



*Oral
History
Program*



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Donald Pantone

Interviewed by Alyssa Kammerman
4 March 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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Abstract: The following is an oral history interview with Don Pantone, conducted on March 4, 2019 at Hill Aerospace Museum, by Alyssa Kammerman. Don discusses his life, his memories while serving in the United States military, and his experiences while serving on the Hill Aerospace Heritage Foundation Board. Lorrie Rands, the video technician, is also present during this interview.

AK: Today is March 4, 2019. We are at the Hill Aerospace Museum with Mr. Don Pantone. My name is Alyssa Kammerman and I will be conducting the interview and on the camera with me is Lorrie Rands. So Don, we want to just start out with asking you where and when you were born?

DP: I was born in Ogden, Utah on August 16, 1927. That makes me 91 years old.

AK: What are some of your memories of growing up in Ogden as a kid?

DP: Oh, many. My father was in the music business and my grandfather started it. We lived down on Kiesel Avenue and the railroad was close and my dad ran the music store but he liked engines and trains and mechanical things so he took me down to watch the locomotives come in and out of Ogden. In those days all of the Union Pacific locomotives would come into Ogden and that was the end of the line and then the Southern Pacific locomotives would take trains on to San Francisco and other parts West. The railroad was really significant in Utah when I was growing up. We had tracks all over town. Switch engines would come around and ... My father played the clarinet and they had a Union Pacific Railroad band in Ogden and he was the only member of that band that didn't

work for the railroad but he was a good clarinetist and they liked him and in the band so he had a lot of friends on the railroad. He'd take me down to the roundhouse where they were overhauling the engines and show me how they'd repair and work on locomotives. He'd take me down to the Union Station about four o'clock or five o'clock in the afternoon and he'd know some of the engineers. And I was just a kid, I'd climb up in the cab of the big engine while they were hooked up to the train, waiting to go pull out of Ogden going east-bound, and things like that.

He was also interested in the aircraft and the airplanes and got me interested in them, too. He took me when I was maybe six or seven, to the old Ogden Airport. The old Ogden Airport was out where the Ogden Regional Hospital is now, in that part of South Ogden, and it was a gravel strip and there was a hanger there where Art Mortinson had airplanes. He had an old Curtiss Robin--which very few people know what a Curtiss Robin was--and a Curtiss-Wright Junior. I learned all those airplanes as a five and six year old. And my first airplane ride was in a Boeing Trimotor, a biplane built by Boeing. It was the Model 80. They have one on display at the Museum of Flight in Seattle. My dad didn't have too much money, but he bought me a ride in this Boeing airplane for I think five bucks and that started my interest in aviation. Then the next year, a Ford Trimotor--I don't know if you know about Ford Trimotors. Henry Ford got into the aviation business and built a bunch of trimotors--three engine airplanes--and they were some of the world's first metal airplanes. They were aluminum and

my dad bought me another ride in a Ford Trimotor and that started it. So I had a real interest in a lot of airplanes growing up.

He had a friend that kinda liked me and for Christmas he gave me a book called the Junior Aircraft Yearbook. It was a book of all the airplanes being built in this country and I'd just read this from cover to cover every year. I couldn't wait for my new book and they came out every year and they had sketches of the early Northrop airplanes, the Douglas, Lockheed, Boeing, and all the other airplanes, and the whole back part of the book had three dimensional drawings, sketches, you know, of the top view, side view, and the front view of those airplanes. So I looked at all of those and I kept up.

When I could ride a bike I used to ride my bike from home out to the airport and just bum around and look at airplanes and talk to Art and then ride my bike back home. So I always did want to fly. And the war came along and I studied all of the military airplanes in World War II and I knew them quite well. Anyway, I was a senior in high school and my father bought me some dual flying time. The Ogden Airport finally got built to where it was in 1942 and on 25th Street there was a building and they had a whole bunch of Navy pilots that lived there. They converted this kind of office building into a dormitory and then out of the Ogden Airport they had bunches of J-3 Cubs teaching Navy pilots how to fly at the Ogden Airport. That was their first flying experience, in the J-3 cubs.

