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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 172-005, 006, 007a

Interviewee: David "Skinny" Beals

Interviewers: Nick Sundt, Charlie Bragdon, and Bruce Van Voorhis

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Note: Because there are three interviewers, it is difficult to distinguish among them. All three have been identified as Interviewer, "I", throughout the transcript.

I: Every once in a while he'll write and says, "Well, I'm going to get out that way and I'll see you" and he never does.

I: I think he's going to get out here he...

DB: Last time no...yes, it was the last time was when he went to Canada, he wrote me from there a couple times. He was back up in Nova Scotia, wasn't he, for a while?

I: I think so. Now he's down in Carolina. South Carolina.

DB: Last time I heard from him he was in Washington D.C.

I: Yes, he was he did a study of the fire fireman in Washington D.C. If you're interested at all in that, he's got a book he wrote on it. It's called *Good Fire, Bad Night*, and it's you know it's kind of a neat story of...He covers the busiest fire houses, how all the men like it and stuff.

DB: This guy used to be an ex-jumper?

I: Yea he used to jump here.

DB: That's where he met Nick and all that?

I: He is a friend of Venom's (?) who Nick lived with.

DB: Oh, I see.

I: Well, I understand you jump for quite a while.

DB: Yes, I made my first one in 1945.

I: Really?

DB: Yes.

I: Was that up at Winthrop?

DB: No, Missoula. Everything was...all training until 1947 was done at Missoula. All smokejumpers were trained at Missoula. Then I went to McCall [Idaho]. I was there just that year. Then I skipped '46, and then I started in '47.

I: At Winthrop?

DB: Yes.

I: Then you came to Redmond. Did you come down here to start Redmond?

DB: Yes, Well yes. In fact, we slept on the sewing room floor. When we got here they hadn't even, didn't have a bunk house quite finished. [laughs] So it was down here on the...yes.

I: Well what was the purpose...Why did they start Redmond down here? Winthrop and Cave [Junction] and La Grande were already here and...

DB: That's actually [unintelligible]. I think they had a little extra money. That's when they had the federal funds for contractors for hiring. I don't know how it was. It was some deal they had for a few years. Like the federal government does and so they decided this, but I honestly don't know why they...The only thing is they had to send them from... They worked out of here a lot anyway. They'd bring a planeload of Cave Junction [CJ] guys in and sleep in a hotel or sleep out of the deal there. So they used this place quite a bit, and I think the Deschutes [unintelligible] wanted it bad because it is too far from CJ and Winthrop to fly, I mean, because our airplanes were pretty slow then. Still are.

I: I asked the guy down in Bend, like a P.R. guy for the forest. He said it was because it was centrally located and because they had a history of fires around it. More or less what you just said.

DB: I don't know. It was always an argument of centralization and non- centralization. There is advantages to both ways.

I: Especially nowadays. I mean—

DB: When they got...You know, if they had a good jump airplane that was fast, then centralized like here would be almost perfect, but a good jump plane is not fast. Those ones they've used, as far as I'm concerned, have been a lousy plane. In fact, the finest jump plane ever made is that one went out there.

I: The Otter.

DB: The next one was a Ford Tri-Motor.

I: Really? You didn't like the ones in... You don't like the King Air, the 200 or—

DB: No. They are too fast. It depends a lot on pilot, but they're just too fast. They're moving and they don't have...These ones with big thick wings on them and all that can poke along, and the jumper just falls out instead of getting whipped around all over the place.

I: We jumped on Saturday on the Deschutes and we had two man exits out of the 99, and the second man couldn't get out. He would stick.

DB: Oh I hate that 99.

I: Do you? [laughs]

DB: But boy, to get from point A to point B.

I: They zip down here from North Cascades, yes.

DB: [unintelligible] that was the trouble with it. Then they had, like Missoula would use them, they had these little landing strips all through their primitive areas. At that time, they were primitive areas rather than wilderness, and so they'd put a few jumpers here and a few here and so it didn't have to go very far because hell, top speed cruise about, I don't know, 85 or something like that.

I: Oh, and then when they feathered the props to slow down it was—

DB: Well the Tri-Motor had wings about twice as thick as that Otter. That thing, you just flop. Noisy. They were metal, and they vibrated a lot. My first airplane ride was my first jump too. Was in a Ford Tri-Motor. The two engines are hung with on the ends and the struts and those engines would go like this, and I was watching that. I was almost more afraid of the airplane than I was the jump. They really wobbled.

I: Did you use the same kind of deployment, or was there more of a shock when you started?

DB: Oh no, there was a shock. That was worst part of jumping was the shock. That's the reason you liked slow airplanes rather than fast because, well, it was just accordion folded and cover put on it, so when the cover came off the wind just caught the just the—

I: The static line.

DB: Or the static line pulled the cover off. Although, theoretically it'd string it out, but at the same time the wind would catch it and just fly out. So a lot of times, see, it'd open before you

were into your lines. Get out and kind of fly around here, and you're still going down and when you hit the end of the line, why—

I: Just wham!

DB: Yes. I mean it varied a lot. If the chute was a little slower opening, it wasn't too bad. Otherwise, they just strawberries from one end to the other on you. Just red marks. You'd hold your teeth together so you wouldn't get your tongue. As I'd go out, I'd say, "god," I'd grit my teeth and then go bang and "damn!" [laughs] So that's the reason we liked slow airplanes for one. The DC-3, it's pretty fast. It depends a lot on the pilot. God, we used to get some horrible shocks. The chute would literally fold up and reopen again. So the deployment bag was real [unintelligible]. That'd let you clear at the end of your lines before the canopy ever comes out, and so it opens so there's no way you can get much a shock on that. But if your canopy comes over before you're at the end of your lines the other way...It just depended a lot. Sometime it's hard, sometimes you got very little, but we used to lose helmets every once in a while. They'd just, bang!—pop off. I had a helmet one time, I looked over my partner, and his helmet just left his head. Just went singing off in the—

I: Would your risers pull your helmet off?

DB: No, just the impact?

I: Really? Wow.

DB: Smack! You tucked under. If you really tucked under—

I: So you could get whiplash if you didn't tuck right.

DB: —and the helmets if you'd really had them really tight on.

I: You had football helmets.

DB: Yes, very similar. Yes. The jump, the suit and all that, that's one of the few things that hasn't changed. Basically that hasn't changed a bit since our first experimental work. It's the same thing. Different materials. Then they were made of canvas. They used black felt for padding.

I: And what was the outside of the suit made of?

DB: Canvas.

I: Oh, it was canvas.

DB: Heavy canvas. Well, during the war and right after the war, zippers are hard to get, so they used hook to close it, but they went back to zippers. Before, the original one had zippers. They did experiment a little with a one-piece suit, but the bad feature of that is you need too many sizes. Otherwise it'd be better yet. You'd get in a lot faster see. But you need about eight or ten sizes whereas this two-piece, well, you can get by with basically three sizes. But they never played around with it much. The collar was the same. I mean like I said, padded a little different. The mask—I bet that mask on there is the same specification as it was in 1939.

I: Who was responsible for the change of the D-bag [deployment bag]? Was that a smokejumper innovation or was that...Who worked on that? Did you guys put in suggestions or anything like that?

DB: No it was done by...Well Missoula had an experiment. What did they call that?

I: MEDC (?) or whatever.

DB: Yes, and they worked with it, and I think that the military had already gone to it.

I: Before you had the deployment bag was it a deal where you jumped out and pulled the ripcord, or did they always have a static line?

DB: All except experimental work. The very first, they didn't have a static line, but in fact they had a static line before the military really had one. See, our old static lines used to just be a regular hook. The military developed that sliding deal, and guys would miss it every once in a while or bounce off the hook. [laughs] The old Tri-Motor had a little...You could jump up to four at a whack. Generally, it was only two.

I: Are you kidding? God!

DB: But if you were the fourth man, you couldn't hook up and I was fourth. Two times I was fourth man out of a Tri-Motor, so you got all already and it's a little short cable about that right next to the door and you just couldn't reach it—the fourth man. So the first guy goes out, second guy, and as you come up, why, you slap it on then go on out.

I: Was it a stand-up exit?

DB: No, they're too small doors. Kind of a hunched over. No, it had a step. You had to come down on the step on it...But it was, god it was slow. So it made it nice for jumping compared. Then the Travel Air. That was the two of the planes when we began. Those were the two jump planes. They were a single-engine KT (?) jumpers.

I: So they had you...That would be just when you got a call for just a small amount of men, you'd take that out?

DB: See, those days they'd request so many men. That's what you took. You never took more than that. If they requested two men, even when we had to Noorduyn that carried four, when they requested two men, that's all we even put in the airplane.

I: So did you ever get, when you went out on a two man, or do you ever get on one that just...I mean I could see two men when they call you, but by the time you get there it could just be an inferno.

DB: Oh yes, it could be it, and once in a while it was a little big. They'd go back and get some more. But see for years, that's all we had up there is Noorduyn. One Noorduyn.

I: Why did they go to different planes?

DB: Get them cheap. Surplus.

I: And they quit making the Tri-Motor I guess and—

DB: Oh yes. See, they quit that. They didn't make that many. In fact, I think there was only eight and nine in existence at that time. The chief test pilot for Ford was killed in an airplane crash, and Ford just gave up on airplanes like that. So they only made it for about two or three years. For some reason, it just killed his interest in it all, and he just dropped the whole project. That's the way I understand it anyway.

I: I guess that is a good enough reason.

DB: I'm not sure whether he was killed in the Tri-Motor or not either, but he was killed in an airplane.

I: They're supposed to be pretty good planes, weren't they, the Tri-Motors?

DB: Oh yes.

I: I like the looks of them. We've seen some old [unintelligible].

DB: They put them in a little dinky holes that you wouldn't believe. They fly just about like the Otter except they won't go faster the Otter. The Otter will, what, 140 knots 30 knots, somewhere in there, which isn't exactly high speed, but it's a lot faster than the Tri-Motor.

I: Well say, where did you...How did you hear about smokejumping, or how did you get into it?

DB: Okay, I was young and all that in those days, and I was raised as a Quaker. I was a conscientious objector during war, and that's who did all the jumping in '43, '44, and '45. Was

all conscientious objectors. In fact, there was 200 of them in '45 that were jumping all over the country. That's how I got started there.

I: Okay, and so you went over to Missoula.

DB: Yes. Then when I tried to get back in in '47, why, this Francis Lufkin was the only one who'd hire ex-Cos [conscientious objectors].

I: Really? He was the only one who would?

DB: None of the others would touch you with a ten-foot pole. [laughs]

I: Well apparently he had must have work with some during the war and liked their work then.

DB: Oh yes, I think they all liked the work, but it's just a kind of a policy of, he just said, the Forest Service. He just ignored it and hired them anyway.

I: Well yes, he was powerful enough to just do what he wanted, wasn't he?

DB: Pretty much so.

I: So why do you think that was so that people wouldn't hire COs?

DB: Same way they wouldn't hire blacks.

I: Really? Well discrimination.

DB: Or Chinese.

I: They just discriminated against them?

DB: I mean, that's fine. You expected this, that part, but because there were guys that got back on with the Forest Service right? Some district ranger liked their work or something. See, just like now—more so than now—you worked on the projects all the time. I know a few guys who got on this...well, they'd be FMO [fire management officer?]
—FMOs now, I guess. Then they call this type of thing on some districts up in Montana.

I: Did you say '43 to '45 you were jumping out of Missoula?

DB: No, just '45 and I jumped out of...I trained in Missoula and jumped out on McCall.

I: Oh, okay. So when you were jumping, did you still have rookie training like we have now?

DB: Oh, yes. In Missoula, we had fairly large groups, so actually what happened is it took longer to train you because one day they divided the group in two parts. Say, there's 50, I think there was 53 or 4. They'd be a unit-type deal. One day you'd have fire training—one group—and the other group would have jump training. The next day they've got jump training and you'd have fire training, and you alternated like that. Even when you're jumping you only jumped every other day. When you're training, you jump one day and fire training the next day and so on.

I: It sounds like there wasn't as much prerequisites then as far as fire training?

DB: Oh, no. No in fact, Lufkin liked to hire farm boys because they are usually strong and all this, and he could care less. He says, "I can train them the way I want them this way." There used to be none of that. Plus, the training was kind of a hassle like it is now, but...You're not supposed to say this, but the training is much tougher now than it was then.

I: Oh, really?

DB: Usually you say in the old days it was really tough, but I mean it was it was tough but it wasn't...You didn't have any specifications to—

I: Oh, like running the mile and all that?

DB: Yes, or so many pushups. God, we had one good jumper one time who couldn't do a pullup. Never could. He was just built...I mean he'd do a million push-ups. He couldn't even jump now, and yet he carries a big load and everything else. Some way he was made he might work his way up to get one, but that's all. He'd work and work at it, and he just the way he was built, I guess. He's a fairly good-sized person too. He jumped for several years and did fine. But anyway, they had nothing. In fact, my rookie training Missoula, all they wanted you to do was improve. If you could do five push-ups all, why, then by god, better keep trying. If your attitude is right, and then pretty soon you're doing 10 and 12 and 15 and so on, great. But if you could do 50 to start with, by god, you'd better do more than that. [laughs] Anyway it just wasn't...It really wasn't as tough.

I: How long did it go for?

DB: About the same as it does now.

I: Four or five weeks?

DB: Yes. When it's every other day I think. I am trying to remember. It didn't start till pretty late. Somewhere in June. Went to...It was about four weeks.

