

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #258 - Sides A & B

Subject: Roe Davis (With Video)

Place: Davis Home, Burns, Oregon

Date: December 7, 1989

Interviewers: Dorothea Purdy & Barbara Lofgren

DOROTHEA PURDY: This is Dorothea Purdy and we're at the home of Roe Davis in Burns, Oregon. The date is December 7th, 1989. We will be talking to Roe, something about his personal life, and his family life, and then we'll be doing a video with him. Barbara Lofgren taking the film. And Roe, can you tell us what your name is?

ROE DAVIS: My name?

DOROTHEA: Please.

ROE: Full name?

DOROTHEA: Yes.

ROE: Well originally I was --- Roosevelt name, was my first, given name. I was named after Teddy Roosevelt. And I was born in 1904. And I --- but I took the name, and shortened it up by taking Roe. And that --- I went by that since I grew up. When I was a kid, course they called me Roosevelt. But anyhow that's, takes care of the name thing.

DOROTHEA: Do you know how you got that name?

ROE: Well yeah, my Dad he was, he kind of fooled around with politics a little, and he was a Teddy Roosevelt man, see. And he, so he named me after Teddy Roosevelt.

DOROTHEA: Oh, okay.

ROE: That's where I got the name. And a funny thing happened on that; I guess I could tell you that now. But on this name thing, I was in Portland one time, and I was about

nineteen and I had a check, I'd been working around Portland, and I had a check made out to Roosevelt. Well I went into the bank to cash it, and of course no identification, but the lady there at the, teller she, she looked me over pretty good, and she said, "We'll cash your check." Says, "I want you to know that --- were you named after Teddy Roosevelt?" I said, "Yeah." She said, "I'd like to shake your hand, because I shook the hand of Teddy Roosevelt." (Laughter) That was kind of strange, you know.

BARBARA LOFGREN: That's interesting, yeah.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

ROE: She was a middle aged woman, you know, or --- But she'd known Teddy Roosevelt during the campaigning. And --- so that's how the name started.

DOROTHEA: Well that's interesting. And what were your parent's names?

ROE: My mother's name was Mary --- her maiden name?

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

ROE: Mary I. Ode was my mother's name, and then dad's name was Frederick, Frederick Davis.

DOROTHEA: Okay.

BARBARA: And when were you born, and where?

ROE: I was born in 1904, in Caldwell, Idaho. About seven miles west of Caldwell, Idaho, in 1904. And I lived there.

BARBARA: Do you have brothers and sisters?

ROE: Yes, and there was seven of us in the family. And one daughter --- or one girl and five boys. And the sister and one older brother is gone. There is five of us yet, five brothers left.

DOROTHEA: What were their names?

ROE: Well there is Oscar and Charlie that live here. And Chester lives in Baker, and a brother named Walter lives in California.

DOROTHEA: And your sister's name was?

ROE: Serena.

DOROTHEA: Serena.

ROE: Yes, she passed away a couple, three years ago. And the oldest brother, his name was Alonzo.

BARBARA: And did you go to school in Idaho then?

ROE: Yeah, I --- what schooling I got I got in Idaho. We lived most of the time around, a little town there called Middleton. And I went to school there, I didn't get very far in school. I had to quit when I was in the seventh grade. But what I got, I got there in Idaho.

DOROTHEA: Can you tell us something about the kind of classes you had? Were they country schools, or ---

ROE: Well yeah, the first one, two or three were little country schools up there in Middleton. It went to the ninth grade. And, oh I wouldn't know how to explain the classes. But I have an idea they are all together different now. But ---

BARBARA: And what did your father do?

ROE: He was a carpenter, and he did cement work too. And just day work. So it was a pretty big family, so the older ones, we got out pretty early and went to work on our own. See that's why I didn't get much schooling.

BARBARA: And what did you start doing then when you left school?

ROE: Well ranch work with sheep men in Idaho, and ranch work until I got --- oh I was about, I got an opportunity to go to California. And then I went down there and I learned

automobile trade. I'd always mechaniced a little, but then I learned it more in California, in the oil fields. And since then I followed the mechanic trade.

DOROTHEA: Can you remember what maybe your first job was?

ROE: Yes, I was about; I think I was either thirteen or fourteen. It was a summer job, and I --- the neighbor run a dairy, and I hired out to milk cows on this dairy during the three months of vacation.

DOROTHEA: Can you tell us something about the wages, the kind of money you received?

ROE: Fifteen dollars a month. Sixteen after the first month, I got a raise of a dollar.

BARBARA: Oh, my.

ROE: Fifteen dollars a month, sixteen for two months.

DOROTHEA: That wouldn't go very far today, would it?

ROE: It sure wouldn't. But it bought quite a bit then.

BARBARA: And when you went to California, what was your --- you worked for an automobile dealership, or a repair shop?

ROE: Well, really not. Not too much. I worked in the oil fields; I worked in a machine shop. And I did a lot of --- at that time it was pretty easy to get into mechanics if you could--- well Model-T's was about all you worked on, and old four cylinder Chevy's. And you didn't take much training, you know. And so when I was down there two years, and then I come back to Idaho. Why I just went to working on cars. In the oil fields I worked in the machine shop, and got some experience in mechanicing.

BARBARA: And what was the reason that you came to Harney County then?

ROE: Well I had a little shop in Caldwell for a couple years in the back of a storage place, just where I did repair work. And then I went to work for a wrecking, a guy in the wrecking

business there. And he --- got along with him real good. And he had been in Burns years before. So after I worked there a couple years, he had a boy that was growing up that was going to take over what I was doing. So he said, "Let's go up to Burns," and said, "maybe I can help you get started up there on your own." So we come up to Burns and looked it over in 1929. And so we come up here. And I rented that old campgrounds that used to be back of the Ford Garage, is where I started. And ---

BARBARA: Did he help you financially to get started?

