

Voices From the Past

CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE

By Lowell R. Barrick

August 17, 1972

Tape #21

Oral Interview conducted by Harold Forbush

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Brigham Young University- Idaho

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Forbush: This morning I am happy to invite to the office Mr. Barrick, who has been a resident of this area for a number of years. The date on which we have met for this oral interview is the 17th of August, 1972. Now Mr. Barrick, for the record will you state your full name?

Barrick: Lowell R. Barrick.

Forbush: And how do you spell that last name?

Barrick: B A R R I C K

Forbush: Now sir, will you state the date and the place where you were born?

Barrick: The date of my birth was July 15, 1902, in Litchfield, Minnesota, Meeker County.

Forbush: Now I am assuming that your folks, your parents and family came out West for some particular reason and thence on up into this area. Why don't you give me just a little background, relate as best you can, why your family came out to the Upper Snake River Valley of Idaho.

Barrick: From 1927 to 1935 I was a member of the Lobnitz Brothers Construction Company of Wilmore, Minnesota. There were so many contractors in the state of Minnesota that it reached the place where contractors were underbidding each other to such a state that it was hard to make a living. So we decided to come out to Montana and bid some state highway work, which we did. We first come to Thompson, Montana, and did a highway project there. Then we went to Lidy, Montana, and did another highway project. Then over to Wolf Point, Montana. In the spring of 37 we had completed that work and we come to Idaho for the purpose of building the Grassy Lake Dam on the south side of Yellowstone Park.

Forbush: So actually that was your first contact then with this area of Idaho?

Barrick: Yes.

Forbush: That's interesting to me. Tell me just a little about this Lobnitz Brothers.

Barrick: The Lobnitz Brothers were a contracting firm of five brothers back in the state of Minnesota. At the time we came to Montana, two brothers and myself formed a co-partnership. The other brothers stayed in Minnesota and operated there.

Forbush: I see. How do you spell the name Lobnitz?

Barrick: L O B N I T Z

Forbush: Is that a Russian...

Barrick: No it is a Dane name but the father to these boys lived in England. His name was Anderson. He was always getting his mail mixed up with some other Anderson, there were so many Andersons. So he said he would fix it and he'd change his name to Lobnitz. That's how the company got the Lobnitz name.

Forbush: Now are they in background experience, more or less capable of doing highway construction?

Barrick: To start with, they were farmers. Back in Minnesota the counties are divided into townships. Each township did its own road work. They got interested in doing township work with a small amount of equipment. From that they went to highway work and to railroad work and to canal work, and to all kinds of earth and rock works.

Forbush: In other words, at that time their equipment was all motorized?

Barrick: Very little motorized to start with. It was all horse drawn stuff. Then it became motorized.

Forbush: By the time you had completed with these fellows, this partnership and these projects in Montana, this road work and so on, you'd had quite a lot of experience in earth moving?

Barrick: Yes, my earth moving experience at that time was 15 years of earth work. At the time we completed the work in Montana.

Forbush: Coming to the Grassy Lake Project, were you fellows bid on this project?

Barrick: No, the prime contractor was S. J. Groves and Sons of Minneapolis, Minnesota. They are a large construction company back there. They are still in existence.

Forbush: Had they had experience in building these reclamation projects?

Barrick: Very much so.

Forbush: They would be comparable to, maybe, Peter Kiwits and M.K. today?

Barrick: I would imagine they would be, because I notice every once in a while on large dam jobs I notice their names are mentioned among the bidders.

Forbush: Well then, this firm you referred to got the bid. They contracted out to the Lobnitz Brothers and yourself. Would your firm be referred to as the Lobnitz Brothers in the partnership?

Barrick: Yes, yes.

Forbush: In other words, your name wasn't in the partnership?

Barrick: My name was in the partnership but not in the company name. There was Lobnitz Brothers consisting of Henry Lobnitz, Otto Lobnitz, and L.R. Barrick.

Forbush: So you fellows undertook to perform what particular contractual services?

Barrick: We did the earth and rock work. There was another subcontractor that did the concrete work. He was from Wyoming, I can't remember his name. I asked about that yesterday.

Forbush: Now was this Grassy Lake project a government sponsored...?

Barrick: Yes, it was sponsored by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Forbush: By the Bureau. Can you tell me specifically the purpose of this, the background, what they wanted to accomplish with this project?

