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Interviewee: Robert C. Reeve

Interviewer: Gyongyver "Kitty" Beuchert

Date of Interview: July 12 and 18, 1977

Project: Boone and Crockett Club Oral History Collection

Gyongyver "Kitty" Beuchert: Oral history interview with Robert C. Reeve, honorary life member of the Boone and Crockett Club, held on July 12, 1977 at his home: Box 559, Anchorage, Alaska, by Gyongyver "Kitty" Beuchert, office administrator of the Boone and Crockett Club. Mr. Reeve, can you tell me your birthdate and the place you were born?

Robert Reeve: I was born on March 27, 1902 in Waunakee, Wisconsin. That's an Indian name for "Peasant Prairie".

JB: And can you give me the name of your parents please?

RR: Yes. My father was H.L. Reeve. His family came down from Long Island in 1935 [inaudible] where a lieutenant in my family had fought in the Revolution, and many Reeve family live in Long Island. He was depot agent there at the railroad for 40-45 years. In fact, I'm working now with the people, the Historical Society that have the depot there named an historical site and named in honor of my father.

JB: Oh, that's wonderful.

RR: In fact, I'm helping them buy the old depot and the park to make a park.

JB: Now this is a little on the light side, but as a young boy, how did you acquire the name "Champion Skunk Trapper"?

RR: Because I was a champion skunk trapper. In those days, spending money was hard to come by. My father was an old Yankee who rubs his nickels, and very seldom gave me anything [inaudible] I bought all my clothes and spending money trapping when I was a kid.

JB: At 15, you left town to join the service, did your age cause any problem and can you tell a little bit about your military experience?

RR: At the age of 15, I was a school dropout and a runaway at that, and I think what first corrupted me was all the different [inaudible] and cars had come through, sewer lines, Chicago Northwest and Union Pacific, they were all there, and I saw these signs, and I knew there was some other place besides Waunakee [inaudible]

JB: So, when you joined the service at that age, did your age cause you a problem in joining the service?

RR: No, no, as a matter of fact, I got to be a sergeant at the age of 16.

JB: And can you tell me a little bit about your military career?

RR: I never got overseas. I was all ready to go when the armistice was signed. That's one of the sad days of my life.

JB: Well, maybe it's lucky for all of us that you didn't get to. Can you relate how you met and married your wife and some of the details about your family?

RR: Yes. That's something to [inaudible] in history. I found a gold mine one time, a very rich one, the Ruff'N Tuff Mine, and I brought it in, all the gold from it, and we went down [inaudible] There was just a pool hall there, and I got a quart of moonshine, and the bootlegger, he saw my, his name was Alex Singleterry, he was an old gunman from Montana, and a real character, and he said, "Bob, that isn't a quart find that's a gallon deal, all that gold." So, I took out a gallon, and I treated all my friends, and the bar and around, and I'd been carrying the torch for this little girl, this little dark haired girl in town working there, and so I said, "Where is she?" She's up at the dance. So, I went up to the dance, and I grabbed her, she was dancing around, and I said, "Quit running around with those grocers boys around here, stick with me because I just struck it rich, and I'm going to be the next millionaire in this town." She said, "Get away, get away, get away, you're getting obnoxious." I went and I sat down and I got her to dance again, and I start the old millionaire stuff, and she says, "I just got a reading on your Mister, Mister Millionaire." I says, "What's that?" "I just found out that you owe for a year's gas bill down at the Standard Oil, and you haven't paid your meal tickets for 11 months, Mister Millionaire." But I had the last word, I said, "You can't deny that I haven't got good credit around this town." Anyway, one thing led to another, and one night, I had a quart of moon, I got mooned up with my friends, and I went to the place where they were living, and I woke up on the floor, and I had a dream that I'd gone up to Heaven, and St. Peter spoke to me, and he said, "You've got no business in here," he said, "You go across the way." And I saw these wraiths floating around which were these lost souls in Hell, and I made up my mind that I had to do something for humanity. You know how I saved myself?

JB: No.

RR: I saved that little girl from being an old maid. I've been very happy ever since. Of course I'm not a perfect husband. I'm gone a lot of time, broke a lot of time, and fell off the wagon once in a while (chuckles).

JB: But she doesn't seem to have minded.

RR: I know enough not to ask her.

JB: What schools have you attended, and could you tell about your honorary degree?

RR: My honorary degree is from the University of Alaska. The degree is a Doctor of Science, and they got that from reading my biography. When they saw that I did a lot of things to keep the [inaudible] going that nobody else had thought of, and they said, "He's a scientist." So, they gave me that degree. In fact, Jimmy Doolittle and I got degrees at the same time. He got a Doctor of Law, and I got a Doctor of Science.

JB: Prior to that, what was your education?

RR: After serving in the war for two years, I left again. I spent two years in the Orient -- roaming around, I was working for the Chinese Maritimes Customs Service most of the time. I covered every port there, and I ended up [inaudible]

JB: Now that you mention that story, can you tell how you got over to the Orient?

RR: I worked as a quarter master on a sailing schooner.

JB: I want to get this down on tape.

RR: Then I jumped ship.

JB: I would like to get this down on tape. You went to the University of Wisconsin, didn't you, and took law?

RR: Yes, for two years, but the law was a drag to me because I'm an outdoor man, and I couldn't see myself the rest of my life sitting in an office, and so I took off again.

JB: Having read about your life, I don't think law would have been the thing for you. Can you tell?

RR: I taught myself to fly in 1926. I was up wandering around in a little town in Texas called Beaumont, Texas. I saw an airplane in the air, and naturally gravitated to where the airplane landed, and I got there the next day, and there the pilots were still sleeping in the bed at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and I said, "Boy, that's the life for me." So, they took me on as a [inaudible] paying for my grub. They let me go and take the old Jenny up -- practicing with it, you know running it up and down the field -- and one day, after I had about four or five hours, a gust of wind caught me, and I found myself in the air flying, and I went around, landed, landed solid, involuntarily of course, and within ten hours I was carrying passengers. One day, an inspector came up, about that time in 1926, everybody had to have a license. One of the new inspectors came around, and he says, "Give me your license," and I said, "I'm not going to give you my license." He says, "You won't, huh?" he says, "Do you want to go to jail." I says, "I don't mind jail, I've been in jail a couple times already," and there was a bunch of standard guy tough lines there, and finally he said, in a sickly sort of way, "Why aren't you going to show me your license?" I said, "Mister, I'm not going to show you my license because I don't have any."

JB: And what happened?

RR: The next day I went down to California and got my mechanic's license and flying license and in two hours, I did the best job I ever did.

JB: Now, this goes back to the days where you were barnstorming, and I wonder if you could explain what that means?

RR: Barnstorming, that had to do with a fellow going around, landing anywhere and picking up passengers for as much as he could get out of him, and hoping you could get enough to pay your gas and get a meal.

JB: Well, was this done for people's recreation, or was it for their transportation, or what?

RR: No, I got my own airplane. I'd take them up and fly them around and bring them down.

JB: Oh, so, it was really for recreation, right?

RR: No, I want to correct this. I was never a wild-blue-yonder-boy. Do you know what that is? That's a boy that looks in the sky and he says, "Oh, I look at the sky, get the thrill out of it." Flying came to me just as naturally as walking or driving a car, it was a natural part of my existence, and I never got enthralled or carried away by being in the wild blue yonder.

JB: Well, now let me ask you, were you ever in the Army Air Force?

RR: Yes, I was in for a short time there, and I had a bum eye, and it caught up on me. Caught up on me and I got discharged. Which is fine with me.

JB: And then you did all this flying afterwards, and they wouldn't have you?

RR: All this flying?

JB: Well, I mean after your career was in flying.

RR: I'll tell you what I did. I practiced with my eye and got it back to normal so I could pass my CAA physical exam, and a lot of that time I flew without a license. Without a physical, a current physical.

JB: Now I want to ask this question very generally, but I would like you to answer it as specifically as possibly. Can you tell about some of your South American flying experiences and your work down there?

RR: Well, that's best put out in my biography written by Beth Day, which has a good story on it.

Well anyway, I flew every day, in one year, I put in 1800 hours. Nowadays you can only put in 800.

JB: Well, you flew mail in the Andes under contract.

RR: I flew the straight mail, I flew the mail over the Andes, up and down the coast of Chile and Peru and Ecuador and Columbia.

