

Sign Oral History Project

Oral History Interview with Captain Willis T. Sperry

Date: March 17, 2000

Interviewers: Thomas Tulien, Brad Sparks, and Avalon Hill (Sperry's daughter).

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Thomas Tulien

Sign Oral History Project

0:00 Tulien: [Looking at Willis Sperry's scrapbook] Does your father have materials, flying saucer reports, things like that.

Avalon Hill: I'll keep looking, I promise.

Tulien: Okay.

Avalon Hill: Look at that.

Sparks: Yeah, I've seen this one.

Avalon Hill: I don't know where.

Avalon Hill: From a -. Oh, you've seen this one before?

Sparks: It is a well-known hoax.

Avalon Hill: Oh, it is a hoax?

Sparks: Yeah, this guy is kind of a weird guy. Believes in Tibetan and strange denominations, of which flying saucers were not popular. That he went on board and was-

0:01 Willis T. Sperry: How the hell did you get that bed all the way from there over to here?

Tulien: With wheels! So they call you "Doc." Why did they call you "Doc"?

Willis T. Sperry: It goes back a long way. (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: How long is that?

Willis T. Sperry: Ah, before World War II.

Tulien: When did you start flying?

Willis T. Sperry: Well, my brother taught me how to fly; I was about 11 years old when that happened.

Tulien: Oh really? Eleven? And so, in the '20s?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. He let me fly. He set me right on his lap.

Tulien/Sparks: Oh, really?

Willis T. Sperry: I used to fly.

Tulien: Oh, yeah. What were you flying back then?

Willis T. Sperry: What we call a Standard.

Tulien: It must have been a custom built?

0:02 Willis T. Sperry: No, no. It was one of a good many Standards that were made by Curtis to train the pilots.

Tulien: Oh, okay. And where were you living at that time? Where did you grow up?

Willis T. Sperry: I was in Akron, Ohio.

Tulien: Okay. Okay, so you're from Ohio?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Okay. So you were flying. Your brother—how did he end up becoming a pilot?

Willis T. Sperry: He was a World War I pilot.

Tulien: Okay. So you, you had flying in your family?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: Yeah, yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, what are you looking at, honey child? (LAUGHTER) [Avalon is looking through her father's papers].

Sparks: The cute stewardesses. (LAUGHTER)

Avalon Hill: Yeah. There's something here that his daughter really ought not know about.

Sparks: What do you mean? You mean will you be my cup and my saucer?

0:03 Avalon Hill: Yeah, this is a letter and this looks like another letter. Yep. And a-

Tulien: So Doc, you were flying in the '20s? Is that, is that right? Eleven years old, you were flying an airplane?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: That seems amazing. Were you flying in the war as well? World War II?

Willis T. Sperry: World War II, yeah.

Tulien: What were you flying in the war?

Willis T. Sperry: Well, I -. Where the hell is a picture of it, honey? B-24. Where is it?

Avalon Hill: B-24. He flew the hump, China-Burma-India.

Tulien: Oh, did you?

Avalon Hill: Yeah, and Korea and in Vietnam.

Tulien: Oh, wow! So you fought three wars? World War II, Korea, and Vietnam?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Huh. What did you do in Korea? What were you flying in Korea?

Willis T. Sperry: Not in Korea. I go over there and land and get some passengers out and passengers back in, and like that. Stop in for a lunch or something, but I would never stay overnight.

0:04 Tulien: So you were flying out of Japan?

Willis T. Sperry: I was flying out of Los Angeles.

Tulien: Okay. So you were in the military from World War II, right into the '60s?

Avalon Hill: Not the military. He flew the American Airlines ATC to 7-A Project?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: A.T.C.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, that was a contract with the government.

Tulien: Oh, okay.

Willis T. Sperry: Where is that picture of the B-24, honey?

Avalon Hill: Was right there. No, that's a different one, but it's right there.

Willis T. Sperry: Where?

Tulien: This is '73 here.

Avalon Hill: That's the one.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, that's it, that's one right there.

Tulien: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: But that was a different trip.

0:05 Willis T. Sperry: Oh, yeah. Yeah, well I, one of the things I did — we do — I'd pick up supplies there at the supply depot. I forgot the name of the place, in China. And then fly it in bound to some of these guys that damn near service it - and eat their own toes off!

Tulien: Oh, yeah? Yeah.

Avalon Hill: China, Burma, India, right? Started in Brazil?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: Nepal, and then over-

0:06 Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, and ah, was all somewhere. I got in almost all of it, as far as - . And I'll never forget that B-24 (CHINESE TALK) Chinese didn't know what the hell they were doing. I found a place down there, look like a pretty good -. Man he just (CHINESE TALK). So we landed in there late in the afternoon. And ah, we got a bunch of the supplies off the airplane. And I said, "Well, I'm not going to take off out here now at night." I said, "God Almighty" I, I don't even what the hell we. I have ah, ah, take in between two great big ridges, which were about a mile apart. And that's where the landing strip was. And we pull up to this one spot here. And we had one, ah, two of the guys were -- officers of the day or something -- were the actual guards, you know. And I said, "Well, we're going to stay here all night. I'm not going to go out in this stuff." I have been, wouldn't be there, that's all.

0:07 Tulien: When did you start flying for American?

Willis T. Sperry: Let me think.

Avalon Hill: '39.

Willis T. Sperry: '39 - that when it was?

Avalon Hill: '39 to '71.

Tulien: When did American start the company? In the '30s?

Willis T. Sperry: No, no. American, yeah, American was back in the '30s. Of course, they never did any good till they got the four engine airplanes.

Tulien: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: Er, they just, you just can't fly across the ocean with the capacity, the poor capacity of fuel.

Tulien: So that occurred in the late '30s, four engines?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

0:08 Tulien: So, so you had been flying -- by the time of your sighting in 1950 -- you had been flying for 12 years with American?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Yeah, quite a while.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: What sort of flight? What were you flying to Europe?

Willis T. Sperry: I, well, no. I was flying DC-3, DC-2's, DC-3's, DC-4's.

