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Oral History Number: 133-047

Interviewee: George Honey

Interviewer: Kim Maynard

Date of Interview: June 6, 1984

Project: Smokejumpers 1984 Reunion Oral History Project

George Honey: Do you got it on now?

Kim Maynard: Yes.

GH: This is George Honey. How loud should I talk?

KM: That's fine right like that, yeah.

GH: Of course, the first year was here [in Winthrop], 1940...then Missoula in '41. Then after that, for two or three years, the smokejumping...on account of the war, the smokejumpers actually here kind of died down. Francis and I would cargo half of the night getting cargo ready, and we had planes that would come in, and we dropped cargo for three or four years during the war times. We bundled cargo at night and then dropped it in the daylight, many times. From planes from Idaho and Montana. KM: To fires?

GH: Yeah, to the fires. Yeah, and we was just about the sole force here at that time until they started coming back out of the service, and we started getting the conscientious objectors...that was, I don't know...recall. Francis might recall the when, and who started. but they started getting those in here and that made...They volunteered to jump you see but they wouldn't fight in the war of course and then...then that brought it on the...a little more strong, about the time the war was getting full blast and pretty near over with, '42, '43, '44, '45 along in there.

So we were just about in full force here for those 2 or 3 years. Then we started out [unintelligible], then I turned to observing and Francis took over the airport—the jumper business, you know. And for about 5 years, I guess, I was an observer here. I don't remember just the exact date.

KM: Hmm. Great.

GH: And then, I went into the construction end of it. We had a road crew, and so forth, and we'd come up here when Francis would get a bust or something. We'd come up here with the road crew, and they were pretty good at cargoing, see. So, he'd call and we'd bring the road crew in, do the cargoing, and then they'd...several of the road crew got to ride and do some of the dropping too. I continued that until about 1948, then I went solely into road construction from there. That's about it.

KM: Great! Well, tell me about your training when you started out jumping.

GH: Somewhere's around here they got a rip cord that I lost. [laughs]

KM: Oh really?

GH: The first time. [laughs]

KM: Oh, no!

GH: It was out here on the airport somewhere. They found it about 20 years afterwards.

KM: Oh really?

GH: Yeah! I jumped out and I jerked that rip cord just as hard as I could jerk it, when I jerked it I lost the darn thing.

KM: And did your canopy open?

GH: Oh yeah it opened all right and Frank Derry had said before that, he said, "Don't lose the rip cord." Because it just puts the chute out of order. We were one short, so I tried to grab the darn thing, but I missed it and it went on. They asked me afterward, 'what were you grabbing at up there?' I said, 'I lost the rip cord and tried to grab the darn thing.' Then I don't know, we just [pauses] jumped here again.

KM: You were using rip cords up until when?

GH: '41.

KM: Up until—

GH: In Missoula they started, yeah, they...and we still had...that was 1940 when we was here.

KM: Mm hmm. What was the...what was the basis of the program? What did you see as the plan for smokejumping. Of course, it's easy to see now, but what did you have in mind when you started jumping?

GH: Well, I'd been on quite a lot of fires from way back in 1929. I was on the [unintelligible] Lake Fire and National [unintelligible] Fire, and some of those for...and then I was in the Hidden Lakes and...hiking in there 10 or 15 miles is a quite a little chore, you know.

KM: Yeah.

GH: And then you get in there and you got to hike back out after the fires...and you're in there. So anyway, to be hiking looked like a good thing to me. To get people in there. And during the late '30s, Roy Mitchell, he was a assistant supervisor, he had a plane of his own. And...I was the Robinson Creek fire in here towards [inaudible] Pass, and he flew over. I'd ordered some stuff, I had...we had a messenger come out. You didn't have the radios then, they was getting radios of course at that time, but...So Roy come in there in his own plane and he dropped this little package of cargo in there. So that was a, quite [inaudible], he was pretty interested.

KM: Was that with a little canopy?

GH: No, he just dropped it...

KM: Freefall?

GH: Freefall...this package out. I forget what we wanted anyway, and then he dropped the darn stuff to us. He was flying around and observing the fires, and things like that, on his own more or less, you see, too. So that kind of...And I was...Well, I knew Roy real well and I talked to him then, during the 1939 training jumps that they had here. My younger brother was one of them that was hired by the Derrys to do the experimental jumping. So through him...and he...I was living up here at Winthrop and he stayed there with me, and that's how I got right in firsthand stuff on it, far as that goes.

KM: Oh, that's great!

GH: And then, knowing Francis—Francis and I had worked with the district on the trails and stuff like that together, you see. So I was pretty well hooked up on that point of it, too.

KM: Yeah. What kind of training did you go through?

GH: We went through...Oh, not too much. They was afraid to give you too much knowledge all at once, afraid that you'd forget the base important part of it. They trained you here and, uh...mostly how...the position to get out in. Because those old Eagle parachutes would sure open on you. You'd be clear on the hill uptown, and they would open you know.

KM: Hmm, yeah.

GH: Because, uh...and you were pretty green, or black and blue around here on the arm from where the harness hits you there, but...So the main thing was the position and to be sure you cleared the airplane before you...And just get, one, two, three, or whatever, so that you'd be far enough from the plane that you wouldn't hang up in the plane. And no one ever did! They was pretty...I think it was a real successful training program that the Derry's put on and—

KM: Yeah.

GH: It was Frank, and Virgil, and Chet, and Glenn Smith, who was the main...they were professional jumpers before they came here and took the contracts.

KM: Oh, they were?

GH: Yeah. They took the contract for 100 jumps in the timber to see if could be done.

KM: Hmm. Right into the timber then?

GH: That was into the timber. Yeah, that was...and that's where Lufkin got into it, too. He was retrieving them guys. Of course, he was both...on the Winthrop district, he knew the forest and he knew where they were jumping. He was a telephone man and had worked the trails and all, so he knew how to get up those trees. One tree up in here I know, some guy lit in a snag, I don't know who it was, anyway, they had to put guys on it, keep it from falling till he could climb up there and un...get the chute out of the tree.

KM: Oh yeah? Oh, no!

GH: So Francis had...well then, of course, he stayed right with us, three or four years I guess. Hirn and I was just about the sole force here at Winthrop.

KM: Wow!

GH: But that was, wasn't so much jumping, just the cargo that had to be dropped, you know.

KM: Right, yeah.

GH: But then when the jumpers did start coming back and getting them in from the service, and all. Why, it changed the picture quite a bit and pretty fast, of course. But the conscientious objectors, they, uh...come in here and they done a pretty good job, you know. They were...weren't afraid to jump or anything, but they just...that moral, that was their religion and their belief, and they just wouldn't do it.

KM: Yeah! Huh.

GH: One time, they had a big fire back here in Bald Mountain or back in the National [inaudible] Area, and they had a bunch of negro parachuters trained for fire fighting. They were stationed at Camp Pendleton in California I believe. So Francis and I went to Wenatchee and met them, they had three plane loads of them coming in here in the C-47's. So Francis coming in, one and dumped his load and went back for the second load, and I come with the second load and dumped it right behind him. So we...by the time he got back then, I was clear out here with...went back to Wenatchee then. So we had 150 men on there pretty fast.

KM: Yeah, I bet. So you were a spotter then?

