

Reminiscences of Sanford Slifkin

October 26, 2006

Interview Conducted by Forrest Barber

BARBER: Good Morning.

SLIFKIN: Good Morning.

BARBER: How you doing over there, Sandy?

SLIFKIN: Fine, thanks.

BARBER: OK. Back here behind the camera is Forrest Barber. We're doing some more Alliance Memories at the Rodman Public Library. Today is October 26 of 2006. It's about 9:30 in the morning. And, we're gonna be getting some memories here of Sandy Slifkin. Sandy's been around Alliance for quite awhile, many titles: pilot, musician, business owner. Very active in the Lions, and, we're just gonna explore some of Sandy's memories. Sandy and I have been good friends for a long time through our association with Taylorcraft and the East Central Ohio Pilot's Association. So, uh, well, here we are, Sandy. You say you never been in the Alliance Room here before?

SLIFKIN: No, I haven't.

BARBER: This is just beautiful. All the memories of Alliance are in here. Pretty soon there will be an hour of you in here. And, maybe we'll have you back sometime.

SLIFKIN: OK.

BARBER: Hey, this name of yours, SOS. You were born when in Alliance, Ohio?

SLIFKIN: July 29<sup>th</sup> 1918. The reason I adopted...I never had a middle initial but when I was in commercial art in the high school, they said I should have a middle initial and I always liked SOS so I had an Uncle Otto so I adopted "O". And, they put that on my birth certificate. They actually did.

BARBER: That's wonderful. Tell us a little bit about your parents and what they did.

SLIFKIN: Well, dad had a shoe store in town for many years. An economy shoe store down on the Square and mother had a hat shop. She was in ladies' ready-to-wear type thing.

BARBER: Were they both born in Alliance?

SLIFKIN: No, dad was born in Pittsburg and mother in New York.

BARBER: How did they get together?

SLIFKIN: I'll be darned if I know.

BARBER: OK, Sandy, so you come along in 1918...

SLIFKIN: Um Hmm

FB...and then I presume you attended school here in Alliance? Where at?

SLIFKIN: I went to all the schools: South Lincoln School and the old Alliance High School.

BARBER: Now, it wasn't too old. I attended that one also.

SLIFKIN: Did you?

BARBER: Yeah, the one at the corner of Arch and Broadway.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: OK. What year did you graduate then?

SLIFKIN: '36

BARBER: OK. Do you remember how many people were in your graduating class back then?

SLIFKIN: Oh, heavens, no, I couldn't tell you.

BARBER: Have you been having reunions?

SLIFKIN: They stopped many years ago.

BARBER: Why?

SLIFKIN: I don't know.

BARBER: Let's get it going again.

SLIFKIN: I'll tell you what did happen. I got a call. Of course, I was sick at that time here about a few months ago. One of the girls from the graduating class of, let's see, what was it? '50, no, '3-, '38 or '39 called me. They wanted me to be a guest and I said, "Why?" And, they said, "Your band played for our senior prom." I played my own senior prom in my band and she wanted me to show up just, just to be there. But, I had to go to the Cleveland Clinic for an operation so I couldn't make it. She said, "Well, come next year," and I said, "The good Lord willing I'll be there."

BARBER: Let's do that right now, Sandy. Let's talk a little bit about your band and your life as a musician. When did that start?

SLIFKIN: My mother had me playing the piano when I was 4 years old. And, I played the piano for many, many years. And, then we started a neighborhood band, a lot of people that you would probably know from the neighborhood and I had a band from high school through, oh, heavens, when my kids were growing up I's still playing because I had to send them to college. And, so I did three things: we had a business, I was playing in the band, and I was instructing aviation. So I had three jobs to educate all five children. And, thank the good Lord they all got educated.

BARBER: They certainly did and they're all fine people. And, that's also of course due to, to a lovely lady who has passed away, your wife.

SLIFKIN: Um hmm.

BARBER: You want to talk a little bit about her?

SLIFKIN: She was a good girl. She was an artist, very good. She was a Mount. She went to Mount. And, we all missed her. She was a hard worker and did her share. You know with five children, five children, I was out working and she was home working. So, she was a very fine person.

BARBER: Why don't you give us her full name, maiden name.

SLIFKIN: Her name was Katherine Siefert. Katherine Siefert

BARBER: Right, Katie.

SLIFKIN: Umm hmm.

BARBER: And, your children, I have met most of them. And, of course, let's see, what? Two of them stayed around town here as nurses...

SLIFKIN: Three of them are at the hospital.

BARBER: That's right. Three of them are.

SLIFKIN: Two of them are registered nurses and the third one is a technician. She runs the CAT scan up there.

BARBER: Yes. The musician business. You were playing the piano at age four and then you formed a band.

SLIFKIN: Local, yeah, a neighborhood band.

BARBER: Do you remember names in the neighborhood?

SLIFKIN: Well, Richard Furniture, they were very popular here years ago. I don't know whether you're old enough to remember that?

BARBER: Of course I do.

SLIFKIN: Well...George Rickard....

BARBER: And, out of that came Kenny Rickard.

SLIFKIN: And, Joe Greiner who became a dentist in Alliance. He and I were pals. And, he played with us. And, of course, Freddie Dickens, who had Dickens and...a gun store over there on Union Avenue, Dickens and Marshall. Remember them?

BARBER: Absolutely.

SLIFKIN: He was..uh, he was somebody everybody knew. Good guitar player, good singer. And, oh, we had people that everybody knew. I am trying to remember the trumpet player. He was a school teacher from over in...uhhh...Best, Charlie Best. Charlie Best. He was a school teacher over in the North Benton area.

BARBER: Now what instrument were you playing?

SLIFKIN: Piano and organ.