Barrick: They had formed an irrigation district here in Eastern Idaho. In this district, it covered a wide area. To get the water that they needed for it they built a dam at Island Park known as the Island Park Reservoir. That took care of the greater part of them but there were some of the farmers in the Ashton area and the Newdale area that were at too high an elevation to get water from the Island Park Reservoir. So in order to take care of that part of the district they built this Grassy Lake Dam up off from Fall River. They brought the water down Fall River. They took it out of Fall River into the canals.

Forbush: It might be helpful to those who read and who will perhaps transcribe this into raw historical data, source material, if you would kindly comment on our river system, what we are talking about in this area, with the principal stream, of course being the North Fork? Why don't you just briefly give a little information about the water sources and courses in the area? You have mentioned one or two names but mention most of them and then just can go on and give the location of the construction of this dam at Grassy Lake?

Barrick: Well, the Island Park Reservoir was built right west of Pond's. That water comes from the North Fork of the Snake River and the Buffalo River up there. It flows on down through Warm River and there is another little river that comes into the North Fork known as the Warm River. Then it goes on down through St. Anthony and then west until it meets the South Fork, west of Rexburg. Before it meets the South Fork west of Rexburg, the Teton River flows into the North Fork. Also the Fall River, which comes from the Grassy Lake area, intersects the North Fork at Chester. Those are the main sources of water that I know of.

Forbush: Now the Snake, the North Fork, of course, follows what direction?

Barrick: Southwesterly direction.

Forbush: Southwesterly. And the headwaters of Fall River are in what direction? Say from Chester, the mouth of it?

Barrick: North and east. Mostly east and northerly direction.

Forbush: Now are the headwaters of the Fall River formed in the Park, are they?

Barrick: Yes, I think the headwaters of the Fall River are formed at or near Beula Lake in the Park.

Forbush: So this Grassy Lake Project, was it a lake to impound waters from the headwaters of Fall River?

Barrick: No, the area where Grassy Lake Dam is located is just off from Fall River.

Forbush: So it isn't on any river at all?

Barrick: It isn't on any river at all. It is just kind of a little basin up there in the mountains. When Grassy Lake was built, had they built it another five feet higher, the water would have flowed two ways. It would have flowed east and come down the South Fork as well as coming down the North Fork. That is after it left Fall River. It was practically on the Continental Divide.

Forbush: You mean water could have flowed east?

Barrick: Yes, the waters could have gone around and come through Jackson Hole.

Forbush: Oh, I see what you mean. In other words it could have been a part of the water course of the North Fork of the Snake or of the South Fork but, of course, it all would have been on the west side of the Continental Divide. Well, in the beginning was there a nucleus of a lake there? Is that the reason they call it Grassy Lake?

Barrick: There was a little pond there, what you would call a little slough is all. But there was a narrow gap between the two mountains there and that's where we put the dam. That formed the lake.

Forbush: Did you have to build the dam on all three sides or one side?

Barrick: ON one gap, just on one side. The water comes out of the Grassy Lake Dam and flows about 500 feet and enters Fall River.

Forbush: By that time Fall River is pretty well defined, the headwaters?

Barrick: Oh, yes. Fall River is well defined at that point.

Forbush: Now specifically are we talking about a dam that is located in Idaho, or in Wyoming, or just real close to the border?

Barrick: It's located in Wyoming. The dam is located in Wyoming.

Forbush: Then it is not very far from the Wyoming/Idaho border, would it?

Barrick: Oh, you would have to come west from the dam; I'm guessing about seven miles.

Forbush: About seven miles. Is Grassy Lake within the confines of the Park?

Barrick: No, it is just outside of the Park, just outside.

Forbush: Now you mentioned Beula Lake. Now that is within the Park.

Barrick: Yes, that is within the Park.

Forbush: That would be over about four or five miles?

Barrick: No, from Grassy Lake it wouldn't be over two miles. It is a short distance, a lot of people go up there and hike in and fish there.

Forbush: Well now, you have more or less indicated the topography of its location, it's in a high elevation, possibly 7000 feet?

Barrick: Pretty close to that.

Forbush: In the course of construction did you get your materials right in the same vicinity for the building of the dam? Did you have to bring a lot of material in? Why don't you go into a little description, as you recall?

