



Douglas County History Research Center Oral Histories

Oral History Interview with
Thomas Raymond Fallbach

Conducted on November 26, 2002, recorded in Sedalia, Colorado

Sedalia Historic Fire House Museum Oral History Project

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SUMMARY: Thomas Fallbach, born January 2, 1927 in Chicago, Illinois, attended St. Paul's Lutheran School, which was located in a farm community on the outskirts of Chicago. During high school he worked in a dog kennel where he learned to train Doberman Pinscher dogs to be attack dogs and he acted as the enemy during dog show exhibitions at fairs. At that time he also played the trombone and performed in local shows and on the WLS National Barn Dance, a radio program. After graduation, he worked for Douglas Aircraft as a riveter assistant before he joined the U. S. Coast Guard where he became a diver. His final tour of duty was as the radio operator aboard the Nantucket, the lightship anchored eighty miles off Nantucket Island. After he got out of the service, he owned and operated a gas station in Chicago and then worked for a Chicago hardware supply company before he started his own company. Eventually he transferred to the Denver area, where he and his family lived for a while before moving

MACHANN: Oh, so you just started a whole new life.

FALLBACH: I knocked the 'er' off just for her.

MACHANN: Say, She should feel pretty privileged.

FALLBACH: I don't know... *[joking]*

MACHANN: And what was your grandmother's name?

FALLBACH: Grandma... No... *[laughs]*

MACHANN: Grandma...

FALLBACH: My grandmother's name was... is this recording?

MACHANN: Oh yeah, but we just ignore it...cause it... I think it is...maybe it isn't.

FALLBACH: Yeah, it's plugged in... Grandmother's name, [long pause]

MACHANN: See, I ask hard questions...

FALLBACH: I don't know.

MACHANN: Well, what was your mom and dad's name?

FALLBACH: My mother's name was Elsa Blumenthal, and my dad's name was Thomas Jacob.

MACHANN: So you were named after your dad?

FALLBACH: No, my name was Raymond Thomas Fallbacher. And I didn't want Raymond. When I was real small I wanted to be like my dad, I guess, and so I became a Tom.

MACHANN: Did they ever call you Tommy?

FALLBACH: Tommy. My aunts never got used to the change, and they called me Raymond, and I didn't know who they were talking to.

MACHANN: And they'd catch you by both ears and kiss you on both cheeks, and you'd run and hide. [*laughter*]

FALLBACH: I had lots of aunts and uncles.

MACHANN: Now where were you born?

FALLBACH: Chicago.

MACHANN: Chicago, Illinois. And you grew up in the Chicago school systems.

FALLBACH: No. I grew up, the only Chicago school system that I went to was kindergarten, and then we moved out to the sticks, as they call that. It was right on the outskirts of Chicago, we were right on the border line. It was still Chicago post office, and I went to a parochial school. It was St. Paul's Lutheran School.

MACHANN: Oh, Lutheran.

FALLBACH: Yeah, for eight years.

MACHANN: What was your date of birth?

FALLBACH: January 2nd, 1927.

MACHANN: Oh, you've got a birthday coming up here pretty quick. Do you have any fond or un-fond memories of your school days?

FALLBACH: I've got lots of fond memories of the school. That I went to I grew up with kids that it was a farm community, and we were in just a small neighborhood of homes and we were surrounded with farms and so most of my friends were farmers. And we did a lot of playing in the hay lofts on the farms, and helping weed carrots and stuff like that. They'd pay me 25 cents a day or evening after school or something.

MACHANN: Did you have brothers and sisters?

FALLBACH: I had one sister.

MACHANN: Older? Younger?

FALLBACH: She's two years younger than I am.

MACHANN: So it was just the two of you?

FALLBACH: Just the two of us.

MACHANN: Now, when you graduated from high school, what did you do?

FALLBACH: During the days in high school I had quite a few jobs.

MACHANN: Oh, you did? What did you do?

FALLBACH: Okay, the main job, my third year in high school I got a job in a dog kennel. After keeping the kennels clean, he showed me how to train the dogs.

MACHANN: What kind of dogs were they?

FALLBACH: All breeds, mostly hunting type dogs and Doberman Pinschers. He was a German guy, and he introduced the Doberman Pinschers to the Chicago area. Became very famous, and during the war I was trained to go on exhibitions with these dogs, mostly to army camps to show them how we trained guard dogs.

MACHANN: The Doberman Pinschers.

FALLBACH: With Doberman Pinschers.

MACHANN: Now, what was this gentleman's name?

FALLBACH: Ludwig Gessner.

MACHANN: And how long did you stay with him?

FALLBACH: For two years.

MACHANN: And this was during high school?

FALLBACH: Yeah.

MACHANN: And you did it in evenings or weekends?

FALLBACH: Evenings and weekends and the summer.

MACHANN: There was a lot of army bases and that kind of thing around Chicago. Did you do a lot of travelling into the surrounding states?

FALLBACH: Because he put on shows too with this WLS [*radio station*] National Barn Dance in Chicago, and we would travel to the county fairs and state fairs and put on our shows.

MACHANN: Was this mostly summer times?

FALLBACH: Yes, that was strictly summer.

MACHANN: Now what were your duties when you were in the shows?

FALLBACH: My duty was first of all to be the enemy, and the dog would attack me. Of course, I had a big gunny-sack padded sleeve, and I was the enemy, and the dog would attack, and he would tell the dog, "Off" and then if I tried to run away the dog would grab me immediately, they were so well trained. And that's what we showed the army, the U.S. Army.

MACHANN: Did they take some of the dogs then and incorporate them?

FALLBACH: No, no, these were too expensive dogs. We had to keep them. Those were his private stock.

MACHANN: But they trained other dogs?

FALLBACH: Yes they trained all different types, a lot of German Shepherds.

MACHANN: Well, I think it was during the Second World War that they started to use dogs, wasn't it? Because I know they used a lot of the in Korea and a lot of them in

Vietnam, but I don't think they used dogs up until that time period.

FALLBACH: Well, they did for guard duty.

MACHANN: Prisoners and that type of thing?

FALLBACH: Yeah, that's right.