BARBER: OK. And, I remember you playing some of the clubs when I was.... I was born in 1942. Sandy was born in 1918. He and my father were test pilots at Taylorcraft. My father was Al Barber. He was born in 1905.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: And, I remember you playing around town with...what was the name of the group?

SLIFKIN: Sanford...uh...it was either a combo or we had a big orchestra but with...we took my first name and split in two and made it the San Ford Orchestra or Combo.

BARBER: And, also, I remember Combo because I remember that at the Vets.

SLIFKIN: Yeah. Um hmm.

BARBER: And, do you still play?

SLIFKIN: Just for the Lions Club. That's all.

BARBER: OK. Well, at one point in time, you had worked for a living other than that. And, so back you graduated from high school in 1936, what'd you do then out of high school?

SLIFKIN: Well, my buddy that I grew up with, Tubby Shank, and I went to Indiana Tech in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was a technical, two-year college. I went one year and run out of money. I was working in a restaurant, doing whatever I could. I finally come home and lived with my mother. My father had passed away. And, my...Mike Third who was the...who worked for Taylorcraft. My mother talked to his wife because they were good friends. And, he got me a job at Taylorcraft and that was in '38, the beginning of '38.

BARBER: What was your first job out there?

SLIFKIN: My first job and the same job I had until I was a test pilot: I put on tail services. That was my job, rudders, elevators and rigged 'em.

BARBER: Now, when you mentioned here that when you became a test pilot, how much later was that?

SLIFKIN: Well, that was after the war.

BARBER: Sure, because Sandy has quite a...quite the story to tell about the war and we're gonna do that...

SLIFKIN: Oh, yeah.

BARBER: ...And, then we'll come back to Taylorcraft.

SLIFKIN: Well, I asked...

BARBER: So, you and Tubby went to the Tech School and then you came back and got a job at Taylorcraft...

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: 1938, do you have any remembrances of what happened out there? And, of course, Katie came along at one point here.

SLIFKIN: Well, one of the ...of course, I had a cart that I moved around because I had to go from airplane to airplane. And, I had a fire extinguisher on it. And, my...because I was at the end of the line I was right near the big hangar, hangar doors where they moved the airplanes out. And, one summer day I was putting a tail surface on and the doors were open and I look out and one of the finished planes was on fire. And, I grabbed my fire extinguisher and ran out to the plane. But by the time I got there, I was the first one there, it was consumed and practically gone. Of course, I was taking flying lessons and it frightened the dickens out of me. But, they told me that in those days the dope had nitrate in it, which is very flammable. So, you...when those...when the fire started—it was boom-- it was all over. And, I [laughs] I had that in my mind when I was learning to fly. I mean no cigarettes, no nothing.

BARBER: Yeah, we had some examples of that out at the airport. An airplane would be totally consumed in about four minutes...

SLIFKIN: That's right.

BARBER: Because of the nitrates, [inaudible]

SLIFKIN: Yes.

BARBER: Of course, later on in life we changed all that. And that was one of the big problems we'll get into later out at Taylorcraft were the fires in the dope room out there where people died.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: Now you mentioned you were learning to fly. How did that all come about?

SLIFKIN: Well, I always wanted as a kid. I had model airplanes and rubber, well, ours were all rubber band and I always wanted to be a pilot. Well, they had the Taylorcraft Flying Club there and, of course, Bill Crawford was the test pilot...was one of the test pilots. He was also the instructor for the club. And, in those days we could fly--today it's \$100 an hour; then it was \$1 an hour. One dollar an hour plus the instructor. Well, I took Bill Crawford to work so that I didn't pay for the instructor. I just paid for \$1 an hour. And, I think about it. It's impossible. Think about it.

BARBER: I know. [Sighs] And, if people would just realize in this country we always need pilots and we always need airplanes.

SLIFKIN: That's right.

BARBER: The Taylorcraft Flying Club started actually over in Bradford, Pennsylvania. It was first organized and then the airplane came here July 7th of 1936. And, that was a prototype Taylorcraft. And, I presume that's the one you were taking your lessons in.

SLIFKIN: That was the one that C. G. Taylor donated to the club, the first Taylorcraft. It was a 38-horsepower.

BARBER: Yes.

SLIFKIN: 38 horsepower.

BARBER: And, it's now out there. Your's must have a little tweaking done to it. Normally it's 37 horsepower. That must have the finer prop on it. That airplane is sitting at my airport today. And, we're gonna be taking it over to the MAPS Air Museum.

SLIFKIN: And, the...pardon me...the instrument panel is at your airport, too. And, what's left of the propeller is there, too.

BARBER: Yes, interesting tale. I'd have to get my dates correct but it was like the end of the year, I believe, of 1938 or '39 that a gentleman crashed in it in southern Ohio. And, Sandy had these parts and he donated them to the Taylorcraft Foundation here about a year and a half, two years ago.

SLIFKIN: Yeah, that was Harry Shade. He was a good friend of mine.

BARBER: Yep. He got caught in a snowstorm then he went. OK, so you're learning to fly out there with Bill Crawford and you soloed. Do you remember what year, what year that was?

SLIFKIN: I could tell you that I got my private in '39 but I can't tell you when I soloed.

BARBER: OK, tell us about getting your private pilot's certificate.

