

OSBORNE: This afternoon I am going to interview Russell E. Iden from Homeworth, particularly about his association with Taylor Aircraft. This is Wednesday afternoon, July 13, 1977. And we're going back a number of years to his history and I want to start first with the background of Mr. Iden; where he grew up and how he happened to associate with Taylor Aircraft. Let's start first with where you were born, where you grew up.

REMINISCENCES

OF

RUSSELL E. "DUKE" IDEN

Iden, Russell E.

IDEN: I was....

OSBORNE: Just a minute, your nickname, or you go by "duke".

IDEN: I go by "Duke"--I use "Duke" in the aviation industry.

OSBORNE: Okay. We'll get to that, how you used that, but where did you grow up, "Duke"?

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Interview by
N. Yost Osborne
July 13, 1977

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: And from a very early age I had a desire to fly. And when I was 16 I got my student permit, and then....

OSBORNE: How did you get a permit in those days?

IDEN: Well, I had to go to Akron and take a physical. It was about all it amounted to. And there was one airplane in Minerva and I propped the airplane for the man, I mean I cranked it for him. Did you know anything about airplanes around an airplane. I got forty-five minutes of instructions and at that time

Prepared by the Rodman Public Library
for the Oral History Project, Alliance, Ohio

1986

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OSBORNE: Oh yes.

IDEN: I was....

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OSBORNE: Okay. We'll get to that, how you used that, but where did you grow up, "Duke"?

IDEN: I was raised in Minerva. About 12 miles south of here.

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: And from a very early age I had a desire to fly. And when I was 16 I got my student permit, and then....

OSBORNE: How did you get a permit in those days?

IDEN: Well, I had to go to Akron and take a physical. It was about all it amounted to. And there was one airplane in Minerva and I propped the airplane for the man, I mean I cranked it for him. Did anything I could do to get a ride or be around an airplane.

OSBORNE: Now what was the name of that?

IDEN: I got forty-five minutes of instructions and at that time

it was \$25 an hour. And \$25 wasn't easy to come by for a young man in a small town in Depression Days.

OSBORNE: Now what kind of a plane was this, was this a Biplane?

IDEN: Yes, it was a biplane, it was a Waco, a Model 10 Waco built down in Troy, Ohio. It had a Siemens Halski engine on it.

OSBORNE: Now spell that name, that engine, or do you know?

IDEN: I can't, let's see, it was a German-built engine and the way one of them got here, Goodyear used them on their blimps.

OSBORNE: Oh yes.

IDEN: And this might have been a surplus engine. The Waco 10 was normally powered with an OX-5 90 horsepower, only this one was a seven cylinder radial engine that develop around 120 horsepower. A very good engine for that time.

OSBORNE: Oh yes, for that day that would be.

IDEN: A nice airplane. And I felt that, then there was no restrictions on you had to have so many hours before you could solo, so I felt that I was ready to solo. I don't think that the owner of the airplane....Well, it was customary, that when you soloed and you flew someone else's airplane you put up a bond, and this airplane cost \$3,000. And he said, yes, you can fly it but I have to have a bond of \$3,000. And \$3,000 cost more than a home. And this was without any question. So I bought an airplane, a Rearwin Junior, a 3 cylinder, 45 horsepower engine on it.

OSBORNE: Now what was the name of that?

IDEN: A Rearwin Junior. I took off and I told him, I said, "I'll land

OSBORNE: Now how do you spell it?

IDEN: R-E-A-R-W-I-N.

OSBORNE: Okay.

IDEN: It was built in Kansas City; and I bought it used off of a man in Indianapolis--they flew it in, and it cost me \$500. And I had never soloed an airplane at that time. And I flew it, not necessarily by accident, I told a young man, I said, a friend of mine, Sherman Studer, he took me down, he wanted to see the airplane. So we went down and I said, I'm gonna--then we started it up. And I had never landed one by myself. And I said, now I'm going to go up on the runway, then we're going to taxi up and down. Now I said, if I do take off, this was in a field that was only about 1100 feet long, just south of Minerva. There was a brickyard at one end and a barn at the other end. I said, I won't try to land here, I'll land out in Unkefer's field, they called it. This is where the barnstormers always landed with their old Curtiss "Jennys", most airplanes _____.

OSBORNE: Now whereabouts in Minerva would this be?

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: Well, that's where the TRW plant....

IDEN: Then I needed a wheel for my airplane, for some reason I

OSBORNE: TRW, all right. Yes.

IDEN: That's where the TRW plant is now. So I think when I taxied up there I had every intention in the world of flying.

IDEN: No, this was a monoplane.

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: And I did. I took off and I told him, I said, "I'll land out in the Unkefer field, you be there in case something happens."

OSBORNE: Okay, now you're taking off.

IDEN: I took off and flew out and I landed, uneventfully and from then on in those days, if you got an airplane up and you got it down, you were then a pilot.

OSBORNE: What was your, can you remember your sensation, your feeling whenever you took off and landed at that time?

IDEN: Well, I had a great love for flying.

OSBORNE: Uh huh.

IDEN: No question about that. And I think that there isn't an intelligent pilot living today that doesn't have some apprehension about take-off. Now this is possibly, a lot of people thinks it's landing an airplane, it is possibly the most difficult; but I think the most hazardous part of flight is the take-off. Because at a certain time the engine quits and there isn't anything that you can do but keep going straight ahead, and whatever's straight ahead you've got to accept. And this can be either good or bad.

OSBORNE: Oh.
IDEN: Mr. Taylor had severed his relationships with the Taylor
OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: Then I needed a wheel for my airplane, for some reason I don't recall, it was a fragile craft, there's no question about that.