MACHANN: Well, what were some of your other jobs? You said you went to the fairs and--

FALLBACH: Okay, when I graduated from high school, 1944, I went to work for Douglas Aircraft, and I was a riveter assistant, they call it a buckler. I buckled the rivets.

MACHANN: Oh, you put the rivets in--

FALLBACH: No, someone else put the rivets in [*from*] outside the plane, and I was inside with a steel plate.

MACHANN: Oh, so you really got them in, okay.

FALLBACH: Yeah, I was a buckler, a rivet buckler.

MACHANN: And then what did you do after? Did you stay as a rivet buckler for very long?

FALLBACH: I stayed until October of that year and then I joined the U. S. Coast Guard. The reason I joined the Coast Guard was I didn't want to be drafted a few months down the way, and I didn't want to get in the Army- I wanted to pick what I wanted. So I was going to pick the Navy. I went downtown Chicago to the recruiting place and right next door to the Navy recruiting place was the U. S. Coast Guard, and they had a big picture of Uncle Sam. He's pointing, he says, "Men of 17, we need you."

MACHANN: Oh, and you knew they were talking to you.

FALLBACH: I was 17.

MACHANN: So you turned in there instead of the Navy.

FALLBACH: That's right. I brought the papers home, and my dad says, "What?! You better wait, gee whiz, there's a war on. Wait till you're 18." So, my mother and father had to sign for me, and I went in the service.

MACHANN: Now, how much time did you sign up for?

FALLBACH: You just sign up for the duration of the war.

MACHANN: Oh, you did? So you didn't have like a three year or---

FALLBACH: No, this was war time.

MACHANN: And where did they send you for training?

FALLBACH: I went to Brooklyn, New York, Manhattan Beach Coast Guard Training Station. And let's see, that's October, November, December. About the first of January then in 1945 I got out of boot camp, and they sent me down to Miami to study engines, for the engine room, and I didn't like that. I didn't want to be below deck.

MACHANN: I don't blame you. I'd want to be up in the sun shine.

FALLBACH: Yeah, so, one of our classrooms, the chief came in, and he says, "We need volunteers for divers." My hand went up immediately. I didn't know what kind of diver, but--

MACHANN: Oh, so you didn't mind being under water, but you didn't want to be under the decks.

FALLBACH: So they sent me to Washington D.C. to the U. S. Navy Diving School. The Coast Guard was under the jurisdiction of the Navy during the war. And I went to U.S. Navy Diving School, which is deep-sea diving with the hard hat and the full uniform.

MACHANN: Where they have the umbilical cord?

FALLBACH: That's right, the hose comes down. So I was there when President Roosevelt died. Of course, every serviceman there was in the big parade procession. I was there in Washington D.C. at the Diving School when Germany surrendered. We

saw the White House, I'm sorry, the Capitol building, lit up that night, because they kept the lights off during the war. It was blacked out. So that was quite an occasion because we all stood outside because we heard on the radio that was what they were going to do, and thousands of people lined up and all of a sudden, there's our Capitol. It was gold. It was very touching.

MACHANN: I would say, that would be something you'd remember always.

MACHANN: So you had a couple of exciting things happen in Washington.

FALLBACH: Yes and then also, one Sunday morning, they didn't give me leave that weekend, so they gave us duty, and I had a big push corn broom, and I'm on the dock, just a-sweepin' and talkin' and swearing, and all these big limos pull up, and this little guy with a flat hat walks up, and he's getting on the U. S. Potomac, which is the president's yacht. Parked there. So, who's this guy? Truman!

MACHANN: Really! So you got to see the president close up and?

FALLBACH: I didn't know who he was. I was only 18 years old, I had never voted, I don't know. So here's Truman and some admirals and generals walking right by us and he looks at us with the brooms, *[some humorous motions happening]* but when he got close to the ship, then he got the guys at attention with the guns, and they're all dressed up. I'm in like, jeans and a corn broom.

MACHANN: Well, you were in your duty clothes! Tom, on your deep-sea diving, how much does that gear weigh?

FALLBACH: One hundred and eighty-six pounds.

MACHANN: I've seen them walk with those shoes, and I think they weigh about twenty pounds.

FALLBACH: Well, you're close: seventeen pounds each on land. And, the weight belt is 80 or 90 pounds. The breast plate, which is all copper, and the helmet, that's 54 pounds.

MACHANN: That would give you a headache and a neckache just--

FALLBACH: Well, you inflate yourself with air.

MACHANN: So it helps support--

FALLBACH: Once you're in the water you can be self-buoyant if you want.

MACHANN: You can adjust it yourself.

FALLBACH: You have to. The deeper you go, the more pressure compresses. More air you need.

MACHANN: Did you get to make some deep sea dives?

FALLBACH: Yes, then they sent me to Piney Point, Maryland. It's a torpedo testing range. Every torpedo that was put on the U.S. Fleet is tested first. They put a dummy war-head on, and they shoot them off barges, and they track 'em. Some of the mechanism isn't right, and they may just dance from side to side, or they may sink, so we would retrieve these, and they would tow them back and readjust them, and shoot them again. But they had dummy heads on them.

MACHANN: I know, but still-- Did you have to go down and drag them up after?

FALLBACH: What we would do, this was in Chesapeake Bay, and the area where they were testing these, the bottom was muck, mud. You'd be up to your waist in mud, trying to walk around. And, if you would find the torpedoes, let's say I'm a hundred feet under water, so then they'd attach a line to my, a lifeline, they call it, and the hose on the deck of the ship. They'd attach it, and I'd pull and pull and pull a hundred feet of hose all the way down to the line.

MACHANN: And, then you'd attach it to the--

FALLBACH: It had a turnbuckle in the front to attach it to the front of the torpedo, and this was almost pitch black work.

MACHANN: Oh, so you didn't see lots of beautiful fish and dolphins.

FALLBACH: You didn't see nothing! *[laughter]*

MACHANN: Here I was picturing you down there with the fish peeking in your mask.

FALLBACH: That would be beautiful. So I did that for a few months.

MACHANN: And then what did you do after that?

FALLBACH: Then they put me aboard a ship, and I was supposed to be the ship's diver, and when I saw the locker room of diving equipment, it was entirely different, it was shallow water diving stuff.