Barrick: The earth and rock was secured right at the area of the dam. However, the sand and gravel had to be brought in and that was brought in from the Wyoming side. The cement was brought in from the Ashton side. The spring of '38, the snow didn't leave up there until late in June. That meant that the construction season was very, very short. IN order to get the dam, the earth work in place in the dam and the rock, why we felt it was necessary to have the cement at the site along about the 1st of May. So in March, we hauled in two carloads of cement with tractors and crawler wagons over nine feet of snow and stored it at the dam site. And believe you me that was some undertaking.

Forbush: And that came from Ashton?

Barrick: That came from Ashton.

Forbush: It was brought in by rail to Ashton?

Barrick: Yes. They brought it in by rail to Ashton. Then they hauled it out Fall River. Then we crossed Fall River and loaded it into these tractor wagons. We would use two diesel tractors with a big crawler wagon back of each one and then a bull dozer went along so that when we got

stuck and got in trouble it could dig us out and we'd go on. By the time we left Fall River east of Ashton until we'd made a round trip, it was thirty-six hours.

Forbush: How many miles covered?

Barrick: About forty. An eighty mile trip, round trip.

Forbush: I understand that historically speaking, between Ashton and the Flagg Ranch in Wyoming, the old Reclamation Road exists. Now as I understand it, when the Jackson Lake Dam was constructed this road was laid out and used for purposes of hauling supplies to the dam site.

Barrick: That's right.

Forbush: In the course of your work for Grassy Lake, did you employ the old road?

Barrick: We required the same road. It is hard to understand how they ever got those supplies over that road and into Jackson Lake. It is just hard to understand.

Forbush: Explain the problem?

Barrick: Well, in the spring of the year the road would be so soft and broken up that you just couldn't get any equipment through. It just bogged you down and you would be stuck all the time. Along this old road we could see where they had old buildings. In fact the Bureau of Reclamation had us destroy one just west of Grassy Lake Dam where they used to overnight, as an overnight stop. How they ever hauled that cement and material through there is a mystery to me.

Forbush: Had they made any physical improvement to the road like putting gravel...?

Barrick: Oh no, no. Strictly an old trail was what it was.

Forbush: And, of course, we are talking about when the Reclamation Road was used, probably about 1910, 12, 14, along in there, aren't we?

Barrick: I don't recall that I ever heard that date.

Forbush: Seems to me that the Jackson Lake Dam was built somewhere around 1915.

Barrick: I don't believe it was any later than that. I believe it was as early as 15.

Forbush: I kinda think so. Of course, they didn't have motorized equipment.

Barrick: No, it was all horse drawn.

Forbush: Some of these big wagons, these supply wagons, they must have been huge?

Barrick: I imagine they used anywhere from six to twelve horse on a wagon.

Forbush: Now for your purposes, had the prime contractor constructed living quarters for men over in the Grassy Lake area?

Barrick: No, we constructed our own living quarters after we moved in. We moved a portable saw mill in and set it up and sawed lumber and built our own camp.

Forbush: What did that consist of, your camp?

Barrick: It consisted of bunk houses for the men to live in. It had a kitchen, an office, and the necessary buildings for sixty-five to seventy men to live in.

Forbush: Now were these men, as far as the Lobnitz Brothers contract was concerned, were they employed pretty much to handle and operate heavy earth moving equipment?

Barrick: Yes.

Forbush: I think in our visitation you mentioned my father, Charles Elmer Forbush, was employed over there. Now I am sure that dad did not operate any heavy equipment?

Barrick: Your father was one of the main carpenters in building the camp, the bunkhouses and the buildings. We had a shop there, a repair shop. He was one of the main carpenters in the construction of the camp.

Forbush: Now these men would stay right up there, these employees?

Barrick: Oh yes, we had a dining room and fed them. For those who wanted to stay by themselves, that had families, they moved in little tents or trailers or whatever they had. They would live somewhere in the camp area.

Forbush: You mentioned that the supplies were brought in, sand, cement, and so forth, in the spring of 38.

Barrick: Well, the sand and gravel, as I recall it, was brought in the fall of 37. It was on the job. That was too early to bring in the cement. Cement will deteriorate and wouldn't be usable in the spring of 38. That's why we waited until March to bring it in. We wanted it as fresh as possible.