I: I understand that running wasn't emphasized as much then. Or did you guys do a lot of running?

DB: Did a lot of hiking. They'd take us out on dinghys and out a pack on our back, and we would have to walk up to a lookout or something like that. Well, okay, you had squad leaders, but each squad leader had his squad and he stayed with them all during the training. We had a guy who wasn't too ambitious squad leader anyway. One time we were supposed to take some long hike, and we went out about a half a mile in the dinghy somewhere and he said, "Let's rest." We rested for about five hours or however long it would have taken us and got up and put some dirt on us and stuff. [laughs] [unintelligible] you know just ordinary boys will be boys, but they had, of course, the jump tower and of course it was just a plain old rope—

I: Was it just a—

DB: — [unintelligible] all the time but just another rope and a tower. You jumped, and when it came to a halt, you did too.

I: So there was no cables to slide on? It was a shock tower.

DB: Part of it was to try to...Yes, because that was the shock you were going to get. Well, they had kind of a net under there, but actually the rope, I saw it break about three or four times. It usually broke so it'd bring the guy to a stop and then it'd break. Then he'd just fall the way down. Nobody seemed to worry about it anyway. [laughs]

I: Well, you guys were tough back then. You didn't need to be worried about it.

DB: Well that's part of it was...I mean jumping off those was a lot rougher. Then we went to nylon rope. Well that was almost too easy. That had so much stretch to it. The middle of it had a kind of spring that you could adjust, but they had that so it came pretty hard and you had to...I don't know whether you can do it now, I don't think you can do it there. In order to be keeping your head while you took like a rock or something, and when you went off, why, then you're supposed to...well, two rocks, and then change hands back forward before you hit the bottom.

I: [laughs] That's a good idea though.

I: What was that to do, just give you something to think about while you were up there?

DB: I mean to see if you were... Well okay, psychologically I don't know how to explain this. In the old days, jumping was much more of an unknown than it is now. The fear of jumping is...Guys were much more afraid, including myself. On your first jumps and even than they are now, because everybody jumps. It's done all over the place, and then everybody's raised with it. But then you weren't. It was a daring do. People—these divers and the airshows and all that. Of course, the paratroopers are just getting started then too. So it's kind of unknown, so guys freeze sometimes in the air. This was to get a guy his mind going even though he's doing

something he isn't...jumping at the same time and being able do it. I saw one fellow myself...I mean...it happened. He jumped and he's like this, and the chute opened and he went all the way to the ground just like this. Just froze. [laughs]

I: Geez. Did he ever jump again?

DB: I'm trying to remember on him. I don't think he made it.

I: Was that during training, or was that during a—

DB: During training. Well, just people were petrified by it. Now, they aren't. These guys, it doesn't even faze them, and it always did scare me to a certain extent. I mean, I was nervous anyway.

I: Well your chutes were...It was tougher with those chutes, wasn't it? I mean compared to the chutes we have now.

DB: Well they were smaller, of course, and came down like a bag of crap.

I: Well, and which chutes did you use?

DB: They were [unintelligible]. Okay, the reason they had the old Eagle chute if you've ever heard of it.

I: Yes, I've heard of it. I've seen pictures of Lufkin and the Eagle men.

DB: I jumped it once, but most guys didn't want to jump it even though they were going out. Okay, they steered very well and the forward speed and all that was probably better than the FS-5 (?) I'd say. I might not be as well as the—

I: The 10?

DB: What do you call yours now, 10s still? But, you talk about opening shock. I mean I am not exaggerating. Okay, it had this ports around it. The second piece you know? Here's the parachute and then another piece was sewn on so when it opened it had a deal that went all the way around about this wide. It was sewed up here and there. Okay, so the chute opened this way rather than filling up inside of it. Opened from the outside, and when those things opened, I mean, the shock was something else. That's what...Those poor guys. Some of them wanted to jump in it all the time mainly because of the steer-ability.

Okay, these are two things I saw with my own eyes. One, the opening shock broke five lines on this parachute, and they were [unintelligible]. And a lot of times they open twice. They made a bang. God, they'd just go bang when they'd open, and sometimes they'd open hard enough

they would fold up and then come bang and hit again. Okay, on a fire jump I made, why, this one guy he always wanted to jump them, and he jumped and he had one of those horrible opening shocks and it broke the strap under his leg. It snapped that off, snapped his suspenders, but of course his harness kept his suit on. Although his leg would flop in the breeze. They split holes in them all the time from the opening shock, so they're kind of bad that way.

I: Split holes in the chute itself?

DB: Yes. It was silk. Okay, silk. [unintelligible]. So anyway, the first chutes we use we just had slots in them. They didn't have the tails on them at all, so you'd turn them and psychologically they went forward but they didn't very much. [laughs]

I: At least you could turn them and come in the way you wanted.

I: Sort of thought they went forward?

DB: Well, they would a little bit. When they put this, we call it a porch on it—

I: Which is the holes in it?

DB: No. Okay well you've got the FS-5s here yet, haven't you?

I: We don't use them, but there are some around.

DB: Well you've seen that back end where they took the extra triangular piece in it that rides up higher and pushes air out there. Well, that helped a lot, but the other parachutes didn't. Looking back on it, we thought they had two or three miles an hour, but I don't think they did.

I: So then you couldn't counter any wind with those?

DB: No.

I: Was it important for you...Did you even try to land it in the wind, or I guess it didn't make much difference then, you could just land any way you wanted?

DB: The way I landed always was the most comfortable way to roll. I always did, which happen to be on the right side. I'd always roled to the right. I can't roll to the left, or at least I never did.

I: Did you use Allen rolls then?

DB: Yes.

I: Did you find that that was easy to do? I mean did you...It looks like a really hard roll to me. I've just learned the other one. I never did—

DB: Well, to do it perfect's almost impossible. Number one, it's hard to train because you don't have the forward speed which you get with the winds, but that whole idea is to get you off your feet. Like I say, you land a lot harder than these newer chutes anyway, and they had to figure out some deal to get you off your feet. When they try to use a military, which is kind of folding and coming over here, too many guys banged up their shoulder because they wouldn't get it tucked under enough. Then this Allen roll... once you get turned like that well then nature takes care of the rest. You're off your feet and well [unintelligible] who cares.

I: Yes, you got enough padding. Well, who came up with that, that Allen roll?

DB: A guy by the name of Allen, I think, in Missoula. He came up with it fairly early in the system. We used to learn it in '45. I can't remember the guy's first name, but that's...Well now you know who he was as far as that goes.

I: Well, you were talking about how some guys liked to use that Eagle chute. Then you had your choice on what chutes you jumped, is that true? I mean you could say give me that one?

DB: Well, there wasn't too many of them left, and some of the old-timers, man in there one or two years usually had them pretty well tied up. But there wasn't that many guys that wanted to do it because of the opening shock. I did it on a fire [unintelligible]. It actually wasn't much harder than I've had with the others, but they vary too, some. I decided, well, they're going out of style. I might as well say I have jumped one of them. They have two sizes. They had a 27 footer and a 30 foot.

I: What, the 27 footers if you wanted to be daring or something? [laughs]

DB: No, they just had to be the two makes that the Eagle parachute company made. The lighter guys generally went with the 27 and the heavier ones with the 30. But they disappeared in '40. I don't know whether they used any in '46. '47, they were all gone.

I: When you did your training on...I noticed when I did my training I thought that it wasn't just to...There was more to it than just seeing if you were physically fit. There was a kind of a test involved in it. Did you—

DB: Well, that's the reason we didn't...A lot of the guys that in those days, like I say, you get some farm kids, and they didn't need to be physically fit. The whole idea in smokejumper training, and I think it still is, is you do all these things over and over—this is the original reason why—over and over and over again until you do it by...what's the word? Rote? Like I say, in those days we had kind of...A lot of guys had fear. Their, just almost, mind went blank on them, but if they'd—over and over again—they'd hooked up, if they'd have done this. Then we did it

over and over again, just like you do now. You go off the tower, you did the walk ups over and over and over, that even if your mind goes blank then the guys going to do the—most of the time—do the right thing and he doesn't have to really think about it. I think that was most of the reason we were training. Tnd then it puts a little bit or it used to...I can't pronounce this right, but it's like the Marines say *esprit de corps*.

I: Oh yes, *esprit de corp*.

DB: Yes, it's kind of a tongue twister. Especially if you go through kind of rough training, it does put some of that in you. In those days, there was a lot of it, of course, among the jumpers because, again, it was unusual. There wasn't that many of them around. It was new and people respected them especially when you're a CO. Thought anybody who would jump out of an airplane can't be cowardly so our relationship with people—townspeople and all that—was really good.

I: How did you get into...I mean, you said you were CO. Did somebody suggest that to you, or did you research it or how'd you get—

DB: No, you knew where...Well, it was like any unit. You had these camps. Okay, you had these camps called CPS [Civilian Public Service] camps. [unintelligible] were there all over the country and like jobs here and there, and you had what they called like a lot of the worked in mental institutions. I was in a guinea pig experiment one time in North Carolina.

I: North Carolina! I went to school down there. Where were you?

DB: Pinehurst. In the middle of the summer, isolated in one room for eight weeks. God was it hot! Jesus! [laughs]

I: That was the experiment?

DB: No, it was on atypical pneumonia. They tried to give us pneumonia and this...Atypical pneumonia is a name of a pneumonia then. It's a fairly non-deadly pneumonia, but it came with the troops and stuff. It was very contagious, and they weren't even sure what caused it. Was it a virus or bacteria?

I: So they wanted to get you guys sick, so they couldn't figure out how to get you well?

DB: Yes, you had a control group, and they had one that had been filtered. The bacteria had been filtered out of it, and then one with the whole works. It turned out it was bacteria. The first little experiment they...I'm kind of getting off the subject here, a few guys got it that was in the control group so they had to tighten down the isolation and do it all over again.

I: How long did you jump? From, you said, '45 then you—

DB: Skipped '46.

I: And then '47 to—

DB: Well I made my—

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

DB: I didn't make any fire jumps after '64.

I: So when did you come down here, and was that '64 when you said you swept [unintelligible].

DB: I was 39 when I came down here. They used to have the rule, of course, at 40 you couldn't jump. I don't care who you were. Okay, so anyway they were soft-hearted, so on the board I was Smirnoff.

I: [laughs] Does that have anything to do with that white substance? Potato juice? That's great! So you got some—

DB: I did some practice jumps, especially when they brought out a new parachute or something like T-10. It came out in '68—the first one or the first experimental work with it—why, is what I got to jump in.

I: So you would give them your opinion on what you thought?

DB: I mean a little more. Actually you don't really have to do it to have an opinion on it.

I: What did you think?

DB: It's like a doctor have to have typhoid fever to be able to treat it. That's a bunch of bologna and really. The singular knowledge about the subject. But it gave me an excuse.

I: Sure. [laughs] It's all you needed, yes. Well, when you jumped were you really excited about it? When you first did it? Was it something...You said it was something that was totally new. Did you decide then that you wanted to stick with it, or did you just keep going in and it kind of...How did you—

DB: Well yes, of course I, thought that it was a big thing fighting fire and all that, and that was a lot better way than walking in 20 miles. You've got to remember there's a lot more roadless areas then than now. I mean you didn't jump next to the road. About five miles was about as close as you ever got the road to start with, and that's when you jumped so seldom because if it's close to road they just never used you. But I know one fellow, he jumped for a couple of years, and what he done he had to hike in about 12 or 13 miles of fire and here's these jumpers there. He was really pooped anyway. He decided, well, if I got to fight fire I might as well get there the easy way.

I: Yes, that's nice. That's what I like about it. I've walked in with IR [interregional] crews. Come over and jump and just jump in.

DB: When I got out okay in '46...well, I worked a while at Glacier Park too, but—

I: What'd you do in Glacier?

DB: Trail crew foreman. A four-man crew.

I: Was that the CPS camps you were talking about?

DB: [unintelligible] where I got discharged from. I like the woods. Anyway, I lived in, was raised in Wichita, Kansas, so I went back there. I didn't know what I wanted to do. My father wanted me to go back to college, and I didn't particularly want to because I didn't have any idea what to take anyway. He was a strong believer in education. I think it took him 20 years to forgive me for not going to college, but I still don't think I would go even if I'd do it over again. But anyway, beside the point. So I messed around, and I finally got a job with a newspaper—copyboy, advertising. I had that that winter. Then I wrote to this Lufkin, and I decided this wasn't for me—this inside stuff. Anyway, he put me on. Of course, I worked about seven years before I got on yearlong too, but I worked underground of all things for a couple three years.

I: Underground?

DB: In the winter yes. A miner. That's a hell of a life. In fact, I can tell you a lot more war stories underground than I can in jump stories. [laughs] But anyway—

I: In other words, you worked seven years before you got a full-time job.

DB: Yes, sometimes I'd worked ten months or nine months. Sometimes only five months. I mean, my god, at the district up there, they had three full-time employees. The clerk was part-time. The district ranger, they called them DA then—district assistant which is like that FMO now—and they usually had one guy in timber. That's full-time. Now that same district you have 70-something full-time. That's the difference. Very few people work yearlong. Engineer, they had one forest engineer, and that was the whole engineer for the...and he was for the whole forest.

I: So the jump bases were right out of the districts then? Is that true?