Tulien: Oh, yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: And when we got the DC-4's, allowed us long Pacific flights.

Tulien: Okay, to Japan and so forth?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: All right. Let's get up to your sighting. Let's talk about your sighting. Can we do that? Your sighting you had in May of 1950?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: I mean, what, explain what were you seeing?

Willis T. Sperry: That's when I was on an airliner then.

Tulien: Yeah! On an airliner.

0:09 Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. I didn't see it. I was writing something in my logbook. Er, the copilot yelled, "Hey Doc," he said, "Doc, get a look at that thing!" And I look out there and I saw the weirdest looking goddamn thing that I ever saw! A, really was a weird looking operation. I had no camera, no nothing. And pretty soon he just took away, just bing! Just like that, he just whooshie (SOUND MADE BY SPERRY TO DESCRIBE HOW THE OBJECT DISAPPEARING) gone. He was right alongside of us, for a while.

Tulien: Could you see it out the window?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. That was, they were close to us as the building across the street.

Tulien: Really? Where were you flying from and where were you flying to? Was it regular schedule?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, regular flight down to Fort Worth from Chicago.

0:10 Tulien: All right. And you're flying at night?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: A night flight?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: What time of the sighting? About 9:30 or something? Yeah, so you just left, no, I'm sorry, again, you were flying out of?

Avalon Hill: Chicago.

Tulien: You were flying out of Chicago?

Avalon Hill: D.C.

Tulien: D.C. to Nashville.

Willis T Sperry: Where?

Avalon Hill: Washington, D.C., to Nashville.

Willis T. Sperry: I have to look my logbook to find out where I was going from.

Avalon Hill: Yeah.

Tulien: Yeah. How long had you been up when this event occurred? When this incident occurred, how long had you been flying? For an hour or so?

Willis T. Sperry: Couple of hours.

Interviewers Tulien: Yeah, couple of hours?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, yeah.

Sparks: Okay. Did you say something about the something going wrong with your compass? Remember anything about that?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

0:11 Sparks: Said the compass went crazy and then finally settled back to what it's chosen?

Willis T. Sperry: Well, people laugh at me when I talk to them about it, (LAUGHTER) cause it's impossible. But the, nevertheless, the first thing I noticed was -- we were

headed Northeast, our pre-planned route cause this guy could take his pictures of the flying. I gave different-; they couldn't get any good shots because of the sunlight, and ah-

Tulien: Let's just go slowly through the sequence when the copilot first saw this thing. What was his response to you?

Willis T. Sperry: "Look here, Doc! What the hell's going on here?!"

Tulien: Yeah. And what was your response to it?

0:12 Willis T. Sperry: I said I was very interested. We had it on the autopilot. And we're going along smoothly and didn't fool around or anything like that. And I call operations in New York, and told them I'm seeing it. And I got a very strange operation. And I've said, they are following me. And they said the-

Tulien: But you, first of all you saw it out of your windshield, right?

Willis T. Sperry: Right!

Tulien: How, how did it follow you then?

Willis T. Sperry: It came up from behind. I didn't know what it was.

Tulien: So you saw it go by the plane at first?

Willis T. Sperry: It didn't get, it slowed down to our speed and-

Tulien: I'm still confused. So you saw it out of the windshield?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: And then it went past you?

Willis T. Sperry: Back of us, yeah.

Tulien: Stop, and stopped behind you?

0:13 Willis T. Sperry: Well, they, what they did, they stopped beside us! About as close as that building over here. It's this building, maybe a little bit farther away. That's pretty close.

Tulien: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: Was that outside your window or the-

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, my window.

Avalon Hill: That's ah, off your port side.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: So how long did it stay there?

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, it was there for couple of minutes.

Tulien: A couple of minutes! So you watched that thing for two minutes?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, sure did, boy!!

Tulien: And at that time, what did it appear like? What did it look like?

Willis T. Sperry: More like a submarine than an airplane! (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: Oh! Was it metal? What did the surface look like?

Willis T. Sperry: Metal.

Tulien: Like metal?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: So it wasn't like glowing or-

Willis T. Sperry: No!

Tulien: How, how were you seeing this thing? Were you seeing this thing like from your landing lights or something? Or was it lit up?

0:14 Willis T. Sperry: Oh, it was daylight.

Avalon Hill: No, it was nighttime.

Tulien: You had the full moon.

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, that one. That's another one.

Tulien: So the full moon that night?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Yeah. So then, okay, now the thing's sitting on the side of your plane for a couple of minutes. Then what happened?

Willis T. Sperry: Well, it was. They were a distance of between here and a little bit farther away then the wall of that building over there.

Tulien: Okay, fine.

Willis T. Sperry: How you get a good shot of it, you know?

Tulien: So, you're saying THEY, you know.

Willis T. Sperry: I don't know who the hell was in it or anything else!

Tulien: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: It was certainly, ah, you know, they were certainly -. If they knew anything about aeronautics, one thing, you never get that close to an airliner!

Tulien: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: Boy, they raised Cain with it.

Tulien: When that thing's sitting off on your wing, what are you guys doing?

Willis T. Sperry: Why, I just flew right steady. Didn't get moving right, just kept cruising along.

Tulien: What were you talking about with your copilot?

Willis T. Sperry: Well, the copilot telling the passengers what we see. And they were all very interested. Didn't look to us like there was going to be any danger or anything.

Tulien: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: And flew along there for couple, 3 minutes, all of a sudden the thing just took off like that. Well, we were doing 200-250 miles an hour. And the thing just whoosh! (SOUND MADE BY SPERRY AS OBJECT DISAPPEARING) just like that, they just left us.

Avalon Hill: Didn't it silhouette against the moon, Daddy?

Willis T. Sperry: Huh?

Avalon Hill: Didn't it go against the full moon? And you can see the shape-

Willis T. Sperry: No, that was in the evening, honey.

Avalon Hill: That's the one we're talking about.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: The nighttime one, yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, I wasn't paying attention to the moon.

