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Interviewee: Bob McGraw

Interviewer: Kim Taylor

Date of Interview: July 21, 1984

Project: Smokejumpers 1984 Reunion Oral History Project

Kim Taylor: This is Kim Taylor interviewing Bob McGraw at University of Montana July 21, 1984, for the Smokejumpers Oral History Project. Can you give us a brief biographical sketch?

Bob McGraw: Biographical? What do you want involved? What do you want in that?

KT: Where you were born and raised.

BM: Oh, you want my life history. Well, I was born in Nebraska. Then I moved to northern Idaho during the depression. That's where I grew up, went to school. In 1945 I started working for the Forest Service, in summertime, in blister rust camp; in 1945 and 1946 and 1947. I graduated from high school in 1947, and then after I worked in the blister rust camp, I enlisted in the Air Force for 3 years. Was overseas during...when the Korean War started and I got extended for a year after I was over there. I came back to the States and I worked for about a year, and I went to the University of Idaho and that's where my brother was a student. And then when school was out, in 1953, I asked him what I was going to do—be doing this summer for work and he said, "Well, why don't you smokejump with me?" So that's how I got in smokejumpers school. He had smokejumped the year before and was going back again and said I had just as well do it too. So I did.

KT: How did your brother get involved in smokejumping?

BM: I don't know. I was gone away from home when he went to high school and college, and everything. He was a junior the year I started as a freshman, even though he was my younger brother, because I spent 4 years in the Air Force. I don't know how he got involved, found out about it, I never asked him. [Pause] So I worked—smokejumped in '53—and I went to school in Tulsa that winter. That spring I went back—came back to Missoula, took my refresher training, went to Silver City smokejumper crew, and come back here after the New Mexico fire season was over. Worked at...I don't know what the name of the camp was, but it was at Hungry Horse Dam in northern Montana...western Montana until end of September. Went back and finished a trade school in Tulsa. Moved to Denver, found work and lived in Denver 28 years. Took an early retirement, and about...Last fall I moved to—back to Bonners Ferry, my hometown. And I'm still retired. Not doing anything yet. And how I found out about this reunion was, I went into a realtor's office, talked to a realtor about buying some property and they directed me to a realtor named Bob Graham. And after we talked through business—about business—why, we started talking and come to find out we both...He tells me about his work with the Forest Service and he retired with the Forest Service, and he told me about what he had been doing. It came around that he was a smokejumper and I said, "Well I'm a smokejumper." And he said,

"Well, do you know about the reunion?" And I hadn't heard anything about it. That's how I came to be here today.

KT: Well now, did you work on the same crew as your brother, in Silver City?

BM: No. My brother didn't go to Silver City. The Silver City crew trained—we trained early—before school was out. And he was in college, so he didn't get as soon as I did because I changed schools that winter. And I [inaudible] anything. It was kind of a tech school—technical training school. So I could leave there any time I want to and then go back and pick it up in the fall. He was at Grangeville, I think, in '54. I went to Grangeville for a couple of weeks after I come back from Silver City—for a week or something like that—I think, before I went up to Hungry Horse Dam Area.

KT: So did you do your training here in Missoula?

BM: Yes.

KT: Before you went to Silver City?

BM: I went training in '53 at Nine Mile, and in '54 they opened this area here up in dedication...I was here for the dedication in '54.

KT: Now, had you had any previous firefighting experience?

BM: Other than this Blister Rust Camp we had...we went on some fires as a Blister Rust worker.

KT: So what did the smokejumper training entail up at Nine Mile?

BM: Oh, the...I guess you call it woodsmanship—compass reading and how to fight fires, and your jump training. I think it was a month's training and conditioning just to get you ready for jumping on fires.

KT: How about the training jumps? Do you remember your first training jump?

BM: Yeah. They didn't get to see me land. I drifted out of sight [laughs] so I passed easy, I guess, because they didn't see me land. I was so...I don't know, I guess taken in, by floating down so soft and quiet, and I didn't really pay much attention. They were trying to tell me to turn my chute, you know, to come in just right, but I don't know, I was probably started off—or out of the plane—off different off from their jump spots. I kind of drifted out of sight behind a little knoll, so they didn't...nobody actually see me land. Made a good enough landing, I guess.

KT: How about right before you jumped out of the plane? Were you apprehensive at all?

BM: Yeah. That is apprehensive, and there is always a little bit of that, even with every jump, I think. I ended up with training jumps, in all 20 jumps. I think seven of them were training jumps, so that will make 13 of them fire jumps.

