

Project name: Agricultural Pilots: Crop Dusters in the Rural Midwest

Field ID and name: Interview 2

Interviewee: Kevin Kingsley

Interviewer/Recordist: Ellen Kendrick, Samuel Kendrick

Date: 3/9/2021

Location: Lamar, Missouri

Others Present: Jackson Kendrick

Equipment used: Zoom Handy H6

Microphone: Saramonic Wireless Lavalier Microphone

Recording Format: .WAV

Recorded Tracks in Session: 1

Duration: 00:49:35

Keywords: Air Tractor, crop dust, Ag, Pilots, Subsidies, wind, wind turbines, chemicals,

Corresponding Materials:

Context:

Technical Considerations:

Transcription prepared by: Samuel Kendrick

Transcribing Conventions:

Use of square brackets [] indicates a note from the transcriber.

Use of parentheses () indicates a conversational aside.

Use of dash - indicates an interruption of thought or conversation.

Use of ellipses ... indicates a discontinued thought.

Use of quotations “ ” indicates reported speech.

Use of *italics* indicates emphasis.

Use of underline indicates movie, magazine, newspaper, or book titles.

Names of interviewee and interviewer are abbreviated by first and last initial letters.

Time is recorded in time elapsed by the convention [hours:minutes:seconds].

[00:00:00]

KK: I don't talk much. I'll be honest with you. You'll ask the questions, won't you?

EK: Oh, yeah.

KK: Okay, I'll just answer the questions.

EK: I'm going to do most of the talking. And Sam is, if he has a question, he'll pipe up. And no, it's okay. If you don't talk. I'm married to a silent man. So we're good with that. So we have to do like, Yeah, you do. Jack's forbidden to speak. So we have to do, like we have to have you signed this release, and we'll get to that.

KK: Want me to sign it right now?

EK: Sure. Go ahead and sign that right now.

KK: Sign my name or somebody else's?

EK: Whoever.[laughs]

KK: So Dusty went off for three hours?

EK: Oh, my gosh, yes. It was great. And we just kept coming up with more questions and more questions.

KK: Did he talk about his bull riding and all that?

EK: Yeah, I got him to start at the beginning, which is kind of where we like to start. But first of all, we have to start with I'm Ellen Kendrick, and I'm here with Sam Kendrick, and Kevin Kingsley. And it is March 9, at what o'clock?

KK: It's pushing two o'clock.

EK: Five minutes till two. And so anyway, we were looking at your plane.

KK: Yeah. The yellow one back here.

EK: Yes.

KK: Okay. We'll walk back here.

EK: All right. And this is, uh, actually, I know what it is. But I want you to tell me what it is

KK: It's, it's an Air Tractor Yeah. 402 b.

EK: So how come they call them air tractors? I have been wanting to ask that.

KK: I don't know.

EK: Are you farming the sky?

KK: It's a tractor in the sky, I guess.

EK: Yeah. It's kind of the same deal, isn't it? Like?

KK: Yeah, it's been made strictly for agricultural.

EK: Yeah. Who makes them?

KK: Air Tractor.

EK: You mean that's the name of the company?

KK: It's in Olney, Texas.

EK: Really? So is there just like one company that makes these planes?

KK: No, there's Thrush, and Air Tractor. And the guy that built Air Tractor, actually, once he actually made the Thrush, that he sold a company to Thrush.

EK: Does it look the same as this one?

KK: A lot. If you didn't know any different, you wouldn't know. You couldn't tell them apart.

EK: So that's also yellow?

KK: Same, same, design, same nose and everything.

EK: And what's the other? What's the third one?

KK: There's a third little... Well there's an Ag Cat. They don't make them anymore.

EK: Oh, I've seen white ones. Is that an Ag... is that an Ag cat? Like in Northern Missouri, the planes are white.

KK: Some of them are white, but you have to have them custom made. If you want anything other than yellow, you have to tell the factory ahead of time.

EK: So it's fascinating to me, like, why you're doing this. how you got into it? Like, did you, you know, we've heard a couple of stories already. But because it's uncommon, like, not that many people are like, what, 2000 AG pilots in the country? Maybe?

KK: I think there's around 1300 registered ag pilots. And they've gotten employed, I think it's more than 2000. Probably closer to three.

EK: but still that's not very many when you think about it. So how do you get into it? That's the deal. I mean, how did you get into it?

KK: Well, my older brother was always fascinated with it. So he, he always flew and he helped me get started flying. And then they bought a Pawnee for the farm. And then he got started spraying

pecans. And found out there's a need for it. One thing led to another... And also the three guys that used to work here had retired around this area. I guess

EK: Did you go to school? Because like we've heard yes and no's.

KK: There is schools, but I didn't go to a school.

EK: Do you think that's common that people around here didn't?