SLIFKIN: Well, that was interesting. First of all, I had to pass a written and there was a FAA examiner on the field. Not a flight examiner with the aircraft examiner. Name was Kenny Johnson, you took your written in his office. Well, in those days, the written was in about four parts: one on FARs, one on navigation, one whatever. And, I studied everything but the FARs. But anyhow, I took the test. And, Kenny set up a flight test for me over at Akron Municipal Airport. Well, that was interesting. I'd never landed on a paved runway at all...in my, in my learning to fly. And, I was worried. I thought, "How in the heck am I..." we had no brakes. I had a parking brake but no foot brakes. But they said, "Don't worry. You got a tailskid. You don't have a wheel. It adds skid when you drop it down, it'll slow you up." And, it did. Well, anyhow, I went over there and we talked to the examiner. He went up and flew. And, he...we come back

down and, he said, “Now you gotta go do the spins.” I said, “You’re not gonna do the spins with me?” And, he said, “No, you’re gonna do ‘em yourself.” I’d never done a spin by my...I’d done ‘em but never with...by myself. So, he says, “You go up over the airport.” This is up over Akron Municipal Airport. “And do, uh...two turn spin to the left and one to the right.” Well, I did that and come down. I was really shaking after that. I’d never done that by myself. But, anyhow, I went back home. And, the next morning, Kenny Johnson, the FAA examiner...er, inspector, come in and he’s chewin’ on. I said, “What’s the matter?” And, he said, “You flunked the FARs on that test.” Well, truthfully, I never studied the FARs. It was so easy. So, he said, “Tomorrow morning you come over to my office and you, you take that test over again. And, you better pass it if you know what’s good for you.” So, that night I went home, studied all night and went back and passed the test. I had, I had the license then.

BARBER: That’s great. And, that was done in the club ship.

SLIFKIN: Umm hmm

BARBER: First [inaudible]

SLIFKIN: That was in that first Taylorcraft.

BARBER: Who did you take up for your first passenger?

SLIFKIN: You know, I can’t remember that. I can’t remember, truthfully.

BARBER: Sandy and I have discussed flying, I don’t know, for, 15, 20 years, I suppose and some of these things that people would think you would absolutely remember, you don’t. I am the same way. And, somebody went for a ride with you the first time, then the second time, the third time eventually you got the family flying, I guess.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: Now, were you married at this point?

SLIFKIN: No.

BARBER: OK. All right. Oh and by the way, Sandy, back then that was the Civil Air Regulations you'd flown.

SLIFKIN: Oh, I said FAA...

BARBER: CA...

SLIFKIN: You're right.

BARBER: And, in today's day and age, it's the FARs.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: And, Of course this will be looked at a hundred years from now and somebody will say, "Oh, boy, were they wrong." But, yeah, it was the CAA back then, Civil Aeronautics.

SLIFKIN: Right.

BARBER: OK, so you got your private and back you came. Now, you had to build up some time before you were able to become a test pilot and so forth so at one point in time you went off and did some military training and so forth. And, why don't we go ahead and just, I guess, talk about that.

SLIFKIN: Well, before that...

BARBER: Yep.

SLIFKIN: I wanted to build up some time and I went up to the office and talked to the salesman, the sales manager. And, I said, "Listen, next time you get a trip some place, I'd like to fly one of the planes." I said, "Because I want to build up some time." They said, "We've got a big trip coming up going to California: 10 airplanes." I said, "No kidding?" I said, "That'll be perfect." I said, "I'd love that and I've got a week's vacation coming up." So, or, I don't know, it was a week or two. He says, "OK." Well, anyhow, here they come. Arthur Hyde from, um..Long Beach..uh...Long Beach, L.A., I guess he was from. He comes with a bunch of students. None of them had any license. They were just students. I was the only private pilot in the group and he, of course, was the owner. So, here's the way we worked it: he flew head on, he was number one with the maps. I was the tail man with maps and if anybody got out of line, I would go up beside 'em and tell 'em, [gestures], "Go over that way." And that's the way we flew. Took us five days and five nights. And, that was really some kind of a trip, I'll tell you.

BARBER: Well, let's elaborate on that because you had told me about it before. Do you remember some of your stops and what route you took?

SLIFKIN: Well, I remember we got to a place...it..it was getting late and it was night time and the only thing we could see was the highway with cars going down it. So, we had a heck of a time. We finally got everybody on...I think it was Tucumcari, Arizona, if I remember. Tucumcari, that's where it was. And, we got everybody to land there. But, one guy was missing. So, they said, "Sandy, you better get out there and start looking for this guy." Well, before I could go, a car stops at--we're at the police department--a car stops and here comes the pilot. He said, "I..." They said, "Where'd you land?" He said, "I don't know, out in the desert someplace." And, so, we said, "The next morning we'll go look." And, believe it or not, he landed in the desert and the airplane was fine. So we got him back to the airport and then we all kept going

again until we got to...and get this! This is what's amazing: We landed at Los Angeles Airport, ten of us in trail, no radio. There was no radio except with the airlines in those days. They just gave us a green light and we all landed. I still can't get that out of my mind that ten air...ten Taylorcrafts landed at Los Angeles Airport with no radio, just went in and landed.

BARBER: That is written up in the Taylorcraft storybook, which we have here at the library.

SLIFKIN: Is it?

BARBER: Tell you what, Sandy, I'm gonna slide this book down. Why don't you hold up in front of the camera there and just show people what we're talking about.

BARBER: There it is: *The Taylorcraft Story*. And, that's available here at the library. And that was written by a fine fellow name of Chet Peek. And, it describes briefly the LAX trip there. So, you made it. Well, how did you get back?

SLIFKIN: Well, that was the strange part, too. I had an aunt that lived there. And, incidentally, I took Harry Shade. He was the one who crashed that airplane at Moscow, Ohio.

BARBER: Yes.

SLIFKIN: Harry was a good friend of mine and he had a vacation. He said, "Hey, I'd like to make the trip with you." So, Harry and I flew the trip together. And, when we got to LA, my aunt lived there. And, I lived with...stayed with her all night. And, I said, "Well, Aunt, we're gonna go down to the train station and get a ticket to go back home." And, on the way to the train station we passed a used car lot. And, I said, "Harry, are you thinking what I am thinking?" And, he said, "Yeah." So, we went in there and for \$65 we bought a Chevrolet Ph...Phaeton, they call it, that's with a soft top. And, he said, "I gotta make sure of two things when I sell this

car. I said, "What's that?" He says, "You gotta have a horn and you gotta have..." Uh... What was the other thing? You gotta have a horn...

