

Original transcript created by Allan Anderson at an unknown date; revised by Leslie McCartney on July 30, 2018.

Note by McCartney: Although the narrator and interview share the same surname (Anderson), they are not related. This transcript is not a verbatim word-for-word transcript.

Allan Anderson's number 11-13-2010 – Slide Tray #1

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00:17

Allan Anderson (AA): I will have each story with each link. About each plane – we will have a story.

Jim Anderson (JA): Now this one was taken about 1970-71 –a PA 12 gear broke it was over at Metro Field where I was teaching an A & P school. That is all the students out there learning how to pick up an airplane and put the landing gear back on. Little simple deal. It was a good place to work, runway and all – things going on all the time.

AA – Was it an actually a plane that had problems?

JA: Oh – plane had come in landed and gear let go. Oh – beat up old junker.

AA: – and this was over at Phillips Field?

JA: No - at Metro Field.

01:00

AA: Let me know when you want to switch pictures. These slides are real faded.

JA: Oh – all the same one.

AA - Do you – Terry was one of your students at one point?

JA: , , and he left and I left and Terry came back and finished up and got his license. Oh , you can see broken gear – that about all there was to it.

01:43

AA - Some of the slides are still backwards. I haven't gotten around to flipping then yet.

JA: Oh , they should be alright. Oh goodness there is the tent we lived in while we were getting the C46 off the hillside. Bellied in - ran out of gas.

AA: Do you know about what year that was?

JA: Let's see - after I left Wiens – probably about winter of '67-'68, somewhere around then.

AA - And you said that was in the hills above Livengood?

JA: – just right outside of Livengood. Don't remember the name of the mountain, it's the tallest one around. Sawtooth maybe – don't know if anybody every told me.

02:35

AA: Was the plane up there in support of a mine?

JA: No – Fairbanks Air Service had a load of drum gas and fuel to go the Anaktuvuk – could not find it, couldn't get in so the captain elected to come back to Fairbanks but he didn't have enough gas to make it. Landed on a clear tundra hilltop – way up no trees – slid 'er in.

AA - Was he on skis?

JA: No C46 – wheel up landing - worst part about it was digging out impacted snow on the belly and snow compartments—to get all weight out of it. Was me and Arnie Lake and Bob Hilliard got up there to do this job – took up - that is air bags to fit under wings – big ones – about 12' square – lift it up and go from there. There I think we were just getting up there – we kinda camped one night for one reason – think that's still on the road, had a loader - loader and a cat to make runway to get off again – that – probable road out of Livengood on the Elliott highway.

4:05

AA – Just the three of you?

JA: And one fellow kept running back n forth – Herb something – he was working for Fairbanks Air Service. Would get a message through and he would bring up stuff we needed.

AA – were you working for yourself then?

JA: Oh, I was kinda at loose ends. I was working for Fairbanks Air Service at the time and trying to work on the house. I was due to go outside and pickup Judy so we could get married, get settled down. This go in between it. Let's see, who was it? Urban Rahoi, no, not Urban, Phil, Phil Rahoi and Jack Winters – had the cat and loader. Bob Hilliard – the first night we were up there he turned around and hit propeller blade and broke his nose so he left and went back to town. So Arnie and I did the job ourselves. Took about six days.

AA - Is Philip Rahoi related to Urban?

05:14

JA: , Urban's brother. Been gone for years now, same as Jack.

AA: Were they both working for the Air Service?

JA: No, no – they just hired on to run tractors and stuff. KInda contract deal. I don't know how that worked out. And there is the 46 – you can see we are up there pretty high.

AA: Is that a lake behind there?

JA: No, no another hill side – was a swale below it –came in landed going uphill. One day a fellow was flying DC3 – and he went by and he was actually below us – looking out cockpit window at us.

06:01

AA: And he had gear up when he landed?

JA: , didn't tear gear off – bellied in. There you can see heaters going trying to get things squared away.

AA: Surprising to someone like me – after seeing something like this that you could get the plane out of there is six days.

JA: No – it wasn't too bad. There we are heating things up and getting snow and ice out of the engine and cockpit. Working something else in the meantime, I expect. Had to change the props of course. Same thing – getting ice out of engines.

06:55

AA: I was surprised to realize that you utilized airbag technology.

JA: Oh .

AA: How long has that been around?

JA: Oh that has been around for ages. These were surplus things - Wien Airlines had 'em and I had used them once before when a gear collapsed outside terminal. That was just one side – wasn't too bad. So we got them and used them for this. Used them again Interior Airways when they forgot to put the wheels down at International – not sure what ever happened to them after that.

AA - Still have some sort of airbags?

JA: Not now, no. Small airplanes you don't 'em. Here you can see it. , must have been ten foot cube.

AA - Is that you standing behind the --?

JA: No, no, that's Jack Winters. Good guy – good operator. But you see the hill was steep enough you can see the cable going up to the prop shaft – had a screw on eye on it - that was to keep plane from sliding back down the hill. We had to watch out for that – tried it once and realized what was going on – trying this time and things were going pretty good – but tail kept coming up – emptied it out to make it light. Then we had to put some drums, full, way in the back end of the cargo area to keep tail down. It was interesting.

08:34

AA - How did you get the drums of fuel up in the plane?

JA: Put a plank down and rolled them up.

AA: Just rolled them up the old fashion way.

JA: Oh. You see the door sill was pretty close to ground – on its belly yet. We had started up and realized this ain't gonna work so put it back down. Doesn't take much pressure I suppose 10-12 pounds is all it takes for that much area. Yes, , that is me there. Then you can see it was pretty warm up there – we were pretty lucky with the weather.

09:05

AA: What time of year was that?

JA: it was spring - I think about March. It was pretty dry around Fairbanks.

AA: You don't notice from the photographs that the hillside was that steep that you would have to anchor it to keep it from sliding.

JA: No you can't tell from here. That's Arnie Lake. We were – left road went cross country – as it was shorter as we had to get to it –as we came up over this little ridge and there that airplane lay all snow blown and drifting and the wind is howlin' and Arnie looked at me and said Jim – we have made a mistake. Then we went to work. It was real good. He was a good mechanic.

AA: He was an aircraft mechanic?

JA: Oh , . Good sheet metal man – good at everything.

10:07

AA: Did he have his own shop?

JA: No, no, he worked for different people – at Wiens. I first meet him at Wiens. We just got along good, had a few beers together.

AA: That plane looks pretty frosty.

JA: Oh yes, yes – that first view was pretty tough. Cock pit door was open and snow had blown in it. The wind blew steady. We got lucky and it stopped. First couple of days it was miserable.

AA: Did you have any issues with snow melting and affecting electronics inside the cockpit?

JA: No – this was old type gauges and we weren't worried about radios and anything else- and actually they worked. It came out pretty fine.

11:06

AA: Who flew it out?

JA: Don Gilbertson. Captain came up - the owner of the company – Verna Evans she send word up that King Williams – they guy who had wrecked it - was going to come up and fly it off. I told she that wouldn't work – Don knew more about it. I just did not trust that other guy, he'd already screwed up this much I wasn't about to let him take a short runway down hill - who knows what might have happen. That was referred to as a propeller shop.

AA: Is the dirt and snow piled up there is that from digging the plane out or is that from making a runway?

JA: That is from making the runway.

11:50

AA - Did you repair the propellers?

JA: No we brought up different propellers for it I think we took these apart when we brought them back – so they wouldn't be hanging over the edge of the truck. They are about 10 foot or so. No big problem while things are heating up to do this. Oh, the well dressed mechanic. Filthy Carhartts.

AA: Can't even tell they are Carhartts. They look like dirty shop overalls.

JA: They are Carhartts. There's Arnie fooling around.

AA: What was Arnie's last name?

JA: Arnie Lake. Now that is hard to see – that is a Gullwing I was in when it crashed off the end of Phillips Field.

AA: Is that the one you were in when you were going to Tanada Lake?

JA: Yes. Glen Gregory's airplane – Glen and I was going down to get this Cub that had fallen into ice on Tanada Lake – had frozen in. The old Gullwing just didn't quite make it.