ROE: A little bit, just a little bit, yeah.

BARBARA: Well it was nice of him to care that you got started when he no longer could employ you.

ROE: Yeah, he was a very nice fellow. And he --- I got along with, got along with everybody. And he just took a liking to me, and said, "I'll help you get started." That's the way it started.

BARBARA: So you started your wrecking yard behind the Ford Garage then?

ROE: Yeah. I don't suppose either one of you --- you probably remember the old campgrounds, the old tin building that was around there?

DOROTHEA: No, I've seen it all through my growing up years, but I really didn't know too much about it.

ROE: It's been tore down for several, quite a few years now. Eight or ten year's maybe.

DOROTHEA: Did you work for the Ford Garage also while you were working there?

ROE: No. Archie McGowan, he was awful good to me. He had a few cars in there, and that's the reason he wanted to rent me that place. He said, "We need a wrecking yard here." And he said, "I'll, there is six old cars over there I'll just sell you them for ten dollars a piece to start on." So that's --- for the first cars. He was real good to me over the years

there, even after I left there. I only stayed in there a couple years. But Archie McGowan and Ray Weeks both was real good to me about selling me their old junk, you know. And it makes a difference if you can get along with them garages. And they --- Bennett's was real good too, all of them. I got along with all of them. And when they could sell me something they didn't want, and I could make a buck on it, why they did. And it just started that way.

BARBARA: So people came around and bought parts from you to kind of tinker with their own automobiles?

ROE: Yeah. And the garages at that time, you couldn't go into a parts store and buy parts. If you couldn't buy some old used parts, it was --- you had to wait quite awhile to get new parts. And the garages was a pretty good customer then. They repaired old cars, and they used parts. And ---

BARBARA: But some of the ranchers liked to work on their own.

ROE: Ranchers did too, yeah. And it all helped.

BARBARA: So you were there for a couple of years, and then where did you locate?

ROE: Moved up there, I bought that property up there where that museum is. And that whole block in there is --- from three different parties. But some of it was about ready to go for taxes. Anyhow I bought it from the owners, and paid a little down and got in there, and paid it out. And then I burnt out after I was in there a few years, it burnt down. A guy working for me had a little mishap, and burnt the building down.

BARBARA: Oh, dear. What year was that, do you recall?

ROE: Well, it was '35, '34. I guess it was '34. No it was '35; no it was '36, because I had an old airplane engine in there at the time. Yeah. But by then I'd begun fooling with airplanes, and I wanted to get out of town. And I begin looking for a place for an airport.

And then I got that property out where the high school is, and moved my business out there and had an airport out there.

BARBARA: So about how many years were you up on the museum hill?

ROE: Oh, I guess about ---

BARBARA: So you say you came in '29 to Burns, 1929 to Burns? Is that when you moved to Burns?

ROE: Just about.

BARBARA: And then you were a couple years at the campground, and then four or five years up on the hill there.

ROE: Yeah, five or six years up there.

BARBARA: Okay.

DOROTHEA: Did you rebuild after you had the fire up there?

ROE: No, I didn't.

DOROTHEA: You didn't rebuild up there?

ROE: No I didn't. I had an old building there that I got by on, that had been used to wreck cars in. And I just toughed it out until I could get out there. There was no way I could build there, the way the building restrictions was, you know.

BARBARA: Things were changing.

ROE: Yeah.

BARBARA: And they didn't want that there.

ROE: Yeah. So I started making different plans. But the old building did the job. It has been --- the last thing that was in there before I was in there was a laundry. But they had, originally it was an old brewery building. And then the back of this lot there was a granary we built into a house. So we, that made our house.

DOROTHEA: Well by then you were married?

ROE: Well I was married when we come to Burns.

DOROTHEA: Oh, you were.

ROE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: So you met Eleanor --- and Eleanor's maiden name is what?

ROE: Stevenson.

DOROTHEA: Stevenson.

ROE: Lola was just about two months old when we come to Burns.

DOROTHEA: Oh, she was.

ROE: That's our oldest daughter.

BARBARA: So where did you meet your wife?

ROE: I met her in Idaho, the first time. And I --- she was about fourteen or fifteen.

BARBARA: And then you went to California and you came back. And then did you marry her after you came back?

ROE: Well, yes. And I was down in California, they was down, her and her family was down there part of the time too.

BARBARA: Oh, is that right.

ROE: During the years why we got to going together. But we went together a couple years before we got married. And we got married in '27.

BARBARA: In Idaho?

ROE: Yes, in Caldwell.

DOROTHEA: So Lola was born in Idaho?

ROE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: And Mildred then, you second daughter was born here?



ROE: Here in the old hospital.

DOROTHEA: Here in the Valley View.

ROE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Okay, the Valley View Hospital, that's the old hospital.

ROE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Can you tell us something then about what you did after you moved out where the high school is now?

ROE: Well I had the airport along with my auto wrecking business. And I only had about a year to go there then, and then the war started. And so I knowed I'd be in it one-way or another, so I wanted to get in it. So I junked all my cars, scrapped them. They was wanting the scrap iron then pretty bad. I scrapped everything out, and went into that war training. And I went over to Bend on a government pilot training program. And through the war, until it quit.

DOROTHEA: Well did you already know how to fly when you, when the war started?

ROE: Oh, yes. Yeah. I learned to fly in '36. I got this little Eagle Rock that I had in 1936, and put it together and made it fly. And learned to fly in 1936.

DOROTHEA: Did you have an instructor, or did you just learn?

ROE: Oh yeah, a guy was here that had flown a little. And he could show you how to get up and down. And that was about all, you know.

DOROTHEA: What was his name?