BARBER: Windshield wipers?

SLIFKIN: Oh, uh...huh?

BARBER: Windshield wipers?

SLIFKIN: No. Oh, license plate.

BARBER: Oh, yes.

SLIFKIN: You gotta have a license plate. They give you the license plate. So, for...we drove the car back to my aunt's. And, she said, "Oh, what're you doing with that?" I said, "We're gonna drive it home." Oh, she said, "Well, I'll tell your mother." This was my mother's sister. Well, I said, "Don't you worry, honey. We'll get home all right." Well, that took us about six days. We had quite a trip with that. Harry was a good mechanic. And, we...outside of L.A, we had to go into a garage. And, he says, Harry said because the engine was falling apart, he says, "If we buy the parts from you, can we use your tools?" And they said, "Yeah." So, Harry...we paid 'em for the parts and Harry used the tools and put the engine back together. And, we bought a couple tires and with the help of the good Lord we made it back home. Took us six days.

BARBER: So, just the two of you did that? The rest of the guys had their own ways?

SLIFKIN: Well, one pilot, believe it or not, lived in Michigan. And, he was just a student pilot. He said, "Can I go with you?" And, I said, "Heavens, yes." So, he piled in with us. So, there were three of us. He went about half way with us then he went home.

BARBER: OK. Now let's see. What... Do you recall what year that was and what time of the year?

SLIFKIN: [laughs]

BARBER: And what the airplanes were? 1940 or 1941, I presume?

SLIFKIN: I would say, "Yeah." There is one thing I want to mention that I got a kick out of. We were half way flying back to L.A., Arthur Hyde came to Harry and I and said, "Listen, I'm running out of money. Do you fellas have any money you can loan me 'til we get there and then I'll give you back?" Well, I had \$150, which was quite a bit of money in those days. And, Harry had \$250. So, we loaned him money so we could buy gas and buy food and then when we got there, he gave us the money back.

BARBER: That's good. Well, you made her back to Taylorcraft. And, then I presume shortly after that the war effort started.

SLIFKIN: Yeah, we, I was thinking about getting into CPT, which was Civilian Pilot Training. And, because the war was getting...or did break out, I guess, and then all us young guys, we had to get in there. We wanted to go to the service. And, when I heard about CPT, Civilian Pilot Training at Mount. So, I applied at Mount because I working on...one of the fellows up there teaching a ground school for the commercial and I was going through the commercial ground school with him up at Mount.

BARBER: Yes, now this is Mount Union College...

SLIFKIN: College, yeah...

BARBER: ...here in Alliance, Ohio.

SLIFKIN: Right. And, he said, “There is an opening. Why don’t you apply for CPT up here?” So, I applied with Murray Cunningham’s father got the opening. Of course, I was devastated. But then they said, “Hey, Sandy, go to Kent. They’ll accept you.” And, that’s what I did. I went to Kent State. They accepted me. And, I went through...and then they changed it because of the war to WTS, War Time Training Service. Used to be CPT but then when the war broke out they changed it to War Time Training Service.

BARBER: I never knew that.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: So, you got accepted up at Kent and you started training...

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: How long did that take and what were you flying and so forth?

SLIFKIN: Well, we started...we started at Mid City. That was an airport they used. A...it’s gone by now. I don’t know where it was, up in that area. But, I went through what they called secondary. I didn’t have to go through primary. I went through secondary. And, then they started the instrument course, cour...took...these courses took about three months. And, they started the instrument course, which I started, and we ended up in the Chicago area, in one of the suburbs. But, believe it or not, during the early war one of the big planes hit a big building up there. Just like they deliberately did here but this was accidental. And, they took all of us out of there and I ended up in Grand Rapids. So, I got my instrument rating in Grand Rapids.

BARBER: OK.

SLIFKIN: But here is an interesting side note: Five of us got so disgusted with all of this running around when we were in the Chicago area. We went down and we said, "Let's quit this thing and let's join the...let's join the troops." We were young. We wanted to get there and fight for the good ol' country. So, six of us, five or six of us went down to the recruiting service and there was hundreds of guys lined up. We got in line. Some Captain came over and said, "Who are you fellows and what do you want?" I said, "We're the enlisted reserve and we want to get out of that. We want to go and fight for our country." He looked at me and laughed. He said, "Get out of here." He says, "We can't touch you." And, we said, "Why not?" "Cause you're in the enlisted reserve. That's why you're in there." So, they threw us out.

BARBER: And back you went. What airplanes were you flying there for your instrument training? You remember?

SLIFKIN: Well, gee...the...the Stinson had a...with our cross country we had a Stinson, a four place Stinson, one of the old ones. I can't remember the number.

BARBER: Sure, it was SR-8 or an SR-10.

SLIFKIN: That was it.

BARBER: Stinson Gullwing.

SLIFKIN: Yeah, that was it. We had that and Arthur, one of the instructors, had a bi-plane, an old bird. We were flying that. All old airplanes, you know.

BARBER: Any multi-engine training at that point?

SLIFKIN: No, no, it was all single.

BARBER: So, you got the...your instruments and so forth and then what did you do?

SLIFKIN: Well, then we...we were sent to the University of Minnesota. And, there we flew the Cub for the primary stuff and a Waco UPF-7 for the big...heavy stuff.

BARBER: Right.

SLIFKIN: And...I'm proud of that course because we had approximately 65 people in that course. And, only six of us got a CFI and I, fortunately, thank the good Lord, I was one of them. So, I was proud.

