



*Oral
History
Program*



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Pat Condon

Interviewed by Alyssa Kammerman
12 April 2019

Oral History Program
Weber State University
Stewart Library
Ogden, Utah

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Mission Statement

The Oral History Program of the Stewart Library was created to preserve the institutional history of Weber State University and the Davis, Ogden and Weber County communities. By conducting carefully researched, recorded, and transcribed interviews, the Oral History Program creates archival oral histories intended for the widest possible use.

Interviews are conducted with the goal of eliciting from each participant a full and accurate account of events. The interviews are transcribed, edited for accuracy and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewees (as available), who are encouraged to augment or correct their spoken words. The reviewed and corrected transcripts are indexed, printed, and bound with photographs and illustrative materials as available. The working files, original recording, and archival copies are housed in the University Archives.

Project Description

Hill Aerospace Heritage Foundation oral history project is a series of oral histories documenting the life stories and experiences of the board members of the Hill Aerospace Heritage Foundation. Board members recall their time in military service, as well as their memories of starting the foundation in 1983 and opening the Hill Aerospace Museum in 1987. Each interview begins with a brief life sketch of the individual board member, then moves onto their memories of the early days of the Hill Aerospace Museum. They discuss ongoing efforts to make the museum the premier location for preserving Utah's Aviation and Air Force history and name important figures on the Board of Directors, base command, and museum staff who helped to make the museum an important influence in the community.

Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account. It reflects personal opinion offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Major General Pat Condon
12 April 2019

Abstract: The following is an oral history interview with Major General Retired, Pat Condon, conducted on April 12, 2019, in Ogden, Utah, by Alyssa Kammerman. Pat discusses his life, his experiences while serving in the United States Air Force, and his time serving on the Hill Aerospace Museum Board.

AK: Today is April 12, 2019. We are in the home of Major General Retired, Pat Condon, speaking with him about his experiences with the Hill Aerospace Museum. My name is Alyssa Kammerman, and I'll be conducting the interview. And I'll go ahead and just get started. Thanks again for allowing me to come and interview you today.

PC: You're welcome, you bet.

AK: My first question is where and when were you born?

PC: I was born in Miami, Florida, on July the 12th, 1941.

AK: Right before World War 2?

PC: Mm hm. A pre-war baby.

AK: What did your parents do during the war?

PC: My father, Frank Condon, was a veteran of World War One and wanted to serve when World War Two began, but they determined that he was too old to do that. He was 45 when I was born, as I mentioned, in 1941. So they determined that they wanted younger folks in our military. So he did not have the opportunity to serve in World War Two, but he was an automobile mechanic in Miami and ran a

garage there from the late 1930s into the late 1940s. And then in 1949, we moved to Atchison, Kansas, where his brother Dave Condon ran an Oldsmobile Cadillac dealership. And my father decided that he wanted to work for his brother as a mechanic there in his dealership. And so in April of 1949, we moved to Kansas, and that's where I did the rest of my growing up through high school.

AK: What are some of your memories of growing up in Kansas?

PC: They were great. Atchison was then, and still is, a relatively small town with a population of about 10,000. So it was a great environment in which to grow up. The town was small enough that a lot of people knew everybody else. I mean, maybe not everybody, but the neighbors knew each other. The neighbors did things together. They looked out for each other and we never had any concerns about safety or anything like that. It was a great environment in which to grow up. And my family instilled in me some values that I think have served me well for the rest of my life. The value of hard work and the value of serving others. And I think all of those have served me well throughout, not only my time in college and in my time in the Air Force, but my time after that. I was taught at a very early age and throughout my growing up that I'm responsible for my own actions and my actions have consequences. And so I should think very carefully about what I do and how I do it, because I own that. Those are my responsibilities. And again, I think those are values that have served me very well.

AK: You mentioned that hard work and serving others was an important value growing up. What are some things your parents did to instill that in you?

PC: I don't know that I can point to a specific thing, nor can I point to either one of them sitting me down and saying, you know, "Pat, this is really important. You need to pay attention to this." It was mainly just by observing. My parents were not wealthy by any means. We were probably lower middle class, although I don't know that I realized that we were at that time. But they were always willing to share with others and always willing to help others who had one particular need or another. And they were just, you know, that kind of people. And so I guess I learned by observing both of them work hard to provide what we did have. I never went to bed hungry. We always had shelter. We never had a new car when I was growing up, but we always had food on the table. Sometimes beans was the entrée at the evening meal. So as I mentioned, they were not people of great monetary wealth, but their wealth, I think was in their values and their sharing of those values.

AK: How many siblings did you have?

PC: I was an only child. But not spoiled.

AK: [laughs] Doesn't sound like it.

PC: No.

AK: So what did your mother do? Did she stay at home?

PC: She worked for a doctor initially as a receptionist, but she gradually took on more responsibilities. And even though she didn't have any formal training, she did a lot of things that would probably be described as things a Physician's Assistant would do today. But she started working for that doctor when I was in about the

third grade and she worked there through the time that I graduated from high school and then later went on to college and graduated from college as well.

AK: So as part of this philosophy of hard work that was important in your family, did you ever have jobs growing up, especially in high school?

PC: I did work some in the summertime. Our next door neighbor ran a heating and air conditioning business, and I remember working for him one summer, just tending to the office when he was out on calls, answering the phone and dealing with anybody that happened to come into the shop with a particular need. After I graduated from high school, I worked basically as a laborer at what was then St. Benedict's College there in Atchison. It's now Benedictine College, but I just worked as a day laborer.

