

Transcript of television show "Chat Corner" with host Terry Martyniuk, copyright Richmond TV-4, 1990. DVD of the program is in the CD/DVD album

There are two versions of the interview on the DVD with much of the content duplicated. (Second version in italics below.)

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Friday, because I worked last night, so it's Friday.

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Maybe you want to start with how long you've lived on Seattle, and when you came, and just a brief...

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Since July 1951, we moved into this house. I had been up at Zeballos for about two years before that and was transferred into Vancouver by Queen Charlotte Airlines. The family and I got together again after many, many lonesome months. But as soon as we saw this, we knew this was home. Yeah. Where did you come from? Well, we were both brought up and we were married in Fort William, Ontario, Thunder Bay, and after the war we moved into Penticton, Narramatta, but it was too difficult to make a living there. There was a little bit of a story, as a matter of fact, on moving down here. I don't know whether you want to hear it or not, but I was on a trip flying out of Vernon and I left trail just about dark and came on into Vernon and no radio, no navigation aids at all. When I went to land at Vernon, normally they would run a car out to the end of the runway and shine the lights down the runway so I could see where to land. And this day something went wrong because when I, when they ran the car out, they shut the lights off. And I came around, picked up a car with lights shining, what I thought, down the runway. So I came in over it and there were trees where there should have been runways. I thought, oh, wrong car. So I pulled up, circled around again, found another car. It did the same thing. It was also the wrong car, but they were all very close to the airport. I knew where the hangar was. I came over the hangar again to let them know there was something wrong, and there was a fellow by the name of Normie Brown, lived right across the street from the hangar. I saw him pull out, drove into the airport, shone his lights down the runway and I came in and landed. And I didn't think too much about it, it was, you know. But Johnny Hatch, the general manager of Queen Charlotte Airlines was there. He was bringing out the first Beaver that came out to British Columbia. And as soon as I saw him I said, Hi Johnny, I hear you got a Beaver. When can I see it? And he said, Tomorrow morning. But he said, do you do this very often? And I said, what's that? And he said, come in after dark with no lights, no nothing. And I said, oh, only when it's necessary. Now, I had known Johnny for years and I had applied to Queen Charlotte Airlines for a job before we ever went up to the Okanagan. And Johnny said, have you got any float

experience? And I said, no. Well, he said, we can't use you then. So of course, that was the end of that. But then to get back to Vernon, as we were driving downtown, he kept asking me about this business coming in after dark. And as he was getting out of the car, he said, Dan, if you ever want a job down on the coast, you let me know and there's a job there for you. So all I had to do was something stupid to get a job. Anyway.

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That's an interesting story. How did you become a pilot? What started that?

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Did you also go to fly?

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I wanted to be a pilot for as long as I can remember. Before the war, I built an airplane, or started to build an airplane. Nobody had any money then. This was right during the Depression. I started to build this airplane so I could learn to fly. War broke out before I got it finished. I had it all ready to cover. War broke out. I couldn't get gas, couldn't get a license, couldn't do anything. So I joined the Air Force just shortly after that, after war broke out, as a rigger. And it convinced me that I wanted to be a pilot. And with my wife's help, I made it. I went to—I always laugh at this—I made an application to remuster from rigger to pilot. And I waited and waited and waited and nothing came. And I was just about the upper age limit to remuster when I'm put in this application. And then one of the boys in the Marine section had also applied and he had his private license and he got his remastered. So right then I was back at the CO's office and I said so-and-so got his remaster?" And he said, Well, Corporal, I don't know. He said, I will tell you one thing, that if you don't have your private license, you won't get a remaster. So I said, Well, would it be possible to get special leave to go and get my license? And he said, Yes, we could arrange that. When would you like to go? And I said, Would tomorrow be too soon? And we had already talked this over. And he kind of grinned and he said, no, we can arrange that. Well, that was Thursday. On Friday I went down to Kingston and registered and got a place to live and took my first flight and then went back to Trenton for the weekend to be at home. And on Monday morning I went to Kingston again and started my training and came back to Trenton on the Friday afternoon with my license in my hand and taking it to Squadron Leader Miller. And on the Saturday morning, I was back on duty, and he called me and told me he wanted an airplane. I was in charge of the ground crew. So we pulled an airplane into the dock, they were all anchored out, pulled the airplane into the dock and I went and told them it was ready. So he sent me up to the left-hand seat and he got in the right-hand seat and he said, I want to find out if you learned anything. And he took me up and he gave me an hour's instruction on that great, big, beautiful Norseman. It was a tremendous thrill. And he said, as we get out, he said, well, I guess you learned something. I got my remaster about a month afterward. So there was my story of learning to fly.

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Yeah.

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Tell us a bit about, you've flown quite a few aircraft.

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How many to date have you piloted? I guess about 80. When I left the Air Force I had 65 types and I suppose there's 15 or 20 different since then. At one time, normally in the Air Force they give you a very extensive, very complete checkout on a new type. I was in ferry squadron where we might fly five, six, seven different types in a day. And you couldn't always have somebody there to check you out. And it got to the point where it really didn't matter because airplanes are airplanes. Most of them have good points, some of them have bad points, and if you know the bad points, then perfectly safe. So we just used to go, they'd send us, eventually they'd just send us out to pick up whatever airplane had to be picked up and delivered to where it had to be delivered. It was an interesting life, but away from home a lot, which is one of the weaknesses of being in the flying business.

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So how did your... what is family life like with a pilot who sometimes can leave in the morning and not be seen for, you know, how long?