MACHANN: What kind of ship was it? Do you remember the name of it?

FALLBACH: This was an AOG aviation oil and gas tanker.

MACHANN: Ah, so you fueled other ships?

FALLBACH: We refueled the ships at sea.

MACHANN: What would they use a diver for?

FALLBACH: Emergency.

MACHANN: Oh, in case somebody fell overboard?

FALLBACH: No, in case we got hit with something that put a hole in the ship. I was supposed to go down and patch it.

MACHANN: Oh, well your riveting skills would have really--

FALLBACH: But, these weren't riveted. They gave us big plugs. We were supposed to plug it, but I have never seen anything so hopeless in my life.

MACHANN: You mean it was wishful thinking rather than anything practical.

FALLBACH: I don't know why they even had it, but I could see where they needed a diver. After we unloaded oil or gas after refueling at sea that hold has to be washed out.

MACHANN: And, you were the one.

FALLBACH: I would go down with an inch-and-a-half fire hose.

MACHANN: That would be dangerous work, wouldn't it?

FALLBACH: I don't know. I did it. I washed the bulkheads.

MACHANN: Did you refuel mostly ships, or were they airplanes too?

FALLBACH: Mostly aircraft carriers.

MACHANN: Oh.

FALLBACH: Because we had mostly aviation fuel and oil.

MACHANN: And then they in turn would fuel the planes from their stock. Sounds like a good system. Do you remember the name of that ship?

FALLBACH: The U.S. Klickatat. It's the name of an Indian river some place up in Oregon or some place.

MACHANN: It's a tribe of Indians [in the Pacific northwest].

FALLBACH: Is it? That's what I thought.

MACHANN: Then where did you go from there?

FALLBACH: As I said, the war was over when I was in Washington, and then I got on the Klickatat, and they decommissioned that ship. They didn't know where to put us because I didn't have enough points to get out of the service. Wasn't in long enough.

MACHANN: So you had to stay in.

FALLBACH: So they sent me out to Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and put me on a lightship. And, my duty there, they asked for a radio operator, and no one put their hands up, and I said, "I'll try it." So I was a radio operator. That's two months on, and they were supposed to give you a month off. It's anchored eighty miles off of

Nantucket Island.

MACHANN: Now is this a lightship that protects other ships from coral like a lighthouse?

FALLBACH: It's a floating lighthouse. And the shores along that area is rocky. It's rocky shoals. And in those days there was lightships all over--

MACHANN: The eastern seaboard?

FALLBACH: Eastern and western seaboards. When there was a war they took them all in.

MACHANN: What kind of lights did they use? Did they have big generators, were they electric, or were they gas lights?

FALLBACH: They were big electric lights; you could see them for miles and miles. And, not only that. It has a fog horn could be heard--

MACHANN: Even during the foggiest conditions?

FALLBACH: And, it actually went, "Bee-Oh". [*laughter*] And when it hit the low O, the ship rattled.

MACHANN: Oh, It was that much of a vibration. Oh, you didn't get much sleep then. Well, if your duties were mostly to keep the light on and the fog horns on, did you sleep during the day?

FALLBACH: Well, we sure could. We all had duties; we all had certain hours. Radio shack, eight hours on, and I forget how many off.

MACHANN: An awful lot of your duties it sounds like prepared you for working with the West Douglas County Fire Department with your inch-and-a-half hose and your radio work.

FALLBACH: The other thing that I got aboard ship-- As a diver, they figured I'd never dive, so they sent me to fire-fighting school.

MACHANN: They did, oh! A fire on a ship is a deadly--

FALLBACH: I was on the fire crew, and they put us in burning steel buildings for training.

MACHANN: And, you had some great experiences. What was the name of your lightship?

FALLBACH: The Nantucket.

MACHANN: Oh, well, that sounds like it was the perfect name for the perfect place.

FALLBACH: It was quite a famous ship because the one before the war was sunk out there. It was a severe storm.

MACHANN: Okay now, when did you get out of the service?

FALLBACH: Not long after. In June of [19]46. I really forgot. I'll have to look. August or September, something like that.

MACHANN: Did you go back to Chicago then?

FALLBACH: Yeah, went back home.

MACHANN: And then what did you do?

FALLBACH: I got on the club, the 52-20 club.

MACHANN: Now, you're going to have to explain.

FALLBACH: For veterans, it was \$20 a week for 52 weeks. [*laughter*] After that you better have a job.

MACHANN: So you were looking for a job for 52 weeks?

FALLBACH: Yes, I put in for a diver in Chicago because they were building these big skyscrapers along the lake, and you know that's all fill. That's all soil that's moved into the lake, and then they dig caissons through that. Many, many, hundreds of feet deep,

and they fill them with concrete. That's what those buildings are setting on.

MACHANN: Wow!

FALLBACH: Downtown Chicago. And I read in the paper where divers go into those caissons and set them and everything, so I put in for it and got the job.

MACHANN: Well, I don't know if that's good because that sounds like a dangerous job. Well, then what did yo do? Your 52 weeks were up?

FALLBACH: I didn't do it that long, a month or so, because my dad was giving me funny looks. He says, "My God, you could go to college, you could have the G.I. Bill." [*The Servicemembers' Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the GI Bill of Rights*] You know. I didn't go to college. I should have. I went to a university called A.U., Aviation University, and learning to be an aviation mechanic. I went there for six months or so.

MACHANN: Did you meet any pretty girls along the way?

FALLBACH: There was one that kept following me around. After that I went out to an airport, which today is called O'Hare Field [*O'Hare International Airport*].

MACHANN: Oh, what was it called then?

FALLBACH: Sky Motive. It was a small field, right adjacent to the airport plant that I worked at. It was part of their runway. Douglas Aircraft, and the other side was Sky Motive using that same runway.

MACHANN: 'Cause Aviation was just starting?

FALLBACH: A lot of the pilots that were trying to get jobs were from the service, and a lot of them couldn't get a flying job at the time, so they worked for me because I was line chief for a while.

MACHANN: Sort of grew into the job?

