

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 133-003**

**Interviewee: Howard Beatty**

**Interviewer: Kim Maynard**

**Date of Interview: June 7, 1984**

**Project: Smokejumpers 1984 Reunion Oral History Project**

Kim Maynard: Okay, can you just say your name and what years you jumped?

Howard Beatty: Howard Beatty, Twisp, Washington. I started as a trainee in 1948 in the spring. The year that we had the very large flood in this country so consequently we didn't have any roads and very few trails, very few fires. I think it was the late fall of '54 was my last year. During that time I, that fall of '48, started college and completed college in '52. Then I kept on here until '54.

KM: What was your rookie training like?

HB: Very uneventful.

KM: How about your first jump?

HB: I suspect most people would say their first one was very vivid in their minds but it was never that way with me. I guess I didn't know any better. It took until about the third until I really got smart and figured out that maybe this really wasn't for me. [laughs]

KM: But you kept on anyway?

HB: Oh yes, I really had to do a lot of talking to myself to get out the door. After the next year, well then it was a piece of cake from then on.

KM: How about your first fire jump? Do you remember that?

HB: There was a kid by the name of Gordie Woods from Wenatchee was my jump partner and we never have ever heard back from Gordie. I don't know if he's still alive or what. No one has ever contacted him. We jumped up on Farm Peak. We had a pilot—I don't know if it was his first fire jump or what his problem was—but he put one wing tip down and just kept circling on that one wing tip. Needless to say, my jump partner just about drowned going down in his own puke. We had the old type mask that had the buckles on instead of bungee and you had to be able to undo the buckle to lift the mask. Naturally in an emergency situation you can't do that. Came back from that fire with that experience, shortly thereafter they changed to rubber bungees on the masks. Horrible experience. We were the first ones, I might also say, on this forest anyway to be lifted off of a fire by a helicopter. I think it was 7200 feet elevation that we were at. It was a quite a trick for a helicopter in those days to lift just one man at that altitude. Just took one man at a time and then came back and got the equipment.

KM: Where was this?

HB: Farm Peak, north of Winthrop. Now let me see, then in '50...'50 I guess it was, I was made squad leader. Went on then from there.

KM: How about in the other jumps that first year that you can remember?

HB: Well from, oh I think we got one fire in '48, one fire in '49, I'm sure I got one. In all those years I don't think I ever got over one fire. My son he jumped in, heavens sakes, he got more jumps in one year than I did in 7 or so that I jumped. Most of mine were experimental jumping, something of this nature. Training jumps, or maybe a crude fire, never any more than that.

KM: Were you testing out new chutes, is that what were you doing?

HB: Yes, we had tried the 32-foot chutes at that time—jumping in on lookouts to do work on the lookouts. Fix the telephone lines or something like that.

KM: Ever have injuries or been with people who were injured?

HB: I got a tree—when was that? About '49, I guess it was. I got a tree dropped on top of me and needless to say I got the typical football knee out of it. Finally, a couple of years ago I had it operated on. That, nothing other than that.

KM: Did you ever have any malfunctions?

HB: Oh, a couple of line-overs. I had to use a emergency chute once. They say you are supposed to be able to keep the D-ring in your hand as a souvenir. Well, I haven't any idea whatever happened to it, it immediately went out into space somewhere. I wouldn't know.

KM: What was the circumstances behind that?

HB: It was just a—several severe lineovers that inverted the canopy and tied it into a ball. You look up and you don't have anything above your head, well you immediately start pulling for something.

KM: And you got it deployed early enough?

HB: Oh yes, oh yes. We came down after that emergency, shook out, well, then the main canopy shook loose, and I came down on both of them. Which you come down faster on two than you do on one. You really hit the ground then.

KM: What was your most memorable jump?

HB: [pauses] Oh golly. [pauses] Oh, I would say not my own jumps, but maybe some jumpers that I spotted that...Over in Lake Chelan, I personally knew these two jumpers, and I knew their capabilities. The only spot they had to hit was about 100 yards wide, not even that wide really on the edge of a cliff, and the cliff fell off about 2,000 feet down the near the lake. If they missed that spot, well they were in for a long, long walk. Needless to say, they made it fine, or I wouldn't have, if I hadn't thought that they wouldn't have been able to make it, well, I wouldn't have put them out. That was a couple of real good boys, they knew what they were doing and did it well.