OSBORNE: Now this was a biplane also?

IDEN: And Mr. Taylor built this--they had been building what we
IDEN: No, this was a monoplane.

OSBORNE: This was a monoplane.

IDEN: A two-place monoplane. And to get the wheel, I had to go up to Sharon, Pennsylvania. Well, I knew of the Taylor Airplane Company that dealt in what they called the Cub at Bradford, Pennsylvania. But I didn't know of the financial inter-workings of the plane. I was too young and too far removed from it. It was just another airplane factory to me. I didn't know C. G. Taylor or Bill Piper. But I went to Sharon to get the wheel that I needed for my, a man that was making wheels up there. A man by the name of Shinn, which is now Goodyear Tire and Brake Division for their aircraft.

OSBORNE: Oh.

IDEN: They bought out his operation and proceeded to expand on it and it is now an established product in American Production. But in the hangar, he had a little room adjacent to the hangar there, set one of the most beautiful little airplanes that I ever saw. And it was the first aircraft that they ever built.

OSBORNE: Oh.

IDEN: Mr. Taylor had severed his relationships with the Taylor Airplane Company in Bradford, and Mr. Piper took over the operation there, through financial arrangements.

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: And Mr. Taylor built this--they had been building what we called a tandem airplane, one man sitting in back of the other.

OSBORNE: Yes.

This airplane was the first really light side-by-side, where you sit side by side in other words. Monacoup was building a small side-by-side airplane, but it wasn't really considered a light plane. It was a professional pilot's airplane. I've flown one and it was nothing for a student to be flying.

OSBORNE: No.

IDEN: But this one, a very beautiful little model, wonderful engineering in it, and I recognized the great potential for it. Even with my limited experience in aviation. And of course, just looking at it, of course I said, "What is it?" and "This is one of a kind, I've never seen anything like it." And somebody in the hangar said, "well, it's a Taylorcraft." It was painted gun-metal gray as I remember, and it had stripes. And next thing I knew, I heard that Mr. Taylor had procured the old Argo Factory here in Alliance and was starting to produce the airplanes. Well, I went and applied for a job as a welder; I had been taking welding at night school at the McKinley High School in Canton. But I was welding heavy materials there and this was light welding. And I failed the test. And I didn't give up, I went back and applied for anything I could do. And I was hired and that was in March in 1937. And I was the 35th employee.

OSBORNE: Now what had you been doing up to, you were going to McKinley welding, taking welding, what had you been doing, up to that time?

IDEN: As a living?

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: I was in school.

OSBORNE: I see.

IDEN: And, I'd worked in a bakery while I went to school.

OSBORNE: I see.

IDEN: I was a baker, I'll say.

OSBORNE: Now what, just to get back before you get your association with the Taylorcraft there. How did your parents look upon your flying ambition?

IDEN: They never gave me any encouragement or any opposition. I can remember people sold, brought the airplane, a man, two men brought the airplane in that I bought, and there I could fly an airplane for \$500 investment....

OSBORNE: Yeah.

IDEN: No, it was a little, this man Everett Walker bought a Waco, and Gwey Robbins, one of the old pioneers of aviation. He had a field up here at Stow, Ohio. He sold Waco airplanes which were made in Stow, Ohio. They said it was the farmer's airplane plant. They said it was a good airplane. They were really early pioneers. And he said, "Well, what do you think of it, Duke?" I said, "Well, it doesn't look too bad for \$500. I thought about buying a 'Jenny'." This was getting the latter days for the "Jenny"--there were still some new ones available. And I could have bought a "Jenny" for about \$350, with an OX-5 engine on it. But they were difficult to keep flying. It was a big, clumsy airplane. And he said, "Well, do you want it?" and I said, "Yes, I think I do." Of course, I had to have some financial help from Dad.

OSBORNE: Sure. Earl Kail, a good friend of mine who operated, who

IDEN: That's what he was there for. With his blessing I got the airplane. He never rode with me.

OSBORNE: Is that right?

IDEN: Never, I never got, my mother never rode with me.

OSBORNE: Oh, that's interesting.

IDEN: But they never objected. I think, no doubt I gave them many hours of anxiety.

OSBORNE: Yes, I expect.... And I couldn't get it started, so I

IDEN: But they were quite cooperative.

OSBORNE: Now you said you went to the airport, was that at the Unkefer field?

IDEN: No, it was a little, this man Everett Walker bought a Waco, and Hewey Robbins, one of the old pioneers of aviation. He had a field up here at Stow, Ohio. He sold Waco Airplanes which were made in Troy, Ohio. They called it the farmer's airplane plant. They built a good airplane. They were really early pioneers. And he bought this Waco 10 and built a hangar. And when I got my airplane, I had to build, for my airplane, I had to build a little addition onto the hangar. We couldn't get both of them in the one hangar. And I recall that evening, I think, Everett Walker flew the airplane over to Canton for me. He tried to put it in the hangar the Sunday he knew, the Sunday I bought it. But it wouldn't go in so he took it over to McKinley Airport. The old field there where Lee Sherrick really started. And I hangared it over there and the next Saturday

I went over and Earl Kail, a good friend of mine who operated, who was a founder of the McKinley Air Transport Company that Kenny Little now owns and operates out of Canton Akron Airport.

OSBORNE: Now was that K-A-I-L, Kail?