KT: So before you went to Silver City did you do any fire jumps in Missoula?

BM: Yes. In '53, I think I only made one jump in Silver City. I sprained my ankle in that jump so I didn't jump any more. [Pause] And so I didn't jump after I got back either, so most of my jumps were from the Missoula base, here.

KT: And that was before you went to Silver City?

BM: Yes.

KT: What was your first fire jump like?

BM: I don't even recall which the first fire jump was. I don't even remember the names of any of them anymore. I guess I could go down to the depot and find out which fires I was on, but I don't remember the names of any of them.

KT: Do you remember any of the fires?

BM: Oh, there's one that always, really, sticks out in my mind...I don't remember how big of crew we had on that. In...we got in just at night, just at dark. It was almost too late—too dark to jump, I think—because it was...yeah, because it was dark. We had to find the fire in the dark with flashlights. I don't know what time we got in there and we got the fire. We fought the fire all night and at daylight we had it pretty well surrounded. And we walked to the top of the hill, got together, and slept a little bit. Ate, and kind of rested. Some of them even went to sleep. I don't know what...how much time elapsed, but it was midmorning or so and somebody woke up, or become alert enough anyway, and saw a big cloud of smoke billowing below us, so we figured the thing got away from us. We went down there, and it had jumped our lines and we had to start all over again. But about the time...about that time, why, the ground crew got into us—relieved us.

KT: How many jumpers were on that fire?

BM: I don't recall. There was possibly a half a dozen. Don't remember. I think I only went in on...I don't even know whether I even went in on a two-man jump or not. I don't remember now. And that might have—that fire I just described—might have been the fire...It seemed like I was on one fire where they called for 32 men, and there was only 16 of us in camp at the time. So that's all they could send out. It was a bigger fire; it could have been that one. I don't know.

KT: So what was the fire like in Silver City, the one that you jumped on?

BM: I don't remember a whole lot of any particular details on it. We had to use different equipment down there than we did here. I don't even think we had shovels in our packs. They had a big heavy-duty rake, that I got pictures of here. I think were called a McCloud, or something like that.

KT: And how did they use that?

BM: Well, the soil down there was more rocky or sandy. It wasn't heavily covered with pine needle layers, like we have up here in the Northwest. Just scrape away, pretty easy, what little vegetation there was on top. It was too dry down there, I guess, to grow any thing on the ground.

KT: Hm, what other kind of tools did they use?

BM: A pulaski was in the pack. That was about it.

KT: Were any of the fire procedures different in Silver City?

BM: No. No, not at that time. I noticed...This is the first time I've been back for 30 years. And I noticed a big change in the way they do things. The equipment they have, and all that. It's been a big improvement over the last 30 years, since I jumped. Seemed like it would almost be a luxury to jump now compared to what we had then. Especially the meals, we had C-rations [inaudible].

KT: What were those like?

BM: Why, good. Kept us alive, I guess. I never found anything too bad about them. I guess the older GI's didn't care for them. I never had to eat them when I was in the service so I...wasn't all that bad.

KT: So how much time did you spend in New Mexico?

BM: Oh, I imagine it was probably 6 weeks. I don't remember what the dates were. But, oh, probably 6 weeks to 2 months. I think this is the date—5 / 16—7 / 11 is the last date on this roster. So it was about 2 months.

KT: Did you have any other duties that you did after you sprained your ankle?

BM: No. I just worked around the warehouse there. In the radio room and...I worked in the radio room some. That's about the only part of it I really remember working in. [Pause] I was on crutches for a while; I sprained it pretty bad.

KT: So when you were done in Silver City, did you come back to Missoula and work for a while?

BM: Yeah, we worked in the warehouse, building up fire packs, and worked a little maintenance here, and then went up to this camp at Hungry Horse Dam. And then probably a couple weeks or so, I transferred out. Well, after the fire season was over. It was after September—after the first of September. There was a Forest Service Road crew up there, so one of the...the guy was short a truck driver, so I quit the smokejumpers. Just called in and told them that they could use me as a driver—truck driver on the road crew—and if they didn't need me, why, I'd quit them and take the last couple of weeks with them. And they...it was okay with them. It was more money too. [Laugh].

KT: So then you went back to school in the fall, is that right?

BM: Yeah, went back to school. Then I went to work—had to go to work then. That's when I moved to Denver. That's when I moved to Denver after I got out of school.

KT: Oh. Okay.