JB: Now you made aviation history twice during that time I believe. One was a speed record between San Diego and Lima.

RR: If it says so, I did.

JB: Okay, and the night flight of 800 miles non-stop, I just wanted to get this down into the interview, and...

RR: Yeah, at night, yes. [inaudible] the mail was a day late, and I caught up, and they lit fires all along the coast, and I flew out over the ocean from fire to fire.

JB: Oh, that's interesting. Then one time you crossed, the, I hope I'm pronouncing this right Episilada Pass in the Andes in a blinding snow storm, and you were featured because of this in Ripley's Believe It or Not. Do you recall the details?

RR: Oh, yes. I was trying to fly on instruments. By the way where did you pick that up?

JB: In your biography, in your book.

RR: Yes, I flew the whole across and back by some blind in the snow storm. Fortunately I got back alive. I'll never forget one time I was flying down there, and I had a fellow named Cortinez who was the first man to fly the Andes, and I got in trouble in a place called [inaudible] and I [inaudible] flying on instruments there and got in a spin, and come tumbling down just over the mountain tops there. Anyway, I got out of that, and somebody asked Cortinez, later he says, he heard about it, he says, "Were you scared?" He says, "I sure was, Cortinez was plenty scared."

JB: Now you know, there is a phenomena that happens in flying around mountains that I would like you to explain, it's called a Willy Wall, is that right?

RR: Yes. The wind follows the contours of the mountain. On the windward side you'll get an updraft, and on the downwind side you'll a downdraft.

JB: And that literally will catch an airplane and throw it around won't it?

RR: Oh, yes, plenty.

[Break in the recording]

JB: Can you tell me what you did for recreation in South America?

RR: Oh, yeah. Down in Texas, [inaudible] I used to play a little polo, and I got real friends with some old polo playing pioneers there, [inaudible] Argentine, and I got my own horses, and we had a champion team up in Eureka. In fact, I'll show you a picture of some of my favorite horses, ponies sometime.

JB: Oh, that's where the polo pictures come from in your biography.

RR: Uh-um. By the way, did you know that Watson Webb, one of our old time members of the club had a ten goal handicap? In the champion team who took the record from the British in 1926.

[Break in the recording]

RR: Okay, in fact one of the great days of my life was when I was flying between the Andes and Buenos Aires, in a little town there lived a polo player named Manuel Andrata who took the records from the Americans in the late 30's. I used to land there and go out and play a couple of chukkers with him and go on with my mail route. But those cowboys sure pounded the Hell out of me.

JB: You said "play a couple of chukkers"? How do you spell that?

RR: Chukkers. That's the same as a round.

JB: Would you relate the story of how you came to Alaska? Some of the very early experiences?

RR: Yes. I was flying an old wooden Lockheed League at one time, and I took off, and it was made of wood and glue. The glue gave away and the landing gear [inaudible] and tore a wing off, and New York called it "Pilot Error", "Pilot Error" -- that it was my fault, and I got canned. And that did something to me. I made up my mind that I was never going to work for anybody else. As a result of this injustice, I was going to be my own boss, and I was either going to be a bum or a millionaire, and if you look at the first chapter of my biography, you'll see the title is, "He looked like a tramp when he came to Alaska."

JB: Well, can you tell a little about when you came and how you got started in Valdez?

RR: Yes. I heard there was an old [inaudible] wrecked over there. That's a big, old time bi-plane. So I went over there and for a dollar an hour I repaired the airplane and then flew it and leased it from the owner until I had enough to buy my own airplane.

JB: Can you describe your part, well, we're skipping a little ahead. You did an awful lot of flying in between coming to Alaska and this question I'm going to ask, but can you describe your part in the

construction of the Northway Airfield, the hauling of the supplies and your family living in the camp near [inaudible] Indian Village?

RR: Yeah, that was a great experience of my life. I got an old Boeing 80A, that's an old bi-plane built by Boeing that had four wings, three tails, and three engines. I cut a big door into it and flew up to as much as 11,000 pounds in an airplane that was licensed for 3400 and got away with it. As a result, I had the airplane stressed for just such a weight, and the big door to put the boilers in, 11,000 pound boilers that I had to haul there.

JB: Can you describe a little bit about the equipment that you carried into that place?

RR: I carried everything to build that field.

JB: Even concrete?

RR: Sure, you bet.

JB: Now, can you describe if you remember, it's probably something I should ask your wife, but maybe you remember, some of the things she did in camp while you were doing all this?

RR: She cooked there for a bunch of men, fed about 30 men in an old cabin at the [inaudible] finally she broke down and they had to get a regular cook. The workers had went to Northway.

JB: Would you relate some of the events during World War II and your flying over the Aleutian Chain? During the war time now.

RR: Oh, yes. I was in the air practically all the time. In fact, I lost my Boeing 80A there one night. I was going to Cold Bay, and I had a load of radar equipment for Amchitka that they were going to use to catch the Japs and get them out of Kiska, and I ran out of gas, I was on top of the soup (that's clouds) at about 1000 feet, and down to my last drop of gas and no place to go, and there I was. And I suddenly remembered, mind you that this is at night, I remembered flying over that far that wherever the water from the mountains, glaciers up there ran into the Bering Sea, there's enough difference in the dewpoint, in temperature, to cause a thin rift in the clouds. So I went around there, and I found one of those rifts and all engines quit, and I dished out into the ocean and got away with it.

JB: And you came out of it fine.

RR: Yes. Well I had to swim to shore, I had to rescue my passengers, but I made it.

JB: That's fantastic. Now I would like you to explain a little bit about some of the things that you used to take, personal things, that you used to fly in just to make it feel a little bit more like home to them. The soldiers.

RR: Oh, sure. I'd fly everything in there. They'd order a whiskey, which was a popular deal, and I'd send it in as freight there and cause great joy around it, and everything, but I was hauling mostly radio equipment for the Alaskan Communication System and their personnel all around.

JB: Well, what I was getting at that I wanted to bring out a little bit was that these personal items you used to take to them just as a favor. They didn't pay you to carry these things, did they?

RR: No, no, because my contract was paid for. If I had any room, I'd just go and load up with what they wanted, needed.

JB: And there's another thing that I'd like you to

RR: Fresh fruit, everything like that, you know. Whiskey, that was a great thing for them.

JB: Then there's another thing that I'd like you to tell a little bit about is all the emergencies that you helped take care of that come up with the bush pilots in Alaska, like taking people to the doctor and things like that. I wish you'd relate a couple of stories like that.

RR: Oh, I've had them by the dozens, but these people, they always got sick when the weather was the worst, and you had to bowl through the weather. Fortunately, [inaudible] I made them all, and only one of them ever died.

JB: Okay, could you explain how you started your airline and some of the problems that you encountered in doing so?

RR: Well, for ten years in Valdez, I did all my own mechanical work, book work, flying, overhaul, and so forth, with my own hands, and I accumulated a great knowledge of things to do, and then at the end of the war, they dug these DC-3's, the Air Force did of which [inaudible] they call them the C-47's, and you could get them for \$20,000 apiece. A \$200,000 airplane for 20% down. So I bought one of them for \$4,000. At that time, a big steamship strike started in Seattle, and people wanted to go back and forth, and I [was] in the air every day for 2 months, ten-fifteen hours, and I made enough to buy and pay for three more C-47's. That's the start of my airline. That's the luck a fellow has.

JB: Yeah, but you had some problems along the way. Can you please explain how it came about that you had to privately operate and maintain the airfields on the Aleutian?

RR: Oh, sure. The service, when the war was over, they all deserted these islands, took all their help out of there, I had to rent them myself. I remember [inaudible], Cold Bay, [inaudible], Dutch Harbor, I even operated [inaudible] for a while.

JB: And would you tell me why you had to purchase Pacific Air Motors?

RR: I did it to go and overhaul my own engines there and know what went into them instead of being in human bonds from some ripper-off from the States.

JB: Well, it seems that at this point you had to control practically every phase necessary to operate your business, is this true?

RR: That's right. I even bought a hardware store.

JB: Oh, can you tell about that?

RR: Yes. I always wanted, I needed a lot of stuff from the hardware store to run the airline, and there was one up for sale there, Kennedy Hardware.

JB: This is in Anchorage, right?