GH: Yeah, we were leading them in. They...they were good Army pilots, but they never done anything like that. So that was all new to them.

KM: Yeah.

GH: [inaudible] in that mountain, flying and stuff.

KM: Yeah, we, I heard recently of the 1945, one of the Black, from the Black Battalion got killed falling through a tree or something like that. Do you know anything of that?

GH: Well, two or three of them got bugged up, but I didn't know one of them got killed. I didn't know that.

KM: That's just—

GH: It might have, and I might have forgotten it by now, too, you know.

KM: Yeah.

GH: They jumped and came out to the Pasayten airport. It wasn't too far from there where they can hike down through the Pasayten airport. Could have been one of them killed, I know there was a couple of them got hurt and they had to take in horses to get them out of there with.

KM: Hmm, wow! So what happened on your first jump, how was that?

GH: My first jump, here on the airport?

KM: Yeah.

GH: Oh that, by golly. They had a little Travel Air that they were flying. They weren't flying the 47's or any of that stuff at that time, or the Ford. Just had a Travel Air here, the Johnsons' in Missoula and uh, that's what we took our training in and all of that and we flew over here and I don't remember who was with me. I think it was, I think it was Glenn Smith. I'm not sure. And when they got over, why he said, whenever you're ready and I just took off. I [could] see I was over the airport and so...

KM: Nobody spotted you, you just...

GH: Well, you, no, you could...we was looking over these haystacks around. We had one particular haystack I'd heard them talking that that's the place to get out over that haystack so I

got out over the haystack. But it seemed to me like, oh god, I was a sure traveling. The wind whistling by my face you know, oh man, but I was in a good position, straight up and straight down, so—

KM: And that would...[was] that first jump the one you lost your rip cord on?

GH: No, I think it was the third one, I think...before I lost my rip cord. I think it was. No, I don't think you could have pulled that rip cord out of my hands the first time. I had a pretty good hold of it.

KM: I bet! Did you have reserve chutes then?

GH: Yeah, we had reserve.

KM: Yeah?

GH: Then Francis, one time I know, he...his chute wasn't opening, and he pulled the reserve and went clear across the river in an alfalfa field over here and lit in the irrigating ditch.

KM: Oh, no!

GH: Yeah! So you couldn't control them very good if your other...he couldn't get his other chute pulled back in after...There was a little bit of a breeze and he went clear on across the river, clear on the other side over there in the field. On top of the irrigating ditch.

KM: Yeah, of course there was no steering either, at that time.

GH: Oh, [pauses] I don't know. I suppose there was. I don't know whether it scared us or not. I suppose we was pretty well fatigued to be scared, I guess.

KM: Yeah. So what...did you ever, or anybody you were jumping with ever get injured?

GH: Oh yeah, over in Montana on the Dean Creek fire. A fellow by the name of Roy Abbot got his leg broke. That's...the first jump we made in Montana was on the Dean Creek fire. It was a project fire and it was a bunch. I think about...oh, pretty near all the jumpers, I guess. It was 18 or 20 of them, or something I think, there at Nine Mile at that time. And they all went on that fire. Roy Abbot, I think was, broke his leg. He hit the snag and it fell with him [inaudible], of course. [inaudible] a chute dragged over the snag and down he come and broke a leg. That was only one that was really hurt...seriously that I know of. Enough to be...have a leg broke or anything.

KM: Did you pack him out?

GH: I don't remember how he came out. I think they...I didn't pack him out I know, but some of them must have packed him on down to where...to the trail where they could get a horse.

KM: Yeah?

GH: To take him out to the...Oh, god. What's that airport! I don't remember...No.

KM: So how about your first fire jump?

GH: Oh, the supervisor was Roy Mitchell. Assistant supervisor was with Virgil Derry, and we went up here on the fire...We circled it and picked out where we was going to jump and it was in the jackpines—lodgepole, and here was a green opening. So we decided we would go into that green opening. So, I cut out of there and then Virgil followed me in. And gosh! We got down there so low then...we could see that it was a small lake there, covered with toolies and things.

KM: Oh, no!

GH: So we went in about three feet, two or three feet, of water and mud down there. We couldn't get out away from it then after we once started in, we was too low to go out over the top or get away from it.

KM: Yeah?

GH: So we went right on into the...and they was wondering up there, because they circled us quite awhile, wondering what was keeping us so long that we didn't get out there. Well, we was getting out of the water and getting out chutes out of it so—

KM: Yeah! Was that a...no spotters at that time? You didn't have anybody—

GH: No, no we didn't. Yeah! Virgil, I suppose he was spotter. He was the more experienced you see. But I just...I think that I just figured when I was over, could get in or something, because we had, I think five or six, seven, maybe seven training jumps here. So you pretty well depended on your ability then, by your...on your own.

KM: Yeah?

GH: And the spotters come later on. I guess maybe Missoula picked that up too, more than we had here.

KM: Did you throw streamers out, or...?

GH: Yeah, you could throw a streamer out and get the wind drift and stuff like that.

KM: Yeah?

GH: The Derrys had that pretty well figured out too, you know.

KM: Did they...? Were they part of the fire organization then, after they...?

GH: No.

KM: They just ran the training?

GH: They were completing the jumps for this 100-jump training to see if it could be done. Then at that time in 1940, the spring of 1940, they always had fire training camps in the summertime to train all the fire smokechasers and the lookouts and the personnel on the districts or on the whole forest. And this fellow, head of the fire control from Washington, D.C., David Godwin was his name, he came out here and he was here, so the forest...or the Fire Control Officer Anderson—Walt Anderson was his name—decided we'd go to training camp where everybody was there the first morning, that we'd have a smokejump. So he got up on the Salmon Meadows over there. They had the training camp at Salmon Meadows, he got there and started a fire and we was to jump on that at 7:00 so he had the smoke a going pretty good when we flew over it. David Godwin and Francis Lufkin, and David...or Virgil Derry, and I was to jump over there. So we flew over and Godwin was acting as a co-pilot, your observer, you see.

And so, by golly, we flew over there and I jumped out first. Then Francis, and then Virgil come right behind him. They made this complete circle after I got out, before Virgil jumped, then Francis jumped...he jumped right on top of him. So we all three came down and Francis lit between Vigil and I. He had to kick his chute out of the fire there, out from the smoke. So we...

KM: Oh, pretty...?

GH: So we was getting in there. Godwin said, "That's good enough for me. Smokejumping is in." He went back to Washington, D.C., and I think that next year, or maybe that same year, he was killed in an automobile accident. So that was kind of a rough deal.

KM: Yeah.

GH: There was one fellow here that was from Portland office that died from a heart attack during the training jumps.

KM: Oh yeah?

GH: Yeah.

KM: What happened?

GH: He was trying to get some pictures up here, I think his name was Loggy Winstead, or something...I think that was his name. He was trying to get some close-up pictures of the jumpers coming in. They were jumping in the backcountry up here above Tiffany, in that area. And so he had run up the hill here to get this guy coming in, whoever it was—I don't remember—and suffered a heart attack. He just—

KM: Just running up the hill?

GH: Yeah. That's the only bad thing really, during the whole business.

KM: Yeah. That's not too bad considering what could have happened.