BM: But I didn't do the kind of work I had been trained for, so.

KT: Okay, I got this kind of confused now. When you came back from New Mexico, that same summer, did you do any more work in Missoula as a smokejumper?

BM: I didn't jump...I didn't do any more jumping after I got back. My ankle was still bad—still weak.

KT: Did you do any project work that summer?

BM: Yeah.

KT: Oh, you did. That's—

BM: Yeah, I went on projects and—

KT: Okay. So then now the next year you came back as a smoke jumper?

BM: No, that was in '54 when I went to New Mexico was my last year at smokejumping.

KT: Oh, okay. So you smokejumped the year before in Missoula?

BM: Yes, '53 in Missoula. And '54 I went to New Mexico. Then, after the New Mexico season was over, we came back here and we just worked on projects around [the] state.

KT: Okay. So, did you notice any major differences in the two different crews, when you worked here in Missoula and when you worked in Silver City?

BM: No, the crew that was in Silver City were...Well, they were all from here. All from Missoula, trained and based here. And then just a crew they formed to go to Silver City from out of here. And when their season was over, why, we came back up here to Missoula, and were part of the regular crew out of here, then—from then on.

KT: So how many—when you were smokejumping in Missoula—how many fires did you have that year?

BM: Well, it must have been about 12, I guess. '53 was the bad year that had a lot of fires here. You'd come in from a fire in the evening and the next morning you were out on another one. It was a bad season that year. So, I had 20 jumps and I think seven of them were training jumps. I think I only had one in Silver City before I sprained my ankle. So about 12 of them I guess would have had to have been, in '53 here in Missoula.

KT: Did you sprain your ankle on the first jump in New Mexico?

BM: I think it was. As near as I can remember now.

KT: Did you work on your feet? Did you realize that you had gotten hurt?

BM: Yeah.

KT: Oh, okay.

BM: Yeah, I knew right away that I sprained my ankle.

KT: How did you get off the fire?

BM: They brought a horse in, and I rode out. That was...I think there was only two of us that went in on that fire. I could walk but my ankle was pretty...hurt pretty bad as far as walking out.

KT: How was it that you hurt your ankle?

BM: Well, I landed in a tree. But you're supposed to swing just in time to miss the tree, but I swung just a little bit too early, I guess, and either—I think I hit the main trunk of the tree. I swung out but I came back in too soon from my swing—hit the tree with my...most the force on one foot and sprained it.

KT: What were some of your off-duty activities?

BM: We didn't have much off-duty [laughs] time. In '53 the fire season was so bad that you'd no more get in off...get off a fire, and you'd go in on another one. And of course, after I'd come back from Silver City, why ,I went out on Project. There, you're so far away from towns that we just never went into towns even. Save our money so we could go to school. That was one nice thing about it; the pay wasn't too good but you really didn't have a chance or time to spend it either, so you saved everything you made just about. Which is nice for college kids.

KT: Did you get a lot of overtime hours?

BM: Yeah. Yeah, generally it was as much overtime as straight time, but of course, they didn't pay any extra for overtime. [pause] I don't know whether they do now or not. I haven't heard anybody say whether they get extra full time or whether there is—I guess there would be overtime, but whether they get extra pay for it now, I don't know.

KT: I believe they do.

BM: I don't even know what their pay rate is now. I haven't heard that either. I never even thought about it till now but I think it beat the dollar...What'd we get? \$1.65 an hour or something like that. Even if you worked 23 hours straight, it was still the same wage.

KT: Yeah, I'm not sure.

BM: That's something I'll have to check into—what the wages are now.

KT: Did you ever have any problems in your let downs?

BM: No [pause]. No, it seemed like it was pretty good training that we had, I guess. It covered everything pretty well. Of course, being of good physical condition has a lot to do with how easy things go when you get on a fire.

KT: Do you remember any of the other characters that you worked with?

BM: Yeah, a couple of them. I don't know whether I should name names or not. [laughs]

KT: That's up to you.

BM: There's...The one that really sticks out in my mind is Max Allen [Maxwell J.]. He was always good for a laugh—keep your spirits up. Things like that.

KT: What kind of things did he do?

BM: Oh, he's...Some of his comments and things he would say and do just trying to keep you—make you laugh once in a while. I won't go into details in some of them. [laugh]

KT: Was there a lot of practical jokes?

BM: No. I don't remember anything like that. Everybody took it pretty serious, and they always watched to make sure that they were placed properly on the top of the list when they were supposed to be. Everybody was always anxious to go out on the next jump.