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Maybe you could tell us a few stories about that. One day I went up to Kemano. The round trip used to take about eight, eight and a half hours. When I got up there, one of the pilots, who was on a freight haul out of Stewart into a glacier and he had made a mistake taking off on skis and the thing got away from him and he wrecked it and they had to have another airplane in there quick so I went up and instead of being home in one night I was six weeks before I got home. Bud sent my clothes and my sleeping bag and stuff up. But that experience up at Stewart was something I'll never forget. I got into more trouble there in that six weeks than in all the rest of the time I flew, and yet I didn't do any damage and didn't hurt anybody. But we were flying up onto a glacier that was at a fairly steep slope, and we had to land going uphill, take off coming downhill. And the snow, the day I arrived, we went up and put trees out, short trees, eight or nine feet high, and lined our runway so we'd have something to line up on. It was all pure white, white snow, white sky, white everything. And we had to have contrast. So we put these trees out and went back down to Stuart and it started to snow. And it snowed for three days, steady. I don't remember how deep the snow was in Stuart except that the snow banks, you couldn't see over them. But when I got up to the glacier, Harry Taylor and I went up together. I was in a Beaver and he was in a Junkers. And when I saw where we had lined our trees up, there was one tree about

so high sticking up through the snow, which meant that we had about nine feet of fresh snow to work on. Well, I come in and I had this one tree top. I could see it out in the window and I kept my eyes right on it, came down, and with that slope on the runway or on the glacier you landed with almost take-off power. I hit down into the snow and sank and sank. And I got out and I looked down and the snow was up to the belly of the airplane. And I was going to jump out into it and then I thought, oh, that's soft. So I reached back and I got my snowshoes and I stepped up and out into the snow and with snow shoes on, the snow came up to my waist. It was just like fluff. And we hauled in there. Oh, I then started and I threw my freight off just into the snow. There was no way I could move the airplane. And somebody from up the hill where they had the camp came down and he said, what are you doing? And I says, I'm unloading my airplane. And he says, well, aren't you going to go and rescue your friend? And I said, what friend? He said, your pal in the other airplane. He just crashed down the hill. Well, I immediately threw all the stuff off, tramped a little bit of a runway to get the airplane moving, and took off and flew down and sure enough here was Harry Taylor with his airplane buried almost to the trailing edge of the wing, buried in the snow just below me on the glacier. And Harry was standing out in front of it. So I yelled at him that I was going down the street to get some help and away I went. And incidentally, when you're in an airplane, if you open your window and bank the airplane so that your wing and your fuselage form a V heading towards the person, if you shout, it's amazing how clearly they can hear you shouting from an airplane. And Harry waved at me and I went down and I got a crew of men and brought them back up and they all went down and shoveled at this airplane. And it was getting close to dark. So I yelled at them to get up there because I was going to have to leave or we'd all be stuck. And it didn't quite work out. Harry got up on time and Bill Lopeshuk got up on time, but Tom Clark, big heavy man, no experience on snowshoes, kept falling. So he couldn't make it. So we left them and the next morning came back up with some more of a crew and eventually got Harry's airplane dug out. And he taxied up to where we had this runway and we loaded everybody into the two airplanes, all the shovels and stuff. And I went to take off and I was heading uphill so I went up a little bit and turned and the wind caught the tail of the airplane and increased the rate of turn, the outside ski sank the wingtip dug in the soft soft snow, the airplane went up in its nose, all the passengers and shovels and everything came rolling down in the back of my head and And that was the end of that. I got out, we lassoed the tail ski, pulled it back down, checked the prop, checked the engine, checked everything, no damage, not a single bit of damage except one little dent on the dashboard where a jack had hit it. And however, by this time it was dark, so we had to wait. And the next morning it was snowing. Oh, the way that snow came down, you could just almost see it building up in the ground. So we were three days before it stopped snowing and then it was cloudy and we couldn't get over the pass because of the cloud. But eventually we decided that you'd see the odd hole come over in blue sky. We knew it was clear above, so we decided we'd watch for a hole in the cloud way off in the distance, and when we saw it, we'd get all in the airplane and take off, climb up, and over the top to Stewart and then down into the valley because there were the odd hole. And so we did that, and I climbed up through the hole, went over the direction I knew Stewart was, saw a valley, let down into it, and followed it down to Saltwater, and it was the

wrong valley. So I turned around and tried to get back up, but I couldn't. So I landed on a glacier there that I'd never seen before, and I had an engineer with me. And we just sat down. There was nothing else we could do. We sat down on the glacier and we had sleeping bags and food and everything. We made a pot of porridge and went to bed, woke up in the morning and Huey Russell came, left Prince George. He heard I was missing. He left Prince George, flew right straight to the airplane, landed alongside of us, and we drained some gas out of his airplane and put it in my airplane and we both went down to Stewart. But you know, a thing like that where it could have been so serious and yet there was no problem at all, just this is the kind of things that happen. And I can't help but think it's been such privilege to fly a float airplane in British Columbia, both coastal and interior, and see all the beautiful scenery and see life the way the other half lived, the people that live out in the camp. Ralph Edwards, for instance, at Lonesome Lake was a good friend, so was his wife, and Trudy. And there's so many things that are completely different from normal, civilized life sitting right here. I remember one day I was heading over to Gulf Islands on the sked. We ran a sked at 8 o'clock in the morning over to Ganges and at 5 o'clock at night. And at 8 o'clock, on the 8 o'clock flight, on the way over I saw a fish boat just south of Steveston on the mud flats laying over on its side. Obviously he had got, something had stopped him and he went to ground and I didn't think much of it but I went on over did my trip and came back and then I took the five o'clock trip at night and the same boat was there but he was afloat and so once again I opened the window and I yelled at him and I yelled, if you need help, wave. Well, he got a sheet out and he waved it for all he was worth. So I came back into Vancouver and picked up a rope, a big long rope and went back down, landed on the water alongside the boat, gave them the rope and I towed them out, oh I guess two miles, three miles out around the jetty and then back in the river to Steveston and let them go just off the dock in Steveston. I often thought how silly that must have looked to see an airplane towing a fishboat of all things. But life was so, so interesting. We'd work all summer. I was on the coast, our summers were always busy, but winters were tough. We're tough to make a living. Russ Baker was fantastic in the ways he'd go out and get contracts for us. The first one was up at Stewart where we were flying into the glacier and that kept us busy all winter. We made our living by, we were on incentive pay, we got paid by the hour. If we didn't work, we didn't eat very much. But one year he got a contract to supply the DEW line. And that was, that has to be one of the most interesting things I've ever been on, to go up there in the middle of the winter, up to the Arctic where temperatures were 60, 65 below zero Fahrenheit and I had no experience in the Arctic. But anyway, I grabbed an airplane, four of us started off together, and I had old FHB, the first Beaver that was built. And it was not in too good shape, it hadn't had its overhaul, and there were little things wrong with it that didn't bother us down here. But when I got up there, the flaps weren't working. There was no heater in it. The filler neck for the oil tank was on the outside of the airplane instead of on the inside on later models. And I just had trouble. I managed to bump it taking off at Copper Mine one time and I bent the tail of the fuselage and had to bring it home. But anyway, when I arrived up there, Ernie Boffa, who was a real old-time northerner and a wonderful guy, we both came from Fort William originally, and he looked at me and he said, what are you going to do about a parka? And I said, they told me I could get one up here. He