Forbush: Now what were these materials used for, for the core of the dam?

Barrick: Well, there's a conduit that runs clear through the dam. There is a control valve underneath about the center of the dam. From the lower side of the dam to this control valve there is a walkway or a tunnel that you can walk in to this valve. Then there is a little control house at the lower site of the dam. This was all concrete work. Then there was what they called the cut of wall that went through the center of the dam. That was for seepage purposes. That

was to stop the seepage from the upper side of the dam from seeping through. That was all concrete work.

Forbush: Now turning our attention more specifically to construction figures and completion figures, I am assuming that the dam construction started in 1938.

Barrick: No, the dam construction work started in 37 and was finished the fall of 39.

Forbush: But the Lobnitz people, more or less, as a sub contractor came in initially at the beginning but a little later on?

Barrick: Well, the only thing that had been done when the Lobnitz Brothers came on the project was the clearing. The clearing had been completed. They had cleared the area for the reservoir and had disposed of the timber.

Forbush: I see. All right now, specifically, how much area is covered by the dam, by the reservoir? I am not sure what is the proper usage there. Is it officially a dam or is it really a reservoir or can one use those terms?

Barrick: Well, a reservoir is the area in back of a dam. This Grassy Lake Reservoir impounds 15,000 acre feet of water. I can't say exactly how many acres of ground it covers but not too many. It is not a large area.

Forbush: In depth, at the deepest point?

Barrick: Oh, I imagine it is close to 150 feet deep at the site where we had our camp which was very close to the dam.

Forbush: Are these water ordinarily held over during the winter time?

Barrick: No, they don't figure on holding much water in this dam during the winter. It is so small that they can fill it in a very short period in the spring when the runoff comes. Then they need to take care of the water and not let it come down into the valley to cause floods. However, they had to build a diversion canal from Lake of the Woods, which is just a couple of miles west of Grassy Lake Dam, to Grassy Lake, to fill the dam in the spring when the runoff comes.

Forbush: This Lake of the Woods is higher in elevation than the dam?

Barrick: Yes.

Forbush: So the water going into Grassy Lake Reservoir comes from this Lake of the Woods through a diversion canal and then it receives other waters from the drainage area. There's no live water course flowing into it. You mentioned that there is a canal built from the dam, the reservoir, over to Fall River.

Barrick: Well, there is just a natural waterway down through there. They didn't have to build anything. They just turned the water loose below the dam and it flows on down into the river. It is about 500 feet.

Forbush: It is just a short distance. So with the gates there at the reservoir they can control the amount of water coming in and going out of this reservoir?

Barrick: Well, they can't really control the amount of water coming into the reservoir. However, when the reservoir is filled there is a spillway that takes care of the surplus water. That spillway puts the water right back into Fall River. The water that goes through the spillway goes into Fall River regardless of whether it went into Grassy Lake or not. But when Grassy Lake becomes full to its capacity then they have to have a way of taking care of the excess water that comes in. So it goes through this spillway. It is an open spillway.

Forbush: Can you give me some figures on, maybe, the length of the dam, the height, and the amount of material that went into the face of the dam? Do you have any facts or data like that?

Barrick: It's too long a time has elapsed. I can't remember the amount, the yardage that went into the dam. But the dam is, it seems to me like, 300 feet high and it is faced upstream and downstream with rock rip rap. The overall cost of the dam, including the area that was purchased, the engineering, and the construction of the dam was right at \$760,000.

Forbush: Now since this was a relatively small dam, the cost ratio...

Forbush: The cost ratio was pretty high?

Barrick: Yes, compared to the Island Park Dam it was, about four to one.

Forbush: It was a necessary adjunct to the overall scheme of providing reclamation, impounding water for irrigation purposes in this whole system?

Barrick: That's right.

Forbush: Now almost concurrently with this was the construction of this Island Park Reservoir?

Barrick: Yes, it was constructed just prior to the Grassy Lake Dam.

Forbush: It also was a Bureau of Engineer?

Barrick: Bureau of Reclamation.

Forbush: To your knowledge, were any of these projects done by the Bureau of Army Engineers?

Barrick: No, no.