We were doing all the things that you do around the university in the summertime to get it ready for the next fall term. You know, painting and restoring things that needed to be restored and replacing tiles and just general maintenance kinds of things. So I did that for the summer between the time I graduated from high school and entered college. And then I worked all the way through college as well. My parents couldn't afford to send me to college, so I benefited from a National Defense Student Loan to start my college time. It was a loan offered by the government and in return I had to major in some technical field and I ended up choosing mechanical engineering. And that loan was enough to get me started. And then I worked my freshman year at the university as a cafeteria employee in the university system there, basically a busboy. And then in my sophomore year, I was able to get a job as what would now be called,

I think, a resident assistant. But at the University of Oklahoma, where I attended, they were called dormitory counselors. So from the end of my sophomore year, through the rest of my time in college, which ended up being a five year stint, I was a dormitory counselor and that paid fairly well.

Paid room and board and \$50 a month, which at that time was sufficient for me to pay for my tuition and books. And then I worked during the summer, too, when I went back home to Kansas--worked in an alcohol plant, again as just as a laborer doing something different every day and almost something different every hour of the day. But it paid fairly well, for that time at least. And so through my work at the university and then my work at summer jobs, I was able to pay for my college and in fact even sent money home to my parents, which is probably a fairly unusual thing to happen, even then. But it all worked out.

AK: What did you say you were studying again?

PC: I majored in mechanical engineering. And I also went through Air Force ROTC at the University of Oklahoma. OU is a land grant college, which means the government provided land to the state to build the university in exchange. At least through some period of time, the requirement was that all physically fit males had to take two years of ROTC. And my choices were either Army or Air Force. And when I went, I found I had to make a choice. I called my father and I said, "You know, I gotta to choose either Air Force or Army ROTC." Naval ROTC was all scholarship and I didn't have a Navy scholarship. So I said, "What should I do? Should I go Army or Air Force?" And he said, "Well," he said, "I was in the Army. I think I would choose Air Force if I were you." So I did. And there was a

draft at the time and things were starting to build up for the Vietnam War so I figured I was going to serve in the military one way or the other. And I decided if I was going to do that, I wanted to do so as an officer. And so I took the additional two years of ROTC, my junior and senior year, and got a commission in the Air Force when I graduated.

AK: What was some of the training you received in ROTC?

PC: Oh, a lot of drill education and, you know, military history and the organization of the Air Force. Just some fairly basic things about our military history and the organization of the service and so forth. But again, every Tuesday afternoon it was drill and we'd spend a couple of hours on the drill field learning how to march and how to pass in review and how to do all of those kinds of things that are associated with drilling. And on days where the weather was inclement, we were in a classroom and there would usually be some predetermined curriculum that we would go through to spend an hour or two on that Tuesday afternoon.

AK: Was it something that you enjoyed doing?

PC: I did. I enjoyed military history a lot. And I don't know if it's because I was engaged in engineering and had developed an interest in mechanics from my father, but I just enjoyed aviation things, I enjoyed all the things that we did in the ROTC class associated with military history and so forth. So yeah, for me, it was pretty easy. It was something I really did enjoy.

AK: Did you have any contact with airplanes during your ROTC experience?

PC: We did. Tinker Air Force Base was about twenty miles north of the O.U. campus, and so we had an opportunity to visit there. Plus, there were field trips that were taken. And when we went on a field trip, we flew on a military aircraft out of Tinker Air Force Base. I remember one field trip we took: We flew to Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, home of the Thunderbirds, among other things. That was one field trip we took. We took another trip to Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth at that time, home of the B-58 bombers, which was one of our early nuclear bombers. Had a trip down to Cape Canaveral. We visited Patrick Air Force Base down there. And this was in the very early days of our nation's space program, our manned space program. It was in the early 1960s, I think, when we took that field trip. So anyway, we got some experience with different kinds of Air Force aircraft and then I went to ROTC summer camp at Reese Air Force Base in Lubbock, Texas. Reese is now closed. At the time, it was a pilot training base and I got my first orientation flight in a jet airplane. It was a T-33, which was a trainer aircraft. And we also took some field trips out of ROTC summer camp. So we got to be around Air Force aircraft and see how they operated, to understand what their missions were and what it took to maintain them and so forth. It was a pretty good indoctrination into the Air Force and what it's all about and how it functions and so forth before getting my commission.

AK: So one of the other board members mentioned that he had joined the ROTC during Vietnam and that there was a bit of resistance on campus against ROTC members, even graffiti on their ROTC building. Did you experience any of that at all?

PC: No, not at all. I was in college from 1959 to 1964, so it was really before a lot of that kind of thing occurred. Although I did have another university experience. The Air Force sent me to school twice for formal education, once to get a master's degree in aerospace mechanical engineering at the Air Force's resident engineering school the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. And then later, I had an assignment with NASA down in Houston during the Apollo program, and I can tell you more about that if you're interested at some point. But while I was there, I was offered the opportunity to go back to school again to get a doctorate in engineering, and I chose to go to University of Texas at Austin.

I was there from 1971 through 1973. So there was some of that kind of anti-war activity going on, but it was fairly benign, as I recall, at the University of Texas. I don't recall any major, huge demonstrations or any kind of destructive behavior that evolved from the protests of the war. I didn't wear a uniform when I was going to school. So only my immediate classmates knew. And there were several of us from the Air Force, and one Army guy that I can remember, who were going to school there together. We didn't wear our uniforms and so nobody other than this immediate circle knew that we were in the military. But I really never experienced any of that. And by the time I finished my degree and got my doctorate, things were pretty well winding down in Vietnam, and then my next assignment was back to Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, and we were pretty well isolated from a lot of the anti-war protests that took place around the country during that time. So I really never experienced it.

AK: Would you tell me a little bit more about the Apollo project that you mentioned?

