

REMINISCENCES OF ROBERT TOLERTON
APRIL 18, 2008
INTERVIEWED BY FORREST BARBER

FB: This Forrest Barber and I'm up at the Rodman Public Library and this is April 18, 2008. We're doing a re-interview and catch up from November 1st, of 2006 with Bob Tolerton. Hi Bob, how are you doing this morning?

RT: Good morning, Forrest.

FB: Here we are talking about aviation, Tolerton Lumber Company, three generations back and all kinds of things. Bob, just to catch up just a wee little bit here, what year and month and day were you born?

RT: Oh, see, October 19th...

FB: Yes.

RT: ... 1926.

FB: All right. You've seen a lot of this history of Alliance.

RT: I'm afraid too much.

FB: On the interview before we, of course, talked about your great grandfather, I. G. Tolerton, your grandfather, H. D., your father, R. I. Tolerton; and now you. We just came back from a trip to Florida where I joined up with you down there and as we were driving through Auburndale in the middle of Florida, you made mention to the fact that your grandfather owned a, a home on the lake down there.

RT: Yes.

FB: That was quite amazing. For history's sake, tell us a little bit about that—what you remember about that.

RT: Well, I really can't 'cause I was pretty young about that time, but I remember riding down there in a 1930 Buick which was a heck of a long time ago, but I was a little nipper and my Grandfather would take us down there every winter for some time and the house was occupied by his brother-in-law and his brother-in-law and his wife took care of the place and they actually had an orange grove out back to that they, they kept track of. And at one time, I had some records of how much a bushel they were getting for oranges, but I can't find that anymore. It was a riot.

FB: One of the amazing things, just thinking back to that year when you drove down there. How long did it take you and where did you stay overnight?

RT: I have no idea, but I know it was a long way.

FB: Because we had no interstates.

RT: No, and here we do it in two hours today. It's just a...

FB: Yeh, Auburndale, Florida was—is just south of I-4 which runs between Orlando and Tampa.

RB: Yes, near Sebring.

FB: The lake is still there...

RT: Oh yeh.

FB: ...and perhaps the home is still there.

RT: And the alligators are still in the lake. (Laughing) Isn't that something?

FB: My goodness. Hey, we did a pretty good job of covering Taylorcraft and a, and a Tolerton Lumber Company before, but a couple of things I wanted to catch up on. You alluded to your father taking a 40 horsepower Taylorcraft on a honeymoon. Now there you were, we're probably back to about 1938 and C. G. Taylor was running Taylorcraft Company and your company, Tolerton Lumber, was supplying spars to Taylorcraft. Now would you just relate that story you told me about the purchase of the 40 horsepower Taylorcraft.

RT: Well, C. G. Taylor told Dad that if he was supplying him with spars for his airplanes he had to buy an airplane and Dad kind of laughed and he says, "What am I going to do with an airplane? I don't know how to fly." And he said, "That's no problem, because our chief test pilot is going to give you lessons." And Dad said, "Well, where am I going to keep a plane?" He said, "Well, we'll let you build a hangar over on our field right near the main building." So Dad designed and built this hangar out there that would freeze up in the winter. I remember taking boiling water out to defrost the door so we could get it open. But they used his plane as their test plane and anything new they wanted to put on it, they just did, and they'd go fly it and test it and see if it worked and so forth and they also used that same plane at the Cleveland air races. Do you remember that?

FB: Yes, I do. And there was a special plane—a race plane, but what color was this airplane?

RT: It was cream trimmed in blue.

FB: Yes.

RT: I remember that.

FB: Yes, we have beautiful pictures of it.

RT: Do you?

FB: Yes, sir.

RT: Oh, it was beautiful. It was the cutest thing you ever saw. On today's market it would be a real sport airplane.

FB: 'Cause it flew up there with the national air race ship which had the a, the a sunburst on the top of the wings.

RT: Is that right?

FB: I have pictures of it, and another gentleman is reproducing a replica of it.

RT: He bought that airplane and Bob Townsend, who was their test pilot, spent many, many hours with Dad teaching him to fly and I think it was a matter of mutual agreement between the two of them, they had so much fun that they also went on the, oh, let's see, what was it, Gulf tour...

FB: Yes.

RT: And Gulf Oil would...

FB: The Gulf Oil tour.

RT: They'd pay for all the gas, which wasn't much, to fly to Florida, and Dad flew the plane down there on one of those tours with Eddie Knowles. Now Eddie Knowles ran Turner Drug Store and he talked about that for an awful long time afterwards. It was a great trip. Anyway, they landed in farmer's fields, and they ran out of gas. Several things Dad told me about, but he alluded to them, but he never really told me the details. Anyway, they had a terrific time going to Florida in that little airplane. When you think of 40 horsepower today, it's practically nothing. Snowmobiles, Seadoos, everything has more power than that and yet here they were flying.

FB: And taking it to Florida.

RT: And taking it to Florida. I think the biggest trouble Dad ever had, is he was also selling spars to, to a, Bill Piper, you know, and he'd fly that plane over to

Loch Haven to see Piper and sometimes he'd get over there in a hurry, but he couldn't get back cause the wind always blew from the West to the East. He told me one time he had to spend a week getting back from Loch Haven which was really funny when you think about it.