IDEN: Yes. He was killed ferrying a Hudson bomber across to England. He was killed on the north coast of Africa, early part of the war. But I had the airplane in the hangar, in Harry Rinker's hangar, and it wouldn't start. I went over to get it to fly it back down home. I'd never flown it, this was still before I'd ever done my solo, you see. And I couldn't get it started, so I drug it down to his hangar to borrow some tools--pull the plugs out, clean the plugs, and so forth. And he come out of the office and he said, "Duke, what are you doing?" I said, "Well, trying to get my airplane started." He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going to fly it down home." He said, "You can't fly." I said, "Well just watch me." He said, "Well, you're not going to fly it off my land." So I said, "Well okay, what are we going to do, what are we going to do here?" I said, "I want to get the airplane down home." He said, "Well." I said, "If you fly it down and I'll bring you back." I came over on the bus, left my car at home. "Well" he said, "I've flown for everything else, I might as well..." I said, "I'll give you your supper and bring you back." He said, "I've flown for everything else, I might as well fly for that." So we flew it down to Minerva. I staked it down so I'd have it there. And then that was a Saturday night and Sunday I made my first solo flight with about forty-five minutes of instruc-

tion. I wouldn't recommend anybody to try that. But I started back when I was a child, right in the back seat of the old Durant. And whenever Dad would go up a hill I would have a hold of the door handle or the window handle, and I would move that forward. I worked on my coordination, and this is the way you throttle an airplane, a lever on the side that opened and closed the throttle of the engine. And I would practice with that door handle in the car. And when he'd go around a turn I would, if it was a right turn I would depress, I would press on my right foot--that was like the rudder pedal you know. When you get to a hill you pull back on the stick, and I had practiced actually in my mind, and I think that a man can teach himself whatever he wants to, if he wants to do it bad enough and he is willing to work at it.

OSBORNE: And I suppose you read literature about flying also?

IDEN: Oh, I would read everything I could get ahold of. Naturally....

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: I'd talk to everybody that I could and observed and after I did solo I still didn't know how to fly. I did, but there was one aspect of landing where you had to stall the airplane up and keep bringing the stick back and hold it back all the way. I didn't know, this is one you brought the stick back. But I didn't know how to coordinate it with the losing of the speed. So I would take my brother who knew nothing, my younger brother, down and I'd let him stand along the runway and as I would come in to land and would bounce down across the field, why he would tell me

what it looked like. And I was trying to work it out that way. I got acquainted with a man that Lee Sherrick taught to fly. He's now passed away but he was Bennie Swineford. And he tested Corsairs during the War and he was in charge of Goodyear's executive aircraft. And he gave me some instructions and straightened me out on that. I didn't have any trouble from then on out.

OSBORNE: Well now, I had interrupted you, you had been applying at Taylorcraft and went back for the second time now.

IDEN: Yes, I went back the second time and I got a job, thank heavens. 35¢ an hour working in the wing department. And I made wing ribs. And it seemed like Lady Luck just sit on my shoulder. I wasn't there very long until they put an airplane on the square, down here in Alliance. And it had a tent. And I was selected one of two people in the plant to go down there and represent the company with that airplane. I think it was more I had a new 1937 Chevrolet, and we could collar someone there and talk to them and then take them out to the plant; and I think I was selected because I had a new car that they could ride in, rather than my ability or knowledge of aircraft.

OSBORNE: Well now, what were you trying to promote?

IDEN: Selling stock.

OSBORNE: Selling stock. Okay, yes.

IDEN: Trying to get next week's payroll.

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: So I had the opportunity to participate in that with selling stocks to try to finance, raise finances. Well, I had no executive position, I was just strictly an hourly employee, power, mechanic, an employee with a background and a little knowledge. But I thought that was a wonderful opportunity, though.

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: Then they put an airplane in Russell Shellhorn's garage, showroom, which is, I believe it's a building on Arch Street across from the...well, Russell was in there last as a garage, I don't know what's in there now. But they had me go down there and meet the public and tell them about the airplane. I went from the wing department to the sheet metal department and become a sheet metal mechanic under the direction of a man by the name of Ray Sweeny, who had worked on the China Clippers Glenn L. Martin Co. built down in Baltimore. He was a terrific sheet metal mechanic. And my progress in those days, it was a small shop and anyone who wanted to work hard or tried to do a good job, and there was many there that did that, because there was a lot of pride. And we worked on these airplanes; we saw them go out the back door and become a living, almost a living machine that flew. And then there was a lot of romance story, love and pride to have worked on them.

OSBORNE: That's the kind of assembly line you like to be on.

IDEN: That's right, it was a great team. And I went into experimental--from the sheet metal. I was the sheet metal man for the

experimental department. And yet all this time we were building the original model, what was known as the Model A with an A Continental 40 horse power engine, four cylinder, about 40 horse power. So we figured around, oh, 12-13 hundred dollars. And then I was told to go down to the old Buckeye Twist Drill building. Buckeye Twist Drill had moved out of their plant and gone to Chicago. Which is now the United Co-op Plant, I believe it's a paint plant.

OSBORNE: Paint Plant, yes.

IDEN: On Ely there, and Donald Kindig, another wonderful mechanic, still lives here in Alliance; he and I was sent down to that plant. And there they had, we had built up the experimental, we knew about it. But the experimental was always kept pretty hush, hush. And the general employees couldn't get into the experimental department. This was a Model B for 50 horse power. And we ran the static tests. Don and I handled the weights and so forth and we loaded the airplane up to test it structurally. A young engineer by the name of Johnny Hutmacher was project engineer and I believe Ray Carlson, who was later at Wright Field, was the chief engineer. And a man by the name of Halderman was the CAA or Civil Aeronautics Authority who inspected us. We had to have an inspector at all times and he had been a navigator for Ruth Nicols who tried to fly the Atlantic and they went down in a fighter craft, but history has that recorded. But it was wonderful working with...and meeting this kind of people....