ROE: Ken Wallen, Ken Wallen. He is a mechanic down here, and worked for Harry Smith, and he'd --- oh he, he knowed how to fly, but like you say, he'd only flown, I doubt if he'd flown over fifty hours himself. But then he could show you how to get them down, and that's all we needed. Seemed like the thing, you looked forward then to get up in the

air, and that was it. You learned from there on.

DOROTHEA: And you went out by the grange hall, and there was an airport out there at one time. Can you tell us something about that?

ROE: Well that was, when I first started flying that's where it was then, out there by the grange hall. And just a dirt runway, they graveled it a little. And there is where I learned to fly. And we didn't have much instruction; we'd just get in something and run it up and down the runway until you'd think you could get it in the air, and then fly it. (Laughter)

BARBARA: You were a brave sole, weren't you?

ROE: Yeah, I don't know. Seemed like you wasn't scared of the thing. Of course you knowed that them old planes then, you know, they might quit you any time. But then, when you went up in the air you always looked for a place, where you could keep in mind where you could land if something went wrong.

DOROTHEA: Did you have to wear those old goggles, and funny looking hats at those times? Or did they ---

ROE: Yeah, you wore goggles, because --- and a helmet, yeah.

DOROTHEA: You didn't have a hood on top of your head, or anything, you just sat out in the open.

ROE: No, no. Just open cockpit.

DOROTHEA: Was it very cold?

ROE: Well, yeah but usually you didn't fly when it was that cold.

DOROTHEA: Oh, you just fair weather flying.

ROE: Just fair weather, yeah. You dressed for it; you put on a lot of clothes if you were flying in cold weather. You could dress for it pretty good. There was no heat in there or anything.

BARBARA: Where did you get the plane to practice in? Whose plane was it?

ROE: Oh, it was stored over in Caldwell, and a guy had --- originally from Oregon, and they had an Oregon license then on the airplane. You could license it with a state license instead of the federal. And he'd run out, his license had run out on him, and they was chasing him around to make him license it. He flew it over in Idaho, and just tore it, took it apart and just stored it. I heard about it, so I got a hold of him and tried to trade him out of it. I traded him a --- he was down in California then I think. I traded him a little Austin car, and fifty dollars for it. Took the truck down there and hauled it up.

BARBARA: So you put it together to learn to fly then?

ROE: Yeah.

BARBARA: I see, I see.

ROE: I hadn't had much experience as far as airplanes, but there was a guy here then by the name of Ian Davis that had taken some schooling on aircraft. And so he knowed how to rig the wings. You got to adjust them just so they fly right and everything. So he was a big help putting it together. And he didn't fly, but he was --- he savvied aircraft work. And so he helped us put it together.

BARBARA: Did you have a hanger or anything to store you planes out there?

ROE: No. I built a hanger to put it in so I could store it. There was one hanger there, but just for one airplane. But --- so I built another to store that one in.

BARBARA: Were there other people around at that time that were flying, or learning to fly too?

ROE: Quite a lot. More --- a lot of enthusiasm in flying. It was in the next couple of years why there was six or seven old planes out there that guys had bought and learned to fly. And it's --- there was quite a lot of enthusiasm there on them old --- flying.

DOROTHEA: Well I heard some stories one time about you. You used to give some rides to people, and you'd take them down and then at some time or other you did some little fancy flying, and flew through barns. Can you tell us something about that?

ROE: (Laughter) No, I think that has been exaggerated a little bit. I couldn't tell you anything scary on flying. I used to take --- after you flew a few hours, why of course you were an old pilot. Then you'd take somebody up, you know. I think I had five and a half hours when I took my wife and my two girls up for a ride. And they don't consider that very much flying now, you know. But I learned pretty much the principle of it before I ever went up, you know. And I wasn't afraid of it. If something went wrong why you knowed what you were going to do, you were just going to land it, that was all.

DOROTHEA: Did you ever have some close calls to where you didn't have a place to land?

ROE: No, the only --- my first old airplane, the only forced landing I had I was given, I didn't have too many hours, maybe ten or fifteen hours, and I was learning Tommy Choate how to fly, and we were shooting landings and the engine quit on us. And I landed in a corner of a field there, right there by Hilton Whittings. And, but he was flying, and all of a sudden I thought he cut the motor to land. But instead of that, the engine had quit. But I could see right away what was wrong, so I took the controls then and landed, landed it. But you always kept that in mind when you was flying them, that something could happen, and then you was always prepared for it. And I had a few forced landings, but --- once out of gas. Not out of gas, but the tank didn't drain clear out. It was a different airplane I had bought, and it run out of gas before it should have. But I was coming back from Boise, and I was up over Burns, but I had plenty of altitude and I just went back and landed at the Burns airport. I couldn't quite make my airport. But I had a

few landings, times --- that kind of things that forced me to land a few times.

BARBARA: How many planes did you own and have out at your airport where the high school is now?

ROE: Well, I had several different planes that I bought and sold. But I had three of my own that I flew commercially.

BARBARA: And then did you rent spaces to other people out there?

ROE: Yeah. When I come back from Bend then, you see by the time I come back from my experience over at Bend why I had a license then, I could fly. And I also had a mechanic license that I could license an airplane with it, federal license. And it was pretty handy.

BARBARA: So when you were in the service did you teach others to fly then?

ROE: No, I went over to this school at Bend. It was a contract school for the state. It was what they called a contract school for the --- they learned the pilots for the government, see. See the government didn't have enough schools of their own, so they hired these contract schools. And why I didn't instruct, well I did some instructing on aircraft in the classroom. And then I was chief mechanic, and I tested them all out before anybody flew them. I had charge of all the airplanes on the ground. And then I had mechanics to work on them, and I did some of the mechanic work too. But I was the head of it, and overseeing the aircraft before it went into the air, tested it.

