonal work, ah?

RM Yeah, seasonal work. You know, they trained their crews and
wanted them on the job ready to fight fires by early July and lightning season... mostly lightning fires.

SG Did you feel like you were a professional at what you did?

RM No... I think some of the people did because they were very serious about their forestry career. They wanted to get the experience and, ah, they were... would look good for them in Forestry School to get that kind of work every summer. They were instructed to get those kind of jobs out of college, if they could.

SG So, if...

RM But, we only had about 3 or 4 people that were forestry people. I only remember Terry Fieldhouse, as being the one, as I remember. And of course, Orville Looper stayed in just by attrition. He just kept coming back and gradually he was the most experienced guy, but he was talented also.

SG So, experience had a lot to do with what kind of position you had at Cave Junction?

RM Yeah, there was no pecking order. You know, Cliff was the boss, no fooling around. Bob Nolan [Robert L.], was the spotter, and those guys were all business. Most of them were logging. They were serious about their work and particularly, forest work. Much different probably, than it is or was. We wore no insignias or no badges, no patches... no nothing.

SG When you say there was no glory, do you think that that's something that the jumpers ever have had during their history?

RM Well, I've not talked to anybody for 10 or 15 years. The guys I've seen that jump were kind of in my era... Bud Proctor and Jim Wright and, ah... It was mostly just experiential, you know, just the experience of doing. It was fun and I always figured, "Well, you know, you jump when you were 20 years old and 22 but you might not want to do that when you are 35 because you going to get hurt eventually." Fortunately I never was... never did get hurt... nothing. Not a bruise or bump or scrap or sprain... never missed a job.

SG And there wasn't... was there a big injury rate among all the jumpers...?

RM Naw, you know, you tip over the truck and 10... 11 guys go rolling out, that's a big injury rate at one time, but as far as the jumping was concerned, the most serious injury was Larry Looper. But even then, Cliff would get those guys to the hospital and to the doctor and we never saw them again. There was no contact. Just like football players, soon as anybody hurt, they're out of sight. They don't wanna... they don't want to glorify injuries. It's a different game then it is now, where people are sometimes rewarded by being injured.
SG  Rewarded with?

RM  Oh, you know, flowers and candy and visits, and those kind of things. That wasn't encouraged.

SG  So, when things happened, there was a kind of... sort of a hush up?

RM  Yes, indeed. In the Mann Gulch thing, I don't think Cliff wanted us to talk about that too much. Very authoritarian very paternalistic and very concerned about us and the equipment. You really sensed that he was looking out for you, not only on the job but off the job. He had his contacts with forestry people and the local authorities and nobody ever got into serious trouble where they were you know, in jail or anything like that. Where they might have been if they were... if they were paratroopers. I can only remember one or two that were paratroopers and he specifically did not hire them because they wanted to jump and he wanted firefighters.

SG  Do you feel like there was a bond formed between you and the fellows you worked with and Cliff and...?

RM  Well... not with Cliff because he was the boss, you know. He was married. He has family. He'd leave the job at whatever hour he could get off and he went home. His home was on the base. If we had problems, we were to call him but we usually went through somebody else.

SG  Seemed like you spent a lot of time with the fellow that you worked with?

RM  Um hm, but no lasting friendships. I always considered it a temporary job.

SG  Do you feel like the job helped you at all in any way, like you say, you're very physically active in skiing, mountaineering, canoeing, bicycling...?

RM  But, that was only part of it... the jumping was only part of it. It was a continuation.

SG  What about your work in medical school that's...?

RM  Well, I suppose as far as discipline and that kind of thing, it helped. Just like being in the Army, I think helps, too... being in the service, especially if you don't have to go to war. Like, I didn't. Because you get you're act together and to learn to use your time. If you got washing to do, you do it and if you got boots to grease up, you do it. You don't poke around waiting for somebody else to do it... which never occurs. [Chuckle].

