

**Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois**

**David Miller Oral History Interview**

Trent Morgan, Interviewer

St. Louis Regional Airport Admin Building, East Alton, Illinois

July 13, 2018

**Trent Morgan (TM):** All right, uh, I'd like to introduce myself, my name is Trent Morgan I'll be interviewing David Miller on today's date Friday, July 13th, 2018. Um, Mr. Miller, can you please state your name and your title?

**David Miller (DM):** Yes, I'm Dave Miller, I'm the director of aviation for St. Louis Regional Airport. The airport's located at 8 Terminal Drive in East Alton, we have an East Alton mailing address, although technically we are completely surrounded by the village of Bethalto.

**TM:** Great, um, can you please give me some background information about yourself? Um, what is your background in education?

**DM:** It, education wise, of course, went through uh, Kindergarten through High School my home town of Solina, Kansas. And from there I went on to the University of Denver, got a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, then went into the Air Force while I was in the Air Force then I picked up a Master's degree in Public Administration. So, there was an interface there between my military career and my civilian career and those interfaces uh, continued on even to the present day.

**TM:** What, what did you do for the Air Force, may I ask?

**DM:** In the Air Force I was a pilot. I flew the heavies, I flew the uh, KC-135's which is the Boeing 707 that was modified for air to air refueling so it was a gas station in the sky. And from there I went on to fly B-52's.

**TM:** Uh huh.

**DM:** And I have over 2,000 hours in each of those airplanes between all the other airplanes that are flown I have a, a total flying time of about 5,000 hours.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** But also realizing that you can't really stay in the cockpit forever, so that's where my, my civilian education kicked in with business, business administration and public administration. So I understand what airplanes need, alright, because I have a pilot myself. I understand what they need when they're on the ground, I understand what they need when they're in the air, but more importantly I understand what they need when they're trying to go from one to the other. So, this uh, was set me up quite well for a career in airport management in my military career, and like the airlines and military and with the Air Force, you get to a certain point in your career, and you're expected to get out of the cockpit. You still

may be doing aviation related duties, but you're not pushing a crew anymore. And like the airlines, you keep flying and flying and flying 'til you can't pass physical then you're out.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** But I was very fortunate with the jobs I had in the Air Force that were not directly in the cockpit. And that included being chief of base operations at Minot Air Force Base, Minot North Dakota, ya?

**TM:** [laughter]

**DM:** But um, the best way to describe that job is like saying I was the airport manager for the city of Minot Air Force Base. So I learned a lot about the administration of air fields, learned a LOT about civil engineering, which you stop to think about, you know airports and air fields and all of the concrete and the tar, tarmac and the taxiways and runways and buildings. I have a, uh, close interface, I'm not an engineer but having a close interface with civil engineering was a, was a big help. When I uh, also were in part of these duties in the Air Force I got into the Command Control element which, in, in laymen's terms is Command Post...

**TM:** Okay

**DM:** ... type duty. And I worked in the command post as a controller for a number of years and then was uh, advanced to the chief of the command control division again at Minot Air Force Base. And this taught me a LOT about having to deal with the, with stress, with the emergency situations, having to make decisions uh, on the spot, the command post is one of those jobs its hours and hours and hours of boredom marked by sharp attacks of... [Laughter]

**TM:** [laughter]

**DM:** ...of chaos. [Laughter] So I was very fortunate that I had, had that kind of uh, job.

**TM:** Wow. What was was your highest rank?

**DM:** I was a Major. Retired as a Major. I had some prior enlisted time, and then uh, qualified for officer training school and then pilot training after that.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** The uh, airplanes as I mentioned before, the first operational airplane that I flew was the KC-135. That took me all over the world, had me refueled uh, all kinds of airplanes, some of 'em uh, on classified type missions...

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** Then after accruing I said over 2,000 hours in THAT particular airplane I was fortunate I could cross-train into the B-52.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** The air in air refueling aspect is incredible, and because of the experience with those two airplanes, I have a lot of experience on each end of the boom, so I know, I know what was going on...

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** ...in the airplane and we were able to do some pretty amazing things once you built that trust level between attacker pilot and the bomber pilot.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** That helped out in the uh, you may remember, some people may recall the Iranian hostage situation...