BARBARA: Well did you spend all your time in Bend then, or were you located in different areas?

ROE: Just in Bend.

BARBARA: Just in Bend.

ROE: Yeah.

BARBARA: And for how long?

ROE: Pretty near --- about two years.

BARBARA: Two years.

ROE: And then --- until they didn't need any extra pilots anymore. They was getting, the war was kind of tapering off then. And then they didn't, they didn't, they cut out them contract schools.

BARBARA: So then you came back to Burns?

ROE: Yes.

BARBARA: And then did you start --- you had your license and everything, you started teaching?

ROE: Yeah.

BARBARA: You say you taught Tommy Choate to fly. Who were some of the other people that you taught?

ROE: Well, I didn't really do much instructing then. I did commercial flying, and then worked on airplanes. And I just stayed in the airplane business for about three years before I went back into the wrecking business again.

BARBARA: Oh, you mentioned commercial flying.

ROE: Oh, yes.

BARBARA: Can you tell us a little bit about that?

ROE: Well, just somebody wanted to go to Portland or something. Fly emergency flights. I flew a little baby that had polio once into Portland. Had to get in there after dark. But it -- things like that, you know.

BARBARA: I see.

ROE: Fly anybody that wanted to fly somewhere, you'd take them. BARBARA: So how

long then were you in the business before you went back to the wrecking yard?

ROE: Oh, I was about three or four years.

BARBARA: Three or four years.

ROE: Then of course meanwhile we hunted coyotes in the winter, you know.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

ROE: With the airplane. Did about anything you could with an airplane, you know.

BARBARA: Did you do spraying, and that type of thing?

ROE: I didn't do any spraying. Oscar did.

DOROTHEA: You left that up to Oscar and Carl.

ROE: Yeah. By the time it kind of went tapering off for, there wasn't enough in for two of us. So I could go back into the wrecking business, and Oscar, he could make a living on it. So he stayed with the flying. I went back into the auto wrecking business.

BARBARA: You mentioned hunting coyotes. How many could you catch in a day, or shoot in a day?

ROE: Well, most of the time you'd get eight or ten, or twelve by the time you shoot them and land and pick them up, skin them, you know. Skin them before you --- But days were short, maybe you'd only fly actually fly maybe three hours. And then the rest of the time you were on the ground, and taking care of your coyotes. But I think our best day was, seemed to me like that one day we got twenty-one. About our best day. But most of the time eight to twelve, along in there.

BARBARA: You said you knew Ted Barber. Did he do coyote hunting too?

ROE: Yeah.

BARBARA: What was his, what did he do with flying?

ROE: Oh, he did about anything you could do with flying. He was an old barnstormer.

BARBARA: I see.

ROE: He didn't have much license either. And then when the war come along, why he went into training, he into, he went to Seattle. And I flew in there once and seen there where he was. He was working for one of them schools, training pilots. And he did that during the war. And then he got out, why he went to flying for himself.

BARBARA: I heard he was quite a character.

ROE: Yeah, he was. Nice, nice, nice man. I thought a lot of him. He was one of the few old barnstormers that's left.

BARBARA: And he did rounding up of wild horses and things too?

ROE: Yeah, yeah.

BARBARA: And then you went back into the wrecking yard business. Did you have that out by the high school too?

ROE: No, that's when I ---

BARBARA: Or did you change locations?

ROE: Yeah, and then I went back into the wrecking business then. By then they was wanting to get a place for that high school. And I could see where I could cut that land up and get rid of it. I had accumulated quite a lot of land in there. Had to have for the airport.

So I started getting rid of it then, and sold it to the high school. And sold Bud Garland a big chunk of it, and where the Dairy Queen is, and the drive-in theater was part of it.

BARBARA: So did you retire then, or did you have a little wrecking yard elsewhere?

ROE: No, I moved out there where that place is now, out on the highway, you know. You went past Hines, just off of the highway, out around the bend.

BARBARA: Oh, I see.

DOROTHEA: Almost ---



ROE: That was my place.

DOROTHEA: Almost to where the new BLM officers are.

ROE: Yeah, that's part of my old property, yeah.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

ROE: And the wrecking yard is down below the hill in that flat.

BARBARA: I see.

ROE: And I moved the wrecking yard out there then and worked that pretty hard. Tried to make my last years count a little bit.

BARBARA: You bet. So when did you retire from that business?

ROE: About twelve years ago.

BARBARA: I see.

ROE: And I sold it to Glerups. George and Dave Glerup bought it from me. It's changed hands a couple times since then.

DOROTHEA: Do you know who has that now?

ROE: Well I couldn't tell you the name, but he comes from over around Eugene somewhere.

DOROTHEA: Out in the valley I heard. I can't remember their name either. I've been introduced, but I can't remember their name. It also belonged to Ed and Bill McManus for a while, right?

ROE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Yeah. So --- Well now you spend most of your time with your musical instruments. Can you tell us some about how you got interested in that?

ROE: Oh, I always loved music. But as a kid I never, couldn't have anything except an old mouth harp. But in the years along, you trade for that stuff, you know. And I'm quite a

trader. And I picked up an instrument now and then. I've sold some of them, but most, a lot of them I just kept. And I just got a collection of them now that I just keep. But then of course I sold, I got into it enough that I sold new instruments for a while. But I don't do too much of it now. Last four or five years I've been working on bicycles. (Laughter)

BARBARA: You always have to have something to tinker with.

ROE: I've got to be active. I can't just, I can't set around. I feel better doing something. And in the winter, most of the time I fool with this music. And then in the summer, I work on the bicycles. I sell, buy and sell and repair them. Something to do, you know.

DOROTHEA: Keep yourself busy, right.

BARBARA: Did you teach yourself how to play your instruments?