Tulien: You said in interviews that this thing went between the airplane and the moon?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: That you saw it silhouetted-

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: Yeah, maybe I should read parts of this, too. Yeah, let me read you some of your interview, done about 1976, and-

Willis T. Sperry: 1976 might be a different person. (LAUGHTER)

Sparks: You are, in a sense. Then, then you can add some details, okay??

Willis T. Sperry: All right.

Sparks: A good plan? You had to turn around in your seat at the moment it appeared, getting a map out of a briefcase?

Willis Sperry: Right.

Sparks: Your copilot called out "What is that? Lookout! It's coming right at us!"

Willis Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: So you remember that? Was it coming straight at you?

Willis Sperry: It came from the right. And it just gradually came up close, closer, closer. I didn't know how close it was going to get to us! But it was a damn funny looking airplane, I'll tell you.

Sparks: You said, "I made an immediate right turn from the heading of approximately 230 degrees to 320 degrees. The object was a very bright shimmering blue light. We were very interested in ascertaining its distance from us.

Willis Sperry: Almost all of the passengers were very excited and very interested in what the hell we were watching. The thing flew alongside of us there for several minutes.

Tulien: Yeah, so the passengers were watching it.

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, yeah! They were watching every move it made! I just keep this baby going straight. Don't turn or give them any indication with it we wanted make a contact of any kind. We got a lot of passengers back there, boy! And a we flew along there and they - I, I couldn't make out what was in there, who was in there.

0:18 Tulien: Did you see—any what?

Willis T. Sperry: I saw the whole body of it.

Tulien: No lines on it or anything distinguishing?

Willis T. Sperry: No.

Tulien: Just smooth, huh?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. No, no, ah, indications as to a F.A.A. license on it or anything like that. There was none there.

Sparks: Yeah, you say in the interview that "As I looked back on this incident, I recall that at the time it did not occur to me that I was seeing an object called a UFO. It was a very puzzling light."

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: So in other words, while you were looking at East-

Willis T. Sperry: As, as, so unbelievably, ah, excited about the thing. And I knew -. What the hell is going on out here! You know, I look out there and watch that thing and I come over and look over here and I say, "You see anything?" "No," he said, "I don't see anything else."

0:19 Avalon Hill: So what, did it go from one side to the other?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, yeah.

Sparks: We're getting to that.

Avalon Hill: Oh, okay.

Sparks: Within the article, says -- this is not your words, this is the article -- done by the time UFO appeared to stop, the stewardess and 8 passengers had said.

Willis T. Sperry: It stopped as far as we were concerned. We were doing 200 miles an hour! (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: Not quite stopped.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: The stewardess and 8 passengers had seen the light along with Sperry. That's you, the copilot, and the flight engineer. The object remained stationary for about 30 seconds before it began moving again.

Willis T. Sperry: Yes, that's the truth.

Sparks: And then you say, "At this time, I started a left turn to keep it in view."

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, because it getting close, a little bit close to me and I just ease over a little bit more, you know. I just, I, whatever I was looking at or something, I didn't want to see. (LAUGHTER)

0:20 Sparks: You didn't want to bump into it or anything? And then, then you say, "There was a full moon in the Eastern sky. The object passed between us and the moon and I got a definite silhouette of it. Appears cigar shaped, with no external protruding from it."

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, well, a cigar shape is a good, good description of it, I think.

Sparks: Um, then maybe not quite like that?

Willis T. Sperry: No, it was, ah, I, I don't know but to say-

Tulien: Could you draw it?

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, yeah.

Tulien: Will you draw it again?

Willis T. Sperry: It just looks like a, look like a cigar, or something.

Tulien: So round end?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Perfectly round?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: Did it have a light coming out of it?

Willis T. Sperry: No! That didn't have any goddamn light, which was, was a direct violation of the F.A.A.!

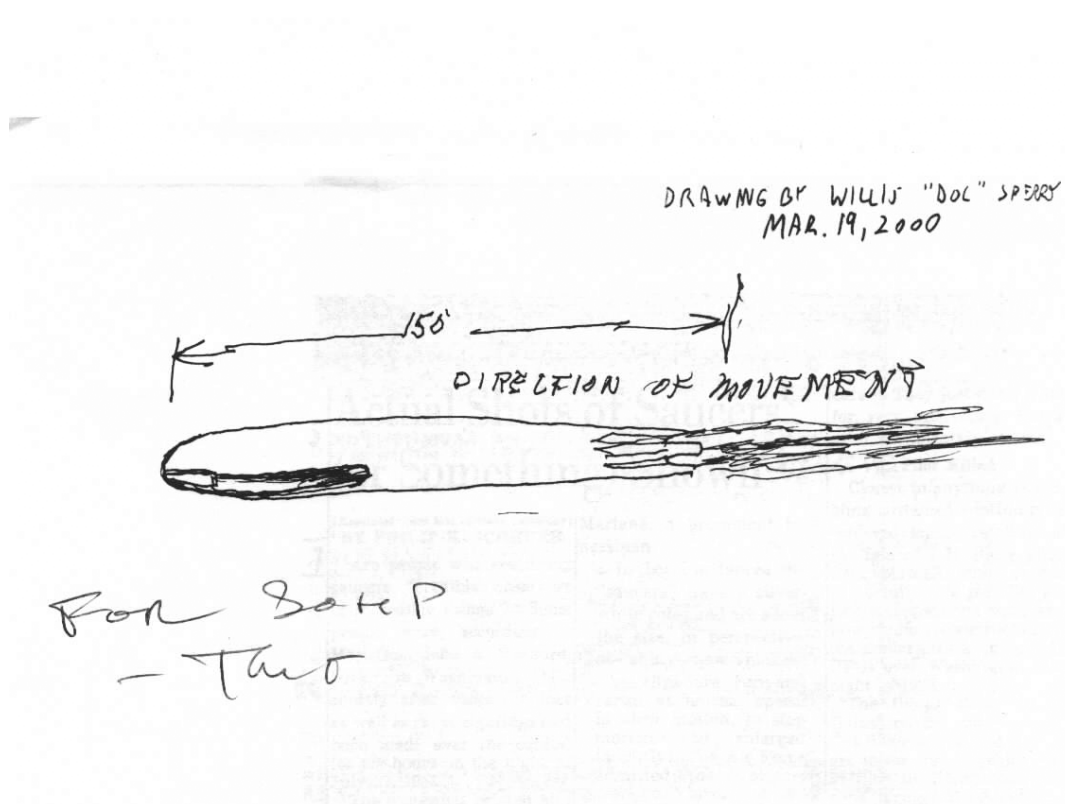
Tulien: Yeah.