GH: During this...trials here, my younger brother Al and a local boy here by the name of Dick Tuttle were helping too, with this...helping the Derrys so they could complete their 100 jumps you see and so they...they, neither one stayed with it. Dick was hurt in that spring, in 1940. A rope broke with him and he fell and was injured and he never did get back into jumping. Then my brother...he went into the service then, so he...his smokejumper [training] come in pretty handy there. He was shot down twice. So, he knew what to expect from a chute, you see.

KM: Yeah, I guess so. Huh! What did you do when you landed in trees?

GH: Well, you had to...you figured out a way to...you had a rope in your, on your leg, you know. And you'd tie that rope. [We] got some practice around here at the airport and in town with the knots and different things, and how you can tie yourself and unhook your...but you had to use leverage in order to release the pressure on the snaps, so that you could unhook your snaps and get your chute off. Or get your harness off, and then come down the rope.

KM: Yeah? Did you ever land in a tree?

GH: Oh, yeah! Lots of times. Then afterwards we got to land...picking out, we was getting in close where the fire was close to a bunch of these second growth...real thicket.

KM: Yeah?

GH: Going out here [unintelligible]. That was just like a feather bed landing.

GH: The chute would drape over them and they was 15 or 20 feet tall you know, and just about enough...I know I was dangling up here one time in a bunch of that second growth stuff, just enough to stand up. So, that was the way that went.

KM: That's good!

GH: Yep.

KM: I bet landings are pretty hard?

GH: Sometimes they was, yeah. And you had to learn how to fall. They taught you that in your training school, they probably still do.

KM: Yeah, they do that out here. You did all that out there?

GH: Yeah.

KM: Did you have a shock tower to jump off of?

GH: Yeah, we built one here. Not before that training, it was in the next couple of years that they built the tower here. Francis had the most to do with that and the Derrys were still over...they had stayed in Montana then afterwards. Francis took over the jumper end of it.

KM: Yeah? So you helped to train the next group of people that came through?

GH: Well, yeah. We both had to do with the next bunches that came in you know.

KM: And up until you...you kicked cargo until that, in '44, and that was when you—

GH: Yeah. '44, '45 when the...they came back out then I was an observer for about 5 years here, it seems to me like. From then up until '46 or '47, when I got more or less lead off into construction on the fort.

KM: Any stories that you remember from those first years?

GH: No.

KM: Fires and...

GH: I don't think they'd be worth telling much.

KM: No?

GH: Because I've been on a lot of big fires before this, before...that's why I said that I hated to have to hike in there 25 or 30 miles when you could ride in, jump out, and get down.

KM: Right! And then you'd pack them out, pack out your...?

GH: Yeah, mm hmm.

KM: How much did that weigh? Quite a bit I bet.

GH: Oh, it was quite a little. It must have weighed about 80 pounds, you know, your chute and your gear and everything. They improve that gear all the time though. Constantly we're improving and looking for better ways and better methods and things like that you know.

KM: What kind of gear did you have?

GH: Well originally, they had a big old leather, high leather, stiff leather collar to protect your face. Virgil Derry hit a tree up here pretty hard, and he skinned the whole side of his face up, you know. And they picked up the football mask...or the catcher's mask and the football helmet for protection mostly. And that's...it just come by hard knocks how that happened to get adopted, I guess.

KM: Yeah?

GH: Seemed like because a lot of them lighting into that brush and stuff, you had to have something to protect your face, your head.

KM: Yeah? And you had suits on too, or you just...?

GH: Yeah, you had suits on.

KM: Padded and...?

GH: Padded suits. And they kept improving that...and different materials and stuff. First, they was old, pretty heavy, kind of a canvas duck and they'd put the pad on here or on your leg or on your knee, for some knee pads and your arms, or something to protect you. But it wasn't...it wasn't too good, a lot of that, because...well, it was just trial and error. You had to try this and try a lot and if it didn't work, you'd try something else.

KM: So did you jump mostly in this area? What kind of range did you have, from...when you were flying?

GH: What kind of what?

KM: Range. How far away did you go away from here?

GH: Oh, gosh we...one time, it was about a dozen of us, left Missoula about 4:00 one morning and I jumped on a fire back here, back of Spanish Camp. I got...before noon I think it was.

KM: Oh yeah?

GH: Yeah. Something...there was quite a bunch of us come over here from Missoula at that time, and the whole plane loaded anyway—the old Ford loaded—and I think there was about a dozen of us. Dick Johnson was flying the plane. And I think they all jumped around here at some of the different places before it was over and the next, within the next day anyway.

Because they'd had a fire bust in here, and they called us, and of course, we come right from Missoula in here. It didn't take very long to get here.

KM: Did you jump two at a time then?

GH: Yeah. Two or three, I guess. Yeah, it seems like...usually one gets behind the other.

KM: Yeah?

GH: Instead of waiting for him to...one go down, make a circle and next [go down], they got so they just, kind of like to heli, or the army...just two or three go right on out because you knew that you was [getting] down there together anyway.

KM: Yeah?

GH: By the wind drift you knew what the wind was—what the smoke was—and could tell pretty well. You didn't have to get too much wind drift for the chute because you could see the smoke—get a good idea of what was going on from the smoke.

KM: Yeah? So how did you get into this? Just by being part of the fire district before that and just—

GH: Yeah. I'd worked for the Forest...I was working on the Forest Service at the time. I was in the Pasayten District in 1939 and I'd been in there for a couple years working on trails, and of course when I came out of there in the fall, my brother and here these guys was a jumping right up by where I lived on the hillside right in back of me. My brother was there, and of course, I got all the dope on that. Francis was right in among it too, because he was working on the district too...on the Winthrop District. I was on the Pasayten District. Of course, I know Francis and we worked together too, so we kind of got right in close on it. I put in for the job the next spring, in 1940, so that...

KM: And they accepted...?

GH: Yeah. The old ranger up there and the Assistant Supervisor were all interested in it too, you know. They...Virg, that old ranger up there, he kept pretty close watch on things and he...Francis at that time was...could travel over these hills like a coyote, you know. And so he

was a good climber and...telephones and stuff like that, and trees, so that's one reason why Frank put him on the...end of it that he did.

KM: How many people trained in '40?

GH: Oh, there was four of us here and I think four in Missoula. I think it was four, it might have been six in Missoula. But there was four of us stationed here that summer.

KM: And then the next year?

GH: Then in '41, we all went to Missoula. There must have been about 18 or 20, I think, that time. I've got a picture of them at home but I never thought about how many they are. But this, 18 or 20 out to Nine Mile, the old CC Camp.

KM: Right.

GH: Nine Mile.

KM: Yeah. And they...you all had previous fire experience?

GH: Yeah, they were trying to get guys with fire experience to be the jumpers, firefighting techniques and stuff like that.

KM: Yeah? What kind of jumps did you have out there? Any...was there anything significant like anyone—

GH: No. No, I never did have.

KM: Anybody you jumped with?

GH: Gosh, I don't think so. I don't know of anything that was spectacular or anything that we did, no.

KM: That's remarkable that people didn't get hurt when they did it. You ever...Did you ever have a malfunction, or anybody around you have a malfunction?

