

GREENE: This is August 6, 1978. The continuation of my interview with Mr. Maxie Lowell McMullin was conducted by my son-in-law William Douglas Jackson, a close friend of Mr. McMullin, and is to be attached as Part II.

JACKSON: This is Part II of an Interview with Mr. Maxie Lowell McMullin. The date is August 6, 1978. My name is William Douglas Jackson.

Mr. McMullin, what type plane do you generally fly in your charter work?

McMULLIN: Mr. Jackson, in the charter work, several types of aircraft have been used. However, before I answer your question, I'll give you an explanation of the different classes, types and categories. The category generally refers to the difference between an airplane or a helicopter or free balloon or zeppelin, and things like that. Your class pertains to multi-engine or single engine and whether it is sea or land, and, of course, the type generally refers to an airplane that weighs over 12,500 pounds gross take-off weight. Since our area of interest is in the light single engine, general aviation class, this would call for us getting into different makes and models. Of course, the makes of general aviation normal category types of planes, the kind that four people can ride in, which are built by the major companies, such as the Piper

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

Aircraft Corporation, in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, the Cessna Aircraft Corporation in Wichita, Kansas, and the Bellanca Aircraft Corporation, in Alexandria, Minnesota. There are others, of course, such as Beechcraft, also located in Wichita, Kansas.

Most of the charter work is done with single engine and, in some cases, what is known as light multi-engine aircraft. Of course, the makes vary between the manufacturers that I just mentioned, and the various models run not only through a year-make, but different configurations and equipment that make up the model. Let us just say that most of our charter work is done in single engine aircraft - normal category aircraft - capable of carrying four people.

JACKSON: What about your dealings with the farmers as an Ag Pilot?

McMULLIN: Well, my dealings with the farmers of not only this area, but other areas in the mid-south and adjoining neighboring states, as well as in Guatemala - we touched on the Guatemala subject in Part I of this interview. I think we can bring out some things that happened in this area. Since I, more or less, was one of the first - or the first black Ag pilot to do Ag work in this area, starting back in the early '50's, it may surprise some people to know that I received very cooperative treatment

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

from the farmers. The majority of the farmers in this area being Caucasian, one might suspect that a person like myself would meet up with some prejudice or discrimination in this type of work, but there has been a surprisingly small amount of this. Most of the farmers, once my reputation has become known throughout this part of the country, or this Delta section where King Cotton more or less reigns, as well as the neighboring states like Arkansas and Louisiana, I guess it is all because the seed of good will has been sown by people - well-meaning people - like Mr. Abide and others, who, more or less, gave me a good start, and, instead of sowing seeds of evil, they sowed the seeds of good will and love. And that's one of the main things that has carried over into the agricultural community, which is probably why I've had a minimum of friction with Caucasian farmers in doing my work. However, despite the generally good, cooperative spirit that has existed and still exists, there are some Caucasian farmers who persist in being racists. Of course, those are very few, a very small percentage, maybe one or two percent, or something like that.

Generally, the relationship has been very good, and they have supported me, and I have flown for some of the biggest land-owners and planters in this area, and have tried to do a good job. In fact, I did do a good job. They thought I did a good job because it costs a lot of money to put on an

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

application of insecticide, and if I hadn't done a good job, they certainly would have let me know it, because nobody wants to throw away expensive insecticide like that. So I am well pleased and very happy with the relationship we have had - and this dates back from the early '50's up until this date.

JACKSON: Is there any organization - that is, for flying - comparable to the Public Safety Commission that we have in various cities, various states, for the automobile? Is there any national organization that looks after general aviation in that same sense?

McMULLIN: Yes, there is. That is the FAA, better known as the Federal Aviation Agency. It has not always been known as the Federal Aviation Agency. Back twenty years ago; or better, it was known as the CAA, the Civil Aeronautics Administration; but the Federal Aviation Agency is the national agency that looks after general aviation activities all over the United States, and has some jurisdiction with military flying also. Speaking of the FAA, right after the advent of the present-day Civil Rights Laws were passed, the FAA was very interested in complying with Civil Rights and EEO Directives, and they have done their best to try to hire blacks in all phases of the FAA organization.