FB: For, a, the distance between here and Loch Haven, Pennsylvania; Alliance, Ohio to Lock Haven, is 168 nautical miles.

RT: Is that what it is?

FB: That's how far it is and we'll be making that trip here next week. I got a fly over there. It'll take me about, oh, an hour and a half.

RT: Right.

FB: And a, in the Model A, it would have taken you probably three hours and perhaps one, two maybe, fuel stops. A, can you tell us about this honeymoon? Your Dad was married to Hazel Edmund.

RT: Oh, I really don't have all the details of it.

FB: Sure, because you were just a little tike then anyhow. You were about twelve.

RT: Yeh, Dad went to, was it, University of Wisconsin and one of his buddies up there was George Dixon, and George Dixon worked for the Gulf Oil Company and was stationed in Louisville, Kentucky. He invited Dad to come down to go to the Kentucky Derby that one year and that's where he met Hazel. She was a sister-in-law, so George had her come up and kind of arrange this get together and that's how they got together in the first place, but then as far as flying, a, she had to learn to ride in the airplane with him because that was part of the deal and they did take the airplane on their honeymoon which was down to Georgia which is where she was from. Kind of crazy, isn't it?

FB: They had a 40 horse Taylorcraft.

RT: Yeh, 40 horse Taylorcraft.

FB: See Duke Iden, you know, later on, he took his wife in at least a 65 horsepower Taylorcraft.

RT: (Laughing) They could, at least, Duke would have been able to carry a bag with him, but with these two, I don't even think they had room for a suitcase. That 40 horsepower was pretty light.

FB: Now whatever happened to the hangar and the airplane, to your knowledge?

RT: The hangar was, like I said, it was out right next to the factory at Taylorcraft, remember?

FB: Well, no.

RT: Well, you didn't see...

FB: You and I have to go out there and you are going to show me that spot.

RT: And then in some of the pictures, you can see in the later pictures, they moved his hangar across the field over by the woods on the east end—or east side and that was the last before they tore it down.

FB: So a when Taylorcraft a, gave up in 1946-47 out there, they filed a bankruptcy and it was taken over by Armour and Company, at that point in time, that hangar was still there.

RT: It was?

FB: A, to your knowledge, was it there over...?

RT: As far as I know. I don't know what the period of time was.

FB: Now when and why did your Dad sell the airplane?

RT: Oh, he got to the point where his vision was bothering him. His depth perception and he told me he said he just had to quit and he, I don't know how he sold it, he must have gone through somebody, but some guy from Mexico came up and, and went out and got a check ride in the thing and so forth and that was the end of the Taylorcraft. He took it back to Mexico as far as I'm con—I know.

FB: We're gonna try to trace that.

RT: Yeh, that'd be fun to do it.

FB: Sure. The old Tcraft's down in Mexico somewhere.

RT: Do you have a picture of the number on that thing?

FB: Yeh, I'm gonna come up with that and then do you have log books down at the office that would show that maybe—your Dad's log books?

RT: No.

FB: These were some of the things that we were going to catch up on from the last time.

RT: Even my own log books. I was looking last night trying to figure out what period of time we used to fly up to North Bay to go fishing in Memorial Day.

FB: Okay.

RT: Remember that Canadian we ran into last week?

FB: Yes.

RT: Well, anyway, '55 and '57 was the two times I can find in my log books.

FB: That you would fly up to North Bay.

RT: Yeh, we flew to North Bay.

FB: Hey, Tolly, let's go back on something now because it's quite interesting. The original model airplane flying club that was around Alliance here; you had some stories of that.

RT: We all built, a lot of my friends and myself, we used to build these stick airplanes where you put pins in on a piece of cardboard and glued the pieces together and put paper covering on them and so forth, but the model airplane club I joined was actually formed at the YMCA.

FB: Do you know if Lyle Crist was in on that?

RT: Lyle Crist probably was, but I can't remember. I remember Lyle was into the motor powered...

FB: Yes.

RT: ...home, home builds.

FB: Yes.

RT: And radio-controlled—he started in on that and Lyle had some beautiful models of different airplanes. He actually had that Taylorcraft model, too, at one time, that Bob, I don't know who built it—it was perfectly symmetrical and it wasn't flyable. This was a wood model—a mock up that Lyle had.

FB: Because Lyle tells about the model club and going out to competitions in Indiana.

RT: Oh yeh, he really was into it. Really, big time.

FB: Really into Wakefield models, they call it.

RT: But the club I was in, we had to have...

FB: It was at the Y.

RT: It was at the Y and we had to have rubber band wind up models and it had to be able to fly at least 20 feet which was across the big room upstairs in the Y.

FB: What year was this now?

RT: Oh gosh, you would ask me that. I have no idea.

FB: Again, just relate to your age. How old were you?

RT: Oh, I suppose I was 15, 16.

FB: Okay. Was this prior to you going in the service?

RT: Oh, yeh.

FB: Okay.

RT: The service thing came at about 17.

FB: Okay, so let's talk about your service experiences.