said, you can't. And I had my coastal parka, which was rain-proof, and an Indian sweater my wife had knit for me, and heavy underwear, and a pair of gloves. And one of the Eskimos saw what I was wearing on my hands and he got his mother to make me a pair of red fox fur gauntlets which were a lifesaver. But the things that went on up there to me were just so strange. You could fly along over the Arctic ice and see seals laying out on the ice or you could see polar bears, loping along, looking for the seals. We had a man by the name of Andy Madore who had a group of Eskimos, four of them, and we would take them out to where we wanted to establish a site for the DEW line. They'd take a tent and sleeping bags and a stove and food and whatever they needed, plus shovels. And the wind was always blowing hard, and it would blow the snow into drifts. And those drifts, when you'd hit one with a shovel on the end, you know, where it hooks out, it would ring. Or you kick it and it would ring. This is snow. And they'd come along and they'd jab their shovel in under the edge of the drift and pry down. The drift would break off, the wind would catch it and it was gone. So all they had to do was this all day long. And the first time we took a crew out, Ernie said that, and boy he was sarcastic, he didn't want me up there, not because of me particularly, but because he wanted an experienced northern pilot, and I didn't blame him. But anyway, he said, I'm going to give you an Eskimo to stay with you, and then if you do crash or you do get forced down, you'll have a chance of living through it. And I thought that was pretty good. But anyway, I had this Billy and we took Andy out 50 miles to the next site. And we put Andy and his, he had three Eskimos, we put them down and Billy and I were going to head back to camp. When Ernie came up and he said, Dan, Andy needs more help so I'm going to leave your Eskimo with him and I'm going to leave my Eskimo with him and that will give them five and they should be able to do it in a couple of days. So I said fine and I turned the airplane around, took off and went home. And when I reached in the back for my engine cover to cover the airplane up at night, here was Billy's caribou hides, which he used as a sleeping bag. Well, you know, in the Arctic, at those temperatures, you have to have proper sleeping equipment. And here was Billy's caribou hides. I didn't know what to do. It was dark. I couldn't go back over. And Ernie had just come in, and I went right over and I told him what I'd done. Well, he tore a strip off me like you wouldn't believe. You can't be careless in the Arctic. Carelessness is killing people. And, you know, I felt about that big. And he turned his back on me and went over, went in the back of his airplane to get his engine covered. And he came out and his face was white. He said, Dan, I got my Eskimo's caribou hides in the back of my airplane. It was the last time he was nasty to me. But anyway, we got up early, first thing in the morning, I'll never forget it. And as soon as it was late enough to see the runway, I took off and went over with Billy's caribou hides and Billy met me and I said good morning Billy and he said hi Dan and I said I'm sure sorry I took your caribou hides away on you he said oh yeah I forgot them. It didn't worry him a bit I said well how did you sleep oh he says we all get in under the one bunch of caribou hides no trouble at all, he didn't couldn't have cared less. But the conditions up there were so different. You'd be flying along perfectly clear and suddenly ice crystals would form all around you just like a heavy, heavy fog. Visibility might be a quarter of a mile in a matter of minutes. And it could happen in daylight, it could happen in the dark. And of course, we only had about three or four hours of daylight when we first went up there. And I remember getting caught one

night going into a site, site three, and the visibility went right down and all I could see was a little black line where the tide was rubbing against a hill that was about 10 feet high and I could see that black line and I knew where I was and I knew that that shore would lead me into the base. And sure enough, about 15 minutes of sitting on the edge of my seat and watching and there was the airport. And I landed there, no further trouble. But one day I got up and it was a beautiful clear day. And I took off and flew over the camp, circled over the camp, and I looked down and I could see a vapor trail forming behind me. So I looked and sure enough here was a cloud forming as I flew. I climbed up a little bit and it stopped and I came down close to ground and it stopped, but there was just an area there where it was heavy, heavy moisture. And just the airplane going through it disturbed it enough to cause this cloud to form. And I remember just for fun I wrote my name in the cloud and you could see it in the shadow on the ground. And that brings rainbows, some of the most beautiful rainbows you could imagine. Complete circles and you'd see the shadow of the airplane right in the middle of them, or beautiful rainbows where, oh, often, particularly over on towards the island in the evening where you get the sun shining at the right angle and you get these beautiful rainbows. Back to Ernie Bafa, we were at Yellowknife and headed north and we went into the radium, not Radium Hot Springs, but where the radium mine was. And we spent the night there, got up in the morning and it was snowing like mad. And Ernie said, you all ready to go? And I said, you going to go on this stuff? And he said, well, of course. You don't pick your weather here, you go where you're going. So I said, well, you wait till I get behind you, because if I'm not following you, I'm not going anyplace. And we started out to the end of the runway, and my engineer had my map. And he opened his window to look back at something, and the wind caught the map and pulled it out. The only map we had was the yardage. So I turned towards it and it was all just straight snow so we taxied towards the map and Bill got out and got the map, got back in the airplane, went back to the runway and Ernie had taken off. So we took off and climbed up and I circled around no, not a sign of them. And so I said, well, the heck with this. I'll wait till it clears and I'll go on my own. So we landed and no sooner got down and got the airplane put together, put away, and Ernie came in. And he came over and he said, that's, it's snowing too hard up there, you can't see anything, so he said we can't go. But he said, incidentally, I seem to have damaged one of my skis. So I said, well, do you want me to look at it? I was an engineer before I was a pilot, and I'm quite capable of fixing a ski. And he said, yeah, maybe Bill could help you. And I said, yeah. No, it was Bobby Morin that was with me on that part of the trip. And we jacked Ernie's airplane up, took the ski off, and the whole brass bottom had torn off. You know, we always put metal underneath. And so we went into the mine and we found an old stovepipe. It was a big stovepipe from one of their furnaces. It wasn't quite an eighth of an inch thick steel but almost. It was a good sixteenth. So we took that and cut it. He had a pair of tin snips and we cut it to fit and put it on and we had to drill the holes with an ice pick. You know, drive a hole through it and then put rivets in. And we fixed Ernie's ski. And that was one of the things that helped me start getting along with Ernie. Because eventually when he left, he recommended that I be put in charge of the flight operations on the sites. So I made it with Ernie anyway. But eventually we ended up and Ernie, one day we were up on the coast working on the different sites and Ernie came down to pick up a man at Yellowknife and he