Forbush: They were all done by the Bureau of Reclamation of the Department of the Interior. In preparing for this interview I wondered if you had much experience in the, and had an opportunity to observe the development of this whole area of the Island Park community in its growth and development? This might be interesting if you would comment when you arrived on the scene in 1937? What were things like in the Island Park area?

Barrick: Well, Mack's Inn was there. Pond's Lodge was there. There was a gas station and a few cabins at Last Chance. Nothing compared to what is there today.

Forbush: These places were on the main route to West Yellowstone on Highway 191 at that time?

Barrick: That's right.

Forbush: Now, that was in 1937, we'll say and some 35 years have lapsed since that time. How do you compare the two? What has happened?

Barrick: Well, there has been an awful lot happen. After we finished Grassy Lake Dam, we did some other work in the state of Idaho, highway work over on the west side. Then when World War II came along we sold a great part of our equipment to Morris and Kunutson. We felt it was a good time to get out of the construction business. But we retained our tractors, scrapers, and bull dozers. We rented that equipment to the government to build the Navy Depot at Clairfield. When they completed the Clairfield Depot, which lasted for about two years, then they turned our equipment back to us. At that time I took over the equipment and I started leveling land in Madison, Fremont, and Jefferson Counties. I had about five scrapers most of the time, tractors and scrapers, and several bull dozers. I leveled thousands and thousands of acres of ground. I got it in shape so that it could be surface irrigated. I developed an awful lot of land and cleared an awful lot of brush. Today Madison and Fremont Counties are so much different from when I first came here, there is no comparison.

Forbush: Well, then, more or less pinpointing this thing, you're saying that perhaps you were one of the first to be actually instrumental in using this heavy equipment for ground leveling in these counties.

Barrick: Yes, for instance, the Meyers Brothers at Sugar City are well known. In those early days of land leveling, I recall, working over at Parker. Meyers Brothers at that time had two bands of sheep, I believe. They were moving their sheep from the Sugar City area out into the desert in the spring. They came by where I was working with one of these tractors and scrapers. They stopped there and they looked and they looked and finally they crawled over the fence and came over. They asked who the boss was. They got in touch with me. I remember the boys said they had often thought that some day there would be a machine like this to level this country up with. At that time they said would you come over and do some work for us, a couple of days of work. I said yes as soon as I get through with this job and some other jobs I had promised. I don't remember just how long it was. I remember going over there for a couple of days and I was there for six weeks. That was only one of the times that I worked for the Meyers Brothers alone.

I recall one time standing up here by the First Security Bank (Rexburg) and, do you remember this man named Smith that lived east of Sugar City? He was a dry farmer. He used to live at that hotel down here, the Idamont Hotel in the winter time. I knew him really well. He's been dead for a number of years. I can't recall his first name. Anyway my partner, Henry Lobnitz, came along. I introduced him to this man, Smith. He said, you know Mr. Lobnitz, this man Barrick, here, is doing more good for Madison County than this First Security Bank.

Forbush: What equipment were you specifically using?

Barrick: Caterpillar.

Forbush: Caterpillar equipment.

Barrick: Diesel tractors with fourteen yard scrapers.

Forbush: Now this would not only take big hunks of ground off but it would also level it.

Barrick: Oh yes, yes. We leveled it so that it could be surface irrigated.

Forbush: I see. You also take brush, timber and remove that?

Barrick: Yes, we removed brush and timber.

Forbush: What areas of the county have you worked in? Now you mentioned Meyers Brothers that would be in Fremont County.

Barrick: That was just across the Fremont County border. You take Madison County, if you will give me a dollar for every farm I have worked on in Madison County I'll give you five dollars for every one I haven't worked on. I have worked on practically all the farms in Madison County.

Forbush: Have you done much work down in, say, the Independence area?

Barrick: Oh yes. Lots of work down there. I did a lot of work for the Jensen Brothers. You know the five brothers down here. I did an awful lot of work for their father and those boys.

Forbush: Now that particular area is the lowest in elevation in the County. Because of it they have a lot of overflow of water from the two forks of the Snake River. Bog holes were filled up I suppose?

Barrick: That's right.

Forbush: Little swampy areas?

Barrick: We filled up holes, places where the river had cut through at some time or another and there would be channels five and six feet deep and thirty or forty feet wide. We filled many of those channels full and today it is farm land and they are raising grain, beets, and potatoes on it.