FALLBACH: Definitely. The owner, this is interesting, the owner, two owners of this airport, one was named Jock Hennebeery. He was the youngest flying general in the

[*United States Army*] Air Corps at the time. And listen to this: the other guy who's name was... lemmie get this straight now... [*interruption, her phone rang*].

MACHANN: How long were you there?

FALLBACH: Maybe a year or so, I can't remember the dates.

MACHANN: Well the dates are... This is just sort of general... This is a long roundabout way of how you got to Sedalia.

FALLBACH: Oh, my gosh. [*laughter*] Am I gonna be here for dinner?

MACHANN: I noticed on your pictures that you were in show business. When did you?

FALLBACH: That's before I went in the service, while I worked at the dog kennel.

MACHANN: Let's go back a bit then. It sounds like you had some interesting experiences.

FALLBACH: My friend Wally Kooker played the trumpet and I played the trombone, and my sister played the piano, and we would have little jam sessions at our house, and my sister would be playing away and I'd play the trombone and from there, my sister couldn't go with us with the piano and move around, so we played at a few different shows, just Wally and I. Then we got real corny with the real baggy pants, which I still wear, roll the cuffs up, had big farm shoes, manure shoes, funny hats, and we played a lot of oom-pah-pah types. Because with the trombone, you know, the slide trombone, I could play the bass, like Beer Barrel Polka and a few things like that. So we got on a few different local type shows. But the big show was with the WLS National Barn Dance which I have pictures of.

MACHANN: And that's the one where you met Patsy Cline...

FALLBACH: Montana. Not Cline.

MACHANN: Patsy Montana. OK.

FALLBACH: I met Patsy Montana when I was with the dog shows. That's where I met

her.

MACHANN: And was she entertaining, and you would do the dog show?

FALLBACH: Oh, yeah, they would have their regular program and we were just an added attraction. They would have their regular show, and the other fellow that was there was Arky the Woodchopper. I don't know if you ever heard of him out here, but back there he was quite famous, and Red Foley, he became--

MACHANN: Famous nationwide.

FALLBACH: We played with that group.

MACHANN: Now, did you tell me that you were driving with Red Foley one time and you'd had an accident?

FALLBACH: We were in a parking lot, and he'd just bought this used Plymouth coupe, and was real proud of this shiny car, and after the show he said, "Come on, I'll drive you over to the bed and breakfast" we were staying at, and he was backing up and some big farm truck, boom, hit my side, pushed the door in--

MACHANN: But you weren't hurt?

FALLBACH: No, no.

MACHANN: And he wasn't?

FALLBACH: No. Except for his beautiful car. So we socialized with those people.

MACHANN: Well, you had a real taste of show business. When you came back from the service were you inclined to get back into show business again?

FALLBACH: No, not really. We kinda split our ways. I still maintain contact with Wally today.

MACHANN: Oh, you do? Boy, would he be interesting to interview!

FALLBACH: Well, that's true.

MACHANN: It sounds as though his life went a little different direction than what yours did. Well, so you're in Chicago as a young man, a mechanic and running the [*aircraft maintenance*] line.

FALLBACH: At the Sky Motive airport.

MACHANN: And how long were you there? A couple of years?

FALLBACH: A couple of years.

MACHANN: And then where did you go?

FALLBACH: Then I worked on a railroad.

MACHANN: Oh, you did? Which railroad?

FALLBACH: The Sioux Line, out of Chicago. And I went out there and they showed me how to stoke a steam train, I think it was the last steam engine on the line, but I was moved to fireman. So, I said, "Well, where's the diesels?" You know, goodness sakes. So they said, "You're gonna be on call and we'll get you." Sure enough, two o'clock in the morning, "Come on in." So I went in, and it's the steam train again. I said, "Come on!" So, the fireman that was on the steam train said, "Here's the shovel." He showed me how to shovel it. And our first run was down to the stockyards in Chicago.

MACHANN: From the outskirts to the--

FALLBACH: We went into Chicago, and there was a delay. I guess that's just the way the railroad was run. So here I am on top of the Chicago River, looking down. Watching the boats... You know, it was pretty... We sat there for a couple of hours.

MACHANN: You couldn't get away from water. [*laughs*]

FALLBACH: There you go... We were waiting because we had to take part of the train that was full of cattle and back in or maneuver, however they do drop off the cars in the stockyard. And now we're in the stockyard and it was hot, and sweltering, and I'm throwing shovels coal, and then we stop, and the engineer says, "I'm gonna take a break here. See this pressure gauge? I don't want it to go higher or lower." I said, "Fine." So

he left; I don't know how long he was gone, and I was studying the pressure gauge, and if it went down I'd put a little more coal in.

MACHANN: If it went up too high, what did you do?

FALLBACH: Well, it never went up too high, thank goodness. I didn't work that hard. All right, then at the end of the run we go all the way back to Shiller Park, Illinois. That's where the round house was. I got off the train, got in my car, and never went back. [*laughter*] One day on the railroad.

MACHANN: Well, the railroad was destined not to be your career.

FALLBACH: And then they called at two o'clock in the morning, and I said, "No, I'm sorry."

MACHANN: I no longer work for you.

FALLBACH: I had to go in for a physical before I got the job. Lasted one day.

MACHANN: One day was enough. Well, where did you go next?

FALLBACH: A neighbor of mine, his father and he owned a gas station. He said, "With your experience with refueling airplanes and all that, this would be a natural." So I said, "Oh, I don't know. I'll try it." So I went to the station, and I had to be in partners with someone. This friend of mine wanted to sell it, so they made arrangements that I could pay him off monthly with no interest or anything, because he really was desperate. It was a City Service gas station on Elston Avenue in Chicago.

MACHANN: Oh, you still remember the address. Well, it sounds like you were there longer than one day.

FALLBACH: Oh, yes, I was there a couple of years, and I worked ungodly hours from seven in the morning till ten at night. I was married by then.

MACHANN: Oh, you were? So that pretty young thing had caught up with you?

FALLBACH: Yes, she did.

MACHANN: So you were married. Did you have children?