0:21 Willis T. Sperry: Be up there flying around without any lights on it! [DRAWS THE OBJECT]

Willis T. Sperry: Appears no propulsion on the thing at all! Nothing! No wings on it or anything!

Avalon Hill: No jet streams, kind of?

0:22 Willis T. Sperry: No, there wasn't. There was a place down here in the bottom where they evidently did their observations. I'm not an artist, but ... this is the end of it here. Out here is just the propulsion.



Sparks: You mean the exhaust?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: Did you see a gas?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, you can see some.

Sparks: Hot trails coming out?

Willis T. Sperry: Gas coming out of there.

Sparks: What was that like? What color?

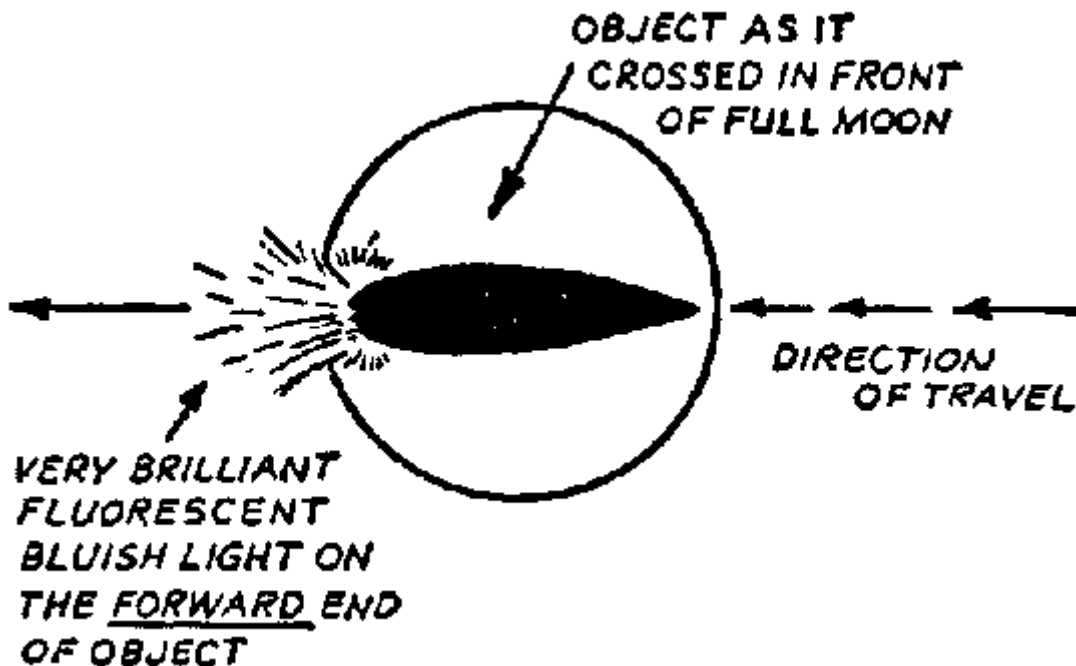
Willis T. Sperry: Sort of a grayish color, but there, there's no wings on it.

0:23 Sparks: 150 feet, huh? Okay, I've never seen a drawing like that. Was a little more elongated than the one that I think you drew for True Magazine in 1950 [*Flying*, September 1950] that was published in the letters-to-the-editor.

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, is that right?

Tulien: You did the drawing of the moon, as it look as passing in front of the moon, looking fatter, then a-

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.



Tulien: So, so it had a dark -- looks like what? -- just a dark area down here at the bottom of front there?

Willis T. Sperry: Ah, I couldn't make out what that was down there.

Sparks: As something, huh? So it took - . Then you say, "It circled around behind us."

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: Appear on our-

0:24 Willis T. Sperry: It slowed down and came around the left-hand side for a while. For a while, maybe two minutes. And all of a sudden, she just went like that, just whoossee. (SOUND MADE BY SPERRY TO DESCRIBE AS IT DISAPPEARED)

Sparks: So it circled around from behind us and appears on our right where it again came to an apparent stop. How far was it from us? I will take a guess that it was five miles away. We really had no way of judging its distance. After about 20 to 30 seconds, it started moving eastbound climbing at about 30-degree angle. We watched it until it disappeared.

Willis T. Sperry: That's a pretty good description of it, yeah.

Sparks: So it was coming around behind you? That's when it went in front of the moon?

Willis T. Sperry: That's when it startled the hell out of us! Wonder what the hell we got out here! (LAUGHTER)

Sparks: Were, were you able to see it from behind you in the cockpit?

Willis T. Sperry: No.

Willis T. Sperry: No, you didn't see it until the copilot got excited and saw this thing.

Sparks: Okay. So it be copilot saw from the right hand side of the-

0:25 Willis T. Sperry: The airplane was on autopilot; so it was holding a steady course. And we had it on the autopilot, just left it there. Cause you take, take it off the pilot, and you just press a button. Bang!. And like that, and you're off the autopilot.

Sparks: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: See that was instantaneous thing if you wanted to fly it yourself.

Sparks: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: But the -. Its very, very strange incident really was.

Sparks: So how did you feel afterwards?

Willis T. Sperry: Well, we were all excited about the thing, you know.

Sparks: Did you realize it was a UFO or flying saucer?

Willis T. Sperry: No, we didn't. We thought maybe possibly it was something out of Wright Field down in Dayton, or something coming alongside of -. But it was going faster than a bat out of hell! What in the name of whoosh (SOUND MADE BY SPERRY TO DESCRIBE OBJECT DISAPPEARING) just like that, away from us!