OSBORNE: That would be.

IDEN: And for....I was born on a farm. I come from a little town of Minerva where there was one airplane. I was having a great time, to tell the truth.

OSBORNE: Oh you, I'll bet.

IDEN: We worked so many hours down there and I rode up with, there were about six of us from Minerva that worked at the other plant. But they would quit at their regular quitting times, 4:30 or 5:00 o'clock, and we would work maybe until 7:00 or 8:00 o'clock and I would walk to Minerva.

OSBORNE: Walk to Minerva!

IDEN: I would walk all the way home, I didn't mind, yes, 12-14 miles. I would at least walk from down there out south of Alliance. And if I wouldn't get a ride in town I'd walk up Union Avenue and go home and eat my supper and get a bath and go to bed and get up early the next morning and back to that airplane again. And we made the drop tests and got it approved. Which is the basic airplane that they're flying today, and building today. So it was a wonderful experience. Then I went with, I was in experimental and we would develop a new, well--likely changed the types of doors we used, when we built the B-12 model. And I would work on the development, the experimental, and then I would go into the shop and coordinate its manufacture--I'd teach people in the factory to make this new part. So I did that. And then they had a man that got into a little difficulty, that was in charge of export airplanes, ferrying airplanes. I had been, if I would get a chance to fly, I would fly. A man, Wes Raymond, was our distributor in Nathan,

Georgia; if he couldn't send a pilot up he would call me and say, "Duke, I bought an airplane, I have an airplane to come down, will you bring it down, and I'll pay your bus trip back?" Well, I would fly his airplane down on the weekend and thumb back--and keep the bus fare. Those were great days, the trucks were running up and there was no difficulty getting back.

OSBORNE: Well, it was a different age at that time.

IDEN: I would get a ride, and I don't know, the buses were maybe 12 or 13 dollars and that would be my wages.

OSBORNE: Well, you mention this name Duke, how did you get that nickname?

IDEN: Well, I carried that from the time I was, I guess I couldn't say Russell so I called myself Duddie.

OSBORNE: Oh, I see. So you got it from early, I see.

IDEN: Yes, I've always been called that, and my son's real name is Duke. I don't know if I did him a favor or not.

OSBORNE: Now I remember the other day, I think I was talking with Bill Morgan or someone and something came up about Taylorcraft and I mentioned you and he said, "Oh, you mean Duke" He knew you as....

IDEN: Yes, very few people knew me in the aircraft industry as Russell.

OSBORNE: Right. Well, I got you side-tracked again there, you were in the export--talking about this.

IDEN: Well, I, I got a chance, Fairchild Aviation Corporation in New York and Faircraftchild Canada. Now there's two Fairchild companies, one in Hagerstown, Maryland, built the Fairchild airplane. Whether they have interfinancial lockings, I can't say. Of course, this was thirty years ago. But they had money in this Taylorcraft Company here in Alliance, and they had the export rights to the air company. And I got a chance to work for them. Well, I was here in this plant with my friends but I had charge of all the aircraft, went into delivering the aircraft, that went into Mexico, Central America, down into the Panama Canal Zone and into Cuba. Anything south of there, any further away than that, we test flew the airplane and then dismantled it and crated it in a big box and shipped it up to New York, dumped it there and put it on a boat down to where it was going to go. And we always heard that these people down in South America made homes out of these boxes that we shipped airplanes in. So I delivered the, in 1941, I delivered the first Taylorcraft that went to Cuba. I flew it across 90 miles of open air, no radio and they didn't build navigation equipment except for compass--and missed Havana by about three miles or so. I'd flown it from here to New York and picked up a young man whose father was a Cuban consul in New York and he could an, I had, he speaks seven languages. And I had to check him out, I didn't have to teach him then, but I had to check him out, in Cuba, to fly this airplane. He had flown for the Loyalists, he was a fighter pilot for the Loyalists in Spain. And when Franco won the fray he got the last load of Spanish Loyal- until I left the company in 1945. It changed hands and I no longer

ist officials off of the Madrid Airport. There was two transports standing by at night to evacuate so Franco would like to have got hold of those fellows. And the one ship hit a gas truck and exploded and they were all killed. And he got his load out. And of course, they had to find new homes, so he went to Cuba. The man who bought the airplane was the President of the Sugar Cane Growers Association, but he couldn't fly. And so he employed this Spanish pilot that had flown a fighter plane, but never flown a smaller, like this was a 65 horsepower B-12. And I took Tom Palmer, short for Palmera was his real name, but we called him Tom, went down and picked him up at Roosevelt Field in New York, and he flew down the coast and two days of making out papers in Miami. And I was real, I don't know how to say it, but I had to change the way, I had to make out the same papers for that man that was taking a freighter across. I could have married someone because I had room to get up in the airplane, I had this authority. But I flew across and after I got to Havana they warned me not to land anyplace but Natural Horse Field. And I had no maps of Havana, Cuba. I don't know if there was any maps of Cuba. But the Coast Guard were warming up some PBY's to look for me, but it took me 45 minutes after I got over Havana to find the airport. But it was, I come back on Pan American. I had charge then up until the war. And after the war I spent nearly two years as an instructor in the Air Force, a flight instructor, and then I come back and I went into the domestic sales department, where I had charge of the sales in Alaska, all the United States, Hawaii and Canada. And I had that until I left the company in 1945. It changed hands and I no longer

associated myself with the company. That's about the....