ran into a storm on the way down and was forced down. It was three days before the weather cleared enough to go out to hunt for him. I went out and I spent three and a half hours in, as I mentioned, sixty-five below weather. I had to leave the window of the airplane open because the windshield was fogging up so badly that all I could see was a narrow strip along the bottom of the windshield. That's the only way I could see out. But when I opened the window, then the wind kept it clear and I nearly froze to death. And I hunted and hunted and hunted and finally got back in just before I was out of gas. And the word was there that Ernie had arrived in Yellowknife. He picked up his man and he started out and we got a radio call from him that he had been forced down by weather on the Horton River and to bring him some gas. Well, once again, it was four days before he could get up there and when I got up to the Horton River, he had a sextant with him so he knew exactly where he was within a couple of miles. I knew where he was, I knew I was right over him, but the valley was socked in tight with fog. I flew upstream, found a hole, dove down underneath and I had about a 200-foot ceiling in the valley. I flew up the valley and landed alongside Ernie. And we immediately started work trying to get him ready to get out. There was no way we wanted to stay there overnight. And he handed me a pail of oil and he said, here, see if you can get this into the airplane. He had drained the engine oil when he got forced down. And, you know, I took that pail of oil and it had been diluted with gasoline before he drained it and I pushed my thumb on the top of it and I couldn't put a dint in it. It was that cold and that frozen so I put it over the fire and I got it boiling and poured it into his airplane and we gassed up his airplane. We both took off and back to camp. No problem. By the time we finished, as I said, Ernie and I were real close friends and there's nobody I'd rather sit and talk for half an hour with than Ernie because he sure has had some experiences.

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Tell us a bit about, you got some photos of Sir Edmund Hillary.

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You were, you took him around. That was such an interesting thing. was right after I came back down from the dew line. The dispatcher called me and asked me if I would take Sir Edmund and his friend and Mrs. Mundy and a writer from the province. What was his name? see Mount Waddington because Sir Edmund had said he would like to climb Mount Waddington. And all they told me was he wants to have a close look at it. Well, I was flying in the mountains all day, every day, and I had no fear of mountains as such. They, you know, they never jump up and hit you. But we went up to Mount Waddington and we started down low and I circled it and circled it until we were right up to the top and into the valleys and let him see where he could climb up. And oh, he was thrilled. He just thought that was marvelous to climb mountains that easily. We came back into Vancouver and I took them all in to see Russ Baker and introduce them to Russ. And Russ was tickled silly to meet him, of course, and he said, How did you enjoy your trip? And Sir Edmund made a remark that I just didn't believe. He said, You know, Russ, I've never had a bigger thrill in my life, he said, to see that mountain as close as if I was on it. And he said, by the way, we're heading down to

the South Pole. We're on our way there now. And he said, I would sure like to borrow Dan McIvor to come and fly our Beaver. And Russ said, no, no, we can't let him go. We need him here. This is the summer and we're busy. And then he turned to me and he said, do you want to go, Dan? And I said, there's no way I'm going to the Antarctic after just coming back from the Arctic. But I always thought that was kind of interesting that we gave Sir Edmund such a thrill.

I always liked using airplanes to do things other than move passengers. And one thing that I did an awful lot of was supply dropping to mines, to hunting parties. I was dropping supplies to a group of grizzly hunters up near Revelstoke and I had warned them that when I was dropping supplies to get under cover because there's no saying where they're going to be and what they're going to be hit with, but this man was behind and a great big rock right beside him. And I dropped this parcel in, and there was a can of strawberry jam in it. And this can of strawberry jam hit the rock right alongside this fellow's face, and he was splattered with strawberry jam.

But the other thing that really was the peak of my career was when I went into the Forest Service, I was flying the Forest Service contract airplane for several years. And I became aware of the problem of fighting forest fires. And I knew that airplanes could be a tremendous help if they'd let us use them. And the first thing I did with the Forest Service, well, I tried to talk them into it. Nobody in the Forest Service was even remotely interested. They knew how to fight fires, and they did. They did a good job. They'd take a bulldozer out and they'd build a fire guard and then let the fire burn up to the fire guard and or they'd send out people with shovels and pickaxes and they'd hand dig the fire guard and They would control them. There's no question about it. He did Because of the type of flying I was doing was by this house here in Burkeville and live here all the time. It meant that I was available and as I told you we were paid incentive pay and I was available within minutes any time that they wanted to call me. I remember one morning I was in bed sound asleep about four o'clock the phone rang and it was Bobby Morin out at the airport and somebody had been badly injured in a logging camp accident and they wanted them picked up as quick as possible. So I was in the summer and I pulled on my shirt and my trousers and my running shoes and dashed out into the car. And Bob had the airplane all set and running when I got there. And I stepped into the airplane and looked at my watch and it was exactly seven minutes from the time the phone wakened me and I was on my way. Another time, the way cooperation can be such a tremendous help on the coast, I had been up into Vancouver Bay which is in behind Sechelt and it was on the way back out, was just coming over Sechelt when the dispatcher called on the radio and said that a little boy had fallen at Mary Island Light. They have sidewalks raised up above the rocks all through that area, and this little boy had fallen off the sidewalk into the rocks and was badly injured, and the closest airplane was asked to go and get him. So I went and landed alongside, picked up the boy and his mother, brought them down to Vancouver and I think it was 23 minutes from the time the father phoned Alert Bay until the boy was delivered in Vancouver. You know, that was faster than you could get an ambulance to come to your home in Vancouver. And here it is right out in the wild. But I...