SG  Were there any people on the base, who didn't do their work real well?
RM Yeah, but it was part of their personal life. They were slovenly most of them. [Laugh]. Didn't have good habits and they usually weren't hired back.

SG Did that make for any kind of disruption during that year?

RM No, some of the guys didn't like to take baths or showers but we usually badgered them into it eventually. [Laugh].

SG Do you remember any really neat stories or anything that was real intense?

RM No. We just didn't have any problems... except those. It's not like we had a 100 people or 200 people, you know, or 50. There was just 20 of us. You could maintain your space even though you lived in rooms of 3 or 4 and that was only for sleeping. We had a little kind of lobby and lounge and we were busy... all the time.

SG What did you do usually do in the evenings?

RM Wash cloths, take showers, um, talk a little bit, play cards, and we were usually in bed early.

SG Sounds like a....

RM Swim... go swimming. A lot of us liked to swim. Sometimes we'd go into town if we weren't to be immediately available. There was very little drinking in those days.

SG Was that part of an unwritten, kind of, code, that you couldn't drink?

RM Well, most the fellows didn't want to get into trouble and if they, you know, drank excessively they could. I was at the age where I just got sick so it didn't do me any good. [Laugh].

SG It was real interesting before, when you talked about the glory, because that is something, you know, that people do talk about... the myth of being a Smokejumper and people do glorify which it....

RM He very early on, you know, dampened that type of... we want you to be firefighters and smokejumping is just your vehicle to get there. And probably half the fires, we went by truck because they were local... suppression type fires.

SG What about your family... what did they think?

RM Well, they came out and watched me... my folks came out and watched me once or twice. They didn't really want to get into it because, ah... I don't think my mother particularly liked the idea. You know how mothers are about that kind of stuff. So, they came out and watched once. It was one of those kind of days
where... real cool on the grounds so the sheet got about 40 feet from the ground and you couldn't get down... you know, pulling strings so you could get to the ground because there was, you know, the denser air. You know, hot afternoons... man you really came streaking in. Fortunately it wasn't one of those kind of days.

SG  So did your mother get where she was...?

RM  She was satisfied because she saw how easily I landed and all that, so, we just sort of stood there and waited to land. He never let us do that... we were never supposed to stand. You always had to roll... Allen roll... never wanted us to stand up, like they do now. You know, with those [?] suits, they can just drift in and stop.

SG  What about your dad?

RM  He didn't say anything about it either. He liked the outdoors and the excitement, aviation. There was no problem with the family, and quite often having lived in Grants Pass, we'd bring jumpers home and we very seldom even talked about it.

SG  Just kind of... it was an accepted part of...?

RM  Um hm, part of the job.

SG  They didn't feel like you were crazy or...?

RM  Nope, nope. I think they worried a little bit about being injured, you know, that kind of thing, you know it would. The Mann Gulch fire got everybody a little nervous but by that time, we were through.

SG  So, did you do any safety jumps or safety rescue jumps?

RM  No.

SG  Would you do it again?

RM  Now, at my age? No. [Laugh].

SG  Looks like you're in pretty good shape, you could probably do it.

RM  Well, yeah, but, you know, these compression fractures... I know more now than I knew then, too.

SG  What about just parachuting... skydiving?

RM  Wouldn't do it. I could see maybe doing a helicopter let down. I could whip into a rappel and go down in that, you know, 50... 100 feet, whatever was necessary but, ah, I think jumping... the risks in jumping is much greater than those other things, you know, if you have a good helicopter pilot. I suspect
that probably... we'll probably see more of that as time goes by... more and more helicopter let downs and bigger helicopters.

SG  Do you feel that that's a lot safer than jumping?

RM  Well, my impression is... to be certain, I would have to see the statistics, but the Army uses it.

SG  More frequently now then they do...?