0:26 Tulien: Did you know other pilots at the time that have seen these things?

Willis T. Sperry: Ah, yes I had. But then none of them ever got very close.

Sparks: Now you, you -. I'm sorry, go ahead. Let me read you this other one, ah, where you said that an eastbound American Airlines DC-6, between Nashville and Knoxville at 19,000 feet, headed for Washington, and flown by Captain Henry Myers, observed what appeared to be a brilliant shooting star falling eastward from the zenith. When it got to the horizon it stopped. They watched for seconds, as it seemed to move horizontally, and then it disappeared. "I talked" -- this is you speaking -- "I talked to Myers after the incident and we correlated the time of my sighting with his, and it's exactly the same time.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah!

Sparks: But you say that his aircraft was 450 nautical miles to the southwest of us, and then you said you were reluctant to report it because ah, he didn't want his sighting to be known.

0:27 Willis T. Sperry: Well, you got to be careful. A lot, a lot of stuff that goes on, on newspaper publicity. Boy, they can really jack it around, you know. And actually some of the stuff nowhere near the truth. And they just sit back there in the back and cook up that whole, whole thing themselves.

Avalon Hill: But wasn't Myers, didn't you tell me Myers flew Eisenhower?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. Henry Myers. Yeah.

Avalon Hill: He was, he was a pilot for Roosevelt?

Sparks: Flew the Sacred Cow for Roosevelt in World War II?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, yeah. He died.

Avalon Hill: But he couldn't be crazy?

Willis T. Sperry: Huh?

Avalon Hill: Myers, Myers wasn't crazy.

Willis T. Sperry: No! (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: He saw something he couldn't explain?

0:28 Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, that's right.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. Henry Myers, nice guy, real nice guy. We got together and conversed about it. He was going into Dallas and so was I. I think that's where he was going. So we got together, communicated a little bit as to what the hell we saw up there! It certainly was not any flight plan.

Tulien: Was he flying for American as well?

Willis T. Sperry: Henry Myers, Myers was flying for American, going Eastbound. I was going westbound.

Tulien: So what happened when you landed? You must have called this in, right?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, we went into the flight operations office and gave them a report.

Interviewers Tulien: What was their response to this situation?

Willis T. Sperry: They were very interested in it.

Tulien: What was the general attitude of the airline for these types of incidents?

Willis T. Sperry: Well, they were quite excited about it.

Interviewers Tulien: They were?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Interviewers Tulien: So they were open about it?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Interviewers Tulien: Okay. That changed in a few years after that?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

0:29 Tulien: You know, where they tightened down on pilots reports.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: With the CIRVIS reports and so forth, right?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. On Pan-American there was a friend of mine who was captain on a flight leaving from San Francisco, going to Australia. And ah, before we landed in Tulsa, he was in San Francisco. And boy, he was making some time! Nothing like we had, moving that far fast. Anyway, it was quite something to see that thing.

Sparks: Here's another comment you made, "I had no idea that this sighting would generate so much interest. Almost everyone seemed genuinely interested in what I saw. I had several interviews with Air Force Intelligence personal from Washington.

0:30 Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, I did.

Sparks: You remember that?

Willis T. Sperry: I had a, a Brigadier General and a general and a couple other came out.

Tulien: Um, I've got to change tape.

Willis T. Sperry: I thought we had quite a conversation.

Avalon Hill: You doing Okay? You need some water?

Sparks: Anyway, you had several interviews with Air Force Intelligence personal from Washington? And you said it was a Brigadier General and some others?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. I can't think what his name was. I got it in a logbook. My logbooks are not here.

Sparks: Oh, oh that would be great, okay, somehow get a hold of that. Do you remember a name like a Colonel Milton, Willis? That name ring a bell?

0:31 Willis T. Sperry: No.

Sparks: How about a General Walter Agee?

Willis T. Sperry: No.

Tulien: Okay, did you talk to any of the people at the Air Force UFO project at that time?

Willis T. Sperry: Ah, several weeks later.

Sparks: Yeah. They call you or you call them?

Willis T. Sperry: We got together and had a conversation.

Tulien: Do you remember who that was?

Willis T. Sperry: No, I never did know. Of course, they were, they were ah, committing a -. They were outlawed as far as we're concerned, because they were so damned close to us!

Tulien: Oh, yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: You're not supposed to be that close to an airliner!

0:32 Tulien: Yeah, yeah.

Avalon Hill: When did this happen?

Tulien: May 1950.

Avalon Hill: May.

Tulien: So you landed in Fort Worth-Dallas, right?

Willis T. Sperry: Dallas.

Tulien: Right after the-

Willis T. Sperry: Not, not Dallas, but ah, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Tulien: You made it. Okay, you're in Tulsa. So at that point you gave a report to the airline?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, yeah. I gave them a report. With ah, one of the stenographers in there, took shorthand description of it. That's the last I saw of him.

Tulien: Okay. And then did you talk to the news reporters or anything?

Willis T. Sperry: No, they weren't out there! (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: Okay, from there, you went on to Dallas?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Okay.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Okay, and, and you didn't, nobody met you at the Dallas airport to talk to you about-

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, yeah, there was. Yeah.

Tulien: And there it was. Who met you in Dallas?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah well, ah, there were reporters.

Tulien: Reporters?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, and I didn't get a chance to talk with them very much.

0:33 Tulien: Yeah, okay.

Avalon Hill: Dad, we found this logbook, but it's not in your handwriting. Who used to fill out these logbooks?

Willis T. Sperry: Let me see it.

Avalon Hill: It's right here.

Willis Sperry: Oh, the secretary did that, on the ground.

Avalon Hill: Oh, okay. So this isn't your logbook?

Willis T. Sperry: No. I have—screaching and scratching that [inaudible].

Avalon Hill: It looks awful neat! (LAUGHTER)

Sparks: [Shows Capt. Sperry his logbook] Maybe you can interpret these entries for us here, for May 29th? 1950.