KM: Did you ever have any real long backpack outs?

HB: No.

KM: What was the reason behind starting the helicopters pick up?

HB: In '48 there weren't any trails as I previously said. So they—the Forest Service—hired a contract, a contract helicopter, for that year to retrieve jumpers because it was practically impossible to use trails. They were all washed out. Most of that summer I think we spent rebuilding trails, not fighting fires. For the seven years I was here it was always on project work. We took four years I think it was, to build a telephone line over to Loop Loop (?) and then one year to tear it out. Oh, the crew put up hay, they built trails, they put up lookout towers, we shingled roofs on Forest Service houses around here. Pretty much jack of all trades, we could do anything. Very, very qualified jumpers. Oh, there was a little bit of training with it, any of them can assist.

KM: What made you go into jumping?

HB: Oh well there was a ranger, I think his name was Jack Handy. I was and raised in Okanogan and I knew him, and he kept after me to try the smokejumper program. I didn't have anything else to do so I sent in an application. Then in those days, and especially in 1948 when they had increased the jumpers, I think they had probably 12 the year before and they were going up to 30, or something like that, all in one year. Needless to say they were, they'd take anybody.

KM: You were in he first few years of jumping then.

HB: The what?

KM: The first few years of jumping. You came in at a time when a lot of it was still being developed.

HB: Oh, heavens yes, using the old let down procedures out of trees, which if you could get out of a tree at all you were mighty lucky with the procedures they had.

KM: What were the procedures?

HB: Threading a rope up through your D-rings and across and making a loop for your foot to stand in and then hoist yourself up then undo your shoulder straps and then thread it through again so you could hoist yourself up. Then undo the other shoulder strap and then let yourself down. I don't know when it was—along in '53 I think was, Jim Allen, '52 maybe it was, Jim Allen was here as one of those squad leaders anyway, developed a new system. For here, sewing a strap on the suits which they are still using at this time. Being able to get out of your harness and go down that way. So much easier. So much quicker.

KM: So you developed getting out of your harness rather than keeping it on.

HB: Ye. [pauses] I don't know if that base is still using—I think something very similar to that yet. I don't know if they use the quick, I think they do. They use the quick release shoulder straps and all. I come from a, now anyway, quite a Forest Service family. My son was a smokejumper, he jumped for five or six years I believe. He started in Canada, the Canadian smokejumper program. Then he went to Cave Junction, Oregon and then up here for three years, I think it was. Then my son-in-law, he's a smokejumper. He's still a smokejumper here on the base.

KM: I just got done talking with him. He had quite a few stories to tell.

HB: Oh, I would imagine. His memory is a lot more vivid than mine. [laughs] It's been quite a while since I've jumped.

KM: What other kind of changes have you seen, between when you started in 1954?

HB: Oh, mainly I think the changes needless to say, have been for the better. They started using the smokejumper program. When I was in it the attitude was to keep the smokejumpers in reserve in case they are needed. Instead of using them for initial attack like they do now they were kept in reserve. Then they started a program of refresher jumps. If you haven't jumped for two weeks or something like that you take a refresher jump. Well, we would jump in June, take two practice jumps and then maybe it would be clear until the last of August before we'd ever get a fire jump. So it was like starting all over again when you did finally get a jump. Needless to say, we didn't have any accidents because of it, but I think there certainly could have been. Other people must have thought so because they changed the program. We were—awful lot of project work. I think the budget on the base here was quite limited, so they would ship us out to some rat district so we could be on their payroll. I think Francis Lufkin probably fought for every penny he got to keep the program going. Times have certainly changed. Here this year, I think they have swung back for the better again. I was really worried that I thought they were going to lose this base all together. But it sounds like now that it might be here to stay.

[interruption]

I did get my new belt buckle, The Missoula Special.

KM: Can you talk about some of the equipment that you had when you first began?