AA: There are a few better pictures of it.

13:11

JA: Oh .

AA: Some of the slides were scanned backwards I believe. And this was off the end of Phillips Field?

JA: Oh , off Philips Field.

AA: When we were looking at these pictures briefly with Terry the other day, he said it was picked pretty clean.

JA: We did not go back to get anything off of it. Oh must have been several months later - summer – somebody said something about a tail wheel. I thought Gullwing might have one – You know I had awful time finding it. I was standing right there – it was within 20 feet – I could not see it until fabric fluttered in the wind. They had taken engine off – scavengers in there and taken – anything might be good.

AA – this was about 1952?

JA: No, it was before I went off to Northup so it would have been 1955, fall of '55.

AA: We have some of the Tenada Lake pictures here.

JA: Oh yeah.

AA: Who was the pilot on this?

14:20

JA: Glen Gregory, it was his airplane. Went to take off – had big old wooden skis with the metal bottoms on ‘um and there wasn’t much snow on the runway – some rocks hit it and ripped the tin on bottom on skis and we used up too much runway before got airborne – I think we went over end of Phillips Field heading towards the railroad yards at about 2 foot – down in the gravel pit and up other end and we might have had ten, twelve feet before we started hittin’ the trees. Glen just shoved ‘er over and shut it off and let it hit. Strong airplanes - Stinson had theory of safety first and performance was second. And I’m glad they did.

AA: Was everyone in the plan workin’ for an outfit that was gonna recover that plane?

JA: Yes – we all were working for Fairbanks Aircraft as it was known at that time. Later it became Bachner Aircraft.

15:26

AA: Tore up pretty good.

JA: Oh yeah, yeah. Frozen trees don’t give easily.

AA: So is this somewhere Johansen Express Way is now?

JA: No, no. It would be –well the Coke plant was over there for a while. Just about there - Before you get we were in trees between railroad yards and the Chena. Has all changed now – of course – all grown up – not a tree left.

AA: You said Coke plant or actual distributor?

JA: Coke cola had a --

AA: Actually made coke.

JA: Yeah, yeah. Same shots.

AA: You said that was a Stinson?

JA: Yeah. Stinson, Gullwing.

AA: You can see I got that slide backwards – by numbers on that wing.

16:33

JA: That was a Comanche - belong to Cliff Fairchild flew - out of Fort Yukon. That’s on Big Middle Lake. Engine quit completely. He and another guy with him – and bellied it in. Did not hurt plane – the way the weather was and the ice we had to take it apart to bring it in with helicopter. And in those days the helicopter weren’t too large – had to drop wings as because they started swinging around underneath him. Prior to that – not much wrong with belly work.

17:13

AA: Was ice too rotten to try to fix it up there?

JA: At first we thought if we could put new engine on and make a bit of runway – but that was before you had small snow blowers or anything else like that– so just couldn't do it.

17:29

AA: What year was this?

JA: Oh boy that is a good one – that was after I came back – I went to Northrup – fall of '56, part of '57 – probably spring of '57 or 8 – somewhere in there.

AA: You said you went to Northrup – was that for you're A & P training?

JA: Yes, Northrup Aeronautical Institute, Englewood California. I figured - oh you can get – you can get your ticket right here — just study up and take your test – you have the experience. I said there ain't no way I am going out there and go to school and get this over with. Good move on my part. First time I'd been outside – no second. Stayed outside with my Grandparents on Vashon Island when I was about ten years old, I guess.

AA: Where was the training at – Englewood CA -- Here I was, poor hick from Alaska cars going every which way – and I was out there right in the middle of them --

AA: You went out there '55?

JA: Let's see, late '55, about Christmas time. School started in January – I was there couple weeks before that got going. Yeah.

AA - Had you been working with aircraft prior to goin' out there?

JA: Oh yeah, since 1954. I was washing parts day I graduated from high school. I started doing more and more and decided that I liked this. So I worked for – '54 – late '55, year and a half or so – then went out to school.

AA Who did you start working for?

JA: Fairbanks Aircraft.

AA: Was that later Bachner?

JA: Yeah, Bachner over at Phillips Field.

19:40

AA - I need to listen to tapes with Him Hutchison and Jess Bachner and get the history down there.

JA: There you go sure. The engine had been brought in and repaired and we were thinking of about putting it back on when we realized it wasn't going to work. You can see from the hole there that water was starting to come up and snow was melting.

20:05

AA: Was he flying from Fort Yukon?

JA: No it was Cliff and a guy name Hal Bogenrife – Bogey. He was another old time pilot up here. His plane had trouble over near Indian Mountain somewhere so Cliff went over and picked him up and they were coming back when the engine stopped completely. And he turned and belied it in.

AA - The guy whose plane quit originally must have been impressed with two things happening.

JA: Two real professional pilots. He says I couldn't believe it – twice in about three days. The one in Indian Mountain that one wasn't too serious. Had to change a cylinder or some damn thing, I don't know what happened there.

AA: Where's Indian Mountain?

JA: Over by Hughes.

AA: Okay. So that wasn't damaged you guys just you had to take it apart –

JA: We had to take it apart and bring it in with the helicopter.

AA: Was it just not accessible with a truck?

JA: Oh no, no roads down there.

AA: So you basically had to when you came to a job like, a lot of times you had to hike in.

JA: Well, not too bad – usually you could land pretty close to them. It wasn't bad that way at all.

AA: So you flew into this one?

JA: Yeah. Came in with 180 on skis. Unloaded everything and took it apart.

AA - And this was spring again?

JA: Oh yeah, you see the way it is melting on the ice there – pretty spongy. That's the helicopter bringing the fuselage in to Phillips Field. And old Bell.

22.02

AA: One of these photos is pretty goofy – pulled the slide cover before it was done. ut I got it again later.

JA: Yeah, that's it. Oh yes a couple of funny there.

AA: Yes I was still scanning and pulled the cover up and it wasn't done scanning.

JA: Ah yes, Tanada Lake.

22:29

AA: and you said this was down by Gakona?

JA: We flew in from Gakona – half hour or so - Super Cub. Bud Conkle and his wife had a lodge there. I was working this time – I had driven a truck to Big Delta and picked up a fellow named Art Smith. We drove on down to Gakona stayed overnight and Cleo McMann flew us in one at a time in a Cub.

23.02.

JA: That ice – Cleo came back in and he landed way down there and he went by us standing on a ski draggin' one foot, just a smiling and wavin'. Engine shut of - He was sliding and sliding.

AA: You said this was – what year – November?

JA: Yeah. I was trying to think when this might have been – you know I had a B55 also – yeah before I went to school. Pretty country. That was the wood hauler – me pulling it. We knocked the end out of a couple 50 gallon drums and put them on a fire and commenced to heat up hot water to pour into holes in the wings to thaw them out. And there it is going home. You got this out of context - you see that should have been at the end of all of them. But that's when I first got there.

AA: Holy Cow, interesting.

JA: that's Art there doin' something.

AA: You said that is a cub?

JA: Yeah, Super Cub. He landed actually further out and he came to a stop and it fell through – so he got himself and his friend out of it. Let's see – Glen went down first and he cut a circle around the airplane in the ice with a chainsaw and pushed the chunks underneath - then they cut a path back and were towing it to towards shore -- well they got stopped when the gear got stuck on the bottom. They could not do anything else. It was too heavy with ice on the wings to come up and try to pull any further. So Glen came back to town – and that is when we wrecked the Gullwing and I ended up going down the truck.

AA - Would the wings have held if they would have pulled it up with the wings full of ice?

JA: I doubt it. There was six or eight inches of ice, probably more. And you can see by the way the wings are that the whole front end was plumb full of ice – of course cockpit– fuselage – everything. Glen is trying to get fire pot going or something, I don't know what was goin' on there.

25:39

AA: Had you dealt with planes going through ice before?

JA: No this was first time. Art had done it before – he had been around for years.

AA: I can just imagine what went through your mind when you first saw that.

JA: it –I thought how in the hell could we do anything here – but I just kept my mouth shut and kept workin'.