Willis T. Sperry: May 29th. Make of aircraft. Certificate of aircraft from La Guardia to Tulsa. And then the next flight on, on a Convair, instead of a DC-4. It went to Tulsa. Convair 240 2800 [Glad] engines.

Sparks: Back on the 29th, over here we have a day and a night and some numbers. Fuel weight in 206.

Willis T. Sperry: Two hours and six minutes of actual flight at night.

Sparks: But 2 and a half-

Willis T. Sperry: Total, total flight here.

Sparks: Four hours and 14 minutes.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: So, two hours and 8 minutes of daytime flight, two hours and 6 minutes of nighttime flight.

Willis T. Sperry: That's it.

Sparks: For a total of four hours and 14 minutes for that day.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, yeah, that's right.

Sparks: What's this mean: Forty-nine? You know?

Willis T. Sperry: Forty-nine?

Sparks: DHD to-

0:35 Willis T. Sperry: Well, what happened was it -. We going from Tulsa to Fort Worth, and ah, this guy got off at Tulsa. I got another pilot on there, Calkins (SP?).

Sparks: Okay. Then we a have, we have a "Gates" and Arnholt were your copilot and your-

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, that was the copilot; man's name Gates, Bill Gates.

Sparks: Bill Gates.

Willis T. Sperry: Now I'll tell you one of the funny things about -. I didn't have a chance. Well, I didn't have any cameras with me. But they wanted and -. And I took off, trying to think of the goddamn place that we left. I landed in a B-24. And they loaded that thing up full of food. And they told me where to go and take it. See if you can get in over there, they don't even know whether it's large enough for a small plane to go in, cause they wanted me to go and find out.

0:36 Tulien: And you landed it?

Willis T. Sperry: And I landed in that place. And ah, because of the terrain around there, it was very, very, it was very, very sure that I didn't take off at night; couldn't, probably wouldn't make it.

Tulien: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: So I stayed there all night, and some of, some of the official Chinese could sleep in the airplane. (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: Oh, yeah.

Avalon Hill: That's a different story from this ah -.

Sparks: Yeah, let me, back to the May 29th, 1950 incident. This is a Douglas DC-6, certificate number 90749, and aircraft classification R-2800. What's the CVR, DHD to CVR?

0:37 Willis T. Sperry: DH what?

Sparks: DHD to CVR. Do you know what that stands for?

Willis T. Sperry: Let me see it a minute. It's ah, oh, deadhead to Cleveland. I was a passenger between there. And Gates was my copilot.

Sparks: Okay.

Willis T. Sperry: And then Arnholt was my second pilot. And ah, where the hell did this logbook come from, honey?

0:38 Avalon Hill: It was right here in this drawer. Finding all kinds of them back in here.

Willis T. Sperry: You can never tell, you might find a love letter.

Avalon Hill: Ah, there are a few love letters in here! (LAUGHTER)

Sparks: Can I read you some more from the interview? Um, back in '76, you said American Airlines expressed only interest in what I saw, and never issued any censorship orders to me.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. that's right. Yeah.

Sparks: Um, do you remember what those Air Force Intelligence people were asking you about? Like the general, the brigadier general?

0:39 Willis T. Sperry: Oh, yeah they -. When we landed at Washington, there was a Brigadier General out there to meet me with his entourage. We went into the hotel where we sat down for about 2 hours and a half, ah, giving him instructions. Not instructions, but a history.

Sparks: Descriptions?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. Never heard anything since. (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: Was there a Blue Book file on this case?

Sparks: There probably is, yeah. That's before Blue Book, yeah, so in fact -. But that wouldn't have been their personnel, so Air Force Intelligence at the Pentagon... And ah, in, in the UFO movie documentary in the '50s, ah, you were asked if you had ever seen any similar objects? And you said, "never before or since." And then you said the same for 1976?

0:40 Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: How about this daylight sighting? When was that? You know, saw something in daylight?

Willis T. Sperry: I saw a hell of a lot of things in daylight! I don't what the hell I - what it is or anything.

Tulien: Did you have another sighting of an object you could not identify?

Willis T. Sperry: Ah, not, not there, no. I don't recall what the, what was going on there.

Sparks: I'm trying to think, think if the, the time you had a compass go out of control?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, it did. I got a sway on that thing. And ah, of course I knew where the country was. One thing or another, I didn't give a damn whether the compass works or not. Because I gone back and forth there so many times, I can tell you how many smokestacks they got! (LAUGHTER)

0:41 Sparks: But you saw the compass react strangely, then it returned to normal?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Sparks: And then did you see anything? Is this the daylight incident, or this is at night?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, in daytime.

Sparks: Okay, then what happened after the compass?

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, I give them, ah, the news reporters were there.

Sparks: Oh, really?

Willis T. Sperry: And because I made these strange reports.

Sparks: Um, so what do you think are UFOs?

0:42 Willis T. Sperry: I don't know! I really don't. You see some things up there, by golly; you'd swear you wouldn't believe. And I still have some things that I swear I saw, but nobody else saw them!! Nevertheless, you see they wanted to know what the hell this traffic was. It's up there. We had no, no permission to fly in an airway accompanied by an airliner in that particular area. And they'd raise hell with it!

Tulien: What you described as a technology, right? What you saw was some type of an airplane, right?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Without wings?

Willis T. Sperry: No wings. No wings on it.

Tulien: All right.

Willis T. Sperry: No wings on it.

Interviewers Tulien: So you know it was some type of technology?

Willis T. Sperry: Honey, be careful of what you're picking up there now.

0:43 Avalon Hill: Okay. I'm picking it up.

Tulien: So you knew you were seeing a technology?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Yeah, did you assume it was ours?

Willis T. Sperry: What?

Tulien: Did you assume it was our technology? Earth technology?

Willis T. Sperry: I reported it immediately. Unidentified flying object, at such and such place. That's the last I ever heard of it.

Tulien: Um, okay. Um, I have another question. You remember there's another sighting of two pilots named Chiles and Whitted?