DB: It went back and forth. When we first started, we were under a district, which was kind of bad what happened. They'd decide that they needed a project done and the heck with anybody else needs. So then it went on to the forest and that improved a lot. Then it would have improved much more if we'd gone onto the region. We got very few jumps. You were lucky to get two or three jumps a year by the way. The reason for it, we were under the forest. Okay, it's hot and dry, and we'll say the Deschutes wants us. "Can't let them go. We might have a fire here," and on and on. Our only other territory was La Grande, and we didn't cover that really well, so I spent quite a bit of time there.

I: From Missoula you're talking about?

DB: No, from Winthrop

I: from Winthrop, I see. Do you remember what your pay was per...Did you get paid by the hour in '45 when you started?

DB: I didn't get paid anything, but that's beside the point.

I: Oh that was a part of your alternative duty. How about the first year after it?

DB: The very first it was 23 something, and then it went up to 26 something before the end of that first year '47.

I: What is it per week or—

DB: No that's per year.

I: Oh, 2,600 you're talking about.

DB: Yes. It was a little under 200 to start with, but it turned right around and I think it's 26 something, which is a lot more than most of—

I: Yes, back then sure.

DB: There are the records somewhere.

I: You said at the beginning of '47 it was 2,000 a year?

DB: 23 some odd dollars. I know it was just under 200 a month. It's called SP-6 we call them then. It used to be all the ratings were P's for professional and SP's was sub-professional. What a GS5 is now an SP6 was then and so on. Then they change it to general. They decide that was too insulting...Or you could say semi-professional, but I think it's stood for sub-professional.

I: Well then people started to get ticked off about being called a sub-professional.

DB: It was kind of mixed up system. Ranger were P2s and P3s and P4s.

I: So you more or less went back to jumping because it was something you like to do and because you were outdoors then?

DB: Right.

I: And you got pretty high up. You were loft foreman in here at Redmond?

DB: Oh I wasn't very high up, but yes. I was at Winthrop too as far as that goes.

I: You were a loft foreman there?

DB: As a matter of fact, I was the first one of anybody in the forest who knew I was going to be here when they opened the place. See in the fall, for lack of money, I had to work, oh, easily until January. I had to work outside up there wading through my rear-end in snow and thinning whatever—

I: Planting trees?

DB: That type of thing, yes. Sometimes in the spring, and here I was promised that I'd—

I: Have an inside job.

DB: Yes, I didn't mind the outdoor job, but up in Winthrop in the snow country. I was tired of working on snowshoes, and the older you get, snow gets to be lousy.

I: I bet. It gets harder to get through.

DB: So that was one reason I came down here. Of course, it was a new place with some, I thought, good equipment and all that. It didn't turn out so much that way but. [laughs]

I: Was '64 then the year that you came down and you said you're sleeping in the sewing room or whatever?

DB: Yes, June...I don't remember the exact day. I thought I'd never forget it but I have. Middle of June.

I: What were you promised that you didn't, or you said it didn't turn out that way? Were you promise more money that they didn't give you?

DB: No, well they got awful tight. Well '64 was the worst year I've ever spent in my life but I don't want to go into that, it takes too long. But they got a little tight on this, and we ended up with an old beat-up, used sewing machines and castoff extra chutes and weather outfits. We had one loft table for a while. They just couldn't seem to let go of the money to furnish this damn place. It was really empty when we came in here.

I: Was it built like it is now? I mean, did it look pretty much like it does now or was it—

DB: Well yes except...Okay the main office, mess hall, and just two barracks. There's three now, isn't there?

I: Yes.

DB: There's two barracks and then the loft. That was it. The warehouse was built later, and the bunk house was built later. Well, then it had the resident. That was a residential over there. I think it's a radio shop now.

I: The [unintelligible].

DB: Oh whatever. They've changed things around.

I: What did that...That used to be?

DB: That was a residence.

I: For who?

DB: For the air...For the—

I: Pilots?

I: Air center management.

DB: Yes.

I: Oh I see. That's pretty nice.

DB: Except after the first one left, why, then only one of them so usually they'd rent it out to...like one of the married jumpers rented it for a while. A maintenance man we had in those days had it rented for a while. Always somebody living in it because it was cheap. It used to be cheap rent. I mean even comparatively speaking. Now that I've got it up so it's pretty well equal, but say the ordinary rent was 100 or 125 a month, why, you're getting that for, oh, like 35 a month or this type of thing. So there was a little bit of demand, but they put a stop to that in the '60s I think it was. They started raising it.

I: Yes. What was it that made you keep jumping all those years? That was a long time.

DB: It's harder to know yourself than any other person in the world.

I: Yes, I know what you mean

DB: I don't really know I just... 'm kind of a drifter anyway. I mean I had what I thought was a good job, and see, I was a bachelor until I was 45 by the way and I made pretty good money or I thought. Money for me to...Everyone I wanted and I just...There wasn't anything else I particularly wanted to do.

I: Well yes, it's a good life.

DB: Now, it's so much of the paperwork, but that didn't used to bother us because we didn't have much. In fact, that's one trouble is our records are so bad in the old days that we did a lot of records...In Winthrop they still don't have records of who all was there in certain years.

I: It's gotten more regulated then? Since—

DB: Oh, definitely. We got to wear helmets to spot and all this. That is something that's come recently. It was coming just as I left. I left in '76, and I think '75 they tried to...just kind of got it started. We kind of ignored it, but in '76 was the first year we really wore them. It's same with hard hats. We didn't even have hard hats until '50...jumpers were the last ones that had to have them. '58 or somewhere in there.

I: Did they just ignore it? Is that why they came earlier to them?

DB: It was trying to...I don't know we just...See that's a fairly recent thing even with loggers and all that. It's not that old. They got them in the earlier '50s, and then we used to drop them separately. They were always getting smashed up.

I: Oh, you'd drop the hard hats separately out of the plane? Like a cargo drop now.

DB: Well even with the fire [unintelligible]. Then guys started carrying them here, and they used to smash them up all the time.

I: Or drop a log on them or something and... [laughs]

DB: I used to hate to wear those. I still do.

I: So you were still here '75, '76 then?

DB: Right.

I: When did you leave the air center then?

DB: September of '76. I was celebrating the centennial.

I: All right. [laughs] Did you guys—

DB: The bicentennial, I guess I should say.

I: You guys didn't have any fire clothing then. Say in '45, '46, did you just wear what jeans or kind of—

DB: Yes, and I had to use a baseball cap. Most guys wore baseball caps.

I: Did you use Cambustems (?), or I mean was there particular clothes that people liked more to wear?

DB: Well [unintelligible]. The old black—

I: Right. Those are like the Cambustems?

DB: I think these are Cambustems, but there a different brand. Sears put them out and [unintelligible]. Then you stag them off. Of course you couldn't jump unless you stagged them.

I: What's stagged them?

DB: Oh our boss made us up there.

I: Are you kidding?

DB: You cut the seam off. You just cut it off with scissors. It gets pretty ragged. Loggers do the same thing, and what it's for is you're going through the brush and say a stick pokes in there and the layer right on your fanny catches in that that seam. If you don't have a seam there, it generally just rips right out. Theoretically, that was it is. You don't hang up as much. So that was the standardized up there. We stagged all our pants, but most guys wore black, but quite a bit of denim blue jeans like that.

I: Well if you didn't stag them, would the rest of the guys stag them for you or something?
[laughs]

DB: Oh yes. They would stag them about here. [laughs]

I: Boy, that was nice.

DB: But mainly the blue jeans and this. Once in a while some fellow would try...I remember it was the early '50s, they had the fad in cords [corduroy] like is kind of coming back now. Talk about lousy pants for fires. The ribs catch in the brush all the time. This guy jumped on the Snake River, way back in the middle of nowhere, and before we were done he had his

[unintelligible] was just in shreds. That's the last time he ever wore cords. The boots were about the same as they are now—logger-type boots. We had a lot of White's [White's Boots].

I: When did you say that the jumpers started to have to wear helmets?

DB: Hard hats.

I: Oh hard hats, is that what you're talking about?

DB: Oh, yes. That's on the fire itself.

I: The helmets were always [unintelligible]. You all had to wear some kind of helmet and the mask, too right? But the hard hats, when did they come about then? Did you say the '50s?

DB: I think it was '58. It might have been '57. Somewhere in there. I can't remember now exactly. They were the last of the Forest Service and type of people not to wear them. I mean before they cracked down. Every once in a while they'd come up with a screwy idea like hard-toed boots. We put an end to that fast because try hiking 15 miles in hard-toed boots.

I: Or when they get hot.

DB: Some of the very original experimenting jumping, they jumped in cork because that's what most of them wore you know, and they learned right fast that didn't work because all you have to do is hit a log and those corks coming—

I: You stick in them.

DB: That one guy just twisted his knee, but you stick so that was taboo.

I: You said you work from some years maybe ten months...Would you like a glass of water or something?

DB: No. That's all right.

I: Are you sure? When you'd work say ten months, what would you do for the rest of the year? Say, if you only work five months and it started to rain, did you make enough so that it was no problem for the rest of the year or did you—

DB: Oh no. Like I say, three years of that, and I worked the mines. One time I didn't do much, but a lot of times things were a little informal. Okay, small town. One winter I couldn't really find anything and I didn't want to go outside, and so the [unintelligible] had an old bunkhouse there. So I stayed in this old bunkhouse, and then the rest of the [unintelligible] and I ran out of money which I did, why, they fed me on the tab. Then early in the spring I got cleaning

irrigation ditches or something to start with and all that. God, I'd come back sometimes broke. The restaurant would feed me until the mess hall opened.

I: The restaurant in town?

DB: Yes.

I: Here in Redmond you mean?

DB: No, this is up in Winthrop.

I: That's pretty neat. God, it seems like it's gotten a little more impersonal since then.

DB: Several times I'd stay, even if I was doing a little work, I'd still stay in the Forest Service bunkhouse. They had lots of room and didn't care. Use a little wood maybe, but you could do your own cooking that way if you [unintelligible] too. When some of the bunkhouses, some of them were just sleeping outfits.

I: Where most of the changes that have been made in like the smokejumper equipment and so forth, was it mainly equipment that you wore while you fought the fire rather than equipment that you wore when you jumped?

DB: No, you don't really have that much to fight fire with. You still fight it with this stuff already you have to have a hard hat. You wear almost what you want to. You just have to wear tough clothes otherwise you know. This and denim are the toughest of the cloths, and so generally most guys wear one or the other. The boots they regulate pretty heavy. You have to have good heavy boots. That's always been that way.

I: Did you guys carry buck knives or what kind...Did you carry knives usually or—

DB: We always carried a pocket knife but not that kind of knife.

I: Say like '45 '46, did...Like buck knives are real popular. I've got like a [unintelligible] like that on your belt.

DB: Well see we didn't have ditty bags then either. In fact, it was probably [unintelligible]. We didn't take much of anything. What you could stuff in your fire pack. Sometimes you'd put your name on a fire package, but I used to stick...open my shirt like that and maybe stick an extra pair of socks down in front of me. But we used a reserve knives when we had to have a knife out. I always just carried a pocket knife. Most guys did, but never one on the side. That's almost a status symbol now I think.

I: Yes. [laughs] With your stone there too. Yes, you got your sharpening stone.

DB: I've got one of them. I don't use it any more but—

I: If you ever run into a bear on the road or something it may be nice. [laughs] After you sharpen your knife first.

DB: But McCall is kind of funny too. They never even gave...Most of the time they never even gave you a map. Maybe a packer in after you. They always send a packer in after you there.

I: So they just...You just waited around.

DB: I'd get mad. I wanted to know where I'm at. So one day they gave me this map and it was some forest, but it didn't have anything to do with where I was jumping. [laughs]

I: But you had a map?

DB: What was funny there at McCall, all we had was rations—K, World War Two K-rations. They were terrible, and this food bit, you see started here, was started at McCall. This guy by the name of Johnson was a foreman at McCall and was for quite a number of years.

I: Was he connected with Johnson Flying Service or a different one?

DB: No, no. Very different. He jumped on fires every so often. Okay, the guys were so hungry that he'd go to the grocery store. We used to work on weekends. That's where we'd get our money during that time. We'd buy some canned stuff and some food and stuff, and we'd stuff it in our pocket, in our jump pocket.

I: So you wouldn't have to eat to K-rations?

DB: I mean it already...Yes. They're almost inedible, believe me. We'd starve. So this one time...They got to be quite a habit. Guys would carry quite a bit of stuff with them. Fresh peaches or a can of peaches—whatever they liked. So this one time he jumped on a fire, I think they dropped like an eight-man fire, and he jumped on it. When it came time to eat, why, these guys start cracking out all this good stuff. He didn't have anything there, and they didn't offer him any. He never said much but when he got back in, he calls up the grocery and he made a—

I: A fire bag?

DB: A little fire...A little food storage deal.

I: At the base?

DB: Yes.

I: Well that worked pretty well and then—

DB: It sure did.

I: When did they come out come out with a ditty bags then?

DB: I don't know. Different outfits came out fairly early. We never had them at Winthrop for quite a number of years. I think we was the last ones to have them up there. The only thing I ever took extra was a pair of socks usually. That's about it. You didn't have any of the chainsaws and all this sort of thing either.

I: Did you guys carry crosscuts with you, or what if you had a big tree that was on fire? Did you request a crosscut?

DB: They carried them in the airplane.

I: Okay. They wouldn't drop it unless you requested it or—

DB: Well if it's a saw, we needed it, but generally we can request it. See, we didn't have radios then either.

I: Oh, that's right.