HB: Well there were football, I think they were all used football helmets when they first started. Some of them were the old leather football helmets. They had riveted the wire face mask on with a hinge in the front. And then they had straps, two straps on the side, just belt buckle type straps that were very cumbersome to get in and out of. And then shortly thereafter they changed them. They went to—some rubber bungees to act as a spring, if you got too hard of a opening shock, well naturally it flew up and then back down again and hit you in the chin. We didn't have deployment bags like they had now. I never did jump with what was called the old Eagle parachute. I know Francis Lufkin did. But I had a sneaking suspicion from what he has said and other jumpers that it definitely did separate the men from the boys. Because even on the best opening you always got two openings shocks. You got when the chute first opened and then the side canopy opened, well then you bounced clear up inside the canopy then back down through the lines on the second opening shock. It was a horrible thing. I don't know anybody that didn't have their back and shoulders all covered with strawberries from openings because of the type of equipment we used. We didn't have a deployment bag that the canopy pulled out first and got air and before your chute, your load lines were ever off your backpack tray, well your chute was out, and you were getting your opening shock. It was very, very noticeable, the opening shock. One time, I think, one jump I must have had perfect opening because I never felt the chute open. Any other time it was just about turn you inside out.

KM: What kind of training did you have for the opening shock?

HB: Well we had the old jump tower out here. Let me see, I think one of the lookout towers they tore down and we— Lufkin was able to salvage it, and we set it up for jump tower. I don't know what year—that was somewhere...I don't think in '48 that, did we? I guess we did. We had a wooden tower that we drug over from across the field. We didn't have a—like the parachute loft, it went in the river with the flood, one of the bunkhouses went in the river. We spent most of the summer in '48, we were digging ditches, for this is the old parachute loft that was started then. We would get an awful lot of building construction. This old bunkhouse up here was put up and bath house then. I guess that is why we got so much project work. We started right off putting up buildings and building trails.

KM: What was '49 like as a fire season?

HB: Oh, they never had what you'd say a fire bust situation until several years after I left here. I would come back in the summertime a couple of weeks whenever Francis needed some help and either fly as an observer or spotter in one of the planes. Whenever he needed help. We brought in that one summer, they brought jumpers in from Missoula, and we had jumpers scattered. I remember I flew over at Lake Chelan and filled up two pages of fire locations and came back over the ridge to where we could get radio communications. We called them in and then we went out the next morning with the jump plane from Missoula. I don't think there was one of them that liked the looks of that country over at the head of Lake Chelan. It was

something to behold.

KM: That was in 1970?

HB: '70, no, no. That was probably '57 or '58, somewhere in there—'70, let me see. That was when they had all the helicopters out here and brought out equipment and rented it to the Forest Service for handling, loading cargo and whatnot. That was a lot of fires that year. A lot of big fires around here. It kept everybody pretty busy. Oh, I did go back and work for the Forest Service in about '77 something like that. I ran the tanker base Nomak for retardant. I have had quite an experience with the Forest Service.

KM: What was the best year?

HB: Oh probably—'54 I suppose. We spent—yeah, we spent all fall in Cave Junction, Oregon. Yeah, not many fires but we got a few down there. But there again there was that still the same, keep you in reserve, you might be needed. But the ground pounders go in and have the fire. But it has changed.

KM: Why do you think they did that? Because of the expensive jumpers?

HB: No, it was just common sense. You trained people for one thing, you trained them for initial attack. If you can get there in a hurry when a fire is real small you don't have expense. But if you let people walk into a fire, and the time they get there they are all wore out. And then they can't fight fire after they get there, that's no good. Then usually your fires get away from you.

KM: Right and why did they keep everybody there?