ROE: Yeah, yeah. I can get a tune out of about anything. But I'm no professional musician. But I play auto harp more than anything else, auto harp and mandolin. But auto harp is --- I love an auto harp, they're a little hard to play.

DOROTHEA: Well my son bought a --- I think he bought a guitar from you, and he also had his grandfather's banjo repaired. I think you bought some parts for it, where it had warped.

ROE: Yeah, yeah.

DOROTHEA: And he said; "Now if you go down to Roe's, you have him play the mandolin for you." I can't remember the name of the tune that he said to play. But anyway, he said, "He can really play it."

ROE: I fixed that banjo up for him once didn't I, recovered it.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

ROE: His dad ---

DOROTHEA: It belonged to Clinton's dad.

ROE: Yeah. Now was you Clinton's ---

DOROTHEA: I'm Clinton's wife.

ROE: Right, uh huh, I see now.

DOROTHEA: And Clint's dad, Ray Purdy played the banjo. And Jim has that now. And he plays pretty good.

ROE: Does he?

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

ROE: That's good.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, he's kind of dominating --- domineering, or whatever you want to call it. He gets to playing, and nobody else plays because he's taking the floor. So whatever you want to call that. That's --- but yeah, he said you were real good with the music instruments. Do any of your children play?

ROE: Well Mildred and Lola both took piano when they was growing up. They both played piano. And Lola, I tried, started her out on a banjo a little bit, but she run out of time. She got busy, you know. She married and --- If kids don't get that pretty early, why they get too busy for music, you know. Unless they get time when they get old, and they play something. I know quite a few that took it up later, you know, just for self-amusement, you know.

DOROTHEA: Was there anything else that you'd like to discuss with us. Something about maybe some more of bicycle building, or some of the things that you do now?

ROE: Well, about all I do now --- I fool with these instruments, and I collect some of these kid's peddle tractors and cars, and rebuild them. And they are kind of collector's items now.

DOROTHEA: Do you keep these, or do you sell them?

ROE: Yeah, I got --- I just distribute them around to most of my grandkids, and they all got them. I've got them all little tractors and little cars and stuff.

BARBARA: That's great.

DOROTHEA: I know a lot of these things have become antiques. So do you keep the antique type things?

ROE: Yeah, yeah. I got quite a lot of antique stuff. I took some up to the museum. But I've got some yet; probably take some more up later.

DOROTHEA: Well I know you have a motor or an engine of a plane up in the museum. What are your plans to do with this?

ROE: With that engine?

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

ROE: Just leave it there for public to view.

DOROTHEA: And you're going to put some pictures up and articles with it?

ROE: I do have --- have you been up there since we put the pictures up?

DOROTHEA: No.

ROE: Yeah, I have one now that's --- tells a pretty good story of the early flying, with pictures. Oh, it's about this square, and the pictures on them, most of them 4 x 6, you know. So there is quite a lot of pictures on there. And then I'm going to put some more up there. I got some more old pictures that I'd like to put up there. (Shows pictures)

DOROTHEA: Oh, this is a picture of your family.

ROE: Yeah. And there's the hotel when it burnt. I took that from the airplane.

DOROTHEA: Shows us a picture of his family after he had flown for five and a half hours solo. His family, Eleanor, Mildred, and Lola Davis in 1936, with an airplane picture of the Eagle Rock at the city airport. Now that city airport was out where?

ROE: It was out by the grange hall.

DOROTHEA: There by the grange hall at that time.

ROE: Here's some of my first mechanicing about 19 --- oh, '22. I made that in '22 out of an old car. Just took an old sedan, an old touring car and tore the old body all off and then made that body on it.

DOROTHEA: And this is a picture with two men on it. Who are the men?

ROE: Well, this is me. And then the ranch, one of the guys that worked there at the ranch.

DOROTHEA: And this is a car that you built?

ROE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Okay.

ROE: They had a --- when I was a kid they had us, awhile there they wanted to make them old bugs out of old cars, you know. They had bug fever. And then that --- I drove that old car, it was a 1911 Oldsmobile. I drove it to California then in 1924.

BARBARA: Oh, gosh.

DOROTHEA: Oh, goodness sake.

ROE: No windshield, no headlights. Lights on there, but you couldn't ---

DOROTHEA: Couldn't see by them.

BARBARA: You just drove in the daytime.

ROE: I drove it right into Long Beach.

BARBARA: How many tires did you go through?

ROE: Not too many, because you didn't drive it very fast.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

ROE: You only drove about twenty-five miles an hour. And ---

BARBARA: That's great.

DOROTHEA: Well that looks like a more modern, more modern car than they came out with, when they came out with the automobile.

ROE: Yeah, yeah, it did. Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Those are good pictures.

ROE: That's another picture of the same thing.

DOROTHEA: It had headlights, but they were about like a match.

ROE: Well, they were run by carbide, and then I didn't --- they wasn't workable anymore.

And ---

DOROTHEA: You also have a picture here taken by the Lemon Studio of all the coyote kill that you must have had. It looks like a lot of coyote skins.

ROE: Yeah, that's this one here.

DOROTHEA: This is on the hanger, where at?

ROE: Between Hines and Burns.

DOROTHEA: Between Hines and Burns out by the old schoolhouse.

ROE: Yeah.

BARBARA: How much did you get for a hide in those days?

ROE: Well, the first year we got them, we got fifteen. And then we hunted them three years, and then the next year twelve, and then the next year they kind of quit buying them. Six and seven dollars is all we got that last year, so we quit hunting them then.

DOROTHEA: That's a lot.

ROE: Now this is the wrecking yard out there between Hines and Burns.

DOROTHEA: These are photomaps taken in 1961, showing the wrecking yard and a map of Burns and Hines. Is that the airport out behind here?