DB: You used signals, and we had a signal for the crosscut.

I: You must have spent more time studying the signals in rookie training or something. Did you guys...

DB: You always carry it on your billfold.

I: Oh, those cards. Yes. I got one of those.

DB: But yes, that's part of the training all right so you could, but there wasn't that many of them that you used.

I: Yes. I got a question about rookie training. I just did it last year, so it's still pretty fresh in my mind. Something I noticed about it was it was kind of designed to weed out some guys too. There were guys who, after the first week, everybody knew they weren't going to make it or it seemed that way. Were there any people in your program...Well, say how many people started as rookies the year you did?

DB: I think there was 57. I don't know of any. I think there might have been a couple of guys that decided it wasn't for them. I don't know that...The [unintelligible] group I was in, like I say we were so separated we didn't do things. It was the squads that did this and this and this together, but I don't...It was very few, if any, that dropped out. You're under pressure being a CO, see. Even if you knew that you were going die, you probably jumped out of the airplane because it proved that you weren't a coward.

I: Were people giving you grief about it then and people that you're at the bases or...The people who weren't COs?

DB: Oh no. Not doing when we did that, no. But it'd take more courage not to make the jump than to jump. In fact, most of the time it is from the pressure on you—peer pressure—because I know about the third jump. If I had the courage...If I knew I wasn't going to make that third jump, I was going to be deader than hell. Don't ask me why, but it just—

I: You just had a feeling.

DB: Well I had been jumping out of that Tri-Motor and they [unintelligible] travel air and I didn't like it anyway. I just...it happened to hit me wrong. I looked out there and I thought holy...What in the hell am I doing up here?

I: Was it more of a prop blast out of there or...just a different surroundings or what? What bothered you about it mostly?

DB: Like I say it's [unintelligible]. The first two times you...My mind was blank. It didn't...I just did it.

I: Yes, I know.

DB: In fact, I landed on my head, the first jump. I had a headache from that. Went poom-poom. It just about coldcocked me. Really clumsy. I don't know why. It's just one of those I looked out, and like I say, it was considered an extremely dangerous job then. It turns out it really wasn't, but I mean it...Anyway, but I went out, and then from then on it let up on me and it wasn't too bad.

I: Was there a lot of harassment in your training? Did they try to get you to your breaking point, like if you get hung up and say, "Do you want to quit," and stuff? They didn't do it?

DB: I frankly think they hassle too much now.

I: Do you?

DB: Because we weren't trying to drive people out. Okay, they run guys to death here, especially in really hot water. When some of these guys can't take it, it isn't because they're not tough, but there are some people who take the heat a lot better than others and all that. It doesn't have all that much to do with jumping anyway. I don't mean that they shouldn't run, but it really is much tougher than it was then training. As far as refresher training, we didn't use to have refresher training and such. We'd make a couple of jumps and that was it. Then we ran or come back soft and stayed soft until...well, we did a lot of project work. There was a hay field up there the Forest Service had. They were always out there and this type of stuff too. It wasn't inside—

I: Cutting hay for the horses or pack horses or—

DB: When I first went up there, they had big ranch, and they had a lot of pack mules. Everything was packed. They didn't have helicopters. Like I say, roadless areas were all over the place. Not just primitive or wilderness areas. There's a lot of areas that didn't have roads then. Miles and miles of it, and they'd use pack strings, so they had a big fairly large ranch there. Eight Mile in fact is where it was. When I first went to work out there, that's where they stuck me. Old-fashioned...They were using mules to cut the hay and rake it. We hand-shocked it.

I: What did they do before they had smokejumpers to fight fires in remote areas?

DB: They called them smoke chasers, and they...That's what Frances Lufkin was and what the first jumpers were. Anyway they'd usually had a horse and sometimes a pack animal with their horse. At the time, they had guard stations scattered—burnt most of them down—out in the woods. Anyway, they get a ring at the phone and get a report of the fire, and they'd get on their own horse and take off for it. Maybe it'd be 15-20 miles, and by the time they got there it would be a roaring inferno. That's when lookouts were a lot better. Lookouts didn't dare report a false alarm like they do now all the time or used to with an airplane you'd go check it. Boy, those guys would come up and kill a lookout if they had to ride 15 miles for nothing.

I: Yes, I think I would too. Man you get in there with all that...carry all that equipment in.

DB: Well they had pack animals.

I: Oh, they'd take...So it would be...So they had a horse and a mule or something they'd take with them then?

DB: Yes and then a...Sometimes just a horse. I mean it depends on how far they had to go, but they usually went by horseback. Then lookouts did quite a bit. Okay, you had a lot more lookouts. You might have—

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

DB: —fought it themselves.

I: Oh really? Lookouts sometimes fought the fire too?

DB: Quite often yes. Especially in remote areas, if they were within reach of it and they could get to it.

I: So sometime in the old days then they would just have one guy fighting a fire sometimes?

DB: Oh yes. They worked alone almost always.

I: Despite how big it was?

DB: Well no, I mean they might have to bring in men.

I: Oh but he'd just go initial attack it?

DB: [unintelligible] anyway, but initial attack they worked by themselves. If it was small, they'd put it out and rode back in.

I: So he had a horse there with him to use?

DB: Yes, they usually stayed at the guard station. Like I say, they had guard stations because they would be where a road was, but they'd be scattered all through the forest. You had these little guard stations.

I: You said they had more lookouts back then too.

DB: Oh yes. Every peak had a lookout on it I think.

I: Did you ever want to do that, try that out?

DB: Yes.

I: But you never did?

DB: I often thought when I retired, why, I'd like to spend some of the...Well now, they don't have that many now anyway, and I wouldn't—

I: I'm sure you can get one if you really wanted it. I mean you've got a lot of seniority there.

DB: Oh yes. Well see they trained...Also they trained us to be lookout in our training because sometimes—it never happened to me—if a lookout had to go to a fire at a bad time and all that and they'd put a jumper on the lookout. Then he'd take over the lookout while this guy would be gone for a few days. So they gave us all lookout training at that time too.

I: I bet that made jumpers happy when they got stuck as a lookout.

DB: That didn't happen too often. In fact, I know it did happen, but I don't know of anybody that—

I: Well what did people think about that? Did you not want that to happen, or you said, “Hey, it' be great to have a couple of days up there.”

DB: Well I would have thought it was great, but some guys wouldn't. In fact, two guys I recall were madder than wet hens. They had some observant airplane they'd they use sometimes even back then you know. Anyway, this plane reported a fire, and these guys go in there and sure enough, so they jump on it and its way back in that dinghies and it was damn hot springs.

I: Was what it was? [laughs]

DB: Yes, and they were eager and doing all that, and god they were pissed.

I: Well, I hope they took a bath anyway and used the thing.

DB: The plane that saw it and reported it didn't know it was there. Everybody else knew it was there. [unintelligible] jumped on somebody's campfire.

I: Campfire. [laughs] In time for dinner?

DB: Boy Scout campfire one time up in Winthrop.

I: [laughs] I bet that was embarrassing.

DB: The patrol plane didn't get down low enough I guess, but he saw the smoke and that was a place where they're supposed to be and all that. [unintelligible]. A couple of times that's happened where when the jump plane got there realized what it was.

I: Oh, they just turned around? So during the war years it was mostly COs who jumped?

DB: Basically it was all. There was a squad leader I had wasn't. There was a few that...The supervisors weren't, but all the regular smokejumpers, all of them, were.

I: When the war was over and people who had been jumpers before the war came back was it...Did most of them go back to school and just jump in the summer, or was there any...Like now there's not that many people in college I notice that—

DB: You know it used to be then all your jumpers, I mean, all but guys like me...Well yes, all were college students.

I: And so they'd stick with it?

DB: You'd average about three years out of a man, yes. See, and also then you could hire them at 18. You didn't have to have any experience. You've just got out of high school so you had them for maybe three or four years.

I: But then there was just some guys who decide that they want to stick with it.

DB: No, no. Actually to me much more now than then because there's so little opportunity. Look how long it took me to get it year round. It's not that way now. Like I say there was very few full-time Forest Service people. You had maybe 60 or 70 people working for you in the summer, and then three of them worked year-round. All your lookouts and fire guards or smoke chasers, fire guards, even clerks and all that, they just worked in the summer or part of the year, and you might pile slash in the fall. We got to work until November.

I: Oh, [unintelligible]. I hate that. [laughs]

DB: [unintelligible]

I: It's fun when you get to burn it though. Did you guys get to burn it?

DB: Well, not in the snow that deep. You try to get it to burn in the snow and...Otherwise, yes, both ways. Planting trees is the worst job of all to me.

I: You guys use hoedads right? Hoedads if it's pretty [unintelligible] up there too to dig in up by Winthrop?

DB: Oh no, it's [unintelligible] small burns up there. I mean, it wasn't too bad that part of it, but...I don't know. We used a shovel. You'd go like this and you'd stick it in and you'd come back on it you'd [unintelligible]. Then they'd have a quota system. That's what used to really burn me. You got to plant so many a day, or some guy...so pretty soon it forces the guy to take...gets down to the end, digs a hole, and yanks out about 100 trees, throws them in the hole and covers them up comes on back. I don't know how many trees are at the end of a...because of that. This guy can plant 700 a day where an ordinary guy could plant 400. They used to do that. Then that's what would happened. I've done it myself because otherwise you might be

without a job. Then I just couldn't plant sometimes as many as they had. In later years, it wasn't quite as bad, but it's just a back-breaking job.

I: What was that planting trees? Did they have a quota system you're supposed to plant some so many—

DB: They did in the earlier days. Sometimes they're realistic, and other times they weren't.

I: This is Nick Sundt. He's another jumper. This is "Skinny" Dave Beals. Do you mind being called by your nickname there?

DB: Oh no, no. A lot of people didn't know my real name for years. They do now. Since I moved here out of here, more and more people, mostly my old friends, call me Skinny, but a lot of newer ones don't. I don't care.

I: Where'd you get the nickname?

DB: Oh, I have had it ever since I was at Winthrop. Maybe even a little before that because I was. See the first year I applied for smokejumping I couldn't get my weight up. God, I ate bananas and everything else, and I was trying to hit 130.

I: {laughs} Milkshakes?

DB: Well finally, I did make 131.

I: Well what do you attribute it to? What was the secret? The food? What food put it on you?

I: Well, that was just temporary back then. It weighs a lot, and they're good and you just pack your stomach with them. You could probably add a couple pounds. Drink two or three glasses of milk. Next year I got up to 133, and they took me that time. Well, I was an alternate, I guess it was, and then they ran out of somebody and they finally got desperate and took me. So I was really too light to be a real good jumper as far as the pack outs. In those days mostly you had pack strings come in on you anyway. You rarely had to pack out. Sometimes you had to pack them out of the canyon so the pack string could get to it.

I: Well was there ever a time that you...I mean like I've heard a lot of stories about pack outs, but I jumped five fires last year and the furthest pack out we had was about half a mile. Was there ever a time where you just did do a whole lot of pack outs? Where they maybe quit doing, bringing in the mules, and you would walk for—

DB: Oh yes.

I: Yes, for miles and miles?

DB: For like seven to nine miles.

I: That was common?

DB: Number one, we didn't have all this environmental stuff, so yes, if we had long pack outs you could strip down to about 65 pounds is what you had to bring out.

I: Oh, you'd just leave some stuff? What would you...Would you leave your cross cut saw?

DB: If necessary, yes.

I: I mean what went first? What was the most valuable of...your jump equipment right? That was the basically what you took out?

DB: Yes, the parachute and suit, and when we had down sleeping bags we brought them out. Oh, we'd leave [unintelligible], we'd leave shovels, crosscuts. Crosscuts were wicked to take out anyway.

I: Yes, Dean was saying the other day, Dean Johnson, he said "Well, yes, the crosscut was the first thing they'd throw, and they throw it down the hill and listen to it "tink" off the rocks." "Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding." [laughs]

DB: But most of the...always the food—dump it. Flashlights, of course, take the batteries out of them. I mean some guy...I never was a packer, and I couldn't pack the loads they pack now. I couldn't be a jumper right now. No way. I mean even if I was younger and all that because I couldn't. About 65 or 70 is just all I could pack. The guys used to, even in the later days when you were always jumping some big guy, and they'd always volunteer to take...I take my stuff out, but anything extra. But the time I quit jumping you'd still leave some stuff back in there. Now you can't even dig a hole to put it in. Well you can, but I mean you're supposed to bring everything out. It's got all more junk you take in with you. Then all we had...we had the sleeping bag, one [unintelligible], one shovel, a crosscut we only got if we had to have. A few rations, a flashlight, and...Anything else?

I: How do you think jumping has changed since you've been familiar with it? I mean it obviously has changed. What I went through last year was a lot different from what you did, and—

DB: It's gotten tougher. They're getting tougher guys than we had then, to be very frank about it. As far as that's my opinion, of course. I don't say tougher, but I mean physically.

I: That are used to running, say, or—

DB: Yes. I mean I used to pack out. I'd plug along and I might rest quite a while and all that. Now, by god, you, "bang, bang, bang, bang." Don't even enjoy the scenery or anything.

I: Well, not everybody.

DB: But they have a lot bigger loads to carry out—much bigger loads to carry out—now than they did then. A lot of times I know you guys get over 100. If your parachute is wet, it goes quite a bit more than that.

I: It seems like it's more organized too now. Do you think that is beneficial overall?