RM  No, because they can mass jump. You see, we never mass jumped, it was only 2... 1 guy at a sweep, maybe 2. You know, we didn't tumble out of the airplane like you see in the Army, where 30... 40 people come roaring out. [Laughter, jokes]. So, it was usually an individual thing, Cliff thought that was safest, to drop each person 1 or 2 at the time at the most.

SG  Did you ever have an incident where you would almost have landed on top of someones chute or anything...?

RM  No, no, that's the very reason we didn't because we were dropping 1 person at a time, maybe 2 at the most. I think in the Ford Trimotor, we dropped 4 or 5 out at a time but he would just keep circling until they got everybody out safely. If somebody was injured or thought they were, he'd quit dropping them, because he wasn't sure of the terrain. Safety is the big thing, you know.

SG  Was there an established set of safety procedures?

RM  Well, it was predicated on the terrain, the height of the jump. Before you were... you know a soggy old irrigated field early in the morning was pretty safe, but you get a hot afternoon and it's 120 in the sun and it's a slope. You hit that thing fast and you'd roll 2 to 300 yards down the hillside, sometimes, you know, on those steeper hills. Guys can get injured doing that, you know, bruised up and not be able to fight the fire. He didn't want to have anybody on the fire that couldn't work because there was 1 or 2 and a ground crew on the way and he wanted his men in good shape when the ground crew got there.

SG  What was the longest you were ever on a fire?

RM  Probably a couple days... a couple nights... never longer.

SG  So, the overtime was really not that long?

RM  Not that long... not much.

SG  Was there a feeling when you'd be working overtime, to push that time as much?

RM  No, because Cliff was onto it. In fact, as I said previous like, if you were sleeping, he didn't want to count that as time. He was watching that budget every minute... so he didn't have to
buy a new pair of chutes, so he didn't have to buy new risers and webbing and stuff.

SG  Do you think that the jumpers... yourself and the jumpers, took a lot of pride in the work that they did or was it just the sense of keeping?

RM  Oh, yeah... yeah. Yeah, there was a esprit de corps but I don't think it was, "You'll be my buddy for the rest of your life type of stuff." There wasn't any of that because most of the guys... there were guys from Texas, Georgia, Ohio, Indiana, and you just never saw them again, and never established a permanent relationship because you know you would never see them again.

SG  So, you felt like you had a lot of personal space when you were working?

RM  Yeah, definitely.

SG  Did most the jumpers like to take that personal space?

RM  Well, I don't know because I lived there, close and if I, you know, felt crowded, I could go home for a weekend. The pilot lived in Downey... flew his plane out everyday, so I just had to just plane ride home with him, sleep overnight, have supper with the folks, and ride out next morning in the plane. He had his own little airplane. Unless we were on fire alert.

SG  And if you were on fire alert, you had to stay right there?

RM  You had to stay right there, but you know, you could go whenever... couple three weekends, you know, or something.

[ Interruption ].

Some guys would never go into town all summer, they just stayed there. They didn't have cars... nor bikes... just got a job and stayed.

SG  If you had any kind of advise, like, for a young person who wanted to become a smokejumper, do you think there are any kind of qualifications, or anything that they should look to be? What kind of person, do you think does it takes to become a Smokejumper?

RM  Well, of course, I don't know what the requirements are now. I suppose physical condition first, would be important. You really would have to have a positive mental attitude because you're expected to do things, I think, that probably... you know, at home, you wouldn't do... you know, work long hours under extreme conditions, heat and so on. Many people can't handle that. If they are interested, they probably should start applying sometime before they could actually do it. My impression is, that when people are hired, they really like to see them first. The foreman or the boss would like to see who
they are hiring. That's the way Al Boucher was hired. He just hung around. He was a scrawny kid in high school and pretty soon, as I say, he was Director of the whole program at Redmond... now retired, I think. I don't know how you'd find him... where he is, but he might have friends or family in Cave Junction.

SG Were you surprised when he became the Director out at Redmond?