Willis T. Sperry: Who?

Tulien: Chiles and Whitted, 2 pilots who were flying down near Atlanta, is that right? Alabama.

Willis T. Sperry: American pilots?

Tulien: And they saw an object similar to what you drew. Clarence Chiles? That name rings a bell? This happened in '49, '48. '49? July 28th.

0:44 Willis T. Sperry: That was later.

Tulien: Yeah, earlier you mean? But they saw something that was strikingly similar to what you drew; only they saw portholes. They saw portholes on the side of this thing. And it had flames coming out of the back the way you describe it.

Willis T. Sperry: I can't explain that.

Avalon Hill: Why don't you look at that later, Daddy. Look at that later.

Tulien: Yeah, okay.

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, boy! (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: How, how about the movie you were in? What did you think of Greene and Rouse? Greene and Rouse were the men that produced it, right?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Clarence Greene, did, did you know him?

Willis T. Sperry: No, only during the picture taking.

Tulien: Yeah. What did you think of the movie? You, you wouldn't take your daughter to see it. (LAUGHTER) so you must not have -

0:45 Willis T. Sperry: Why didn't I take you?

Avalon Hill: Because I was too young to go, you know, to stay up that late, I think. You wanted to go to a party afterwards.

Willis T. Sperry: Er, so much of the stuff that I forget you know.

Interviewers Tulien: So, what did you think of the movie? When it came out, what did you think of it?

Willis T. Sperry: It weren't too bad.

Tulien: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: Tell them about the lie detector test. You remember that?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: On TV?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: Paul Coates?

Tulien: Oh, they put you on a lie detector, huh?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Oh, yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: They just asked me some questions. I just answer, answer the question that's all.

Tulien: Yeah, Paul Coats is a local show, is that right?

Avalon Hill: He was a head of a talk show host at that time.

Tulien: Probably just around here. I don't remember him.

Avalon Hill: Yeah. I gave you the-

0:46 Willis T. Sperry: You know one of the things that I think was very interesting? They had all of this equipment, this food equipment, everything for Chinese. And I landed in Chang-Kling or something like that, where they had a, a strip on the road that was big enough for me to land a B-24 on... so they said. (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: It wasn't big enough? No? Your wheels would, wouldn't do it?

Willis T. Sperry: I missed them all but by god, there was a post out there that was damn close to me! (LAUGHTER)

0:47 Tulien: Um, let's see, did we cover everything? So getting back to your sighting, okay. You, you don't remember seeing it in front of the moon, the full moon? Was there a full moon that night?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: There was! Did you see the full moon in front of you or behind you or -?

Willis T. Sperry: It was, it was a, ah, northwest-, northeast of us!

Tulien: Okay, so then it was full moon?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: So this thing went between - okay, so -- your plane, and the moon's here. The thing went between you and the moon?

Willis T. Sperry: Yes it did.

Tulien: You saw it against the moon?

Willis T. Sperry: Yes.

Tulien: You did?

Willis T. Sperry: Just a blink, like that.

Sparks: Yeah, okay, you did. This 150-foot figure, ah, would match a 5-mile distance for a fitting in front of the moon. Pretty good observation, but then again maybe I'm wondering what the full moon -. Yeah, full moon says it's important because you can determine the size. And you can determine exactly the direction. And yeah, we need to determine the direction, yeah. Yeah, just an astronomical calculation.

0:48 Avalon Hill: Yeah. A triangle.

Tulien: So how about this? I mean, here it is, ah, um, 50 years later, and ah, you know, there is still no answers on what you saw. Why?

Willis T. Sperry: It's been pretty quiet here lately.

Tulien: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: Ah, there been quite a few reports. One in South America that was pretty damn good. Then there were was a one in Arabia that was a good report done by one of the pilots. And then, ah, in the same time or very close to this time, this airliner going from somewhere in Europe over to London, we, crisscrossed, he was below us and we were above, and he saw something.

0:49 Tulien: Oh. Yeah. So you know a few pilots who saw something?

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, yes.

Tulien: I mean, how many? A dozen? More?

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, yeah. I know more than a dozen.

Tulien: And, I mean, up until today? Or you're talking about during that period in the early '50s? You were flying in the '60s, too, right?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: You were still hearing pilots' stories seeing these things in the '60s?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Okay. Did you fly into the '70s?

Willis T. Sperry: When did I retire?

Avalon Hill: '71.

Willis T. Sperry: '71, yeah.

Avalon Hill: You were flying all over the place privately. Did you ever know anybody who saw anything in a private plane?

Willis T. Sperry: Not really, honey, not really.

Avalon Hill: This guy that flew below you in Europe, that was during the war, then?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Avalon Hill: And he saw some kind of a UFO?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, yeah.

Tulien: Um, I think we covered everything. So you don't have any position about what you think this thing is all about?

Willis T. Sperry: I really don't.

Tulien: Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: And I never-

Tulien: Let me ask you this: At the time, in 1950, I mean, I am just curious-

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, everybody was all junked!

Tulien: Everyone thought you were calling them flying saucers?

Willis T. Sperry: Had to, you had to do a lot of weeding!

Tulien: Yeah, to get to the truth.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. (LAUGHTER)

Tulien: Yeah, yeah. I know what you mean.

0:51 Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, keep from exaggerating.

Tulien: You use to go out to Giant Rock, too, yeah?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: What, to hear Adamski and those guys?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, I knew Adamski.

Tulien: Yeah, did you know Van Tassel and-

Willis T. Sperry: Van Tassel.

Tulien/Sparks: Ah, Bethurum?

Willis T. Sperry: Sure.

Tulien: Bethurum, and what was the woman's name? Um -.

Willis T. Sperry: You're a glider pilot?

Tulien: No. Uh, uh, I'm not.

Avalon Hill: Were they glider pilots?

Willis T. Sperry: You know, you went out there with me one day.

Avalon Hill: Yeah, but were they glider pilots, too?

Tulien: Oh, he, he flew his plane there, huh?

Willis T. Sperry: Sure.