GH: Well, yeah. I can remember two or three of them where they kind of fouled up, but I don't remember now what they...what they were. They were...one, two chutes out at the same time, or something like that, with...and one! One...I don't remember who it was or who was here, jumped, and his chute...he didn't think was open, it was gonna streamer, and he pulled his other chute about then and they both opened. I think that's what happened to Francis too, that time that he went across the river, but I'm not sure that that's it. Other than that, no. There was no...pretty good, pretty good jumping.

KM: Yeah? Well, that's pretty good. Your fire seasons were probably 4 months long, is that...?

GH: Yeah. Usually figure on June through August.

KM: About how many fires would you get?

GH: Oh, gosh! Not...they used to have a lot of lightning strikes and they had...they worked...Oh, there weren't enough jumpers in that time to cover too many lightning strikes, by the time you went out and got back, so they had quite a...crews around, too that had been for years. Going on fires, you know. And the farmers around here, they'd have their own horses and their...go out and put out a fire. Well, they'd do that without ever being asked, you know, a lot too. So, we never did have any great bust but what we could control them.

KM: Yeah? And then you hiked back to Winthrop?

GH: Yeah.

KM: From the...it could be a long ways? Or to Missoula, wherever you were jumping at?

GH: Yeah, we hiked back from the Dean Creek fire. I know that was getting to be a long ways before we got back to the airport there.

KM: What's the longest pack out you had?

GH: Doggone! That was probably it, over on the Dean Creek, I guess, because here the fires I jumped and went too far. We jumped up here, when we come in from Missoula that time, and jumped up here at a little camp they call Spanish Camp. It's quite a little notorious camp back in there. There's a bunch of sheep running in there and these fires were scattered, there was several different fires—smoke around. You could see when you was coming down. So we jumped, and pretty soon I walked up to the sheep herder there. He said, "Where in the hell did you fellows come from?" He never thought about us ever jumping out of the plane you know, so he was pretty badly surprised.

KM: Yeah? So how long did it take you to get back?

GH: Oh, we hiked out in a day.

KM: A day?

GH: Mm hmm. Yeah. That was about, oh, about 15 miles to the road that [inaudible] place from Spanish Camp. But then they were pretty quick, too, at getting in those horses to pack you out, because that was the only way they had. The pack horse could go right to where we were, see,

and pack us out.

KM: Yeah?

GH: And that's the way with Virgil Derry. Now, on that first fire that we jumped on, by gosh! We met the packer. He was coming in after our equipment when we was half way out of there, you see. So he was [inaudible] takes too long to get the fire out we got out of the mud hole—water.

KM: Huh! Yeah. Wow! I talked to your son earlier and he—

GH: Yeah?

KM: He was hoping that his son would jump so you'd have a three-generation—

GH: Yeah! Yep.

KM: How long was your brother involved?

GH: Oh, all that fall, the fall of '39.

KM: Yeah?

GH: Yeah. He wasn't in '40, he wasn't the...he wasn't employed by the Forest Service. He was employed by the jumper outfit—the Derrys—and that was all contract.

KM: Yeah?

GH: And that was just through 1939.

KM: That's great. Let's see here. [pauses] What did you like the most about jumping?

GH: Well, it was quite a thrill to jump, but it was quite a thrill to get in there too. To...on the fire so darn quick and that you didn't have to spend a half a day or all-night hiking to get into the fire.

I know I'd walk into Hidden Lakes and into Ashenola and into those fires, and Remmel Lake, and some of them was a long ways. It took you...you left in the night and walked half, two-thirds of the night, you know, or left in the middle of the night. And it was daylight when you got there, and you wasn't too good of shape to start fighting a fire for a whole 24 hours, you see, seemed like. And there was no...nothing there either. You didn't have any grub for anything. That was the main thing, you couldn't get anything to them until pack horses or somebody come in. That might be two days, it seemed like, before they got to you.

KM: Yeah?

GH: So...and it was the idea of getting in there and have something with you so that you could get the fire out, and wait for them to come and get you then. That's about what it amounted to.

KM: Did they drop cargo on your fire right after you jumped then?

GH: Yeah, they dropped the cargo. Your tools, you see.

KM: Yeah? And that all was free fall?

GH: No. They dropped the tools with a chute on them. Because you'd break them up if you didn't. See...they'd hit too darn hard.

KM: Huh! And you jumped about what altitude?

GH: Oh about...you had to have, I think they had 2,000 feet you're supposed to jump in altitude, but we might have been a little shorter than that a time or two.

KM: Yeah? Gee!

GH: But that'd give you plenty of time to get down and if you...course, if it was kind of windy or something, you didn't want to get too high cause it'd drift you off too much, you know.

KM: Yeah. Did you ever land in the fire?

GH: No! No.

KM: What...did you ever come across any bears or other animals ever give you any trouble?

GH: No, not many. No, I've...I met a deer at one time. She was kind of mad, but she didn't give me any trouble. I know why...she...the fire might have scorched her a little or scared her some too. Or something else might have scared them too, you know, but I never did have any trouble with any. Exciting times all right, like that.

KM: Do you keep up with the other people who jumped around here?

GH: Do I?

KM: Yeah.

GH: Oh, once in awhile, yeah. I see Francis quite often. He...we trapped together and hunted together. After that...I know one time we were...had our traps set out and going back there,

made the rounds, and we come out here and had...the Forest Service called and said that we got money to go on to work and, "...we want you guys back on the job." So we had to go back. Francis went to work and I went back and sprung the traps. We figured if they want us to work, we better work and not be trapping instead. But we hunted together. Francis and I got 11 cougars in one week, one time.

KM: Oh, really?

GH: Yeah.

KM: Wow!

GH: I had a couple of good hounds up here, and I lived up here at Winthrop. A lot of the time I worked on the Forest Service Ranch. See I was working, feeding the stock at the Remount Station. And then Francis was working in town, and around, and...that is, for the Forest or on, whenever. So in the wintertime then we'd hunt, trap, stuff like that. In them days you only had the summer work job. You didn't have a yearlong, and luckily, I got the feeding of the remount stuff at Eight Mile up here. That give me a yearlong job. And Francis was, then it turned...so where, by the time the...the hack time, why they were getting here why, they had to get this loft together. And Francis was years a getting this stuff put together because it was kind of like pulling teeth you know, a lot of this stuff, to come by.

The machines and the material, and of course, a lot of the competition you got was people that didn't know what was going on. I think, too, you know, they wouldn't...Oh, what could be wrong with this or that, or why, or this or that, you know. So it took a little doing to get your machines and your thread and your outfits you needed to really run this parachute loft here with, too. Get the building...we had to pack the chutes at Winthrop in the...in the ranger station there in a warehouse.

And cargo'd be in the warehouse before there was anything here, see. There was a little building set over on the river that was washed away in 1948 when the flood come down. But we done most of the carting. Set up the loft up in the Winthrop warehouse [so] we can pack our chutes, you know, and get the cargo right out of there...do our cargoing right there in the night, have it ready for the next morning for jumping or dropping.

KM: Yeah?

GH: We dropped many loads of cargo there for 3 or 4 years. Just...might say the two of us, really.

KM: Yeah? What did...you kind of developed that program then?

GH: Well, it seems like pretty much, yeah. We had a lot of help, you know, with other guys and

suggestions. I know Roy Mitchell, the assistant supervisor, he was interested in it from the word go, you know. He wanted to see it go, and things like that too. And the whole Forest was more or less interested in it. It started right here, and they wanted it to continue, and if there was anything to it, they wanted to be able to share in it, of course.