ROE: Yeah, well that had closed, it had closed then. Because see that was after I sold that property to the high school. See where they made that track?

DOROTHEA: Oh.

ROE: That's the high school. I closed the airport by then.

DOROTHEA: Oh, uh huh.

ROE: And this, but this one here, the airport is right down in there on that picture. There was our airport between Hines and Burns.

DOROTHEA: We're looking at some old pictures of the airport between Hines and Burns that Roe had at that time. About what year was this?

ROE: '45.

DOROTHEA: About '45.

ROE: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Well can you think of some interesting stories that happened to you during your time as a pilot? And we mentioned earlier Billy Dibble. Can you tell us something about him?

ROE: I really couldn't tell you much about Billy. But I got to know him just --- see he left here in '32. And he used to come up to the wrecking yard. They had magneto trouble on them old airplanes, and I helped him out on the magnetos a few times. Fixed up a magneto for him. And some of the stuff, points that broke off, some of the old cars had the same points. And I just got to know him. But I took my first ride with Billy, really. And me and my wife and Lola when he was --- had taken up passengers out there one time. We went out and took a ride. But he's the first guy --- first time I ever got up in the air was in his plane.

DOROTHEA: But he didn't teach you how to fly?

ROE: No, no. No he left here, see he left here in '32, and then there was no airplanes around here then. And then Daryl got a hold of an airplane about '35, an old Pusher. Then I got mine in '36.

DOROTHEA: Daryl Eggleston?

ROE: Yes, Eggleston. See there was a gap in there; there was no flying activity here at all.

DOROTHEA: And so Daryl more or less flew before you started flying?

ROE: Yeah. Daryl, he flew about a year before I did.

DOROTHEA: Did he have a business in the air --- at the airport, or did he just ---

ROE: Well he never did fly completely. He did it as a sideline. He worked; when he started flying he was working in the post office. And then he always, he never did do just flying alone. He just did it of an evening and Sundays. Did instructing, and did a lot to promote flying. Daryl did a whole lot to --- in that early flying, to get flying to going.

DOROTHEA: Did he more or less build the first airport out there then?

ROE: No.

DOROTHEA: Or was it already there?

ROE: They built it there for Billy Dibble. The city built it. See they built it here before --- they built it for Billy Dibble. And they built that hanger there, just to take care of one airplane. But that was before I come to Burns.

DOROTHEA: Well my lights going on, so we're going to turn this over and visit a little bit more.

SIDE B

ROE: Daryl helped learned me to fly.



DOROTHEA: Daryl helped.

ROE: Daryl did, yeah. He flew before I did. And he helped me ... to fly. And I helped him with his airplanes, I was a mechanic, and he was a pilot. But we flew quite a lot together, me and Daryl.

DOROTHEA: Did you instruct the same time with him, or?

ROE: Well yeah. We was both doing a little outlaw instruction. (Laughter) Neither one of us had any instructor license. We helped one another, you know. But about all you could do in them early days.

BARBARA: You said the city built the airport for Dibble. When he left, was the airport just left vacant then for a while?

ROE: Oh, yeah. It was the city airport, you see. And they had that one runway there, and they --- when you asked them to, they'd go out and blade it, you know. But there was a few years there they wasn't a using it at all, I guess. Because --- once in awhile somebody would fly in here and haul passengers. But I never did. I was pretty busy trying to get started and make a buck. And I always had flying in the back of my head, but I just never could take the time to get into it.

DOROTHEA: Well when did they move the airport then, the city airport out to where it is now?

ROE: Well during World War II. They started to build it as soon as the war started, because they wanted that for a emergency landing, and also for practice landing. See they started building that airport; they built that airport while I was over in Bend.

DOROTHEA: So you weren't here when it was built?

ROE: No.

DOROTHEA: And do you know who built that?

ROE: Well the government built it.

DOROTHEA: The government did.

ROE: Oh, yeah, it was government. It was government.

DOROTHEA: Well now if I can remember right, they did have some airplanes stored there next to where the airport is now, didn't they?

ROE: You mean the army?

DOROTHEA: Army.

ROE: I don't think so. It could have been while I was away. But they was in and out of there quite a bit with airplanes. See they had a big army flight school in Pendleton. And they flew from Pendleton back and forth into here, just practice flights more than anything else. And I don't think they ---

DOROTHEA: How do you feel about the airplanes that are wrecking now, and having all of the problems? Do you feel that they're needing upgraded, or --- What are your feelings on this?

ROE: I just don't think they're watching them close enough. I know my experience with airplanes; you just have to keep them checked awful close. Inspecting, god them big ones, I don't know how they'd even do it. But then they could do it; they've got plenty of help. But just falling down on their inspections. Because --- and of course some of them is getting so old, look how old some of them are, and the thousands of landings they've made.

BARBARA: My son flies the F-16 fighter jets, and some of those planes are twenty plus years old.

ROE: Yeah.

BARBARA: They need new planes.

ROE: That's right.

BARBARA: But with the amount of flying that they put in them day after day after day. And they say they take a whole engine out and put a whole new one in. You know the mechanics are constantly working on them to keep them in the air.

ROE: Well you see that during the war, them airplanes they made then most of them they lost them or wore them out, you know. They didn't get a chance to fly that long. And combat planes especially, you know. And they either tear them up landing, or get shot down. And they just had to keep replacing them with new ones all the time. That was the point then more than anything else.

BARBARA: But they cost so much now, it's hard for them to replace an awful lot.

ROE: Oh, my gosh.

BARBARA: You know they are flying a several million-dollar plane. They are not cheap.

ROE: Hard to realize it all right.

BARBARA: How much did it cost you to buy an airplane when you first started out?

ROE: My first airplane?

BARBARA: Uh huh.