RM Well, you know, he was just a young fellow, 17 or so and, ah... I knew he was intensively interested because he was sort of a bat boy, you know. He was around all the time. Sort of mascot. So, you know, you could see that that could have happened.

SG Do you think he had any special qualifications that...?

RM No, I didn't... I didn't know him that well. I knew eventually, through the grapevine, that he got hired and the next thing I heard, he was over at Redmond. We stopped in one time and saw him and kind of looked around, briefly. You know, I thought my kids might be interested in it but they never were.

SG Why do you think that was? Did your children ever talk about it?

RM No, we didn't talk about it much but we did visit the Bases and one of my sons worked for [Inaudible] Fire Patrol here up at Springfield, one summer but he never was interested in going into the smokejumping.

SG Do you think that smokejumping has anything that is similar to these other sports that you've got yourself involved in... ah, mountain climbing, canoeing, bicycling? Does it share anything?

RM Yeah, I think they do... I think it was a personal accomplishment, you know, that... quite often the trip is more important than the accomplishment. [Chuckle]. More satisfying to get to the mountain and get up there. You get to the top it's sort of, "Well, well what, you know, we did it."

SG Well, that's true.

RM So, I was jumping, you know... getting ready, getting in shape is so much. The actual jumping isn't really much because it wasn't much worse than the shock tower. That's the way they have it rigged, anyway, so the jar was greater and the landing on those pulleys was greater than actually existed in the ground, for me.

SG So, the whole...?

RM I never had any experiences jumping that I hadn't preceded... been preceded by in training. It always seemed
easier jumping then it did training.

SG  What about the just the idea of, well, when you're jumping, you don't have the ropes and the canvas? There's a thrilling element there.

RM  Well now... yeah, you have your reserves and stuff and we never had any chute failures, or things like that. No equipment failures.

SG  Is there anything that you've done besides jumping out of a plane, that has more of a... sort of, an impact on you guys as far as...?

RM  No. Yeah, well, you see, the thing is, those... experiences were related as a job, not as any big personal experience... as a job.

SG  It sounds like a hard job?

RM  Well, it was a hard job but that's what we wanted when we were 20 or 19. [Laugh]. We had a hard job getting into shape after the winter. I never believed in going to school in the summer like some people did. I always wanted to get out and do something physical in the summer.

SG  It sounds like you continued those physical activities in the winter though, too.

RM  Um hm, yeah... cross country skiing and I was really active in Boy Scouts... had a lot... all boys were in those. So, I spent a lot of time in Scouts and I'm still a Scout Leader. I have the Medical Explorers Shield at the hospital. [pause]. Also, I was National Director of the Outward Bound Program and so, I sort of got the Outward Bound philosophy, too.

SG  Which is?

RM  Well, they have the Outward Bound School in Maine... sailing. They have an Outward Bound School in Portland which is climbing. Colorado Outward Bound, and then a friend of mine was Director of the Outdoor Bound School in Puerto Rico for the Peace Corp... all the Peace Corp people went through under Sargent... Sargent Shriver... Sarge, we called him. So, I was kind of, later on, introduced to this type of outward bound philosophy that I had all ready done... to put people under stress so they can stand it later when they get it. Outward Bound philosophy was developed by a German who... the British noted that the old sailors survived in the life rafts after the ships were torpedoed and the young guys would die or not survive. But then we found out it was an emotional, stress related thing. They couldn't take that cold or heat or whatever. So, they started it in England and developed a program in Hanover, Massachusetts. It's the old... they first had had the "dine 'em"... or "Dunk 'em and dine 'em" Technique where they put the guys out in the boats all
day and you'd come home, have a hot shower, put on your coat and tie and have supper. Cliff had a little bit of that philosophy... Cliff Marshall. He expected the guys to be rough and tough, work hard, then when you come in at night and you clean up. Put on a clean shirt and eat supper. He didn't allow too many personal hygiene problems. [Chuckle].

SG And Willy Unsoeld...?