HB: It was like I say, because we might be needed. They might have something that would really need on jumpers on the back country, or something like this. Now even if fires are alongside of a road they use jumpers. Get them quick and fast and get on that fire and don't spend bucks on it. Oh heavens I know that, I don't know what year it was when I was flying observation and maybe it was '54 and—Pinnacle Creek fire. Flew over Lost River and saw a little smoke coming up and radioed in the location. That was the only time I ever knew Francis Lufkin to get in the airplane. Believe it or not, the only time. He had in '48 when I started—he had I think probably 46 [jumps]. I don't know if he jumped in '46 or not. But he didn't in '47. And he never jumped after that I know. But I never had known him to ever get in an airplane. But he did get in the with that bunch of jumpers and he would not jump them. Because of the terrain, it was all rock, trees that were there, the root system was so shallow that if you hung up in a tree, the tree would have just gone over with them. Cliffs of hundreds of feet and he just would not put jumpers on it. By the time the ground crew got in there the fire was gone. It turned into a project fire that thousands, I mean probably millions of dollars were spent on it. Because of terrain. But even so anymore, I still, in country like that, I don't think they would ever put jumpers on a fire. And now they'd use retardant and rappellers. Jumpers got have a half a chance to hang up on a tree or if he doesn't he is going to get hurt.

KM: Did you ever hang up?

HB: No, I never did. Not for me. My feet were always on the ground. The chute would be in the trees, but my feet would be on the ground. I know in the Cave Junction that fall we jumped into the Madrona. I had never seen trees like that before. I was a country bumpkin. I didn't know what it was all about, I know I come slamming into this Madrona tree, my feet were on the ground, but my hip hurt so dog gone bad from hitting that tree, and I looked down and saw that I had skinned all the bark off the tree. Well underneath it was just blood red color. Well, when I looked down my hip hurt so bad I thought that I'd smashed my hip and that was blood all over the tree. Little things like that to keep you awake. Then of course we'd jumped into the Redwoods on one occasion. Oh my, we didn't have let down ropes for things like that.

KM: What did you do?

HB: Well thank goodness we made it to the ground and not hang up in those high trees. Or we'd still be climbing down.

KM: What other kind of changes have you seen happen since '48?

HB: Oh of course the slotted chutes and then tails and chutes they have now, my goodness they turn around so much faster. They gave a guy so much more maneuverability. I still don't why they don't go to these wing type chutes where they do have all the forward speeds and maneuverability with them. There must be a good reason. Free fallers I know use them for accuracy jumps and what not. Maybe they'll come to it, who knows?

KM: Alaska is going into it.

HB: Are they? That'd be great. That'd be great.

KM: They have got the country to make mistakes in, too.

HB: That would be great.

KM: How about the people you jumped with, what were they like?

HB: Oh, well, being a squad leader and what not, I never got to know them all that well. Some of the ones that I started jumping with in '48, I got to know them really well. But after you get to be squad leader you don't become very good friends of the jumpers. Lost several real good friends in airplane accidents. Plane crashed up here in '57, I don't when it was but one of my very best friends, he was squad leader then and he was killed in the plane crash. Needless to say, one of my best friends killed in Korea. That wasn't jumping though.

KM: What happened in the plane crash up here?



HB: Oh, they had a big investigation and as far as I know they had flown over the ridge and made a cargo drop. My good friend Gus was wrestling a very heavy load of cargo trying to get it to the door and I...from what...everything I heard anyway that the pilot I guess, was watching him instead of watching of where he was going. When he looked up, well, he was going right into the ridge. He had—he was too low. He pulled the, it was a twin Beech Aircraft, he pulled back on it too hard and it came up too steep, stalled out, flipped over, and came in upside down into the mountain. Killed everybody on board. That's what they thought happened anyway.

[Long pause]

KM: How many jumps did you have all together?

HB: I think it was 39. In seven years.

KM: And most of that was around this area?

HB: Oh yeah, I did, oh I went to Missoula one year, Cave Junction several times. Did even get to jump out of Ford Trimotor once. Heavens, I know my son has got as high 50 jumps in one year. So my measly few was nothing very exciting about it. Some of these guys get up to their 500 fire jumps or what not, jumps. They've been around awhile.

KM: Yeah. I guess. Do you know anybody else that has been jumping in your class that is around? Or did most people just jump one or two years?

HB: Melvin Norcott he lives here. He jumped after I did, but I imagine you got his name. I don't know. I'm sure you do. I'm sure Bill would have given you—they have compiled all the history when they had the reunion here [Winthrop, WA, 1982] and I suppose you have all that information on all the jumpers. Where they live and what they do. That was a very good undertaking, when they had that reunion.

KM: That was in '82.

HB: We were involved pretty heavily in helping them do that of course by living right here. My wife got involved, my daughter got involved. It was lot of fun.