KM: Yeah?

GH: And the ranger, and the personnel on the Forest made quite a lot of difference too.

KM: What did...how did you do the cargo? What was the procedures for—

GH: Well, we just had to get...I'd pack enough with the mules and horses, and stuff you know, and they come out with these new type of saddle, the Decker saddle, and you had to cargo that stuff to put it on the mule. So, coming cargo, kind of come natural to me there, to cargo this stuff up. So we was...pretty well knew Francis had been out there, and everybody else concerned had been on the trail enough, you know, to know that by golly, you had to have the stuff taken care of, or you was...no good to send something broken in, so just kind of a...what common sense you had, had to be used. That's all there was to it.

KM: Right! What kind of packing did you do to get it to...?

GH: We used canvas, heavy duck canvas and ropes. Mantie ropes you might...well, they called them manties, for the packing for the Decker saddles. And you roped them up and done them in cargos, you know. Took some time, took quite a load for...in order [to pack] a stove and stuff like that, you know. Stuff that wrap in took...wrap that up so we could the chute hooked on to it and stay. See, that was one thing to get it so you could put a chute on it. And still get it out the door by the time you got over the target.

KM: And you would pack those chutes and deploy them yourself as they went out the door?

GH: Yeah. We learned how. They taught us...everybody, how to pack a parachute and the whole business you know, and we had a right [inaudible] maybe he'd be, Francis with somebody might be packing the chutes, and the other guy would be doing the cargoing and stuff. Then after they got more of a crew in here, why the road...as I said, the road crew took care of most of the cargoing and, of course, they had the other...in the loft had done the...getting the chutes ready and stuff like that and...mainly from the jumpers here. And so half of them have stayed right here, still working I guess, for the Forest Service somewhere.

KM: Yeah, or the people. When you threw the cargo out, was that, uh...out of what kind of plane? Same as a jump plane?

GH: Yeah, same as a jump plane. Usually they'd get the jumpers out there and come back, and we'd take the cargo and drop it to them, or something like that, you see.

KM: You'd come back for the cargo then?

GH: Yeah, they'd come back. They'd...well you could drop them there too, what they needed, you see...their pack. And then if you was going to supply a fire camp, then you had come back here and get quite a lot of groceries and stoves and all kinds of equipment to drop into that fire. Like, you put 300 paratroopers in on the fire in there, you had to have quite a little equipment.

KM: Then they had to pack it all out again?

GH: They...at that time, they assembled it mostly, and the packer went in to do a little airpotting with a string of mules and went in and packed the stuff down to where they could load it on the airport. The [inaudible] out here, that was a primitive airport back there. It was built...in fact I was working on the airport in 1939 when the jumping first started. I was working the Pasayten District on the landing strip on what is the Pasayten North airport. But they let it grow up now, they done away with it.

KM: You just use this one?

GH: Just this one.

KM: Yeah. Oh, well tell me what you've seen as the changes that have happened in the past.

GH: Oh, god!

KM: Since you...I mean, during your involvement, during the time you were—

GH: Oh, god! They just more or less perfected the whole procedure, you know, from what it was. It used to be like any primitive undertaking. Why, on something new...why, every year we saw a lot of improvement, and the biggest jump, I imagine, was from the rip cord to the static line. I think that was because you could...well, like some of them said, you just push a sack of potatoes out of there. You wouldn't have to be alive or whatever to drop with a static line. That was the big improvement. That took, I think a lot of the hazards and the danger of—the fear out of smokejumping—was the static line.

They had a...they could watch you and they could see guys go out, and some of the new guys would ride along as an observer to see how it was done, and the guy would jump out and he could see what happened. But before that, the time or two, you didn't know whether, you know, whether the guy was going to make it or not. If he had had to use the rip cord, he might have jumped too quick or pulled it too quick or froze up a little or something like that.

KM: Yeah?

GH: But I think that was the biggest step, was from the rip cord to the static line probably.

KM: Which was...that in 1943?

GH: '41.

KM: '41?

GH: Yeah. The Army, down in Fort Benning, I think, tried that first. It's...I think that's the way it was, I'm not sure. Anyway, when we went to Missoula in 1941, we started using the rip...or the static line instead of the rip cord.

KM: Yeah!

GH: It was done away with.

KM: Didn't you do training for the military too?

GH: No. We could have. I was in the military though, before. And then they had offered us the commission, I think it was the Lt., or something, in the Air Force, to go in. I don't think very many of them wanted to get in the military.

KM: Mm hmm? So they didn't...?

GH: In 1941 they called a Reserve Officer or two from Missoula. I think there was two of them went to...out of the...over the smokejumpers that were training for smokejumpers over there in Missoula that had to go...were called to the reserves. And then, they went from there, I guess, into the paratroopers, or something. I don't know where they...whatever happened to them.

KM: Yeah? Hmm, wow! Did you, when you were in Missoula, did you jump mostly in the...that area, right around Missoula, since you had to pack and all?

GH: Yeah. Mm hmm.

KM: You didn't go to Idaho or...?

GH: No, some of them did. Quite a lot of them did jump into Idaho, and there was several of the boys that was there, were from...scattered clear out over Idaho, and Washington, and Montana too...were, the kids that were being trained in there.

KM: Yeah?

GH: And...well that Wagner Dodge, I think he was from one place and he was in that Mann

Gulch fire. He was a foreman you know.

KM: He was one of the ones to be killed?

GH: Yeah. [Wagner Dodge was one who survived.] And he was one of the ones that flew over here and jumped from here the time we come from Missoula...that plane that flew.

KM: Oh?

GH: There was a lot of them that...this old Rufus Robinson, you probably heard of him.

KM: Right?

GH: He was there too, at that Nine Mile camp in '41. And I think he probably...I think he jumped a time or two. He was from Idaho I think, to start with, and I think he jumped in Idaho and in Montana both, I think around...pretty well scattered around at that time.

KM: Yeah? What affect did the war have? It had a pretty big effect on manpower...?

GH: Yeah, that's right. They had to train these paratroopers to jump on fires...or train them to fight fire, is what they done. How good of fire fighters...I don't know how they got...how good they were trained or anything, but they was pretty much of a skeleton crew I'll tell you, when the war was on. Because until these...until the conscientious objectors started in, then they kind of bolstered things up.

KM: Yeah...were you still involved then, at that time?

GH: Yeah.

KM: You were doing the training end?

GH: Yeah, we was...I was here with Francis, and we were...I was doing mostly observing at that time. And cargoing and teaching them how to do cargo. Stuff like that. And the whole bit of course.

KM: Yeah? Did you have a selection process on who would be a jumper, or was it pretty much whoever...?

GH: No, Francis done most of that. The...he was actually put in charge of the thing, Francis Lufkin. And so he would get the choice of...there weren't too many applications at that time, I don't think. I think he took pretty near everybody that applied for the job, I think. You'd have to talk to him, but I think that's the way it was, pretty much.

KM: Yeah? Huh, quite a lot of faith, I guess. [laughs]

GH: And I was usually out on some project or working somewhere until the fire season started, you see, and then...

KM: With the Forest Service?

GH: Yes, with the Forest Service.