26:00

AA: Now was the tripod to lift plane up or pulling back?

JA: That was for pulling back originally. Bud and his wife came over – that was good as we stayed in the lodge and Mrs. Conkle was cookin' up food and was a warm place to sleep. Art was telling story about black fish. They are little fish about couple of inches long – but they will school up in the winter. And keep circling in water so they had open hole above them. Art was telling this story and all of a sudden said Bud do you have an outboard around here – a small one? So the next things – we took this outboard out there and stuck it in the back end of the boat and cut a hole in the ice and put it down through and started stirring the water up and it just melting around the airplane. But the way the wings were the problem was there –with the ice inside. So we cut holes in the fabric on top of the wing and started carrying buckets of water to pour into 'em. This was much more efficient than the fire pot to heat up the water.

AA: You said before you had to drill out all the --?

JA: Oh after it came up out – there is the outboard running there - see it is underneath that canvas on the back of the boat – Art carrying buckets of hot water – no cold water – heading for the beach. He's runnin' back to get more, and the weather was warm enough for covered up – see when the water was open up – didn't freeze at night. I think the coldest we saw was when we first got there it was about 30 below – and then it warmed up. Here again – we were lucky with weather.

AA - You had to spend some time getting wet.

JA: Oh yeah. Splashed water around – however not too bad.

28:01

AA - You did not actually had to go under the ice?

JA: No – Had problem hookin' up the – we had tripod on the bottom, or was it on the ice? I forget which. And then hooked onto the engine when we got it thawed out enough and commenced to lift 'er up. And things got a little wet then.

AA: Anytime you need to take a break we can just press pause and return.

JA: I think we can go a little further here before I need to run to the bathroom again.

AA: They're out of sequence again.

JA: Wrong airplane. That's – I think that is Art again – I was taking pictures. Its full buckets – he was heading for the airplane.

AA: This picture is this looking south or north or?

JA: I couldn't tell you, I really couldn't. The lodge I think would have been to the right a little bit but I'm not real sure about that either– nice place, all log, beautiful.

AA: Do you know if it's still there?

JA: I expect it is, yeah. Mrs. Conkle is still alive, she could tell ya about it.

29:10

AA: And this is – East of Gakona?

JA: I don't know.

AA: I'll just have to look it up.

JA: Oh yeah, yeah.

AA - What a site.

JA: Oh yeah, yeah. Oh yeah. We splitted through the through the ice – and we just used two legs for the tripod instead of three.

AA: There had to be some pressure to get this job done as it was going too just get colder.

JA: Oh yeah. Going to colder and worsser. Oh yeah. Oh yes.

AA: Is someone on top?

JA: Yeah, I think that's probably Art pouring water in or doin' something.

29:59

AA: Was Art the one who needed two boxes of cigars?

JA: He did. I came in first then Art came in – he's standing there looking at that and Art said Cleo McMann and he says, Cleo, this is a two box job. I need another box of cigars to finish this one. There she's coming up. And we have some extra rigging on it for some reason. Another set of poles.

AA: This might sound like an ignorant question but was there chainsaws at that time.

JA: Oh yeah – chainsaws but not much else.

AA: No electric drills?

JA: No, no.

AA: Generators?

JA: Yeah, you could get generators

AA: Portable ones?

JA: Yeah, but we didn't have one. So what we did was – yeah we didn't have a generator. We used hand drills. Art crawled all through that fuselage drilling holes in the tubing to drain the water out. Years later when it was recovered it – said they only found one split tube that he'd missed. The water had been in it frozen. There we have it back up and on and now we are underneath all the blanketing and tarping and stuff - fire pots and a drip oil stove. Warming it up and getting more ice out of it.

31:42

AA: Must not have had parachutes at that time to create a –

JA: No down there - no we didn't have them. Just tarps and quilts. There is the lodge in the background. Everything thawed out. Drained the engine oil. Now that is the old style engine cover. Went over the engine all the way to the ground so you could put a fire pot right on the ground underneath it. And keep the wind off of it. Some guys sat under there with a little bitty wood fire to keep them warmed up – when things weren't going right -- you don't seem them anymore. Now it is all electricity. And super insulated – that is just white canvas. Have to shut it off for a minute. Just like the good old days.

32:44

AA: Okay we are back recording.

JA: Yeah. Quite a little venture. I musta been about nineteen at that time.

AA: Oh, at Tanada Lake?

JA: Mmm.

AA: After you saw that were you sure you wanted to keep on being an airplane a mechanic?

JA: I just wanted to learn how to do things. I just wanted to keep doin' 'er.

AA: You said onthat one tape your Dad gave you the choice of –

JA: Oh yeah, the morning after I had graduated from high school – I was already working part time at Fairbanks Aircraft after school and on Saturdays – and I kinda thought it would be fun. So my dad gave me the option – he said well now if you're gonna go to college – room and board will be free. If you are going to keep working - it is going to be a \$100 a month. That was 1954. I sat there for a while and thought I think I'll keep working and see what I'm gonna do. So of course, instead of going to college I went out to Northrup. It has been a good time. I have enjoyed it all these years.

AA: How much was it to go to Northrop?

JA: Oh gosh, seems like, I Think tuition was \$1,000 and I had saved every nickel I could. I had about \$2,500 when I went out. Figured I was a rich kid. Room and board at this place was \$17.50 a week – but you had to find own grub on Sundays.

AA: Was it right in town?

JA: In Englewood. Oh yeah.

AA: So it wasn't a problem to go down to a café or something.

34:38

JA: No – No - \$17.50 a week. That was probably when we were flying in.

AA: Is that snow shoes?

JA: Yeah, snow shoes on the wing struts. Common thing.

AA: Was that just a survival gear?

JA: Yeah. And for stomping down run-ways if you got in deep snow. Yeah – I think that's the lake there. There were several lakes on the way in. In fact – one of them we were going along – peaceful and quiet – and you have to remember only the week before this I had been in a crash at Phillips. All of a sudden Cleo chopped the throttle and that airplane started diving - I thought oh no not again – and I am waiting for something to happen – all of a sudden the power comes back on after circling tight and said there was a wolf down by the lake. Bring the shot gun next time. It was legal to shoot from the air then and he was good at it. Pretty high country.

AA: Pretty barren country.

JA: Oh yeah, there's not much there. Bud was running a lodge – taking hunters out – so must have been something around there. That I think is Mount Stanford.

AA: This must be east of Glennallen or Gakona.

JA: Yeah. We can look on the map shortly and find it. Oh, there was a job and a half.

AA: What is that?

JA: That was a C82 here in Fairbanks. Some fellas had bought it - company called Carolina Aircraft. They'd got it – and said get this thing going. We have to get it down here. So I had commenced to work on it -- It had been parked for three-four years anyhow. And let's see – got it runnin' – both engines – everything squared away best we could – everything working pretty good. Got it into Wien's hanger – last little bit to get it thawed out good. It was probably 30, 40 below next morning when they pulled it out and it took them so long to fuel it and they didn't have heat on the engines and when they started it up it blew the nose case gears – couple of them on the right engine. So it sat the here in town damn near all winter – finally fixed it the rest of the way in the spring – and they flew it out. Oh yeah, that was a bit of a challenge – oh my it was cold.

37:39

AA: It wasn't an option to pull it back in the hanger?

JA: No – we couldn't get Wiens hanger. You know we could manage it for a couple of days and that was it but that was it. Worked on the props – deslugging things bit and fine tuning whatever we could.

AA: Is that still the Wien Hanger that sits down here now ?

JA: Yeah, it's at Era's now.

37:59

AA: What year was this?

JA: Whoeee – I was still teaching school at the time – doing this on the side – so I would have to say something around '69, '70 maybe. '69 because the fellow working with me - was the first year I had taught school. The fella that was workin' with me, Dale Briggs, is right.

AA: Did you bring your students down and show them this thing?

JA: Yeah, later in the spring. You know it would have been cruel and unusual punishment to put some kid wanting to be an A & P mechanic down there at 30 below working on an airplane. That would not work out too well – they would get discouraged.

AA: What is the history of this plane?

