

Working for the Air Force Rescue Service

RK: Well, I came home and I spent 14 months in combat, and then I came home and was assigned to a rescue squadron. The air force, during the war - it started during the war, but then after the war they kept it. They kept the Air Force Air Rescue Service. And they were positioned in various places around the country. I think there were about eight or ten locations across America that had Air Force Air Rescue Service. And we had different airplanes, many of these airplanes up here, that we used to search for lost airplanes and that sort of emergencies. It was sort of an emergency-type thing. And I got into a squadron of that, and served with it for a number of years. It's great, we saved a lot of lives and found a lot of lost pilots. And we also participated in all kinds of emergencies, like floods and all that. One time, they had what they call "haylift." They had a severe winter across the midsection of America. And all the cattle were dying, because it was so cold. And so we went out and we would - transport planes would drop hay to them. Everything was frozen - the whole midwest was frozen over. And so there wasn't much they could do. So we took our larger birds and flew out and dropped hay out the back door. All across the midwest!

DS: Somebody's just kickin' bales of hay out, right? Just so you could fill the whole...

RK: Just kicking bales of hay out, that's right.

DS: And find the cattle, or the livestock, and feed them.

RK: Yeah, yes. They were starving to death. And they couldn't get to 'em, everything was frozen. It was really a mean section.

DS: Now where was your base located when you were doing these missions?

RK: We were stationed in Fort Bragg - not Fort Bragg. Fort Lewis.

DS: Oh, Fort Lewis in Seattle. Just outside of Seattle. Tacoma, right?

RK: It was called - actually, the air force base was called McChord air force base, at the fort there. And I was in that for 5, 6, 7 years, I guess. And I enjoyed it very much; it was great, great work. You were doing good work. And we were finding a lot of lost people, and ships at sea that crashed, and blah blah blah. Not ships, but airplanes. In those days, airplanes weren't what they are today. Every once in a while, one would crash. The technology then was different than the technology today. So we went out, and we would go out - and I'll show you a picture later - we had a boat that strapped underneath the B17. And we would fly out to a ship that's in distress, or an airplane that had gone down in the Pacific Ocean, and drop that big boat down. [We saw] in a big bunch of parachutes. And then they - the people who had got out of the wrecked airplane would crawl into the boat. And we did that several times. And then we would go on to missing airplanes and that sort of thing.