Avalon Hill. Yeah.

Tulien: Yeah. Okay, so you went out there for the conventions that Van Tassel put on, right?

Willis T. Sperry: I don't recall whether it was that time or-

Tulien: They had the speakers and everything, talking about riding in flying saucers and everything?

Willis T. Sperry: Well that was a different time.

Tulien: Yeah, okay.

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah. Where the hell are my logbooks?

Avalon Hill: They're all right here, Daddy. I'm going have search a little further for your actual logbook at that time.

0:52 Tulien: What do you actually think of these characters, of Adamski and Bethurum? I think you knew Van Tassel, right? Yeah.

Willis T. Sperry: I knew Van Tassel, yeah.

Tulien: So you used to fly out there and go have coffee with Van Tassel?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Yeah, and talk to him?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Yeah, what was he like, Van Tassel?

Willis T. Sperry: Oh, wasn't that bad.

Tulien: Yeah, good guy?

Avalon Hill: Remember the story with the, with the big spider, the black widow down there under the rock? Remember the story where he never killed anything? The big black widow going along, remember that story?

Willis T. Sperry: No.

Avalon Hill: I recall that story.

Tulien: Glad that you remember.

Avalon Hill: Yeah.

Willis T Sperry: I don't remember that.

Avalon Hill: You, you remember she said, wasn't like his museum down under Giant Rock, and he had pictures and stuff?

0:53 Willis T. Sperry: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Avalon Hill: Remember that girl who wouldn't kill it?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Wouldn't kill a spider?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, I remember that now. Oh, they gave me hell! I was trying to kill that damn god black widow!

Tulien: Um, okay. I can't think of another question to ask. So, I think we got, we got close to an hour or so. Thanks for helping us. Thanks for taking the time -

Willis T. Sperry: Nice to meet you, sir.

Interviewers Tulien/Sparks: to get your story. Yes, thank you.

Willis T. Sperry: Nice to meet you.

Interviewers Tulien/Sparks: Nice to met you.

Willis T. Sperry: I don't just jump up at the present time. (LAUGHTER) not quite.

Sparks: Feeling beings.

Avalon Hill: Feeling beings that live on the back side of the moon, and they-

Sparks: Van Tassel.

Avalon Hill: Can land down. Yeah, that was the Van Tassel. And they land. You, you can see it would be a great landing strip.

0:54 Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, what they found was just a bunch of volcanic holes.

Avalon Hill: Yeah, that's right. And then, of course, when they went to the moon, then they'd be able-

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, that's right.

Tulien: Oh, of course they remember though. That would be a short-term story.

Avalon Hill: Yeah, right. Van Tassel, I mean, remember he had that Cyclotron thing where he get people in there and, and whirl those lights around and make them think they'd gone to the moon?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Was that it? He'd tell them they went to the moon?

Willis T. Sperry: Um, oh yeah.

Tulien: To the moon, Alice!

Willis T. Sperry: It was ah, to put in a, er, like, in. They, they had that thing in the, ah, what the hell kind of place? They had different to get this write a rock under something.

Sparks: Planetarium?

Willis T. Sperry: Yeah.

Tulien: Oh, he did have a planetarium out there?

Avalon Hill: Yeah, it's still out there. Yeah. You can still see the -. He told me they live up there. Weird dome. It's a-

Tulien: Yeah, but that Cyclotron thing, that was some device, making out like that's something that strange.

Avalon Hill: Yeah, yeah. He told me they'd line up there every day, 50 bucks a pop, and to go in. Yeah.

Sparks: Yeah. I didn't realize they were making money like that. P.T. Barnum is proven right once again!

Avalon Hill: Isn't that the truth. Yeah.

Sparks: There's a sucker born every minute.

Avalon Hill: Yeah, yeah.

0:56 Willis T. Sperry: Well, you know, er, out east of Palm Springs about 50-60 miles, I would say about that -- 50-60 miles, by god if I didn't have engine trouble. I got boy, this

is one hell of a nice place to have engine trouble out here! You're 50 miles from a road, nobody knows you are out here. You call, and then nobody answers you on the radio. God, I'm telling you and then finally the thing just ka-chug, ka-chug, ka-chug. It quit. I landed along the side of the road and left a message in the airplane. And I got out there and I stood out there for damn near an hour before a car come along and stopped, picked me up. And that airplane sat out there for a week before we got a mechanic find out what the hell was wrong with it.

Sparks: Wow! What kind of plane was it?

0:57 Willis T. Sperry: It was a Piper. I had it in my flight school and I recall that's what it was. One of the things though that always intrigued me, ah, you fellows know what a B-24 is?

Sparks: -- that's a Liberator?

0:58 Willis T. Sperry: Yeah, Liberator. Boy, they can carry a hell of a load! And they loaded that thing too, ah, of, of food. And they told me where I should go. No airports, no nothing. And not, Sperry, if it ever looked good, forget it. Just come on back, you know. And I went out there about 75 miles where, ah, this refueling place was. And I comb this place out here, and it look pretty damn good, you know, pretty damn good. And I went down there and got down within ten feet of it. Sure looked good. I jerked the throttle back and we landed. And ah, I said "God Almighty, I don't know whether I am going to get out of here or not! But we, it was getting dark. So I called on the radio, told them where we were. And ah, they said "You're in, you're in a military area that is not conducive to what the United States is over here for. And you might have some problems. Well, I met a couple of these Chinese Generals that were there you, you know. They came in there with their car, old dilapidated car they had, and ah, they wanted to know where I wanted to stay and I said I'll stay right near the plane. Well, okay if you do that, why if you, if you be with me on it. Cause then they had all kinds of bandits and everything over there. Go over there slaughtering the whole damn bunch of you if they had the opportunity! See, if they thought they going get something. What the hell you got here?" Oh that's, that's a non-stop. Ah, I still have that record, for Los Angeles.

1:00 Avalon Hill: I think, um, yeah, you have the world's record for loops in a glider in 1933. Now that one may not, may not have been broken. That's a land speed record... There's your plaque from the hump.

End.