KM: You were working with the stock at that time?

GH: Yeah, mostly on the stock...with the stock. Then until 1948 I went into the construction and maintenance—roads and bridges and stuff, buildings.

KM: Yeah, did you...did they use jumpers in rescue jumps?

[Break in audio]

KM: Did they use jumpers in rescue jumps then?

GH: Yeah. I can't recall any of them, but I know they jumped—you mean rescue of other personnel?

KM: Of...yeah, any. Whether it's Forest Service or not Forest Service.

GH: I don't think so, I don't believe so.

KM: What about this "jumping doctor", wasn't there someone...?

GH: Yeah, he was...he trained—

[INTERRUPTION]

The doctor, I think, was trained over there in Missoula or in Idaho. One of the places, but he wasn't from here. He was trained, and I think he actually did jump on a couple of them and get a injured man out of the woods.

KM: Yeah? Packing them out, I guess?

GH: Yeah, that was something else again. Yeah.

KM: Yeah, hmm. You didn't ever do any rescue jumps yourself?

GH: No, no.

KM: Yeah? Boy! What was the most significant event in your smokejumping career?

GH: Oh God, that'd be hard to say.

KM: Or several? Can you think of any, any...?

GH: No, I don't know what it would be.

KM: About how many jumps did you have?

GH: Nineteen.

KM: Nineteen, really? Wow, can you remember any of them?

GH: Oh, yeah.

KM: That you can explain a little bit?

GH: No...Oh, I can't remember anything in particular about them at all.

KM: Just where they are? Where they were and what size fires?

GH: Yeah there was, uh...three or four over around Missoula, out in there. And then mostly here on the Okanogan or the Chelan National Forest.

KM: Did you ever land?

GH: The rest of them...

KM: Pardon?

GH: The rest of them would be in here. But they was nothing very spectacular, or anything like.

KM: Hmm, did you ever land in water?

GH: Jumped in that little pond the first jump, the first [unintelligible], yeah.

KM: That was your first—

GH: Other than that, no.

KM: Yeah? During any of your fire jumps, did you ever have a tough fire, or...that you needed to call in more jumpers or more crew?

GH: Oh, god! Let's see...I don't believe so. I don't think so, no. It was a little bit rough, a couple of them you know, but by golly, we didn't have to call any more unless they already knew ahead of time that it was going to take more than say, two men, and they'd send some more the next time around. Why they'd send in some more, but we had radios. Getting into radio contact...did pretty good with the radios and you could call them if you needed help pretty quick.

KM: You jumped with a radio, would you?

GH: They could drop you a radio. In your...and then they...you did have a radio you just could put on your...in your...on your pack, or on your leg or something, and drop with that, too.

KM: Did you ever have trouble finding the fire once you were on the ground?

GH: No. [laughs]

KM: No?

GH: You could always pretty well find then, you knew just about where it was at when you could see her before you ever left the plane. You knew you was going to, where you was at, and what was around it too. You generally took a pretty good look around the surrounding area to see what was—things could be like.

And I know, one time I was dropping cargo back in here on a fire and the ranger off of the Pasayten District, he was climbing right up there. He was going to get up where he could look around. And I had a radio in the plane, and I radioed to the ground and told him just get him the hell out of there because he was walking right into a...right up to...if that fire blew up and come up the hill and took him right out of there, you know.

And afterwards I talked to him, and he said he didn't know why. He just walked up that thing and never even once dreamed about the thing blowing up and catching him. But it just would do something like that, you know.

KM: Wow!

GH: They do, accidents happen that way.

KM: Yes, right!

GH: A few years ago we were on Fish Lake over here and a fire...there's some guys got trapped

because they weren't watching, they got in ahead of it and she blew up and come right up and they couldn't get out. It wasn't nothing ever very spectacular in my smokejumping, as far as that goes.

KM: Mm hmm. Did you train other people to get cargo then, during your training?

GH: Yes, quite a few of them. I took...I had several men on the road crew, my operators you know. And they were pretty well...I trained them in cargoing here, too, so whenever they needed a lot of cargoing, or even dropping some cargo once in awhile, I took them along so they could see how to drop it. How it went and what happened to everything you know.

KM: Yeah?

GH: They was some of them didn't like to go very good but they, but they were willing to quit the road job and come right in here and start cargoing. And Francis, you know, he knew that he had a pretty good cargo crew any time he needed them. Holler and we'd...I'd have some men for him to do the cargoing.

KM: Yeah?

GH: And of course he had his men jumping all over the country. Well, the didn't—probably didn't—have time to do much cargoing anyways, see? So they...it...made it work out pretty good.

KM: That's great. Still going today?

GH: Yeah, still going. I think that after I retired, I think that they still call the road crew in here to do the cargoing.

GH: Yeah, the...another...one of the operators that I had [was] probably the most experienced packer in cargo and stuff. Packing on mules and stuff, you got to be a pretty good cargoer to pack on mules and stuff like that, you know, and horses and stuff, so he'd been in that for quite awhile. So he knew, pretty much, what to do and how to do it, and anybody...rest of the crew come in and didn't know, why he'd point up to them what all to do and how to wrap it and how to do that. So we made it pretty simple. And I know the...Francis and whoever was responsible here for it, knew that they could depend on him to get that cargo out there. So that made it pretty handy, and cooperation for the whole outfit too. There was a...everybody cooperated in this whole outfit.

KM: Yeah? Did anybody...any of the districts or any of the Forest Service personnel not like the idea of jumping—jumping particularly?

GH: Well, I don't think so.

KM: Didn't have any problems with that—getting funding and that kind of thing?

GH: They did...You mean some of the other personnel on the Forest didn't like it, or how do you mean?

KM: Yeah, or...Washington office, or once that guy saw it, he was pretty much for it and you got the funding you needed?

GH: Yeah, seemed like that, yes. Of course, Region-1 is the one that got all the money. They got most of the fund and the glory and Region-6 was [inaudible]. They got...they done all right but they could have, I think, had a little better cooperation I would say, from the bigger end of the stick. I know it took a long time, and hard work and stuff to get, seemed like, what we really needed there for a few years. And of course, nobody knew what they really needed too. That was another thing that had to be proved. That you had to do that to...had to have it.

KM: Yeah.

GH: But it seemed to me when I was in Region-1 in '41, they got pretty near everything they wanted. It might have been the personnel there too that was...happened to be the head guy too. Whatever, but I don't know.

KM: Yeah, did you do your own sewing of your suits, and all that kind of thing?

GH: We did there, yeah.

KM: Did that all here?

GH: Yeah, at Winthrop, up in the loft. Clear up...it wasn't the loft, it was up in the warehouse. They had the sewing machines set up in there and we learned to patch the chutes and sew this whole business, yeah.

KM: Mm hmm. And did...would you get your chutes...did you develop the chute eventually—the Derrys developed it?

GH: No, no. To start with, they seen the parachute coming in, it was the one, they brought this chute out here, the...or the...he was from Washington, D.C., and he was interested in this parachute business of course, so he was the one, but no, I just learned and we learned here through the Derrys how to pack the chutes and do the maintenance of them, stuff like that.

KM: Yeah, did you...what kind of chutes did you use for your cargo?

GH: They were ex-military chute.

KM: Personnel chute?