DB: I don't know. It's not near as much fun. We had pilots then. A lot of them were of course pilots in the '30s—real barnstormers anyway and really excellent pilots. Seat of the pants. I remember the first time we went to [unintelligible] when we used to go to airports to the La Grande and worked the Snake River. [unintelligible], this guy didn't any area map, so you got an old road map [unintelligible] Oregon and that's what he took. He'd never been there before, and none of the rest of us had been either you know. He gets this old road map out and away we go.

I: Followed the roads?

DB: Well no, he just...He'd tell the towns and all that. He didn't have any trouble. Got right there. We had a lot more fun in the airplanes too. The buzz jobs and god, they'd get killed, I mean get themselves in real trouble. I remember at Winthrop they used to...Well, the Noorduyn had a...It's one of the noisiest airplanes, prop airplanes, ever built. When you flatten the prop pitch, the ends of the prop hit the speed of sound. That's the reason for the noise. That's a lot of noise you hear in an airplane is a prop noise, and that's because the tips are going about the speed of sound. It makes that cracking noise rather than the engine. The Noorduyn you could flatten the pitch, shove it forward, and it would just raise you right out of it. So we did an early morning run, and our boss lived up on the hill in town there. We come in about 50 feet and slam that old prop back. You'd wake up the whole town? People would mumble about it, but nobody ever reported us. Hey, my girlfriend lives down there. Let's give her a buzz job. Man if you felt in a good mood then you did that.

I: Do you feel that there's more interference from above now than there was before? I mean were you freer to act as you guys wanted to?

DB: No.

I: Really?

DB: Less. Like I told you about the forest. We were under the forest. Say another forest wants some jumpers, "Well, it's hot and dry."

“We won't let you have them.”

“We need some work done out here on a project.” The heck with it. We'll take them all out there and put them to work instead of staying on standby. Of course you had standby, but you never got paid for it. We'd just stick around. That came with the job.

I: Wasn't there a time too when you got paid 50 cents an hour or something? Just a less salary to standby. Did that come later, or was that ever true?

DB: Only if you were a fairly high-up supervisor. I forget what grade it was, but as the grades got higher then they'd come off down. Pilots really took a beating on that.

I: Oh, they'd make them standby too?

DB: Yes, but they get a lot less because of the...But it was done on a pay. As I remember ours, it didn't cut it any—GS5s and 6s. I'm not sure about 7s. The 9s started getting cut.

I: Well, you said there was more regulation as far as going on fires, but how about individual behavior? I mean if you went into a bar and got into a fight then you wouldn't be talked to by the forest officer, would you, or something like that?

DB: Oh no. Oh no, although there were certain standards. All of the guys would do it. Like I said, if you wouldn't stag your pants, they might do it for you, or somebody ever let their hair grow long it would have got cut. Guys had their own deal on what they thought was good, bad, or indifferent, but no we had some heavy drinkers. Got in trouble every once in a while. In fact, they'd get in pretty bad trouble every once in a while, but they probably nobody got canned over it unless they kept making trouble.

I: Did you ever have guys who tried to grow their hair long, or are they pretty well found out?

DB: Well, Lufkin, he could get away with it. They had shorter hair up there all through the '60s [unintelligible] base in the place. He really legally couldn't, but he was a one of a kind in a way. He had the fear of god in most jumpers. I was one of the few that, “I wonder if I could talk to him about that. Would you talk to him for me?” Yes. I knew him so many years I wasn't afraid of him, but a lot of guys were just really afraid of him.

I: Well, tell me more about him. Was he really technically knowledgeable then on all aspects of smokejumping I bet, or—

DB: Oh yes, he did all the experimental work. I mean he was one on them—experimental work in '39. He didn't think the first fire jump, but he made the second fire jump ever made. It was the first one up there, and there was a ripcord. They used the ripcord the first year.

I: How high did they go out when they used the ripcord?

DB: About the same as they do now—about 1,500 feet. But it never worked. It was hard to spot because guys would open sooner. That Eagle, of course, you opened as soon as you could because the further higher speed you were going the harder you got kicked. But it wasn't working that well so then they took a piece of webbing and sewed it up and put the chute on the end of it and all that. It was, like I said, before the military had it. They had to have some way. [unintelligible] half decent time in the same time. Plus, some guy would freeze up on you, well, you'd be in trouble.

I: Did Francis Lufkin ever jump on a fire to check, after you had left it, to check and see what kind of a job you'd done? I heard that Bill Moody did that sometimes.

DB: No, Lufkin quit jumping pretty early in his career because of him and his wife.

I: His wife didn't like him to jump?

DB: No, to say the least, but [unintelligible]. But range or a...A lot of times your...Okay, call them FMOs now?

I: Fire Management Officer?

I: The guy who's in charge.

DB: Okay then they were DAs—o me they're still DAs. We called them district assistants then, and they did about the same thing. They'd go in sometimes and check out a fire on you, on the district you did. Well it depended, they weren't always as particular either. In the early days of philosophy, if the fire's out, fine. But god help you if ever, if you ever let one go.

I: Did you guys potato patch? You know—

DB: If you'd have to. I put out two or three fires. I've even put a liner on them. That was small. Got it worked it off, got my hands in there and worked it until I was sure it was out. It was fine if the fire was out. God help you, you could get canned on that if you'd let a fire...I know a guy that did, but he...I think they finally...they did decide to keep him. I remember when they can him for doing it, but that was an unforgivable sin almost. So most guys did line them and do a lot of stuff to small fires, why, they didn't care as long as it was out. Well, it varied with districts and varied somewhat, but we didn't work the fire over near as much as you do now.

I: You mentioned Lufkin and his wife and I was just...Somebody else had mentioned...Reno had mentioned the other day—a guy from up at Winthrop had mentioned—that smokejumping had caused a lot of problems with people's marriages. Looking back over the years that you jumped

and from your knowledge of other jumpers, do you think that it is, that it has been tough on marriages?

DB: Well, it was in the earlier days because again it was considered an extremely dangerous job, and more so if a guy married after he was a jumper, usually it wasn't as bad but some married guy, it'd last just about a year. So it affected them, I guess. Then being away from home some. Never knowing. When I first got, I was 45 I got married. By god, I was working...I had two and a half days off the first summer. After I got married the next year, I think I got about three days off during the summer. But she got used to it. She knew what I was in and that's it. That's the way I made my living. Of course, I was an old timer by then. Women are strange creatures.

I: [laughs] Amen. You can't live with them, and you can't live without them.

I: Have you been asked about the...About women coming in to the smokejumping program? What do you think about that?

DB: Okay number one, look at my age and all that, and you can guess how I'll answer that. I see that thing is on.

I: Yes, we're just interested in your opinion.

I: It doesn't matter what your...This stuff is—

DB: This is not going to be in the—

I: We are not going to play it to anybody except McCall.

DB: I don't think women should have...well, to be in the Forest Service basically. I mean because they cannot physically do the damn job. The men carry them, and god you go out woods now and here are the Forest Service vehicle and you can bet two out of three times it's some dame running on there. I say not in the Forest Service, but as far as in the field—I mean as far as administrators or administrative officers and all that fine—but that's the way the same with firemen, policemen. You know, I'm old fashioned.

I: Any physically demanding jobs.

DB: There's exceptions. There is probably one woman in 100 that might make a smokejumper. No, there isn't that many. They had these two girls out here on the rappelling.

I: Up at Winthrop or—

DB: No here.

I: Here?

DB: What was it, a six-man crew, helicopter. Hell, those guys carried those women. They really did.

I: Well, when I was on an IR crew, I found that to be true too. We had—

DB: I think some of them make pretty good money. When you put a mixed crew in, there's no way the concentration on your job...no way it can be as—

I: There is added scenery maybe.

DB: Well concentrate on your job as much because when men and women mix there's a certain chemistry there. You're either trying to show off to them just subconsciously because that's the way men do. They try and do something for the men, and instead of concentrating on fighting fire I just, I don't think they work together that well. That's my own opinion. I think women are different than men, that's all, and regardless of all this [unintelligible]. There's a lot of jobs they can do that men have been doing all right, but some of these hard physical jobs women just weren't built for that period.

I: Well what about, say you get a woman who is...like you get some weightlifting woman or someone who is just ultimate, I mean she's qualified physically, but what do you think would change about smokejumping in general if she comes here, rookies, and makes it without any problem? How would that affect say Redmond Air Center and the jumping program? I think it would have some effects. What do you think?

DB: Well okay one, I don't think it would affect it that much. It's when you start getting...Okay, it's kind of like blacks. Generally, even in the old days one black amongst whites, well, everything went great. Nothing changed really, but as soon you have several of them, then you start siding up and the whole thing goes to pot. Which is as much their fault as the whites, but that's beside the point too. Because if a black's too friendly with a white he becomes an Uncle Tom, and because he's got peer of the same kind there, why, he can't. But if he's alone. Well, women are the same way. One woman I don't think would hurt anything, but you got two or three women or four and add in some subconscious competition and stuff instead of concentrating on your—

I: What? Okay. Sure. [responding to an unidentified speaker]

DB: Well, I'm just prejudiced against women for this type of job that's all. No way around it.

I: Okay, now taking another question related to that. They've been talking about actually lowering standards up in Missoula to accommodate, to encourage women to not only apply,

but to actually make it. Do you think that would have a serious effect on the whole program or not?

DB: Of course, it will. Again, we'll get back to the blacks. One of the problems with blacks—I mean they had all kinds of problems—but that's one of the problems right there. The reason that there's so many whites that still have their back up is because they're lowering a bunch of standards so they can get the job. Look what it's done there. Of course, it's hurt. It's hurt the black badly. I think I mean, my own opinion, it'd do the same with women. Anytime, you give somebody a break because of sex, race...It's like the gay. Well, they want to, they want these laws put in. Well I don't...I mean gay's gay. Nothing off me. I wouldn't care if a gay was teaching my kid in school and all this type. I mean...But once you make a law like that, then you have to go over backwards. If you got a choice between a normal and a gay, and they both qualify for the job, guess who you have to hire. That's the reason I'm against them having right or some of these other...because that's the way it works. It's wrong. But yet you are trying to cure an ill, and it's difficult to do by law. It has to be done up here, and that takes generations. More than one generation.

I: When you were a CO did you apply for the jumper program, or they said you were going to be a jump?

DB: Oh no, it was strictly volunteer. Anything what they call the base camps were all volunteer.

I: But you were assigned to that camp, and then out of there you applied to be a jumper? Or you volunteered for that camp also? The CPS camp, say, you were talking about?

DB: Well yes, I mean I went to a Mennonite one as it so happened because that was in Colorado Springs and I really like Colorado Springs.

I: I bet. Boy that was a pretty choice place.

DB: It turned out pretty good for two reasons. This is back to the CPS. Most of the outfits were around small towns and they took a hell of a beating, and they get beat a lot of times too.

I: What do you mean a beating?

DB: Well physically by...Remember you get in that...Well, you can't remember. World War Two was a lot different than the Korean War or Vietnam or any of these others, I mean.

I: Everybody's behind the war.

DB: Yes. They took a lot of abuse, and sometimes had to go in bunches to a lot of those places. Colorado Springs have two things going for them. One it was a fairly large town at that time. I think it's 20-some thousand, and secondly they had this huge Army camp there. Fort—

I: Carson.

DB: Yes, I think at one time they had some like 20,000 men. Okay, believe it or not, the military you get...Soldiers, military, you get along a lot better than civilians.

I: Really?

DB: Oh, yes. We used to...Okay, the first of the month, why, the town would be just sidewalk crowded—I mean, just packed with serviceman.

I: Was that at payday or something?

DB: Yes, after the first of the month. Yes, so the first weekend. Okay, you might be going to the show, but you get in there and they “Oh, looky a civilian,” because most of the civilians were kind of half scared of these kids anyway so that’s all you’d see. “Oh, looky a civilian.” Quite often they’d ask, “How come you are out?”

Most of the guys would tell them...Jesus Christ, why, didn’t I think of that. [laughs] I didn’t ride on trains and stuff, and I usually came right out. I was watching a crap game one time on the train. A scout was trying to get me to take a drink, but at that time I didn't drink. Then he asked me about it. They were half-drunk. They just thought it was funnier than hell. Thought it was a good deal. So it made it a lot easier. Anybody in an Army camp like that didn't seem...There would be exceptions—you always got bad guys—but basically you didn't run into that trouble. Then it was a bigger town so you weren't picked out so much like a little town of 600 or something like that.

I: Yes. People needed something to talk about.

DB: But anyway, I ended up there, and then I went to this guinea pig experiment I was telling you about. Then I wanted to jump. To jump, that would be the greatest thing on the face of the earth. Boy, did I want that. I could just taste it. Finally got her.

I: But what made you think that that'd be the greatest thing?

DB: The romantic he-man. I thought a forest ranger was the great...And when you are raised in the city, you have these books written and all this. It doesn’t give you exactly the correct idea, but it's gung-ho and—

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]

DB: —slacker and all that because it's considered very [unintelligible] job and all that and it was. I mean, small town to be a jumper you know. They got along fine with townspeople. They themselves might not approve of what you did, but they knew damn well you weren't yellow, so to speak.

I: Well, when the guys came back from the war and started jumping, was there any hard feelings like, "Oh, you guys didn't go, and you advanced up the ladder."

DB: In most cases not. There were some, I mean, but it was very subtle what there was of it. Not any outright stuff, but most of them didn't give a damn.

I: Yes, as long as you could do the job I guess.

DB: Well, yes.