PC: Sure. After I got my master's degree in aerospace mechanical engineering, I went to Tinker Air Force Base as a propulsion engineer. Tinker is a base similar to Hill in that at the time it was called an Air Material Area, it was basically a maintenance and modification repair depot for aircraft. And I was a propulsion engineer engaged in various kinds of tasks associated with trying to correct problems that we saw as aircraft and engines were being repaired and modified. While I was there, I received a notification from headquarters Air Force Logistics Command, which was our parent command, saying that the Air Force and NASA had an agreement to send Air Force personnel to NASA locations to get on-the-job training in manned spaceflight. At the time—and again, this was in the mid-1960s—the Air Force had a program called the Manned Orbiting Laboratory program.

And its intent was to have a laboratory in orbit around the Earth that was populated by uniformed military personnel. And so a number of us in the Air Force were selected to go to these various NASA locations to get OJT in manned spaceflight. And then we were supposed to be there for two years and come back to the Air Force and be assigned to the Manned Orbiting Laboratory program and apply that experience. And so I went to the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston—now the Johnson Space Center--as a rendezvous analyst in October of 1967. And the nation had experienced its first real space tragedy about nine months before that, in January of 1967, when we lost three astronauts in the Apollo 1 fire. And so spaceflight had been suspended while they went

through the process of determining what went wrong and how to make sure it didn't happen again. And they got through their process very quickly, because a year after we got there, Apollo 7 flew. And so I was at the manned Spacecraft Center from about a year before Apollo 7 flew until after Apollo 14 flew. So I was there through the first lunar landing and through Apollo 13 and the anxious moments that resulted from that mission. And the reason I was there that long is during the first two-year period I was there, the Manned Orbiting Laboratory program got canceled. So we didn't have a program to come back to. And a number of us were offered an opportunity to extend the year. And I was having just a marvelous time and this was a fascinating place for a young engineer to be, a fascinating time in our history. And so I jumped at the chance to extend for a year. Instead of a two year tour, it was then going to be a three year tour. And during that third year, I got offered an opportunity by the Air Force Institute of Technology to go back to school again to get my doctorate in aerospace engineering. And so I ended up staying an extra six months in order to make my time of entering school match up well.

So I ended up being there three and a half years instead of just the two years that was initially planned. But again, it was a fascinating time in our history and a fascinating place to be. And I did most of my work there on the Skylab program, which was another manned orbiting laboratory program. But this one was run by NASA and I was involved in designing the maneuvers that allowed the Command and Service module to rendezvous with the Skylab once it was in orbit. But anyway, it was a great tour and I just have some great memories. And

I'm fortunate to still be involved in NASA, in that I serve as a volunteer on the Human Exploration and Operations Committee of the NASA Advisory Council. And we review all of NASA's human exploration plans and the operations associated with those and then provide guidance or advice as we see fit to the NASA administrator. Then as a part of that, we're reviewing the commercial programs with SpaceX and Boeing and as well the plans that NASA has with the Space Launch System and their plans to go to the moon and eventually to Mars. So it's been a great opportunity to stay engaged with the nation's space program.

AK: That's really cool. So did these orbiting laboratories that were going to be manned by the military ever take off?

PC: No, that was a mission that during sometime between 1967 and 1969; that first two year period that I was at the manned spacecraft center, the Manned Orbiting Laboratory program was canceled. So we never put uniformed people in space as a part of a military mission or a military organization. Now, there are obviously astronauts from that time as well as in the current day who are military. We have Navy and Air Force and Army officers who are astronauts. But they are basically detailed or assigned to NASA for civilian missions, not military missions.

AK: OK, so what were some of your day-to-day duty duties while you were there with NASA?

PC: Well, as I mentioned, I was a rendezvous analyst. So we ran computer programs that designed the maneuvers that were required to take, in the case of Skylab, the Command and Service Module which contained the three astronauts from its

insertion orbit, which is a fairly low orbit around the Earth, through the various maneuvers that would enable that Command Service Module to rendezvous with and then subsequently dock with the orbiting laboratory. So it would take a few hours for the Command and Service Module to go through its maneuvers that are required in order to get into the higher orbit and to basically rendezvous with the orbiting laboratory. And there were various constraints that were involved in terms of the time of day you could launch and the kind of lighting that you wanted when the Command and Service Module approached the orbiting laboratory. So there was good visibility for the astronauts who were doing the docking and there were a number of other constraints as well.

So you had to basically go through an iterative process of changing the maneuver time slightly or changing the thrust slightly in order to make sure that you got where you wanted to be when you wanted to be there. And we would publish documents for each of the missions describing all of those maneuvers and anything else on the periphery that was needed in order for the astronauts to be able to launch and get into their initial insertion orbit and then eventually rendezvous with the orbiting laboratory. So basically what I did every day was, you know, run those programs and there were some auxiliary tasks that would come along that involve rendezvous and we would explore those. But basically, you know, the task was finding and designing the maneuvers required for two spacecraft to rendezvous in orbit. And that's what we do.

AK: That's amazing. So after you finished up your doctorate, where did you go from there?

PC: I went back to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio as an engineer in the Aero Propulsion Laboratory, which was part of the Air Force's laboratory system, doing basically science and technology work, basic research and exploratory development and advanced development on technologies that hopefully one day would find their way into warfighting capability for the warfighters. So I did that for about four years and progressed from being a bench engineer, basically, to a branch chief. And then after doing that for four years, I remained at Wright-Patterson but moved over into what was called the Propulsion System Program Office. And that organization was responsible for developing and fielding the engines that were used in our aircraft at the time. And the office into which I went was the F100 engine office. And that the engine was used initially in the F-15 aircraft and then later the F-16 aircraft.