FALLBACH: I didn't have children then. They came right after that. So at the station-- I got pictures, I got a calendar of the station. They named us Four Gables because it had four peaks. Four Gables Gas Station. My partner was a mechanic, really a good mechanic and I learned a lot from him, but he was a jerk. His wife got involved. And, I walked away from that after a couple of years. I just walked away. I said, "It's yours." Because we were paying off every month. Not much, but we weren't making much either. You know, gasoline was 28 cents a gallon at that time.

MACHANN: Those were the days when you used to go out and wash the wind shield and check the oil and the radiator.

FALLBACH: Oh, yes, tires. "Give me two dollars worth of gas", and you're washing the windows. "Don't forget the rear!"

MACHANN: The whole thing, yes.

FALLBACH: One time, the police station wasn't too far from there. They would come in. *[coughing and break]*

MACHANN: So you walked away from the gas station...

FALLBACH: Well, yeah. We had a series of burglaries.

MACHANN: That close to the police station?

FALLBACH: They break in at night. I even had a German Shepherd there, but they'd throw meat and cookies, but there was nothing to burglarize. We didn't keep cash there.

MACHANN: But they thought you did.

FALLBACH: They'd drop the drawers and dump everything upside down--

MACHANN: How about tools?

FALLBACH: No, they didn't take them.

MACHANN: Thieves aren't interested in working for a living, so they won't want the tools.

FALLBACH: One night at 10 o'clock when I was closing up I had the cash drawer and I took all the bills and rolled them and counted them and put them in my coverall pocket. So I'm laying out all the change, and all of a sudden there's a guy standing there with a gun. "Hand over all that money!" I took the change and I just shoved it over. He didn't see the roll of bills, so he starts scooping up and he's looking outside all the time, and he said, "Get in that grease pit!" So I walked over, and he said, "Jump!" I was going down the ladder, and when I looked up he was gone.

MACHANN: Well, at least he didn't hurt you.

FALLBACH: No. So naturally I called the police.

MACHANN: They were there within a minute and a half.

FALLBACH: Yeah. The Gale Street Police Station. They came and took the report, and then they called me the next day and said, "Come down. We want you to identify someone." They caught him at another gas station down the way. So I went down, and I looked at the guy, and I says, "Your name is Chuck Broad, isn't it?" "Yeah." I went to high school with him.

MACHANN: But you didn't recognize him when he had the gun on you! All you saw was on the gun, I guess. Well, when he committed the second burglary did he get any paper money?

FALLBACH: I have no idea.

MACHANN: Did you ever tell him that you had the good stuff in your pocket?

FALLBACH: I made a mistake. The guy that robbed me with the gun, I have no idea if he got caught. I had another burglary after that that I called in and that's when they called me down to identify him. That was different.

MACHANN: Sounds like you had quite a bit of theft in that city.

FALLBACH: We had a lot. But they didn't take anything; they were just looking for money. Most of them were ex G.I.'s.

MACHANN: They couldn't get jobs?

FALLBACH: Evidently. It was sad. So I got out of there; I walked away, gave everything to my partner. I didn't pay it off.

MACHANN: And did he stick with it?

FALLBACH: I have no idea.

MACHANN: When you walked away you didn't look back. Where did you go from there? You had a family to raise.

FALLBACH: Oh, I know. This friend of mine that I bought the station from worked for a hardware supply company in downtown Chicago, and he asked me if I'd like to get into that type of business. It was a big company, W. D. Allen. I went down there, and I got a job. As an assistant, I was trying to learn, it was in expediting, type of stuff. Because we had a plant, manufacturing plant, in Bellwood, Illinois.

MACHANN: So you were the one in charge of getting things shipped.

FALLBACH: I wasn't in charge, but I was learning how to stock the material in downtown Chicago in the warehouse. It was the main office and warehouse.

MACHANN: Then people would come in there to purchase--

FALLBACH: And we would ship all over the country to other companies, but the branch I was in was the manufacturing branch and we manufactured fire fighting equipment.

MACHANN: Oh, you were destined to end up in West Douglas--

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

FALLBACH: This fire extinguisher is one we made.

MACHANN: Oh, that's a little treasure! I'm going to go up and take a picture of it.

FALLBACH: It should be real shiny, we sent those things just looking like jewelry, but through the years it's just corroded, oxidized. We made hose nozzles, all different type of fire-fighting nozzles. Couplings. Lawn sprinklers, we did a big business in that. And I was the expediter between the factory and the fire house.

MACHANN: How long were you there?

FALLBACH: Now, I've got-- Oh, my daughter was born there, Carolyn. So I learned a lesson. I walked into the president's office, and he congratulated me on good work and everything. He knew what I came in for I suppose. I made a big mistake, I said, "You know, I'm going to have a baby and I need more money." You never ask for a raise that way! You tell me what you do for the company.

MACHANN: And, how valuable you are to them.

FALLBACH: That's right. That's the weakest, poorest excuse, he said "But we'll give you..." I got a raise. I was young and foolish, but I think now, how do you ask for a raise, you try to sell yourself. So anyway, I got a raise.

MACHANN: Good. And you had your daughter Carolyn.

FALLBACH: My daughter Carolyn. They said, "You want to make some extra money, go out to the plant and work Saturdays if you want to make some extra money also." So I went out to the plant in Bellwood, Illinois, into the plating room, and I was a racker. You wrap all these parts and they show you how to plate all these different tapes, and "Hey, I love this." Then the boss showed me how to go to the chemistry bench and to simplify and to analyze some of these plating baths.

MACHANN: Oh, so you were developing a whole new--

FALLBACH: A whole new thing. Then Monday morning when I'd go back to the warehouse in downtown Chicago I'd keep thinking I liked what I did out there. And I said, "I know they're shorthanded. Is there any chance of being transferred?" "You gonna be a racker. Look what you got here. You can go up the ladder." I just couldn't

believe-- So, they transferred me out to the plant.

MACHANN: So you found your niche.

FALLBACH: I learned real fast, and a good superintendant there that wanted me to learn. So I did, and I became the youngest foreman in the plant, and I ran the polishing, buffing and plating.

MACHANN: You had a lot of responsibility.

FALLBACH: And I did all the buying for that. And I got to know the salesmen that came in to sell me these chemicals. And one day the guy said, "You mind coming out for an interview? We need a salesman for the area."

MACHANN: And you were familiar with their products.