Unidentified Speaker: How are you doing Skinny?

DB: Pretty good, Alice.

US: I haven't seen you. How are you doing? Are you behaving yourself?

DB: I'm afraid so. At my age you can't do much else. [laughs]

I: How old are you?

DB: Fifty-six.

I: What's your full name? Everybody calls you Skinny, but what's your—

DB: David Beals—B-e-a-l-s.

I: Oh, you're up there on the list for...how many jumps did you have? I think that's—

DB: A hundred and one I think it was.

I: Yes, for the 100th jump.

I: What is it? B what?

DB: B-e-a-l-s.

I: Oh, okay. You say you had that nickname at Winthrop way back when. Did a lot of the other guys have nicknames too? Did everybody have one name or another?

DB: I don't think any more than usual. Most places you have you know.

I: Can you remember anybody, any nicknames off the top of your head?

DB: Well we didn't call him that to his face. We had one we called him Light Horse Harry.

I: Why was he called that?

DB: Because uncoordinated, stumble, fall down, and...you know. Well, I got him for a jump partner. Well, this big long story I was talking about. He was the one that jumped with me [unintelligible]. But anyway, in those days, guys chose their jump partners.

I: Oh, really? After each jump or just for the season?

DB: No, for the season basically because most of the time it was two-man jumps. We rarely jump more than two men, because bigger than that they'd out a ground crew and you didn't jump or that type of deal. So I'd let everybody choose and I'd take whoever's left, so I had some real losers for jump partners. Anyways Light Horse Harry. I don't even remember what his last name.

US: You might want to add some hot water to that. [speaking to a customer]

DB: But that's what everybody called him. They might someone call it to his face.

I: Did you have, when you were jumping, did you always have some guys that were in the outfit who were kind of scapegoats or outcasts, or was everybody pretty much treated equally? I've just noticed on some of the crews that I've been on that one way or the other there always seems to be one guy who catches a lot of shit over the others.

DB: You know it's the same.

I: Has that always been the case?

DB: I think so. There's always one dud it seems like anyway, and I ended up with a lot of them.

I: Would that guy usually, do you think he had a shorter time as a jumper than other jumpers? I mean would he get the message or—

DB: I think so. Well, see we did have...I would say probably half the jumpers we had couldn't be a jumper today.

I: Well in Light Horse Harry's case, did he you know specifically what kind...Did everybody always give him a lot of grief because he was—

DB: Well yes, but he wasn't really there long enough to...not so much. I know what you mean.

I: Well, we had a guy—

DB: It usually wasn't done that extreme unless the guy was a real dud, but well it was...like now, we had some ex-marine who came in there and he'd been on [unintelligible] or something like that. Talk about...he finally left. I think it's because he was, man he was a marine like a drill sergeant and stuff and he carried it with him. Jumpers, well you can imagine how jumpers would take somebody that orders all time and—

I: He wasn't an elite squad leader or anything?

DB: No, oh no.

I: He was just one of the jumper?

DB: Yes, but he tried to [unintelligible]. He didn't last too long. I can't even remember what finally did happen to him.

I: Because people...Boy, there'd be a lot of opportunities to give him some grief. "What do we do now, sir?" and stuff. [laughs]

I: Have you kept in touch with a lot of your guys?

DB: No.

I: You haven't? Any idea what's happening to them? Whether they have ended up in the Forest Service or whether they've pretty much been scattered all over.

DB: Well most of are scattered because very few...Okay, I don't whether you were here then, but almost all of them were going to college. You didn't have ski bums which is what half of them are now. I guess really should say that.

I: [laughs] Ski bums don't mind being called ski bums.

DB: But, oh, 95 percent, even more than that, were all college students. Most of them were taking something besides forestry. A lot of them it was something other and going through school. There was a few in the Forest Service. Like I say, you didn't have to have any experience [unintelligible]. You didn't have to have fire experience. Your boss figured if you're good man or

not. Before we had a lot of 18 and 19 year olds. In later days here you rarely get anybody under 21, but there I had to buy beer for one rookie group of 15 because there wasn't a single guy that was over 21. Or 21 or older.

I: Well why do you think it's changed from college students to older guys now?

DB: Because all the experience they have to have, they're going to be out of college almost before they qualify.

I: Oh, okay. All the fire experience they need before they're ready.

DB: Yes, and all that.

I: Training.

I: I hope this question hasn't been asked before, but I was wondering how whoever was in charge actually picked the jumpers. How you were hired on? Was it just a matter of going to the base and talking to the manager or whoever was in charge?

DB: Well, we had people just like now. They'd request an application. When you had the application, they send in the application and you'd look it over. If somebody knew somebody, "I've got a friend who'd like to jump," this and that, that would help.

I: Was it important to go up and meet the people you're going to be jumping with—the bosses, or anything like that? Like now I didn't meet, a lot of people didn't meet anybody here before they came.

DB: Well, that doesn't do much good because the way the system works now, why, it's pretty limited choice.

I: But back then it was more important to go—

DB: Well, yes.

I: So Lufkin had a lot more power over who got to jump at Winthrop?

DB: Oh yes, he had complete. And the firing. Nobody...Why if you didn't work out, goodbye. Generally, if a guy didn't make jump training, which some of them did, [unintelligible]. Trying to find him a job on the lookout [unintelligible] Forest Service for the rest of the summer. [unintelligible] he was good that way.

I: Did you have to worry then about...You mentioned that people were fearful of Lufkin. Do you think part of that had to do with the fact that he could can them any time he wanted?

DB: Sure, that helped, but he had authority. I mean, you'd have to know the man, but—

I: Yes. Well, I hope to talk to him.

DB: I really liked him. Most of the guys who worked for him...like me, he'd really back his men up. If you'd get in trouble with the district...You go to work for a district and you get into trouble, and man, he'd be right there. Like one guy was canned in the district. Wasn't his fault. In on it, but it wasn't fault at all. God, Lufkin marches up to the guy, and anyway the guy got his job back.

I: What was he canned for?

DB: Oh, this one guy, he was an old-timer at Brush Creek—old fellow—and some days he was just in a bad mood and he just rant and rave then he'd just can somebody on general principle. Lufkin really backed his men up. Sometimes almost right or wrong, maybe if they are real wrong on it, but they didn't have to be all together right. He was pretty loyal to him. He was tough because he really backed his men up on most of things they'd do.

I: So that guy you're talking about at the district, he canned a jumper? Is that what you're saying, or he canned one of his own district men?

DB: No, it was one who went to work for the district as the jump season was over. He still got his job back.

I: That's good. So I guess Lufkin had he had pretty much a free ticket in the Forest Service.

DB: He broke so many rules you wouldn't believe. I don't know why he didn't end up in jail sometime. You know the surplus material...Well, no, you wouldn't. Anyway, they get a lot of it here but they'd bring out these surplus lists of a government agency who turned things loose and you can pick them up. Well, in town if he thought somebody could use it he'd go into the surplus and get it and then give it away. Parachutes got...They used to get us...They wanted us to destroy our old parachutes, so they were really cracking down on him. I bet everybody in Winthrop had a parachute. You old little [unintelligible] he could throw out. [unintelligible]. So Lufkin [unintelligible]. [unintelligible sentence]. So he let it be known that unofficially that there was going to be something dumped out there. Women would make all...weave stuff out of it.

I: Oh it was silk sheets, wasn't it?

DB: No, this was nylon. So they'd be out there waiting. Okay, technically we dumped the parachutes. We used to have them just come out and get them or give them away, but they'd make rugs, rag rugs, and this stuff out of it. You might as well.

I: Did you guys make anything like that? That kind of stuff.

DB: No.

I: You lived in Redmond here then ever since—

DB: '64. That's 17 years in Winthrop, and this is 17 years here in Redmond. This year.
[unintelligible].

I: Do you think that you and the other jumpers were any different from the average Joe in any way, or do you think you just had a little bit a little bit more adventurous...or what do you think made you guys different for the others?

DB: I don't know. I know that McCarl [Robert S. McCarl?] thinks we were a breed of ourselves. I know him because I read some of his stuff. I don't think it's that much. Some guys like the outdoors and some guys...Well of course, now it's more money. Then it wasn't all that good pay but kind of do-gooder. You're fighting fire and protecting the forest and outdoor life, and so the guy that liked an outdoor life [unintelligible] all kinds of reasons. Like I said earlier in this deal, some guys just tired of walking fires so he started jumping. [unintelligible sentence]. Back there is a big wilderness area anyway, and some guy would pack a pack back in 20 miles of fire [unintelligible].

I: Sipping on cold drinks?

DB: There isn't that much of that.

I: Well when you went through rookie training did you...say your first jump, did you have an initiation before you jumped the first time?

DB: No the only thing they had, they, I've got a copy at home, I think, somewhere. There's a song about, kind of a nasty song about jumping and getting smashed all over the place. I mean, real gory. All a squad leaders got together before we made our first jump and harmonized this song. I don't know whether I still have that or not.

I: Boy, I'd like to see that.

DB: It was supposed to be...it was supposed to psyche you out. I mean it [unintelligible] but it could other people, and in this day it couldn't now. Too many people jump.

I: Did they pull any stunts in the plane to try and scare you guys on your first jump?

DB: No. In fact when they sang this song to us, they had to sneak us off somewhere because they were under orders not to—

I: Oh really? Was that Lufkin's orders?

DB: Oh no, this was at Missoula. Remember that's where my rookie training was.

I: Oh right, right. Okay.

I: Well what did things, once you went through Winthrop, did that kind of thing change with rookies that were coming on at Winthrop? Did you have initiation there?

DB: Yes. We had an irrigation ditch that used to run—it's dry now—it ran right through the, between our loft and [unintelligible] bunkhouse and that got...Put Lufkin in a few times. Got brave enough. That was a national pastime there. Somebody that decided...Things...People...I don't know whether they've changed or whether the regulations or the way they're raised has changed. I remember when our bunkhouse was...to start with, it was one open one, and then finally had it split in two with a kind of a [unintelligible] in between. A little bunk house. The original one was all one. Guys would come in in the middle of the night and start turning beds over, bring a hose in and just raise holy Cain. When they finally divided the bunkhouse in half then you had one side versus the other side. One night swiped a pig, and they threw the pig in the other side. They'd kick it and make it squeal, and then they'd block the doors while the pig was panicking. Of course, it woke everybody up.

I: I bet you were in on now on that one, weren't you? Did you—

DB: No, I wasn't. I wasn't in on too much of the stuff. I don't know why men left me alone, but I remember one night I slept on the end—I had a place—and it was 4th of July. Anyway, I was asleep, and two things happened. One, they decide to dump everybody. When they got to my bed and I was half awake, and I heard "Should we dump Skinny?"

"No, let's not." Then pretty soon I got half awake, and here's a roman candle at one end of the barracks and I was on the end here. I could just barely remember it. They said I kind of came up like that and these things go right by the foot of my bed just bouncing off my bed and the wall right here. They said I went like that pretty quickly. I got used to it.

I: Boring.?

DB: These guys would have lights on late, and it's open so I, after years of doing that, it didn't bother me too much. They'd get awful wild sometimes. Dump water. Everybody dumped in the irrigation ditch at about three o'clock in the morning. Even me once in a while.

I: So Lufkin knew that this stuff was going on and just let it slide?

DB: Oh, yes.

I: Just figured letting steam off or something?

DB: Like I said, they dumped him a couple times. He wasn't too happy about it. He got even with one guy, but they did anyway. Pilots they didn't like it. Pilots are...pilots are a breed of their own.

I: It seems they still are.

I: So they get mad if you try to dump them in? Is that what you mean?

DB: Yes, well some of them you wouldn't dare. We had one that always got po-ed and they never lasted very long.

I: We've got some traditions here at Redmond where if you've had...after your 50th job or after your 100th jump, you have to buy everybody a keg of beer. Or after you've qualified as a jumper, after your rookie training, you get your little rookie pin. Were any of those traditions around when you jumped?

DB: Well no, because you didn't get that many jumps. See guys were jumping anywhere from two to four jumps a year. That's all. Because all you do is jump way back in the dinghies. These guys were never jump next to a road. Then they kept us some tight on that forest too where we couldn't get out in many cases. We had one year there that ten jumpers never got a single fire jump.

I: Did you get practice jumps in?

DB: Two. That all we had—

I: For the whole summer? That was at the beginning of it too, right?

DB: Yes.

I: Well what about when you actually qualified up in Missoula? Were you given any kind of pin even like that, or they didn't have those then? I'm just wondering when that started, when they started doing that kind of stuff.

DB: I think some units did it pretty early, but I don't remember that. Don't remember anything then.

I: What about like putting a patch on your parachute? We do that now to make sure that you look up right away just to check your canopy. What we do now is we'll put a patch on there, and if you get to the ground without having noticed that there's a patch on your canopy, you

have to buy everybody a keg of beer. Can you think of any traditions like that? Anything, not necessarily having to do with the number of jumps, but just...Well, I'm just curious to know where a lot of these things got started, and I'm also interested in knowing if you guys did stuff back then that we're not doing anymore. Just unofficial things.

DB: Yes, I know what you mean. Funny...Some things impress some people and some impress others. I know the big thing used to...This was when they...At the end of the year, when each guy, say this is his last day, a lot of time we were out on projects, but most any time that we had open state trucks [unintelligible]. Usually, when he got done with work that day and that was his last days, then they tear his shirt off and rip up his pants and all that. We'd go through town and we'd yell and point at this guy's and left him [unintelligible] with his pants hanging on and all this. That got to be, for several years there, a regular thing until we got closed vehicles. Finally, they got to where they'd wear old clothes on his last day because they were going to rip them up.