So I was engaged in going through all of the things that one goes through when you're developing and fielding a new engine. They always find ways to break and then it was part of our responsibility to work with the contractor, the prime contractor, Pratt and Whitney, to determine what went wrong, why it went wrong and how to fix it so it doesn't do that again. So I did that for a couple of years and then moved to Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio as a representative of the director of the Propulsion System Program Office. Kelly Air Force Base was the prime depot base for the F100 engine and there was a lot of activity going on. This was in the early 1980s. The F-15 had been flying for about six years or so and the F-16 was just coming on board. And there were a significant number of growing pains with the F100 engine. It was a real leap forward in

capability in terms of the thrust that it produced and the fairly lightweight that it exhibited. So its thrust-to-weight ratio was way beyond anything that we had ever fielded before and there were some growing pains associated with that.

So I spent three years at Kelly Air Force Base as the liaison, if you will, for the director of the Engine Program office at Wright-Patterson and working with the folks at Kelly who were responsible for doing the sustainment, the maintenance on those engines. And then I was selected for promotion to colonel while I was there and also selected for Air War College. So I went to Air War College in Montgomery, Alabama, at Maxwell Air Force Base for ten months, and then from there I went to Eglin Air Force Base in the panhandle of Florida as the deputy for engineering in the Armament Division. We were responsible for developing and fielding air launched weapons for the Air Force: bombs and missiles and things of that nature. And so I was in charge of the engineering workforce that supported and participated in the program offices there that were developing the various weapons and did that for a year and then moved over to become the commander of the Armament Laboratory, which did the science and technology work, sort of what the Aero Propulsion Laboratory was doing when I was up at Wright-Pratt. But in this case, directed at air-launched weapons. So we were the science and technology organization, if you will, for the Armament Division, who did the development and the fielding of those air-launched weapons. So we were at the very early stages of technology development in the Armament lab.

Anyway, did that for a year and then got selected to go to the Arnold Engineering Development Center, which is a ground test facility in southern middle Tennessee at Arnold Air Force Base. Huge complex of wind tunnels and turbine engine test facilities and rocket motor test facilities and ballistic ranges and vacuum chambers for testing spacecraft. So we tested on the ground, but in simulated flight conditions, all forms of aircraft and missiles and spacecraft and the propulsion systems for those before they ever flew. And so I was the commander there for three years. Got promoted to brigadier general, was assigned to the Pentagon in the office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, and served there for four years and then was promoted there to major general, then went to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base again, working as the Director of Plans and Programs in the Air Force Materiel Command. That was a result of a merger of the Air Force Logistics Command that I had worked in one time before, and the Air Force Systems Command, which I had spent most of my time in working in the laboratories and the program offices. And so those were all a part of Air Force Systems Command. But those two commands merged and the headquarters was at Wright-Patterson, So I was the Director of Plans and Programs there for about a year and a half and then came out here to Hill and was the commander of the Air Logistics Center at Hill from 1994 to 1997 and then retired out of that position. And have lived here in Ogden ever since.

AK: That's quite the career. OK, so you retired in 1997; How do you feel that the Cold War affected your work? Did you feel it created more of a frenzy to get things done faster? Or was that more nationally felt?

PC: Well, it ebbed and flowed. During the Reagan administration, the--well, I don't want to go into political history here. But the Air Force, the services, I think went through ups and downs. You know, over the years, as you alluded to earlier, there was a lot of discord in the country during the Vietnam War, a lot of dissatisfaction, I think inappropriately aimed at the military because they were just doing what they were asked to do by the senior leadership of the nation. But nonetheless, there was a negative feeling toward the military. And that hurt the funding some during the Carter administration. We went through, you know, some pretty rough times, too, with members of our embassy being captured in Iran and held prisoner, basically. And then when Ronald Reagan became president, there was, I think, a great recognition that we needed to restore our military because it really had waned, if you will.

It really had suffered the consequences of a lack of support which manifested itself in inadequate funding. And Ronald Reagan greatly built up the military as his way of addressing the Cold War. And so the military enjoyed some pretty good times in the mid-1980s. And then, you know, in the late 1980s, the Berlin Wall came down, largely, I think, due to the policies that President Reagan had incorporated. And so there was a feeling that, well, we didn't need as much military strength anymore. And so the military funding went down. So over time, it has waxed and waned.

You know, some years the support has been very good. In other years, not so good. And the military capability sort of follows that curve. And, you know, even after the Cold War, we've gone through periods of the, quote, "peace

dividend," if you will, where money that might have previously been allocated for military uses, was spent in other ways on other programs. And then at some point there becomes a recognition that we've gone too far and we start building up again. And we've seen that transpire over the last ten or fifteen years as well. So there's probably nothing new in our history about periods of strength and periods of great funding for our military and periods of not so great funding, you know. I mean, you can probably trace back through our history and see the curve oscillate, sometimes fairly wildly.

After World War One, you know, we had built up to some degree in World War One, although our involvement in World War One was a relatively short one. But we basically went through a disarmament period after World War One, only to have to build up again as World War Two came along. And then after World War Two, the strength of the military went down again and we had to build up some for the Korean War. And then after the Korean War went down again, and then Vietnam came along, and you can look back and trace the history of that funding curve. And it's, you know, a little bit like a rollercoaster. So you know, the main build up, I think that led finally to the end of the Cold War came during the Reagan administration. We had a number of programs. The Strategic Defense Initiative was one program that I think many people credit for helping end the Cold War, because the Soviet Union found that they could just not keep up. They could not keep up with the military spending that the United States was and its allies were putting into their defenses. And that led to the Berlin Wall coming

down and ultimately the dissolution of the Soviet Union. So anyway, you'll see those fluctuations over time.

AK: So after you retired, you mentioned you continued to live in Ogden, Utah. Did you join the museum board right away or did you have other jobs that you were working on?