KT: What were most of the other guys that you worked with? Were they students or veterans?

BM: No, they...Most of them seemed to be students—college students. I don't really know how many of them were veterans. You mean service—Armed Forces, that is? I don't know how many of them then would have been—I think most of were college students, so. I know I spent time in the Korean War, and I know Hugh Fowler did because...I don't know. There's a story behind that too, how I knew Hugh Fowler. When I was over in Japan, I squatted in a station at a little base for a few weeks and we ate at a small mess hall. And I'd always, in the mess hall, I'd always see this tall slim guy at the mess hall the same time we at. And there were both of them and I just seen him and he stood out because he was tall. This was probably 1950. The summer of 1950, after the Korean War, started it. And I was only there a few weeks, and then in '53 I jumped here in Missoula—took my training—and Hugh was our first aid man. And we...I don't know how long a time went by, but we finally got a talking one day, we thought we knew each from somewhere. Got to talking and find out that it was this little mess hall in Japan, in 1950, that we'd known each other. That we never spoke to each other, but we'd just had seen each other, and just from that we remembered that, that's where we had seen each other. He was a paramedic. That's the only other veteran that I know of that was here. There could have been more because usually the guys never mentioned it.

KT: Well now the jumpers that were students, were they studying forestry?

BM: I think most of them were. A lot of them seemed to be anyway—a lot of them from back East. Or not a lot of them, but there was jumpers from back East that were studying forestry. A lot of them would come out West, here, to work—to get the experience and training in forest.

[INTERRUPTION]

KT: What kind of planes did they use?

BM: We used the Ford Trimotor, the Travel Air, and then later on they had the Twin Beech, and the DC-3. And that was...I guess they got more modern planes now they're using, but that was what we had then.

KT: Which ones were they using in New Mexico?

BM: We had the Lockheed Loadstar in New Mexico.

KT: And which plane was your favorite.

BM: Well, I don't know. I never had any trouble with any of them, I guess. D-C 3, I guess probably, because of its speed was partly a little different, more different than the others. I never...Don't think I went out of the Twin Beech. I don't remember that at all. I know they had it but I didn't...don't think I jumped out of it.

KT: What were the pilots like?

BM: Oh, they were pretty nice. I think the pilots we had in Silver City—I'm not sure how it came about—it seems like they were contracted for that New Mexico job separately. They applied separately and were accepted, and they met here, I think. Here in Missoula, or possibly they didn't meet until they got to Silver City, but when they met, they found out that they knew each other in World War II, and the first time they'd seen each other since World War II. They were in the same outfit I think, or something like that. So it was kind of a reunion for them. This brought them together.

KT: What kind of chutes did you use?

BM: Oh, I don't know. I think they were 30-foot chutes. They had tails—slots, I guess. [Pause]. Better than the ones they're using now just from going against that tour out there, they're a little different from what we had then. They've made improvements—quite a bit.

KT: What was your most memorable fire?

BM: I suppose the one where I sprained my ankle. [Laugh] But there was nothing...There was nothing special in any of them that stuck in my mind anyway. It was just a job as far as I was concerned then.

KT: What kind of reactions did you get from your friends and families?

BM: Oh, not many I know about, I just don't think about it at all. I know when my brother was jumping, in '52. I'd get letters from my mother and...My brother would write my mother, and then my mother would write me and she would say that Jerry made jumping—smokejumping sound so nice that she thought she'd even like it. So—

KT: But they were never worried or concerned?

BM: No. I don't think so. My brother, I know, he was a ROTC in college—Air Force ROTC. And they found out that he was smokejumping and they didn't like it at all. They tried to make him quit it. He told them that it was none of their business what he did in the summertime, but that was his business what he did when he was out of school. They didn't like it too well, I guess, but

he told them that anyway.

KT: Do you know why they didn't like it?

BM: They just didn't...They thought it was dangerous and that they would be losing a man—a potential officer. He went to officer's flight school after he graduated and was in ROTC. And he had to spend, I think, 4 years. They just felt that it was too dangerous; it was risking his life and they didn't like that. But he told them that it was none of their business what he did in the summertime.

KT: Was your brother ever injured in a jump?

BM: No.

KT: Were you ever involved in a rescue jump?

BM: No. [Pause]. All hard work, no glory. [Laughs]

KT: What was the jumper morale like?