OSBORNE: Well what did you, when you left there, what did you do? Have you done anything connected with aviation since that time?

IDEN: Well, when I left Taylorcraft, the change of management, ownership and all persons at the top, the chief engineer. The Chief Engineer and Vice President in charge of production and myself started a company in consulting--making aircraft parts. Which was a financial failure, and I liquidated the company after about oh, three or four years; and decided to quit flying, 'cause flying meant travelling. And I got married in 1945 and had a little boy and I wanted to see him grow up. And I turned down a job with the Cessna Company as Eastern Regional Sales Manager. It was a little bit of a place, but Cessna was a very up and coming company and has done very well. Assistant Sales Manager, a fellow by the name of Derby Fry that I knew, flew in from Wichita and talked to me. But I said no, I said rich people makes a living same as....So I spent 18 years in the contracting business.

OSBORNE: Now, have you done any flying in that time?

IDEN: Not to speak of, nothing professionally. No. Not as a professional pilot. I have flown some, but I had a chance to fly this new Omni Navigation System and it just makes flying and getting from one point.....and we built many airplanes for the mili-

tary. The L-2 Spotter plane is a Taylorcraft-built airplane. We built gliders for training gliders. End of Side 1. lots. And--but I think one of the large operations was making tail surfaces for the

Well, that's going back to 1937.

OSBORNE: All right now, I'd asked Mr. Iden a question here about working at the plant and he spoke about the morale there and about the pride that workers had. My next door neighbor's Bill Tanner, who worked in the paint division.... the company. Fairchild had

IDEN: Yes.

OSBORNE: And still works for Taylorcraft now years later out here. And let's see, Sidney Hartenstein was in and of course he goes back a lot further than you do in history. But one of his experiences was working during the war period for Taylorcraft. what I

IDEN: I didn't know him personally.

OSBORNE: You probably were out at that time.

IDEN: Yes.

OSBORNE: On that. Well, you said you were the what, 35th worker?

IDEN: I was 35th, my badge number was 35, yeah.

OSBORNE: What did they get up to--work?

IDEN: 1800.

OSBORNE: 1800. and an old, old pilot. One of the first, he learned

IDEN: 1800 and a million dollars a month in ____ work. This was during the war of course and we built many airplanes for the military. The L-2 Spotter plane is a Taylorcraft-built airplane. We built gliders for training glider invasion pilots. And--but I think one of the large operations was making tail surfaces for the world. Piper maintained number one position. But we were number

A-26 attack bomber which was made by Douglas. The prime contractor works for Douglas aircraft _____. And they made some beautiful tail surfaces. This was where the largest expansion of the plant; however, going back, around 1940 I'm going to guess, Dick Depew and C. G. Taylor were operating the company. Fairchild had put this money in; see financing is always a problem....

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: With a new and growing industry, especially where the product is not even established, you not only have to sell, you have to sell the product to sell the product, that is. You know what I mean?

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: You find the man, but you've got to sell the public. This costs a lot of money. And Fairchild put this money in and wherever there's money invested in industry, and rightly so, there is also control.

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: And Mr. Depew was sent in by the Fairchild Company, who was a wonderful man and an old, old pilot. One of the first, he learned to fly in France. And he was a wonderful man to work for and with. And the company prospered, this was through 1938, '39, '40 I would say. A new office building was built, a new dope room was built, an addition for the final assembly was built. And we were the second largest producers of privately owned, private airplanes in the world. Piper maintained number one position. But we were number

two, it was a fine airplane. It was faster than the Piper airplane, wouldn't get off the ground in quite as short a run but it was a much better cruising speed. It was a wonderful compromise, a good compromise.

OSBORNE: One of my neighbors, Cy Syverson, who works for Universal Co-op now, is a pilot. He's trying, currently he is building a plane as he gets time, a light plane. He tells me that there are still people that still have original Taylorcraft and great pride in those. Some of them look, he said, they keep them up just almost like the day they came off the lines.

IDEN: Just last week-end we had a reunion, you know.

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: And we had a hundred old employees that registered there. And there was some twenty-some airplanes that had been flown in by people who have--some of these airplanes are thirty years old.

OSBORNE: Uh huh.

IDEN: Think of what an automobile....

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: And the man that flew in, that got the prize for flying in the furthest was 800 miles.

OSBORNE: My golly.

IDEN: I talked to a man from southern Arkansas, I talked to a man from Canada, I talked to a man from Tennessee; and I think this is a pretty good flight up from there.

OSBORNE: That's right. what you read in history so often, isn't

IDEN: Now driving on the highway is one thing, but driving a thirty year old machine, or flying it 800 miles without a radio is something else. well.

OSBORNE: That's certainly right. Well, you know there were some people--I was in college here and I was out in 1936, so before this happened, but as I would come back I picked up this--I wouldn't call it exactly a fever, but a promotion, that Alliance was a rubber capital, or I mean Akron was a rubber capital, Detroit was a motor, and we were hoping for Alliance to be an aviation center, an airplanes....

IDEN: It had the greatest possibility that there was as far as I'm concerned, in a private field there was more potential. And just by a quirk of financial maneuvering is all it took.

OSBORNE: Yes. where Taylorcraft came in. There had been a couple

IDEN: Because Cessna is possibly one of the best and largest established manufacturers of private airplanes in the class that we were in today and they actually copied their airplanes from what we had in the experimental stage in 1945. We had an all metal fuselage, it wasn't the first all metal light airplane fuselage, Luscomb made the first. But he had a wing on it that wasn't safe for an amateur pilot to fly. It was fast, but we had an airplane that had everything combined, a metal fuselage, we had a compass....Cessna didn't start out with a metal wing--the Cessna 140 has a fabric wing, and we were leading the way. And just by a quirk of financial maneuvering, it was all lost.