JA: It belonged to Al Mosley. And he got it and brought it up and was hauling freight carry on - Al had a bit of a heart problem. So they pulled his ticket – his medical and the bank ended up owning the airplane I think. Anyhow – things went around and around. And – this Carolina Airlines was going to take it.

39:18

AA: For someone who does not know this aircraft at all – what is on top of it?

JA: Oh, they converted it --Oh they put a jet engine up on top to give 'er a little more power for take-off. They weren't overpowered by any means – and that was a safety factor so if you had a full load and lost an engine you could get to a runway. That is basically what it was for.

AA: I don't think I've ever seen one of those.

JA: Oh they flew in and out of here for years with Northern Air Cargo – that is how they started up – had two of 'em. And they are still going strong and got jets now. Wien's hanger on a cold morning. It must have been 50 below by the looks of the ice fog. There is my boat, headin' down river.

AA – this was the Tanana?

JA: Yeah, pretty new yet was pretty green.

AA" '69 or so?

JA: Yeah, probably in there. That dog – that is Judy's dog. Big old black German Shepherd. Nice old guy. We are just coming in to Fouts' Landing on the Chena.

AA: Down towards the mouth?

JA: Oh no. Just below where the Discovery Park is now. There is still a bit or runway there –it has been closed for years. You can see float planes lined up. At one time there would be float planes up for – let's

see what street was that - Ravenwood Street which ended at the river - all the way up to Broadmoor Street which was two blocks up – wing tip to wing tip.

41:23

AA: Once again I think I have some of these slides flipped around.

JA: Those are right I think. My poor photography – of course I am taking pictures - trying to ride in a boat and do everything else.

AA: And you have to remember these photos are forty years old and have faded some.

JA: That is true. Oh that is one of the racing boats going down the river.

AA: Okay, for the Yukon 800?

JA: Yeah, we use to go down and watch them take off.

AA: Now I think they take off from Chena Pump Camp Grounds.

JA: Yeah, yeah, there's too much traffic on the Chena. There I am and there is ol' Spotsy - mangy dog and me were together for seventeen years.

AA: Was that the daughters dog?

42:12

JA: No that's the one they remember when they were little. That dog did not want the girls fussing with her. She was kinda a one man dog. But by gosh – if somebody come around – the kids she was right there guarding them. Didn't want anybody fussy with them.

AA: Is this the dog you had in the classroom?

JA: Oh yes –I took her over to work with me and everything else - she was raised up at Wiens in the hanger.

42:40

AA – Is this the boat you bought for doing that recovery?

JA: Yeah, yeah. It's down in the Tanana somewhere. Hmmm – I wonder where that was at? You know that was probable on the DEW Line, yeah.

AA - If I had ultra-zoom we might be able to zoom on, who is that?

JA: I am pretty sure that is Jimmie Peterson. Wien mechanic at Barrow. No – on the DEW Line airplane. They kept one up there for going back and forth across the line. And Jim was the mechanic and flight attendant on it. I happened to be over at Point Barrow working on a Beaver when they blew a cylinder on this airplane at Barrow. And I went out to the site and helped him change the cylinder.

43:36

AA: Was this a Wien plane?

JA: Yes 769, tail number on it. Later on – I spent almost a year on that plane – flight attendant mechanic myself.

AA: Was that a C46?

JA: C47 – DC3 oh yes. I think it was Wiens first DC3 – there was one there and one out of Nome – DC3's.

AA: Was this late 60's again too?

JA: It would have been – went to work at Wiens – '63 I think and I was there until after flood in '67 – so it was somewhere '64 somewhere in there maybe.

AA: It was '66 when my dad went to fly for Wiens out of Kotzebue.

JA: Yeah, I would not have meet him – I never got over to Kotzebue to speak of.

AA: But he flew up to the DEW Line in '57.

JA: Way before time. That is when they were still working on it. Well – good times of that were early '50's – big money jobs then for the construction heads. Yeah – that's Mike Daniels – he was one of the station agents at Barrow. And that is the Beaver they kept stationed there that I would come up and work on when it needed 100 hour.

45:02

AA: So Wiens colors were not always gold.

JA: No, no – these are leased airplanes. There were two that color.

AA: Are those standard tires for a Beaver?

JA: They probably are. Probably the largest they could put on at that time anyhow. Standard Prop. Oh tha's my front yard in Fairbanks with my Taylorcraft sitting in it. Yeah – that was at Fairbanks Aircraft – it was a Mooney Mite that they had overhauled there. Little one piece all wood airplane.

AA: For me to have ID that plane – I would have had to get a book out – I have never even heard of a Mooney Mite.

JA: Oh yeah, yeah. That's a wrecked Bonanza at Clear. They went to take off and didn't make it. So – Jess Bachner, Joe **Galiato** and myself drove down with a trailer and took it apart –loaded it up and drove back to town.

AA: At the air station?

JA: On no – it was a little runway near the Clear Sky Lodge. Golden Dark – but we stayed at the Clear Sky Lodge and had a good time.

AA: Any idea on the date of that?

JA: Oh my – I haven't got the foggiest – back from A & P School – probably before I went in the army – '57 maybe '58. No – it was after I got out of the army – '61, '62 – in there.

47:08

AA: Was the army a voluntary?

JA: Oh no – I got drafted – like everybody else in those days. Basic training at Fort Ord – and ended up in the 3rd infantry Fort Myer, Virginia. The old guard. Yeah – march in parade and carry on.

AA: Was this between Vietnam and Korea?

JA: Yeah, I was lucky. Before Vietnam got going. Got drafted, went in '59 and got out in January or February of '61 – or something like that. I was glad to see that plane crash. I had first gone to work when I had gotten out of the army for Lou Applegate. That airplane was running back 'n forth to Clear and it was a junker. Always something wrong with it and the guy did not have enough money to fix it properly and we kept gluing it back together you might say. Then I went back to work for Fairbanks Aircraft – and that airplane followed me. Finally when it crashed I told Jess I will be happy to junk this thing out. That is the Wien DC3 again, probably at Barrow. We are back on the river at Fouts Landing. That is from the upriver side. Fish wheel going down on the Tanana. Yes -- Fouts'.

AA: That is coming from different direction on the river or I got the slide backwards.

JA: Let's see. I think that one might be backwards. There we are kicked back. Both dogs – Judy and the bow taking pictures. I had a little seat I had built right in the stern. I would sit down there when things were good. Spent most of the time standing up though - we are out in the middle of the river now, no problems.

AA: You're lookin' rather regal there.

49:18

JA: One hand on the lift and one hand on the throttle – did that for years. It was a good set up.

AA: Did you incorporate the boat much other than for pleasure for recoveries?

JA: Oh I used it on the B25 job. That was the main reason for getting it, plus the fact that I could write it off. It was on a couple of other jobs too. Don't know what in the hell is going on there.

AA: Maybe that just a picture of the trees.

JA: I might be.

AA: I see something – that is the front of –

JA: The pickup.

49:54

AA: Is that an old Chevy?

JA: Yeah, '66 Chevy pickup. I had that for years – I think I drove that thing for thirty years. That's our house – just the first part of it.

AA: It's real difficult when you are looking at the slide with just the slide and I don't have a slide viewer – to see – and the first time I scanned I had it upside down and I had to really study it and see that it was a cabin. Where is this located at?

JA: Probably Broadmoore Acres, I'm still living there. Has been added on a few time, yeah, but still livin' there.

50.31

AA: I think that is the last slide Jim – yep – that is it. Do you want to take a little break? I have a few questions I want to ask you on tape.

JA: Go right ahead. Okay, what ya need to know?

51:06

AA: I need to get some biological information – I can't just start a book out and say – there is an airplane mechanic and he was born an airplane mechanic –what would you like in a book.

JA: Oh yeah, I was born in Fairbanks - I was born in St. Joseph's Hospital - the old place.

AA: Do you mind me askin' what year that was?