Now, I would like to go back and say something. I think I said this in Part I, and I would like to reiterate

here that the FAA people have been very nice, very cooperative, even back before the advent of present-day Civil Rights Laws, and this is one of the things that has really impressed me. In other words, this group of fine people did not wait until the passage of Civil Rights Laws to become cooperative in doing their part towards black airmen. This was done back when I first came into the general aviation field in the late '40's, early '50's, right after World War II; and they have continued to be a responsible body - Federal body - in that they have tried to hire blacks in all phases of the FAA organizational structure. The highest would be an FAA Inspector, which is, more or less, comparable to, let us say, maybe a highway patrolman or some other fairly high official in the general safety program as pertains to automobiles.

The FAA Inspector - the man in charge of the local office statewide, which is in Jackson, the capital of Mississippi - is known as the Chief of that facility, and as much as five years ago, and even before then, he had made an attempt to hire a black inspector that would represent the State of Mississippi. Of course, I am sure that they considered Air Force Veterans and the like, but it seems as though since the FAA Inspector and his duties - mostly his jurisdiction would be in dealing with general aviation activities and pilots and fixed-base operators in the State of Mississippi which pertains mostly to general aviation activities - and they figured it would be better to select

NOTICE

someone who had been operating, or had experience in this field, rather than Air Force people who were trained in the Air Force way; so this position was offered to me some five ago, to hire in as a General Aviation FAA Inspector. I am sad to say that I decided to pass up the opportunity. It hurt me to my heart to do so, but the reason was because of the fact that the rules and regulations controlling the FAA would not allow a person to operate in his own home town, and possibly not even in his own home state. The fact that I chose not to leave Mississippi was the main reason behind me rejecting this wonderful offer.

JACKSON: Do you have any affiliation with any local organizations - anything connected with the Airport here?

McMULLIN: Yes, Mr. Jackson, there is such an organization known as the Airport Commission. Most everyone familiar with city government knows the method that most municipalities employ - such as a Mayor and City Council. Most towns that have an airport will select a Commission to oversee Airport business. It works somewhat like a sub-committee to the City Council, in other words, and it was my honor to be recently appointed to this Commission by the Mayor. I would say the Mayor recommended it - the Mayor of Greenville, William Burnley, made the recommendation, and it was approved by the City Council, that made me a member of this five-member Commission

NOTICE

This material may be
protected by copyright
law (Title 17 U.S. Code).

that oversees the business of the Airport as well as the Air Base equipment that was turned back to the City of Greenville some years ago after the Air Force saw fit to move on and close this facility as an Air Force Base. So right now the Commission term is five years, and having been appointed and accepted by the City Council, I've only been a Commissioner for a few months, so I look forward to serving the remainder portion of five years to go, and will do my best to contribute what I can to the airport business.

JACKSON: For any reason, have you ever had to perform anything like an ambulance service with an airplane - that is, to carry the sick, or maybe someone deceased?

McMULLIN: Yes, that is true. I have had the pleasure of doing this - although some might not consider it a pleasure. It was, nevertheless, a responsible duty that the people in air travel had to become involved in. A few years ago, a local fixed-base operator was in the business of having available an aircraft equipped to transport deceased bodies back and forth to distant cities, You might call it an air ambulance. Of course, the air ambulance picks up people who are injured maybe in crashes and things like that, but in this case most bodies, as you probably know, are shipped from distant towns and cities, some on the railroad train, and some in the local automotive ambulances.

In this case, to save time and also to facilitate the

early expeditious arrangement of funerals and things of that sort, they employ this fixed-base operation to transfer bodies. Most of the time, the man who operates the company did it, but one time I was called on to fly to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to pick up a body and return it to Greenville so that the funeral could be carried out on time. That was quite an experience. Of course, in this type aircraft all seats were removed and space provided for the coffin, or, in this case, a special type basket they carry the bodies in.