BARBER: And, a CFI, it's a Certified Flight Instructor?

SLIFKIN: Flight Instructor, yeah.

BARBER: And, did you instruct then?

SLIFKIN: Well, what happened is that they said, "Go home and we'll assign you." So, we went home and we got an assignment to go to Randolph Field. Now, in those days, that was the ...that was the big place in aviation, Randolph Field. You graduated there, you were a pilot.

BARBER: That was in what state?

SLIFKIN: That's Texas.

BARBER: Down in Texas. So, you'd been to the far North and now you're going to the far South.

SLIFKIN: Well...anyhow, there, that was interesting. The...the building complex is in the center but on all 4 sides they had various types of training: twin-engine, multi engine, single, whatever.

You had to be very careful because every side had their own patterns to approach ...and depart. And, we all carried a little book. We were forced to carry the book in case of emergency so that we would know, we wouldn't get mixed up with the other four sides...other three sides. Well, believe it or not, one day we're flying...it was a Fairchild...the tandem Fairchild. What did they call those?

BARBER: Fairchild? The tandem? That would be a PT-19...

SLIFKIN: OK, that's it.

BARBER:... or a PT-26.

SLIFKIN: One of those. Anyhow, I am sitting in the backseat and the wind comes up and it's starting to rain and all these planes are milling around. That was a mess. We finally got in there all right. Uh...

BARBER: Go ahead.

SLIFKIN: Well, I was gonna say that once we got on the ground then they asked all the pilots to please help tie down the airplanes cause out there in Texas, you know, big wind blowing. So, we had to tie down these airplanes and while I was doing that, I run a pito tube into my right eye. And, I thought, "Uh oh, I lost my eye." Anyhow, they picked me up and carried me to the hospital. And, the doctor looks at that and says, "Well, you're faking it." I said, "Faking what? Look at the blood running out of there." Well, I was in the hospital about 4 or 5 days and the doctor says, "You're OK, get out of here." So, I finally got out but I still after I come home, believe it or not, four years later, I still, there was metal in my eye. One of the doctors found metal in my eyeball.

BARBER: Never heard that story.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: Hey, uh, OK, so down there at Randolph, what ratings did you end up getting and...

SLIFKIN: Well...

BARBER: where'd you go to from there?

SLIFKIN:...that's where they—no, we were still in the enlisted reserve.

BARBER: OK.

SLIFKIN: They then were assigning us to various fields that were available. And, I had two buddies that I run around with-- one from Cleveland and one from Illinois. I originally was assigned ...to...or, I asked for fighter planes, to go to a fighter group. This was for delivery and then eventually into the regular Army. But, one of the boys who lived out, it was in California asked me if I wouldn't rather go to, do transport work. I said, "Why?" He says, "Well, I got, we got week counting off, you can go home for a week. Otherwise you're gonna end up out in California." And, I said, "Well, all right, I tell you what I'll take your transport and I can home and you can take the fighter group." So, what happened is that I got into the transport but that was after we had to be assigned to a field. And, because of my two buddies, we went to Wickenburg, Arizona. And, instructed in Steerman for one year of primary, Army Primary.

BARBER: Now, where was that field, again?

SLIFKIN: Wickenburg, Arizona, it's about 50 miles west of Phoenix.

BARBER: OK, and, you did instruct. One year out there in the Steerman.

SLIFKIN: Yeah. one... Um hmm.

BARBER: OK, now we're up to what year?

SLIFKIN: Well, let's see...let's see, I got into active duty, I'm guessing about '53...

BARBER: '43

SLIFKIN: or '43.

BARBER: Now, out of that then in '43 you went on to active duty.

SLIFKIN: Yeah, we...uh...when I left there, we were assigned then because they closed that field. I had a, we all had the same chance to do whatever you wanted. I could go back to civilian life and be an instructor in WTS or I could go on active duty. And, I said, "Hey, after all this I want to go on active duty." So, they assigned me to Romulus, Michigan, which is outside of Detroit there. I was gonna be a ferry pilot, ferry airplanes around.

BARBER: OK.

SLIFKIN: Most of the planes, believe it or not, that I ferried were C-46s and PBYS.

BARBER: Now, when you doing this...now, when did you get the multi ratings in? At Randolph?

SLIFKIN: No, they sent me to a school in Reno and they had a multi-engine school and that's where I was checked out.

BARBER: OK, now let's...you ferried airplanes around and I'll tell you were gonna do an interview sometime with just the military But, tell us about some of your experiences now in the CBI -- China, Burma, India. You flew the hump.

SLIFKIN: For only one... a year.

BARBER: How did you get selected to do that?

SLIFKIN: Well, what happened is that...let's see, well, I had to ferry an airplane to Europe and I did it the old way. Not across the Atlantic, but went down to South America and down to Belém, Brazil and across the Ascension Islands over to Africa up to Morocco, and up along the coast of France and Germany, er, France and Spain up to England. But, before that we knew that, those who of us were flying C-46s , were gonna go eventually to the hump because the C-46, there was more of them flown over the hump than anything else. At one time there were 5,000 pilots over there flying that hump. And, so, we were gaining experience. We knew eventually we were gonna end up there. And, that's what happened to me that I ended up in England and they deadheaded us to Karachi, India finally. And, then I was assigned a base at Mowenberry(?), India.

BARBER: Now, for some of the people listening to this in the future, these hump pilots...could you explain a little bit about China, Burma, India theater, why we were doing this?

SLIFKIN: Well, we were carrying supplies to China. That's what we were doing. We were taking supplies to China. Their main base was Kunming but there was a lot of little places like Super Ting(?) and all in that base where...what was that name of that group of pilots before the war started?

BARBER: Yeah...

SLIFKIN: You know what I'm talking about?