BM: I think it was pretty good. Everybody there was...always waiting to go back out on the next fire. They made sure that they were placed on top of the highest...on top of the list that they could possibly be. They didn't want to get bumped down any...always ready to go again. [pauses] A lot of them wouldn't even...wouldn't even leave town on the weekends, so they could be here to jump in case there was a fire. They wanted to be around.

KT: What were some of the basic fire procedures when you get to a fire?

BM: Oh, get a ring around it. Just get a ring around it and get it contained and generally by then there'd be a ground crew on its way in. Supposedly a ground crew, unless it was a small, two-man or something like that. Generally, a ground crew was supposed to be on its way in by the time you went in. As soon as they got in, why, we went out. We never stayed after they got in.

KT: And how did you get out?

BM: Walk! [Laugh].

KT: You did, huh!?

BM: Yeah. Sometimes they were long walks too. After fighting fire all day and then hike out.

KT: What was the biggest fire you were on?

BM: I don't remember. I think possibly the one they called for 32 men, and we only had about 16 left in base at that time. That call—everybody was out.

KT: What did your project work entail?

BM: I don't remember what all we did at various districts. Trail work I suppose, road work, things like that I guess. I don't recall, all these years, just what all we did do.

KT: Were you on call when you were on fire crew?

BM: Yes. There was one time I was called back from one of the districts. It was, I think it was, Ants Flat Ranger Station up in Northern Montana, right by the Canadian border, I think. We got called back on that. They flew a plane in and picked us up. I drove up there in my car with some other guys in my car and they flew us back by plane. We went on fire and after the fire was over, I was around here—I don't know—a week or so, and I still had to...My car was still up there at this ranger station, and I was kind of anxious to get it back. So they flew me up there and dropped me off, and I had to hitchhike into town—to the ranger station to get my car and drive it back. [Pause]. Oh, one of the projects that I remember now that I did on one of the districts, was beetle spraying—beetle control. Spraying the trees. That was about a 10-mile hike into this camp, from the road to this beetle spraying camp.

KT: And how would you be camped out?

BM: Oh, we might have been there—a couple of weeks I suppose. I don't remember now. They, I guess, dropped the tents and supplies and everything in, and we set our tents up after we got in there.

KT: Now if a rash of fires had come up while you were at camp, how would they have gotten ahold of you?

BM: Radio, I suppose.

KT: And what did the spraying entail?

BM: Oh, we sprayed trees, standing trees, with ethylene dibromide. Which, now, they say is cancer causing and more of this environmental stuff that they're controlling. They didn't think too much about it at the time we used it. We had...wore eye goggles and gloves, I guess, but that was about the extent of the protection we had at that time. I don't know that anybody's had any ill effects of it over [inaudible] or at that time, but now they say it is cancer causing—dangerous stuff.

KT: Did that seem to be effective against the beetles?

BM: I never heard how it...apparently it is, I guess they used it for years. I don't know whether they still using it or not.

KT: After having been a smokejumper, did you think about it a lot?

BM: No, not really. I was...got interested in my work and other things and never thought about it too much.

KT: Do you think having been a smokejumper affected the way you thought about things at all?

BM: Oh, every instant in your life, I guess, affects you some way whether you realize it or not, but it was good. I liked it. I like the mountains and the forests anyway. Even when I was...lived in Denver all these years, I spent most my weekends out in the woods—hiking, picture taking. I just like that type. That's the way I grew up—in the woods. Or least I was old enough to remember a lot of things like the mountains, and the forests, and streams, and the wild animals.

KT: Oh, did you ever have any problems with the wild animals when you were working? Or snakes or anything like that?

BM: No. No, never had any problems. Ah, some of the Blister Rust Camps we worked in we had bears around camp, but they weren't any problems. I can remember down in New Mexico hearing wild turkeys gobbling in the early mornings, out on the fire. No, we were never in any snake—rattlesnake country.

KT: What do...what do you think about the smokejumping today?

BM: Oh, it's all right. It's...looks like it's still a nice job.

KT: What kind of differences do you notice in the way that it is run today and the way was run when you were working?

BM: Oh, their equipment is changed an awful lot. That's probably about the biggest thing, I guess, is the equipment then. The advance technology and the firefighting and the equipment that they've come up with refinements and all that. Of course, I guess this Research and Development Center they got out here being close to the fire depot has had a lot to do with that.

KT: How about in the attitude? Have you noticed any difference in the attitude, in smokejumpers—

BM: No. They're still the same gung-ho bunch of guys—guys that I've met. I understand that they don't have the turnover in jumpers that we used to have. They get a crew now and I guess

they come back year after year. Of course, they're in an age now that they can jump, because it's been extended quite a bit. That makes a difference, I guess, in the turnover.