So by 1945, the war was winding down and the opportunity to go to pilot school or anything was just not there. They didn't need to train any pilots in 1945. But my dad bought me some dual time in Cubs out at the airport so I got about

three and a half hours of dual instruction in the J-3 Cubs. Well the only thing that could be obtained in June of 1945 was that we heard that the Navy was still taking enlistments for gunners on Navy airplanes and so that was a chance to fly. So three of us one morning says, "Well we gotta go down and join the Navy." Well for some reason they didn't really want us, they just wanted me and my one friend from flying. The others' eyes weren't quite good enough, and then the other guy didn't pass the mental test. [laughs] We were driving back and he says, "Oh my mom is going to be mad at me for having such a dummy as a kid." [laughs] So anyway Tom's brother was in the Navy in San Francisco and he says, "Why don't you join the Merchant Marines?" So he says, "If you get into that, you get a deferment and when the war ends, when everybody says you can quit, you can go in the sea and go home--you don't have an enlistment." So we thought, "Well that sounds like a good enough idea." I had a good friend named Tom. So Tom and I went down to Salt Lake and there was a March Marine recruiting office downtown Salt Lake City. They asked us questions kind of like, "When's the Civil War started," and things like that. "What's the circumference of the world?" Just to see how smart or dumb we were. They also gave us kind of a physical and looked at our birth certificate and so we both got accepted. We had our graduation from Ogden High and three days later we were on a troop train that we caught in Salt Lake headed for Catalina Island.

The U.S. Maritime Service which handled all the merchant ships and the crews for merchant ships in World War II was called the War Shipping Administration. And a lot of people don't realize what the Merchant Marines did

for this country in World War II, but all of the troops, most of the cargo, all of the fuel, we carried all over the world in merchant ships. We had this training at Catalina Island and it was really pretty intensive. I've had some of the friends I went there with who went through that and later got drafted and I'll tell you that story in a minute, but they said it was a lot stricter and harder than what Army Boot Camp was so anyway that was pretty interesting.

I spent five months on a Liberty Ship across the Pacific Ocean and to Japan. This Liberty Ship was scheduled for O-Day plus 14 on the invasion of the home islands at Japan, so we had really programmed for the invasion of the home island of Japan at the time and of course the Atom Bombs stopped the necessity of that. But after twenty-eight days on this Liberty Ship we pulled into Manilla Bay and there were a thousand ships in Manilla Bay with Navy, Australian, British Navy and Merchant ships and nobody quite knew what to do with them because this plan to invade Japan just hadn't got shut off fast enough after they dropped the bomb.

So we were in there about three or four weeks. We got there at the end of November. I went under the Golden Gate Bridge on 4 October 1945, in the Liberty Ship. And then I spent Thanksgiving at Sea between Manilla and Tokyo Bay and then we were in Tokyo Bay and you could go ashore. We were at anchor and we had a whole bunch of Air Force cargo on top. The whole ship was filled with beautiful California Redwood. They'd been up to Eureka and filled that ship. I don't know who in the Army planning thought that they'd need all that Redwood in Japan but anyway that's what we had. We unloaded the Army stuff

and then went down to Nagoya and unloaded all the Redwood and came back finally, sent us back to Tokyo Bay. And I don't know if you know much about Liberty Ships but the Liberty Ships were freighters that we built and we built 2,700 of those in World War 11. And they were really just a freighter and they were pretty old fashioned but they were cheap and fast to build. Henry Kaiser made a name building Liberty Ships and he built one in seven days from the time it was launched and we actually built over 2,700.

In February of 1945, we came back and we'd sunk all of Japan's merchant ships so in March of 1945 they said every other Liberty Ship that was in Japanese waters was going to be given to the Japanese. And we thought well we were either gonna ride home on a ship or take ours home. Well we had a ship, and they put another Liberty Ship crew on ours and so we headed home empty. We filled the Number 5 hole with fire hoses to get the screw down in the water deep enough to propel the ship.

So after that, I got together with Tom. We'd got split up and we sailed on a Madsen Ship to Australia. They had Seaman's Unions in those days and that's kinda why the Merchant Marine was not too favorably looked at was because these unions were pretty strict. That was under the old Wagner Law, which was way before you, but the Wagner Act made the Union Shop a closed shop and so you got hired by going to the Union and joining the Union and they'd put you on a ship because you were an apprentice in the Union. We just got sent as scullions and that's the very lowest thing on a ship, is scullion. They're the Cinderella of the ship. You clean, you peel the potatoes, you clean the stoves, and you wash

the dishes—that's your job. Clean the stoves, clean the galley. We were put on the *SS Marine Lynx* which was a converted troop ship that Madsen borrowed. They had put their liner in the dry dock to convert them from being World War II troop ships. All those pre-war liners that Madson and other shipping companies had were converted to troop ships and they filled them full of troops. They carried about 1,000 passengers but about 5,000 troops just crammed in those ships. So they took us and we went to Sydney, Australia and loaded about 900 Aussie war brides--Australian war brides that had married GIs, that were coming to the United States. And we went from Sydney over to new Zealand and picked up another 100 Kiwi wives and brought a thousand war brides from there to San Francisco. [laughs] So that was kind of interesting.