BARBER: Absolutely, it was like an American expeditionary [inaudible]

SLIFKIN: Yeah, well, we used to go in there once in awhile. And, we'd also go into Myitkyina, Burma once in awhile. But, most of the supplies—and, it was all, everything you could think of. It would be woman's clothes; it would be b...even bombs, gasoline, they had regular tankers. But, anything you could think of, we would take to China, that's where it was going.

BARBER: And, how many hours would the trip take?

SLIFKIN: About 3 ½ to 4 ½ each way.

BARBER: OK, and, what altitude would you fly at?

SLIFKIN: Well, our, every base, believe it or not, was assigned an altitude. Our base at Mowenberry(?) was 16.5 over. Coming back it could be anything, 21, 22 cause we were breathing oxygen all the time.

BARBER: OK, and you did this for how long?

SLIFKIN: Oneyear.

BARBER: And, do you recall approximately how many missions you flew?

SLIFKIN: 87

BARBER: 87?

SLIFKIN: 87 round trips.

BARBER: Wow. Well, Sandy, we're gonna pick up on that military another time. Right now, I want to get you back home and we'll get you back at Taylorcraft. So, at one point in time you're out of the military. Was that because of the war ending or what happened there?

SLIFKIN: Yeah the, well, no, well, the war was over. We flew the hump even after the war--six months after the war was over we were still carrying those dang supplies. And, that was miserable because there were, there were pilots, planes going down. Not being shot down, but mechanical failures, weather was horrible, as you can imagine.

BARBER: Yes.

SLIFKIN: As a matter of fact, I think I told you this: Reverend Dave Hostetler said to me one day, "Sandy, do you ever pray?" And, I said, "Reverend, I flew the hump for a year. I learned to pray over the hump."

BARBER: A lot of people did. I heard there no atheists flying over the hump. So, anyways, at one point in time, do you remember the month and the year that finally this hit: military is over and you're back to Alliance?

SLIFKIN: Heavens, I can't tell you.

BARBER: Well...

SLIFKIN: Well, but, what happened is that they said at the discharge, it was at Wilmington, Delaware they said, "You have a choice." No, they said, "Here's what we're gonna do. We're gonna assign you to go to a, to a school...down in..." It was in Alabama. I can't think of the name of it now. As an instructor. And, I said, "Instructor?" They said, "Yeah." I said, "Do I have

a choice?" They said, "How about a discharge?" I said, "You just said the magical words! I'll take the discharge."

BARBER: Now was that late '45 or...?

SLIFKIN: It was, I would guess '45, yes.

BARBER: OK. Do you remember arriving? How did you get back to Alliance?

SLIFKIN: You ever hear of a train?

BARBER: Yes, so you were mustered out somewhere and then you brought your train home?

SLIFKIN: I took the train home. And, that's when I went back out to Taylorcraft to see if they had a...my original intention was to go to college. After all I had a free ride. I wanted to finish my college. And, I went to Taylorcraft and became a test pilot. And, while I was test pilot, I decided I'd go down to, I flew down to Columbus, signed up for my classes. I went to the airport. They said they'd hire me as an instructor. I had a room. I was all set to go and I come back home and I told my buddy, Tubby Shank, who was, he had a job as, I don't know, he was one of the head people out there at that point. I said, "I'm ready to finish my college." I said, "I signed up. I'm gonna be leaving here in a couple of months." He says, "No, you're not." I said, "What do you mean I'm not?" He says, "We're going into business." I said, "We are?" I said, "What business are we going into?" He says, "We're gonna make seat covers." I said, "Where'd you get that idea?" He says, "One of the fellows from Goodyear told me that he could sell all the seat covers that we make." I said, he said, "That's what we're gonna do." I said, "Well..." He says, "We'll do it. Don't worry about it." So, I never went to college. We ended up making seat

covers and finally got into the home improvement business. Had a business for about 50 years, I guess, I don't know.

BARBER: Right and that's what I was gonna finish up with was S&S products.

SLIFKIN: Yep. Umm hmm.

BARBER: And, that is just a fantastic thing up there on Arch Street. Let's go back to Taylorcraft 'cause I want to clip this out sometime and just use this portion of it. So, you come back over to Taylorcraft as a test pilot.

SLIFKIN: Um hmm.

BARBER: Do you remember some of the other test pilots at that time?

SLIFKIN: Well, heavens, yes. There was—I was just looking at the picture this morning. Of course, Bill was still teaching, was still...

BARBER: Bill Crawford.

SLIFKIN: Bill Crawford and your dad was there...

BARBER: Al Barber.

SLIFKIN: And...

BARBER: Paul Dietz.

SLIFKIN: Paul Dietz was there. And, Johnny...McClain

BARBER: Johnny McClain.

SLIFKIN: And, who was the other one?

BARBER: Well, there would have been two or three other ones. Now at that point in time Dale Ludwig had left.

SLIFKIN: Yeah, Dale was gone.

BARBER: He was gone.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: You remember him in the beginning?

SLIFKIN: Oh, very well. Let me tell you something about him. You can believe this or not. They claim when we had that fire and I went out there with the extinguisher, Dale, he used to smoke in the airplanes. He did.

BARBER: Yep.

SLIFKIN: And, they think, they could never prove it, that he threw a butt out and it landed on the wing. Cause why would it catch on fire with nobody around?

BARBER: That's right. I just recently got a good photo of him. And, of course, we have all the history of all the various test pilots out there. You and Johnny McClain are the only ones left. The rest of them are gone.

SLIFKIN: Oh.

BARBER: And, I have a lot of their....

SLIFKIN: Reese Edwards is his name.

BARBER: Reese, of course, Reese Edwards.

SLIFKIN: That was it. Reese Edwards. I've...