I: If a guy had a hole in his shirt would you rip it off of him? I've heard—

DB: Oh yes.

I: I mean other days besides his last day, and there was that—

DB: Hey, you got a rip there. Whoops! [laughs] DB: Oh yes, they did.

I: Did you ever...Let's see, did you have a jumper fund? We have what we call a jumper fund that you pay probably ten bucks to join, and then whenever you need to borrow money you can borrow from it and you pay it back when you can.

I: Oh, we didn't start it until real late. I think they did when we started traveling more. We used to not get to travel that much anyway, but not as organized as now. I think that you could just ...Somebody would borrow some money from somebody else. I'm trying to remember when we ever did. Might have toward the last year, the last year I was there [unintelligible], but it wasn't [unintelligible] even though we'd travel. By rule, Lufkin rule, we were supposed to carry 10 bucks to get you by most of the time. Generally when we traveled we would end up sleeping in Forest Service warehouses. Per diem was two dollars a day or a dollar something. Even in those days you couldn't get by on that. I mean except [unintelligible].

I: Yes, that is pretty tough. Did you ever have a rookie death pool?

DB: Oh yes, that's as old I think as old as probably jumping. I don't know whether they had one in Missoula but I wouldn't have been surprised. They didn't do it the first year I was there, but at least at Winthrop as far as...I don't know whether it was the first two years I was there, but it's a fairly old, ancient pool.

I: Did that bother the rookies at all that you knew?

I: How did you figure out...How did you determine which rookie? Did you pick whatever rookie you thought would be injured first?

DB: No, that's too unfair because...See, in those days if a guy just barely made it through training he's actually where he wouldn't even begin to here. They would go ahead and give him a chance you know and [unintelligible]. There were some guys that were, you could tell were more accident-prone, not that they always get hurt, but no, we drew.

I: So that everybody, so that every rookie had somebody—

I: —betting on them quitting.

DB: Well it depends on the number too, but I remember here [unintelligible] it was always drawn. It was anyway.

I: Could you trade names that you picked if you wanted?

DB: I suppose if it was mutual you could.

I: So if you had picked the name of the rookie who was injured first you'd—

DB: Get the pot.

I: How much did you put in? How much did each person?

DB: I can't remember what it was?

I: I mean was it a large sum of money, or was it just something—

DB: Oh, no.

I: Did you ever win it? [laughs] Well I was real happy. The guy who picked me...Well I wasn't happy. I mean if somebody was going to get hurt...It was interesting, it was the guy who picked me last year got hurt. He was an old man. Did you have a termination party at the end of the year where you gave out awards or anything?

DB: Oh, no. We had termination parties all right, but they weren't that well organized.

I: What would it be like?

DB: Lots of beer and a bunch of booze and just raise Cain. Go out somewhere and just raise Cain.

I: Well can you think of one in particular that you know the specifics of it? Did you start at a bar or in the barracks?

DB: No we rarely went to the bar. Well, the earlier days we'd have them in the barrack. In fact, the Forest Service would have some wild parties inside the government buildings. I mean, the while I say it ended up that way. I can't think of anything specific.

I: You mentioned that song the old men sung when you were a rookie. Do you remember any other songs off the top of your head that we're sung when you were a jumper or any limericks or anything else? Sayings, popular sayings. Words that people used to use—jargon? You know we have certain—

I: There's words you hear around here a lot that you don't hear other place besides cuss words, I mean, that I noticed when I first came here.

I: Or, like when you'd have a line over the top of your canopy, it's called a Mae West. I'm just wondering if there are any kind of expressions like that then?

DB: Well see actually we never called them Mae West before. I mean it was always a line over, that's what we called them.

I: Just a line over?

DB: In the military, it was Mae West, which it had been for years. Well the reason I can't is because remember I spent 28 years in there and jargon to you I wouldn't know quite how to...I mean, I wouldn't recognize it particularly as jargon.

I: Right. It was just everyday—

I: Oh right, you were so familiar with it.

DB: What are some of the examples that you were thinking of as jargon?

I: Well, around here just there's words that get used a lot like "you bet," "good deal," like to describe a trip that you enjoy or a fire that you make a lot of money at or it's a two-man that it's real beautiful and you just have to dig a little line, you say it's a good deal fire.

I: Oh those are...Yes, those change over a period of time, I mean, quite a bit. Of course, you have a large fire—the barn burner.

I: Okay, we call them gobblers.

DB: Or gobblers. We called it both ways.

I: How about it's something...If you have something going wrong, something that goes wrong with your canopy on your way down, do you just have specific technical terms to describe it or do you...I mean we have, there are line overs and streamers and all. I'm just wondering if there were any special words that you guys used other than the official words to describe those.

DB: Not really. Just wasn't that many of them. Actually that malfunction there were anyway. In fact, it was just about the same rate with the new chutes as they were with the old ones. You look back on that...You've seen about one in every 300 jumps you're going to have. Then streamers are rare, I mean, short streamers. Line overs, you're going to have a line over about one every 300 jumps as a [unintelligible]. It always has been that way. Take a big a big shot of them and have four or five. Then go quite a while without them but it seems average then.

I: What did you think of the Aim netting (?) when that came in?

DB Well see with this coming out and I fought it tooth and nail, but that's because it was put on backwards. Okay, we were having slow openings quite a bit with them, really slow.

I: With the Aim?

DB: Yes, and so we were fighting. Well, it turned out that they had the netting sewn on the inside, and I don't remember now, but on the inside instead of the outside or the outside instead of the inside. So you pull your...This is after I left. They pulled them all off and when the put it on the correct side and all that, why, all the sudden the stuff disappeared. Being a [unintelligible] of course have been light because it's more stuff to repair and get in the trees and tear up, and it makes it a bitch to pack compared to the [unintelligible]. I'm not sure it's all that good, but the military says it is so it must be.

I: Have the old men always been called the old men, and rookies called rookies?

DB: Yes.

[End of Tape 2, Side B]

[Tape 3, Side A]

I: I'm interested in that story that you were talking about.

DB: You don't need that on it because McCarl's already heard that and taped it.

I: These tapes are actually going to the Smithsonian, and McCarl will be using them. But I think it would be nice to have it on here anyway, just for the uses of other people, and actually have it on tape. Have it straight from the horse's mouth instead of on paper and interpreted.

DB: I don't know how close I can get to the old one, because I do forget things once in a while because when I say that everything went wrong except the fire, I mean everything. Nothing went right on that plane. Okay, here we go.

I: Do you want a drink of water or anything? Are you getting hungry?

DB: No, no.

I: Do you want to move to a place to eat?

DB: No I'm just looking at the time. My wife gets home [unintelligible] at quarter after six, so I'm fine. Otherwise she'd wonder where I was at.

I: Well, you can just blame it on the smokejumpers.

DB: She wouldn't care though. She knows where I'm at.

Okay, it was 1956, the first part of July. A few forests had never been jumped in before [unintelligible] Gifford Pinchot. This was the very first request for jumpers on the Gifford Pinchot. Also, you didn't always have list—a rotation list. Sometimes, you'd pick men. Okay, I was the old man. So they decided to do the right job so they can use us again...They sent me and this Light Horse arry—rookie—and this was his first fire jump.

Anyway, we started right after breakfast. I think we started around 9:00 in the morning. We grind our way down there in a Noorduyn. I think it took a little over two hours—about 11 or so. Then it was called a "wild area". It's about the only time I've ever been in virgin timber, I mean, like it was in the old days. The trees ranged from 7 to 11 feet in diameter. You couldn't see the forest for the trees. There wasn't any brush in the original virgin...in the brush because not enough light gets down there. There's this smoke curling up. The spotter looked, and the only opening was this brush patch. It wasn't too big.

I: How big? Compared to this room, say.

DB: Oh, it was probably at least as large as this room, but—

I: So it was steep?

DB: Anyway, it was brush.

I: Steep?

DB: So that was the spot. It's actually a good thing we didn't hit the spot, but anyway. So we jumped. We always jumped two men sticks at Winthrop, and, of course, there was only the two of us in the airplane. We jump and came down. I hit this top of this god awful, big Douglas fir. I wouldn't have had enough jump rope or anything to get to the ground if I'd hung at the top of it. I hit the top of it, hung for a little bit, and then I started sliding—slipping out. I slid out and I hung again and I slid out. Finally, I'd hang a little bit and then I'd shake a little bit to see, and I'd break loose again [unintelligible]. Finally, I got down and thought, good, it looks like I'm only about 60 or 70 feet up and I got enough rope. I bounced a little to make sure that it was hung good. I take off my helmet and start to let down. About that time, snap! I thought, I've got to have protection on my head so I tried to jam the helmet back on with one hand while I was grabbing limbs with the other. Glasses came right down [unintelligible]. I finally slowed down and—to shorten the story a little—I got on the last limb. I'm hanging on the last limb, and my chute slithers down like this. I look down, and turns out the way things went, it's probably about 30 feet more to go. I could only hang there for so long. Of course, no way you could chin up to the [unintelligible] and all that stuff anyway. I was pooped. It must have taken me two or three minutes to go down that tree that I kept hanging on. I'm hanging, and I almost hit the spot, because I'm hanging on the edge of this deal and it's as steep as all get out. I look down there and, number one, like I said, it's a good thing we didn't hit it because there was brush but the brush was covering a big rockslide. Go in there, you know, and just rocks. I look down here, and I know I could only hang for so long. I look there and I thought, no. I was getting tired, and I thought that this was the funniest thing that...including the other one. Wouldn't have made any difference if it turned out. I thought, if I've got to break leg, why, which leg should I break? In other words, taking the impact on one leg so I won't snap both of them? Like I said, it was about 30 feet. I thought, I always roll off to the right so I'll take it...and I always take first impact on the right foot anyway, so I'll do that.

I: Were you above rock in that tree, too, or was it—

DB: Yes. There was rocks and then a bunch of brush. It was close to a [unintelligible], but right where I would have hit wasn't right by a great big rock. It was steep enough I thought I could get by too. When it's real steep, you get off your feet pretty fast and all that, but it's still...But anyway, I hung there, and finally I couldn't hang any longer. I took a deep breath and let go. I was whistling down there, and just as I...I just kind of touched the ground like that and I bounced back up about this far. I looked back up there, and okay, this huge tree had a smaller tree growing out from it. That chute had wedged into a V right on the ground. That's how I

knew it was about 30 feet because the line...I just touched the ground and came up. The chute had wedged between this V and the tree—the bottom of the tree. Okay so—

I: That's just the start?

DB: Oh yes. Like I say, I haven't even started yet. So I get down. My partner, he lands in a tree too, but it's a smaller tree. He gets himself let down all right. Anyway, we're still quite a distance from the fire. This was the only spot that...We started to cross over on this rockslide and the brush. It's slow going brush and rocks, trying to feel your way and we had to deal because it was so steep. We thought it'd be easier, but it turned out it wasn't. He was ahead of me and all of a sudden, he disappeared. He had dropped in a hole between rocks. The brush caught him so [unintelligible]. Anyway, I looked down thinking that maybe he had gotten himself killed, but he hadn't. Out he comes. It must have taken us about two hours to get to the fire, fighting through this deal. Once we got to the fire, okay, the fire was just smoldering. Not too big.

Okay, now to backtrack, in those days, they dropped the fire pack and the food and water...or the food and water...It was dropped in separate packs. We got to the fire packs down and the tools, and we worked on the fire for a little bit. But they hung the food up in a tree. I'd say it was 13 feet, but it was probably only 10 or 11. But it was a huge thing. It come down, and it hung on the last limb. The limb must have been about 36—

I: So you're talking about diameter. Ten feet in diameter?

DB: Yes. Oh, huge thing. I mean, it went up in the air, and you couldn't really see the sun or anything else—I mean, light. This food hung right up on the end of this big old limb, and it was probably up about 50 or 60 feet up the last limb down. This was a little too high to throw something at it, but it just barely hung there—small, little eight-foot chute. We went back to the fire, but we decided...he was getting hungry. This had been late in the afternoon. We go over there, and all we had...climbing ropes and all that. Besides, I think it was too big for that. We generally just used our jump rope, cut it to size and work our way up. We had a belt, but that's all. Winthrop never gave climbing training other than outfit gear. I don't know why, but they never gave very good one.

I: And you had big trees up there too.

DB: No, not so big [unintelligible]. Anyway, I thought...I was never a very good climber anyway worth a hoot, and he just finished rookie training. "All right, I'll climb it." So he gets the...he gets the spurs. Anyway, he gets up there about six feet and "shooooomp." He puts the spur in his side of...just above the ankle. God, bleeding like a stuck hog. Well technically, we're 11 miles from the nearest...nine, ten, about eleven miles from the nearest road anyway. Oh, ground crew was supposed to be in too, soon after we got there. Anyway, he took a handkerchief and wraps it

around on top of the wound, and of course, that took care of the food. Still up there as far as I know.

Anyway, so back to the fire we go. We dinked along and we didn't line it up, but we got it pretty well put out. I thought, well, let's wait until morning and see how the fire is. Finally, didn't anything else happen...well, not yet. We waited...we went to bed that night and slept. We got up the next morning and worked the fire over with our hands and all that. We didn't even have it completely lined, but I decided that we had to get on because of this leg of his...It took stitches when we got back. One thing, he was a pretty tough boy. But no ground crew yet. It turned out that the ground crew got there [unintelligible] 40 minutes after we left. Boy, that would have saved us.