GH: Yeah. They'd been used or handed down, so a lot of that was cargo chutes, yeah.

KM: Well, were they 28 feet or so?

GH: 28 feet most of them, 28 foot. They seemed to have quite a lot of them, because I guess they used a lot of them in the...in the Air Force...probably in the paratroopers you know. So they got them in by...quite the bunches of them. And I don't know, Francis was more into all that stuff than I was, so he done a lot of the ordering and the purchasing. And I think along with the Region did too, you know. So they figured they'd have to have so many or whatever. I don't know, I'm not too good at any of this, ordering of the chute stuff.

KM: Yeah. So what was the procedures for kicking the cargo?

GH: Well, it was a little shaky there for a few years. We never had a parachute on or a barricade on the door or anything else.

KM: You fell out, that's it!

GH: And boy, I come pretty near quitting here too, one time, with a bunch of cargo in my arm. We was dropping over in here toward the head of Lake Chelan and Dick Johnson was flying the plane. There was two or three spectators along, one of them who happened to be this assistant supervisor, and we hit a...just had the cargo pretty heavy, and I was getting right up to the door [when] he hit a air pocket, or something, and boy we went down. I know Roy Mitchell hit his head, [laughs] he was bald headed and he hit it on the top of the thing, and I...if I'd have went out...went forward instead of backward, I'd have went on out of there without a parachute.

KM: Oh, no!

GH: So, that kind of makes you think, "Well, I better have a parachute on. Or I better have something strapped to you!" So they got...after that, put a line on you so you couldn't get out the door, or fall out the door or something. But it was...gets a little dangerous in these rough canyons and stuff. Dropping cargo in there, you know, it's pretty rough. You had to get down pretty close to hit a bad air pocket, or something. But I didn't realize it until afterwards that that was pretty close call, I'll tell you.

KM: I bet!

GH: I had this pretty good-sized package in my arms and scooted right up to the door when it hit, but the way it turned it pushed me back instead of...if I'd a went out, that would have been just it. It'd been too bad.

KM: Yeah! Wow!

GH: Yeah. So I don't think...that's what it seemed to take. But nobody...wasn't very many bad accidents. There was one or two here, but it wasn't...plane went down, it was a pilot error up here on...killed three or four of them on one of the Regions on which...

KM: Was that when they had a rescue jump up there?

GH: I don't think they had a rescue jump.

KM: No?

GH: They may have had a rescue jump. I wasn't, I wasn't involved in it at that time. I was on road end of...that was after I got out of the Forest Fire Control end.

KM: Yeah?

GH: But they [pauses] hit the bad air, and it took him right into the mountain.

KM: How many years were you on road crew?

GH: Twenty.

KM: Twenty years?

GH: Yep, '48 to '67.

KM: Really? And then you retired from the Forest Service?

GH: And I retired from the Forest Service.

KM: And during that time did you kick more cargo?

GH: Oh yeah, during...in there clear up until the last. Whenever they had a fire bust or something, they needed cargo, why, Francis would call us, and then that was the way we come—right headed for the airport. Was kind of a break too.

KM: Yeah?

GH: Get up here, you knew it...kind of interesting to that work too, you know. Kind of interested in it. And the guys that had worked with me was pretty well interested in that stuff too.

KM: Yeah. You never had any airplane malfunctions while you were kicking cargo?

GH: No, not while I was kicking. Yes I did, and it wasn't me. It was a fellow down here that...I give him the cargo to drop, they had a little of these bomb chutes, and I told him, "Now," I said, "take this and drop it back here." Lack of instructions I guess, anyway it hung up in the tail of the airplane and they went down up here in the mountains. But they...luckily didn't nobody get hurt. Kind of bugged up the plane somewhat.

KM: He had no control over the plane?

GH: No, it had the chutes over the tail of it.

KM: Yeah?

GH: Yeah, that was a bad...so they done away the...eliminated that bomb chute after that, but actually, it was probably my fault and the cargo droppers fault too. I didn't tell him how to get it out, only how to get a hold of the cargo. It was just a small package with a little bomb chute on it, and to hold it and get it below the door, and all. So they had to be that the dang wind caught it wrong or something. It hung up on the tail of the plane.

KM: What's a bomb chute, just a little package and it'll...if you throw it hard enough—

GH: Yeah, it's a small chute that they use for just to tail them bombs down. That's Army stuff...Army—little chute. Then I, another guy—we hung up back here on the...just dropping some, wasn't dropping these...I was dropping little cargo, yeah, one day back here, and the plane—carburetor—iced up and we had to hit the mountain back here.

KM: Oh yeah?

GH: Didn't...we hit pretty good and stayed pretty good until we hit a big rock and broke a front wheel off. Then we poured into the dirt. But it wasn't too bad. Then we had...in fact we built a airport there for about a week to get that...fly that plane out of there.

KM: Oh yeah? Oh, no!

GH: We didn't turn over or anything.

KM: So you just built the whole runway system?

GH: Just had to build the whole darn runway. Pack...just dynamite in there and blew rocks out of the way, back on what they call the Bald Mountain back here, that's where I went down.

KM: Put some...put a new wheel on the plane?

GH: Yeah, put a new wheel. And then, first time he tried to take her up, he cracked into some more rocks and we had to rebuild it again.

KM: Oh no!

GH: So, it was two rebuild jobs before we could fly her out of there.

KM: What was the biggest fire year that you worked with?

GH: Fire year?

KM: Yeah, what had the most fires?

GH: Oh gosh, I wouldn't know. The biggest fires were some of them old timers in 1929 and something like that, you know. They had some monster fires back in the backcountry.

KM: You weren't fighting fires then, were you?

GH: '29? Yes ma'am!

KM: Really?

GH: I walked into them for about, from the end of the road up to 30 Mile up here. 30 miles above Winthrop. I walked 15 miles to the fire then...that's...what'd I say, 1929? I was fighting fires, yeah.

KM: And how big was that?

GH: Oh fod, I wouldn't know. There was three big fires back there at that time, and they burned a whole thousands of acres.

KM: Can't get too many people in by hiking them in?

GH: It took a long time to get them all in there, and then a lot of them, you know, coming off the streets, weren't capable of hiking that far, you know. They weren't dressed for that or they didn't have shoes for that. Things like that.

KM: Yeah?

GH: So when they got the smokejumpers and they had to wear pretty good clothes, and pretty good shoes to hike with and jump with, and...it made a big turn around right there I think. I think if there's a bad weather conditions and everything is right, I don't think how many men

you got out there is going to stop a fire, but that's...they got a better chance for it, so that they...I don't think they can stop it no matter how many men you have.

KM: What kind of clothes and personal equipment did you have when you jumped?

GH: Oh, just regular Levi's, and overalls, and shirts and stuff.

KM: Boots? Logging boots?

GH: Boots, yeah. We generally wore the Kearns or the Whites or something like that.

KM: Whites were around back then?

GH: Yeah, mm hmm.

KM: Hmm, great. Well, [are you] the oldest smokejumper in the world? [laughs]

GH: I don't know. [laughs] There isn't a...around here because...I don't know, it seems like I probably was because I was just about the age limit when I jumped, you see.

KM: Oh yeah?

GH: Yeah.

KM: How old were you when you started?