BARBER: Certainly. Reese lived down on Walnut Avenue. OK, so, can you remember back some of the first airplanes you tested, what time of year it was? Was it in the winter? In other words...

SLIFKIN: Well, we...

BARBER: ...you come back late '45?

SLIFKIN: oh...it was spring and summer, no winter.

BARBER: OK, so you come back in the spring.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: Was it after the big wind storm that they had out there? A bunch of airplanes were blown all over the place. That was...

SLIFKIN: It must have been because I don't, I don't recall that.

BARBER: That was in March...

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER:... of 1946.

SLIFKIN: It must have been after that.

BARBER: So, the airplanes you were flying were the BC-12Ds. And, how many a day would you fly?

SLIFKIN: Oh, I don't know, two or three, I suppose. I, I never paid much attention. We'd work on 'em. We'd talk to 'em. We'd talk to the mechanics and we'd fly up and down, you know, four or five times and get it right.

BARBER: Sure, a lot of times they'd go out for 20 minutes, come back in with some squawks, take another airplane out, bring it back. It's all recorded in the log books. And, Sanford Slifkin, I want you to find your log books. We need 'em.

SLIFKIN: Let me tell you an interesting... I think I know I told you this. We always kept a little throttle on when we were doing spins. And, this one time I forgot... pulled back and the doggone engine quit--while I'm in a spin! And, I looked down as we're spinning and there's a field right below me. So, I landed in the field, set the brakes, got out, cranked it, took off and kept going. Never told 'em about it.

BARBER: Close to the factory was it?

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: Sandy, we've been doing this for over 40 minutes now. I'm gonna take a little break. And, we're gonna come back and we're gonna continue with the Taylorcraft story so we're gonna break here a moment if I can figure out how... OK, we're back here at the Alliance Room. It's about 10:30 in the morning and we're talking with Sandy Slifkin here on October 26 of 2006. Some of Sandy's memories. We've decided that we're going to just continue here a little bit with Taylorcraft. And, we're gonna come back in and do another session with Sandy

telling us about the Taylorcraft Flying Club and, of course, his, his own S&S Products, which is a 50 year history of Alliance. So, Sandy, we were just talking while we took a break there about some of the other airplanes out there at Taylorcraft. Back before you left to go to the service, you remember the tandem airplane, the L-2?

SLIFKIN: Yes, I do.

BARBER: You remember flying it?

SLIFKIN: Just briefly. The thing that as I told you before, was Bill Crawford put me in the back seat.

BARBER: OK.

SLIFKIN: And, turned me backwards...

BARBER: All right.

SLIFKIN: ...and then took me up and did some acrobatic maneuvers. And, that's just like going to an amusement park, I'll tell you that. My head was going six different ways.

BARBER: Yeah, for those of you who don't understand that, the L-2M Taylorcraft had a swiveling rear seat that the backseat passenger could sit backwards and work at a desk. It was an artillery spotter. Well, one of the comical things that the test pilots would do to torture their friends was to take them up and put 'em in that seat backwards and do all kinds of aerobatic maneuvers.

SLIFKIN: That's right.

BARBER: OK, and one of the other test pilots, of course, we discussed was Dick Olm. Dick was a very good test pilot over there....

SLIFKIN: Yes, he was.

BARBER: ...and went on to Goodyear.

SLIFKIN: Umm Hmm.

BARBER: Let's go back now to the four-place. Do you remember it?

SLIFKIN: Only the...the thing I remember is that I flew it once and it was very nose heavy.

When you come in to land, you had a heck of a time keeping the nosegear off of the runway.

And, so you had to use a lot of back pressure and a little power to keep it up at, at a sort of a stall altitude.

BARBER: Right. The four-place Taylorcraft was a model 15 and there was only one of those built. They set up to build a lot of them. And, there was a big fire and a bunch of those fuselages were unusable afterwards.

SLIFKIN: Yeah.

BARBER: Hey, Sandy, let's get into a wee little bit of the Taylorcraft Flying Club. Then we're gonna really expound upon it later on. Of course, you soloed the airplane under the Taylorcraft Flying Club. Then after you came back after the war, you were still in the club. And, can you recall any of that?

SLIFKIN: Well, we did a lot...I'll tell you at one point I was the only instructor in the club. And, they would line up on Sunday morning or Saturday morning at the field, depending on which

field. We were at Barber Field. We were at Miller Field. And, finally ended up at Tri City. But, there were so many people lined up waiting to fly that some of them got disgusted and went someplace else. Because they, how long were you gonna wait for an instructor to come back.

BARBER: Why were you the only instructor?

SLIFKIN: I don't know why it was. I enjoyed flying. That was my life and heavens, I didn't do it for pay. What'd we get? 4 or 5 bucks an hour? I, I just loved it and I just liked it. And, it's because, believe it or not,--and this makes me proud, too,--is the fact that the fella, Russ Miller, who was an FAA examiner, put my name in as an examiner because he watched me instruct, knew that I enjoyed it, felt that I did a good job, and I eventually became an FAA examiner because of Russ Miller's recommendation. I guess that's it. I don't know.

BARBER: Well, I know that I recall I would have been...oh...six, seven, eight years old hanging around the airport out there. There would be Sandy out there in the morning with a group of students in front of him. Or he'd be doing a little bit of ground school and what you were gonna do that day. And, then they would line up in that old bench of ours. And, you'd give each one of them maybe like 20 minutes of flying. And, you would just stay in the airplane the whole time. We're gonna do that another session. And, we have to so S and S Products another session. We have a lot to do with Sandy. We're trying to pack in...gees, how many years here? We're coming up on 80, aren't we?

SLIFKIN: I'm 88.