Anyway, we had this map. To forewarn you, and it was, the map had a mistake on it. An old map. It showed this trail cutting just below the fire and going so and so to Quartz Creek and from there the Lewis River. Okay, find. So we walk down the slope a little ways and put our packs on. We left everything, all fire tools, for the ground crew. We left all our fire tools, just took our chutes out. Because it was an unforgivable sin, and it always has been, not to bring your chute or suit out. We start down there, and sure enough we hit this trail so we start going down the trail. We go about a mile and half, two miles, and all of a sudden, we come to nothing and here's this sign that says, "This trail is no longer maintained."

No, I take it back. It forked, and then one of the forks it said, "This trail is no longer maintained." I looked down and seen Quartz River, but I hated to go cross country, because I don't know the country. I've never been there before, and I've got this wounded guy with me. Okay, this other trail said certain so-and-so lookout. I thought, I've got a Forest Service key, and maybe they'll have some food up there. Meanwhile, we haven't had anything to eat. This is the next day—24 hours without anything to eat. We'll try maybe the lookout and maybe we'll get in contact with somebody or something or other. It was seven miles up to that lookout. So we dumped our load and away we went. We got up there, what, four or five, maybe six miles. We got up high enough so that we got into some snow—snowbanks and stuff. Then came this sign, "This trail is no longer maintained." It happened that the main trail from the lookout came from the other way. They used to have trails all over the woods, but they abandoned a lot of them after the 3-Cs [Civilian Conservation Corps] and after the war. I thought, well, we're close enough to the lookout, we're sure to find the lookout so we might as well keep going. We got up to the top of the ridge. Stuff had thinned out. We're in high country then. We'd walked straight up hill, and we're getting tired. We looked and we looked, but we couldn't find anything. We never did find the lookout. It's starting to get toward dark, and we wanted to get back to our stuff. At least we could sleep in our chutes and stuff like that. Get back to that.

So we started back, and we couldn't find the end of the trail where we'd lost it. This panic button type of deal, when you're supposed to sit down? Okay. I was a smoker then and this guy was too, and he forgot his cigarettes so we had one cigarette left. We just sat down. I said, "Let's just sit down." That's what you're supposed to do. It was getting dark. The middle of—

I: You haven't eaten in a long time. Did you split the cigarette?

DB: Well, no. So we sat there, and I said, "We could always cut over here, and we'll cut that other trail and maybe get back. But we don't have much time." All downhill run. So we kind of separated. Anyway, about half an hour later, why, we found it. I was so disoriented then, it's a wonder. So down we went, full bore, and got back to our stuff. It was getting dark then, so we crawled in the parachutes and brought them out of the sack and went to sleep.

I: Did they give you a compass then to use, or did you have any navigation aids?

DB: No, I don't think we had any...besides a map. You could...the sun and all that, except up in the snow, it's so bad trying to orient yourself when. You've got the big snow banks. You could walk over the top of them. They were hard.

Anyway, we slept that night. Well, the next morning it was two days with no food, and we'd walked probably, I'd say at least...2, 6, 12, 14 miles by then. Of course, all the [unintelligible] with your load on. Okay, no hope of getting our stuff out. We had to leave our stuff there because two days or 48 hours without food and we'd already walked about 14 miles. His leg was stiffening up anyway. He was limping pretty bad. So I said, well...The last thing I wanted to do was...We could hear a patrol plane, but I wasn't about to start a fire or anything. Hey, this is the first fire jump, we've got to make an impression! And everything went wrong. So we decide...Oh, there's plenty of water. It was early in the year, and there was water running all over the place so water wasn't the problem. Running across the trail and a lot of the snow was melting anyway.

So we took off. We decided to cross-cut it. I said, "That has to be Quartz Creek down there." So we took off cross country and down in the woods again where you couldn't see the forest for the trees. Anyway, we finally hit Quartz Creek, and naturally there was a trail on the other side of it. We waded that thing. He was stronger than I was. I was getting to where I couldn't walk. It was an old trail and instead of being graded...Drainage coming into Quartz Creek was fairly large creek. The trail went down and back up and then down. On the uphill, I'd have to count 100 steps, stand there for about 30 seconds, another 100 steps. I'd go downhill all right, but my knees were shaking. He was limping bad. But he was tough.

It seems like I've told everyone...Back off when we got his chute out, we had a heck of a climb anything by the time we fell in the tree. I was really proud. I had one patch and about five [unintelligible] fallen in a tree and down in the rocks with it.

We started down Quartz Creek there, goes into Lewis River which is a large drainage. Anyway, we walked, and we finally hit the end of the road. In fact, it was always comical to me. Here's this bridge, and the bridge goes nowhere. I mean, the road starts, the bridge goes over the

Lewis River, and then there's a kind of parking area and that's it. They brought in a lot of pack strings in the olden days then.

We got down there, and we found this note that said, "Smokejumpers." There's a panel, number so-and-so...I mean, rig, number so-and-so, Park so-and-so, and the key's under the floor-mat and here's a map how to get to some guard station—Mosquito Lake Guard Station. You can go there, and they had a map. So we got in this rig, and I'd lost the hunger pangs as far as that goes. So anyway, down the road we start. It's one of these one, one-and-a-half way roads—dust this thick. Rolling dust behind us. I'm coming around this sharp corner, and here's a car coming right at me. I slam on the breaks, and, of course, the other car did too. We skidded...I'd like to say three inches apart, but I suppose we were actually six or seven feet apart when we came to a stop and dust rolling over top of us. It was a Forest Service rig—a sedan, in fact. I... "Hi."

"Oh, hi. Are you the jumpers?"

We said, "Yes."

"Oh," he said—by the way, this is the Forest Supervisor, the District Ranger, the Administrative Assistant, one other. I mean, there was five of them. It's a wonder we didn't run over got up so close.

I: That might have stunted the jumper program forever.

DB: Well, it turned out they didn't know how the jumpers operated. They said, "We're beginning to wonder about you. Since our ground crew got up there," so-and-so time, which was the day before. "We didn't know whether you were lost or quite how you operate." They hadn't even really started to worry about us yet. They were about ready to. So they hadn't been sweating it out, thank god. So we kind of gave them what happened.

I: Did you try and pretend that you weren't too affected by everything that...It wasn't real urgent that you get food soon, or did you tell them?

DB: Oh, no. We told them it'd been two and a half days, and we'd gone 20-some miles—like I say, it wasn't with a load on—without food. They said, "Well, lunch is in the afternoon. Go get some lunch or something to eat guard station." They said, "You did a fine job on the fire. You really had it out," and we weren't sure. We didn't have a 24-hour wait or even 12-hour because I wasn't to get the guy out of there. We didn't have it lined all that well, but I remember it was out because they said we did a very good job on the fire.

Seems like I've forgotten something...Oh, okay, then we went to Mosquito Lake Guard Station. I'm not hungry. In fact, I remember I had a small bowl of soup and two sliced tomatoes, and I

was full. I couldn't eat anymore. We was there, and I said...Okay, we went down to...it's called Trout Lake anyways, Ranger Station from there. I said, "Okay, we left our stuff up there."

They said, "Well, fine, we have a packer."

The packer was there, and he says, "I know where the place is [unintelligible]."

I said, "But I'd better go back with you because we don't leave our stuff there." I must have been...I was just down to the bones because I must have looked terrible. They laughed and, "No, we'll take care of it. We'll get it back to you in a few days," and all this. Hell, I couldn't have walked back up there for all the tea in China, but it was just something you didn't do...Wasn't so much a fear of Lufkin.

So then we start down. They had a bunch of fires, and they had some guy out of Portland worrying about it all. Anyway, Trout Lake is setting up quite high, and then it come down into the Columbia River. It's a winding road, on and on and on. There's this dumb character was riding his brakes because all of a sudden...I was sitting in the front seat, and he says, "Boy, these brakes are sure getting mushy." I started to say they're fading on him is what they were doing from riding on them so much. Then I looked ahead, and there was one more little curve and then a long straightaway. I think maybe it would cool off from there. I didn't want to say...Some guy out of a regional office. So I sweat the last curve out, but he had enough mushy brakes left and he couldn't figure out what was wrong either.

We got down to there, and then Dallas Port has a landing strip. Our regular observation airplane pilot and an observation airplane came down to pick us up to take us back up to Winthrop. [unintelligible sentence]. He took one look at us, and he said, "What have you guys been doing?"

I said, "I got to explain to Lufkin why I didn't bring his stuff back."

He says, "I wouldn't worry about it if I were you." We landed at Winthrop, and I walked in with an explanation. Johnny took one look at me, and he never even said a word about bringing his stuff back. We got the stuff back in a few days...about two weeks actually.

Then old Light Horse Harry...his aunt or something...he's from the, I can't remember, Midwest—Indiana, Illinois, something like that. He had an aunt or somebody die, and somebody had to get there. We took him into the doctor to get some stitches. He left, and then later on we never saw him again. Later on, he rolled in for his check. That was his jump—

I: That was his first?

DB: That was his first and last one.

I: When did he get his nickname? Did you guys give that to him after?

DB: Oh, no, he was extremely uncoordinated.

I: So he got that name right off the bat as soon as—

DB: Yes, he seemed to stumble a lot, and he was awkward and gangly and all this. So we called him Light Horse Harry. When he walked, it was sort of “dum-thum-dum-thum”.

I: Did he know that people were calling him that?

DB: I think so. I don't think...I think he did. He wasn't a very good jumper anyway. Like I said earlier, those days we chose jump partners. Because I was the old man of the place, why, I let everyone else choose, and I took whoever was left. So I got some real losers, because they were the ones that were disliked by the rest of them and—

I: Did those other guys...I'm sorry go ahead.

I was wondering if those guys that you ended up with had a nickname, too?

DB: No. Most of them weren't printable. We wouldn't say it in front of them, anyway. [laughs]

I: Did you jump for position like we do now? How did you determine who jumped when then?

DB: Drawing.

I: Drawing? Okay.

I: Before the fire actually...Would you just draw for [unintelligible] or would the next fire just be two people and then draw the next time after that fire for two people?

DB: No, at the beginning of the year. We'd pair up, and each pair would have a number and then you draw first, second, and third.

I: So those pairs were very rarely broken up during the season? Let's say when Light Horse Harry, when he didn't show up?

DB: Oh, I don't know. It wasn't that tight...because a lot of time guys would be out on...Stand-by wasn't as tight then. Guys would run into town, and no one would really care. Then you'd get a fire and one partner would be there and the next guy so you'd just pull of somebody else. It wasn't a strict...I was kind of roving a lot of those years. It wasn't really that come out even or anything. I just...Lufkin just put me in where he wanted to. I didn't really get on the list

or...except in the [unintelligible] days. Then later on, I just [unintelligible sentences; background noise]. In between times is when I'd get to jump.

I: [unintelligible]

DB: Then I'd get [unintelligible] La Grande, and I'd be down there for three weeks to a month. That's a lot of my big share of the fire jumps were on the Snake River and I [unintelligible]. That's my favorite country anyway.

I: I'd like to jump over there.

One question. Was there much rivalry between you and other jump bases or between you and some of the ground pounder crews that you can remember?

DB: Well, the ground pounders have always been ground pounders as far as I know.

I: Was there competition? Was it pretty sharp competition between groups to see who could get to the fire first? Did you always feel that the jumpers had to outperform everyone else?

DB: We jumped so much further from roads all the time that if you thought another crew was going to get anywhere near in the time we were, then we wouldn't jump. All you're wasting is jump...Jumping was made for roadless areas. Say, you had a lot more then, a lot more of. So we were rarely on big fires. Two-man, four-man. An eight-man fire was a huge crew—jump crew. We had a plane...Most of the time we only had one airplane that would carry four jumpers anyway. Later on, they kept getting larger and larger. You get more of them, but in the early days, just two...almost basically two-man. If they were bigger than that, we forgot about them. We let somebody else take care of them.

I: Did you ever hear about that 120-man jump they made out of Missoula? I think that was last year.

I: It was last year. I was on that. I wasn't jumped. I ended up going there on an IR crew, but they did put down 120 jumpers. It was quite a—

DB: Seventy-some is what they put me on one year—70-some fire. That's the largest I remember.

I: Did anybody else have some kind of nickname for you guys? Any kind of name that they used to call you? As a group?

DB: I think...I'm trying to think...I think they called me behind my back—

I: Not just you, but I mean, what the people in town would call the smokejumpers. They just call you jumpers, or did they have—

DB: Oh no, Winthrop had a pretty good...First place, Lufkin liked to hire local people anyway. So it had an awful lot of local people—farm kids out there—before they tightened down on specifications.

I: Are you okay?

I: Yes. Well, I'm probably going to change—

[End of Tape 3, Side A]

[Tape 3, Side B]

DB: —had some.

I: The planes basically haven't changed that much over the years as far as...You have pretty much the same planes that you used back then that you do today, don't you, or no? You still have the Beech 99s and—

DB: The Beech 99 is fairly recent. In fact, it was a year before last, '75, I think's the first I've used it.

I: So the planes have changed quite a bit then?

DB: Yes, just recently.

I: You used mainly a Ford Tri-Motor most of the time?

DB: Well, Travel Air, they used an awful lot of those, which is a one-engine airplane. That was a Johnson, of course.

[End of Interview]