KM: So a lot of the people I guess, particularly your class are from here.

HB: Yes most, most everybody, was, oh there was a few. There was a few out of state. But most of them from around Winthrop, Twisp, Okanogan, Tonasket, local areas. The biggest percentage of them were local kids. We didn't have the—it wasn't tough to get into the program. You put your name in and chances are that you'd be accepted if you had any kind of firefighting experience at all. But anymore they put you into a computer, and you have to come up through the Forest Service program and it's pretty tough. I know my son he, of course got in

the back door by going to Canada and then jumping up there and being accepted by the Forest Service.

KM: How many people were with you in your class?

HB: I think we had up to that time, we had the largest rookie class. I think we were 24, here [Winthrop, WA]. By Missoula standards, that's nothing, but I think there was 24 rookies. But with you know, you have to appreciate we didn't have any accommodations. The bunkhouse—the cook house was still there. The bunkhouse had to be moved, all replumbed, and training facilities were none. Had to build those. So you can understand why I say I don't remember too much about the training, because we were doing an awful lot of building. It was a very, very bad year for flood.

KM: What did you build when you joined the service?

HB: Well, we built them right over here, we built the, we moved in the jump tower and the torture racks and of course there were tires on the ground, and put up the trampoline type, doing rolls off on the trampoline. Let down procedure. And chute manipulation tower. By the standards they have now well we were very, very antiquated. But we got by, we used the old Norsman then. Single engine Noorduyn, if you want a, I guess there is still a few of them left in Canada and Alaska. I think we had four airplane pilots that first year I was here. Of course, the story went there was only one of them had a valid pilots license. Something was wrong with all the others, with their licenses. They hadn't renewed them or some silly thing like that. That was, you would always imagine that Forest Service would be very strict on something like that, but I guess they didn't check licenses. We had one pilot called Joe Harold (?). He was different, very, very different. I know that one of the jumpers walked by in a casual way joking, "I see you are working on that old bucket of bolts." He took after him with a wrench. I mean he was very serious about that bucket of bolts. [laughs] He did have a problem. One I think was that he didn't have a valid license. Oh well, it was a very good program and most all of the guys that I started with were going to college, either out of the service and in the college program or had just started. Most all of them put themselves through college by the jumper program. So they earned enough money in the summer time to make to go to school. I know that I saved every paycheck from my first year and I think I saved \$1,300. That put me through one year of school. Now my son did the same thing. He worked and earned enough money in the summertime to put himself through school.

KM: Do you recall anything of stories from 1945 of death, or rumored death of one of the jumpers of the black battalion? [555th Battalion all-black airborne unit]. You never heard of it?

HB: No. No. You don't have a name or anything like that?

KM: No, we just heard that there was an earlier death than the Mann Gulch fire of jumpers and that was it and yet no one seems to know of it.

HB: I know that the Army paratroopers jumped on Bunker Hill and that must have been in 1945. I know they had casualties, my goodness, broken legs and arms.

KM: What was the cause of that?

HB: Well they were an Army paratrooper outfit.

KM: They might need a—

HB: There was a Negro battalion and they were in the wilderness area back there.

[Interruption from outside].

They jumped them in there on that to help fight that fire. Now maybe that's—one of those Negroes that got killed in there. I don't know. 1945 was the first time I was ever on a fire. Your eyes get awful big by all these stories and what not. But I don't ever remember of and I know Francis wouldn't have known if one of them was killed back in there and I'm sure there weren't. I would have heard about it. There were a lot of stories though. The packers would take a white mattress cover and something like this and put over them and a crawl through the brush and growl and they'd get them all psyched up of course that there was bear in there. Oh they just tormented those poor guys. They had never seen the mountains before, a lot of them. And to jump them in country like that, that was quite an experience for them. You know they didn't have the protective clothing and gear that the smokejumpers had. They just jumped with their fatigues and—like they were in battle.

KM: What were the procedures when you would jump when you first started jumping, when you got to the ground?