RR: No, there was another one, it's across the way from Kennedy, and I sent all my friends coming in saying, "The war is over. You can shoot a gun down main street, and you won't even hit a dog. Business is going to Hell." Then pretty soon the biggest one came up for sale, George Kennedy. When I paid him a down payment of \$25,000 I think, he said, "Bob, I'm sorry to tell you, the war's coming to an end, and you can shoot a gun down here and never hit a dog. [inaudible] going to the wrong store." But that was a good business, it kept my airline going for years, then it burned out.

JB: Can you tell me what the thinkflight was of the 43rd Tactical Fighters Squadron, what was that about?

RR: Yes. I became an honorary member of the 317th Fighters Squadron, and there was no such flight as F flight, but that was my command, and I became known as Sink Fink, Commander in Chief F. Fink Flight [?], and I'll call up out at [inaudible] and to this day and say to this day, "This is Sink Fink." "Yes, what can I do for you Sink?"

JB: Okay, I have a biographical outline which will be attached to this transcript, but I would like you to mention some of the honors that you have received that meant a great deal to you.

RR: Well, I've already had far more honors than any individual ever had, I had them all. The National Aviation Hall of Fame and you'll read my biography there, and you'll find them all.

JB: In 1948, you killed a world record brown bear, world record at that time, and received the first Sagamore Hill medal that was ever given by the Boone and Crockett Club.

RR: That's correct.

JB: Can you give the details at this time? And who was with you?

RR: Yes, I had some friends, [inaudible] out here at the Air Force, (just saw his picture,) I'd known him over the years and they wanted to go out and get a bear. So I took them out, and they went out and got their bear, and I got caught up on my sleep. [inaudible] Oliver says, "Aren't you going to go hunting?" But I didn't tell him I'd been dropping vitamins to a bear there for years, and he was the world's record. Then I went out, and there he was just on the side of the hill and I plunked him. He was a monster. To this day, even though the skull is way down in the records, it was really the biggest bear I ever shot in the knowledge of the people a lot of today. Wait 'til you see the pictures of it.

JB: I've seen some pictures of it, they're fantastic, what's in the records book now?

RR: The hide was 13 feet wide and 11 feet long.

JB: Are you aware that the picture of that bear and you are in the new records book that just came out?

RR: That is right, you showed it to me.

JB: Would you explain the significance of the Sagamore Hill medal and how you felt about being honored in this way?

RR: Well, that was a new honor put out in honor of, they called it, Sagamore Hill is the old Roosevelt homestead, and I wasn't there when they named it the Sagamore Hill, but it was very appropriate, it was named after Teddy Roosevelt's old home there.

JB: Did this event have any relationship to your becoming a member of the Boone and Crockett Club?

RR: Yes, yes. I went back to their dinner and got the medal and at the next election I was elected a regular member. I remember being proposed by Watson Webb, who I had known over the years and always has guests in New York, they were very gracious and Alfie White [?].

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

JB: I want to mention here some of the offices that you held. Do you remember the dates?

RR: No.

JB: Okay, well I'll just put it down for the record

RR: I held practically all of the offices at some time or another.

JB: You were vice president in 1965 and in 1969, and then the executive committee in 1962-64, '66-68, and in 1970. And then a little later in the interview, I'd like to get into your activities with the North American Big Game Committee. Okay, how did you become actively involved with the members of the Boone and Crockett Club?

RR: Well, they elected me into their inner circle, and whenever I get in there, they'd have a big lunch for me out in Wall Street. I remember very well Archie there who is Roosevelt [inaudible], he was in the insurance business, Watson Webb, Webb and Lynch, he was also in the insurance business, and Allan Ames was a banker, and Ernie Quantrell was a lawyer, and Bob Ferguson would join us, too. Those were great days.

JB: What prompted you to take such an active interest, especially since you were so far removed from all the other members? What prompted you to take such an active interest in the Club affairs?

RR: Well, it was a great thing to me. On account of, it goes back to my skunk trapping days. I was a great lover of the outdoors, and I used to hunt a lot, all of the big game -- moose, bear, and rams, that is adult [?] sheep. You know, in retrospect, to this day, I've been elected to many clubs like Explorer's Club and Metropolitan Club and the Rainier Club of Seattle and everything, but my association with the Boone and Crockett Club has been the greatest of all my associations -- due to the people, [inaudible] and the things we accomplish. I tell you what I did. I got two things put through there of which I'm very proud. I got the fair chase deal was put in where you can't use an airplane or anything to spot a game, you've got to get it on foot. I had a lot of trouble getting that through because everybody had their own idea on it there. I got it through, and I also got the distinction between a brown bear and a grizzly bear: the brown bear was a fish eater, he lived [near] the streams that went into the Gulf of Alaska, he fished, they were brownies, and those that were killed up there where the streams ended in the Arctic Ocean were grizzly. And to that [this?] day, that's still the criteria.

JB: The brown bear is much bigger because of the more protein.

RR: Oh, yes. He's looking for fish.

JB: How did you develop such an interest in both hunting and conservation?

RR: Well, hunting was in my blood from [the time I was] a little guy, and the conservation - as things went on, I saw that, for instance, if we didn't get fair chase, they'd go and annihilate our game by the use of the airplane. To this day, I look in that records book and I know many of those trophies were not killed in a fair chase. I can tell by the, you ask Frank Cook about that, we worked with him. I first started that in the Alaska Big Game Trophy Club, and we got it through, and as I say, I had quite a time getting it through the Boone and Crockett Club on account of the fact that everybody had their own idea how to put it.

JB: You know, that's something that I'd like to ask you about. The Boone and Crockett Club, basically, the majority of the members have always been on the East Coast, and do you feel, since you were one, either the first or one of the first really western members elected, don't you feel that the western members have an awful lot to offer in the way of knowledge of the problems that arise out here since you live here?

RR: Say, to my knowledge, I'm the first member elected west of Pennsylvania, or the Ohio River.

JB: And, going back over the question again a little, don't you feel that by living out here, you can relate to them some of the problems that go on that they're not familiar with?

RR: Oh, yes, do that all the time. Now, I haven't been able to travel much the last several years, but I got two good men in there, Dick Reeve and Frank Cook who are good conservationists and know what's good, well, you've seen them in action down in the Trophy Club down in [inaudible] and Awards Committee. Incidentally, they take a great interest in the Club and don't miss any meetings if they can help it.

JB: What other conservation organizations have you belonged to if any, and did you hold any offices in any of them?

RR: Oh, yes, Alaska Big Game Trophy Club, I was the founder and Frank Cook was the Founder, and I was president of that for a while, and I don't recall any other conservation, that's the great, number one, ultra, ultra club of all things, in fact, the Boone and Crockett Club is well known as the most exclusive club in North America of any kind.

JB: Did belonging to this other organization ever relate to your activities with the Boone and Crockett Club? In other words, did belonging to the Alaskan Trophy...

RR: Yes, that relates, too, because we set the pattern for a lot of things they do back there. We're right in the center of the action here.

JB: A committee was formed in 1929 in the Club to study firearms regulations. Has the Boone and Crockett Club ever taken a stand on firearms to your knowledge?

RR: No. You're referring now to the regulations like the handguns the NRA is keeping down? No, we never had any part in that.

JB: Can you describe some of the [inaudible] things the Boone and Crockett Club did which you attended and some of the social get-togethers?

RR: Well, as I said, whenever I get down there, the inner circle would always invite me down to Wall Street there, and we'd have a big lunch, and I'd get some loose jokes from Ernie Quantrell, who was a great lawyer there, and I'd always get to hear his latest jokes, and he always had them. I remember they always fought about who would pay the bill. "Oh, Ernie, you shouldn't pay this, have to do this." [inaudible] The guy that they called it always ended paying it anyway. They had a lot of [inaudible] luncheon clubs, you know, in that area.

JB: Do you remember any humorous or personal stories of any of these social get-togethers offhand?

RR: No. Ernie, I can't remember, I can't even remember, oh, a couple of Ernie's, but they can't be repeated.

JB: Okay. Could you explain how you met and came to know Bradford Washburn and some of your experiences here in Alaska with him?