I crossed the equator and went through a ceremony to join the King Neptune's thing and I still got that at home. Then, American President lines needed a ship to start the world moving into the Pacific, but American President lines lost every one of their liners in World War II and they still had the U.S. shipping from U.S. to Manilla, Hong Kong, Japan and Shanghai. So they took the *SS Marine Lynx* and repainted the stack—it used to have the yellow stack with the blue M on it, but we changed it to the red, white, and blue paint of American President lines. After that, they changed the ships rosters but we still had our same jobs as scullion. Our first trip we took businessmen and I made seven trips on that to the Orient in the two years I was in the Merchant Marine and we usually went from San Francisco to Manilla, Hong Kong, Shanghai and then back. But one trip we went down to Singapore and picked up a thousand

Indians that had been working in Singapore and took them up to Calcutta. And that was an interesting adventure and interesting time to see Calcutta the way it was in 1946, because this was 1946 by then.

So anyway after sailing for two years, we quit and came home and went to school. The law at that time was that if you sailed for two years in the Merchant Marine and had discharge papers that showed that you sailed for the two years, you got the same draft classification as if you'd been in the Army or Navy for two years. So I started going to college and it was going good, and then I was doing kinda lousy in college in the spring quarter so I thought I'd join the Air Force. I passed all the tests and then my mom came in and said that the bishop wanted me to go on a mission. So I went on a mission for two years then came back home, and in the 1948 draft law they left all of the Merchant Marine guys that served out and I became 1-A again and was gonna be drafted in the Army. By then I had a wife and two kids but since they didn't accept that Merchant Marine time, the only way that I could finish college was to get in ROTC at the University of Utah. So I joined the ROTC at the University of Utah and got a Mechanical Engineering degree and a commission on graduation from the U, and that was in June 1954. And while I was there, I wanted to go to pilot school, but my twenty-seventh birthday was August 16. In June I passed all the tests for pilot's school but I had to get into a flight school by my twenty-seventh birthday. Unfortunately, they didn't have any openings in flight school before my birthday, so that ended that.

So I went to Maintenance Officer School and I had a job for six months with them. I got called to active duty and spent nine months at Chinook at Aircraft Maintenance Officer school. Then when we got our commission, the Air Force was down-sizing officers. It was after the Korean War and they didn't have any slots so they didn't know what to do with all of us. Later they had different plans: they'd send their guys to Reserve units and that. But in those days, they called us all to active duty in the Washington District of Columbia Air National Guard, which was kind of a strange thing but anyway that's what I did on active duty. Then finally after about six months they just changed me over to regular Air Force. Out of Maintenance Officer School you were supposed to be sent back home to a base that's closest to your home and that's why I got assigned to Hill Air Force Base. I really was dreaming of an assignment in Germany because I'd been to the Pacific and crossed that ocean about fourteen times and so I wanted to go to Europe, England, or Germany, or any place like that, so I was really disappointed to come back to Hill Air Force Base. But I didn't have much choice, so we got sent here and they put me on base in Transit Flight as kind of an Assistant Maintenance Officer.

I was still a Second Lieutenant and that was pretty interesting. And one of the things we did there that nobody said much about, and which I'd like to talk a little bit about was, I can't remember the name, I think we called it a red flag exercise. That's the term that they use now at Ellis for their combat training, these red flag exercises. But we just had about ten, fifteen military members. We had a captain in the base flight that ran it and about fifteen GIs enlisted, then we

had about thirty civilians--civil service mechanics--that maintained it. And in that base flight we had a C-54, and when I was first there we had four C-46's, two C-47s, and a TB-26 airplane. It was all part of base flight because all the pilots in those days had to fly four hours a month to get their flight pay so any of the officers at Hill Air Force Base that were in their different jobs still had to go fly four hours a month. So we had to have these airplanes for them to fly. The C-54 was the General's airplane to take him wherever he had to go on different Air Force business things.

One of the things that SAC did--Strategic Air Command--is that they had B-47s and B-36s, and I thought they called it a red flag exercise but I don't remember that well. But the B-36 would just call on final once they were landing at Hill Air Force Base and they'd come up to base flight and they'd have a list of maintenance that needed to be done like it was a war emergency. And so they did this to all the Air Material Areas around the nation and they'd give us a list on either a B-36 or B-47 of discrepancies, maintenance squawks. Some were just listed to see what we'd do, some were real. And the guys up there kind complained of getting some of their harder maintenance fixed by the depots on these deals. But anyway, we'd have about 36 hours to turn that airplane around with all the stuff fixed and it was that was kind of exciting. And nobody's really complimented the civilian depots from the AMA's.