KK: The older, older people that's been around a while have not been to school. Nowadays it's common.

EK: So, what's the process of learning then?

KK: Just buy you a cheap tail airplane fly it around. [laughter] It helps if you know somebody that's done it prior. That will show you some...

EK: And that was your brother?

KK: Well, no he met up with a with somebody older that used to spray down in [unintelligible] Texas. Showed us some ropes.

EK: So, our other guy...

KK: In fact, he did pipeline patrol with him. Oh, so he flew with him a lot, surveying the pipeline, which he worked for the company for a while so he flew with him a lot.

EK: So did you like did you just learn to fly like initially like you didn't go to like a flight school.

00:05:00

KK: Yeah, I went to flight school. You have to get your license. You have to do that. Go to anybody with an instructor.

EK: Where did you go for that?

KK: Joplin. So I got my pilot's license, then I'm instrument rated. When you're commercial you have to have that spray.

EK: The instrument rating?

KK: No, you have to have a commercial license.

EK: Oh, okay. How many hours is that?

KK: Uh, 250, Total.

EK: That's quite a few hours isn't it.

KK: Yeah, it takes a couple years to get just to get your license.

EK: So then, after you get the commercial license, then...?

KK: Then you have to learn how to spray. Which you have to be able to fly a tail airplane. If you look here, you see the difference. To the landing gear on that. On this yellow plane here? The center of gravity will be somewhere right in here. And the landing gear on that one is behind the center of gravity. It's just it's not hard. It's it's a little different.

EK: In what way?

KK: All your weight is behind you. When you land versus this one your weight is in front of you.

EK: Is that because it has to balance out the weight of the load?

KK: I don't know why they make ag planes thataway, it's just... I think just keep the nose up in case you're working off of rougher areas. Like gravel and things

EK: So on the way down here...

KK: You have to, you have to be able to fly a tail-wheel airplane, I guess I'm trying to say

EK: is that what you learned on when you got your commercial?

KK: No. Not many people have tailwheel time. Usually it's a tri-set gear over here like this one.

EK: So, it's a whole different deal.

KK: Yes and no, we... it's not hard. It's just it's a little harder to learn. It's a little harder to control it.

EK: Did you have any... How old were you when you started this?

KK: 25

EK: So had you done at some other jobs?

KK: Yeah, I worked. I have my brother's farm.

EK: Okay. That seems to be like a common deal.

KK: It helps us to grow up in agriculture. Yeah. Then you know, Then you know what purpose you have out there, what you're spraying? You're not learning all that. But that's another thing you have to know. You have to know what, what crops are what? what they look like, what you're spraying for. Or seeding for

EK: What about these windmills? What have they done? What have they done to your flying?

KK: It just makes it more difficult. You have to watch it. Makes it harder turn.

EK: Have they cut into like the fields that you've been spraying and stuff?

KK: Yeah, all right in the middle of it. A lot of it.

EK: That's kind of disappointing, isn't it?

KK: At first I was kind of kind of shook up with that. But they don't seem to be too bad. One thing about these windmills are really tall.

EK: So do you fly under them?

KK: Yeah, you can stay under them. These are these are some of the tallest ones in the world.

EK: I was watching them on the way down here.

KK: Because they're like 200 feet from the ground, bottom the blade.

EK: How far above the ground are you when you're dropping... When you're spraying?

KK: Anywhere from waist height, to probably about the height of that ceiling, which is ideal. Yeah, you get too low and it fans out too much. If that makes sense. Because when you're spraying it ain't... it's not just the with the booms. It's, it's the vortices pulling it out. When you spray it because you go into the air 100 mile an hour and it has wings producing lift.

EK: How do you learn all that stuff?

KK: I learned and I got my license, and then you just pretended to.

EK: So do you have to... What do you do to get a license to be an ag pilot

KK: You don't really get a license you just, you just have to get legal with the state.

EK: So it's like a certification type process or something

KK: You have to get a commercial applicators license. That's a license to handle chemical.

EK: so excuse me, I'm probably backing up over myself but, did you have to go to school to do it? Or did you just like learn from somebody...

KK: To get a license to spray?

EK: Yeah, to do this.

KK 9:13

You have to learn from somebody, or go to school. Somebody... He has to learn from somebody that knows

EK: Is that what you did?

KK: Yes.

EK: You can say anything I mean it's no big deal. I mean, I know that there's like the legal way or the formal way and then there's the other way

KK: Well, you got get insurance and it's hard to get insurance if you're if you're a low time pilot. Etcetera. But it's hard to get into without at least knowing somebody. Dusty did it.

EK: I'm curious, like, the other way because he, you know, he was like wide open about how he did it.

KK: Back up to what did what Dusty did too, he also bought a cheaper plane, it was a Pawnee. he wasn't upon it right. And he piddled... I say piddle but he...