ROE: A hundred and fifty dollars. And I bought a new one; I bought a new Taylor Craft, my first new Taylor Craft in 1940. It was a '40 model; it was twelve hundred dollars, a new one. It was cabin and everything, you know, it was --- And then right after the war I bought a Cub Trainer, a new one, eight hundred, new, brand new.

DOROTHEA: Now you couldn't even buy the front seat of one for eight hundred dollars.

ROE: That one that, if you had one of them now, like the one that I give eight hundred for, I sold it when I quit flying out there, I sold it for six. It had about two hundred hours on it. If you had it now, you could get about six thousand dollars, maybe ten.

BARBARA: Oh, dear.

ROE: Probably get ten thousand dollars for it.

BARBARA: Isn't that something.

DOROTHEA: Who were some of the kids that you instructed to fly besides Tommy Choate? Can you remember some of their names?

ROE: Oh, I didn't do too much instructing. I helped a lot of guys that was flying. But I didn't really put myself out to be an instructor, you know.

DOROTHEA: You more mechaniced.

ROE: Yeah. And I was a mechanic and aircraft inspector more than anything else. And -- but I did help anybody that wanted a little help. I would take them up and try to help them a little. But I couldn't ---

DOROTHEA: How did Oscar learn to fly? Was he here with you?

ROE: He was, he was working over in Idaho and he flew a little bit. Then he come over here and I think Daryl, I think Daryl soloed him. I think he did, I don't know. Did he say when he was ---

DOROTHEA: I can't remember.

ROE: But he come over here later then. Oscar didn't fly much over here until after World War II, you know. And ---

DOROTHEA: Do you have to have a special license to keep your flying up, and to mechanic on them?

ROE: Yes, you do. To fly them, it used to be you get a commercial with a hundred hours. What you call, I mean a private, a hundred hours of solo flying then you take a test with a government flier. And then you could fly; you could haul somebody with you, not for hire. And then when you got two hundred hours, you could take another test and get a license,

if you passed it, and fly for hire. And on mechanics it took two years under mechanic supervision to get a mechanic license. And then --- but --- Then the license I had for inspector's license was, I was qualified by qualifications, the way I got it. Just by being able, and then by experience, the work I had done. And ---

BARBARA: Who were some of the men around here that were flying in the early days? You say Daryl, and yourself, and Oscar, who were some of the other people that flew around here?

ROE: Before World War II?

BARBARA: Uh huh.

ROE: Well Earl Curtis of course flew. And Bernie Lazarus, maybe you didn't know Bernie Lazarus. And there wasn't an awful lot. Ed Brown, of course he's gone. Ed Brown had an airplane. And there wasn't too many that owned airplanes. But then they had a flying club. A bunch of the fliers that formed a club, you know. And then they bought an airplane, and then they could fly cheaper that way. And then had Daryl, was their instructor. And I think there was about probably ten or twelve in it. Neil Smith, Jr., and Faye Richardson, they flew. There was a lot of them kids that flew then. Some of them didn't do anything with it, didn't keep flying. But just a lot of them flew a little, you know. One of the Purdys flew a little.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, Tim got his license, and he flew. And when he had to get his physical the second time, he had allergies and they wouldn't let him go up anymore, so he hasn't gone back.

ROE: Is that right.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, he was taking some kind of medications for his allergies, and they said, "No, no flying with those." So he hasn't gone back to it. But he got his license, and

he flew. Had quite a few hours in.

ROE: What years was that?

DOROTHEA: It was in the '70's. I can't remember just exactly when. But it was in the late '70's.

ROE: Yeah. He flew with Oscar then, didn't he, before he quit?

DOROTHEA: Yeah. I can't remember, his instructor was the guy that was doing most of the mechanic work out there. I can't remember what his name was. I can't for the life of me. He started with a guy that came in here, Limburger, and he took the money and run. So then he got started with the mechanic that's--- I don't know if he is still working out there or not. But he worked out there, and did all of his flight training then from there.

ROE: I know after I quit flying and went out to the, and went back to the wrecking business, I kind of lost interest there. I just, I didn't know what was going on. I just --- I had too many other things in, too many irons in the fire.

DOROTHEA: He was quite interested in flying, and then he got interested in music. And so, I mean his music overtook the flying. And then with, he was taking, like I say, some medication and the doctor wouldn't pass him on his physical. So he just kind of lost interest there. He got a few scares. He had to land a couple times, and didn't choose the right place to land. It was hard to take off. So ---

ROE: Yeah, you get some scares all right.

DOROTHEA: He took Clinton up cattle looking one time, and he hit some air pockets and bounced him up pretty good. Didn't like that either, so --- I don't know, he did his flying I think, and he just wanted to do the challenge of getting his license and knowing that he could do it. And then he kind of dropped it. So I don't know where his interest was, whether it was really in flying or--- But he is now into music, so that's where he's at.

BARBARA: How many airports were there here at one time? You say out by the grange hall, and then where the city --- or the government built where it is now, and then you had yours out here by the high school, is that it?

ROE: Well, when they built that one out there, the new city airport, they just dropped the old airport. It was never used anymore. Just the two then, had just the two airports. See this

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DOROTHEA: Well Bill Hebener used to fly. Did he have an airport of his own, or where did he ---

ROE: Well he had a little place to land up there somewhere. But he --- now see when, they put out a book then on, the state did, there is the Burns airport, there is the Burns airport. And this is my airport back of the high school. (Shows book)

DOROTHEA: So there was really only two.

ROE: Yeah, just two, yeah. Though a pilot could get one of these books, you know, flying around, and he'd know where he is at all the time. He knowed where his, where the airports was, and the facilities. It was pretty handy. State put them out. I don't think they do anymore, I don't know. Like I say, as I got so far away from it, I had to stay away from it.