RT: (Laughing) Oh, gee, well, they came to the high school and gave a big lecture to all the graduating seniors that would be—behoove us to join the Army or the Navy or whatever, you know, the big promotional deal by the Government. So all my buddies enlisted and so I did too, and we had to go to Cleveland and get physicals and all that sort of riot, and it was—you didn't get much choice what you went into—as what they needed, and I got into what they call the ASTP—Army Specialized Training Program—which was supposedly to send you to college for six months and get a year's training in six months and then on to officer's training school. Well, by the time we got through with the college thing,—by the way I went to Purdue—and some of my buddies from Alliance ended up at Indiana, and we went through that and they said, "Well we don't need anymore officers, so you're now cannon fodder," and they shipped us all to Fort Knox and we ended up down there driving tanks and whatever else they wanted us to do. And that's how we started out in the service. So you go through basic training and all that so forth, and the war was winding down in Europe about that time, and I got an emergency furlough to come home because my Grandfather was

dying and I was taking the week to come back here to see him, which was the best thing I ever did—penalized me when I went back to Fort Knox and I had to go through basic all over again the second time. This is not fun. (Laughing) Anyway, after that they didn't know what to do with us so they shipped us off to California. You're now gonna go through basic again for the third time only with amphibious tractors. So we did all our maneuvers in Monterey Bay, and we had great time running around out there running into sailors and so actually climbed a submarine one night while we're on maneuvers with this tractor—the Caterpillar—took out a piling at Pacific Grove and this was in the Monterey Peninsula section in there. So we had some great times in California, but it was horrible. You sleep on the beach, rained every day. They call it, they call it heavy dew, back here we call it rain and it was just something else. The fog would roll in and so forth, but that was basically it and then finally we loaded on the ships in San Francisco to go someplace—we had no idea where—turned out later, we found out it we were the invasion force for Japan, and thank goodness, old Harry dropped the bomb, because they turned us around and came back to San Francisco and that was the end of it, except they said to me—well they told us all that if we wanted to re-enlist since the war was over—we could pick whatever branch of the service we wanted and I said, “Gee I'd like to get in the Air Force.” So we went up to re-enlist and I tried to get in the Air Force and the guy noticed I had a defect in my arm and he says, “You don't want to go in the Army again, don't you. Wouldn't you like to go back to college?” And I said, “Yeh, that'd be nice.” So the officer in charge of the hospital said, “Well, we'll reject you and give you a medical discharge and you can go back to school.” And that's how I came back home. I got out. I was lucky. Some of the other poor guys were going on a 30-mile road march the day I left.

FB: Now what year was that?

RT: That would have been '45.

FB: Yep. The war's over and Tolly didn't get to beat Japan.

RT: No, I didn't get to go to Japan. I was all...

FB: Back you came.

RT: I was all upset, but a fun thing that I had while I was in the service, I had my student private license—er student pilot's license—and every place I would go, like Fort Knox, I'd go in Louisville and rent an airplane. I could go putter around in a Taylorcraft, if I found one and it was great. Fort Ord, California, I'd rent a little cub or a champ out there and go flying up over the mountains and wave at the—the fire guys sitting on a platform up on top a mountain someplace.

FB: We covered that in the first interview...

RT: Yeh.

FB: ...but, let's repeat it this time. Where and when did you learn to fly—from whom?

RT: Well, I started at Miller Field, a no I didn't. I started at Martin Field in Canton and had Bob Kepler and Noah Sharp for instructors and they were teaching the cadets from Mount Union at that time that were, um, Air Force people and so they'd take some time out after their day with the government to teach civilians afterwards so I'd go over and get a half hour every now and then. It was kind of fun. But then during the war or during the time in the service, like I told you, I was renting an airplane, I'd go putting around, I'd even—I think I was even down cross at Arkansas one time for some reason or other.

FB: Wow.

RT: I rented a Taylorcraft.

FB: Then you came home, and that's where you completed your other pilot's certificates.

RT: After the—after I got discharged, I decided I better see...

FB: Tell us about that.

RT: Well, then I went out to see old Russ, Russ Miller, and he said, "Well why don't you study this book and come back and see me and we'll go through this (laughing), this training for the written part." Which I did. I came back the next day and he says, "You flunked, so take the book back home and study it some more." So anyway, after a couple times of flunking, Russ finally got me passed on the written part and he says, "Now we gotta go flying," and he says, "This is what you're gonna do," and so forth, but getting your check out with Russ was great because he didn't just check you and say you pass or you fail, he actually gave you lessons and told you what to do. 'Cause I'll never forget my spins, which we had to do in those days, and Russ said, "I want you to make two spins to the right and then we're gonna do two spins to the left." So I come out of it and I said, "Well, how was that?" And he says, "Fine, but you did eight spins," and he says, "Now we're gonna go back up and I'll show you how to do it the right way." Anyway, that's how I got my check ride for my private license.

FB: Someday, when I interview myself, or course, I got my private and my commercial from Russ Miller.

RT: Did you?

FB: And it was a learning experience.

RT: Oh, he was...

FB: The whole time. He was not only going by the book, but he was also...

RT: Teaching.

FB: ...Teaching me things that he knew from his experiences. Now let's talk about some of these experiences. You went ahead and got your private then.