RM Willy Unsoeld, then got more involved in that as he became [inaudible].

SG So, that outward bound philosophy was just developing during those years?

RM Yeah, it was sort of... you know, the training is that way. The training toughens you up for what's going to happen. Hopefully you'll have the landing experiences and things you'll have on the fires.

SG Sounds like a real positive experience.

RM Yeah, it's a real positive thing. It's... I think the Southfun Corporation in Southeastern United States runs all their Executives... Junior Executives through the Outward Program in South Carolina... similar type program.

SG Do you ever see or hear anything about the current smokejumpers?

RM The only thing I hear is from... what comes out of Missoula.

SG Do you hear good... bad things...?

RM Well, I think it's just an established arm of the Fire Fighting Program now. I don't have any conception of what's going on.

SG Over the years they've gone through several periods of the job changing from a seasonal job into one where a lot of the fellows have stayed... as well as some of the women now... stayed for... they can work for a lot of the year.

RM [Inaudible]. You see these articles, you know, like this is out of a... some northwest magazine, you know, "The Grueling Way To Make $7.50 An Hour, Do You Know The Right Stuff," "How to...." Did you see that? That was this... just a couple of weeks ago.

SG What do you think of these articles?

RM Well, I... you know, you can see the picture is taken to look like the "Right Stuff"... ah, picture of the movie. [Pause]. Just interesting, I guess.

SG Do you think they glamorize it too much, or do they make it
RM Well, I don't know, you know, it's been almost 40 years since I've done it, so I don't know what the situation is now. You know, I don't know if the guys have to have an IQ of 140 and be football players, and you know, Phi Beta Kappa's now to work for them. I don't know what the requirements are. The ones that I saw in Redmond, 8 or 10 years ago, looked like, you know, smart young people... forestry types and college students... good shape. [Discussing article and what magazine it was from and date it was published.] The reason I took the article, I was amazed to see that the uniforms are very, very similar to what we had. You know, the same high collar and now they have a plastic football helmet. You know, ours was leather. They're using a very similar chute, apparently. Different planes of course. Then they have this shock tower landing type setup that we had. Ours was a little more crude. Let's see... there are 1000 applying and only 430 are assigned so they have 430 guys now, apparently.

SG There's a lot more now. A lot of more jumpers.

RM And of course there were no girls [inaudible]. They didn't want girls hanging around us out there in the woods.

SG What would you have thought then if they would have had women fire fighters?

RM Oh, I don't know. I think it would have been OK but girls just didn't... weren't really that active then, so it wasn't really, ah, a thing you even thought about much. If a girl were hired, you'd say, "Well, she's going to parachute rigger, or cook, or secretary, or something like that." Which would be what you'd think they would do. You wouldn't think they would jump.

SG How would you have felt about jumping with a women?

RM I don't have any idea of what I would have thought. I really don't. Women just weren't there then... in 1946.

SG Well, even as fire fighters, they've just really begun getting into firefighting the past... actually getting enough experience even to be a jumper.

RM Yeah, my brother's daughter fought fires over in the La Grande area... she wasn't a smokejumper. And I've know girls that have fought fires but they've all ended up being teachers and college summer work kind... nurses.

SG Hearing real mixed feeling from the men about it. Some of them don't like it at all.

RM Well, it's hard work, you know, it's really hard and you would have to have a particular kind of gal to do it. I always
thought it was hard and carrying those 90 pound packs and things like that is tough going... sometimes it's 10... 15 miles, you know.

SG Yeah, I don't know... that would be a lot. I've heard the packs are... I've heard the weight goes up to 120 pounds, sometimes.

RM Yeah... well, if you get both chutes, and your harness, and all your fire fighting equipment, it can be pretty heavy. I thought it was hard then.

SG Yeah, it sounds like a lot of hard work but it sounds like... what I'm hearing is you took the job pretty seriously and did a good job.