00:10:00

EK: No, that's good.

KK: For himself and other farmers so he didn't do a whole lot and he got some experience in and then then moved on up. That's how you have to do it. So he just did it.

EK: Is that the way you did it?

KK: Yes. Maybe not the exact same way but, but same scenario

EK: Because I've like, before we started this I read up on like, they're like these whole schools and then you go through a mentor, ship and all that stuff.

KK: You can go to a school and you won't know a whole lot when you're out. Still gonna have to get some experience. Yeah, but you'll, you'll know what, what, what to do.

EK: How do you find like, do you borrow somebody's plane?

KK: You usually have to buy one.

EK: So it's a major commitment before you even really know what you're doing.

KK: Yeah, you don't have - you don't have to go out and buy one like this. You can buy an older plane.

EK: Which one did you start with?

KK: A Pawnee.

EK: Oh, yeah, that's right. You said a Pawnee. I wish I knew what a Pawnee looked like.

KK: A Pawnee is just like this one, but its much... it's a lot littler. They made a bunch of them in the 60s and then they don't spray with them much anymore.

EK: Does anybody around here have one?

KK: Yeah. Booneville. Brad Slaughter's got three. My brothers have a bunch of them.

EK: Yeah. So your brother's fly?

KK: Yeah.

EK: They do this too. This is what they do. That's interesting.

KK: Well, then they farm.

EK: Yeah. It seems to go together. The whole farming flying business. But the only thing I really have to compare it to is like truck driving. Oh, is that a Pawnee? Okay.

KK: A Pawnee was the real deal back in the 60s? But but one of these will park four of them. It will take four them to keep up with this one.

EK: So one of the things, too, that I'm curious about is that the correlation between farming on the ground and farming in the sky seems to be like this sort of symbiotic relationship. I mean, one can't exist without the other. And I'm wondering if the, and maybe this is, like, I don't know. But you strike me as a thinking guy. And...

KK: Oh, I do? I wouldn't go that far.

EK: [laughter] come on. [pause] And then so I'm wondering if, like, politics in general, have a big effect on your job, like foreign policies that, you know, and things like that? Do they have a positive or negative effect on what you do?

KK: Well prices has has an effect, is that politics?

EK: Yeah, it is.

KK: And then there's also subsidies, like cover crops and things, that can play a plus.

EK: Because they're... cover crops are....

KK: That's something I can do in the fall in standing corn. Like for example, radishes is a big thing. Now you see those?

EK: Like, radishes? Or turnips?

KK: Both. Radish, turnips.

EK: Because we've ended up with some turnips in a pasture.

KK: Dusty do that?

EK: He might have.

KK: There, that's for erosion. That just depends on what what plan they're on.

EK: So if the farmer gets a subsidy for a cover crop, then that positively affects what you do. Yes. Yeah. How about like the year to year, the year to year? profits? Does that affect your profit margin as well?

KK: Yes. Like, like I said, For prices, and weather. Weather is a big one.

EK: Weather it's huge, isn't it?

KK: Yeah. I mean, say I have some beans this tall, they don't want to drive through them. But they're only seven or \$8 a bushel. Then they might drive through them and not pay me.

EK: That's not good.

KK: Well, no, it changes every year. Or if the weather is not looking good. It's looking like it's not gonna rain later on and go from making 50 bushel to 20 bushel.

EK: What's this year look like?

KK: Right now it looks good. I have no idea what's gonna happen. July and August. right now it's looking good. The wheat and everything is looking good.

EK:What are you doing right now? Are you working?

KK: Remodeling the house and eradicating these mice in here.

EK: Are you so your house and mice... So are you flying at all? Have you started that yet?

KK: I did a seeding job last, last week. And then I had a couple of students that I'm working with and this one. And I was working with Jackson here up until the pandemic.

EK: That's right because of his 90 year old grandmother. She is a liability but she's vaccinated now. So life is looking up for all of us, I think

00:15:00

KK: I'm ready for this pandemic to be over.

EK: Yeah, we're way ready for it to be over.

KK: Then I've got a couple of jobs lined up in a week or two, possibly.

EK: And that's like seeding?

KK: No, that's spraying wheat, for early weeds in bed. And chickweed things like that.

EK: When does the...

KK: That little pretty purple flower? I spray and kill that. [laughter] Sorry, go ahead.

EK: You hate it. [laughter] It's your job. When does it get really busy like the...

KK: It gets really busy usually middle of June. First week of June, second week of June for corn.

EK: And lasts until when?

KK: A lot of times they don't quit until October.

EK: Yeah, that's I was thinking

KK: But June through middle of July is really busy.

EK: And your days are how long?

KK: Monday to Monday. Sometimes, Sometimes til after dark. Yeah.

EK: Sam, do you have any questions? 'Cause I saw you writing over there.