HB: I don't think we changed very much. Immediately you put your streamers out and your Double L and—I don't know if they still use that procedure or not. But had all your code for signals that, of course we didn't have a radios like you have now. We had little SX radio sets that, we did, believe it or not have one of those on my first fire jump though. You had to climb the tree and run a big, long wire from tree to tree and it was crystal and if you were very lucky you would find the right frequency that you could talk to the lookout.

KM: You didn't talk to the plane?

HB: No, we were finding this fire that this lookout had reported in there and we'd flash the mirror, and he would look through his finder, range finder, and tell us if were close to the area or not. About then a cloudburst came over and if there was a fire it put it out, so—

KM: That was on your first fire jump?

HB: Yes. [laughs]

KM: So you never found the fire.

HB: No, heavens no. We just about drowned.

KM: What did you do then? Spent the night?

HB: Oh yes, we put up the chute, one of the cargo chutes to try to keep some of the water off of us. We dug a trench through the center of it so all of the water would run through. Oh it was quite a rain storm, and lightning. I think every tree on that hill side got hit, re-hit by lightning that night. It was a dandy. Of course, it was a real experience, course was going off and taken out with the helicopters, that was neat. I don't think that I ever had—I don't think I ever had a, either a guy got out with a helicopter or horses or some darn thing. I was always pretty lucky. Or else on a crew fire or some darn thing that, never hung up in a tree. Pat the angel on my shoulder. [laughs]

KM: Great, never had an injury?

HB: No, no

KM: Great, so the helicopter came right to where you were then?

HB: On top of the peak yes, we had to hike up to the top of—

KM: The equipment must have weighed probably—

HB: At that time—and I don't think it has changed that much—I think it was a 110 pounds, with what you'd pack out. And at that time, we were using the old ski trooper pack boards. But the kidney busters, they were the aluminum tubing type pack boards that carried your weight right here on the hip. That's why they called them kidney busters. It was really too much weight for that kind of pack board. And we used the down sleeping bags, little light down sleeping bags. Didn't have the disposable tools or sleeping bags or anything or disposable food. We used the old Army C rations.

KM: Which were dropped to you? All of that was dropped to you?

HB: Yes, yes, and let me tell you, you didn't stay out any longer than you had to with those Army C rations. They were probably five or six years old when we got them, and they didn't taste very good.

KM: And when you were done with the fire, did you pack them back out?

HB: Not the C rations. heavens no. They were probably buried long before—

[Break in audio]

HB: We were experimenting on how to drop tools and supplies. And everything we had was Army surplus. We got it, Lufkin was quite a scrounger. He could get the Army surplus equipment and we would build something out of it and try that and then build something else and try it. Didn't have chain saws of course. We had cross cuts and tied the two handles together and tied big long streamer on it and tried free falling. Unless it went right into the rocks it worked out pretty good. It just bounced when it hit the ground and didn't hurt the saw. Then they got them small surplus drift chutes and put those onto them. Oh, just tried everything. We dropped a cook stove out of an old Noorduyn one time to a trail crew. I think we put two chutes on the thing, because it weighed so much. Needless to say, it broke loose out of the harness anyway and when the chutes opened it broke loose, of course nothing was left of the stove. But it was an awful lot of trial and error. If something didn't work, then you went back and tried something else. Of course, it was the same as now, you didn't, an ordinary jumper didn't pack his own chute, you had to be a qualified rigger. You had to have license. I assume it's the same now. They have to be qualified riggers. I think most of us were master riggers. Worked up until Christmas time out piling brush, pruning trees, something like this, then come in and in the spring, sew up chutes, and do all the maintenance. Not much has changed except now I don't think that they do project work. I think jumpers usually just stay right here on the base. I personally think it would be a real shame there not out doing project work, learning something. They keep them close enough that if they do have need for them and then get back here short period of time and be gone.

KM: We do quite a bit of project work out of Missoula. The sub-base system so that we can do project work. What other kind of things did you work on developments of the jumping system? Like food, did you change the food?

HB: After I had left the program and I got into Boy Scouts, helping the Boy Scout program, well we got into real light dried foods and what not and—I gave some to Francis so he could try it with the jumpers, and they liked them very much. They ordered quite a few of them and tried those for several years. Well it seems like you once you are a jumper, around here anyway, pretty small valley, everybody knows where everybody else is doing and pretty close family. We have always kept close contact with each other.