RR: Well, in 1936 or '37, I got a letter from him. He wanted me to take him into Mt. Lucania which is over in Canada. They were going to climb Mt. Lucania, and I wrote back to him, "Anyplace you'll ride, I'll fly." So, I took the supplies in in the winter and in the summer I took him in there. In fact it was June 18, an ordinary, the snow would be hard and everything, but I went down the crevasses there, but for the reason that where I'd been flying, close to the coast, there was wet snow and always packed down, but this was nothing but frost, and down you went.

JB: You had a problem getting out of there, didn't you?

RR: I never expected to get out of there alive.

JB: Now, they had to walk out because you couldn't go back for them, didn't they?

RR: Yes. They never expected to get out alive either. In fact, they damned near drowned.

JB: Now as you know, he, along with some of the other long time members of the Club have resigned because of the Club's continued association with records keeping and the awards program. How do you feel about this?

RR: About them resigning?

JB: Yes.

RR: If they want to resign, let them get out. In fact, I asked Washburn why he resigned and he said, "Environmental" or something, I forget, it wasn't important. He wasn't eligible to be nominated in the first place. He wasn't that much of a scientist. Some friend of his put him up. Archie's son and grandson resigned, and when I posed the question to Archie, fifty dollars was too much for him. Remember that letter? And he says, "Well they didn't have it in their blood to go hunting," like we did. We're doing fine in the Club, we're doing just fine. [inaudible] get fair witness to the dinner we had in Denver where you had two or three hundred people in attendance. That's never happened before, we never had more than 20 or 30 or 40 at the dinner back in New York.

JB: Well, you know, now, one thing I'd like to point out to you, because it's just dawned on me, you're speaking of the annual dinner, I think - the member's annual dinner, and this dinner was for the awards program.

RR: Yes, I know that, we had that every year. I've never missed any of those either. A lot of travel.

JB: Now you are a very good friend of Archibald Roosevelt's. First of all, can you explain how that friendship came about?

RR: Well, I first met him about 1933 or '34 when he was up here on a hunting trip over in the Ptarmigan Valley, and I just had a short conversation with him, and [inaudible] he was in front of the telegraph station in my mind, I wondered, "Is he spending some money?", but no [inaudible]

JB: Do you remember some of the things that Archibald Roosevelt was active in in the Club?

RR: He was, in everything. Archie Roosevelt and Bob Ferguson and some of those inner circle, they ran the Club. The membership, the [inaudible] committee, the awards, everything.

JB: Okay, you said to me that you'd give me a little bit about what you knew about his service record.

RR: Yes, I do know from the records that he served in the 28th Infantry of the First Division in World War I for which he received the Distinguished Service Cross, and then, he ended up as a Colonel in New Guinea. President Roosevelt didn't think very much of that branch of the Roosevelts so he sent them as far away as he could - to New Guinea. He had a fine record there, and I'm going to look his record from a fellow named Mickey Reed.

JB: That was Franklin D. Roosevelt that was President at the time?

RR: Yes. I'll never forget that. He said, somebody told me there who was in on it, he says, "What's the farthest place you can send them?" He didn't want them to get the name Roosevelt [inaudible], and I think pretty sure that Archie got the Distinguished Service Cross also for service

in New Guinea.

JB: Okay, this is a story that your son said to ask you about. He said that one evening you all had a meeting and after that meeting, you and Archibald Roosevelt went home to see his wife, and that I should ask you about this story. Do you remember it?

RR: Oh, yes. We had a few drinks. No, this wasn't his wife. It was a blue-nosed Roosevelt named Jack Roosevelt. One of his kinfolk, and I was staying with him, and Archie drove me up, we were making a lot of noise, and his wife came out, she was a blue-nose, and boy did she raise Hell with us, all the noise and everything. Yeah, I think that was it. I think that's the occasion.

JB: Could you mention some of the great men in the Club with whom you've had the opportunity to become friends and relay a little bit about them? You talked a little about the inner circle, but if you remember any details of some of the friendships you developed.

RR: Ole A.C. Gilbert was one. He's the A.C. Gilbert toy company in Boston. Fine gent. In fact I've got his picture on my wall here. A.C. Gilbert and I can't think off hand

JB: What about Dick Mellon?

RR: Dick, yes. Say, I want to pay tribute to Dick Mellon. Dick, when he died he was the richest man in the world. He had an estate with a [inaudible] of three billion dollars, and he was always ready to give a donation to some fund that needed money, and I wanted to pay tribute to Dick for that. He was always in there pitching. He was a fine host. I stayed with him in Pittsburg for a few times when they had the meetings there.

JB: Did you know Charles Frick?

RR: Charles Frick, sure, yes. Fine gent. [inaudible]

JB: Mr. Reeve, there was a committee formed by the Club at one time and the people on the committee included you, and Dr. Gutermuth, and Duncan Hodgson, and Richard [inaudible] and Julian [inaudible], and this committee was to draft a resolution on the oil and gas exploration of wildlife refuges. Can you explain what that was about?

RR: I wasn't in on that. You see, up here I couldn't attend all those meetings, and they'd have a meeting, half a dozen of them, and decide it right there, you know. No, I don't remember that at all.

JB: Okay. Well, now in June and September of 1957, they held a meeting in Washington and it was to discuss the entire field of conservation of wildlife, [inaudible], national parks, and other wilderness reserves and particularly the pending legislation affecting these [inaudible] and some of the things that I thought that you would be able to explain - there were many, many, a list of them

- but the ones that I thought that you might be particularly knowledgeable about was the endorsement of the establishment of proposed arctic wildlife refuge. This was in Alaska on the north of Brooks Range.

RR: Yes, and it got to be established.

JB: Were you one of the ones that provided information for that?

RR: Yes.

JB: And then, there was a threat at the time, a threat to the polar bears on the edge of the Alaskan ice cap, and I think you were very involved in bringing that [inaudible].

RR: That's correct.

JB: What did they do about that? Do you remember?

RR: Well, we stopped the use of airplanes. In other words, no trophies were to be taken if they were taken by an airplane. They had to go out in a boat, or kayak and rough it and seek the bear out amongst the ice floes. Oh, yes, I had a big hand in that.

JB: Alright, do you remember anything at all about the Padre Island National Seashore Bill? I think the Club was involved in putting that bill through.

RR: I don't understand the, Padre Island? No, I wasn't in on that.

JB: To your knowledge, did the Finley Robertson Act ever come into play in any conservation project which the Club supported? You know, the federal support to the states in conservation?

RR: The Club must have come in, but I don't remember because all those things were done in [inaudible]. Closed meetings by a few people back in Washington, or New York.

JB: Since you're interested in the grizzly bear, I was wondering if you remember anything about the Craighead Study that the Club supported? The Craighead Grizzly Bear Study, do you remember that?

RR: Oh, yes. Sure, I've got a copy of it here.

JB: Oh, do you? Do you remember any of the details at all?

RR: No.

JB: I'm not sure if you will know some of these things, but do you know what the Club had to do

with the establishment of the National Bison Range?

RR: I'm sure that they had a part in it, that's in Montana and Wyoming, isn't it?

JB: Yes, and also, I thought maybe this one you would know, the establishment of Mt. McKinley National Park?

RR: Yes, Teddy Roosevelt got that done in his administration.

JB: Okay, now this is one I know that you're very familiar with, and I would like very much for you to give as many details of it as you can remember. There was a rampart dam that was proposed to be built in Alaska, and the Club funded, through outside donations, the rampart dam study, and they hired Dr. Stevens Spu [?] from the University of Michigan who was an impartial person to do this study. Now, you personally contributed to finance this study, and I was wondering if you could explain the details of what this project was supposed to be and who you remember might have contributed to that?

RR: Yeah, no, we all did, I guess. I wouldn't know the contributors because I never asked who contributed. But that was the most damnable thing that ever was. They'd make this dam, they'd flood the whole Yukon River up there in [inaudible]. All the land for [inaudible] moose and sheep and everything.

JB: Well, the little bit I know of it, it was explained to me that it was also in a permafrost area and that this would have made it totally impractical anyway. Is that correct?

RR: I wouldn't know about that. Permafrost, you mean, for the dam?

JB: That the water in the dam would have been frozen all the time.

RR: I suppose so, yeah, except in the summer. Thing opens up there. It's all water and all ice in the winter. It's all ice for about ten months of the year and the rest of the time, it's all water.

JB: So, the purpose that they were going to use it for wouldn't have worked anyway. It was to generate power, wasn't it?