SK: One thing that Dusty talked about? He called it like the the, from July to whenever you quit. He called it the 75 days of hell because it's

KK: Dusty did have, he did have a rough summer. I guess that's how you's say it.

SK: Do you have like this similar schedule? Like when you... every day... Get up at like four in the morning and spray, fly for 14 hours?

KK: Yes, it's a window. Usually you want to get it done in the morning. I think ...I like to get done before the thermals and all that starts bouncing around.

EK: What time does that happen?

KK: In the middle of summer? I think it gets dark daylight about five, 5:30. I usually get up 430.

EK: That's pretty early.

KK: Get things ready.

EK: Yeah. and ready to go as soon as...

KK: And then I've learned to take naps. In the heat of the day. If you get winded out or if you quit for whatever reason, I usually go take a nap.

EK: Do you do it all by yourself or do you have somebody working with you?

KK: Now my wife's oldest boy helps helps me full time. He was supposed to be here. I just forgot about this thing.

EK: That would have been... Yeah, I wish that he had we could comeback if he wanted...

KK: If you want to come back tomorrow, he'll be here.

EK: We could well, no, tomorrow we can't. Well, maybe I don't know. We'll see. That was one of the things I was wondering about because it's like a over the road truck driver. You know, like

you've got it. It's you and the machine. And I didn't know like I was wondering if like you did all your business. But obviously you said your wife and your son...

KK: Yeah, there's a lot... you mixed chemicals. It might take 40 minutes for the next load of chemical. If I had to get out and do that, and I'm sitting there waiting 40 minutes. Whereas he can mix the next load while I'm spraying.

EK: Does your wife do that too?

KK: She used to, then then he started doing it. We get along a lot better. You got to keep track of the wind and all that when you do a job and the date, if we ever have a problem.

EK: What's it called when it drifts?

KK: Drift. Yeah, the drift or temperature inversion that can make a drift? Is that what you...?

EK: No, I was just thinking about it. It just... there's so many things you have to think about. And like there's this whole new set of vocabulary, you know that I just was...

KK: That's not my strong point. It's just simple words. Like Go for it.

EK: Yeah, no, that's fine. But just you know...

KK: Yeah, just drift. You can't drift certain stuff on certain fields.

EK: Right. Do you call ahead of time and let somebody know if you're going to be spraying by them?

KK: If it's something that's going to hurt the adjacent crop? And I always call the farmer and see if it's like for example, if you spraying beans for one farmer, and the next one is beans, you make sure they're Liberty Link or our Roundup Ready. The product you're spraying. We'll make sure that drift wouldn't hurt it.

EK: What about the people? Do you worry about the people?

KK: Yeah, you don't want to drift on people.

EK: Yeah. Is there any other job you would do besides this? Have you done any other jobs other than farming in this?

KK: Yeah, I hauled lab work a couple years ago at night.

EK: Oh, in the plane. But flying is it for you then.

KK: That's that's about all I've done since I was in my early twenties.

00:20:00

EK: Lab work like delivering, like transplants and things like that. Wow. That's impressive. That's huge.

KK: It was always at night though.

EK: Why?

KK: Because I guess they do all that the test during the day. Then they gather all that stuff up in the evening then you got to get to the lab that night as quick as possible.

EK: So like, where would you do that? like would you go to Kansas City mostly...?

KK: Kansas City was where the lab was, so they let me keep the plane here. And I went to Little Rock and picked it all up, took it to Kansas City. It was fun, it was just too much with with this

EK: Trying to maintain like the spraying as well as the... This as well as that.

KK: Yeah, I mean, I do this all summer and busy and then and then do that in the wintertime.

EK: Do you do your own mechanics?

KK: Some, what you can, I mean, there's... You have to be licensed to do certain stuff.

EK: Right. Dusty said he takes his plane to Louisiana. Is that what you do too?

KK: No, I, um...the engine, I have it worked on by a guy in West Memphis. And then I use a local mechanic here to help me do the work on the airframe.

EK: The guy in Eldorado?

KK: Not him. No. That's Shane, right?

EK: He didn't give us his name. I just, you know, it's curious. Because like you, again, you don't know that these people are doing these things, you know. And so it's curious that there are enough people that you don't go to the same person. Which I find interesting.

SK: It's kind of like the shadow jobs.

KK: That you don't see people do?

EK: Yeah. But you can't function without him.

KK: Like, like there's different... There's different, there's different stages you have to do on the motor with inspections and things.

EK: Like what?

KK: Fuel nozzels for example, you have to have those flow checked every 300 hours. I usually take it to Memphis and have that done.

EK: Do you fly just to get places just to have fun?

KK: Yeah. Got this one here.

EK: That's what this one's for?

KK: You want to go in a ride in it sometime?

EK: I'd love to.