There were so many things like that happened with cooperation between both the airlines and the pilots, and there was all kinds of frustrations and troubles between the airlines but wherever it came to human need, they were always right there. I always laugh at a place up the coast here, Manson's Landing, where we all used to go in and have a cup of coffee on the way north and refuel and so on. And Pacific Western, Central BC Airways at that time, had the contract. But we used to use every airplane we could get our hands on, all the BC Airlines boys and all the West Coast, whatever, you know, we used them all, particularly BC Airlines. And one day Ray Oliver, the fellow that saw the whale fight, got a propeller off a Cessna Crane and took it up and gave it to Jack Summers, who ran the base at Manson's Landing. And Jack was just so thrilled about airplanes. He just loved them. He took this thing and he put it up on the wall in the coffee shop that his mother-in-law ran. And I came in, there was a bunch of us in, and I came in just after he put it up and I said, you know what we should do, Jack, is get everybody to sign on the propeller, all the fellows that come up. And he said, what a good idea. So I said, well here, and I took a serviette and said PWA pilots, sign here. And I hung it over one blade of the prop. And then I made another note, ordinary pilots, sign here. And I hung it over the other blade. Well, if you don't think that started something, ordinary pilots! I got told off.

But I guess the most important part of my whole flying life was when I got involved with forestry and forest fires. And I spent, well, there was a period when I was up at Zeballos that I was working very closely with the Tahsis Company and the Gibson brothers and almost got a water bomber going there but it didn't work out and then I came and and flew the forestry contract airplane for about six years.

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sorry

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I've got a question going here on, tell us a bit about your time you spent with the forestry.

Okay. Shortly after I came with Russ Baker in West Pacific Western, he called me into the office one day and he said, Dan, I want you to take on the forestry airplane here in Vancouver. And I said, no, I don't want to do that. I want to fly to Kemano. You know, you fly for a day and you get eight hours. Real good money and real good way to build up your time. Well, he said, I'm not going to force you, of course, but he said, I think you'll enjoy it. I know you'll enjoy it far more than you'll enjoy Kemano. And he said, you'll find that they'll become your close friend. So I agreed to take it on. And Doug Taylor was the district forester. And we became close friends. He came to our kids' weddings and the, you know, is that the grandchildren's baptisms, and close personal friends for years. And we used to fish. Time after time, we'd go fishing. But the thing that got to me there was that we had airplanes and yet we didn't do anything about putting fires out with them. And I talked to Dr. Orchard, I talked to Doug Taylor. Doug was interested. And eventually the Ontario Forest Service brought out a set of rotating tanks that they mounted on their Beavers and on their Otters.

And I got permission to buy a set to put on the Goose and I told the fire protection committee that if they would charter one airplane for one day with tanks to fight a fire, they'd have tanks on every airplane that was capable of carrying them. And they authorized me to see if I could talk an airline into doing it. And Doug Taylor said he'd use it if we could get one equipped. So I told BC Airlines, I told Pacific Western, and I told West Coast, and I told Charter Air Service and West Coast immediately ordered a set of tanks. This is Al Mashad and started putting them on and we had a lightning storm, a bad one, and we knew there was going to be fires the next day and I phoned Al and I said if you can get that airplane ready to go in the morning you'll find it'll be used. Sure enough, they worked all night, Gordy Peters, and he got the tanks installed, and Doug Taylor phoned and chartered that airplane, and they used it for 10 days on a fire, or 10 hours in that first day on a fire up at Sechelt, and the fire was out, under control. And Doug Taylor told me then, he said, Dan, we'll never have to send a crew into a fire again. We can control them from the air. And, you know, with that kind of support from the Forest Service, we used Beavers the rest of that summer and Art Sellers up at, well, up the valley here, he equipped his Avengers to drop water on fires and we found that an Avenger was many, many times as effective as a Beaver because it was carrying, gee, what was it, 300 gallons? I'm not clear, I don't remember how much they carried, but compared to the Beavers, 40 gallons, you know, it just made so much difference. Although you could take a Beaver and put it on a fire and not even notice what good it was doing that day, but get up in the morning and you'd find that where he had been dropping water it was way down but where no water was dropped it was still going wild but it became obvious and Ontario Forest Service discovered that their Beavers with 40 gallons the Otter with 80 gallons was eight times as effective as the Beaver with 40 gallons, so far far more than just quantity. And I started looking then for a big airplane. I knew that we had to have a bigger airplane. You know, if you take a, you have a little bonfire, and you take a cup of water and throw it on the bonfire, you'll cause a black mark or a part of the fire will be out. And you go down to the lake and get another cupful and come and throw it on, that fire has burned up again. So you throw another cup on and eventually you'll put it out. But if you were to take a 45-gallon drum of water and pour it on that poor little fire, not only will it be out, it'll be soaking wet and it'll be scattered and it, you know, there just won't be any further worry from it. Well, I started to look for an airplane and I remember reading about an airplane that the US Navy had built that was so big that you could walk out inside the wing and work on the engines in flight. And I remembered having seen a picture of it with people standing from one wingtip to the other on the top of it, this great monstrous flying boat. And I couldn't remember the name of it. And I hunted and hunted and talked to people around the airport, but nobody seemed to know about it. One day and Bobby Morin was down there and Bobby was a good friend. We had been in the Arctic together he was up at Kemano for years and we just were good friends and I said Bobby do you remember an airplane what that was so big that people could walk out in the wing and work on the back of the engines and he said yeah that's the Martin Mars. And I said, that's right. How do you know? He said, they're up for surplus sale tomorrow down in California, four of them. And I said, how do you know that? He said, well, I was going to buy them and put them on hauling fruit between here and the Okanagan. And he said, do you want the invitation for bid? He

said, I'm not going to do it I haven't got the money so he gave me the information to bid with all the data about the airplane, the size and the shape the payload the speed everything and that was it it just hit it right. Well I started I phoned first and asked them if I could put in a bid now I had no money and no right to make an offer, but I asked him if I could put in a bid. And he said, no. He said, bids are closed tomorrow. I said, well, you let me know who buys them. And he said, oh, I'd be glad to if you want to call. So I called and I got the name of the fellow that had bought them, and I phoned him and asked him what he would sell them for. he had bought the four Mars for \$26,000 some dollars,

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for the four of them.