FALLBACH: Yes. So I went down and I got interviewed by the big boss and I guess I acted right because we went out to lunch, and he was testing me out. "OH, you can have the drink now." I'd learned a lesson: "No sorry, not for lunch, thank you." And he thought, "Well, that's impressive."

MACHANN: So he hired you on the spot.

FALLBACH: Funny about things like that.

MACHANN: Oh, it is, but you know, those things make a difference.

FALLBACH: So he hired me, told me when to start. And I had to go back to tell the superintendant, who I really liked, who was really nursing me along in this job, gave me the foreman's job. He looked at me "Boy, I knew it! I knew you'd do..."

MACHANN: You can't keep a good man down.

FALLBACH: I thought maybe he'd wish me good luck and, you know. Boy, was he mad!

MACHANN: Well, he probably knew you were the best thing that had happened in a long time and he didn't want to lose you.

FALLBACH: He was an O'Brien, an Irishman.

MACHANN: So you had some experience with an Irish temper. Now, you had your family, and it was growing, and you were with the chemical supply company.

FALLBACH: I was with the chemical supply company for many years. And then I broke away with two other fellas that worked for the company. We broke away. We started our own chemical supply business. We were in Franklin Park, Illinois.

MACHANN: What was the name of the company?

FALLBACH: Hull Midwest. Because one of the supplies that I was selling was from the Hull Company and Mr. Hull put money into this to start us out, so we had to use his name. So we were Hull Midwest.

MACHANN: And I bet when some 19 year old came in and said, "I need a raise, I'm having a baby", I bet you gave him a raise. *[laughter]*

FALLBACH: Boy, and how! It was a good lesson. I ran the scuba program at the [unclear] YMCA [*Young Men's Christian Association*] in Wheaton, Illinois. I started the scuba program.

MACHANN: You did? You still loved the water and you loved diving.

FALLBACH: Because I did it, I had equipment and I had a friend that had boats and we were out every chance we got. Lake Geneva, Illinois. Lakes like that. I did a lot of diving. Then I became Scuba Commissioner for the YMCA's for Northern Illinois. Listen, I'm bragging. You know what I mean?

MACHANN: Wonderful. I wondered how in the world you were running these scuba programs in your spare time?

FALLBACH: Evenings and Saturdays.

MACHANN: And enjoyed them.

FALLBACH: Um hm. *[affirmative]* Wouldn't do anything else.

MACHANN: And that's how you met some body that we both know.

FALLBACH: In my diving program, in one of the classes here's this lovely creature that slides out of the water and standing on the deck, and that started that.

MACHANN: Now, she was a long-distance swimmer?

FALLBACH: She was a backstroke champion [for] the state of Wisconsin. And she was destined for the Olympics. I dunno what happened. That's before I met her.

MACHANN: You took one look and that was it.

FALLBACH: Yeah, that was it. Funny isn't it? How things work out.

MACHANN: Well, you met Kelli in Chicago, Illinois. How long did you court her?

FALLBACH: A couple of years. After the divorce.

MACHANN: What prompted the two of you to come to Colorado, and what prompted you to end up in a place like Sedalia?

FALLBACH: Well, let's see. How did I get to Colorado? Oh, I was breaking up with the company and I wanted to sell out to the partners, have them buy me out I mean, And this Hull Midwest. I went back to Hull. They heard we were breaking up, and they said, "Well, if you're gonna break this company, why don't you stay in Chicago and run our branch for us?" I said, "No, I want a whole new break, a whole new life."

MACHANN: Did they offer you a territory and Colorado was part of it, or--

FALLBACH: What they did I named it-- Kelli mentioned something, "I don't want to stay around Chicago, there's other places we should go, did you think of Denver?" I said, "I've never been out there." She said, "I think it's really nice."

MACHANN: So you hadn't been here before.

FALLBACH: So I went to the Hull people in Cleveland and said, "Instead of Chicago, how about Denver?" And they said, "There's nothing out there." There wasn't. And I

said "Well, I don't know." And the way I was thinking, they thought maybe I would go with a competitor in Chicago. The big boss was a real good friend of mine, says we don't want you with any competitor. Take Denver if you want the damn thing! Yeah, there's nothing out there!

MACHANN: Did you live in Denver for a while?

FALLBACH: I moved out here. When I came out here, all I had was a Hull company station wagon, my scuba equipment, my shotgun, my rifle. I gave everything to my ex-wife cause I had three kids. I gave them everything, the car, the house, nothing. I walked away again. I'm driving, probably just got into Denver from Nebraska, it was all plain fields and everything. And I'm driving, "Where are the mountains?" I'd never been out. I looked in the rear view mirror and all my belongings, my scuba tank, and everything else, was there. That's all I had! And a suitcase. That's it. I had five hundred dollars in my pocket.

MACHANN: Well, and you came to Denver with scuba gear when there's no place to dive!

FALLBACH: I know it.

MACHANN: You like the water!

FALLBACH: Here I am. First night I went to the Holiday Inn, and then eventually found an apartment at Sixth Avenue and Sheridan. And then Kelli came out. She was on her way out. We were going to get married in Tucson, Arizona where her folks and everybody were. She got caught in a snowstorm in Omaha... You don't want all this.

MACHANN: Yes, yes I do! I'll delete what you don't want me to put in! I'll let you go through it.

FALLBACH: Her cousin was a priest in Omaha, so she had the priest over to her hotel room because she couldn't move, the highways were closed.

MACHANN: Omaha storms can be nasty!

FALLBACH: This was the day before Christmas and we were supposed to be down in Tucson. So I flew into Omaha from here. Kelli and I got in the car, she had bought a

brand new Volvo. And I met the priest, Father Jim, the nicest guy you'd ever want to know, but they had killed half a bottle of Scotch by the time I got there, in that bad snowstorm. Everybody's happy, and I had to catch up with them.

MACHANN: So you got married there?

FALLBACH: We could of. He gave us a little marriage prayer book to take with us. I'm Lutheran, she's Catholic. Father Jim said, "What's the difference? You love each other." Because her family had doubts. They're very strict Catholics, did you know that?

MACHANN: Yes, I did.