JA: 1936. Had an older brother –he is three years older than me - finally looked him up last year. Looked him up on a trip to the states – lives in California – and we realized it had been thirty-seven years since we had seen each other. When our Dad died he came to the funeral. It was a good little town then. In '39 the folks were up on Pine Creek on the upper Chena. They sent my brother down to his grandmother - took me along and that is where I got checked out on the cat. There is a picture somewhere of me on my dad's lap working the cat. Old TD40 or something – so we were up there for the summer.

AA: Mining?

JA: Yeah, it's funny how you have first memories – and there has always been this first memory of a lamp swingin' around and a bird with wheels on it. I kept trying to put that together for years and finally realized that I had got up river on a cat train.

52.40

JA: With wannigans you know on the sled and everything else – and that was on the cat train. The lamp was swingin' and it was a Stan Able gas box. That's the first real memory I can come up with. Dad told me – we got up there and the hydraulic pipe for giants and everything was pretty light weight and it got kinked on the bumps on the sleds. So they gave me a jack and a handle and shoved me in the pipe – which was about 3 foot across – to get in there - and jacked the dent out. And you know I did not turn three until that fall when we came back to town. I do remember the folks had brought a tricycle for me

and I had backed it into a hornet nests. And that's a very vivid memory. Oh boy – I did not know what was going on. I just screamin' and their justa bitin'. One of the crew come walkin' up and get me rescued me. Mom said later they got me into the cook house. She said the hornets were coming out of my clothes and runnin' around– and they would come back around and only sting me. I was a puffed up little rascal for a while I guess.

54:02

AA: Your dad was a miner then?

JA: Oh he always wanted to – he had mined before. But that was the last real mining he got into. Then of course, the war came along. We went to Seward. He had a job down there running their equipment shop. And Seward was fun for a little kid then, I was about five, six, somthin' like that. Musta been six, I was in the first grade, I remember that. There wasn't too many kids around because it was a war zone and they had shipped everybody out unless you were Native Alaskan. Well Mom, my brother and I were. She was born at Ophir. So – here we go. They had machine guns in placement along the corners. Everybody had to have a trench/bomb shelter – in back yard. And poor old Mrs. Brown – she didn't want them to dig one – and of course, they did. And they found her husband's body. She'd buried him in the backyard, beat his head in somethin'. Oh yeah – it was kinda interesting. Every now and then we would be at school and they would have a big air raid signal and we'd all would run down to the basement. Usually it was in a whale or something – and everybody thought it was a Jap submarine. Came back to Fairbanks – pretty normal from there on – going to school and carrying on. It was a good town then. Well if you didn't count the military – there might have been 6,000 people living in Fairbanks then, civilians. Maybe – town pretty well ended at the edge of Weeks Field – which was about two blocks from our house – so there I was staring at airplanes again. I did deliver papers along Weeks Field for a while – that was fun, get to see all this stuff. Uncle Fred had a hanger up there. He worked for Lyle Green - they had a regular -- taking care of – they had a regular air force – taking care of their stuff. Yeah, it was good place to grow up in.

56:21

AA: Your uncle Fred – what was his last name?

JA: Oh Fred Seltenreich. He came originally from McCarthy. He and his brothers – all in aviation - one was killed in Pan American crash I think at Barrow or Nome, no Barrow I guess it was. And Bud – he had a flying school here in town until big wind blew all in a ball. Saw a picture once - must have been four 4 or 5 Taylorcrafts all wrapped up together. Big wind on a Easter Sunday – and that was the year we were outside visiting our grandparents

AA: Was Bud your uncle?

JA: Yeah, yeah, they're all passed away now.

AA: Is Fred's brother –

JA: Fred's brother Bud yeah – he worked for FAA years and years.

AA: Is this your Mom's brother?

JA: My mom's sister Helen married Fred. So it went along that way.

57:22

AA: Yeah there is some archival stuff on Bud Seltenreich. Was he an airplane mechanic or pilot?

JA: He started off as a mechanic and then he flew too of course, I don't think he flew commercial. I did not realize until years after that he had started working for Harold Gillam down at Glennallen – somewhere down there – McCarthy. Then, of course, high school and all that stuff. Old Main School on Cushman Street. Started out in the basement for kindergarten and Seward – first and part of second grade – from then on I was in Old Main until I graduated.

AA: How many – did you say you just had the one brother?

JA: Just the one, that's all.

AA: And your kids. You have Lillian?

JA: There is Jenny, Lilly and Elizabeth. Oh yeah – they are still here in town workin' away, every things goin' find for them. Elizabeth is outside now. Her husband is getting squared away for surveyors ticket. Lilly's workin' at the University and Jenny – bless her heart- is retarded – she is in her early forty's now. We have to keep an eye on her a bit too – but she is doing pretty well.

58:56

AA: So Fairbanks – guess you were in the elementary school in the '30's –'40's?

JA: No, no, '40's – I think it was 1942 when we were in Seward. So let's see – I would have been six years old. I was in the first grade there.

AA: Fairbanks had to been a different place - pretty much changed about pipeline time.

JA: First change when they started – when built Eielson and they had a lot of troops at, what was Ladd Field then – Fort Wainwright now and that kinda boomed it up - then it was generally military construction – the University was building a little - things just kept slowly growing and growing. The pipeline was the big boom, of course. The DEW Line – there was quite a bit of growth there because there were a lot of guys going thru to go up there and work on that. That would have been early '50's and - It was still going on in '54 when I got out of high school - because I remember South Fairbanks was not part of the city. The bars were open twenty-four hours a day. Didn't matter when you did anything – you could hear music playing somewhere.

1:00:30

AA: When did you establish this hanger here?

JA: Oh, this came way late – I did not get moved into here until '93 – Prior to that I worked out of a small shop down on Ravenwood Street, it was close to Fouts Landing. I bought the property in 1980 – and then about that time I got a divorce – so I got drunk for a couple of years. Then got squared away and settle down and saved up a bunch of money and started building this place. Actually Hutch built this part – that part was my original shop – but it was shorter, and the gray building out there we used for parts – people could land at Fouts runway and taxi up the road to my yard and work on airplanes and carry on.

AA: Did you have a hanger?

JA: No just this small building. Twenty four wide, about thirty two deep.

AA: Did you work on plane out in the driveway then?

JA: Oh In the summer, yeah.

AA: What did you do in the winter time?

1:01:39

JA: Rebuild. And then came the pipeline and there wasn't nobody flying airplanes or doing anything. And I had some Herman Nelson heaters I'd resurrected because I would work on Northern Air Cargo C82's when they came through or heat them up or whatever it took to do a--- but that was pretty – wasn't too steady of work either. And then I ran into – a truck driver – dispatcher for one of the truck lines one afternoon – was having a beer– and got to talkin' and he said 'hey – do you still have the Herman Nelson and I said sure – couple of them – it was just what they needed 'cuz it was cold and they were stateside drivers. They would turn their rigs off and they would freeze up. So I spent the rest of that winter – basically – thawing out trucks and heavy equipment. And fixing Herman Nelson heaters – but it got me through the winter – couple years of that, yeah.

AA: If you wouldn't mind – so I can develop a timeline – as much as possible and I know you have already done a lot of it - could you kinda just – you got started on airplanes and talk about who you worked for – each progression – so you started out working for Jess Bachner.

JA: Actually some place back here I have a resume. I will go dig that out. Maybe I can find it. I did most everything in the whole shop.

AA: This looks like a typewriter written resume. Looks like a typewriter vs computer generated.

JA: Don't know where I got this one. Yeah – needs an overhaul, that was mostly cleaning parts. Like this one – I was going to school – but they had a deal going - Western Airlines had lost a bunch of mechanics due to strike. So they were hiring students – that were within three months to getting their tickets. So from November to there -they overlap. That didn't last long, Lou's. I don't even think it went to November – oh well – back to Fairbanks – then I went to - '67 –when I bought into the B25s – yeah – owner and maintenance chief – that's me. Sounds good doesn't it. Now – June of '68 to November '62 – the - power plant instructor – I was also working on B25's.

AA: When you were working for the A & P Program was that for the University?

JA: At that time it was the North Star Borough School of Aviation.

AA: Who was it owned by?