KK: It's kind of windy today.

EK: Yeah. Today's not probably not the best day.

KK: It'd be rough today.

EK: Jack said the sock was stretched out at 25 miles an hour.

KK: I think its more like 35

EK: Is it? I would love to Yeah. I used to fly. I went to school in Colorado. So I would fly from Denver to Aspen in an Otter.

KK: I know what an Otter is.

EK: Yeah, over the mountains. Yeah. I loved it. It was pretty fun.

KK: They used to do it in the morning. Or do you remember?

EK: It was nightttime usually, I usually flew... It was generally dark also. So I don't... does that make a difference?

KK: It'd be smoother. I think. I think the mountain turbulence gets rough.

EK: Like when the it's bright and sunny?

KK: When all heat starts rising. Yeah, I don't have any experience with mountains.

EK: But the same thing is, it happens off of fields, doesn't it? Different fields give off different amounts of heat.

KK: And I think it'd be much worse than a mountains, from what I understand.

EK: Yeah. I'm sure it probably is. Yeah. So like, do you consciously think about that?

KK: What's that? The mountains? No I don't get much...[laughter]

EK: Thermals and heat coming off of fields and all that stuff?

KK: Yeah, it throws you around when... As it gets hotter. When you're coming in over tree rows. You get the thermals and the wind changes directions. It's not a smooth ride like everybody thinks it is.

EK: No, it's probably not. It looks smooth, though. It's very impressive from the ground.

KK: Dusty said... I think he can compare it to bull riding.

EK: It doesn't seem to bother him. But he seems pretty deliberate. I mean, he's, well, you know, he's alive. So it's... that's the important thing. He said there's always a landing. There always has to be a landing. I'm not sure what he means, what you think he means?

KK: I think be ready to land at any time in case something happens.

EK: I don't know. I'm not sure if like it's one of those.

KK: Are you committed to landing? what goes up must come down.

EK: Yeah. And you want to you want to make sure it's there. I don't know. What else there was something else. But whatever.

SK: I was curious about like, because, obviously, there's always going to be something come up at some point, while flying, and like the incidents or accidents that you've had you've had while flying.

00:25:05

KK: You're asking me if I've had any or...? (**SK:** Yeah) I've had an engine failure in Pawnee. Wouldn't call it engine failure. A carburetor (**EK:** Just quit?) Yeah, a little piece of the carb heat box broke away and went up into venturi. Same as quit motor wouldn't run.

EK: Yeah. so what did you do?

KK: I'd landed right and right in front of me but...

EK: Where were you?

KK: I was on the field I was seeding. There was a big terrace and a fence, so I went through that. It tore things up a little bit. but yeah, I think that's about the only real incident I've had

EK: And you have to know where all the wires are.

KK: Yeah, I've never hit a wire.

EK: Is that a common thing for people to hit a wire?

KK: It is, shall find some wood to knock on?

EK: Well, that's just you know, being careful, unless they put something up and don't tell you.

KK: Well, you always look at an old barn or, you know, a field will always have a have an old house, homestead, or a barn, or machine shed. Always look at that real close because it's getting power or was getting power somehow. So I always look for the transformer box.

EK: Do you get maps? Do you sit down before like before every flight and look at the map and are these...or do you do repeats enough that you know?

KK: Both. Around here I've done so much repeated stuff. I can just glance at the map. Like the other day when I did a seeding job, I forgot that the two maps for the last customer I was doing, but I remember glancing at it before I took off. I didn't even worry about it I just went and did it.

EK: How far north and how far south do you go? Like what's your what's your territory?

KK: In this area? About 30 mile all directions. But not... not 30 miles, probably more like 20 all directions

EK: Dusty said that there's enough work, like there's not a lot of competition in this stretch is... Do you think that's true?

KK: Yeah.

EK: Everyone's got their own little spot...

KK: Got their own customers that they work for. And then if I get busy call Dusty or... to come help me or anybody that can. dusty. He had me help him a lot this summer.

EK: Yeah. Does poaching go on in more crowded areas? Like undermining and under-bidding and things like that?

KK: More so in rice country. Like, Arkansas, where there's a lot a lot of these planes there. There's more of that to deal with there.

EK: When Sam was in Bowling Green, we would drive you know, across southern Missouri towards Sikeston.

KK: Yeah, that's all rice country. What... Did you see a lot of planes in there? Maybe?

EK: A few. Yeah. Yeah. And I just was when you were talking about that. I was thinking, I wonder if it happens there. Probably.

KK: more so there. But if they do good work, then they've got they've got their customers, right. One of the... if you eat much rice, one of these planes has been over it probably three or four times. We do.

EK: It's pretty exciting. I mean, I think it is. Dusty always flies over and wakes us up in the morning.

KK: You must live close by him, then.

EK: Yeah. Not too far. Do you have people that come running out and wave to you?