So that kind of gets us into areas of air travel that we don't like to do every day, but it is necessary, and, as I said, I am glad to have had that experience.

Also recently I had an opportunity to make a flight to Madison, Wisconsin, to pick up a little boy who had undergone an operation. It was considered by his parents that it was better to get him home as quickly as possible and not expose him to the rigors of riding in a bus or car, and sometimes, even airlines, as fast as they are, involve changes at some of the terminals. His parents thought that possibly a charter flight in a small general aviation aircraft would be better. So recently I had the opportunity of doing this, and flew the young man home. All went well, and I think he enjoyed the flight, and it didn't upset in any way his recuperation from his operation.

My participation in general aviation has been very - I would like to add this in addition. I have had some experience in instructing others, since I do hold an FAA Flight Instructor

rating, although I am not active right at the moment, but back during the years I have had the opportunity and pleasure of instructing for the Air Force Aero Club during the time the Air Force occupied the Air Base here in Greenville; and since then I have had the pleasure of instructing some of my friends and have sort of motivated their interest in general aviation, and I expect to become more active in the instruction field as time goes on. And I would like to say that I don't know of an experience that is more rewarding than the ones I participated in during general aviation for the past twenty-five or thirty years; and I hope, as time goes on, I will continue to be able to participate, and that other blacks will join me in this endeavor.

GREENE: Interviewer's note: The child referred to by Mr. McMullin was Malcolm Chenier Jackson, who had undergone surgery at the Mayo Clinic. Mr. McMullin left Greenville at five A. M., on this mission, and returned at 5:30 P. M., the same day.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Alice C. Nagel)

FINAL
Sept. 1, 1978
Alice C. Nagel

INDEX
OF MAXIE LOWELL MCMULLIN (PART I)
BY SHERILYN D. ALLEN

Abide Flying School, 12, 13, 17, 29
Abide, Lee, 11, 12, 15, 17, 19, 24, 26
Abides, the, 15
Ackerman, Mississippi, mentioned, 1
Air Base, 12
Air Force, 7, 17, 18
"Air Taxi", 19
Alabama, 8
Albany, Georgia, mentioned, 19
Arkansas, 1, 2, 4, 25, 26
Army Air Corps, 7, 8
Bacon, George, teacher, Coleman High School, 3
Barnes, Eddie, pilot, 13-15, 31
Beechcraft, 20
Boll Weevil, 25, 26
Bridges, Gertha (registered nurse), aunt, 2, 32, 33
Bridges Theatre, 11
California, mentioned, 20, 21
Cessna, 19, 20
Chicago, Illinois, mentioned, 10, 11, 17, 30
Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA), 11, 16. See also Federal
Aviation Agency

Civil Rights, mentioned, 15

Coleman High School, mentioned, 2, 9; teachers, 3

Crop-dusting, 15, 16, 18, 20, 24, 26-28

"Cross-country", 15, 21

DC-3's (airplanes), 34

Dallas, Texas, mentioned, 22

Diversified Occupation (DO) Program, 3, 8, 11

Dukes, _____, teacher, Coleman High School, 3

Elmyra, New York, mentioned, 19

England Motor Company, mentioned, 19

"FBO" (fixed base operations), 10, 19

Federal Aviation Agency (FAA), 11, 14, 16, 22. See also Civil
Aeronautics Authority (CAA)