Forbush: Where did you get your materials to do that, though?

Barrick: Right Adjacent to it. The high spots.

Forbush: There was a lot of vegetation down there in the early days?

Barrick: A lot of vegetation. Then there were areas where we would strike gravel pockets. Well, we would take this gravel out a foot below the finished grade and put it in a deeper place. Then we would bring in top soil over the gravel so that they could farm it.

Forbush: That is fantastic. How many units did you eventually acquire and have in operation?

Barrick: At one time I had five D-8 Caterpillar tractors with thirteen yard scrapers. I had two dozers. I had one patrol for cutting surface ditches. I had two drag lines for maintaining and digging canals. Then I had some rock equipment, an air compressor and jack hammer.

Forbush: Did you also build roads for the County?

Barrick: No, very little of that kind of work. I did once in a while; they would have some job they wanted done. We would do it. Our prime work was the leveling of the land, the clearing of the land, and the developing of the land.

Forbush: Would you care to mention the worth of that equipment at the high peak of your operation, your construction company?

Barrick: Well, in those days, it would be considerably less than today. But I had some where around one hundred thousand dollars worth of equipment operating.

Forbush: Would you like to mention some of your operators, besides yourself and Henry Lobnitz?

Barrick: Yes, I took as many people as I could find around here that were interested in that kind of work. I would break them in as what we called grease monkeys. In other words, they would service the tractor and scraper in the evening after we had finished work. They would fill it with diesel fuel and oil and change the oil and such as that. Then I would encourage these boys, if the operator would give them a chance to sit over in the operator's seat and operate the equipment.

I had two men, a man by the name of Alvin Weinager and Ray Craig. Those boys started in as grease monkey's and they became operators. They became some of the finest operators that I ever had. Those two boys worked a total of twenty-six years apiece for me. The one boy, he had a little farm. Ray Craig had a little farm and he got a chance, when the work kinda slowed up, to go to work for the county as an operator. He's over there operation now. Alvin Weinager, mechanic and foreman that was with me for twenty-five years, Vern Davidson.

Today the boy is still operating on a small scale and he has one of the men that I had at that time still with him. I think he's been here fifteen years. I think we had fewer turnovers on labor in our business of any businessman in the country.

Forbush: So actually, Mr. Barrick, you, your partner, and men have been serving in this great program of reclaiming land from about 1940?

Barrick: Yes, yes. From 1940, in fact, we started in as soon as we came to Grassy Lake Dam because we would have to leave Grassy Lake Dam in the fall, the 1st of October and we couldn't get back in until June. So the late fall and the early spring we would clear brush down in the Valley and then we would move up to the dam and work the dam and then come back down again.

Forbush: So you've been doing this, when did you cease doing, being active in this program?

Barrick: Well, I ceased in about 1962, myself.

Forbush: So it would be from 38 to 62 or a period of about 24 years approximately?

Barrick: Yes.

Forbush: That is a fantastic record and literally thousands of acres have been reclaimed.

Barrick: And I enjoyed every minute of it. I will say this about the people of this community; I lost less than one half of one percent on collections. I never went out and solicited one job but I did every bodies work. Anybody who came to me and needed to work, I helped them. I tried to; I always went along with them and let them pay when they could. It always worked out very well.

Forbush: That's a very fine statement to make, and I am sure it is honestly made too. Now one of the interesting things I have heard about you is your interest in aviation. Did that start kind of a hobby type of thing, as an aviation enthusiast? Tell us a little about it.

Barrick: I had two boys, Jerome and Lowell. Jerome is nine years older than Lowell. Well it was during World War II one day I was here in town and an airplane flew over. I don't remember who I was talking to, but I was talking to somebody that knew about what was going on. They said, see that airplane. I said, yes, what about it. Do you know who is flying it? I said, no, I don't have any idea who is flying it. He said, that's your son, Jerome.

So right then and there I decided if I was going to keep up with those kids and know where they were I'd have to learn how to fly. They had an airport up here on the hill, a little old airport up where the college dairy is now. There was an instructor up there.

Forbush: Who was the instructor?

Barrick: I can't remember his name. He was some fellow who came here and gave flying instructions. I got acquainted with him and I started to fly. That's how I came to start to flying.