DOROTHEA: Well I understand it got pretty costly to keep your licenses up too.

ROE: Yes. I loved to fly. But I didn't quit because I didn't like it. I just loved it, but I just had too many other things to do to fool with it.

DOROTHEA: Did either one of your girls fly?

ROE: Oh, Mildred soloed.

DOROTHEA: Did she.

ROE: But she didn't fly much after that. She got married, and then went on out to the ranch to work, you know. But Mildred soloed. I soloed her. She flew a little bit, solo. She learned very fast, she had no problem. But by the time --- Lola didn't care about it, you know. By the time we come back from Bend, why she was going with the boys then, and she didn't have time to fly. BARBARA: More important things.

DOROTHEA: Well your daughters married. Lola is now Lola Gibbon, and she has two children.

ROE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: And their names are? She is married to Tommy Gibbon, and they have ---

ROE: Well Jimmy is the youngest. He works with the Ford Garage up here now. And Joe, he is in New York. Boy he is all over, but he is in antique picture business of some kind.

DOROTHEA: Oh, he is?

ROE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: And then Mildred has two boys.

ROE: Yeah, Mildred no --- yeah, she's got two boys.

DOROTHEA: Matt and ---

ROE: Mike.

DOROTHEA: Mike. Right. And so then you are great grandfather. And how many great-grandchildren do you have?

ROE: I got, oh two --- three.

DOROTHEA: Two. Mike has ---

ROE: Mike has one.

DOROTHEA: One. And Matt has ---



ROE: And Matt has ---

DOROTHEA: Three.

ROE: Yeah, he has got three, that's right.

DOROTHEA: So you got four. Well, you're doing pretty good.

ROE: That's a starter anyway.

DOROTHEA: Right, right.

BARBARA: Do you do any traveling at all now since you're retired?

ROE: Oh, no. We never did. We went, we bought us a motor home and went down to Arizona one winter. We were going to stay down there awhile. But we only stayed a couple of weeks and come home. But ---

BARBARA: No place like home.

ROE: No. Cecil Bennett, the Bennett's have a place down there, you know. And Cecil was pretty good then, before he got sick, you know. He'd been going down there for years, so we went down there where they was, that was Apache Junction. And we enjoyed it. But I don't get too much out of that.

DOROTHEA: Sitting around and ---

ROE: Neither one of us cared too much about it. Got a place to go down there and stay just for the winter, you know, and had good health, and didn't have to run around and find a new doctor or something, you know, it would be all right.

DOROTHEA: Well, Barbara, can you think of anything?

BARBARA: Do you have anything else on the list here Oscar --- Roe, that you would like to talk about that we haven't covered so far? ROE: If it satisfies you folks, that's the main thing. You know kind of what you want. I think that covers it pretty well. Can't think of anything else that ---

BARBARA: With all your instruments here, have you ever played in a group?

ROE: Yeah, we have some hoedowns ever once in awhile. Just practice sessions, you know.

BARBARA: And who are the people that you play with?

ROE: Oh, Dale Eggleston comes out, he plays violin now, Dale. And my brother plays the banjo, Charlie. And over the years I've had quite a lot of guys play with me. I've played with Billy \*Yohey, you know. He was in here a few years. Worked around here a couple years, old Billy Yohey. (\*Corrected from Yohe)

BARBARA: Owie?

ROE: Billy Yohey, he comes in, when they have the old time fiddlers. Do you ever go to that?

BARBARA: Yeah, I have been.

ROE: There is one guy there and they called Bill Yohey, Bill Yohey.

BARBARA: How would you spell that, do you know, his name?

ROE: Be Y O H E, I guess, Bill Yohey. And he's, he plays the violin. And he's been one of the top violin players, one or two of the years. Plays banjo, and plays about everything. But that time when he was in here, he wasn't doing much playing. But since then he's done a lot of playing professionally.

BARBARA: Did you ever play for dances, or anything like that?

ROE: I never did, no. There was quite a few around here that would come in different times. Of an evening we would play together.

BARBARA: Well that's nice.

DOROTHEA: Well, if that's about all you want to tell us, let's get a little video of you. And we'll put that on film too. We like to do these videos so that if somebody comes in and

wants to know what you look like, and what you sounded like, well then they can kind of get a picture of you. So we'll get busy and do that. ROE: Would it be all right if I put the auto harp in it?

BARBARA: Absolutely.

DOROTHEA: Sure.

BARBARA: Absolutely.

DOROTHEA: Sure. Very good. We'll close this off now, and do a little bit of videoing on you.

(Roe plays musical selection on his auto harp.)

DOROTHEA: What was the name of that?

ROE: Well that's --- I composed part of it, but some of it I stole from old Hank Williams, some of his --- It's supposed to be "I Can't Help Loving You".

DOROTHEA: Oh, okay.

(Roe plays musical selection.)

ROE: I dedicated that to my wife.

DOROTHEA: That sounds like a good song.

BARBARA: Great.

DOROTHEA: Well is there anything else you want to play for us. Can you play any of these other instruments? Or did you just, or would you rather just ---

ROE: Well, just any of the others by themselves really don't, it don't ---

DOROTHEA: Don't sound too good.

ROE: No. I can play mandolin more than anything else. I play banjo a little. But I play mandolin.

DOROTHEA: What do you play on the mandolin?

ROE: What?

DOROTHEA: What do you play on the mandolin? Can you give us a little tune on it?

ROE: Oh, anything. You mean ---

DOROTHEA: Let's see, can you --- is there a Wild Wilderness Rose?

ROE: ... got about the same time. It's a good one.

(Roe plays musical selection.)

DOROTHEA: Well that's pretty good for not having played for a while.

(Roe plays musical selection.)

ROE: I forget how it goes now.

DOROTHEA: I can't remember.

(END OF TAPE)

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