JA: The borough actually ran it – it was under the uh - yeah – the borough had the program – that is when they got a bunch of vocational educational programs goin'. Now the A & P Program started about

a year ahead of this and I wandered in and got the job with them, part time at first – then full time. And that would have been – ‘68.

1:05:54

AA: Did that eventually turn into the University Program?

JA: Yeah, the university took it over when – let’s see – after I left. And they might have been at met for another year or so – then were at Hutchinson’s on –moved into there -- but right about that time, I couldn’t tell you --- I went to work in about ‘68 – anyhow there had been a class before that - they also started up some of the mechanics school and bunch of other things and combined them all and built Hutchinson Center and the university had it then – I think.

AA: Did you keep up with the history of that program at all?

JA: Oh now and then.

AA: Did they lose some instructors in crashes there for some years?

JA: No, – no only one, only one. I did not know him too well I – his last name was Berry, if I remember correctly and he had - he was the only one that had been killed in a plane crash – he lent his plane to somebody else and they crashed and got killed up on Lions Peak and the Parks Service got after them to get the wreckage out of there. So he and a fellow name of Fritz flew up in Fritz’s plane and the wind got them and they both got killed. But other than that it was just a normal change – I was there. I was working pretty much with a guy name Bob Richardson. In fact I was the one who talked Bob into workin’ there and he stayed long after I had left. He was over at Hutch for quite a while –finally retired – now in the states. Don’t know when Arvid came on board but it wasn’t too much longer after that, after Berry got killed - Arvid Weflen, well he’s retired too.

1:08:00

AA: You have a job or period of time that you remember especially fondly as far as your working career goes? Was workin’ at Wien a good hitch?

JA: The DEW Line was a good hitch. It was about a year – but I had started building this house and between one thing and another – Wien’s pay wasn’t too high. And I got pretty well in debt. They sent me to PT6 School out in Hartford, Connecticut and they said you are going to go to Kotzebue and take care of the Porters. I said I was not going to go to Kotzebue because I have a house in town and I don’t need another house in Kotzebue. So they offered me the DEW Line. And, I don’t really understand the mechanics and all – but I think they wanted me out of town. The overhead had changed and they just – I don’t know what was going on there. Prior to that I’d been working doin’ the dope and fabric and some of the upholstery, had a little shop in back of the hanger – was a good set up. Yeah, the DEW Line probably – yeah, that was a good time. Free room and board and plenty to keep you busy.

AA: Part of your upholstery job at some point was to make a seat for Doug Mallard.

JA: Oh yeah, yeah. Doug’s pretty short. So he came in one day and was talkin’ about his problem with the C46 – how he was always sitting on the edge of his seat. So – I figured it out – made him a longer one – that would fit in there and he could put some pillow behind him and still his legs were supported. Yeah – Doug’s good people.

1:09:58

AA: I think I told you I was going to Anchorage over Thanksgiving – to spend it with my step-Mom – it will be her first holiday without Dad and my brothers are going to be up north. She has to work and on the 26th Doug is going to come in and spend the day.

JA: That is a good deal. Doug said once – I have been flying the same airplanes for twenty years. I said Jesus Doug – you are plenty qualified – why don't you move on to some bigger outfit. He says I can't, I'm too short. And that is about it.

AA: And Doug has flown me many of times out to the homestead at Onestone. Good pilot.

JA: He is, yeah.

AA: Another guy that I actually – truth I did not realize Jorgie was even alive.

JA: Oh he's over here every Wednesday morning – he and Al Wright. Yeah.

AA: Your dad worked as a cat skinner?

JA: Oh yeah.

AA: Was he mining in Kantishna? There is that story that he was out there when Jess Bachner went out and [inaudible] got melted

JA: I think actually – well yeah – he trapped, then he met Mom and then worked at some of the mines down there in that part of the country – Ferry, Healy, and whatever. And he was hauling antimony ore from Stampede Mine – I suppose up to a railroad connection somewhere -- with a cat and a sled. And – see I know he worked on the Davidson Ditch – he was driving cat there – old sixty horse gas cats which they used mainly for transporting across country – they did not have any blades or anything on them. I know he and Mom got married in '32 – he was working for the FE Company then – they got married out at the FE camp – which is still there.

AA: The one out at Chatinika?

JA: Yeah – Chatinika. And then, of course, during the war – he must have been working at the FE Company when I was small – except one deal up at Pine Creek.

1:12:21

AA: What kind of a mine was there at Pine Creek, Shaft Mine?

JA: No – placer. And then let see – he was in Seward – was head of shop there – came back, worked for Corp of Engineers in Fairbanks running heavy equipment - and then he bought a surplus cat and went to clearin' ground for on the homestead that we had around then. He cleared ground on Farmers Loop and Badger Road – all over – a D8 cat and operator - \$20 an hour.

AA: That was probable good money.

JA: Oh we thought it was a fortune. Of course most of it ended up going right back into keep cat running. Then later on - he shifted out of cats and went to well drilling. He worked on the drill crews for the FE Company –so he bought this used Sirius 20W - mounted it on a truck and away he went.

AA: Water Wells?

JA: Water wells – yes he drill water wells around here for ages. Then, when he is up in his 60's – I guess it would have a guy married to our niece. They were working for Burgess. They're up at Point Barrow – and the crane operator tipped the crane over. And all the years Dad had kept in 302 – it was just kinda there -- but wasn't working thru the unions, but he had his cards. They got ahold of him and asked if he would come up and run the crane up here at Barrow. Sounded like a good deal – so away he went. His next remark when I picked him up to take 'im back to town – he said Jesus – this working for these guys is a lot easier than working for yourself. So he worked at that for three or four years. He finally kinda retired. He died when he was sixty-eight, heart attack. Just before him and Mom had been married for forty years. Well maybe they did have their fortieth anniversary. I took them down river by boat to go fishing.

1:14:38

AA: It must be your – is it – whose is Lilly doing her master's thesis on? Is it your Mom?

JA: No it is my mother's Dad – John Rieck.

AA: She actually defends her thesis Thursday at 3:00 p.m.– I think I will get out of bed early – so she has an audience. She told me not to. But I think I will anyway. I hope she makes it.

JA: Well she said she had it up once – but she didn't think she had it right this and that and then she called at the people that were judging her and they hadn't read it or anything. She was a little discouraged – said she probable could have sailed right through it. They are still looking for a picture of her granddad – it would have been. This coffee shop that they had of Chilkoot Pass –that is a story I never heard. I never knew my grandpa too well. We stayed with them for about six months.

AA: Did they live in the States?

JA: Yes they were living at Vashon Island – well they closed down all the mining when the war started. So they came in from Tekotna – wasn't much to do down there – everything was shut down. They were running the roadhouse at the time – Grandma was the Post Master. So they – Rieck's Roadhouse – so they came in and went out and bought this place at Vashon Island. Stayed there – we went out and stayed with them. It was right after the war – we drove over the highway in '46.

1:16:07

AA: Did you say Rika's Roadhouse?

JA: No Riecks. R E I C K [sic].

AA: Where was that at? That was at Tekotna. Yeah, we have a picture at home of Grandma and Grandpa sitting on the porch.

AA: So that makes you third generation Alaskan.

JA: No, I am second, Lilly is third. Oh yeah, my granddaddy – his knees were shot. Boy – he was a tough old guy. He would be out working that garden on Vashon Island on his knees with pads.

1:16:42

AA: Where is the Island at?

JA: Puget Sound. Wasn't much there then – I guess it is a regular bedroom community of Seattle now. I would like to go out and take a look at it someday.

AA: Well Jim – we have an hour and twenty minutes of recording today. Would you like to call it a day?

JA: Yes – that is good for today.

AA: It will be better when I get the next hundred slides on there.

JA: Oh yeah – that's good for a lot of conversation. What about the regular photos though? Banks Aircraft Service.

AA: I wanted to get your take -- your history – not necessarily just with but what you know about Fairbanks Aircraft Service and the people involved.