RR: Yes.

JB: At a meeting of the executive committee in 1965, the Club decided not to accept polar bear for the records until the world status of this animal was better understood. Did you agree with this decision, and did you help in bringing it about?

RR: I must have been in on it, but not to a big point. See, now while you're on the rampart dam, I want to go and make an observation here appropriate to the club. Now, the people voted here years ago to take the capital out of Juneau and put it up in Wasilla which is about 70 miles north of

here, there, and that would have been the worst thing that ever would have happened there because with all the wild game around there, and the 30-40,000 people in there, all those lakes and streams and everything, would have been ruined with the hunting, fishing, and building and so forth.

JB: It didn't take place, right?

RR: Yeah, and they're also figuring out a dam there now close to Talakitna River, to dam it up. No, no, that's the worst thing that ever happened. You know, years ago, everybody said, "We've got to be a state," and I says, "No." [inaudible] We'll get rid of federal regulations and deregulations, and since we got to be a state, it's 100 times worse than it was before. As a matter of fact, you'll see a picture of me with Ike Eisenhower, and I'm having an argument with him. He's asking about statehood, and I told him that same very thing, I said, "The history of these things is that we'll have multiplicity of meddling in our affairs if we get to be a state." And it's true.

JB: [inaudible]

RR: Yes.

JB: Okay, also in 1965, the Club was concerned about and discussed the killing of brown bears through aerial slaughter, how was this problem curtailed and controlled?

RR: Well, the hunters are advised against the law to use an airplane to hunt with, an airplane the same day that you go into camp. It's not strong enough in my estimation, however, it works a little bit because, those things get out if a fellow spotted a bear or anything in an airplane, we know about it, who did it.

JB: And you had mentioned earlier in the interview about the fact that you helped to put that into the fair chase [inaudible]

RR: Oh, yes.

JB: Was that one of the things that helped to curtail this killing?

RR: No, that's the statewide regulation -- I had it put in the state's regulation. Frank Cook had a big hand in that, too. Frank was a great conservationist, a valuable man.

JB: Okay, are there any projects relating to Alaska that the Boone and Crockett Club was involved in that I haven't asked you about and that you'd like to talk a little bit about?

RR: Well, all the important ones in my estimation are the fair chase which has taken hold, and guides, in fact, we have guides that advertise "hunting fair chase only". You'll see it in the advertisements, how we hunt in fair chase only. But there's too much of it going on as it is. It's

murder.

JB: There is still a tremendous amount of wilderness area here in Alaska. Do you have any opinions on how some of it can be preserved but still remain open to hunters and outdoorsmen for their recreational use?

RR: You're thinking about this D-2 bill where they want to go and make everything a big jungle of bureaucracy.

JB: As an Alaskan, I wondered if you had any opinions on how the wilderness areas can be protected and then still leave it open to legitimate hunting

RR: Local. With those people back there, [inaudible] all the minerals we get are brought in from outside, and we've got these same minerals here, all over, that should be exploited. In other words, you've got to have, they're going to kick somebody out of an old mine, you know, it's already happened, environmentalists, you can't go and run a placer mine anymore because you disturb the silt in it. It's murder. It's pitiful. You know what I tell them? These miners, one of them lives on the next block. Go in there and mine anyways. You bet.

JB: The only thing is, if you get all these mineral regulations they'll probably be penalized for it.

RR: Well, get your gold first.

JB: Okay, now we've discussed the fair chase statement a little. I think this might have something to do with this. How did you become specifically interested in the North American Big Game Committee?

RR: Having an interest in big game hunting and conservation, it was a natural for me to become interested in it.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

JB: You made several large contributions to the Club to help finance the work of the records of North American Big Game Committee, can you explain your deep interest in the work of this committee? I think you mentioned it a little before already.

RR: I gave \$100,000 one time, did you know that?

JB: Yes.

RR: Well, I just made a killing on the stock market, and I figured it'd do a lot more good with them than me spending it. I had plenty left.

JB: Okay, you were a former NRA director. Can you explain how that came about and your reasons for resigning?

RR: Well, yes. I resigned when they took over the North American [inaudible] Boone and Crockett Club with the big game records, because the reason I resigned was I figured that the two fellows that who were the directors and officers of the NRA had sold the Club down the river for the sake of their other club, the NRA.

JB: Well, is it true though that there was some, I don't remember the thing, I'm sorry because I couldn't find any records of it, but that the NRA misquoted you on some things and you were very unhappy about it?

RR: I don't remember that. It was just simple enough that those, in fact I wrote a very strong letter to them resigning.

JB: Okay, so you were against the co-sponsorship.

RR: That's correct. I tell you why I was against it was that here's two members of both the same NRA and the Boone and Crockett Club that use our position big in the NRA to go and give them a snow job about taking it over.

JB: Okay, now can you relate some of the actual discussion that took place in the Club when they decided to cosponsor the program with the NRA? And do you remember who was for it and who was against it?

RR: Pink Gutermuth and John Rhea both vice-presidents of the NRA poked it through, or sandbagged it through committee of the Boone and Crockett Club.

JB: And do you remember any of the members in the Club that were very strongly against it?

RR: No. None, I was pretty strong, because I told you I resigned from the NRA as a director.

JB: But you haven't resigned from the Club.

RR: Never.

JB: Do you feel that you can help by helping to keep an eye on [inaudible]?

RR: Yes.

JB: Okay, do you feel that presently, the affiliation with the NRA is working well and that the integrity of the program has been kept up?

RR: Well, I wouldn't know too much about that, except, as I say, all their publicity is NRA, NRA did this and that, and the Club never gets any credit.

JB: Okay, from the very beginning (this is kind of a long question, but I'll read it slowly), from the very beginning, most of the Club members have held high ranking positions in other conservation organizations also, so that at any given Boone and Crockett Club meeting, many other organizations are represented. Do you feel that this is an important factor in the strength and effectiveness of the Club?

RR: I haven't been to a meeting for several years, but I would say the more we get in the act, the better. We don't have it confined down on Wall Street there with the money, the inner circle. I'm not criticizing, I'm just telling that it was a great thing with the Club. All those people. Seven or eight people running it, you know.

[Break in audio]

JB: Should the Boone and Crockett Club be involved in trophy hunting in today's conservation-oriented world?

RR: Certainly. That's the purpose of the Club.

JB: Can you explain your reasons for feeling that way?

RR: Well, trophy [inaudible] years ago, it helped people kill only the good heads instead of just shooting them for meat, or a small head. To hunt, go out and hunt, to seek down a good head, or a good, big bear and so forth, you did a good job on that. It's got a good purpose.

JB: Okay, if Theodore Roosevelt were still alive, do you think that he would be as strongly interested in the recognition of trophy hunting today as he was in his time?

RR: Probably even more so.

JB: Okay, and you feel that trophy hunting is consistent today with the role that the Club played in it in the early years?

RR: That's right.

JB: Okay. Do you feel that the records keeping program can be used as a conservation program?

RR: Definitely, definitely.

JB: Can you explain that a little bit, things like the habitat and that kind of thing? Could you explain why you feel that way? That it can be used as a conservation program?

RR: Absolutely. Like the arctic wildlife refuge up there. That's what it is -- to maintain the wildlife for the country. Canada has got a few areas out there where you can't hunt - trophy hunting only, and we've got a few of them here too, of course -- McKinley Park and the Ranglelums [?] which is going to be an area. It's all very valuable to the spirit of the game.

JB: Can you elaborate a little on the role of the hunter in conservation? What they have contributed to conservation?

RR: Sure. I know friends of mine who go out and don't fire a shot because they don't see a suitable trophy. We got [inaudible] to be the hunters, though.

JB: And do you feel that, like the records keeping statistics that are compiled, do you feel that they show an indication, for instance of good habitat because you can tell where the trophy heads are coming from? Is that something that

RR: Yes. Sure.

JB: Now, the records keeping program is one of the important things that has made the Boone and Crockett Club famous. Many of its prominent members have resigned because they feel that the Club should no longer be associated with the records, but if the Club removed it's association, what could take its place as a [inaudible] function of the Club?

RR: Well I don't know of any old time members that's resigned as a result of that. Maybe a couple of associate members like Washburn who had no business, although he's a friend of mine, he had no business in the Club in the first place.