What are you going to do write a thesis or something for college on this?

KM: No, this is part of the oral history project that they are making for the reunion this summer, [Missoula, MT, 1984] and I'm just conducting interviews which maybe will be eventually a book, or part of a book.

HB: I can tell you a good story about Missoula. We flew in the only time I ever jumped over there. Jumped out of Moose Creek somewhere in Idaho and hiked down to Moose Creek airport. There were two Ford Trimotors, and there was enough of us that they put half of us in one plane, half in the other, both took off about the same time. We were kind of hedge

hopping going down into Missoula and, like there would be a telephone line or a fence or something and he'd jump up over it. Just as we were ready to land, oh my goodness, he took a sharp evasive action and went off to the right and [we] looked out the window and here was the other Ford Trimotor, [it] had been landing coming in from the other direction and both were landing from opposite directions. So they both went around and did things properly that time and lit from the right way.

KM: Did you ever have any near accidents with planes?

HB: Well, we had one pilot that the was always running out of gas, always running out of gas. I don't care where he would let a tank, it was in the Noorduyn, it was a single engine. He would reach down and switch the fuel and off we'd go again. Well it was kind of a challenge to the jumpers to see who would be the one to jump or But he would always run out of gas either too low to the ground or over water or on takeoff or some damn thing where you could never jump out. So nobody ever got to jump out on him. And [it would have] started an investigation if somebody would have been able to jump out on him. Well then there would have been an investigation "Well how come you jumped?" Well, ran out of gas. Oh, we were over concrete. He flew in there, we went into get gas and there was a big stump patch out over the end of the runway and he got off the ground about 50 feet up in the air, 100 feet, I don't know how high, but he ran out of gas on takeoff.

Reached down and sput, sput, sput and restart it and we'd go again. Everybody tried to get him but they never could make it. Oh, we were flying to Cave Junction. Everybody was asleep in the airplane and I guess maybe we got too close to Hanford, I don't know. But the first thing I know, well look out, here was one of there black painted, coal black interceptor airplanes that they used around Hanford. Boy, he made a pass at us and I know the pilot woke up and he got the heck out of there in a hurry.

KM: So you went south quite a ways.

HB: Yeah, see we used, had satellite base for several years down at Joseph and Enterprise before they started a base down in that country, permanent base. LaGrande I think was a permanent base I don't think, I think they discontinued it again. But maybe they don't have a satellite base program there, I don't know. But anyway, we would send a crew down to Joseph and Enterprise every summer. And then after that well then they'd send them a satellite to LaGrande, well then LaGrande got it's own base and started it's own program. And now then they discontinued it. Mainly experimental, just everything you did was trial and error. But I will say I don't know how many years it was that Lufkin went here with out any loss time accident. Years and years without a loss time accident. I know when I got a tree dropped on top of me, well it was late in the afternoon, took me into the doctor and got my knee fixed up and was able to hobbled over and set behind a sewing machine the next day so I didn't have a loss time accident out of it anyway. There was a lot of those. The time I was here I think there was only one kid that ever refused to jump.

KM: On the first jump?

HB: Yep. I think they found him employment somewhere else. But you take three weeks of indoctrination, living with, oh, kids your own age and what not. Boy oh boy, it would be harder for somebody not to jump, than to jump. Oh, you would never, never ever be able to look them in the face again if you never jumped. And I have a sneaking suspicion on the second or third jump, well that had a lot of precedent. [laughs] It was mighty, mighty attractive not to jump. What am I doing up here?

KM: What are we all doing up here? Did you have any pretty wildfires themselves?

HB: No. One fire a year you couldn't really have wildfire. All nice little campfires. All nice little campfires. Heavens, we got one in Oregon that was—creek came by and we were able to get an irrigation ditch going and just real irrigated the thing and put it out by the creek.

KM: Mostly two-manners that you were on?

HB: Yeah, yeah, In those days that—fire was very big at all they wouldn't put jumpers on them and if they were close to a road they wouldn't put jumpers on them because the ground pounders could get there, they could handle them. Didn't use jumpers because we might get a fire in the back country some place where we need you. So we set here and waited.