PC: Right after I retired, I was asked by retired Lieutenant General Marc Reynolds, who was the foundation board chair at the time, if I would come on the board and I accepted that opportunity. My employment after I retired was basically aerospace consulting and I worked with a company in Ohio and then later some companies around here as well in doing consulting mainly with companies who are interested in doing business with the military. Largely the Air Force and in some cases with the program offices within the Air Force who needed an outside set of eyes and ears to come in and review what they were doing and offer some recommendations based on whatever issue it was that they were dealing with at the time.

So that consulting has a fair amount of flexibility associated with it so it allowed me to do some volunteer activities like serving on the Museum Foundation Board and get more heavily involved in the Air Force Association as a volunteer, first here locally and then later nationally. And I was privileged to serve as the national president and then also the chairman of the board later for the Air Force Association at the national level. And so that that gave me an opportunity to stay pretty well connected with the Air Force and what was going on in the Air Force, both the Air Force Association activity, as well as the

consulting activity which kept me involved in Air Force related matters. And so, you know, as we discussed early on, early in my ROTC time, my interest in aviation was there and it and it has remained there. And so serving on the Museum Foundation Board was something that was attractive to me. And so I have been on that board for a little over 20 years now.

AK: So you joined the board in 1997--

PC: 1997 or 1998. I don't remember the exact date but sometime around there.

AK: What are your memories of the museum from the time that you got there and the efforts to make it into what it has become today?

PC: Well, before I even was on the board, the museum had an idea that it, first of all, wanted to make sure that what was in the museum was of good quality and it was of good value for the people who visited the museum; That it helped tell the story of the history of the Air Force and even current-day Air Force in a very professional way. So that was one focus of making sure that we're doing a good job with what we've got. But the other focus was expanding and growing and continuing to grow the collection and expand our capability to share Air Force history with the public. And so during that time--and I don't remember the exact years--money was raised to build the second gallery. It's now the Lindquist Stewart Gallery. And that allowed us to bring inside a number of aircraft that had been on display outside and take better care of them, ultimately. And as you probably are aware, we've got an effort right now going on to build yet a third

gallery to bring yet more aircraft from outside display under some cover to better protect them.

So for the whole time I've been on the museum board, there've been these two main focus areas of upgrading the exhibits, of upgrading the patron flow and so forth within the museum so that we can do a good job of communicating Air Force history with the assets that we have, but also looking to the future to expand that capability. The education mission of the museum has just really blossomed and the opportunity to bring school-age children into the museum for various special programs to educate them on some fairly basic things like aerodynamics and electricity and mechanics and things like that, to sort of help get them interested in STEM related science, technology, engineering and math related disciplines to show them that STEM is pretty cool. I mean there are some pretty neat things that have been done through science, technology engineering and math and also help acquaint them that it's not magic, it's not scary. It's something that's very useful and really has produced some pretty amazing things in our society. So the education aimed at schoolchildren has just really, really blossomed over the years. And the opening of the education center, named in memory of retired Lieutenant General Marc Reynolds, was a great step forward in expanding the capability that we have to provide that kind of education outlet for school age children. So that has been great as well.

AK: When did that education initiative start?

PC: Well, I can't tell you when it exactly started. I mean, it's been there the entire time I've been on the museum board. Deloy Spencer was a big part in the early years of it, working with the schoolchildren. We were able to get grants from NASA and others that helped provide funding to do some of the education programs. So it's been going on a long, long time. But as I mentioned during the time that I've been on the board over the last twenty years, those efforts have really expanded greatly and, I think, provide a great resource for this community. Robb or Aaron Clark can give you the precise statistics, but we touch some 40,000 school-age children a year from this northern Utah area right there in the museum. And I think that's a significant contribution to this community.

AK: Were there any specific projects that you specifically had a hand in?

PC: Not projects specifically. I mean, there have been certain board members who have been really instrumental in specific displays. Like we've got a display on the Vietnam War, we've got a display on various other aspects like that that certain board members who had a particular interest were heavily involved in. The thing that I was probably most involved in, not really a project, was the annual reunion of the Doolittle Raiders that we hosted in 2000. You know, all of the Doolittle Raiders are now deceased. But in 2000, there were 25 Doolittle Raiders who were still surviving and the Doolittle Raid occurred on April 18th, 1942.

And right after the war, the group of airmen who participated in that raid decided to hold a reunion every year. And so on the 18th of April, every year, they would get together someplace around the country and probably tell war stories and catch up with each other and so forth. And various organizations then

started sponsoring or co-hosting or hosting that annual reunion. And at the time, one of the Doolittle Raiders lived in Brigham City. His name was Chase Nielsen and he was a navigator on the sixth aircraft that took off from the carrier in 1942 to go bomb Japan and I don't know the exact genesis of this, I don't know whether somebody on the board contacted Chase or whether Chase contacted General Reynolds or somebody else on the board about the possibility of our foundation hosting their annual reunion, but however that came about, the decision was made that the foundation board would be the host for the annual Doolittle Raider reunion in 2000.

And General Reynolds asked if I would co-plan the reunion. And the way they did it at the time was that the host organization would have a co-planner paired up with one of the Doolittle Raiders who is the other co-planner. And so in this case, Chase Neilson was the Doolittle Raider person with whom I worked. And we co-planned that particular reunion. And it was one of the highlights of my life to be involved in that. It was just a tremendous experience. As I mentioned, twenty-five of the Raiders were surviving in 2000 at the time of that reunion, and seventeen of those twenty-five attended the reunion here and it was just a great experience. The Raiders arrived on Thursday and we held a small reception at the Officers Club at Hill for them. We got a few of the community leaders and supporters of Hill Air Force base out for that. But it was a fairly small affair. And then we housed the Raiders on-base at Hill, which was convenient for them and convenient for us as well.