RT: Yeh.

FB: ...And then you had numerous airplanes which that could fill a whole tape, but let's go to these excursions where you would go up into Canada in the mid '50s and who would go with you and what would you do up there.

RT: I think it was even later than the '50s. I don't know. Every Memorial Day—well, I'm trying—yeh, Memorial Day—we'd go up to North Bay to go fishing.

FB: Who would be a typical partner with you?

RT: I'm trying to remember who I took with me. This started really with Ray DeVille from Canton, 'cause Ray was going back and forth up there doing this fishing and he knew a lot of these places to go and he introduced me to a lot of people that were doing the same thing. So I got a few friends from Alliance to go with me and I'm trying to remember who it was. A, I can't really recall. I remember one time I got a bunch of guys and John Teeple was one of them, but John didn't fly with me. He said, "No, I won't fly with you, but I'll drive up."

FB: (Laughing)

RT: So John and some—a couple other guys drove up and pulled a little boat behind them. I think, I think Glen Burton was with him. So this is some of the old group that we'd go up. So it got to be a tradition, every Memorial Day we'd fly to North Bay, take a cab down the hill to Trout Lake and get to Tupper's Landing and this guy put us in an old Beaver and fly us across, across the lake, Nipissing, and we ended up at the mouth of the French River. It was a lot of fun. I looked forward to that every year. The time involved was just phenomenal when you think about it 'cause we could, I could leave Alliance and in five hours be staying in that lodge in the French River up there. That's how short a time it was by flying, and in those days you could just fly across Erie, Pennsylvania, file for customs in the air, and they'd be waiting for you when you got to North Bay. Today I think it is a little different.

FB: Yes, it's a wee bit different. Most people have a Can pass and in my opinion, it's much easier to go into Canada than it is to come back into the United States.

RT: In this country.

FB: You really get checked out back here, and I always tell them, "I'm not the enemy," but, a, that's another story.

RT: That's another story.

FB: Tolly, back here in Alliance, Ohio now the Tolerton name has been known forever and you, with the Chamber of Commerce we had the Jaycees, Junior Chamber of Commerce. Can you relate to some of your experiences there?

RT: Well, let's see, the Jaycees I started when I was in my 20's—early 20's and I was working for my Dad in the lumber business and he thought it would be good to get involved in civic duties, and I joined the Jaycees which was more of a—we did a lot of good things for the town, I mean it was, it wasn't just like the regular Lions or Rotary and so forth, but we built things. We built a pavilion out at Silver Park and we paid for it through donations that we got through fireworks and things like that that we put on the Fourth of July. We did the Halloween parade. We sold Christmas trees—that was another flying story.

FB: Yes.

RT: (Laughing) At Christmas time, and we did a lot of things just to promote the City of Alliance and I got involved in the aviation thing through it. They put me up for State Aviation Chairman and I got elected to that position and every month I had to go around to a different group and give a talk, prepare the things at the annual convention and so forth. It was a, it was great 'cause I got to meet a lot of people. In fact the Governor Laoshy and Max Conrad, the guy that was flying from capital to capital all around the United States all were in Columbus one time and I got to be there as a dignitary with that group.

FB: Yearwise, we're looking there at the late '40s, early '50s perhaps?

RT: I would say so, yeh.

FB: And a, explain this again now; you were the chairman of an aviation committee that was at the state level of the Jaycees...

RT: State level of the Jaycees, right, and it was a lot of fun 'cause you got to meet a lot of people and it was—in fact it was kind of funny, I wanted to get on the Board of Directors of the Jaycees in Alliance, and they didn't have time for me, but I could do a state job with no problem.

FB: Do you recall any of the prominent members of the Jaycees back then?

RT: Well, they had different groups. Doc Ewing was one of them.

FB: Okay.

RT: And Leo Grove was in the Jaycees. John Teeple, the barbers—I called them the barbers because Bob Lolly...

FB: Oh, Yes.

RT: ...And his, who was his brother-in-law, Erchick or Ermlich—Erchick, I think it was. Anyway, the barber group and the real estate group and Ray Snyder was an insurance guy—that was—and Bruce Brandon. Shoot, everyone in town who worked downtown on Main Street was involved in the Jaycees in those days. Mel Slusser, who ran Sears and Roebuck, he was the assistant manager, I should say, but we had quite a group. It was a lot of fun as well as work and we did a lot of work. The people don't realize how much the Jaycees did in those days. I don't even think they're in Alliance anymore, are they?

FB: I'm gonna have to get back on that. I believe that at one time they disbanded and then they started up again, but I don't know whether they're operating or not.

RT: Yeh, it's a good organization and, oh and then Moushey, Charlie Moushey was in it.

FB: Sure.

RT: The age of retirement—you wish you were forced to retire—was 35.

FB: That's right. You became, what, an Old Rooster?

RT: You were an exhausted rooster.

FB: (Laughing) Exhausted rooster.

RT: At that point. So I finally stuck it out 'til I was exhausted and that's what was so funny, when I was telling I was trying to get on the Board and they didn't have time for me, but the last year I was in the Jaycees, at one of the meetings, they gave awards out. Well, I got an award for the do nothing award for that year and I never forget it. I got up and says, "Thank you. After all these years, I finally got recognized." (Both laughing) For the do nothing award. That was the last year in that...