The complexes that we are today--we've gone through a lot of changes but they all used to be called AMAs. We were OAMAs, which meant "Ogden Air Material Areas," and OKAMA was Oak City and MOAMA was Mobile AMA and

those were the names. And we had about seven Air Material Areas and we were Ogden. And Ogden AMA was responsible for the whole North West: any military airplanes in the North West or any facilities in the northwest was the responsibility of Ogden. So anyway that was interesting.

Well my two years of active duty came to an end and I didn't have wings and in those days I figured if you didn't have wings in the Air Force, you didn't have much of a chance for a career so I thought I'd just get off active duty. I heard that the Marquardt Aircraft Company was coming to Ogden to build Ram jet engines and Speery was building missiles in Salt Lake and so I thought, "Well I'll try an application into both of them." So I did and I got a job offer from both places. Marquardt was about five bucks a week more and closer to Ogden than Salt Lake. So I got a job when I got discharged. I put the uniform on on Friday and then the next Monday I put a suit on and went to work at Marquardt.

Well we'd had C-46s and we got this Reserve unit that shared part of the hanger with us and they had some F-84s, a couple of T-birds, and they had a corner of our hanger and the civilian head of Base OPS was in that reserve and he said, "You've had maintenance experience with C-46s, why don't you come and get in the Reserve? Because we are just being changed from a fighter unit to troop transport." But I guess the old Continental Air Command made the decision to transfer all of the Reserve units to troop carrier units so that's what happened. So I got off active duty January, and the first of March I went to my first UTA. I had to take off my silver bars and put my gold ones back on because in the Reserve you only had your permanent grade. And on active duty, at eighteen

months a Second Lieutenant got a temporary promotion to First. So anyway that started my Reserve career and my job at Marquardt. And so I just stayed in the Reserve.

We had C-46s for summer camp, which was down at Chino, California—just up from Sacramento. We took our C-46s and we were part of a West Coast squadron. At the old Hamilton Field in California Payne field in Washington and at Long Beach, California there was a squadron and we were just a squadron of those four places that formed a group. So I did that and worked for Marquardt for six years. I was in field service and I knew that this contract was ending and I thought, “Boy, I got a job problem coming up.” And I worried about that for a bit and I didn’t know what I was going to do because I knew that Marquardt was going to close because the Bomarc Program was finished and gone.

They’d come up from Los Angeles and those guys were all these engineers, and all Los Angeles area you get warriors and that. They just move from one company to the other that have the contract. They work at Douglass till their contract ends, they go to work for Northrop or for Lockheed or Consolidated it and they just kind of moved around. But they moved up here—in fact, the first two months I worked I had to go down there because the engineering group was still in Van Nuys where Marquardt was. Then finally we moved and built this plant where Autoliv is now on Hinkley Drive. That was built by Marquardt Aircraft and that’s where they built all of the Ram Jet engines for the Bomarc Missile Program. Boeing was just starting Plant 77 here and a lot of Marquardt people had already gone over there so I knew a couple of people and they got me a

Boeing application. I sat down and filled it out and stuck it in my desk drawer and then all of a sudden in October we had the Cuban Missile Crisis. I was at a party Saturday night and one of the guys from the airport says, "Well what are you going to do tomorrow? I heard you're activated." [laughs] He said, "It was just on the radio. Kennedy activated all of the Reserve Air Forces." So Sunday morning I went out there and we all got activated, the whole squadron. By then we had C-119s. We'd gotten rid of our C-46s and gotten C-119s. And we had thirteen C-119s and got activated for a year. My orders read active duty, so my employment problem was saved for one whole year.

Anyway, we worked hard. We had problems with the airplanes. I was the Organizational Maintenance Officer and we trained pilots, getting them up to date. We had C-119s moving people all over the country. In the anniversary celebration we had for our Reserve until they didn't say on word about what we did in the Cuban Missile Crisis, but I don't think I ever worked any harder for twenty-eight days than I did then. I was up at six o'clock every morning, then every night at midnight I was at the telegraph office on Hill Air Force Base telling the wing at Hamilton exactly how many airplanes we had in commission the next day for assignment. That was the last thing I did at night. I'd go home and be back here at six the next morning. We moved the whole F-100 unit from Victorville and we had a secret air base—it was a classified secret then—in Florida that we were to deploy to if the United States invaded Cuba. We were all ready for an invasion. The 119s were parachute droppers, that's what we did. In fact, we lost an airplane once. We used to have to send an airplane back to, I

think Ft. Knox, Kentucky or the Army training base just to train paratroopers for two weeks. The airplane was coming home and got in a storm and crashed somewhere in the mountains and we lost four guys in that event. They had an engine failure and they all parachuted out and they all hit the ground alive, but four of them froze to death. It was in a late November snow storm.