Early Friday morning, I think probably around 7:30 or so, we rounded up all of the Raiders and their spouses who attended and took them to the enlisted dining hall for breakfast. And we scattered the Raiders out throughout the dining hall so that as many enlisted people who were there also for breakfast could sit at their tables and listen to their experiences over breakfast. And so we did that. There was no formal program. The Air Logistics Center commander at the time was there and he gave a welcome and so forth. But it was mainly just an opportunity for the Raiders to mingle with our current airmen and for the airmen to get to know these World War II heroes. And so we did that. We took them over to the 388th Fighter Wing and the 388th gave a bomb-landing demo for them on the F-16. And so they were in one of the hangars doing that. And it was an opportunity, again, for members of the 388th to interact with the Doolittle Raiders. We then took them downtown. The Standard Examiner, the newspaper in town, hosted a luncheon for the Raiders. [Chokes up] I get emotional because it was a very emotional experience. The whole reunion was, but anyway we'll try to get through this.

They hosted a luncheon for the Raiders at what's now the Ben Lomond Hotel. And it was, again, no program, no speeches or anything like that. But the publisher of the paper gave a welcome and presented each of the raiders with a reproduction of the front page from the Standard Examiner the day after the Doolittle raid. And it talked about the U.S. Army Air Corps launching from an undisclosed site called Shangri-La. Which is what President Roosevelt had termed this, because at that time they wanted to keep secret what the Raiders

had really done in launching off the U.S.S. Hornet, the aircraft carrier. And so they made this fictitious site, Shangri-La, as the launch point. Anyway that was what was part of the headline of this paper. And so anyway we had a really nice lunch there at the Ben Lomond. And then we took them over to the Union Station and they had the opportunity to rest if they wanted to, there at Union Station, or tour the various museums that are a part of Union Station.

So we did that for most of the afternoon and then took them to the Timber Mine for a private dinner. Dean and Karen Hill, who were the owners of the Timber Mine at the time, set us up in a separate area where we were just all by ourselves, just the private contingency there, the Doolittle Raiders and some of the leadership from Hill Air Force Base. And then after dinner, we went to Weber State in the large auditorium there, and we'd invited the public to come to that. (And again, this is all taking place on Friday, their first full day here.) In the auditorium, we played a couple of videos that documented the Doolittle Raid and so, you know, people had an opportunity to meet the Raiders and so forth. We had a full auditorium.

I don't recall the number, but it was a pretty good number of people from the community who came out for that. And then we took them back to the base after that so they could return to their quarters. And as we were going back there, I thought, "boy, we have we have really messed this up. These people are mostly in their 80s, at this time and we've had them on the go since 7:30 this morning without stop. And while they had a little bit of time to sit and rest at lunch and at the Union Station, I know we've worn them out." And, you know, "we should have

thought this through more carefully. We should have planned rest periods in here. I just know we've worn them out." Well, all of my fears were set aside when, about 9:00 at night, a couple of the Raiders, as they're getting off the bus to supposedly go to their quarters, they came over to me and they said, "Say General, do you think the bar's still open at the officers club?" [laughs] It wasn't, but anyway my concerns about me wearing them out with all that we had them do on that Friday just went completely away when they wanted to know if they could still go party some.

But anyway the next morning, Saturday morning, we were at the museum and the morning was dedicated purely to the Raiders. They were by themselves off in the conference room where they conducted their normal reunion business that they do every year. Part of that was the tradition of, in essence, toasting the fallen Raiders, the ones who'd been lost during the previous year. They had a traveling cabinet with small chalices, each one engraved with the name of one of the eighty Doolittle Raiders. And as a Raider would pass on, they would take his chalice in that cabinet and turn it upside down. And so that was a part of their ritual and so forth, to recognize members of their group who had been lost over the previous year. And then they had other business that they conducted as well.

Then we had lunch for them there in the museum. And in the afternoon the Raiders signed autographs for the public who came to the museum and there was a huge, huge outpouring of support from the community. The Raiders were set up in the Stewart Lindquist gallery—you know the new gallery—but the line stretched way into the first gallery and that went on for hours and hours and

hours. And some of the Raiders, when they recognized that we were getting near the end of the time when they were gonna have to cut off autographs and go on back to their quarters to freshen up, recognized that there were a lot of people in line who were not going to get there in time to have that opportunity. So they went out and set up a little table out in the first gallery and signed autographs for everybody who was there in line. I don't think anybody went away without an autograph of at least one of the Doolittle Raiders. But anyway, the Raiders were great with the public. They spent as much time as anybody wanted to spend talking with them. And that was, quite frankly, part of the problem in that there were far more people than we could accommodate, you know, if each Raider spent a good bit of time with the people who were visiting. But again, the Raiders who came out to the other gallery and signed autographs, we just ensured that everybody who wanted an autograph was able to get one. So we took them back to their quarters, they freshened up and then back to the museum Saturday evening for dinner.

It was a private dinner, but we invited members of the community who wanted to participate. We had a cut off because we have a limited number we could accommodate, But businesses hosted tables, bought tables, in essence, and we had one of the Doolittle Raiders at each of the tables there in the museum. And I don't remember the number that we had, but it was probably on the order of 150 or 200 total guests, including the Raiders and their family members and then members of the community. And Colonel (ret) Glines, C.V. Glines, who was the Raider historian, gave a presentation after dinner. Basically

the history of the raid and what its meaning was and told a little bit about each of the seventeen Raiders there that were present and what their role was, what their part was.