KK: Yeah. And some of them don't like it so I try to... For the most part, people's okay with it.

EK: What's wrong with them anyway?

KK: I don't know. It gets worse when you get more into a residential area like Springfield. Then they don't understand what you're doing. Seems like there's always problems.

EK: Like what kind?

KK: They just... they think you're flying recklessly out of control.

EK: Do they make phone calls?

KK: Yeah, they can they call the FAA. It's not bad here but, like, if you get over into Lawrence County, more towards Monett, to where it's really commercialized and developed.

EK: So you've had that happen before?

KK: Yeah, yes. in those areas.

EK: So does the FFA [FAA] have to follow up on it?

KK: They'll just give you a call and ask you what she was doing. (**EK:** Working?) Yeah. And usually, that's it. I'd say as I say try to avoid them.

EK: I hadn't even thought about that aspect of it.

KK: There's a farmer I work for over by Jack Henry. You know where that is? (**EK:** I know where Monett is) But Jack Henry is a big company over there. He's got some fields right next to their company.

00:30:00

KK: They always complain every time I work over there. So a lot of times we do it on a Sunday and they don't even know about it.

EK: That's the way to do it, I guess. That's like... how far is Monett? Monett's like 60 miles maybe?

KK: Yeah. This'd be Barton county then Monett would be Lawrence County or next county catty-corner. Oh, Monett the county line, I think is right in the middle of town.

EK: So, is there anything you want the world to know about what you do? I mean, what you just shared, I think is pretty important.

KK: I think what I just said there is plenty.

EK: Yeah. That it's essential. You know, you're doing your job. Yeah. Wind it up?

KK: I don't think the world really understands the whole food chain. Do they know how it's grown?

EK: I know, I don't think they do.

KK: Or you walk into the farmers market. And you see these lush? photos of lettuce and things? how it looks a little. So happy there.

EK 31:14

Yeah. And how did it get there, Mr. Kingsley? [laughter] You know how it got there. I mean, if you don't do your job, then it's not going to look like that. No, I don't think they do. I, I have thought that for a long time, that... This isn't about me. But I spent a couple of years driving over the road, hauling meat to different parts and then bringing produce back from California. And that was a

thought that I had a lot, that people have no idea, which is the importance of what we're doing here talking to you. You know, it's important what you do. It's essential.

KK: Organic is a big thing. Now, I don't know how they're how they're doing all that.

EK 32:09

Do you I mean, there's organic fertilizer, there is organic... Can you, like, drive over and drop a load of ladybugs?

KK: No. I've heard people talk about like you have.

EK: Yeah. I mean, I don't know if it's possible. I don't know. Would you ever consider...

KK: Well that's kind of where cover crops is that's kind of a form of organic. Getting the soil back in balance is supposed to help with weed control. I guess that could be a form of it.

EK: You probably have to like, well, you would have to change out the hopper completely, wouldn't you?

KK: Yeah, we're... that's actually set up this to spread seed or fertilizer. See it drops the chute right there, then up front, there, it's open to the wind. And it just blows it through each vane.

EK: Is that where everything comes out? Or...?

KK: Well, no spray you gotta put a pump on. And then the wind drives the pump.

EK: And does it come out? Like, are there little ports that are

KK: You put the booms on. They're over here on the thing

EK: Is that what they're called, booms?

KK: Yeah, well, nozzles. Watch you don't step in this glue here.

EK: Oh, here they are.

KK: Yeah, you put them on. And here's the pump that would run the chemical.

EK: Well, you have to have help, don't you?

KK: Yes. I don't know... Did Dusty have a spreader on or did he have a spray system on?

SK: He had a spray system on.

EK: Yeah, he said he had sprayed a couple of days ago.

KK: I think he did. Yeah, sprayed some wheat. Yes.

EK: So do you have to like change these out every day?

KK: Oh well it depend. Sometimes if you've got some spraying to do then, you usually want to spray in the morning, then you gotta switch it over into fertilizer in the afternoon, or late afternoon by around 10 o'clock in the morning. I don't like to switch every day because it's more work. Yeah, sometimes you got to a lot of work.

EK: It's really a pretty plane, isn't it?

KK: Yeah. Well, this one's pretty new. It's a 2020 model. Like I just got a February of last year.

EK: Really? Yeah. And it's brand new. (**KK:** it was new) You're the only one who has ever flown it?

KK: It had two hours on it. Somebody flew it two hours just to test fly it for the factory.

EK: Is this the first brand new when you've had?

KK: No, its the second one?

EK: What was the other brand new one?

KK: One just like this one? One? A 402B. The 402 is the gallons you can haul. It's a 400 gallon plane.

EK: Right. Is that... that's the designation? Yeah, so Dusty's is 500. So then, he can haul 500 gallons. Is that right?