Anyway, we had a formation one day and they said that after one month of active duty President Kennedy released us all and that was really hard. We had several school teachers whose slots had been filled by the school boards and they didn't know what they were going to do. It was kind of a hardship on them. I went back to Marquardt and my boss says, "Well I hate to welcome you back and tell you you're gonna be laid off in thirty days." But I knew I was. He didn't tell me any news. So after that formation I emptied my desk at Marquardt and just put it all in a cardboard box and put it in the backseat of my Volkswagen and it just sat there the whole twenty-eight days. I didn't have any time before that. So then I went in there and dug out this Boeing application. I'd gotten a raise since I first filled it out and there was a block in there for your salary so I lined it out and put my new salary in. Then I drove down to the west area to the Boeing office, turned it in, and I got hired for Boeing. So I spent the next twenty-six years working here at the Hill Engineering Test Facility on the Minuteman weapon system. We had a full launch control facility and a launch facility down in the west area for a Minuteman, totally complete except we had a dummy missile in there. But the computer took the place of the warhead and inner motors, but it did everything else. You could go to launches and simulate a launch of a Minuteman.

So I worked for Boeing and was practically in the U.S. Air Force. A lot of the guys that I dealt with in the Air Force didn't know I was a Boeing employee instead of Air Force Civil Service. I had a lot of good friends around in the Air Force. So I did that and then I just stayed in the Reserve and I kept getting promoted. Then finally when I became a Major I got promoted out of my slot for the maintenance and they made me the commander of the Civil Engineering Squadron. I had an engineering degree which qualified me as a Mechanical Engineer, not a Civil Engineer but they didn't care what kind of engineer you were--it still qualified you for the CE Commander's slot. I had ten great years with those guys. We went to Italy for our two week summer camp once and that was great. They called me two years later and said, "We need to send a CE squadron to Brindisi, Italy and nobody wants to go. Do you want to go?" And I said, "Yeah, we'll go." And so two years later we were at Del Normandy--it's about ten miles north of Brindisi--and it was an Air Force station that did nothing but have radio listening. It was really strange, they had this secured room with all these radio receivers and this huge antenna out in the field, and all the guys that did the listening were sailors, Navy guys, and they were on this Air Force station. There was no runway; they had to land at Brindisi, which was about ten or fifteen miles down the road from there and that was an interesting assignment. But we went to Hawaii, Alaska, Niagara Falls in the ten years I was there.

Then I finally got promoted out of that and I spent my last five years at Beale Air Force Base as an IMA, that's an "Individual Mobilization Augmentee." That's what that alphabet stands for. And they assign a Reservist so I was

assigned to be the Base Civil Engineer of Beale. If a war started or something and he had to get deployed then I would step in and take his job. And we had IMAs here at Hill Air Force Base for the Commander, Center Commander, and different jobs here. They had a Reserve IMA to that slot and that was a program they had pretty much during the Cold War. In fact, I don't know if they still have it, but the Base Commander, the Center Commander, all had an IMA assigned to that job; The Civil Engineer here did and so did Beale, different Civil Engineers and Base Commanders around the Air Bases around the country had that. So I spent five years down at Beale and got my thirty years in and retired.

Then about that same time, I retired from Boeing and Rex Hadley was the Maintenance Officer in the Reserve and he was also the Operations Officer during the Cuban Missile Crisis and he said, "Why don't you come down and help me with the museum?" So I said, Ok. And I came down and all there was was this building up here, that first building when you come in the gate, that 1919, that was the museum. It had an office in there and had a couple airplanes out in front and was just getting started.

Rex gave me different assignments. I took a trip up to Wyoming to see if we could talk this guy out of his BT-13. We went to see his wife and he was kind of a rancher and he got this airplane out of Hill Air Force Base. He'd bought it surplus after the war and he loved it, but it kind of had flat tires and I said, "Does he fly it?" And she says, "No, but he has an annual inspection on it every year." And I says, "Well we're kind of wondering if he might consider giving it to the Hill Air Force Base Museum." She says, "Nobody's going to get that airplane until he

dies." [laughs] That was her words. Finally, we got a BT-13. The one we've got here is from another source, but that was one of the trips I went on for the museum. I just hopped in my car and drove up there.