"Ferry" (Ferrying), 19, 20

Flight Service Stations, 22

Furmarsa, 26

GI School, 9

Gary, Indiana, mentioned, 10

Gary Steel Mills, 10

Georgia, mentioned, 20

Grauman, 19

Great Lakes Naval Training Station, 10

Greenwood, Mississippi, mentioned, 22, 25

Guatemala, mentioned, 23, 27, 28, 30

Harlem Airport, mentioned, 10, 11

Harlem Theatre, 3

Highway 82, mentioned, 12

Jackson, Sylvia, 32

Jackson, William (Bill) Douglas, 31, 32

Johnson's Flying School, 10

Lampley, Dovie, mother, 1

Lawrence, _____, General Science teacher, Coleman
High School, 3

Leland Road, mentioned, 12

Lepanto, Arkansas, mentioned, 1, 2, 4-8

Little Rock, Arkansas, mentioned, 3

Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, mentioned, 7, 14, 19

Louisiana, mentioned, 26

McMullin, Maxie Lowell: born in Ackerman, Mississippi, 1;
schooling, 1-3, 9; DO (Diversified Occupation) ex-
periences, 3, 8, 11; childhood recreation, 4, 5;
views on early relationship between blacks and whites,
5, 6; interest in flying, 6-11; participation in
World War II (Navy), 6-8; Navy discharge, 10; enrollment,
Johnson's Flying School, 10; recipient, private pilot's
license, 11; employment, Bridges Theatre, 11; enrollment,
Abide Flying School, 11, 12; crop-dusting pilot (ag work),
18, 23, 24, 26-29; airplane crash, 29

McMullin, William Thomas, father, 1
Maddox, _____, teacher, principal, Coleman High School, 3
Memphis, Tennessee, mentioned, 14, 25
Metcalfe brothers, the, 13, 15
Mexico, mentioned, 26
Midway Airport, 10
Mississippi River, 25
Municipal Airport (Greenville), 12
National Weather Bureau, 22
Navy, 6-9
Nelson Street, mentioned, 3
99 Pursuit Squadron Pilots, 11, 17
Nolan, J. C., 4
North American Rockwell, 19
North Carolina, mentioned, 20
Oklahoma, City, mentioned, 19
Petty, _____, teacher, Coleman High School, 3
Piper Aircraft Corporation, 7, 19
Piper Cub airplane, 6, 7, 14
Rolling Fork (Miss.), 33
777's, Jumbo Jets, 20
South America, mentioned, 23
South Carolina, mentioned, 20
Split School Session, 4

Texas, mentioned, 20
Toler, Mamie, teacher, Coleman High School, 3
Tuskegee Institute, 8, 11
United States Armed Forces Institute, 9
VA Contract Schools, 9, 10
Vickery Chevrolet, mentioned, 19
Vicksburg (Miss.), mentioned, 25, 32, 33
Wichita, Kansas, mentioned, 20
Williams, _____, teacher, Coleman High School, 3
World War I, 1
World War II, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 25, 31
Young, Richard, teacher, Coleman High School, 3

INDEX
OF MAXIE LOWELL MCMULLIN (PART II)
BY SHERILYN D. ALLEN

Abide, _____, 3
Air Base, 7, 9
Air Force, 5, 6, 9
Air Force Aero Club, 9
Airport Commission, 6
Alexandria, Minnesota, mentioned, 2
Arkansas, mentioned, 3
Beechcraft, 2
Bellanca Aircraft Corporation (Alexandria, Minnesota), 2
Cessna Aircraft Corporation (Wichita, Kansas), 2
Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA), 4. See also Federal
Aviation Agency (FAA), 4
City Council, 6
Civil Rights, laws, mentioned, 4, 5
EEO, 4
Federal Aviation Agency (FAA), 4-6, 8. See also Civil
Aeronautics Administration (CAA), 4-6, 8
Guatemala, mentioned, 3
Jackson (Miss.), mentioned, 5
Jackson, Malcolm Chenier, 9
Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, mentioned, 2
Louisiana, mentioned, 3

McMullin, Maxie Lowell: charter, work, 1, 2; Ag pilot, 2;
member, Airport Commission, 6, 7; ambulance services,
7-9; instructor, Air Force Aero Club, 9

Madison, Wisconsin, mentioned, 8

Mayo Clinic, 9

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, mentioned, 8

Piper Aircraft Corporation (Lock Haven, Pennsylvania), 2

Public Safety Commission, mentioned, 4

Wichita, Kansas, mentioned, 2

World War II, 5