JB: Well, I'm thinking of, like Douglas Burton, and I was wondering if you knew him well?

RR: I don't remember him, I don't

JB: Did you know Julian Fleis?

RR: Yes.

JB: He resigned, and I was wondering if you knew him

RR: Oh, a lot of these old timers, they resigned because of the \$50 fee, or something like that, that's what I think. Because they didn't want to be, tend to a meeting Jimmy Doolittle, did he resign?

JB: I don't think so.

RR: He's on a Senior Citizen status.

JB: Yes.

RR: What he did, Jimmy told me, I resigned so there could be a vacancy for a new young member. That's a fact.

JB: Now, he didn't actually resign, he was just moved [inaudible]

RR: I mean, I moved up there to leave, they don't count in the total membership, you know. Those emeritus [inaudible] I got up there to give room to the [inaudible] place for a new member.

JB: Well, there's lots of room for new members. That's what my next question is about. In November 1948, a special committee was appointed to study the problems of strengthening the Club to its full membership, and now, 30 years later, the Club seems to have the same problem. The Club's regular membership is down to 76. What do you think should be done to attract new members of the right quality?

RR: Well, they should go and get hunters interested in it, in joining. You see, it's the old clique back there in Wall Street, in Boston and everything, they're dying out, you know, those people had millionaires and they go on a hunt, you know, [inaudible] but they don't have that weight anymore, we don't have the interest in big game hunting. Now this meeting here, we had, they'll get the names of a lot of old members and they'll be invited back to the dinner. I know that.

JB: What do you feel, I mean what is your personal feeling about the true original purpose of the Club?

RR: Oh, I thought it was a great thing.

JB: But do you have an opinion about why Theodore Roosevelt founded the Club and what

purposes he had in mind for it to accomplish?

RR: It was basically conservation, and don't go out and shoot any kind of animal or bird just to get a trophy, a real trophy.

JB: How do you think that the Boone and Crockett Club can best continue to carry out its original focuses and retain its position of influence and prominence?

RR: Well, I think this dinner we had down in Denver is a good example of the interest that was shown and where it can be enlarged. In other words, you have two or three hundred different people there, they're all interested in hunting, and they know about the trophies and everything, but [inaudible] the only salvation. Of course with the airplane, nowadays and everything, they can go over to a meeting in a matter of hours.

JB: Okay, now this about concludes my formal questions, but I'd like to get one thing on record, on the tape: That because of your great contributions and great dedications to the growth and development of the state of Alaska, you have been given the nickname, "Mr. Alaska", and I wanted to get that on tape. Now, what I would like you to do, if you would, is I know that you have a reputation for being a fantastic storyteller, and if you could think of a few of the stories that you tell to your friends, I would like to get that down.

RR: Okay. I got a couple of them. One time when I was a kid in the army in World War I, it was on Thanksgiving Day and the post where I was, the women around there invited the soldiers out for a Thanksgiving dinner. I went out, this was a real fair charmer, see, a widow, and boy, one of those fair charmers, and I noticed that I was scared of girls. I'd seen too much of these advertisements of movies showing what happens when you take a bad girl out. It had the Hell scared out of me, and then we had dinner. We had turkey, we had cranberries, and my favorite pie - pumpkin pie. At the end, she brought this pie out there, and I ate it. In the meanwhile, she'd had a few drinks, and wine, and she's saying, "Now, Sergeant, this is your day. The evening is yours. Whatever you say, I'm your slave." And I finally got up my nerve. You know what I said?

JB: What?

RR: "Forgive me," I said, and I had another piece of that pumpkin pie. (laughs) How was that? I was only sixteen.

JB: You were only sixteen years old?

RR: Yes.

JB: Oh, that's right, you said you were a sergeant by the time you were sixteen.

RR: Yes, I was a sergeant.

JB: But I bet you've changed a little since then, haven't you?

RR: I say nothing.

JB: Well, let me ask you something. I'm sure that you must have been on hunts with some of the members of the Club or on some very good hunts that you would have stories about. Can you remember any of them?

RR: I've been on some great hunts with Jimmy Doolittle. I don't remember. Let's see, I did have a story about him. I can't think of it offhand. Let me tell you a story about Sandino, the Nicaraguan bandit that nearly killed me. I was flying the mail into Minagua [?] and I went to a little town, and meanwhile, Sandino was a revolutionist and he was out to tear down the government and everything and he was quite a killer. I walked into this little bar having a beer and who comes in this door but this drunken guy and he saw me, the instant, there were a lot of people around. The instant he came to me, he had this pistol and he put it up to my nose, and he said, "Gringo, [inaudible] mutar usted", which in Spanish means, "I'm going to kill you." He had that 45 rubbed it in my nose, and I had one thought, "Will I be able to see that bullet when it comes out there and blows my brains out?" He put the gun down, and he says, "Tagame [?] un cerveza", "Buy me a beer." I said to the bartender, bring us a dozen beers, and he sat down, in the meantime I knew he was going to kill me, all the people had left behind me and were behind him, they didn't want to be hit by a stray bullet. I knew he was going to kill me, and so I did some fast thinking, and around his mouth he had a [inaudible], I could see that he was subject to flattery, and so I said, "[inaudible] el cadí el primero colonel, general such-and-such, dar me permiso [inaudible]", "Do you give me permission to go and take a leak?", and I had him. I'd puffed him up and everything, and I'd made him on the plane of a gentleman, and the gentleman, the other, he couldn't refuse me which I'd planned. So, I went back there, I didn't wait, I went right through the screen netting and beat it there, and the next day I was down in Cristoble [?] and I was telling them my narrow escape, and there was a woman there, one in every crowd, and I told her, she says, "You didn't deserve to get out of there alive, you broke your word." I said, "What do you mean, broke my word?" "You didn't take the penga like you said you would." I said, "Lady, lady," I said, "I didn't break my word, I already done that when he put that 45 right in my nose." I'd already done that when he put that 45 right on the end of my nose. I'd already done that in my pants, when he put that 45 on my nose.

I'll tell you another. I used to play poker when I was in law school, and I had a famous story peddler whose name was Alex, and he used to tell stories. I had a habit with my cards, open them up inch by inch, peaking at them, you know, and everything, and he said, "Bob, you remind me of a story." He said, "This fellow just got married or had a girl and he hit the sack, and he was romancing and soft talk and everything went on until about 7 o'clock in the morning when all at once he consummated his visit, and she said, 'Willy, why didn't you do that in the first place?' Willy said, 'I can tell you [inaudible] happened to me when I was a kid. My old dad and I went out hunting one time. Saw a squirrel in a tree, and old man, he up and he aimed and aimed the gun at it and never

shot. We saw a big rabbit, he aimed and he aimed and it didn't shot. We saw a grouse, he aimed and aimed and didn't shot. This went on all day, and as we were coming home, here's this big ole rabbit on the top of the fence, the stone pile, and he up and he aimed and he aimed and got a forked stick, he aimed and he got it, and he shot and he blew the whole rabbit all to Hell. I said to him, 'Dad, why didn't you do that in the first place?' He said, 'I only had one shell in my gun, but oh, Christ, how I like to hunt.'"

JB: Now I know something that is not a joke that I remember I would like you to tell about. When you came to Alaska, your health was not very good, and...

RR: I had polio.

JB: And I would like you to explain how you overcame that and regained all of your strength back and some of the things that you did.

RR: I used to be standing up and my leg would give away, and I'd fall down. I made up my mind that I was going to dominate it. Ordinarily with polio you never get your muscles back, but I said, "I'm going to do it." So I went on a hunt and I walked for 50 miles through the swamp and tundra and everything and up and to the camp. I walked back and it fixed my leg up. My leg's just as good as it was, but I'm going to tell you something about that hunt. I was with an old time prospector, and he was deathly afraid of bears, and while he was up there prospecting around, there were a couple of grizzlies up there, and I said, "Charlie, while you're prospecting, let me take your gun and I'll go up and get those grizzlies." He said, "What! Shoot a bear with a 30-30? Why, Hell, you're crazy. It'll just make him madder." I said, "I'm not afraid of bears, Charlie." He said, "Well, I am." Anyway, I took the gun and when I got back to camp a little later, he was mixing up some bannock. Do you know what bannock is? That's the salt and flour and water, like a hot cake, and I walked through the tundra, the swamp there, noiseless, and I walked right up to him, he was mixing this stuff, singing to himself, and I remembered he was scared of bears. So I let out "Raah", and boy he hopped in there just like a shot out of a gun, ran down the valley, and I thought he was going to kill himself, a lot of trees and boulders there, and so I yelled, "Charlie, Charlie, tisn't a bear, it's just me." When he came back, he was madder than Hell, and he didn't speak to me for three days and three nights. On the morning of the fourth day, he rolled over, he was content in his sleeping bag, and he looked at me and he says, "Don't you ever do that again." Anyway, that fixed my leg up. Just a miracle. See, I got to my leg while it was still in the process, before it had petrified it, you know.