FB: Did you belong to some of the other service clubs; Lions, Ruritans, Rotary?

RT: Yes, I was in the Rotary Club then after that.

FB: You were in Rotary?

RT: Yeh, actually my Father wanted me to get involved in one of the city organizations and it was good. I think the Rotary is great, but the only problem I had was Rotary—it was at noon and if you didn't make it, you had to make it up some place and you had—and I would be busy with customers in our store down there. We were in that retail lumber, you know, at that time, and I said, "How can I get out of here at noon to go to Rotary Club and it was terrible to tell some customer, "I'm sorry, but I gotta go to lunch." And then in a half an hour they gave us a full course meal. We were meeting at the Country Club then and so I call it the hurry up and burp club because you had to eat real fast. Tony Gates, who would be running the singing and, and it was a riot, but we, we had a good time in the few years I was in the Rotary also, but I finally had to just back out and say, "I just can't make those meetings." It was killing me.

FB: Tolly, we might as well get at it. Let's talk about the Tolerton Lumber Company and that tremendous fire that happened down there.

RT: Oh, gosh.

FB: Now was your Dad still alive at that time?

RT: Yes.

FB: Okay.

RT: He was...

FB: Tell us about the Tolerton Lumber Company fire.

RT: Well, I'm trying to remember what year was it? In fact you came down and guarded the place for me one time.

FB: Yeh, I was...

RT: You were in the Alliance Police Department.

FB: The Alliance Police Department.

RT: Yeh.

FB: And I'm ashamed to say that it was the biggest, monumentist thing in your life, but I just barely recall even what we did down there.

RT: It shook me up pretty bad.

FB: But I just remember the fire

RT: I'm trying to remember. I don't...

FB: What was the final determination, I knew there was a disgruntled employee, as I recall.

RT: I don't think...

FB: It was an arson.

RT: Yeh, but I don't—I trying to remember whether my Dad was alive at that point. Dad passed away in '70. What year was the fire?

FB: Well, it had to have been after '66 when I came on the police department.

RT: Yeh.

FB: So I'm not even certain. We'll look that up.

RT: But, anyway, that's one of those things, but the fire happened on a weekend and believe it or not I was up at Put 'N Bay at a party. That was the weekend that they have their annual Christmas Party or New Year's Party up at Put 'N Bay.

FB: Oh, that's right.

RT: And Bill...

FB: And they have it early.

RT: Yeh, and Bill Jellison ...

FB: Sure.

RT: ... had us come to one of the bars up there where we all got together and somebody called and said, "Would you like to know what's going on, but you're lumber yard's on fire." And they got me on the phone—in fact, no, Jellison called from down here and told me, and I said, "Well, what can I do from up here?" and he says, "Not much." He says, "When you get a chance, come home." Which I did and that's when I found the disastrous results. And fortunately, we had a

sprinkler system in that plant that put out the fire in the mill part of it, so the part that burned basically was the retail lumber storage and it was out in the far end of the yard. It was pretty, pretty horrendous. They said they could see it for miles around, and it was started by a fellow, he wasn't really too, too much all there. He was a young fellow that was in one of our apartments for years and was brought up up there and he had had several jobs around town, but people were afraid to hire him because he wasn't quite a, normal, I should say. Any rate, he was out there playing with—he thought it'd be cool to build a fire to keep warm. It was in the winter as I remember, no it wasn't, it was in the summer, but he was playing with matches anyway and he started this thing burning. Then he was running around trying to help the firemen put the fire out. They put the poor guy in jail. Like I said, he wasn't all there, and he ended up in Massillon in the nut house over there where he proceeded to hang himself several years later.

FB: Oh, that's right. I'd forgotten about that.

RT: Yeh.

FB: Ashamed to say, I can't even remember his name,...

RT: I can't either.

FB: ... but it's in the history of Alliance.

RT: Yeh, it was shame. It was a heck of a fire. I felt sorry for the guy afterwards.

FB: And, a...

RT: He didn't do it maliciously.

FB: Tolerton Lumber recovered from that.

RT: We...

FB: ... on a smaller scale or what...

RT: Well, basically, we were more in manufacturing at that time anyway—and that's the mill part.

FB: Yeh, the mill part.

RT: It was still going. It was...

FB: For those ...

RT: It was capable and it was fine, but as far as the retail, that was about the beginning of the end of the retail.

FB: Yeh, for those that will be looking at this 50 years from now, Tolerton Lumber was down on Freedom Avenue and Freedom and Fifth where the railroad underpass is, and it just was a couple blocks there, three blocks maybe, and you at the moment are running the offices down there in the Ski Shack.

RT: Yeh.

FB: So. Somehow you got into skiing, Tolly.

RT: Well...

FB: How did that happen?

RT: It was a relief from the headache of the lumber business, let's put it that way. It was a hobby that got out of hand, I tell people, and basically it was a lot of fun and my Dad said, "Well, if you want to do something in the wintertime." We weren't doing anything else to speak of, the lumber business, as you know, is kind of dead in the, in the wintertime. People aren't out there building houses, but I started this on my own as kind of a sideline to boost up the lumber sales and so forth.