The more I flew the better I liked it. I used, I had a plane, and I used it in my business a great deal to fly over this country and look at rivers and canals and one thing or another that I couldn't see from the ground like I could from the air. I got ideas. The airplane was a great help to me in this work that I was doing.

Forbush: Can you tell me first of all, where, and just what this little air-strip was like up there on the hill?

Barrick: It was just a little strip that was laid up from a northeasterly direction to a southwesterly direction. It was anything but level. It was, the ground was rolling. Believe you me, when a fellow soloed off from that field he was ready to fly. Because if he could get on and off of that field he could fly most anyplace.

Forbush: Now were there not only ground problems there but, maybe, air currents?

Barrick: No, I am not suggesting air currents, mostly ground problems. You see, when you were on one end of the airport you couldn't see a plane on the other end of the airport. It was that rolling. Then there was a side slope to the airport. When you landed with your plane, you were never level. You were on a slope, sideways as well as being rough ahead of you.

Forbush: Which end of the runway would you land?

Barrick: It would depend upon the wind. If the wind was out of the east, you would land from west to east. If it was out of the west you would land from east to west.

Forbush: There was just the one runway?

Barrick: I remember the next day after I soloed up there. I went up and was going to fly. I took off and flew around for a while. The wind was out of the west when I took off. Of course, I was green at it. I supposed the wind would stay in the west. I came in back to land and I went to land and I was going to fast and I couldn't land. Finally I woke up to the fact that the wind was out of the east. I had to land the opposite direction.

Forbush: In other words, you have to land into the wind?

Barrick: Always.

Forbush: To reduce the speed and factors like this. Did they have a hanger up there?

Barrick: Not to start with. But they built a hanger. That was used for several years until they moved the airport down to its present location.

Forbush: Now when you first came into the Rexburg area, I suppose this airport, this little runway was in existence at that time?

Barrick: It was in existence. I didn't realize it cause at that time I wasn't interested in flying.

Forbush: What type of equipment was this trainer using to train people to fly?

Barrick: He was using Piper Cubs.

Forbush: Was that what you subsequently got when you purchased your plane?

Barrick: No, the first plane that I purchased was, I think, in '46 or '47. It was an Air Coop. It was a low winged plane, a two passenger plane. I had that, I think, for about a year. Then I sold it and bought a Stinsen Stationwagon. That was a four passenger plane, single engine plane.

Forbush: In those days, in the early 40's, can you call to mind some of those other individuals who lived in the area who were somewhat active in, and tried to promote flying in the area?

Barrick: Well, Art Porter, he wasn't one of the first ones but he got into the flying later. There was Mark Siepert, he learned to fly and owned a plane for a while. There was one girl, I can remember her name, who soared up there and did quite a lot of flying.

Forbush: The man here at the college?

Barrick: Eldon Hart, yes, Eldon Hart was another one. Steve Meikle.

Forbush: Now was this the elder or the younger one?

Barrick: The younger. I used to fly Steve's father once in a while when he wanted to go some place. I would fly him different places. I used to fly Doc. H.B. Rigby. I remember a call one time soon after I got to flying. The Doctor came to me one morning and he said, Lowell could you fly over to Helena, Montana, to pick up a photographer for me. I want him to come over and take some pictures of my Herefords. I said, yes. He said, well, he'll be at the airport waiting for you. So I flew over to Helena, picked him up, and brought him back. They went about their picture taking and after lunch, Doctor called me again. He said, Lowell could you fly this man back to Helena this afternoon. I said, yes. So he said we'll meet you out to the airport. We got out to the airport and he said, do you mind if I go along? I said, no, I'd be glad to have you go along. So Doctor went along. When we come back he said, I'd like to fly up against Sawtelle Mountain over there. Well, I said, we can do that Doctor, but tighten your seatbelt. We'll get a ride. So we come around there. Sure enough we got a good shaken up. He said, I guess you know these mountains. I said, I know enough to be afraid of them.

Forbush: What happens when you get around a big obstacle like Sawtelle?

Barrick: Well, for instance, when you come up to a mountain like that, and you are coming with the wind. The wind will come up and carry you up over. But if the wind is coming from the opposite direction she'll suck you down. So it is not a wise policy to monkey around these mountains. Better stay away from them. At least have good altitude when passing over them or around them.

