

March 8, 1974
Subject: Early Aviation

Interviewer: Alvin Elkins
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Q. Could you tell me your age?

A. I'm over Eighty summers.

Begin with the bit of history about yourself and your airstip and your interest in aviation.

I was interested in flying and aviation since I was about 13 years of age and I was not much older than that when Christofferson flew off of Multnomah hotel. I walked from Beaverton to Portland to see that feat. From that time on or even before that I was real interested and I wanted to take a trip, go to trade school and take up that type of work. My parents were opposed to it. Went to high school in Portland.

Q. What high school?

A. Columbia University.

Most of my time I spent around the Aviation School that was in Portland. I got to know the students who were taking up aviation studies and they were building a glider, I was very interested in that glider and I was interested and Columbia University's studies.

When that glider was completed, several years later, I was here in Beaverton. The students that built that glider brought that thing out here to this farm and they assembled in the barn and they took it out in our cow pasture and we flew that thing. It was no great flight. It was 50 feet or 100 feet or 200 feet depends on the light weight of the pilot and his ability. From that time on I was very very interested in the building of aircrafts

Q. Tell us about how your airshift got started down here and tell us about the hangers and the type of planes and what year it started.

A. In about 1928, we jumped there quite a speal because my parents objected to me being around aircraft so we up until after my father died, in 1928 we started building aircraft. One aircraft that was built for Mr. Elmer Stith that was built by Then we had all our fingers in things, they were the two ladies. After that aircraft was built and put through sever testing and that aircraft flew 100's of hours every year up until World War ll. Then it was put on the retiring list.

Q. What type of airplane flew out of the airport all types I suppose?

A. The types of planes we had here was mans own ability and his own ideas he developed them according to his own plans.

Q. The man that built them flew them, is that right too?

A. Yes, the man that built them flew them. A lot of these planes was built by young folks 20, 21, 22 up to 30 years old. They build their own planes and they flew their own planes and at that time we were not licensed by the federal government. The state of Oregon had an inspector that would watch these planes these planes developed and checked them over and most of them he flew himself before he licensed them himself.

We developed a cord for our own ideas some was conventional, some were alt-together on a differ~~ent~~ theroy. The most prominent one was the Yates aricrft.

Q. That was George Yates right?

A. That was George Yates.

It was built of wood. We had built several of them before World Warll. The army came in there, they knew about it and they had checked over and over and finally just after World War ll had broke, we were frozen we couldn't get materials. We were stuck there with half built airplanes. The army came in and looked the airplanes over, the previous airplanes, there were three of them. We told them we couldn't fin~~ish~~ them because we couldn't get the equipment.

After testing this plane, it was a single engine we tested, we were building twin engines, too at the time, they asked Yates and myself for a conference we told them we couldn't get equipment to go ahead any more. He said don't ever mention that. We well give you all the equipment and money and anything you want,, but you must get us a thousand airplanes a year of this type. Well, that was impossible for us to do, it took us two years to build one airplane, let alone a thousand. They said we'll give you everything you need, money well be no object, but we need this you got the airplane here that out performs Zero, that was a Jap plane, we've got to have a thousand a year. for training and soforthe

We tried it, we got V. P. Johns, I think, he was a manufacturer he came out and looked at it and he says he could do it, it's very complicated to his line of work. Fes Dornbecker, that's two of them, they could do it. In the mean time the government sent in a train into Portland with all kinds of gadgets that they wanted, they wanted to show the people what they wanted.

The furniture company that we were dealling, they saw something there that they could turn out without any trouble. They turned out and we were left out so we just kind of stopped.

When we started to build aircrafts, a glidex, they used to haul manure in a trailer, they'd build them in Portland or someplace. They'd build them in over in Agcocks or in somebody's basement in Portland and bring them out here in a semi and we flew them from here.

Q. How long was this airstrip at that time?

A. The landing strip when we opened up was two thousand feet. It has since progressed, we're getting bigger aircrafts in and more people coming in and pilots were not familiar with landing on a short strip. We increased it to thirty-five hundred feet.

Q. What was the last year the airport operated?

A. I think it was either in '68 or '69.

Q. Was this the first airport in Washington County as far as you know?

A. No. The Hillsboro Airport was there it wasn't used very much. Dr. Smith bought that and he developed it into an airport.

Q. He started the airport in Hillsboro.

A. I think it was Dr. Smith.