FB: What year was that that you got into the skiing?

RT: Oh gosh that was also—about in the '70s, late '60s, early '70s.

FB: And you had friends back you had one, I remember, Mr. Porter.

RT: Bill Porter was the one that really got me started skiing. He was Superintendent at Marlinton School and he says, "I heard about a ski slope down here in the, a, Robertsville." Come to think of it, it wasn't Bill. Do you know who actually started me? It was Bob Rodman.

FB: Oh, okay.

RT: And Bob Rodman's the one that told me to go down there, and Porter came along a little, little later, but Bob went down there and said, "Let's go down and see what this place is all about." We went down one day and here they're skiing up and down this hill on Bob Starkey's farm, and he said, "How do you get into this club?" So we signed up to join the club. I paid my dues and Rodman backed out and never did, never did show up. So I was in the ski club and that's how it all started, and then I ran into Porter not too long after that, and he said, "Well, we can go down there." And back in those days you remember we had a lot of snow on the ground.

FB: Oh, yes, and Bill Porter, of course, at one point in time, had a Stinson out at our place and a, the Barber Airport, and I remember going out with him and taking photographs of shadows on the north side of slopes all over Northeastern Ohio.

RT: Is that right?

FB: Yeh, he was wanting to put in his own ski slope.

RT: He also put in a slope behind his house. See Porter had a house out on Mountview and he decided, in fact, to this day, I tell people that was the one and only I ever heard of pony tow, instead of a rope tow, he had a pony and his, his daughters would ride the pony up and down the hill and pull the kids up with ropes from the back of the pony. They'd stick it under the saddle and somehow, anyway, I told Porter he was famous for starting a pony tow.

FB: Well, I'm gonna have to go out and check that out.

RT: (Laughing)

FB: Bill Bosser was out there and a, and a...

RT: France lived down on the corner there.

FB: Yeh, France, and Mr. Ammet and Mr. Blumenstiel were out there.

RT: The lawyer, Blumenstiel, was above him, and he's the one that got after Porter for landing his airplane out there one day.

FB: Oh, that's right.

RT: Yeh, he was taxiing down the street, and Bud didn't think that was too funny. (Laughing)

FB: Well, I landed a G-3 cub out there and...

RT: You did too?

FB: I think Jim Ammet and I went for a ride and maybe Jimmy Blumenstiel too.

RT: Oh my gosh, well. Those were the days. But Porter, with the skiing was great, in fact, he liked it so much that a, that we did a lot of it together and he also liked fishing so I went to Canada fishing with him in a airplane a couple of times cause we owned that blanket together.

FB: Well your Ski Shack is known all over, a, not only Northeastern Ohio, but Pennsylvania, just all over the place, and when did you really get that expanded and get going? It surprises me the things you have down there.

RT: (Laughing) Well it's not...

FB: What really kicked it off?

RT: I can't really tell you, it's just forty years of messing with it, I guess. It's a, the people you meet. And when you think of where skiers come from—all walks of life. I mean they could be plumbers, they could be doctors, they could be lawyers and they could be real estate people. It's just awesome, and anyway...

FB: Well, we've discussed your clients and it surprises me the complete range of people that ski.

RT: Oh, it is. Even cops.

FB: Even cops.

RT: (Laughing) I've got a few from North Canton that come over.

FB: Sure.

RT: And public officials, you know; judges and lawyers and so forth. It's, anyway, that's the one thing that kept me going. It was kind fun because I enjoy people, and I think that's probably the best part of the whole thing. As far as making money, I don't think our prices have always been low in order to get people to drive from Canton or Akron or wherever and a, if I could just make the overhead and, and a, cover my expenses, that's basically all it amounts to.

FB: Now you have a wonderful person down there with you, your wife, Joyce.

RT: Oh yeh.

FB: And Joyce is a private pilot. She owns her own airplane. Would you like to talk about Joyce a little bit? I know I'm putting you on the spot.

RT: Yeh, you are.

FB: Where does it start?

RT: Where do we go with Joyce? Well, we met skiing, believe it or not.

FB: Okay.

RT: And a, well, we fell in love and it's been 22 years of just terrific bliss, and my only regret is that I wasn't younger when I met her.

FB: Yes.

RT: But, a, she has just fallen into so many things that I enjoy doing, including flying. I don't know whether—and golf.

FB: Oh, the golfing is amazing.

RT: Oh my gosh, yeh. Well, the first time I went golfing with Joyce, I said, "Why don't you just come along and pull my cart along with me and see what's happening," which she did, but she said why don't I hit a ball? So then she hit a couple balls and that was the end of that. And golf is just like everything else that ladies like to do, it's got a lot of style and class and different shopping places you can go to get clothes and everything to match so Joyce got into that. Then she got into skiing with me. Like I say, she had already learned when I met her, but, a, through me she got to improve quite a bit with a lot of different new techniques and at that time, I was teaching, too, and I did put in 15 years of teaching at Boston Mills; running back and forth every night after work to give a couple of lessons and so forth, and now Joyce is so good, I can't keep up with her. She's way ahead of me, and a lot of people are that I taught years ago.