And there was another aspect of this: When I was stationed in the Pentagon back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, one of my responsibilities was Acting Director of Science and Technology for the Air Force. And the Air Force, in concert with NASA and other entities, was developing what was called the National Aerospace Plane. It was gonna be a hypersonic aircraft that could go from one point on the earth to another in a couple of hours--a very short period of time. And we had on loan to our organization there in the Pentagon, a member from NASA, and his name was Ming Tang. He was of Chinese origin, born in China, but he was a naturalized U.S. citizen. But he had done a lot of work out at Edwards Air Force Base in supersonic flight with NASA and was a pretty well recognized expert in supersonics and hypersonics. And I remembered talking with Ming when we were there in the Pentagon back in the late 1980s, early 1990s, and him mentioning to me that his father was a general in the Chinese army. And that he remembered as a little kid, his father hosting dinner in their home for Doolittle Raiders.

And these were raiders who had, after they completed their raid over Japan, had flown to China and had either ditched along the coast or had bailed out on the interior of China. And a number of them were able to find each other and they got organized and ultimately were taken out of China and returned back to the US. But as a part of that process, at one point, a group of the Raiders were

hosted in the home of this Chinese general, the father of Ming Tang. And Ming says, "I kept my father's photo album." And he said, "In that album, there are pictures of my father and the Doolittle Raiders that we hosted in our home." He said, "Do you think any other Raiders would be interested in seeing these?" And I said, "Oh, my gosh, Ming" I had invited him not knowing that Ming had this history. I told him that we were having the reunion and invited him to come out and be a part of it if he wanted to be. And he said, "Sure, I'd love to do that." But he said, "I've got these pictures that were in my father's family album. Do you think the Doolittle Raiders would be interested in these?" Well, these have never been in the public domain.

They had been in the Tang family album since 1942. And so Ming had the photos reproduced and sent out here. And I got together with Chase Neilson and then went through them. And Chase recognized some of the people that were there were in these photographs. And so, as I mentioned, there were twenty five raiders surviving, 17 of the twenty five were at our reunion, and as it turned out, five of the 17 were in these photographs. And they had never seen them before because they'd never been in the public domain. They'd been in the Tang family album. But anyway, Ming Tang came out and he talked about those photos. He was a part of the presentation that Saturday night after Colonel Glines had given his presentation, Ming got up and talked about his remembrances as a little kid and he showed some of these photographs. So that was a really special touch, I think, for the reunion. And it provided the Raiders something that they'd never experienced before, the existence of these photographs. And so Ming provided

them to C.V. Glines, the Raiders' historian. So they're now a part of the public domain as a result of that.

So anyway, that concluded the activity on Saturday night. And then Sunday morning we took the Raiders and their family members down to Salt Lake City for the broadcast performance of the Tabernacle Choir. At the time, the choir director was a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Craig Jessop, who had grown up in the Air Force band system and I had met him before. And so as we were planning the reunion, I contacted him and said, "Hey, we're hosting the Doolittle Raiders here for this reunion. I'd love to bring them to the Tabernacle Choir broadcast performance on that Sunday morning." And he said that would be great. He said, "When I was the director of the Air Force Singing Sergeants, we have an arrangement of the Air Force Hymn and I'll put the Air Force Hymn in our broadcast that morning in the honor of the Raiders." And that would be great. Anyway, a week or so later, I heard back from him and he said, "I just checked the calendar, and that's Palm Sunday." He said, "We're doing a special C.D. of music for the choir, incorporating both music from Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. And I can't change the order, so I can't do the hymn as a part of the broadcast. "But," he said, "Bring the Raiders anyway and after the broadcast is over, I'll have the choir do the Air Force Hymn." So we did. We brought them down there and the Raiders were introduced before the performance. The crowd, you know, really gave them a great welcome.

At the time, that broadcast was done in the Tabernacle itself. This was before the Conference Center was built, but the place was full and they gave the

Raiders a great, great welcome. And then after the broadcast was over, the choir sang, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and the Air Force Hymn in honor of the Raiders, and that was just an amazing, amazing experience for them.

We had breakfast for the Raiders that morning at the Officers Club at Hill, and I went over there--this is before we put them on the bus to go to Salt Lake City, and I went over there, and I was walking through the dining area and there was a family there, one of the Raiders, and I think his daughter and her family and I heard him say, "Well there's General Condon, let's ask him." And I thought, "Ah what is this?" And they said they had driven to the reunion from one of the nearby states, and I don't remember if it was Montana or Wyoming or one of the Dakotas. Anyway, it was someplace that was within driving distance and the daughter said, "Well," you know, "dad's kind of anxious to get on the road. We'd kind of like to go to the Tabernacle Choir thing. What do you think we should do?" And I said, "Well, you know that's a decision you all really need to make. I don't know how long your drive is and how your father's feeling and so forth. But tell you what, go to the broadcast, go to the performance of the Tabernacle Choir, and if you don't like it, if you think it was not worth your time, then you can say bad things about me all the way back home." And so they flat out said, "OK." So they ended up going to the performance and I ended up sitting next to him just by happenstance during the performance.

And after it was all over, after the choir had sung the Battle Hymn of the Republic and the Air Force Hymn, I looked at him and I said, "Well, what do you think? Was it worth it?" And he couldn't respond because he had tears in his

eyes. So anyway, that was another aspect of their reunion that I think was really meaningful to them and something different than what they'd ever experienced before. And that's something that they would never experience anywhere else, at least not like that. And Chase and his wife, Phyllis, told me I can't tell you how many times, for years after that reunion, that every time they would get together, the other Raiders would talk about the reunion that they had out in Utah and how great that was.

And so the whole experience, you know, from the little private reception that we had on Thursday night, through all the activities on Friday, and then the activities at the museum on Saturday and the dinner that night, and then capped off by the performance of the Tabernacle Choir on Sunday morning; it was just an incredible experience, one that that obviously is very meaningful to me. And certainly one that I'll never forget. And I think it was really meaningful to the Raiders. And that's I guess that's what has made it so special for me and so meaningful for me.