Then we finally got this building built. Rex did a lot of work and talked about hanging airplanes, so I had a Reservist who was going to Utah State get started, but I was involved with hanging every airplane that we did. I got to be good friends with the guys in the cable shop on base here. I'd take all the drawings up for the cables and they'd make them and that, and then we'd get a hoist and I more or less personally was involved in hanging every airplane of those six airplanes that are hanging out there today. I was the only engineer on the board, I guess, so Rex gave me those jobs and I handled those. Then they wanted to elevate the 8-17, so Rex asked me to design some pedestals and I came up with a drawing. I showed it to a couple of people and they said, "That looks ok." By then I'd been at the Ogden Airport. I still wanted to fly and so by then my wife's sister's husband [inaudible]--my brother-in-law--and I had bought an old Europe. Four guys got together \$400. I had a family and I couldn't afford to fly, but I scraped up four hundred bucks. The four of us bought an Europe, and I soloed in that Europe with the knowledge I'd gotten from my previous lessons then I took a few more lessons. Mel Kemp was there at the airport and somehow I got to know him, so I took these drawings for the Boeing pedestals down to Mel, at Kemp and Kelsey, which is still out on 1900, and I showed him the drawings and I said, "Can you make these?" He said, "Yeah I'll make them." And so, about a month later he called me and says, "Your pedestals are ready." And I went

down and looked at them and geez, they were beautiful. He's got four sons and he called his one son in and I says, "How much do I owe ya for these?" And the Foundation Board knew that we were going to have to pay for those and Mel's son handed him a piece of paper. Mel says, "Boy!" He said, "You really used a sharp pencil for that didn't ya?" And he says, "Well you told me to, Dad!" [laughs] And he says, "Ok." He told me, he says, 'that's ok, I'll just buy them for ya.' And so he donated those first two sets, the ones that the 8-17 and the 8-25 sit on. And then I got involved in putting both those airplanes on them, and all of the pedestals since I knew Kemp and would just take them down to him they'd make the pedestals for us. And they did a nice job on them. They don't do that anymore.

I went to the Aleutian Islands, too, when we brought the 8-24 down. And I kinda had a worry about that. I got the steel cable to pull the parts for the 8-24 down and that didn't work out. Talk about going back to the drawing board. That's what I had to do for that. But we finally got all the parts down and we went up there in 1996. I think in 1995 we got the P-38 and in 1996 then we got the 8-24. We have a nice video on that. But, so yeah I was on both those adventures.

I went up a couple years before with Rex and we went on the ship that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had, the MS Tiglets. They go out and in the summer they take college students and put a couple of college students on all the Aleutian islands--not all of them, but lots of the islands--to watch for the birds. They call them 'bird watchers' and there'd be a couple of kids out on these islands and they'd take food and stuff out there and if they have any birds that

they picked up or that had died they take them back to the ship and they kinda had a lab on the ship that they could analyze what they were eating and what their diet was. It was a pretty interesting little vessel. They'd go all the way from Adak, all the way up to Shemya, the end of the Alaskan chain, with these kids scattered all the way. [laughs] And that was good.

Went down to New Orleans and we got the F-18 from the Navy at New Orleans Naval Air Station. Hill overhauled over two hundred Navy airplanes and they haven't said much about that. They gave that airplane away because they didn't know. It's bothered me because we got that airplane and they did two hundred and thirty four and I thought that was a real inner Defense Department event for the Navy to let the Air Force touch any of their airplanes. Because when I was in Basic Transit Maintenance, The Navy *Constellation* lost an engine flying over here and made an emergency landing at Hill and we were at total capability of changing that engine—all they had to do is get an engine here, but they wouldn't let us touch that airplane. They sent a whole team.

They carted an engine up, a propeller, and a team of guys. The only thing they got from us were the work stands and the hoist to change the engine. And then twenty years later, to let the Air Force do depot-level maintenance on over two hundred of their airplanes was a real change. I thought that somebody should have made a great story about that being a great event as far as inter-defense departments working together. They never said much about it. And then they gave the airplane away and we had worked pretty hard getting it. It had an engine fire and so the navy didn't want it. One of our board members

was Jeremy Taylor and he helped get it. He's a Two Star Admiral, retired, and we sent a team out and I went out with the team to get that help. Then I rented a car and we drove in the one night into the start of Marty Graw in New Orleans! And that was quite a time. [laughs] Yeah that was some recreation cuz the guys worked hard all day long on that airplane and we got it ready to go home.