BARBER: Oh, my, that's right. So, we'll, we'll do that another time. Hey, let's finish off a little bit with Taylorcraft out there. Do you...ok, you and Tubby were running S&S Products...

SLIFKIN: Yes.

BARBER: in 1946 and you were...

SLIFKIN: Pardon me, he was the Works Manager. That was his title out at Taylorcraft. I couldn't remember.

BARBER: Right.

SLIFKIN: He was the Works Manager at Taylorcraft for many years.

BARBER: Yes, he was and then you fellows had set up S&S Products and tell us about a little bit of the end days of Taylorcraft.

SLIFKIN: Well, Taylor...that was sad, of course, that was our life. I think that the fella that run it at the end, I think his name was Nash Rush.

BARBER: Exactly. Nash Rush and three others.

SLIFKIN: He just didn't have the feeling. The dollar was more important to him than us, aviation was the important thing. Of course, he had a lot of money invested, I guess. He looked at it differently than we did. But that was sad. That was well, like your family dying is when, when a place like that closes.

BARBER: The Taylorcraft factory employed like 2,200 people with 600 in training different times. They had all sorts of things going on, which we're doing a program on that. And, now come October, November 1946. You were instructing. And, can you remember those last days. What happened? Who called when it, when the bankruptcy took place?

SLIFKIN: Well, it was sad, I mean, we, you know, you're losing your friend, you're losing your life, your body. And, it's devastating, that's all I can tell you....

BARBER: Were you...

SLIFKIN: ... very devastating.

BARBER: Were you married at that time? Tell us about meeting Katie?

SLIFKIN: I can....Well, I can tell you about that.

BARBER: Please.

SLIFKIN: Tubby Shank had a babysitter. Her name was Katie Seifert.

BARBER: Oh.

SLIFKIN: Tubby Shank lived next to the Seifert family. And because Tubby and I were inseparable buddies, naturally I met Katie cause she taking care of Carol, who was Tubby's daughter. And through that we became interested in one another and I started dating her and eventually we got married.

BARBER: When were you married?

SLIFKIN: Oh, heavens, I don't know.

BARBER: Oh, I'm terrible coming up with this.

SLIFKIN: I can't tell you that. I don't know.

BARBER: We're gonna look it up and put it on the next interview. But it was definitely after you come back after the war.

SLIFKIN: Oh, yeah.

BARBER: It was after you had stopped being a test pilot at Taylorcraft?

SLIFKIN: Oh yeah.

BARBER: OK.

SLIFKIN: Umm hmm. It was long after that. I, I'm guessing it was...I don't know. I don't know.

BARBER: We'll look it up. Then along come your kids.

SLIFKIN: Yeah, we had five children.

BARBER: You wanna talk about them a little bit, the boys and the girls.

SLIFKIN: Yeah, the girls as I said two of them are registered nurses at the hospital and one of 'em is a technician, she runs the CAT scan. And, incidentally, she is going through an EMT course now, emergency training. And, she rides in the police cruisers sometimes.

BARBER: Well, that's good.

SLIFKIN: I was thinking about you when she told me that. She says, "Dad, I ride in the police cruisers." And, I said, "Why?" I said, "Because you're training?" She said, "Yes." The one boy is a...

BARBER: What's his name?

SLIFKIN: His name is Phillip.

BARBER: Yep.

SLIFKIN: Phillip Slifkin and he is a nuclear engineer. We're proud of him. He graduated from Case. When he graduated he went right to the nuclear plant down the Shippingport on the Ohio River. He's been there ever since. Although, they've changed hands four or five times but he's still an engineer in there. We're very proud of him.

BARBER: And, your other son?

SLIFKIN: The other boy is David. He graduated from Athens, Ohio University. And, he is now working for Oregon State College in Eugene, Oregon.

BARBER: And, the girls, go ahead name them and talk about them a little bit.

SLIFKIN: Well, Barbara, she's been at the ER.... She's, she's a registered nurse. She graduated. She's got a Bachelor of Science degree from one of the colleges. I can't remember which one. But, she's been in ER for, heavens, years and years and years at the Alliance City Hospital.

BARBER: And, then we have Nancy.

SLIFKIN: Nancy, she's been in the CAT scan for years and at this point, she's uh, for some reason wants to get an EMT and that's what she's going through in school on that now.

BARBER: And your little girl?

SLIFKIN: The youngest girl is Patty. She is a registered nurse. She is up on the 2nd floor working with the elderly people.

BARBER: And, then you have that fine young grandson, Kyle.

SLIFKIN: Oh, Kyle. Well, you ought to know him. You taught him to fly.

BARBER: Not too well. Though, Kyle started out with me, of course. And, I thoroughly enjoyed him. And, he's done a lot with audio visual stuff. And, Kyle is what 17 now, I suppose?

SLIFKIN: He's just turning 18.

BARBER: Oh, he's turning 18?

SLIFKIN: He's all wrapped up with the computer business. And, Marlinton's got him working on their computers. And, believe it or not, the Marlinton Police Department, he takes care of their computers. He's only 17 or 18. That's, that's amazing to me.

BARBER: He'll, he'll be getting his private pilot's certificate...

SLIFKIN: He's all ready for it. Yeah.

BARBER: ... pretty soon. He's all ready. And, he'll be taking Grandpa up, I'm sure, soon. His first passenger. Maybe his girlfriend. We can never tell. Sandy, we're gonna just leave this on a high note. We've put in about 54, 55 minutes here. And, we're gonna come back and we're gonna pick up.

SLIFKIN: Oh.

BARBER: We're gonna pick up with more intensive stuff on the Taylorcraft Flying Club. And, we're gonna also go on into S&S Products at our next session. So, that's it for today, sir.

SLIFKIN: OK, thank you.

BARBER: Thank you.

SLIFKIN: Thank you, I've enjoyed it.