RM Well, he did let people go, you know. So, there was always the threat of being fired. There was no appeal. I mean, he was... that was it. It was final and it was quick. [Laugh]. Most the time, you didn't even know the guys were gone. You say, "Where's old Joe?" "Well he was here this morning." We'd ask Cliff, "Oh yeah, oh... he didn't get along too well on this or that and we let him go."

SG Oh, so, you didn't even really hear about a lot of the reasons.

RM It was immediately after the fact. There was no... there was usually, probably some confrontation or some discussion in advance but when the guy went, he went.

SG Was there discussion among you as jumpers as to why or where he went?

RM No, because the possibility was always there. And, of course, like I mentioned, the gross things... the guy would not jump or would not "behave" (in quotation marks)... I mean he had just gotten out of the Army, you know, the year before, so, that's the way they worked then, too.

SG So, there wasn't really much in the way of gossip, or rumors, or things of that sort.

RM One thing we did one year is, we went over to the coast... I think to Brookings and worked over there for a couple of weeks, where they needed some labor work; doing forest work. Fire level was low so they sent 6 or 8 of us over there. We lived there in the Forest at a Ranger Station and worked out of there. Gold Beach is where it was... Gold Beach.

SG How was that?

RM It was fine. Just like the kind of work I'd done before. We worked all the time... always worked.
SG Did you learn a lot of new things when you worked or was it something that you pretty much known?

RM No, not particularly because I had all ready been in forest work before. We worked on bridges and trails and... you know, just things that Forest Service people do... put up telephone line.

SG Was it nice being outside?

RM Um hm. That's what I wanted, those times. But, um... we did everything. We did plumbing, and we did construction, and roofing. If a stick went out to jump on a fire, we just continued working. The plane was taking off and landing... it wasn't our turn so we just stayed on the job. We didn't stop to watch them or do anything about it. Very matter of fact. "Fellows, it's you guys turn, get out here and get your clothes on, we're going to go out and see if we could fight this fire." The other guys just didn't miss a beat with the hammer if they were shingling, whatever they were doing. You know, there wasn't all this ready room type of stuff. You quite often never knew where you were going.

SG Did you like that aspect of the job or not?

RM Yeah, you know, there wasn't a lot of thinking going on or philosophizing going on about jumping. We were more likely to be talking about some book we were reading or football game or something like that.

SG Then all of a sudden you would have to go and...?

RM Go to work. Go fight fires.

SG You never felt as if that was any imposition on your personal life?

RM Nope.

SG So, it was OK in no matter what you were doing just to get kind of called up in the middle of it and take off?

RM Yep.

SG Was that fun or was it...?

RM Well, I was returning to college, once, I was home and packing up. They called me out to come back and jump again and I had quit for the summer and they had another 2 or 3 weeks of dry weather. Whistled out there in my father's car, as I remember, it was the only way I could get out there. He had to pick it up some way. And, then, had to go back to work.

SG Would you have to put off going to school?
RM No. I don't think I ever did. Same thing happened to me in high school when we were called out for fire fighting after the school started on a couple of occasions during [inaudible]. So, I had... you know, I was used to that. A truck would pull up in front of high school and all the guys that were in forest camp would go around to the truck and go out and fight fires for a couple of days. [Laugh].

SG Was there a lot of talk of the war at all, after...?

RM No. And Cliff was very set about that. He didn't want war stories going on because a lot of the guys had some interesting experiences and we did talk a little bit about that. It turned out, a lot of them are sort of squeaky people, you know, the kind that would have ended up being soldiers of fortune, now.

SG So, Cliff didn't like that...?

RM No, he didn't like that at all. He discouraged talk about war because he didn't feel it was applicable to our job. And the one guy... I think he last name was Foster, was a veteran, had done some stuff behind him in lines... he didn't come back the second year. He was one of my bunk... roommates in my tent as I remember.

SG You think it was because of those...?