FB: Now you two folks from Alliance, Ohio, have skied at some pretty big places around this country of ours.

RT: Yeh.

FB: Can you name some of those spots that you go to?

RT: Well, it'd be easier to name the ones I haven't been to yet.

FB: This is true.

RT: I—The only ones I haven't been to is the Canadian ones like Banff, Lake Louise, Blackcomb Whistler, and for some reason or another we just never got up there, but all the other ones from Aspen to Mammoth, California; Crested View, Colorado and the eastern slopes, a, I used to go to, but we kind of backed out that. Skiing in the east is difficult. You never can count on anything. One year, a terrific snow, just like going fishing. Like the guy will tell you, "You should have been here y—last week." And that's...

FB: Yeh.

RT: ...the way the skiing is in the east. "You should have been here last week when we had snow, now it's rain and slush." And so, we've been to most of the

eastern slopes. Joyce hasn't been to as many as I have, but we do love the out—the west and it's just beautiful, and there's so many places that are still open to people to go to that aren't crowded like the big resorts are. Anyway...

FB: We, a...

RT: I should get you on skis sometime.

FB: Oh, I did that years ago a wee bit, and at the moment, of course, I have this badly shattered ankle so that just takes care of that. I have a lot of, a lot of metal in there. Did you ever ski, a, over in Europe or anything like that?

RT: 1970.

FB: And you might get Ezio in on this.

RT: Ezio. (Both laughing) No he wasn't in on this.

FB: He wasn't in on this. Okay.

RT: No, actually, Brad Goris' dad, Glenn.

FB: Yes, Glenn Goris.

RT: A, and Brad was a little kid, let's say he was 16 or 17 going to, going high school at that time and studying French, and the Cleveland Metro Ski Council that we belong to through a club that we had joined, a, decided they were going to Courchevel in France, and he says, "Why don't we go on this thing?" And I said, "Well, I don't want to go." So, anyway, he twisted my arm. Somebody backed out of the enlistment and I got to go with them and probably was the greatest trip of my life. Two hundred fifty bucks from Cleveland to Geneva and down to Courchevel, oh, and for \$25.00 extra, they came to your door every morning and gave you breakfast in bed—kind of a continental breakfast. It was pretty tough.

FB: Wow.

RT: Yeh, and even in those days, that was phenomenal. Nobody could believe what the price it was, and I didn't go—oh and Mark Henschen went the next year, I think, on that thing. There was a lot of people from Alliance got involved in that. It was a terrific deal. The Alliance Ski Club was something. You know, Alliance High School was the first school that I knew of to have a ski club and today it's one of the only ones that doesn't have a ski club, and it's a shame.

FB: Marlinton has one.

RT: Marlinton came later. West Branch came later.

FB: And, of course, my little Grandson, Daniel Cironi, a, he just loves the snowboarding.

RT: Oh.

FB: Oh, he loves that. He was out in Oregon, you know, and just got to do that.

RT: Oh, I know.

FB: A couple of weeks ago.

RT: Isn't that something?

FB: Yep. And I think he's gonna to learn to fly one of these days.

RT: Well, there you go.

FB: He's expressed, he expressed some interest in that.

RT: Does he really want to?

FB: Yes. He expressed interest now finally.

RT: You know, my son said, "Yeh, it'd be nice if I could learn to fly." And I said, "I tell you what," I said, "If you are really interested in it and you, you're working, you pay half, I'll pay half," and that was the end of it. He never took an interest after that. He would have done it if I'd have paid the whole thing, but I just wanted to have some...

FB: Yeh, it's strange.

RT: ... incentive and that's what I did when I learned. I, you know, I'd haul coal and everything else every time I'd get a few bucks, go take a lesson. It was fun.

FB: Absolutely.

RT: But you had to have a desire, and I don't think it was there, and I'm glad your Grandson has, I think that's super. Well, he's around you guys all the time.

FB: Yeh, for the people that don't know, you and I and Joyce, we meet about once a week for wings and beer down at Cornie's and, a, I've always enjoyed listening to your stories, and we just spent quite a time down in Sun 'n Fun, that's in Lakeland, Florida at the big fly in down there, and then you a, went over and visited with another great Alliance citizen, Bill France.

RT: Oh, yeh.

FB: How's Bill and Marge doing down there?

RT: Well, Bill had—keeps telling me he's got Alzheimer's, but not so bad that he can't remember me and a lot of things and I think it's great, and Marge is a wonderful woman and she's taking terrific care of him, and probably the best meal I've ever had in my life, she prepared as a little snack, she said.

FB: Sure.

RT: I said, "If you guys eat this way every day, it's awesome," and Bill said, "No, Marge takes care of me, she does everything." And, this community he's living in is so nice too because they don't even have to go out of that community.

FB: What's the name of it again? Indian...

RT: I—No, I can't tell you. It's, it's got a name on the plaque.

FB: Oh. Okay.

RT: It's a gated community with its own golf course and everything.