00:35:00

KK: In the right conditions, I don't think he'll do every day all day long.

EK: Do you? Do you load it up full? (**KK:** Yeah.) Is this plane... Why wouldn't you get a five?

KK: More money. That's why I didn't get it. And I didn't have this hanger at the time, I had nowhere to put a 502.

EK: So does it also depend on what kind of fields?

KK: I think a 502 is the most popular selling plane, like I know it is. So I think it maneuvers almost as good as this one. And you get another 100 out of it. So that's why it's the most desired plane.

EK: I see. So you can go further and stay out longer and be more...

KK: More productive versus a bigger plane flying. Like the 602, and the 802. They're more docile, and they're harder turn around. They're not good for smaller fields.

EK: So you don't have to tell me what this costs. But is it cost effective to upgrade?

KK: Well, it's several 100,000 more, I think.

EK: So, the income aspect of the job? Does it... Can you make a decent living doing this?

KK: If you got the work? Yes.

EK: It seems like everyone around here does have the work. Because like farming, you know, it's like good years, bad years. And if you don't have the subsidies the way farming does, then you're completely dependent on your ability to maintain, aren't you? And do it work your butt off?

KK: Yeah. But there always seem to be something to do. I've noticed anyhow.

EK: That's good. Sure, is pretty good. Just to even look at it. Well, well, I know we will think of other things, but okay. We know where you are.

KK: We sure didn't get nothree hours.

EK: No, well, Dusty is like, yeah, you know. Do you think it would be good to talk to Mason? Does he have a whole different perspective?

KK: He could have Yeah, it'd be I think it'd be good. He I'm sure he talks more than I do. Well, we still live here. Okay. Yeah, you cut it or you play it all?

EK: No, we can cut it. Okay. Yeah. We can, like there are things that we're going to cut from me. Because I've had to talk more than I did yesterday. I... We sat back with dusty, you know... (**KK:** He just talked.) Oh, yeah. So, but I had to talk more. But it's like, no big deal. We just cut me out and...

KK: I think he's done reality shows, hasn't he?

SK: Yeah. I did have a question about like the cockpit size.

KK: You want to get in it?

SK: Sure.

EK: Are you sure? it's kind of small!

SK: That's... versus... like the 402 versus the 502.

KK: 502. It is smaller in there. Just because the plane itself is narrower. I think his probably this much wider. You can get in there if you want.

SK: I might, I might get stuck. That's probably okay.

EK: That's nice of you to offer though. Thank you. JACK, are there any questions?

KK: One thing about it is with the cheaper plane, It didn't matter so much what you did. Now you kind of depend upon you got to do so much to make all that work. Insurance and payments.

EK: So you feel the pressure more?

KK: I mean, I don't I try not to let pressure bother me. But yeah, there's definitely more pressure there. Just before it didn't matter if you would do because need to make a living, but it didn't matter how much you did. Because everything was paid for. But then again that's something, that older stuff. You can't do it all either because it breaks down on your margin on a newer modern plane.

EK: So do you trade it in? Or do you sell it to somebody who's just getting into the business?

KK: Um, both. The dealer that I bought it from helped me sell it to, uh, off in Iowa? They wasn't just getting into the business.

SK: So how often is it that someone in this business buys a brand new plane?

KK: This is serial number 1420. My last one was 13... 1384, and most of those went to Brazil.

00:40:00

KK: But in the United States, most people buy the 502. So that's how many 402's were made from 13 to 20.

EK: So, you mentioned insurance, is it hard to get insured?

KK: It is for a low time pilot.

EK: But not you?

KK: Well...

EK: Are there certain companies that cover ag pilots.

KK: Yeah, but I don't I don't really get into the company too much. Who does it? I just go through, like Midcontinent. There's only two companies that you would deal with as far as the underwriter goes, around here, that'd be Hardy and Midcontinent. And then they find you the best deal they can. I think I said that right.

EK: I think so. It sounds right to me.

KK: For seeking out actual insurance company. And we don't do that. No. We just let let's midcontinent or...

EK: When you buy the plane?

KK: Well, no, when you when you call them to quote you a policy. But the banker makes sure you have insurance. He won't let you go without insurance.

EK: Have you known your banker all your life?

KK: No. Just about seven or eight years. 10 years.

EK: Because I didn't know if that was like, a hard thing to, you know...

KK: It would be starting out because he's going to want to know how much... what kind of income you're going to bring? What have you done past years? What numbers can you produce?

EK: All of those things.

KK: For us, it's not too bad because we've done that repetitively.

SK: I had a question. I thought of it, but I didn't write it down. So now it's gone.

EK: We can come back and do Mason.

KK: Dusty have any close calls?

SK: He did. did say that at one point. He was doing a fairly small field and clipped the tops of the trees with the with the landing gear. And...