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And when I talked to him, he referred me to his partner, and his partner said, yes, they'd sell them to me for \$50,000, double their money. And, you know, \$50,000 for about \$20 million worth of airplanes isn't too bad. And, oh, this went on for, I guess, two months. Dickering with him and trying to get our company interested enough to buy them and do something about it. Eventually they sent us down to investigate, see whether I thought they could be maintained in the bush. And we had people from Ferry Aviation in Victoria come down to give us the information on converting them. They would be given the job. And eventually the company approved the project and we got them ours. And we brought them up here and, you know, the whole thing. One day coming up, we were all out of place. The captain was sitting in his chair. I had got out of mine. I was a co-pilot on each of these flights. I got out of mine and the fellow that had owned the airplane sat in my seat. Jack Edwards, our engineer, was sitting on the engine instrument panel and all of a sudden all four engines quit. Just bang, there was dead silence and boy if you ever heard silence that's the place to hear it. Jack had done something, we don't know what he did, but he had pulled something that he shouldn't have and they all quit. And boy, I'll tell you, people got back into their own seats pretty quick, you know, just seconds and we were all where we were supposed to be. Jack Traxler was the Navy engineer and he called over the intercom. He said, number one's quit, feathering number three, and the skipper said, That's enough, Jack. We haven't got any more. You should get them running. So Jack started and he got number four running. And the dive slowed down. But boy, I'll tell you, when you look down at that Pacific Ocean and see it getting bigger and bigger and bigger as you're going straight down, you know, or almost straight down. But anyway, he got all four going and we got them in without any trouble. We ferried all four of those airplanes up, never had any trouble with them, and converted one. And then for the next several years, we did our best to prove that that airplane was capable of fighting a forest fire. And we had numerous fires, but the one that I remember as being to me the absolute proof that that airplane could fight any fire that we would have on the coast, it was up at the head of Ramsey Arm. It was burning in great big overmature cedar. The fire boss, we had quite a talk afterwards, and he said that some of those trees were as much as 14 feet in diameter. You can imagine. And he said the whole

area was covered with windfalls because they were over-matured, they were rotten, a lot of them, and the windfalls, he said there were five deep. Now imagine trying to get something in to fight a fire with a pile of five 14-foot logs. It just couldn't be done. There was no way that they could fight that fire. Could I have that? Yeah. The Ramsey Arm. And there was just no way that they could fight that fire from the ground. And we went up and we were called early. One of the few times that we were up till then that we had been called when the fire was still young and still really going. But we went up and I remember as soon as we saw it, it was obvious how to fight it. The inlet was here and the trees were right there, just beach, and there was a fire in those trees and burning maybe 100 yards up the valley and 100 yards across the valley. And the wind was blowing towards the fire, up the inlet. So we landed, filled, going out the inlet, did a U-turn and came back and we'd come in about halfway up those trees and drop so that the water would go in under the canopy into where the fire was burning. And as we dropped it, we'd ease back on the stick a little bit and the lack of weight and the climbing ability of the airplane would clear the trees without any danger, no trouble at all. And that water would go in there and the fire boss said that on one drop I hit the canopy with the whole load and knocked those trees over. Imagine that, imagine the force, well over 60,000 pounds of water hits the top of the tree, it's going to bust. But he said the water that went in under the canopy would go in there and just boil all in through the trees and soak the bottom, the top, the sides, everything. We made 22 drops and there wasn't a sign of smoke. Not one sign of smoke from that great big fire. And to me, that was the proof of the pudding and from then on I knew that we had an airplane that could fight fire and since I left they changed their program quite a bit but the first thing that a logging camp does any of these member companies they phone tankers that they've got a fire and tankers get the first crack at it. Whatever they want to do, they can send helicopters, they can send the Mars, they can send the bird dog to check it out, but they're there and they know that they can get in and they've been so successful. They haven't had a fire get away from them in, oh, 20 years. And what a difference between that and what the Forest Service does or did up in the Kootenays when they let the fire burn for a week and then go in and try and put it out. I shouldn't say that.

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I spoke with Richmond resident Dan McIvor, who has had a long and interesting aviation career. Not only has Dan chauffeured Sir Edmund Hillary over BC's highest peak, Mount Waddington, he has piloted over 65 different types of aircraft, mobbed countless hours of Arctic

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flying, and in the 1960s was instrumental in acquiring the Mars water bomber for fighting BC's forest fires. I asked Dan how long he and

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his family have lived on Sea Island. July 1951 we moved into this house. I had been up at Zeballos for about two years before that and was transferred into Vancouver by Queen Charlotte Airlines. The family and I got together again after many, many lonesome months. But as soon as we saw this, we knew this was home.

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Yeah. Where did you come from? Where were you?

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Oh, well, we were both brought up and we were married in Fort William, Ontario, Thunder Bay, and after the war we moved into Penticton, in Naramata. There was a little bit of a story, as a matter of fact, on moving down here. I was on a trip flying out of Vernon, and I left trail just about dark and came on into Vernon and there was no radio, no navigation aids at all, but when I went to land at Vernon normally they would run a car out to the end of the runway and shine the lights down the runway so I could see where to land. And this day something went wrong because when they ran the car out, they shut the lights off. And I came around, picked up a car with lights shining what I thought down the runway, so I came in over it and there were trees where there should have been runways, right? Oh, wrong car, so I pulled up, circled around again, found another car, did the same thing. It was also the wrong car, but they were all very close to the airport. I knew where the hangar was, and I came over the hangar again to let them know there was something wrong. And there was a fellow by the name of Normie Brown, lived right across the street from the hangar. I saw him pull out, drove into the airport, shone his lights down the runway, and I came in and landed. And I didn't think too much about it, it was, you know. But Johnny Hatch, the general manager of Queen Charlotte Airlines was there. He was bringing out the first Beaver that came out to British Columbia. And as soon as I saw him I said, Hi Johnny, I hear you got a Beaver. When can I see it? And he said, tomorrow morning. But he said, do you do this very often? And I said, what's that? And he said, come in after dark with no lights, no nothing. And I said, oh, only when it's necessary. Now I had known Johnny for years and I had applied to Queen Charlotte Airlines for a job before we ever went up to the Okanagan. And Johnny said, have you got any float experience? And I said, no. Well, he said, we can't use you then. So of course, that was the end of that. But then to get back to Vernon, as we were driving downtown, he kept asking me about this business of coming in after dark. And as he was getting out of the car he said, Dan, if you ever want a job down on the coast, you let me know and there's a job there for you. So all I had to do was something stupid to get a job. Before the war, I built an airplane, or started to build this airplane so I could learn to fly. And war broke out before I got it finished. I had it all ready to cover it. War broke out, couldn't get gas, couldn't get a license, couldn't do anything. So I joined the Air Force just shortly after the after war broke out as a rigger and it convinced me that I wanted to be a pilot and with my wife's help I made it. I made the application to remuster when I put in this application. And I never heard a word. And then one of the boys in the Marine section had also applied, and he had his private license. And he got his remuster. So right then I was back at the CO's office and I said, so-and-so got his remaster, but he's got his private license. If I