Forbush: Have you had any experience at flying over or around the Teton Range?

Barrick: Yes, one time I was invited to go with Mark Siepert. I think it was on Decoration Day. Mark says, I want to fly up the Teton Mountains. I said, well, it is alright Mark, I'll go with you but you stay away from them. We went up there and we flew around them. On the way back Mark said, I understand what you mean, Lowell. I won't go up there again.

Forbush: Now up here in the Big Hole Mountains, you are familiar with the Big Holes?

Barrick: Over in Wyoming?

Forbush: No in the southeast part of the country. Up by the Pincock Springs.

Barrick: Oh, yes.

Forbush: There are some pretty good peaks up in there.

Barrick: Yes, I have been up amongst those peaks.

Forbush: But nothing like the Sawtelle?

Barrick: Well, yes. Some of them are as far as flying is concerned. But then there is no two days alike. Some days you'll have good air and some days you'll have poor air. When you have bad air it is better to stay away from those mountains.

Forbush: When they changed the runway to the point where it is today, west of Rexburg, they made a wise move I guess, didn't they?

Barrick: At that time, Joe Demont was the mayor. I recall one day, Joe came and looked me up. He had Ross Harris with him. Ross was a flyer at that time. He said, he wanted us boys to take a ride with him. We rode out where the present airport is and down over the ground. He said, what do you think of the City selling the airport up there on the hill to the college and buying this for an airport? We both spoke up at the same time and said we don't have to think. We know that would be a smart move. From there they went ahead and bought that property and built that airport. In fact, I built that airport out there.

Forbush: Now they purchased a forty acre tract, as I understand first?

Barrick: Wasn't it eighty? Eighty acres.

Forbush: Eighty acres, I see. Now you say you built it. With your equipment? What did you have to do initially? What had to be done to ensure that it would be a good landing strip?

Barrick: As soon as they purchased this land they went to the CAA, the government aviation department, and the government approved it. They participated in the construction of the airport. That is the County and the City paid part and the Federal Government paid part. The Federal

Government made the survey and drew up the plans and called for bids on the airport. I bid the job and I got it. And I built the airport.

Forbush: Now it required quite a little filling?

Barrick: Well, at the time they built the airport, I wanted to build it. I knew that an outside contractor would not have the interest at heart in the airport that I had. I knew that he would come in here with a job to do and to do it as quick as possible and not to do any extra work that might need being done without being paid for it. So I figured out the very least I could do it for. I bid the job and I was considerably lower than the other contractors who bid on it. So I got it. I told the engineer at that time, that if you would give me a set of stakes up each side of the runway, a good set of stakes that I can rely on that are set perfect right to the inch, then I don't need anymore help on it. I will build the airport and then you can come back and check it. He said fine, and he did that.

I moved in five scrapers and a bulldozer on a Monday morning. Saturday night I was through. I had a man out their running rod for me and I was setting pegs for these boys. Believe you me; it kept me busy to keep ahead of those five scrapers. But I had it done in a week.

When we started the airport, started the construction and notified the Federal Government that we were going to start on such and such a date. He got here the next week after we had finished. He come and said, I thought you was just starting this airport. It looks to me like you are done. I said yes I am. He said, let's go and look it over. He said, how in the world did you build it in that length of time? I said, I don't believe in fooling around this time of the year. It was the fall of the year. I said, I moved in all of my equipment. We rode up and down the runway three or four times. Finally he said; say I would like to meet the man who finished this for you. He said, I would like to meet your blade man that finished this for you. I said, I didn't have a blade. Not a think, he said, I couldn't do better if I tried. It is perfectly one hundred percent but I can't understand how you got a finish on it like you did. He says, you said you didn't use a blade. I said, I didn't use a patrol. So I took him down and showed him this land plane. I had a big fifty foot land plane that I used for fine finishing on these farms.

Forbush: Now when you say fifty foot...

Barrick: Fifty foot from one end to the other.

Forbush: Not in width but in length?

Barrick: In length, ten feet wide. After I got all this dirt in place I put that land plane on and went over it about three or four times and It was just like that sheet of paper. That airport never did settle out of shape. It always stayed; we never had to re-due it any place. It always did stay up good and in perfect grade form.

(This is the finish of this tape)