KT: I think that that has a lot to do with the idea of the professional jumper that they're promoting now. What do you feel about that?

BM: You mean these skydivers type?

KT: No. The professional smokejumper. Just a [inaudible].

BM: Well, I guess professional smokejumper, I suppose is why they don't have the turnover then now, that they had.

KT: What kind of differences do you think that would make in the crew?

BM: Well as long as you work together with somebody, why, you know how he thinks and how he's going to react and you know you can depend on him if you get in trouble.

KT: What do you think about the idea of decentralization? Have you heard about that?

BM: No.

KT: Ah, that's where they're trying to work back at the district level again.

BM: You mean have spread out—other stations spread throughout smaller areas/

KT: Mm hmm.

BM: Well I guess that would get them to a fire quicker. I don't know. Cost wise, I suppose that there's some savings there too, but then it's...means more equipment, so I don't know how it comes out cost wise. [Pause]. I don't know. This wilderness thing that's going on now I...They don't even want you to fight fires, some of these places. I'm kind of against that. I...They say they want nature to take its course and let them burn but I don't go for that. I like the forests too well to see them burn down. I talked to a district ranger, retired now, and he was on a big fire and they wouldn't let him bring in bulldozers, trucks, or anything else to stop the fire. They just had to do it by hand if anything at all. Couldn't build roads or nothing. I just don't go for that. Maybe it's because I spent so much time in the woods and was trained as a firefighter and...to save the woods and that. I guess...that's still...believe in that.

KT: Do they ever have any smokejumper parties at the end of the season?

BM: No, generally the guys would phase out kind of gradually. They just...Two or three would just disappear at a time, go back to school or whatever, and I never got in on any anyway. There

might have been a group from time to time, might go down to the bar and celebrate, or something like that, but I never heard of them. But [that] doesn't mean that they didn't do it. But as far as a big general overall party, we didn't. Other than when we left Silver City. Of course, we were the first crew in Silver City, and the city, I guess Chamber of Commerce or whatever, threw us a big banquet, farewell party when we left. That's where that big picture—they took that and sent each one of us after we left. So they really treated us nice there.

KT: So how did the people in the community feel about the Smokejumpers?

BM: They, thought pretty well of us. They treated us pretty nice and threw us that big banquet when we left, everybody.

KT: How about the women folk?

BM: They were all...The people, they just treated ya...really welcomed you. We were some rarity to them, I guess. They really thought quite a bit of us coming down there and fighting their fires for them.

KT: Did you feel that more so in New Mexico than you did when you were here in Missoula?

BM: Yeah. Yeah. Of course the Forest Service and smokejumpers were—been known pretty long time around here, I guess, so people were used to it. There in Silver City, why, that was the first time a group like that had ever been in there, so they treated them pretty nice.

KT: What were some of the difference in the types of fires by the different terrains from around here, around Missoula, and down around there, in New Mexico?

BM: Well, I was only on about one fire in New Mexico, and maybe—the one I was on the trees weren't that heavily...weren't as thick and not that much of a problem. But I guess there is areas down there. I know they have bad fires down there. The trees weren't...they were different type of tree; they didn't seem to be as large and thick as they are here but still it's drier. I know they do have bad fires there in town.

[Break in audio]

KT: Do you have any jumper story's that you would like to share with us?

BM: No. Not really, I guess. [pauses] There was one thing the guys in Silver City liked, was going across the border and laying a year's supply of booze for their college parties up here. They took advantage of that pretty well. They must have had a good time that winter up here after that.

KT: So would they load up on the stuff?

BM: Yeah, they brought back quite a...quite a bunch of booze with them. I guess it was pretty reasonable price down there in New...in Old Mexico. They go across the border and pick up the booze to last them through the winter here in Missoula or Bozeman or wherever they were going to college.

KT: But you were never involved in that?

BM: No. I never went down and got any of it. Sampled a little of it but— [laughs]

KT: Are there any other comments that you would like to make on the smokejumper organization today or when you were a smoke jumper?

BM: No. I pretty much said I think what I could say. It's a kind of life I think a guy likes or don't like probably. Most of them seem to like it and come back year after year.

KT: Well, I would like to thank you for this interview.

BM: Yeah, it's been kind of nice just to reminisce bring up some thoughts that I hadn't thought about for years.

[END OF INTERVIEW]