

Hale Burge: One day the Navy had a little C-45 [Beech Expeditor] flew over from Attu and the engine wasn't running right. So we had the line chief and his assistant out there messing with that airplane for 6 hours and finally I told them... I was on a B-26 rebuilding it from a crash landing and I told the Maintenance Officer, Captain Boatwright – he was out of North Carolina, kind of high-faloutin' and hadn't been used to this war torn area over seas. He was strictly gun-ho go, go, go and "yes sir, no sir." Anyway, I told him, I said, "I'll tell you what, you let me go home for supper now and I'll bring this friend of mine, Jim Crider," -- we worked together a lot. He was a real good mechanic also. "And we'll get that airplane fixed." [He said] "Do you think you can do it?" I said, "Yeah, we can do it."

So we went over and had lunch or supper that evening and came back and I said to Jim, "Now this 985 engine [Pratt and Whitney] has got a balance problem." Because he revved it up to 1800 and it started back firing through the carburetor. And I said that's all it can be. So I said, "You start up here at the top and work the cylinders, take the valve covers off and I'll start at the bottom by the sump pump and go up the other way on the right." So we did that and, you know, finally got down to the last rocker arm cover on the bottom by the sump pump on the left hand side and there, we could see it was kind of cracked but it wasn't leaking oil. So we pulled that off and adjusted that valve, got a new cover off of an engine in the engine shop, put it back on. If we had inspected all those covers real good we'd only have had to pull one off but that's the way it goes while you're still learning. He and I both, he'd gone to school somewhere in the states, I don't know. But I'd never gone to any aircraft maintenance school.

So there we was and about an hour and a half time we had that engine running like a charm and I called to the tower and told them to get a hold of our Maintenance Officer and he come down there and couldn't believe it. So I got him in the cockpit, he didn't know anything about it. But I knew how to run up the engines and what have you and checked them out and they were perfect. I said, "Get the Navy and they're ready to go back home." And he said, "How'd you do that?" And I said, "Well, you know, I talked to the Crew Chief on this airplane this afternoon and asked him when was the last time they had a 100 hour inspection on this thing and did they mess with the valves." And he told me about 6 hours back. So that's how I had a clue it was the valves in the first part of the time, but the other was I knew it from backfiring like it was, it must be something to do with the valves.