JA: Okay, when Fairbanks Aircraft service started up it was still in Weeks Field. My Uncle Fred was mixed up in it. Fairbanks Aircraft and Fairbanks Air Service. Holly Evans broke off with Fairbanks Air Service and they were starting to close up Weeks Field so Fred and a couple of other –I think Jess might have been a partner in there then. And Gordie Mitchell– three or four people - Dave Phillips was one – they got the hanger built on Phillips Field.

1:18:11

AA: Named after Dave Phillips?

JA: No Phillips Field - was an old boy - Carol Phillips had a homestead over there. And he said okay we will put a runway for you guys – anyway they all got together and got this done. So the hanger went up and everything was operating out of there then Holly built another hanger down the runway and moved down there. Dave Phillips sold out to Gordie Mitchell. Let's see, Fred had already sold out I guess. But Dave sold out to Gordie Mitchell and Jess and later on Jess bought out Gordie. So he had the thing himself. I can't tell you what year that was. Andy Bachner would probably know.

AA: I think actually they talk about on those video tapes that are on Project Jukebox on line – I think Jess Bachner talks about the establishment of it some too. There was something there about — they had to get – they were building Fairbanks International at the time and they had to get a flight in.

JA: They have a picture on the wall of one of Hollys airplane taking off and the runway was in use before International got finished because the patterns did intersect a bit and they were supposed to keep above so high above Phillips when they came through and I can remember dark and foggy days in the 46 would loom out of the fog – and pretty low. But we all expected it – nobody thought much about it. See I don't know -- I don't think there was any mid-air or anything else caused by it.

AA: Was there a plane that crashed – right behind in between U Park, old U Park School and Hutch?

1:19:52

JA: Yeah. That was a DC6 of Pacific Alaska they took off – and as it would happen I was due to go to Kotzebue the next morning or Galena or someplace and the wife and I had gone over to the Boatel to have a couple of beers and relax – had a babysitter and this airplane went over head and the fellow tending bar had flown a bit too and he says – that don't sound right – no it don't – we went to look out the windows and we could see the lights on the 6 as it was coming down. I never went over to look where it crashed at. One guy survived. I think the flight engineer – I am not sure. It turned out they had fueled up and they got diesel in it – well jet fuel – there'd been a mistake made somewhere. We actually saw it settling.

1:21:00

AA:

Do you remember what year that was – I have this obscure memory in my mind of being a kid in about 1970 and going and looking at ...

JA: No it would've been later than that.

AA: Yeah, I'm not sure when that ... I think I remember seein' that

JA: I wasn't teaching school - so it would have been up the – let's see, it was before I got divorced, so it had to be mid-70's or somewhere in there.

AA: See I went through U Park until 1976 or somewhere in there – so I might have gone out as a kid and looked at that.

JA: Probably did.

AA: So Jess Bachner was he the main game in town when you got started in airplanes?

1:21:43

JA: Well – they had their own place over there and there was a couple of guys working out of International – uh – I think actually – let's see – ol' Hutch had a hangar at International for a while – had his own business – Hutch's Aircraft - there was another guy, then Bill something - in the 60's - that was at International –but uh - Northland Aviation didn't get going until mid-60's - they had a hanger up – I think basically that uh Bachner had about the only hanger goin' for small aircraft at that time.

1:22:34

AA: Weeks Field it was right where the library sits?

JA: Yeah, the library sits on part of it. It started at Gilliam Way and went basically to the river. I mean they take planes down on trailer and put them in the water at the end of the runway.

AA: Oh so it went north - south – the runway, did it?

JA: I think so.

AA: I always envisioned it going east to west.

1:22:55

JA: No I don't think so. Uh -- Fairview Manor got built on the edge of it -- so - well if we took a drive I could show you pretty much where it was. It seems like -- trying to remember what street was behind it -- it kinda curved around back in there - maybe it would have been 10th, 9th, 8th kinda hooked around and that curved and it was at 10th, that went down along runway - then 9th hooked into that -- 10th kinda disappeared there for a while. And at the head of Barnette Street -- there was a flying school there -- on the runway; engine overhaul shop -- all kind of things going on. Gilliam's hanger was across the runway -- about where Boy Scouts building is now. And, of course, Pan American hanger was on the edge of the runway and that's the bowling alley. So if you can figure it out from there -- you have it pretty well plumbed in.

1:24:11

AA: And Weeks Field had been around for years.

JA: Oh yeah. In fact what I understood -- there was quite a fight when they closed it up. Because there was no reason they couldn't -- you know, Anchorage had a runway in town -- why couldn't they have one here. But the city fathers got to figuring out -- it was kinda a land grab when it got done. It was originally part of the Weeks Homestead. That is how it got started. That is where the property came from. And from what I was told -- if it wasn't used for a runway -- it was supposed to be a park. Well they only made the one small park -- where the library is - in that one little area there - and the rest of it got developed. Now you go to fly into Anchorage -- and you see that long green strip -- that was the originally Anchorage Municipal Airport.

AA: Really.

JA: Now it has schools and stuff on it - but that's all. That is basically what this was supposed to be.

1:25:04

AA: I always thought the original airport in Anchorage -- was -- what's the field right there ...?

JA: Merrill. Oh No Merrill was the 2nd one.

AA: Okay.

JA: It was on the outskirts. But you fly into Anchorage you know you can see that long green strip. Going thru there -- there is buildings on it now.

AA: And it's called the Park Strip now.

JA: I think so. It was originally Anchorage Municipal airport.

AA: Okay.

JA: And they should have done same there here - but greed -- who knows.

AA: Anything else about Jess Bachner and his company?

1:25:34

JA: No - Jess was real good to me about that. I came and went. Always went back to work for him. I guess on and off – I probably worked for him about 6-7 years, or chunks thereof. Well you know, I got outa service – went back to work for Lou – then back to work for Jess – then I went outside. Couple of winters outside I think, I'm not sure.

AA: Did you work outside?

1:25:59

JA: Oh yes – Burns Aero Seat Co. One year anyhow – yeah, I guess that was it. It was an interesting job. I had drove out there – I am going back to states – restless – I goes over to employment service after a week or two and got squared away - got a place to live. Told this fellow, says I want to get a job – five days a week – preferably indoors, this that. He looked at me and said you are pretty particular for a guy looking for a job. Well I said I am not actually in a hurry to go to work and I have never gotten unemployment in my whole life. He says – no problem here – Alaska is gonna to pay for it. So, okay, that is good.

1:26:41

JA: We chatted away for a while and – I went back in three or four days later to see him – he is sittin' there with a grin on his face and he said, "Yep, I got just what you are looking for." It was up North Hollywood - wasn't too far from where I was livin'. So I built aircraft seats for a winter. Yeah – it was interesting – I never been around people like that – every, all these other guys, every check was already spent to finance companies. I couldn't figure out how they could live like that. I had kinda plan on staying out there – it was a good job – paid good, had a good time. I'm drivin' to work one morning – it was a clear day for the first time in months and I am looking over the hills and I said 'what the hell I am doing here? I told the foreman, I says Jessie, I gotta leave. The birch trees are turning green up north. I knew this was going to happen, he says, I don't want you to leave. I says I gotta go. I went back to get my tools squared away, draggin' my stuff up. I guess worked another week. And told Jessie – he says, Jessie James was his name – nice guy. He says I wish you hadn't said that about the birch trees. He says, I originally come from North Dakota and that is all I have been thinking about for a week. 'Cause there – nothing changed – everything is green all the time.

1:28:10

JA: Now here's a funny one for you. When I was going to Northrop – was living in a boarding house – there was four or five other students living there. And we were sitting out on the lawn – warm hot night – darker than hell – and I made a remark, I says, you know it is kind odd – when it is this warm at home – it would be daylight – and they looked at me like I was nuts – I said 'No " – bein' the midnight sun in summer time – here it is 8 o'clock it's darker than hell – there it would be light 'til midnight – couple of hours it isn't even dusk. Sun just barely goes down and comes up again. Luckily one of those guys had made a trip up here with his folks when he was younger and he said – no he's right – we got there the middle of June and it was day light all night long and we could hardly sleep. Funny – you never think of that. I confused people in the army when they were talking about water – I said you mean thawed ice? Huh? Well that is how I look at it – summertime it is thawed.