FB: Yeh, because I talked to Bill on the phone and of course, he was a great inspiration in my life. Bill France wanted me to become an attorney, and he and I flew together out at our airport back in the '50s and '60s and he was involved, of course, with Porter, and with Witte and so forth. Great man. Um, yeh, I just lost my thought. Well, that's the way it goes. Oh, your own aircraft. Tell us what your flying these days. You have that Comanche 260.

RT: Yeh, the Comanche I've had for a long, long time and that's the second one I've own. I had a 250 originally and I'm afraid to say, I'm coming down to the end of my time with a high performance airplane. I just don't have places to travel to anymore that I can't go on the airline, and I'm too lazy to put forth the effort to fly—like Sun 'n Fun, you know we took the airline down there, but it's probably one of the nicest of all the aircraft I've ever had.

FB: Yeh, on this a, this a, a economy thing, um, I just, I just put \$224.00 of fuel in my own airplane yesterday, a Piper Cherokee, which is ridiculous.

RT: Isn't that something?

FB: I was with Al Beckwith who runs Commercial Aviation up in Kent and he's, he's going to Myrtle Beach today.

RT: Yeh.

FB: He's taking his own airplane and he'll pay a thousand dollars in fuel.

RT: I can believe it.

FB: And as you and I know, we can fly to Florida on the airlines for—mine was, I think, \$218.00 round trip.

RT: That's about right.

FB: So this price of fuel is just getting absolutely ridiculous.

RT: It is absolutely. Do you know what I was thinking about, when I first flew in the Taylorcraft Flying Club at your field—

FB: Yes.

RT: We used to gas up every time we'd come in.

FB: Yes.

RT: The total cost was \$3.00 an hour including fuel.

FB: Yes.

RT: I couldn't believe it when I was looking at some of...

FB: Our lowest fuel prices at one time were 17 and a half cents a gallon.

RT: Isn't that something?

FB: Yep.

RT: But as you noticed at Sun 'n Fun this year, I saw more, what do they call them, sport planes?

FB: Yes. The light sport aircraft.

RT: The light sport aircraft then I have ever seen before and it just seems like their growing...

FB: I think...

RT: ... like mushrooms.

FB: I think that's really going to be a wave of the future, and then, well like for you, see you've flown all your life, I've flown all my life and a, I can get in various airplanes and just go enjoy and I'm still faster than any automobile even that 40 horsepower Taylorcraft...

RT: (Laughing) Yeh.

FB: ... would still cruise at over 80 miles per hour.

RT: As long as the wind wasn't blowing.

FB: Yeh. Yeh, as long as you didn't have big head wind.

RT: (Laughing)

FB: Um, Tolly, we discussed all kinds of things here, and a, I'm sure happy we got caught up on a lot of it, and, a, I think we're gonna slowly wind down here this morning unless there's some—anything else you have that you would like to discuss about the history of Alliance, Tolerton Lumber Company?

RT: Well, back when we were in the, in the lumber business, my Dad was always trying to come up with new products that he could adapt to what we were doing, and he was the first one to get into like you were alluding to, making those spars.

FB: Oh yes.

RT: Which took electronic gluing. Electronic gluing is nothing more than a huge microwave.

FB: Yes.

RT: Bouncing back and forth giving it the heat generated a, to set the glue. Basically you speed up the gluing process. You could do the same if you let them set for days, but it was a lot quicker to do it this way. Dad also tried to get into other products. He was—make key beds for pianos. Glue them up with the same process. Cherry backing block, which was block that the photo engravers mounted plates on. That was all glued up out of pieces of cherry—took little pieces instead of the big ones, and then he was—I told you once before, he was making toys one time just to use up scrap lumber, which was all hard woods. Wholegate Toy Company over in Pennsylvania did the same thing years later, but, a, he was put out of business by the Japanese in those days who copied everything you made. It's a wonder they never copied the airplane spars. But that, that basically was what Dad did. He was very a, much for promoting new products and things like that and he tried a lot things. Some failed, some made it.

FB: What did your Dad pass away of?

RT: A, cancer.

FB: I didn't know that.

RT: And it was in Florida. It was at Clearwater. Same place we were this time.

FB: Sure.

RT: And I think about it every time I go by that hospital or near it 'cause he was down there for, of gosh, I'd say, almost three months in that hospital. It was a shame, but my Grandfather had cerebral hemorrhage problem. It wasn't cancer. Dad was the only one in the family with—that really passed on...

FB: What did Great-Grandpa pass away of, do you recall?

RT: It was cerebral.

FB: Okay, and at a pretty ripe old age?

RT: No, really. I've lived longer than most of them.

FB: Oh.

RT: I shouldn't talk about it, it makes me nervous. (Both laughing)

FB: Well, Bob, we've just had a very good experience here, and I thank you so much and we have a few little things to follow up on. I'll have you take me out and show me where those hangars are, but, a, I want to make sure that everybody knows, you're my first interviewee with the brand new camera equipment here so we'll see if it worked out.

RT: Well, it looks pretty elaborate. I hope it works.

FB: Okay. Well, I'm going to push my little button here, and it's about eleven o'clock here and a, we're done with this segment.

RT: There you go.

FB: Thank you, Bob.

RT: Thank you, Forrest.