OSBORNE: Well, that's what you read in history so often, isn't it? Just one of those little....

IDEN: Just one of those little things that could of gone the other way just as well.

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: And this could of been very well, I don't know, I give Bill Piper, now dead, Bill Piper was an excellent businessman and he pyramided what was originally Taylor Aviation Airplane Company which was founded by C. G. Taylor. But Bill did, Bill Piper did a wonderful job with them, and I don't know how their production today rates with Cessna. I would say that Cessna in some ways outstripped, or went ahead a little, maybe, of Piper. And this would all depend on whose company you were with.

OSBORNE: Right. Now you said when you came up here you went to the old Argo, where Taylorcraft came in. There had been a couple of other attempts to make airplanes in Alliance.

IDEN: Yes, the Argo airplane was built here, and this was really before my time.

OSBORNE: I see.

IDEN: I didn't know about it. When I went to assembly the machinery was still there, I knew, I'd seen one or two of the airplanes; they're a very small, light biplane, with a, I think it was either five or seven cylinder Hess-Warrior. They made the engines even. It was an unusual thing. Many companies would not

build their own engines.

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: It just took too much machinery and too much technical knowledge to build an engine and also an airplane. But as I, what I've been told, they built that in hopes of getting a military contract.

OSBORNE: Oh, I see.

IDEN: Of course, sometimes dreams just don't come true.

OSBORNE: Don't come out, yes.

IDEN: I don't think it failed because it wasn't a good little airplane, I think it was. It took a contract to pay _____.

OSBORNE: To pay him, yes.

IDEN: As I understand it.

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: This was a little before I was interested, before I was old enough to become involved necessarily.

OSBORNE: Yes. Right. Now you say the peak was around 1800.

IDEN: Yes.

OSBORNE: The people employed there during the war years. What would, before the war, what would be the complement or what would be the number of workers?

IDEN: Oh, I would say 500. I think we were up to around 500 employees. Producing I don't know, three, four, six _____ planes

a day. We really had things worked down real nice.

OSBORNE: How much real skill, many of these workers; just sort of piece work, assembly line or did they have to have a skill?

IDEN: No piece work. This is one thing that they've never done in an airplane factory in my days. Because everything had to be, it was rigidly inspected. It had to be just right. There was quality first and then speed would come with practice. But you're going to learn to do it right first. We don't want a whole lot of bad parts. And so, it was no piece work, it was all, now there was tooling, of course, down there, jigs so that you would get uniform parts. Back in, when I started in the sheet metal department, we would take pieces of steel, maybe five or six and clamp them together and have one that was already cut out like for a fitting on a fuselage. And we would hacksaw and file those out, maybe five or six at a time. Until we got the dies made. I made many a part with the hacksaw and a file. I think this is one thing about our situation, industry-wise today; where the opportunity doesn't exist for the individual--but back in those days if you could afford a hacksaw and a file, and you could weld and you had the engineering ability, you could build an airplane--you could be in competition with the next man. But not so today. If you don't have four million dollars to invest in some tape-controlled machines and big hydro-presses and so forth, forget it. It's out of your realm of possibility, don't even dream about it, because you're fooling yourself.

OSBORNE: I suppose this would have come in itself, but the war, the pressure to produce during the war, made a lot of that come much faster, didn't it?

IDEN: Oh definitely yes. Yes. In 1941, in November, November the 10th, we delivered the first ten, a trial order of military planes, to Wright Field. I have a record in my log book. I flew one of them down there. It was designated the Y-57, which was a designation of an experimental aircraft for the military. They designated it Y-0, I think Y-0 was a general experimental designation for military aircraft. This was a Y-57, and it took three hours to fly it from here to Dayton. I remember Dick Depew led the flight and we flew in an echelon, one just a little higher than the other, buzzing along about 75-80 miles per hour, I suppose. Flying military, my first entry in the log book was flying the military airplane. Of course, I had several thousand hours during the war as a flight instructor in a military airplane, but that was my first one. And then I had the great fortune to be a test pilot on one of the, well, it was my own airplane. Carl Elkins, who was then domestic sales manager, and I flew it to Fort Knox to Godman Field there and I had, this was a 1939 model. I think I was the first man that ever bought, that worked there, who bought a new airplane. And always I recognized back then that a company or an industry cannot be successful if its employees can't buy what it produces.

OSBORNE: That's right.

OSBORNE: Uh huh. Yes.

IDEN: I saw its shortcomings and it's never changed after thirty years; but this airplane had, I had a large speaker built in it, I could fly over a city and I would do aerial advertising. And I don't remember how many watts of power I had but I know it was restricted--you had to wear parachutes because of the electrical equipment.

OSBORNE: Oh yes. little insignificant thing.

IDEN: And I had a wing--the engines didn't have generators on them so I had a generator mounted out on the strut with a propellor on it to generate electricity to operate this; and I had a mike that hung on my breast, I tried a throat mike, which the military used. But the quality was so bad. But I took that airplane to Godman Field and worked with the Tank Corps. And this was the very first spotter plane idea. The radios were of poor quality and I was-- there were only two airplanes in America to my knowledge, that had speakers on them. The Pure Oil Company had a large system in a big _____ that they used strictly for advertising. And this is where I got the idea. I put it in a smaller airplane and I sold advertising time, and worked the cities around in this area as far down as Miami, Florida. The idea was we would fly up ahead and if there was a bridge out, we would fly back and tell the commander of the tank corps or tank crew, a bunch that was in tanks. "Well, go around this way because this bridge is out." But we couldn't make those fellows hear over the noise of the tanks. But it was a first attempt.