EK: But he was ready for it.

KK: But he knew it was coming. [laughter]. That's good. [more laughter] Good, if it surprised him, I'd think less of him. It means he knew he made a mistake before he got there

SK: Do you ever just like, I mean It's not ideal to have these those moments, but do you ever have like when you're flying or you ever just have like a "Oh Fuck" moment? Something that you... It's not necessarily a huge mistake, but it's something that is important.

KK: Yeah, I think I know what you're saying. Like, you take off. And you just get in the air. And you look at Oh, shoot, I don't have my nozzle set. Is what you're saying? Or you get way out in the field and you realize didn't have your nozzle set. Come on clear back, land loaded. Yeah, that happens sporadically. I think that would be what I would compare to what you're trying to say. Or you get out to do a job and it looks like it could rain. Yeah. And you don't know whether to go ahead and do it or quit and come back?

EK: Are you instrument rated, too?

KK: Yes.

SK: How does that make a difference in the way you fly?

KK: It has nothing to do with spraying. Instrument rating is a totally different game. You have to... That's more for the corporate and airline thing. Instrument rating, you file a flight plan. You pick up your clearance, and then you just you do what you're told.

EK: Do you ever do that? Do you ever fly instrument...

KK: When I worked for that like lab company, I did.

EK: Oh, okay. Well, yeah, 'cause it was nighttime. Yeah. Yeah. Do you ever think about maybe getting out of this and just being a pilot for hire?

KK: It has crossed my mind. Yes. Especially before this pandemic, because there's such a shortage of airline pilots right now. It was hard to get into in the years past, but now it wouldn't be. Because all the old timers have retired, the Vietnam guys.

EK: Oh, yeah. They're in their 70s.

KK: pushing 70 now.

00:45:00

KK: Then the military don't run them through like they used to.

EK: They don't?

KK: I don't... I don't think so. No, not like we did in Vietnam, or the seventies.

EK: I didn't realize there was a pilot shortage. Pilots and teachers

KK: Used to, the airlines would require some kind of bachelor's degree, now they've waived all that. If you've got experience, they'll take you.

EK: So you could ostensibly do that. Yes. Is it tempting?

KK: Yeah, but I don't think I'd ever do it.

EK: You'd have to work for somebody else.

KK: I'd have to work for somebody else. It's a lot... the money usually isn't there when you work for somebody else.

SK: You'd have to listen to them when they told you what to do.

KK: And well you got all them procedures and rules to go by.

SK: Yeah. With this you can just, you know what needs to be done?

KK: Yeah, I mean, rules are there for a reason. Safety is good, but if you miss something, one thing, you can get a violation real quick.

EK: Does your wife... that's not what I mean. Is she supportive? She obviously is because she's helping you run the business.

KK: Yes. She worries a lot.

EK: That's... See that's kind of what I was wondering if she worries when you're out flying and... because what wife wouldn't?

KK: If I don't check in I hear about it.

EK: 'Cause, you worry her! So, do you let her know when you when you take off and when you land?

KK: I don't know about that that often. But yeah, I keep her posted throughout the day, what's going on.

EK: Yeah, that's just the thing to do. Yep.

KK: Speaking of the corporate part, there's actually a couple planes here that do charter work. Because everybody's scared to fly now because the virus. So, I thought about maybe trying to do

some winter work there. I don't know if it will or won't happen, but that's something I can do in my off season.

EK: Yep. Most ag pilots, are they instrument rated?

KK: No, very few.

EK: I didn't think so. So that makes you unique, then.

KK: That adds a little more to me, I guess.

EK: Yeah, it does. makes you...

KK: More rounded. Yeah. I'm also an instructor.

EK: Yes. You are, which I think is a neat thing.

SK: How many Ag Pilots are instructors?

KK: Probably not very many.

EK: Okay, we're gonna wind it up.

KK: Instructing is one of the hardest things, I think. Yeah, you got you got to worry about what somebody else is doing. I'm trying to think what they're doing. What are they thinking?

EK: Think twice? It's like, making decisions for two. But you do it. I mean, obviously you enjoy it.

KK: I do. I don't mean I don't do a lot. I do a couple students a year.

EK: Yeah. I know. It's changed Jack's life.

KK: Maybe we can continue on here.

EK: I hope so. I keep saying when are you going to go back, when are you going to go back so...

KK: He was about ready to solo! If he'd just loosen up

EK: He is a tense person.

KK: Yeah. High anxiety.

SK: Getting Jack to loosen up is...

EK: Good luck! If you can do that.

SK: Well, anything final to say?

KK: That's about all I got, I guess.

SK: Well, I just like to say thank you for talking with us and doing this. And really appreciate the time that you took to do this with us.

[end of interview chatter back and forth as the interview winds down and microphones are collected]

00:49:34