KM: Wow, and did project work?

HB: Yeah, yeah.

KM: Did you ever do any project burning?

HB: No, no, we did experimental pruning, pruned trees 16 feet high off the ground, we pruned them out in the fall with snowshoes on, if you can imagine in five or six feet of snow, pruning trees on snowshoes and getting tangled up in all your brush. That was fun. We did that when it was 30 below, believe it or not. Piled an awful lot of brush in the fall. That's one way that the—[jumpers] didn't have to be on the airport payroll, you would be on the district's payroll. Lufkin just didn't have the money.

KM: The airport from where you were jumping, the jump base and the district were together at that time?

HB: No, they were entirely separate, they had their own funding. But Francis would get on the phone, well have you got any project work that you need done, well of course that would come out of the district funds if he could get jumpers out onto districts payroll. Well, it didn't come out of his own. At the end of the year if he had money left over, well it was some supplies that he could buy. All these buildings you see around here were built that very way, by him saving money and being able to buy new supplies or send out and get some surplus property. He was

quite a scrounger.

KM: What kind of pay were you getting?

HB: A hundred and twenty-two dollars and fifty cents every two weeks. That was squad leaders pay, I might say. No overtime.

KM: No overtime, not even on fires?

HB: No, straight time.

KM: You only worked eight hours a day?

HB: If you worked more you still got your straight time. It didn't matter.

KM: No hazard pay?

HB: No hazard pay. Just straight, straight pay. If you did work over eight hours, I know when I got a permanent position, well you had comp time. You took it off in the fall. You didn't get paid for your extra hours. You got a \$122.50 every two weeks period. Then in the fall why, you wanted to go deer hunting or something you had all these hours built up, well you got to take them off and you still got paid. No, it was much later when hazard pay, flight pay, and all those little niceties came along. I don't know who ever dreamed up that kind of stuff, [laughs] but the taxpayers stand for it, what the heck.

KM: Do you know when it was changed?

HB: I don't, I don't. Way after I was here. Probably in the '70s.

KM: Did you ever do any water jumps?

HB: Nope. Heavens no. They kept us so far away from water that—they didn't want us to drown.

KM: Even when you were spotting?

HB: Oh gosh, no.

KM: Did you ever spot a rescue jump?

HB: Oh, I can't remember if I did or not. I jumped on a rescue jump, but I packed out, or helped pack out, a ranger over on Mount Baker.

KM: What happened?



HB: Oh, he fell down through the trap door on the lookout tower. He thought he broke his back. He didn't, he'd sprained it. But they brought in the helicopter to take him out and the helicopter broke a rotor and crashed and the doctor that was aboard broke his arm. And so after that we just had a stretcher. Well, the horses had been, it was so brushy, you couldn't get off the trail. The trail was there, period. And the horses had wore a great big deep groove into the soft earth and on an ordinary stretcher there is a man on each side. Well, you couldn't do that. You had to walk in line. And we didn't have any way to, you know. And two guys packing another man you can only go for maybe 50 yards and then your all in. Then somebody else would take over. Well, that's how we had to do it. Came back and developed some yoke system that four guys could walk in line and pack a stretcher. And they would carry it on their shoulders. You know, you would develop those things is when a situation arose.

KM: Did you have any emergency exits from the plane?

HB: No.

KM: No problems except for the guy running out of gas?

HB: That joker. No, no. Extremely safe. The name of the game was safety.

KM: You had static lines when you were jumping?

HB: Oh, certainly, certainly. All static line jumps. Never— [pauses] oh golly, I think one of the small planes caught a goose sending out supplies or something and he caught a small chute on the tail of the plane. They had to sit down, and they didn't get hurt. Wrecked the airplane.

KM: Did your jump gear, your jump suit change between 1948 and 1954?

HB: No, no. We were still using the felt, sewing in felt for padding for sleeves and the knees and what not. It was much later when they started using that resilient-type rubber and had it in pockets and the fire resistant suits and what not. It was much later. No, we were still using football helmets when— [pauses] Well, Lufkin is probably out there, and I should go to work I suspect.

KM: Okay. Well thanks very much.

[End of Interview]