FALLBACH: So we got into the car and we headed down towards Tucson. Christmas Eve now, we were about 70 miles south of Albuquerque. The car stopped, broke down, blew a valve in the middle of nowhere. And she had that Weimaraner dog in the car, so what do we do? We're stranded. I said, "I'll have to get out and hitch-hike to the next town. I hope we can get someone." She stayed with the car and the dog. The dog was kind of drugged for all this travelling, so she propped the dog up to sit like Snoopy. All this on Christmas Eve.

MACHANN: What a wonderful Christmas you guys had! Did you get somebody to tow your car in?

FALLBACH: So the first guy that came along, he couldn't speak English, I couldn't speak Mexican. So he drove me into the town, Socorro, New Mexico. He left me off and I walked into a tavern.

MACHANN: And of course, there's nothing else open.

FALLBACH: They were open and singing. Trini Lopez. *[Immitation Spanish]* I told the bartender what happened. "Well you'd better drink!" He shoves me a drink... I'm not much of a drinker, so anyway I said danke schon **[unclear]** So he told me to go down about a block or so, turn left. I was walking, it was dark. It was a junkyard. So, at the gates there's dogs on leashes. Grrrr! I walked up to the house, there's cars parked, the house is all lit up, there's a party going on. But they were English, so I told them what happened. They said, "Where was this?" I said, "Oh, about 20 miles out, it's where the big hills were." "Is there a picnic table there?" And I said, "Yeah." "That's where they

rob people.”

MACHANN: Oh! And Kelli's there with the dog!

FALLBACH: He said, “Come on, let's go.” So he takes a bottle of Jim Beam and sets it on the seat between us. We were barreling along *[taking a few swigs.]*

MACHANN: So you got there and you were pretty well lit.

FALLBACH: I said, “There's the car.” And he makes a u-turn. Kelli said, “Where you been?” “Ay, it's Christmas!”

MACHANN: I bet she almost divorced you before you got married.

FALLBACH: I think if the car would have started she would have escaped. So we hooked on, he drove us down to Socorro, we got a room, and she called her mother. **[unclear]** I went back to 7-11 or something like that and got some bologna and bread and that was our Christmas. She had a little plant, looked like a Christmas tree; she brought that into the room.

MACHANN: Oh, your first Christmas together.

FALLBACH: And I did something nice for her that evening. We went to the old, old church, built in the 1700s, mission church, and it was packed full of people for the Christmas Eve Service. I didn't understand anything, but she did. We had just standing room only. I felt really good about that.

MACHANN: What was the date of your marriage?

FALLBACH: January third.

MACHANN: Of 19[??]

FALLBACH: Now listen, the story ain't over yet. The next day we had to be towed 90 miles back to Albuquerque.

MACHANN: That was the next biggest town where they could do the automotive work.

FALLBACH: It was a brand new car; it was all under warranty. Luckily, she went to college in Albuquerque and she knew people there, so she stayed with these people. I had to fly back to Denver right away because my kids were flying in. Had 3 kids flying in. So I got in the airport and waited around until their plane came in.

MACHANN: Oh my! Kelli got the car fixed?

FALLBACH: And she went down to Tucson. It's a couple of days after Christmas now.

MACHANN: And you flew down--

FALLBACH: The kids were there for a short while, I took them back to the airport, and flew down to Tucson.

MACHANN: And you finally got married.

FALLBACH: Well, we had the prayer book. We went to a big Catholic church that was open, all by ourselves, went up to the altar. We read to each other.

MACHANN: Oh, how special! That's really romantic.

FALLBACH: I'll never forget that.

MACHANN: And what year was this that you guys--?.

FALLBACH: Umm, '69 [1969].

MACHANN: 1969. So you've been married just a year or two.

FALLBACH: Yeah, I'd say so. But anyway, her family was there, her father and mother, brother and sister, the whole family. I had a friend of mine fly in from Cleveland as the best man. And then we had a justice of the peace come over to the house.

MACHANN: But you had already gone to the church.

FALLBACH: Oh, that was just between her and I. No, we had this little guy that looked like the Keystone Cops. His name was Toby, I forget his last name, but he performed the ceremony with us. He said if we had a piano I could play the piano too." And that's how we got married.

MACHANN: Now you continued on with Hull Chemical.

FALLBACH: They gave me this territory. I got here just at the right time, cause industry was moving in, and industry was getting bigger. I sort of hit a gold mine. Just at the right time.

MACHANN: Well, it sounds like you were sort of protected all through your life.

FALLBACH: To a degree.

MACHANN: Oh, I mean a few little minor glitches to make it more interesting. And you did have an interesting time.

FALLBACH: So far.

MACHANN: Well, now, did Kelli go to work for a chemical company because she's a chemical engineer--

FALLBACH: Yes, she went to work for Gates Rubber, and she was the librarian for the engineering department. And she travelled 'round the states to different colleges giving different types of information and literature.

MACHANN: Now, you guys are still in Denver-

FALLBACH: We were living, we bought a house in Littleton.

MACHANN: Ah, so you were getting closer.

FALLBACH: We're getting closer.

MACHANN: When did you move out to Sedalia?

FALLBACH: We were looking for mountain property, something in the hills. We

didn't know where. We had never heard of Sedalia. A customer of mine had a place up Madge Gulch, he owns 40 acres up there, and we were cross-country skiing, and he said, "Well, use my property; it's sort of flat." So we were skiing around and there was a For Sale sign half buried in the snow. We kicked the snow out, and it pointed up to where we live.

MACHANN: Oh, for heavens sakes! And that's how you found it?

FALLBACH: That's how we found it. So we called the real estate people that was listed on there, and from there, we got it.

MACHANN: Well now, the house that was there had burned down, right? What was the year that you had the fire?

FALLBACH: Early 1970s. I think it was '73.

MACHANN: Were you on the fire department at that time?

FALLBACH: No. Yes! Because Kelli was down at Station 2 with the women and I think Norm was showing them how to work a pumper when the call came through.

MACHANN: Oh my goodness! So they had the truck, and at that point it was Jarre Canyon.

FALLBACH: That's right, it was Jarre Canyon.

MACHANN: So Norm and the ladies came up and fought the fire.