GH: Well, in 1942 or '40...let's see, I would have been, uh...
34 when I started.

KM: Hmm, well you could be.

GH: Yep.

KM: So Francis is—

GH: Francis is eight years younger than I am.

KM: Yeah. Okay. Let's see. [pauses] Do you have anything [to add] that I didn't get about the training, your first training that you had? About procedures? You mentioned that you jumped out of a tower with a shock cord, and you did some practice on landings. Did you do other things, physical training or—

GH: No, I didn't when I was training, no. That came in afterwards. You may know him all ready, I

don't know where he is now...Fred Brauer from Missoula was a...quite a football player in his...and they done that in training for football. And he come in with some of these ideas, you know, and physical fitness and all. Of course, everybody knew they had to be in physical condition, but Fred Brauer come in with some of that training. Sessions of that, that they had over there in Missoula, and he was going at that time, or just got out of the University of Montana at Missoula. Of course, there was Earl Cooley too and all.

KM: Uh huh. Well, he came in here and set up the tires and—

GH: Yeah, he went through that stuff, and all that.

KM: So did you go through that yourself?

GH: No, I didn't, no. I don't think Francis did, or any of the older ones did. And I think they, they was probably...because we, more or less the guys that was...went into it had been used to climbing the mountains and fighting fires and things like that. But these other, you take kids out of school or out of college, they've never really done too much manual labor you might say.

KM: Yeah.

GH: And so, in order to get them in physical condition, they had to use...Lufkin had a lot of them out here cutting sagebrush off this flat for 3 or 4 years.

KM: Oh, yeah?

GH: Some of them would get a little wise and cut a big pile and then get behind it and hide [inaudible]. Couple of them thought they would hide out all morning behind the sage brush. And Honey come in at noon, he said, "Say, before you guys go back out, I just want you to know that you was on annual leave this morning." So I...they changed their minds. They cut out where I could see them work, I think, after that.

KM: Oh no! Did...what...the average age of the people that...your class that you jumped with was quite a bit older than they ended up being later?

GH: Yeah, mm hmm, they were. And most of them come in then right out of school, you know, or something like that. Younger...and college...a lot of college boys, I think, for the first year or two, came here to jump, and I know from all over. I know Francis has had some from way back in the East and scattered all over the country you know. And they were college boys. They was going to college and getting ready to go to college, but with...when I started, I was clear beyond that school stage, you know. Of course, I was married and had a couple kids.

KM: Yeah?

GH: So, by 1940, you know, it was a different...little different class you know. Older, more experience on the working end of it.

KM: Yes, right. Huh. So when you were in the...you did the training for cargo up until '67 then?

GH: Yeah, more or less. Yeah, we'd...there wasn't much training there for those guys got pretty well how to do it you know.

KM: Yeah? So you saw a lot of changes in the way that you packaged cargo and all that kind of stuff?

GH: No, not too many changes, no. But you saw quite a little difference in the cargo you packed because they come up here with all of these "big man" mess kits and 20 man crews, and stuff like that. You see them come out of the service. I think Francis must have got that equipment. There were big kettles, and pots and pans, and stuff like that. Out of the military, I think, is where he got that, so it was a little different cargo-ing.

KM: Yeah?

GH: Everything changed more or less through the doggone 20 years there you might say.

KM: Right, sure. You packaged it in canvas still?

GH: Yeah, and they had...they built containers to put some of those big two-man kettles in. Or 10-man or 20-man. They'd...so that you could just hang them on a parachute and drop them, you see. And they had...They were insulated and hanging right, and things like that. Or sealed, or cream cans or something like that. Made a quite a little difference in the type of cargo you had to handle.

KM: Hmm, I bet. After the war there was...the people who came into jumping were fairly young and not from the military? I mean they're not...they weren't related...at that point the CO's stopped coming and got local people?

GH: Yeah and...yeah. And then you could get, more or less, of the locals like around here. They'd pick up some...well, my son Raymond for instance. He was just out of school and, a lot of them just out of school and wanted to get a job. So the first thing that hit was a smokejumper. Of course, they could make, they thought, big money and have a big time of it but they found out they had a little work to do too, you know, but kids that were raised in the country knew a little more of what work was, than the kids that were raised in the cities. So they didn't take quite so much training, I don't think.

KM: Yeah? Did they have...put them...did you put them through fire school and—

GH: Yeah, they had to learn firefighting and stuff like that. Of course, most of them had been on fires around here, spot fires and little fires here, and throughout the summer since they were probably 16, you know...get out on a fire somewhere. Something like that. So they were pretty well educated on the working and firefighting end of it even though they were still just getting out of school. Where the kids from the...in the colleges or back East, more or less, had never been on a fire or something like that, you know, so they took quite a little training.

KM: You got...you got people from back East to come out here?

GH: Oh, yeah! They had them from all over.

KM: Recruiting, kind of?

GH: Yeah, that's why I said, I don't know too much about that because Francis was the main squeeze on that.

KM: Yeah?

GH: He got...moved that through the Okanogan Supervisor's office of course. So, he could give you a lot of good information.

KM: Great!

GH: But he's been kind of sick lately, I don't know how he's getting along. I imagine he's...have you called him?

KM: Let's see. [pauses] Yeah, he's coming tomorrow at 3:00 so—

GH: Yeah, he'll give a lot of first-hand information because he's got a good memory, and he was right from the word go on the whole business.

KM: Great! Anything...did you ever see a lot of people wash out during the—

GH: Not very many. One or two is all; one or two is all.

KM: Nobody got hurt during—

GH: No, they didn't get hurt; they just decided that was...wasn't what they wanted to do.

KM: Right.

GH: And get pretty badly scared, and they never been up in the air either, that's another thing, they hadn't been around it. It makes quite a little difference too, I think. I think the first time

that I was up...or the second time, I went up for a ride once and then the next time, why, I had to jump. So that was about the way it was with me too...or I did jump, anyways. But I'd never been up in the airplanes very much at that time and I don't think any of the other locals had either really, been up in airplanes very much.

KM: Hmm, so this is a new airport then, at that time?

GH: Yeah, just a strip down through here—dirt.

KM: Brand new for the—

GH: Dirt strip. Yeah, the Okanogan, or the American Legion I think, had older...had possession of this here. And they'd gradually grubbed out a little landing strip, and then...so when...after the Forest Service took it, then they started clearing it, clearing it, clearing it more and more all the time.

KM: Huh! Let's see. [pauses] What kind of training did you put people through during your...during the period that...say after '43 or whatever? What did they...did you do any medical training with them or that kind of thing?

GH: No, not medic...medical?

KM: Yeah.

GH: No.

KM: No? Just firefighting?

GH: Just first-aid or something like that. They had first aid yeah. They got first-aid training and stuff like that, yeah.

KM: And jumping and firefighting?

GH: Jumping and firefighting, and how to fall, and how to get out of the plane, and that stuff. Just...Oh, first-aid in case somebody broke his arm or cracked an ankle or something like that.

KM: Yeah, anybody do that?

GH: Oh yeah there was several of them had sprained ankles and stuff like that, yeah. But they wasn't so far but what they could get in, and the doctor—get to the doctor. Hurt knee or leg or something like that.

KM: Yeah? Great! Well, I think that might be about it here.

GH: Okay.

[End of Interview]