get my private license, will I get my remaster? And he said, well, Corporal, I don't know. He said, I will tell you one thing, that if you don't have your private license, you won't get a remaster. So I said, well, would it be possible to get special leave to go and get my license? And he said, yes, we could arrange that. When would you like to go? And I said, would tomorrow be too soon? He said, no, we can arrange that. Well, that was Thursday. On Friday I went down to Kingston and registered and got a place to live and took my first flight and then went back to Trenton for the weekend to be at home and on Monday morning I went to Kingston again and started my training and came back to Trenton on the Friday afternoon with my license in my hand.

Maybe you can tell us some of the aircraft that you've flown. Yeah, this is my old Air Force logbook and they're not all in here but I had 65 different types in my log when I left the Air Force and first of all I learned to fly in a Piper Cub 40 horsepower airplane that was shown worn out. But this is the Moth and the Tiger Moth and the Harvard and Yale, Hanson, one, two, three, four, and five, Bolingbroke, Fleet Finch, Cornell, Crane, Norseman, Hampton, Stearman, Oxford, Taylor Cub, Lysander, Kitty Hawk, Cant's Lowe. There's one interesting one, the Lockheed 14 that I ferried from Vancouver to Calgary and that airplane was one of the original airplanes owned by, Lockheed 10A, was one of the original airplanes owned by Air Canada when they first started the real line.

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You spent a fair bit of time flying in the Arctic. Maybe you can elaborate on that a bit.

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One year he got a contract to supply the DEW line. And that was, that has to be one of the most interesting things I've ever been on, to go up there in the middle of the winter, up to the Arctic where temperatures were 60, 65 below zero Fahrenheit. And I had no experience in the Arctic. But anyway, I grabbed an airplane, four of us started off together, and I had old FHB, the first Beaver that was built. And it was not in too good shape, it hadn't had its overhaul, and there were little things wrong with it that didn't bother us down here, but when I got up there, the flaps weren't working, there was no heater in it, the filler neck for the oil tank was on the outside of the airplane instead of on the inside on later models. when I arrived up there, Ernie Boffa, who was a real old time northerner and a wonderful guy, we both came from Fort William originally, and he looked at me and he said, what are you going to do about a parka? And I said, they told me I could get one up here. He said, you can't. And I had my coastal parka, which was rain blue, and an Indian sweater my wife had knit for me and heavy underwear and a pair of gloves and one of the Eskimos saw what I was wearing on my hands and he got his mother to make me a pair of Red Fox fur gauntlets But the things that went on up there, to me, were just so strange. You could fly along over the Arctic ice and see seals laying out on the ice, or you could see polar bears loping along looking for the seals. who had a group of Eskimos, four of them, and we would take them out to where we wanted to establish a site for the dew line. And they had, they'd take a tent and sleeping bags and a stove and food and whatever

they needed, plus shovels. And hard and it would blow the snow into drifts and those drifts, when you'd hit one with a shovel on the end, you know where it hooks out, it would ring or you'd kick it and it would ring. This is snow. And they'd come along and they'd jab their shovel in under the edge of the drift and pry down. The drift would break off, the wind would catch it and it was gone. But the conditions up there were so different. You'd be flying along perfectly clear and suddenly ice crystals would form all around you just like a heavy, heavy fog. Visibility might be a quarter of a mile in a matter of minutes. And it could happen in daylight, it could happen in the dark. And of course we only had about three or four hours of daylight when we first went up there. And I remember getting caught one night going into a site, Site 3, and the visibility went right down was a little black line where the tide was rubbing against a hill that was about 10 feet high and I could see that black line and I knew where it was and I knew that that shore would lead me into the base and sure enough about 15 minutes of sitting on the edge of my seat and watching and there was the airport and landed and no further trouble. But one day I got up and it was a beautiful clear day and I took off and flew over the camp, circled over the camp and I looked down and I could see a vapor trail forming behind me. So I looked and sure enough here was a cloud forming as I flew. I climbed up a little bit and it stopped and I came down close to ground and it stopped, but there was just an area there where it was heavy, heavy moisture. And just the airplane going through it disturbed it enough to cause this cloud to form. And I remember, just for fun, I wrote my name in the cloud and you could see it in the shadow on the ground. And that brings rainbows, some of the most beautiful rainbows you could imagine. Complete circles, and you'd see the shadow of the airplane right in the middle of them. It was an interesting life, but away from home a lot, which is one of the weaknesses of being in the flying business.

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So how did your... What is family life like with a pilot who sometimes can leave in the morning and not be seen for, you know, how long?