And then I was involved in getting the Jenny and the Wright B-flyer that was out at the Owls Head main museum. General Mark Reynolds took me out there and he says, "Let's go up." He'd been up there with his wife and seen it, came home and got excited about it. So he took me out there to look at it and they wanted a price and so we told them we'd buy it. So I got four guys and we flew out there and rented two big trucks and disassembled it and hauled it to Westover, then put it in a C-5 and brought it here and put it together. I helped put it together. And then the Jenny, that was another adventure. [laughs]

General Rex Hadley, I called him Rex. I maybe should have called him General Hadley, [laughs] but he was always my friend, Rex, and we always worked together on this museum. One of the dreams we had when we first got this building was to get every World War II fighter and every World War II bomber and we'd done pretty good. The only fighter we don't have is the P-39. And we don't have a 8-26. We just really worked hard to get a 8-26. We bought a Fuselage. We took a team up to Kodiak and loaded up an airplane full of 8-26 parts out of a crash junkyard. Inside the Smithsonian in Washington they had a 8-6 Forward Fuselage complete with a radio operator and everything and the whole front pilot's cockpit. And we bought one from Carl Shoul down in California

and I was gonna start with that and eventually build a whole airplane but that dream never materialized. Rex passed away and Mark passed away and so the dream went. But we had a whole hanger full of 8-26 parts at the Ogden Airport.

We still have a hanger at the Ogden Airport just for airplane restoration and that's where the 104 was restored. And we towed it over here at two o'clock in the morning throughout the Ogden Airport, down 4400 to 1900 and had the police and everything. Steve Hatch and Scott Craigen did most of the work on that airplane and they really worked hard for this museum. They worked and restored that airplane and we got a good paint job practically free from the paint shop on the airport and that's a great airplane. I don't know if it's out in the fighter gallery now, the 104. Well, do you have any other questions?

AK: I know this is going back a little bit, but I was curious about how you mentioned that you remember the railroad being a big part of Ogden when you were a child. Would you tell me a little more about your memories with that?

DP: Well, the present Union Station had so many rails and we had tunnels down underneath that people would go through to get on the train. And they had two roundhouses, that's where they'd keep the engines that had to be worked on and pulled on and I used to wander down there. I could walk down there because I was only two blocks away and if my dad was busy I'd go down to the round house and I'd just walk through there and look at the design of the engines. I guess engineering things always fascinated me but I'd look at the these big bearings and these big push rods and all those parts of the wheels and they'd have the front open you know and have the boilers open so I'd stick my head in

and look around. They'd built it up with lime silt and they'd have all these chemicals that would strip and the silt and that away from the locomotive, and I could just ride my bike down there and park it outside and I'd walk through that thing and most guys didn't say anything. I kept thinking I was going to get kicked out but they were all kind of busy working and that. They just fascinated me and I've loved trains and railroads ever since.

AK: Do you remember any differences in Ogden because of the railroad?

DP: Oh the railroad made a huge difference. First of all, we used to have quite a Chinese population. My grandfather was born in Italy and came over to this country when he was five years old and my dad was born in Indianapolis, my dad and his older sister. My Grandma Pantone was born in Italy but she was a young girl, about fifteen, when she came to this country and somehow they married in Louisville. My dad and my Aunt Marie were born in Indianapolis and when my dad was three years old, my grandpa had asthma. He was an itinerant violinist. He and his brother used to follow around the circuses playing in circus orchestras. I don't know where he learned to play the violin, but anyway they got to Utah and his asthma got better when he got off the train. They stopped in Colorado and it didn't get better, but it got better in Ogden. And he was broke or something and there was a Chinese lottery in Ogden in those days and he put some money on it and won about fifty bucks and got a job at the Orpheum Theater playing in the Vaudeville orchestra and that's why they stayed here. [laughs] So that was the Chinese, and then we had a lot of black people. All of Wall Avenue from 12th Street--all those homes were black people. We used to

have a Porters and Waiters Club down on 25th Street and we had a lot of black people. In fact, we went down there. Dad would take us down and one of the ladies there had an Easter ham dinner for the whole city and a lot of people in that neighborhood went down there and ate. Just down, straight down on 29th and Wall was Scott Stuart. He was a black kid a little older than me that liked airplanes and he made a model. I used to go down and play with him and have dinner at his house or lunch. That's not the same area now, but they were nice houses. They were some of the better homes that Ogden people built and the porters and the waiters moved in there and the switchmen. And my neighbor on Keisel was a Southern Pacific conductor. The engineers and the conductors in the neighborhood were kinda like airplane pilots now.