1:28:20

AA: When I was right out of high school I brought my girlfriend out to Wyoming to my Grandparent's ranch and she'd never been out of Alaska her whole life, and she said I never thought I would go on a

dark walk in the summertime, where it's warm enough to walk in your t-shirt. And you, I had worked out there every summer in the hay fields for my grandpa so I was used to it and I had to think about that for second and I thought, wow, yeah ...

1:29:42

JA: Well, here's one for you - when I was on the Dew Line - I was up there for about three months. And, you know - it is winter - and it's miserable - it was - actually it was comin' into spring in town. Well anyway - I managed to finagle some time off 'cuz I had to take care of paperwork and stuff - so they had somebody come up and replace me - I had three days - I had to go back up again - okay, that's alright. I think I came in on a Thursday and went back up on a Monday - or something like that - anyhow - I'm on the 46 - and I am in my grubby coveralls had and pair surplus mukluks on and my parka with me, and they opened the door of the plane I am standing and all of a sudden, Jesus Christ, I forgot about trees - that quick - 'cuz there wasn't a tree - nothing just blowing snow - I hadn't even thought about that. I can see where you have some young kid from Barrow or somthin' like that or Barter, ship them into Fairbanks to go to the University - it would be quite a shock. Yeah - that was strange just that short length of time - I had forgot about trees.

1:30:56

AA: First time I went to Prudhoe I couldn't figure out why they couldn't build a straight road - it was middle of winter - and I can't see very good in the dark and it is dark all the time and the roads are all windy and I'm made it - stayed up there from October until April - May - and it finally started thawing and I was like oh. There's lakes everywhere - that is why they can't built a straight road.

1:31:15

JA: Oh yes indeed. Of course, when I was up there - there was nothing there. Just the Dew Lines sites - and occasionally - well once we - we must have been at Barter for a couple of days - heading west heading for Barrow and going along and - what the hell is this? Well there was this cat train - we could see the tracks. They had unloaded at Oliktok and were heading off across country - whoee - we had to turn and follow them guys were in our country -.....that cat train about 50' in the dark. Just fun.

AA: Oliktok is where my Dad went to work on the Dew Line and that is where - I don't know, about 30 years later I was working for Houston up there as a mechanic and I was at Oliktok Station.

JA: Yeah - let's see - Bar 4 - that was off to the east of us - Barter was actually our main base. Then it was Flaxman, Oliktok, Lonely, Barrow, Wainwright and Point Lay. We covered all of that.

AA: Did you pretty much just travel with the plane.

JA: Oh, I was on all the time - I was the flight attendant, yeah.

AA: And the mechanic.

1:32:33

JA: Yeah, it worked out pretty good. Only once did I get a little nervous. They loaded on an Eskimo gal at Barter - oooo -- was she pregnant - I remember telling the pilot - I says, hey Smitty - don't make any hard landings this time - I don't know if I can handle this. Even though I had gone to stewardess school and supposedly checked out in deliverin' babies - I did not really want to get into this - they got her over to Barrow and I guess he had the kid about two days later. Something like that.

1:33:05

AA: You didn't happen to run across John Cross in your travels did ya?

JA: I met him slightly over at Kotzebue years later - that is basically where he lived and flew out of - he was pretty old - he'd quit flying by then.

AA: That is my step-Mom's Dad.

JA: Oh, be darned. Well she probable knew Buck then.

AA: Oh yes, well my Dad flew for Buck a little bit.

JA: Oh, he did? Okay.

AA: But, Buck Maxson

JA: Maxson Aviation.

AA: Yeah, Maxon, yeah.

JA: Twin Beach, Twin otters and 185 - smalls, oh Jesus, bunch of stuff he had through the years.

AA: Now, there's a, I forget her name, there's a lady up there - who had a flying service -

JA: Marge Baker.

AA: Yeah, Marge Baker.

JA: Yeah, Marge Baker. Baker Aviation.

AA: Yeah, 'cuz when we first came to Alaska my Dad's first job was based out of Kotzebue and we all lived up there. And I always thought to myself, I wonder what it was like for my Mom - a girl out of Big Horn Wyoming never been anywhere - to get shipped straight to Kotzebue.

JA: Oh Jesus.

AA: It must have been a culture shock.

JA: Must've been a bastard, yeah. And honey buckets - oh boy - yeah there wasn't indoor plumbing back then either - 60's. Let's see, yeah because I was up there for Wiens once, I think was all. I went up to help out a little bit.

1:34:19

AA: In fact in Jorgie's book - have you read Jorgie's book?

JA: No.

1:34:23

AA: He talks about his last flight was – his plane was out a Minto and his eyes had gone bad ...

JA: Oh yeah, yeah ...

AA: And he needed to get his plane back to Fairbanks and – it was actually Sue's brother, Milton, who had some sort of emotional breakdown while they were flying in and said they couldn't make it.

JA: Yeah.

AA: And flew

JA: And Jorgie flew in with his eyes as bad as they were ...

AA: Using scopes on his gauges.

JA: Blind as a bat – yeah – oh yeah – he that story one day. Phew.

1:34:52

AA: Would it be out of line for me to – you said Wednesday mornings – is when Jorgie is down here.

JA: Yeah, but it's kinda hard to get him to talk.

AA: I wasn't actually thinking of recording him, I wondered if it would be a problem if I just come down and be a little mouse in the corner.

JA: Oh yeah, yeah, no problem at all. They usually show up about 9 or so – and some days of course Jorgie ain't here – you know, his health ain't all that good.

AA: You just kinda have an little unorganized meeting?

JA: Well, we just stop and have coffee and get 'em talking. Yeah, it's great. Well they have a regular round they make. Ted drives 'em around. There is Al and Jorgie and they come here, then they stop up the runway and see O Neal then they go over and see Todd McDonald at Metro - and let's see hanger one closed down so I don't know where else they go.

AA: Who's Al? Is that his son.

JA: Al Wright.

AA: Al Wright.

JA: Old man - flew up here for centuries. He started off in the 40's flying a T-craft out of Nenana – Nenana Air Service. \$25 – no \$15 one way - \$25 round trip. Hard to think of it – it is like Wiens though. Here is a picture of Bill English standing on the floats of a Cessna 120 or 140 hauling mail up and down out of Beetles – I think. Yeah – because – he was raised in Wiseman.

1:36:22

AA: Is Bill English part Native?

JA: Yeah.

AA: Okay, I didn't know – I've heard the name for years.

JA: Yeah, quite a guy – straight as an arrow – no booze, yeah. He was two of the top pilots for Wiens were Bill English and Tommy Richards – part native guys. Then there were several others – in the bush and everything. Benny Uhlman came from Wiseman originally. He was co-pilot on this DC3 I was on and then he went on - I think he was co-pilot or captain on a jet when he died. Pretty young yet too. Went home to watch the football game and died in his rocking chair. Recliner.

AA: I don't remember who it was – but one Christmas I was – I think I was going up to Barrow to see my sister who was livin' up there and the plane broke down – and we were sitting in the plane – it was Christmas Eve – and we couldn't go anywhere –and we couldn't get off the plane for some reason – some Wien Pilot , my Dad's told me the story about who it was but this got on the intercom with the harmonica.

JA: George Clayton. Yep, George Clayton. He would play that harmonica and carry on –only had one tune – but he had a lot of songs for it. He was quite a character.

1:37:46

AA: George Clayton – there is a – rental coordinator – parts foreman – Bill Walker –he works for Airport Rentals - he rebuilds old cars – and he got all of George Claytons model A's and model T's – I was down there talkin' to him one day – my brother-in-law.

JA: Well I know there is a Model A Club here in town and George made sure they got all of that stuff.

AA: And you were talkin' about the one pilot.

JA: Dean.

AA: Who was it now? My brother in law knows his kids. Not Donaldson, um, I gotta get on tape here.

JA: Even there.

AA: I'm gonna shut down the recording now.

JA: My biography here.

(People start coming in).

JA: So get with the program. Already.

[Chatter, overtalking, end of recording.]