FALLBACH: By the time they got up there Castle Rock was doing some manoeuvres around Sedalia here, so they got the call first. And they were up there. Castle Rock. But it was a loss.

MACHANN: Yeah that was a loss. Well, you had to walk away unwittingly from that house. Did you design the house that you're living in now?

FALLBACH: I designed the basement. 'Cause it's just a rectangle. From there up, Kelli did everything.

MACHANN: With all her nesting instincts.

FALLBACH: She designed it. And Chet Heir built it.

MACHANN: He's one of your neighbors.

FALLBACH: Now he's our neighbor. So there we are.

MACHANN: Well, I've got to ask you what is your fondest memory of Sedalia?

FALLBACH: Kelli and I talked about that the other day, how fortunate we are to have all these nice people out here. Wherever we go we're talk. We knowpeople.

MACHANN: What is your worst memory? Is it the fire?

FALLBACH: Yeah, the fire was devastating to me because after the fire we were going through the rubble and little Patrick says, "Here's my little truck."

MACHANN: What started the fire?

FALLBACH: We had just a small basement with a furnace, and there was a crawl space with lots of different wiring that came down, and a rodent or something chewed through the wires. That's where it started. I don't want to ever go through that again.

MACHANN: Well, do you have any fond memories of the fire of 2002? The Hayman fire. What were your experiences of having to evacuate?

FALLBACH: It was memories of another house burning.

MACHANN: I'll bet you had some nightmares.

FALLBACH: Yes, I didn't like that at all.

MACHANN: You know, I find that there are an awful lot of people who are really traumatized by what happened this summer. And a lot of the guys who were actually on the fire lines are having problems with depression.

FALLBACH: I bet. Oh I bet.

MACHANN: It really had a much bigger impact than I think when we were going through it we realized.

FALLBACH: Being on the fire department all those years, twenty years, we fought structure fires, we felt bad for the people. Real bad. I sort of put myself in that position and talked to those people. But what really bothered me about the Hayman fire was what if my house burned down. It turned my stomach.

MACHANN: I can remember fighting some fires up on Madge Gulch, the cabin there, was it Mary's [Cornish] family ? That's ancient history, way back. Well, you just came back from a wonderful trip. Now, you've done some travelling in your lifetime. Besides Germany, where have you been?

FALLBACH: Kelli and I took a trip to Australia.

MACHANN: Oh, did you? When?

FALLBACH: Oh, about ten, twelve years ago. The company sent me over there.

MACHANN: Oh, I bet that was beautiful!

FALLBACH: Oh yeah. Kelli was there for a week. They told her to come along. The company really thought maybe if I was interested they'd transfer me there.

MACHANN: Oh, we can't let you go, sorry.

FALLBACH: Well, I was really thinking about it. They wrote an ex-patriot schedule for me. I worked with our distributor there [who] owed us a lot of money. They thought I'd just step in and take over. At the last minute while I was there, and they knew why I was there, they came up with the proper amount of money for us. But I got a two weeks vacation there, and Kelli had a whole week with me.

MACHANN: So you've seen Germany and Australia. How about Ireland?

FALLBACH: Never been there.

MACHANN: Oh, no: You're going to have to put that on your list.

FALLBACH: That's what they keep telling me.

MACHANN: Well, Tom what are you doing right now? I know you're working a couple of jobs, and I know that one of them you were nominated for the Channel 7 award, which I think is very special.

FALLBACH: I never got it.

MACHANN: But you were nominated, which is very special.

FALLBACH: I was nominated, I got a nice letter from Channel 7.

MACHANN: You're teaching school--

FALLBACH: I'm teaching school at Coyote Creek in Highlands Ranch two mornings a week, used to be three, two mornings is enough. And, I work at the Blue Spruce, they call it, a biological supply company in Castle Rock two mornings a week.

MACHANN: Now they supply frogs and toads and--

FALLBACH: No toads. Frogs and cows' eyes and sheep's brains for schools.

MACHANN: Oh, that sounds really interesting. For schools. For educational purposes.

FALLBACH: I work in the warehouse sorting the orders.

MACHANN: So you keep pretty busy.

FALLBACH: Oh yes, I have to.

MACHANN: Do you have any plans to go back to water where you could do some scuba diving?

FALLBACH: I keep thinking about it. I'd like to do it again.

MACHANN: Where would you go?

FALLBACH: Well, I used to go to Grand Cayman Islands with the YMCA group.

MACHANN: And there you got to see the beautiful fish.

FALLBACH: Oh, there we saw the fish.

MACHANN: Do you have any films of that?

FALLBACH: Yes, I took underwater pictures.

MACHANN: Oh, I'd love to see them sometime. And what other projects do you have coming up?

FALLBACH: Well, I've got all those tractors that I work on, antique tractors.

MACHANN: And you're a member of the tractor club.

FALLBACH: The tractor pullers club.

MACHANN: And you compete. How often do you guys get together?

FALLBACH: Thirteen pulls this last summer. But I didn't attend all of them, probably half.

MACHANN: But you're always working on your tractors, and you've been very supportive of the museum. I don't know what we would have done without your last display.

FALLBACH: So that's what I do, just work on the old tractors when I can. It's not as much as it used to be. I guess I'm getting old and lazy.

MACHANN: Well, are you a grandpa?

FALLBACH: I have a grandson 19 years old and a granddaughter six years old.

MACHANN: I'll bet she keeps you busy.

FALLBACH: She lives in Highlands [*Ranch*]. They moved out of Highlands Ranch to-- I can't think of the name of it, quite an exclusive place. You have to go through a gate to get in, because my daughter-in-law is editor of magazines and--

MACHANN: You should be pretty proud of your kids, all of them. But you don't have any big secret wishes that you wish you could fulfill that you're willing to share with me?

FALLBACH: No, I don't think I have any future big heavy plans.

MACHANN: Oh, you don't? Well, I'm disappointed. I thought you'd have some.

FALLBACH: Well, I'll have to think about it.

MACHANN: Well, if you think of anything let me know.

FALLBACH: I sure will.

MACHANN: Well, Tom, thank you for the interview.

SIDE 2: END OF INTERVIEW