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Maybe you could tell us a few stories about that. One day I went up to Kemano. The round trip used to take about eight, eight and a half hours. When I got up there, one of the pilots who was on a freight haul out of uh, Stuart into a glacier. And, uh, he had made a mistake taking off on skis and the thing got away from him and he wrecked it. And, uh, they had to have another airplane in there quick. So, uh, I went up and, uh, instead of being home in one night, I was six weeks before I got home. Bud sent my clothes and my sleeping bag and stuff up. But that experience up at Stuart was something I'll never forget. I got into more trouble there in that six weeks than in all the rest of the time I flew, and yet I didn't do any damage and didn't hurt anybody. But we were flying up onto a glacier that was at a fairly steep slope and we had to land going uphill, take off coming downhill and the snow, the day I arrived we went up and put trees out, short trees, eight or nine feet high and lined our runway so we'd have something to line up on. It was all pure white. White snow, white sky, white everything. And we had to have contrast. So we put these trees out and went back down to Stewart and it started to snow. And

it snowed for three days, steady. When, I don't remember how deep the snow was snow banks you couldn't see over them. But when I got up to the glacier, Harry Taylor and I went up together. I was in a Beaver and he was in the Junkers. And when I saw where we had lined our trees up, there was one tree about so high sticking up through the snow, which meant that we had about nine feet of fresh snow to work on. Well I come in and I had this one tree top. I could see it out in the window and I kept my eyes right on it, came down and with that slope on the runway or on the glacier, you landed with almost takeoff power. And I hit down into the snow and it sank and sank and sank and throttled back and it stopped, oh I guess in 20 feet on the landing run. And I got out and I looked down and the snow was up to the belly of the airplane. And I was going to jump out into the snow, and with snowshoes on, the snow came up to my waist. It was just like fluff. And we hauled in there. Oh, I then started and I threw my freight off just into the snow. There's no way I could move the airplane. And somebody from up the hill where they had the camp came down and he said, what are you doing? And I says, I'm unloading my airplane. And he says, well, aren't you going to go and rescue your friend? And I said, what friend? He said, your pal in the other airplane. He just crashed down the hill. Well, I immediately threw all the stuff off, cramped a little bit of a runway to get the airplane moving, and took off and flew down, and sure enough, here was Harry Taylor with his airplane buried almost to the trailing edge of the wing, buried in the snow just below me on the glacier. And Harry was standing out in front of it. So I yelled at him that I was going down to Stuart to get some help and away I went. And incidentally, when you're in an airplane, if you open your window and bank the airplane so that your wing and your fuselage form a V heading towards the person, if you shout, it's amazing how clearly they can hear you shouting from an airplane. So I left Bill and they had all kinds of food and tents and you know there was no danger. So we left them and the next morning came back up with some more of a crew and eventually got Harry's airplane dug out.

You got some photos of Sir Edmund Hillary that you were, you took him around. Oh that was, that was a such an interesting thing. It was right after I came back down from the DEW line and the dispatcher called me and asked me if I would take Sir Edmund and his friend and Mrs. Mundy and Who a writer from the province

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Was his name?

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Paddy Sherman up to See Mount Waddington because sir Edmund had said he would like to climb Mount Waddington. And all they told me was he wants to have a close look at it. Well, I was flying in the mountains all day, every day, and I had no fear of mountains as such. They never jump up and hit you. But we went up to the top and into the valleys and let him see where he could climb up. Oh, he was thrilled. He just thought that was marvelous to climb mountains that easily. We came back into Vancouver and I took them all in to see Russ Baker and introduce them to Russ. And Russ, it tickled silly to meet him of course, and he said, how

did you enjoy your trip? And Sir Edmund made a remark that I just didn't believe. He said, you know Russ, I've never had a bigger thrill in my life, he said, to see that mountain as close as if I was on it. And he said, by the way, we're heading down to the South Pole. We're on our way there now." And he said, uh, I would sure like to borrow Dan McIver to come and fly our Beaver. And Russ said, no, no, we can't let him go. We need him here. This is the summer and we're busy. And then he turned to me and he said, do you want to go, Dan? I said, there's no way I'm going to the Antarctic after just coming back from the Arctic. But, uh, it. But I always thought that was kind of interesting that we gave Sir Edmund such a thrill.

One thing that I did an awful lot of was supply dropping to mines, to hunting I was dropping supplies to a group of grizzly hunters up near Revelstoke, and I had warned them that when I was dropping supplies to get undercover, because there's no saying where they're going to be and what they're going to be hit with, but this man was behind a great big rock right beside him and I dropped this this parcel in and there was a can of strawberry jam in it and this can of strawberry jam hit the rock right alongside this fella's face and he was splattered with strawberry jam. But the other thing that really was the peak of my career was when I went into the Forest Service, I was flying the Forest Service contract airplane for several years. And I became aware of the problem of fighting forest fires. And I knew that airplanes could be a tremendous help if they'd let us use them. And the first thing I did with the Forest Service, well, I tried to talk them into it. Nobody in the Forest Service was even remotely interested. They knew how to fight fires, and they did. They did a good job. They took a bulldozer up and they'd build a fire guard and then let the fire burn up to the fire guard. Or they'd send out people with shovels and pickaxes and they'd hand-dig the fire guard. Doug Taylor was the district forester and we became close friends. He came to our kids' weddings and the, you know, the grandchildren's baptisms and close personal friends for years. And we used to fish. Time after time we'd go fishing. But the thing that got to me there was that we had airplanes and yet we didn't do anything about putting fires out with them. And I talked to Dr. Orchard, I talked to Doug Taylor. and eventually the Ontario Forest Service brought out a set of rotating tanks that they mounted on their Beavers and on their Otters and I got permission to buy a set to put on the Goose and I told the Fire Protection Committee that if they would charter one airplane for one day with tanks to fight a fire, they'd have tanks on every airplane that was capable of carrying one. And they authorized me to see if I could talk an airline into doing it. And Doug Taylor said he'd use it if we could get one equipped. So I told BC Airlines, I told Pacific Western, and I told West Coast, and I told Charter Air Service, and West Coast immediately ordered a set of tanks. This is Al Mashad, and started putting them on, and we had a lightning storm, a bad one, and we knew there was going to be fires the next day, and I phoned Al and I said if you can get that airplane ready to go in the morning you'll find it'll be used. Sure enough, they worked all night, Gordy Peters, and he got the tanks installed and Doug Taylor phoned and chartered that airplane and they used it for 10 days on a fire up at sea, or 10 hours in that first day on a fire up at Sechelt and the fire was out, under control. And Doug Taylor told me then, he said, Dan, we'll never have to send a crew into a fire again. We can control them from the air. And Art Sellers up at, well, up the valley here, he equipped his Avengers to drop water on fires, and we found that an Avenger was many, many times as effective as a Beaver because it was carrying, gee, what was it, 300 gallons? And I'm not clear, I don't remember how much they

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Transcribed with Cockatoo, Oct. 16, 2023