OSBORNE: Uh huh. Yes.

IDEN: And I was fortunate enough to have been a part of it.

OSBORNE: Uh huh. Yeah. Of course, I think so many people today even forget--I remember how astounded I was when I got to England and I heard so much about the Spitfires. When I actually saw one and I thought, that little thing, you know, was what Churchill was talking about. But it performed, it did. But when you saw it, it looked like just a little insignificant thing.

IDEN: Well, you know back in 1937, I believe the better part of '37, '38, the Taylorcraft Aussie plant was set up in England and the Taylorcraft was built in England under license to our parent company there. Our chief engineer, Ray Carlson, went over there for a while.

OSBORNE: I see.

IDEN: And they made copies of all the drawings and so forth, and the Taylorcraft Aussie played a very important role as a spotter plane for the Royal Air Force. Which is basically nothing but a Taylorcraft airplane, oh yes.

OSBORNE: Interesting. Well, you talked about morale with the group there, did that continue when you had 1800 or when you had the top number on....

IDEN: Oh yes, because not--only in a different way. In a different way. The morale was bolstered by the necessity to win a war. And to help your friends that were over there, fighting this war. It was a different, entirely different--the morale in 1937, '36 and

'37 was, I think, the fact that a man could work on a machine that was a sophisticated machine at that time, and see it fly. And the test pilots had a little habit. Whenever they had a plane ready to test, they would be walking down through the plant with their parachute and as a sort of rule, they'd pick out somebody out of the plant and say, come on, we're going to test this airplane, you see; and you never knew when you were going to have to ride in your own work. And we had a little joke that went around, it was some little minor thing. We'd say, well at 10,000 feet and in a blinding snowstorm, who's going to see it?

OSBORNE: Until you had to take a ride.

IDEN: Yeah. That's right. It was a really wonderful place to work. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn. You got to associate with degreed engineers, talented engineers. Engineers who were really making history. And there was just every opportunity in the world. And I think that I can look back over the years with associates that worked there that has all profited by their experiences there. Went with other large, many of them went over to Goodyear Aerospace.

OSBORNE: Oh yes. 're looking for or not. But Mr. Hart, who was

IDEN: To work over there. his office was right next to mine. And

OSBORNE: Now you said you flew a plane to Cuba. Did you fly any others to Mexico, Central America?

IDEN: I sent them down.

OSBORNE: You sent them down there.

IDEN: I sent them down, I had charge of getting them there. I'd become so involved in the operations of things, they kept getting larger and so forth. And I sent them down there. I didn't have the time to get out and go on trips myself.

OSBORNE: Sure. As much as you would have enjoyed that.

IDEN: Oh yes, very much. In fact, it about broke my heart to see them go.

OSBORNE: I'll bet, yes.

IDEN: But I had other things, paper work and so forth, to do.

OSBORNE: I suppose when you drive home you will think of some anecdote, but right off the cuff, can you think of something amusing, anecdotal, in connection with Taylorcraft? You talked about this joke that went around, "10,000 feet in a blinding snowstorm" but were there any others of this nature? Or were there any pranks or could they afford to indulge in that?

IDEN: A lot of incidents, let's say. But I just can't recall--I do remember one night. I don't know whether it would fit into the category that you're looking for or not. But Mr. Hart, who was President of the Company, his office was right next to mine. And he said "Duke, Dick King and I" (who was the Assistant to the President) "has to catch a flight out of Columbus, Ohio to Washington." He said, "Paul Dietz" (which was one of our test pilots) "is going to fly me down, one of us, and will you fly one of the other ones

down?" It was about dark then, of course; we had been working late in the office. And so Paul--you see, we only had two-place airplanes, so if you had two people to go, you took two airplanes, unless--but neither one of them could fly. So Paul flew one down and I flew one down, and Paul landed over at Norton Field. The airlines operated in and out of Port Columbus; however, Curtiss-Wright was building a Navy Plane and it was closed to general civil aviation. Well, I figured, we were prime contractors in the military effort. Here I have a company executive catching an airliner to go to Washington. This isn't pleasure flying, this is a professional flight. I'm going to land at Port Columbus, so I did. They didn't say anything that night, a jeep come out, a military jeep come out, and said follow me. And took me to a tie-down area and we tied it down. I wasn't going to fly back that night--I stayed in a hotel. The next morning I went out, they said, you know this is really--your flight's really a civilian flight. You're not a military operation. We had military equipment, but I couldn't fly them. He said, this field is closed to civil aviation. And I said, I had, I told him the circumstances and he was giving me a pretty hard time. So finally he give me permission to take off. So I'm taxiing out, there was a P-38 right in front of me and when they go out to the end of the runway or taxi strip, they're supposed to turn 45 degrees and blow the dust back across the field, not back on the airplane behind them. See, this is only common courtesy and also military safety rules. And I'm quite sure, the boys, we had

the expression "give the boy a dusting off." He tested those two big Allison engines and that would be about 1200 horsepower apiece, he had over 2,000 horsepower. And I sat there in that little Taylorcraft in back of him and actually raised up about three feet off the ground, and I let it go backwards. I knew I couldn't turn away from him because he would roll me across the field like a kite. I never sit in back of a man that checked his mags any longer than he did. But I know the boys in the tower were having a great time.

OSBORNE: I'll bet they said, he won't land here again! Well, I'm sure. Well, that's, you can laugh when you look back on it.