RM No. He was just drifting around... from job to job. You had 15... 20 probably... you could draw $20 a week for 52 weeks. In those days $20 a week was quite a bit. A lot of the guys would just work if they felt like it and not tell anybody, so, they would draw their 20 bucks a week.

SG Did you feel like a lot of those...?

RM No. There wasn't many. There was a couple. That kind of ran out, too, about that time.

SG How many years did that go on after you left?

RM I can't remember. It was going on... going on then as I remember... you get out and you could draw 52 weeks of pay.

SG That's pretty nice.

RM Yeah, $80 a month went quite a ways then. [Chuckle]. Especially that job.

SG So, they could collect that in addition to... or, did you collect that, too?

RM No, I didn't get that because I was a student, so you didn't get it if you were a student because you got the GI Bill if you were a student. You couldn't do both.
SG (Interviewer) GI Bill for students was great, too.

RM (Respondent) Yeah, it was good. I think it was $500 a year for tuition and books and $75 a month to live. Which was enough money.

SG I thought you were a professional dentistry person and....

RM Doctor... my brothers the dentist.

SG Oh, I thought you were... oh, you're not a dentist?

RM No. I'm a family doctor... I have been here for 27 years.

SG I thought your wife said you were a dentist.

RM No, my brother is.

SG Well, here I'm thinking the whole time that you were a dentist.

RM No. No, I was in medical school from '50 to '55 and interned to [inaudible], California in '57. You know, you lose a lot of contact in 7 years with people that you associated with prior to '50. A lot of growth... a lot of changes. So, I never really got back into it except to, you know, go down to Oregon Caves... my son worked down there and drop into the Base and say hello to Orville Looper and take off again.

SG You went to school as [inaudible], that's hard...?

RM Yeah, so, and I didn't keep up any close affiliations except with Unsoeld and Carters, who both worked there.

SG I heard quite a bit about Willy Unsoeld.

RM Yeah, he's a pretty famous person. Did a lot of big things and I got guard type of educational things in Outward Bound and Peace Corp and US Aid in Nepal. So, we had a lot of jobs. Then started... helped start that University over there.

[Tape noise]

SG Oh, I didn't know that.

RM He was in the ground floor. He was a philosophy professor at Oregon State [inaudible].

SG So, do you still do any climbing?

RM Oh, yeah. Not actively, you know, I'm not doing any type of things.

SG Where do you climb?

RM Mostly Cascades or any of it's big sisters. I didn't do any this summer. Last summer I climbed a couple of times but... a
lot of biking and hiking... more appropriate for my age. [Laughing].

SG  A little easier on the knees, walking and biking can be. So, you don't think you will ever be doing any kind of jumping again?

RM  No, not unless [inaudible].

SG Well, is there... we talked about a whole bunch of different things about smokejumping, is there anything that I haven't asked you about, that you feel is particularly important to say about those 2 years you jumped, that haven't been emphasized?

RM No... no. Unfortunately I'm not a very good historian... no names on the backs of the pictures, and no big, you know, anecdotal types of adventures, but I'm sure if you talked to old Looper or some of those other guys, they would probably know something about me I can't even recall. Those guys were with it so long, you know... if you can find them. This time of year, you probably can because the fire season is pretty much over throughout the United States.

SG Their life they've pretty much stayed... do you think they've stayed with fires?

RM I had the impression they did. If you can find Al Boucher... I have no idea where he is, but they would probably know in Cave Junction. So, if you could put a few calls in, maybe you could catch them on the way back. Because, you know, they watched the thing really grow... Alaska, and here, and Redmond.

SG You were part of that too, though, you think, just to start the rapelling technique and just the improvement in that whole....

RM Well, early on. I don't know... do they use that now... do they use the rapelling technique to get out of trees?

SG I think they do.

RM Fortunately! [Chuckle].

SG I think finally they do but those early years were the formation of a lot of the techniques that they use.

RM Yeah, but we were pushing for it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]