JB: There's another story that I'd like you to tell, and it's about the time that you brought a bear home and brought him into the house.

RR: Oh, yes.

JB: Dick was telling me about this.

RR: Now, one time a friend of mine had a little black bear, and we were down at the Bedford Club down in town there and the bear, and I said, "Mart, bring that bear up to my house and we'll have some fun." So, I came in and a few minutes later he knocked on the door, and here's Mart with the bear on the outside of the door and the kids went to the door and they ran screaming away and everything, and he brought the bear in and the bear was pretty tame and they had a lot of fun with him, but anyway, that's the time we had the bear in the house.

JB: Did you warn your wife about that or was she just as surprised as the children?

RR: No, I just told them "We're going to have some fun." No, I didn't warn her, have some fun. Remembers that, does he [Dick]?

JB: Yes, he sure does.

RR: They were all little kids then.

[Break in audio]

JB: Okay, tell me.

RR: I'm talking about that instance that Arch and I went up and blew in a hole with Jack and his wife who was a [inaudible] who knows, and their daughter Liz was going to come up to Alaska for a visit to us, and they took me out to the airport the next day, and I said, "Liz, I'll see you in Alaska." And her mother said, "Liz isn't going to Alaska. Not what I've seen with you, your association with Archie Roosevelt. Liz isn't going to Alaska." Did Archie tell you that?

JB: No, Dick was the one that mentioned it to me and said to be sure to ask you about it.

RR: I wonder how he knew about it.

[Break in audio]

RR: I'm very old, are you ready? I had a very old friend come up from Minneapolis yesterday for a fishing trip, and he called, checked in of course and he said, "There was a fellow sitting next to me on the other seat in the plane there, and I told him that I knew you," and he said, "Oh, that Reeve," he said, "he got a high school named after him and a baseball team named after him, and there's a rumor that they're going to change of McKinley to Reeve Mountain." Here's this fellow, you know, he doesn't know Jack knows me there, he just getting the scuttlebutt. They're going to change the name of McKinley, too. That's worth telling, wasn't it?

Well, we'll go back to it -- we already got to Valdez. There was a lot of old timers there, very few, practically no women around and very cosmopolitan bunch. They were all either fugitives from the law or escapists from their memories. Their women -- I don't know. I got acquainted with them off

and on there around the old hot stove at the Pin Zone, that was the pool hall there. One that I was especially fascinated with was a fellow by the name of Archie Parks, and he didn't have any scalp on the top of his head. Well, he'd got entangled with a bear, and the bear got him in his head his mouth and started to chew on him. Archie played dead and got away. The bear went off and left him, but he had this huge scar on his head, but the point is this: In the old days there, very few of those old timers died a natural death, they were either killed by bears or died trying to cross glacier streams. Another instance was a fellow named Red Hearst from Shushani [?], a miner, and years ago he was coming across in the pass in the mountains near Kanikot [?] and the bears attacked him and knocked him off his horse and took a swipe and took his scalp off. Anyway, somebody shot the bear and the other fellows took the scalp and they stuck it back on his head, but they stuck it sideways so half his hair grows one way and half the other. But to make a long story short, they took him over to the Kanikot hospital and the doctor said, "He's alright." He just took a scissors and snipped off the twigs and leaves and everything there around the old scalp, and he's doing fine. I've got a picture of him somewhere.

But the glacier streams were a mortal enemy. They went out of their way to tell me -- when you cross a stream, use the greatest of caution, lean upstream on it, don't lean downstream, because if you lose your footing, down you go, and you get caught, it'll roll you around and your clothing will get saturated with dirt and everything, and so heavy that you can't get up. You'll sink right away. And for that reason, they've never found any of the people that ever lost their lives in glacier streams. They were carried on the surface and rolling around and around like a saturated log, you know. In those days, the standard gun was a 30-30. 30-30 do you know what that is? Caliber, and it was light and they carried it with them to shoot, you could get moose if you got them in the right place, but it was no good for bears, and the bears usually charged them, you know, and they'd get them, and the bears, you just go off it's skull, the bear usually got him. But as I say, not being repetitious, that the greatest source of death was killed by bears and lost in glacier streams.

JB: Speaking of glaciers, I wanted to ask you, how did you acquire the name "Glacier Pilot"?

RR: Oh, I guess that started from my biography. They named the name of the book "Glacier Pilot" because it was a fitting name for it, you know, and described the whole, nine-tenths of my career was spent battling the glaciers.

JB: Well, the next question kind of answers that. Can you explain some of the unique types of landings that you developed for the various weather conditions up here? You know, I'll remind you a little bit, the mud flat landings and the glacier landings.

RR: Oh, that mud flat, landings on there, I'd seen this rich mine in the summer when I couldn't land on wheels on the glaciers, so I went out and put skis on it and went off the mud flats which was even better than wheels, and everybody found out that I could do that, so all the miners wanted me to take their stuff up to the mines in the summer by taking off the mud flats. In fact I used to leave a plane on there all summer, never take it off skis.

JB: And then you landed on the snow up in the mountains.

RR: That is correct.

JB: Were you the first one that landed on the glaciers?

RR: Yes. They say that Joe Crawson landed on Muldrow Glacier once to rescue a mountain climbing expedition, but he got stuck—

[End of Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]

RR: I was experimenting with the mud flaps. I experimented with them and found out the technique, found out what kind of snow there was, I found out the incline, I found out to keep away from the crevasses -- it was just a case of trial and error. A lot of error, too, mind you.

JB: Did you ever have any crash landings- oh, you described one crash landing, but do you remember how many crash landings you had? Or forced landings I should say.

RR: I had 16 forced landings the first 9 years I was in Valdez. Sixteen, and I had to walk in many miles from a few of them.

JB: Now, I would like to ask you one thing relating to the Boone and Crockett Club, I saw a telegram where you weren't able to make the meeting where they made you an honorary life member, and I wanted to ask you about how you felt about becoming an honorary life member which is the highest honor that they bestow on anyone?

RR: Well, naturally, you feel highly elated. Highly elated and I had a warm feeling towards my many friends. How's that for an answer?

JB: That's wonderful. Did you ever expect that that would happen?

RR: No, no I didn't. I'm a giver, I'm not a taker. I do things and never don't expect any return. Oh, say, I just happened to think that I have a picture, I want this in honorary of the O. B. Archie Roosevelt -- I have that citation on my desk on there on the wall there where it says, "You O. B." You old bastard, and all my friends come in and they say it and they salute me now, they said, "You old bastard." In fact, I wrote him a couple of days ago, and it says, "Hello, you O. B.", Hello, you old bastard, that's something he understands. But anyway, my friends they see it and they come in and laugh, and it says "Hi, you old bastard." I just want to let Archie know that his efforts didn't go unappreciated and did leave their mark in my life.

JB: There's another thing that might have left a little mark on your life. Can you tell me about the earthquake and what you were doing when it happened?

RR: You're talking the big 1964 earthquake. Well, I was up at the Petroleum Club which is on the 16th floor of the Westford Hotel. Incidentally, I'm one of the founders of that Club. I was up there, I was expecting to have a lot of friends at home to celebrate my birthday which was that day. We were at this table and I had a couple of martinis. All at once, I heard this [inaudible] and I knew what it was because I had seen it, been in a lot of them in Chile. All at once it hit and it catapulted me out of my chair, on the floor and I was rolling around on the floor, back and forth -- in fact I tell you it was something strange, I had my watch here on the chain, and as I was rolling along, I saw this watch on the floor. It was my watch, somehow or another it had gotten disengaged from the clip on my vest and there it was. But anyway, this went on for 3 1/2 minutes and of course, we had

the little repercussions after that, but I made up my mind I wanted to get out of there, not only because the highest place in the world, but I wanted to get home to a real celebration. And so, I went in the hat room and people wore a lot of hats in those days, and it took me some time to find my hat, and I got downstairs, I remember some fellow there and he opened the door, the doors were all jammed, but we finally got out, and I stood in the doorway, the sun in my eyes, you know, kind of blinking like an owl and here was a fellow there who had been at my table. He beat me out, and I said, "Joe, where did you go?" He said, "Bob, I went for help." And quite often, we have a lunch or meet there to commemorate that occasion up in the Club.