IDEN: Oh yes, I was a busy pilot.

OSBORNE: I'm sure at that time.

IDEN: But I took it as a joke too.

OSBORNE: Right.

IDEN: I knew how the military was, I'd been flying with them for a couple of years while I was a civilian but I was under contract to teach for the Army.

OSBORNE: Sure. Where were you based?

IDEN: I instructed at Fort Morgan, Colorado. I instructed at the flight air academy in Arizona at Wickenburg and I was a flight instructor at Bruce Field in Balinger, Texas. And I flew basic training, that's where we give the boys their formation, instrument and night flying, at, it was then War-Eagle Field, it's now Andrews Air

Force Base. _____.

The end of the war was coming, it wasn't over yet, but they saw it coming, they knew it was going to end and they always had pilots in training to be instructors. And if some of those who were instructors didn't leave they would have to go. And I thought, well, I can recall--I had a brother who was a P-51 fighter pilot. And one night we were flying to the All-American Show in Miami in 1939, I think. And he stayed for the night, we were together. Remember I spoke of him?

OSBORNE: Yes.

IDEN: And we got caught over Valdosta, Georgia, at night with no airport with any lights. And we had to make an emergency landing in a turnip patch. And we were sitting around, I think Lee Sherrick must have been in on that one, we were sitting around our hotel talking after we, there were three planes of us. Roy Lyons saved all of our skins because he had talked to Charlie Lindbergh, he was a friend of Charlie Lindbergh, and Charlie Lindbergh flew the air mail and a lot of night flying. He said any time you get into any trouble at night pick a plowed field because the grass is dark. Especially in areas where it's sandy, a plowed field will be lighter in color. And Roy picked this plowed turnip patch. And he went in and landed first, and I'm not ashamed to admit I went in second and the other airplane came in the third time. There was one plane crashed in the episode but nobody was hurt. Lost an airplane, but....

OSBORNE: Yeah. Cellulose Nitrate. This was gun powder, is what it

IDEN: But sitting around talking and Lee Sherrick said, it's no good for two brothers to fly, one of us could get killed. I was climbing down off of the wing of a BT-13 Vultee at War-Eagle Field. And my brother was flying combat in Germany. And I thought of that and we had been told a couple of days before what the situation was, and I thought--I'm going to give somebody else a chance and I'm not going to shove this brothers flying thing. I think pilots might have been a little bit superstitious, a little bit. I'm not going to shove this thing of two brothers flying, but he was killed.

OSBORNE: Is that right?

IDEN: Yes, he was killed, in one of his last missions he had to fly. He was killed. Shot down over Germany. Couldn't do any good here, so I quit.

OSBORNE: Can you recall at the plant, of course, you had to have utmost safety precautions, especially with the dope part, that operation, were there any bad accidents?

IDEN: Oh, the dope room blew up on the average of once a year. And Mr. Woods, who was the postmaster at Limaville, lost his son in one of the dope room fires. Johnny Held, who was a well-known figure in the Fire Department here, his father was chief, Chief Held's son Johnny was burnt very bad in one of the fires.

OSBORNE: Now this, when you say the dope room, this was used to, for what?

IDEN: This was Celulose Nitrate. This was gun powder, is what it was. Gun powder is made from celulose you know, from the top of a root. And the dope that we used to put on the fabric to shrink it, it was fast, it was a lacquer, lacquer was in the same family--why it was quite explosive. And I can remember one time, in the new dope room we only had one fire to my knowledge, when a man brought a drum of, a fifty-five gallon drum of dope in on a push cart and he sit it down and when the steel drum hit the floor, it set off a spark and there I saw the fire doors come open. I was working right outside of the, in the final assembly, teaching some girls how to make some new parts, and my heavens, there was just a sheet of flame. I mean it was so fast, the explosion. Now they had in that room, the west wall was all glass so in case of an explosion it just blew the glass out. But the last dope room we had lost, it had exploded, it was a wood frame building and it just lifted the roof up, blew the sides out and the roof was sitting very neat right back down on the foundation, the sides all went out. There was very little fire but there was some, of course, from the explosion, but there was no continuous fire. It was just actually basically an explosion. Yes, the dope room did give us problems, in that respect, at least. And then it was a bad place to work, it would make you intoxicated.

OSBORNE: To inhale those fumes.

IDEN: Inhale the vapor of the spraying, you see. They kept milk in a box outside the dope room and a man, especially the spray

End of Tape.

painters would come out after, I don't know just what the interval was. One department I never worked in was the dope room, I worked in most all the departments in the factory, but I never did work in the dope room. Well, I never worked in the machine shop. But you'd come out and you'd drink a lot of milk, this would coat your stomach.

OSBORNE: Oh, I see.

IDEN: It wasn't the healthiest place in the world to work.

OSBORNE: Right. What about your testing, your, the test pilots-- as they test these planes, did you have any incidents there?

IDEN: Well, one day the late Al Barber, bless his heart, he passed away just about a year ago, a great person and a wonderful friend. Al was one of the old test pilots; he tested probably hundreds and hundreds of airplanes. He never lost an airplane in a test run. But one day the boys hooked the aileron cables up backwards, and at work we called him Abey, and Abey got aloft and got it on a roll. He was too far along to cut power and get it back in the field again without them. And you know the last thing a pilot wants to do is to make a turn back into the field. This is what they call a suicide turn. But Al, so he had to go on and fly, but he landed it in a field over south of the factory, he wouldn't even bring it back in the field. Well, I know, even though it was hooked up wrong.....

End of Tape.