This was the Depression. I grew up in the 1930s, so my young years were in the middle of that Depression so people having jobs and all the people that worked for the railroad were really lucky, especially engineers and conductors because they were the high salary people. They're kinda like how we think of airline pilots today as making a lot of money, well they did too in those Depression days. They were pretty rough times and people didn't have cars. On the Kiesel Avenue where I lived there was Morris. He had a car, and the butcher and his family had a car, but there were only four cars on that whole street. Everybody else walked. Mr. Burt that lived there ran a meat market. He had a store down on 28th Street and Wall Avenue. He'd walk every day and my mom would call him and tell him to bring a rump roast home for Sunday dinner and he'd stop by and bring it and that. But driving and automobiles were rare, and I

guess everybody on that little half a block that I lived on had a job and or a business. But boy, the Bums--We called them Bums, but they were pretty good guys. They'd come and knock on your door and say, "Can I cut your lawn for a sandwich?" And mom would make them a tuna fish or a cheese sandwich. They were willing to do work, they didn't just want a handout. They were pretty good guys that just didn't have a job and were hungry. They had kind of soup kitchens for guys. I remember all that. Those were pretty grim days.

AK: That's fascinating. Those are great memories, thank you.

DP: Yep, but the railroad was really a lot of big locomotives and I knew every one of them by number. The 7000s were a fast Union Pacific passenger, then they got 800s and the 3900 was their freight and the 9000 had three cylinders. I knew all of those locomotives, the different types. There was a lot of different types. For some reason it was all Union Pacific; I didn't have much to do with the Southern Pacific. They were at the north end of there and the UP was at the south end. And my dad played the clarinet in the Union Pacific band. They used to play for the rodeo back when they used to have a live band in the first rodeos at the stadium. I'd go up and sit by my dad's side while he played the clarinet with the UP band. And then they went up—I remember this, I was just a kid—they went up to Sun Valley. Sun Valley was all built by the Union Pacific Railroad in the beginning. Their engineers in Omaha designed the first lift to go up the hill and so the whole band got in a Pullman car and the train went to Sun Valley and parked this Pullman car there and the band played in the Sun Valley rodeo.

Oh and then the ice plant. In high school, a lot of my friends worked at the ice plant and that was a great big thing and they'd make blocks of ice that were about 300 pounds each. Then all the Pacific fruit trains that were hauling fruit or veggies from California would pull onto that track and they'd open and put blocks of ice on each end of the railroad cars. During the war, all the high school kids could work there. I didn't ever get a job there but a lot of my friends did. They'd hire these high school kids to take this big mechanized ice plant with conveyors and such to ice up the trains that had come this far from California. They'd come into Ogden and needed icing again to go farther East and haul all this fruit. And that was a job that kids could do. They had all of the other bigger, older guys gone to war and so they were hiring sixteen and seventeen year old kids to do that work after school.

There was a box factory making ammunition boxes, and a concrete plant company making concrete blocks, and my friend and I lied about our age so we could work there. I was sixteen when we got this job and pretty soon we worked there loading cement blocks. They were building all of these buildings for the defense, the navy Supply Depot. Boy, that guy hired Tom and I, and I had never worked harder before. I was sixteen-no I wasn't sixteen, because I didn't have a driver's license. But we'd lied, he says, "How old are you?" And we, you know, "We're eighteen, or seventeen," and we were only about fifteen. [laughs] I drove a little car down that we had and Tom and I worked there for three weeks: ten hours a day, seven days a week. And the people from the State Child Employment came down and caught those people and then we were gone the

next day. But they needed help so bad and they were just glad to have anybody work. [laughs]

AK: That's a great memory. [laughs] Well thank you so much. Did you have anything before I finish up the interview?

DP: No, but my cousin and I traveled a lot. He and I rode a train from Hong Kong to Berlin. That was another adventure, all the way through China, Mongolia, Russia, Poland [laughs]

AK: That sounds like an adventure. Well I just wanted to wrap up with one last question: Of all that you've achieved during your time here at the museum, what achievement are you most proud of?

DP: I think hanging the airplanes. Or maybe getting the 8-24 and the P-38. Yeah, I worked pretty hard on hanging those airplanes. I had to kinda calculate the center of gravity. I determined the lengths for the different angles for all of the cables and the different loads. They're pretty safe and the Wright Patterson museums had finally come out with different standards and I think mine was way better than theirs. [laughs] So I feel pretty proud about that. Not many people know about it except me now. The ones that helped me do it are all dead now, and so are the ones that wanted me to do it, like Rex and mark and that.

AK: Well you did a great job on them. Thank you so much for your time and for this amazing interview. It was perfect.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW AGREEMENT

This Interview Agreement is made and entered into this _____ day(s) of _____ by and between the Weber State University, Stewart Library, Oral History Program (WSUSLOHP), Hill Aerospace Museum, and Don Pantone, hereinafter called "interviewee."

Interviewee agrees to participate in a recorded interview, commencing on or about _____ time March 4, 2019 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

Donald M. Pantone
(Signature)
DONALD M. PANTONE
(Printed Name)

INTERVIEWER

Alyssa Kammerman 2/14/2020
(Signature)
Alyssa Kammerman
(Printed Name)