JB: [inaudible] on the 16th floor, that wasn't a very good place to be.

RR: No, not on the 16th floor of the tallest building in Alaska.

JB: Was that the tallest building at the time.

RR: It was then, yes.

JB: It isn't anymore?

RR: No.

JB: Is there a taller one now?

RR: Twenty-two stories. Don't ask me that one, the way things are going, I can't keep track with it - with these high buildings.

JB: You mentioned in those days people used to wear a lot of hats. Do you have a significance for how many hats you have?

RR: Yes, and I'll tell you why -- in fact I wanted you to know why I have all those hats, because here it rains a lot, and you wear one hat all the time, either it gets out of shape and looks like Hell, and I hate a hat that looks rained out and Hell, so I have my choice. I just rotate them one every few days once a week, and they don't get bad and I have a good hat for the rest of my life here. How's that for an explanation?

JB: That's a great explanation, I think I counted 22 of them over at the apartment.

RR: Oh, there's more than that around there.

JB: There must be some more here.

RR: Yeah. That's the reason I do it, because as I say, you wear it, you know how awful an old hat, tall geared hat looks. I only take pride in wearing a good hat, and this way, if you rotate them, even

if it rains, change your hat every couple of days, they don't get bedraggled. I knew you were going to ask. I knew you were going to ask that. Everybody who sees the display of hats up there asks about it.

[Break in audio]

RR: It's just like when Columbus sailed for America, he didn't know what they were like, but he sailed anyway and experienced the storms and frustrations and everything that go with finding land. So, it's a [inaudible] case of trial and error. It was the only way to make a living there. That's one main thing. I had to make a living there, and I was always looking for a rich gold mine, and I found one there, and I've got a piece of rock from it down in the office, I'll show it to you before you go here. It's about that big, got about \$10,000 worth of gold in it. Can you imagine that? Sure, I'll show it to you. There's a whole mine, mountain of it.

JB: What did you make the mountain up there?

RR: I sold it. I sold the mine and the war came and I have never gone back because I did my share of finding those mines and developing them and everything. As a matter of fact, didn't I show you a picture of the mine on my wall there?

JB: Yes. I wanted to ask you something, this is present day stuff. Do you maintain all the airports in the Aleutians yourself now?

RR: Well I did at one time -- after the war when the Air Force all pulled out and they closed them up, they didn't have any more need for the Aleutian route going to Ashmunna, too, so they just bailed out, and I moved in and got a short term lease and I ran them to keep my own airline going. And that is Port Heiden, Moller, Cold Bay, Dutch Harbor, Umnak, Adak and Shemya, even ran Shemya for a while.

JB: But now you don't any more, you're not

RR: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I've a very costly situation where I run the first five or six at Port Heiden, Sand Point, Cold Bay, Dutch Harbor and that costs me enough. That costs me hundreds of thousands of dollars to keep my, to have my birds can come down and roost.

JB: And nobody else is involved in helping you to keep that up?

RR: Hell, no, no nobody. They said, "Let Reeve do it." Did you ever hear that, "Let Reeve do it." I don't wait for anybody else to do anything. There's my skunks to skin and my airline is at stake and I'm keeping them going. I learned early in life, flying around South America and Alaska that you can see through a cloud or obstruction, fog at a distance, but once you get into it, you're dead blind, and I learned that and that saved my life many times. I just learned don't get into it because you can see through it. I did get in trouble once, but you read that about Santasmina, how I into a place

and got caught.

JB: Let me ask you one last question. Do you think you're ever going to feel up to coming to one of the B and C meetings so you can see all your friends?

RR: Oh, certainly. I look forward to it, always the next meeting. That's the one I look forward to. I'll make it sometime. You bet, you bet, it's one of the great events of my life, and seeing old friends like that. Old friends mean a lot to me. As a matter of fact, old friends, I've got them by the dozens and hundreds, and those that are still alive to this day always write me or call me or stop in and see me. To this day, well, you've been in the office when some of them have come in there. Even their mothers come in.

[Break in audio]

JB: About Frank Cook...

RR: You know, Frank Cook is one of the greatest additions the Boone and Crockett Club has ever been because he's knowledgeable and energetic and takes a great interest in the Club. I well remember when Archie Roosevelt asked me to get a third member from Alaska, because I was in and my boy and I immediately thought of Frank and nominated and I got back to a dinner and got him up to the membership committee and one time at a lunch I remember, I said, "What have you done about Cook?" Oh, he said, "He's passed, but I got a better member, I got another fellow on there I think should be elected." I said, "Who is that?" "Oh, somebody down on Wall Street, or something like that." I said, "Look, look, Archie, you told me to get another good member from Alaska, and I've got you one, and I insist that this other fellow be passed 'til next time and Frank Cook be nominated for membership." "Fine," he said. Well, that goes to show how that little circle on there, how they, all these people that are up for membership, they're the ones that put their names up.

JB: And decide on them.

RR: Oh, sure.

JB: But you know, one of the things that Mr. Cook and I talked about during his interview, and maybe you have a little bit of an opinion on this, is how important it is to have people like you from an area like Alaska because this is where the hunting is going on right now and I'd like to have your opinion on how you feel about having western members and members out in places where the hunting is really going on.

RR: I think it's the greatest thing in the world when they busted up that Wall Street clique down there and started seeking members all over the states around there -- Chicago, Denver and everything, and as I was telling Frank, I bet you got a list of good possible members, but the people who attended the dinner, and he said, "Yes." I said, "Take a little time to look them up and sort

them out, but we got to find the future there, Padre, of these western people." You see, like Archie says in that post card, he says, "My boy, grandson got out because he has no interest in big game hunting any more." The day's past of all those people, they were all people of great wealth and they could go out and take a trip 25, 30, 50,000 dollars, you know, they didn't think anything of money, and like did you see that picture of my dad up there? Of the horses crossing the stream? Well, that was taken on a Watson Webb party.

JB: Is that Sam Webb's father?

RR: Yeah, that's Sam's father, yeah. Yeah, he was a great hunter. As I told you before, hope I'm not repetitious, but he was the first ten goal handicap player in American polo. He played back, which is number four there, and they're the ones that took the championship from the British in 1926.

JB: Did you ever go on hunting trips with him?

RR: No. No. I was here making a living.

JB: Do you remember going on any hunting trips with your son, Richard?

RR: My boy? Oh, yes, a lot of them.

JB: Do you remember what animals you hunted?

RR: Mostly rams, white sheep. That's the real trophy. A white sheep where you got to climb, climb, climb and then get to the top and then come down again so you can get a shot at him. You know, one of the great things is having this trophy meeting at Denver because it brought together 200 at the dinner alone, mind you of the greatest conservationists and hunters, ex-trophy hunters in the North American Continent. It was the cosmopolitan group, you know, cosmopolitan, they're from every state, area, all of them got something to add, to contribute. Look, I don't want to be repetitious about this Wall Street clique, but it's the truth, they were dominated by half a dozen of them who lived within a few, who worked within a few blocks of each other, had bloodties and money, and making money, you know, and there they set up the Club, which was fine, it went fine until late, the people, we got a different breed of hunters now. We haven't got the very rich people who get 1500 horses on pack trains on a trip and go out, over the hills, you know and fair chase, and go and seek the game out and pass over anything that wasn't a decent trophy. You got them right in this book here, the records book. Which is a wonderful book, a lot of work went into that.

JB: Yeah, and then that way hunters aren't going out and shooting everything they see. They wait for something really good.

RR: No. I can tell you in that book, I can see a dozen names of hunters there that have gone and spotted the game with unfair chase or hired somebody to go and locate the trophy and then went

and got them. I could point out a dozen of those, names that are repetitious in there. Frank Cook will agree with me.

[End of Interview]