But it's something that the museum and the museum foundation, I think, really needs to take a lot of pride in because of what was done through the foundation and its sponsorship and its hosting of this event was something that, again, based on what Chase Nielson shared with us later, was really, really meaningful to the Doolittle Raiders. And I think the foundation needs to really be proud of what they did to host the Raiders for that. And, you know, these guys were an incredible part of U.S. history. They were an incredible part of World War Two history. And if you've had an opportunity to read of that mission and what

they did and how they went about doing it, it's an incredible story. And just to be associated with them in even some small way was just an incredible experience for all of us who had a part in that. And again, something, as I said, really, really meaningful for me and something that the foundation really needs to be proud of.

AK: Man, I don't know how you follow that story. That was incredible.

PC: Well, it was an incredible event. And again, something that was very meaningful to me and a whole lot of memories that will stay with me forever. And it's a real shame that we've now lost all the Raiders as Dick Cole passed earlier this week at the age of 103. He was the last one and he was Jimmy Doolittle's co-pilot, which is perhaps fitting, but it was just an incredible bunch of guys and they did some incredible things. And when you talk to them about it and ask them to share their experiences--and Chase Nielsen was like this, as were I think most of the Raiders, you know, their response was almost always, "I don't know what the fuss is all about. I don't know what the big deal is. We were just doing our job." And that was their attitude: "We were just doing our job." But, the job they did was just truly amazing and the impact that it had on the war was incredible in itself. And I don't think it was fully appreciated, certainly, at the time.

I mean, Jimmy Doolittle thought he was going to be court martialed because he'd lost every airplane, lost sixteen airplanes. As it turned out, one of them went to Russia and so it wasn't lost, although it was lost to the U.S. because the Russians kept it. But, you know, usually when a commander loses all the airplanes under his command, it's not a good thing. And that's why Jimmy Doolittle was convinced immediately after the raid that he was going to be court

martialed. And in looking at the raid, it had some tactical value, but really fairly minor. I mean there was damage done to certain facilities in Japan. But from a tactical standpoint, it was not terribly significant. But from a strategic standpoint, it changed the whole course of the war in the Pacific because the Japanese leaders had told their people they were never under any threat of attack and that they shouldn't even be concerned about that. And here it's barely four months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States launched an attack on Japan and it caused the Japanese military leadership to change their whole focus on the war in the Pacific and basically draw forces back to protect the homeland that they thought they didn't need to protect and so it really did change the whole course of the war in the Pacific and then obviously changed the course or changed the outcome of World War Two in the Pacific, and it was all done by these 80 guys who volunteered for this mission, not knowing what the mission was. Pretty incredible.

AK: That is incredible. Do you feel like a large part of the museum's value here in our community is also what it does for the community through honoring the people who sacrificed and bringing that awareness to people of Utah?

PC: Yeah, yeah, I think it does, you know, to a certain extent. Utah is an incredibly patriotic part of our country and there's a great appreciation in Utah, I think, for our military in general. And certainly here in northern Utah, there is a great appreciation for the Air Force. And so I don't think the museum does this in a flashy, you know, big production kind of way, but there are a number of exhibits both inside and outside the museum that honor those who have served. And I

think that's greatly appreciated by a large number of people here in the state.

And so the museum, I think, does have a role to play in not only telling Air Force history, but recognizing those who have served and have been a significant part of our military and a significant part in defending our nation.

AK: Are there any final memories that you'd like to share about the museum?

PC: Oh I've pretty well exhausted them I think. I've really enjoyed being part of the Museum Foundation Board. And again, you know, getting back to what I was saying earlier about the expansion of the museum and what it has to offer and the expansion of its education for young children and just the way in which the museum has been able to grow and expand its capability to share Air Force history with the public has been a thing that I really enjoyed being a part of, and will probably continue to enjoy being a part of for a long time yet.

AK: Perfect. Well, thank you so much for allowing me to come and interview you today. That was fantastic.

PC: And I hope you can do something with what we have put together here.

AK: Oh definitely.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW AGREEMENT

This Interview Agreement is made and entered into this 12th day(s) of April, 2019, by and between the Weber State University, Stewart Library, Oral History Program (WSUSLOHP), Hill Aerospace Museum, and Pat Condon, hereinafter called "Interviewee."

Interviewee agrees to participate in a recorded interview, commencing on or about 10 AM time 4-12-19 date, with Alyssa Kammerman.

This Interview Agreement relates to any and all materials originating from the interview, namely the recording of the interview and any written materials, including but not limited to the transcript or other finding aids prepared from the recording.

In consideration of the mutual covenants, conditions, and terms set forth below, the parties hereby agree as follows:

1. Interviewee irrevocably assigns to the WSUSLOHP and Hill Aerospace Museum all his or her copyright, title and interest in and to the interview.
2. WSUSLOHP and Hill Aerospace Museum will have the right to use and disseminate the interview for research, educational, and other purposes, including print, present and future technologies, and digitization to provide internet access.
3. Interviewee acknowledges that he/she will receive no remuneration or compensation for either his/her participation in the interview or for the rights assigned hereunder.
4. WSUSLOHP and Hill Aerospace Museum agrees to honor any and all reasonable interviewee restrictions on the use of the interview, if any, for the time specified below, as follows:

Interviewer and Interviewee have executed this Interview Agreement on the date first written above.

INTERVIEWEE

INTERVIEWER

Stephen P. Condon
(Signature)

Alyssa Kammerman
(Signature)

STEPHEN P. CONDON
(Printed Name)

Alyssa Kammerman
(Printed Name)