**TM:** Yes.

**DM:** I was a commander of the special detachment that flew out of Anderson Air Force Base in Guam. Consider where Guam is, I mean, if you consider where California is and where Vietnam is, Guam is about half way in between the two...

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** And we were flying missions out of Guam all the way up into the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** That was to show the flag in, uh, response to that Iranian hostage situation. And some of those missions were like, 38, 36, and 42 hours long.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** And because of that, um, those jet engines they are allowed to leak so much, so many drops of oil, so in one particular mission we came back with 4 engines uh, shut down on one side and then had to hook up to a tanker. Well, again, the experience of being on both ends of the boom, we went in there without incident and we got the gas home:

**TM:** Now, the B-52s are still in use today...

**DM:** They're still in use. There were 8 different models of B-52, the A through the H model. I've flown the F Model, the G Model, and the H Model, right now the only um, models that are still flying are the H models.

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** And they were the newest, they had the turbo fan, uh, blow by engines, which they were incredibly fuel efficient when compared to the earlier models. A B-52 is designed in the mid-50s.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** And uh, is, is still flying today.

**TM:** It's amazing that wingspan.

**DM:** The wingspan, yes,

**TM:** When it takes off on the runway...

**DM:** Yes. And then there's those um, heh, in the vernacular we call "training wheels" a sectional tip protection gear. It's 147 feet from one, from the left tip here to the right tip here...

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** And when you're operating off of a runway that's 150 feet wide, that doesn't give you much uh, much more room left for error. But also amazing, both airplanes, uh, could carry an incredible amount of fuel. In fact, both of those airplanes, KC-135 and the B-52 could carry more weight in fuel than the weight of the aircraft.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** So that was um, another thing learning how to... handle heavy weight aircraft and bring everybody home.

**TM:** So my my dad served in the Air Force. He served at uh, Indiana, Kokomo...

**DM:** Okay.

**TM:** He served in Nebraska.

**DM:** Okay, Omaha.

[phone ringing in background]

**TM:** And then he served in, uh... Canada, Goosebay Labrador.

**DM:** Oh... boy, huh [laughter]. Well most of my, uh, career, was in the in the Dakotas, North Dakota, South Dakota...

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** And then a tour of duty in Clark Airbase, when strategic air command when the South East Asia it was always on a temporary duty basis so, although I was never assigned to a base in Vietnam, I have over 888 days [phone ringing in background] flying missions in South East Asia, flying out of Okinawa, flying out of Guam, flying out of uh, Thailand, flying out of Taiwan.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** So, um, yea, it's...

**TM:** Well thank you for your service. That, that's awesome.

**DM:** Thank you. I enjoyed being in, I'm enjoying being out, but I'd do it all over again. [laughter]

**TM:** I know. Uh, what, what got you into uh, the St. Louis Regional uh, Airport?

**DM:** The...

**TM:** I know you have an extensive background in ..... but what brought you here?

**DM:** The job opportunity, let me just kind of uh, review here. I managed 7 different airports in 5 different states.

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** I've actually probably moved more, moved around more as a civilian than I did when I was I was in the Air Force. Notwithstanding all the temporary duties, of course.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** But, and there was uh, a career progression that brought me to this airport. I... first got, my first civilian airport management job, I was assistant airport manager in Flynt, Michigan. And then that took me to, uh, Bismarck, North Dakota. We had a lot of experience, we loved North Dakota, and a job opening came open and the family said "Dad, go for it!" Ah, well, it's not quite that simple...

**TM:** Right, right.

**DM:** Haveta apply for it. From there, I went to Juno, Alaska. Managed that airport for about 5 years, then slipped down to Ketchikan airport, managed that for about a year. There's uh, a saying that uh, in Alaska and you probably say the same thing about Hawaii...

**TM:** [laughter]

**DM:** ... if you're in Alaska too long, pretty soon you don't fit any place else.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** So it was, uh, time to uh, return to the lower 48...

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** ...and the opportunity came open in uh, Montrose, Colorado, and that, um, was uh, was a good ride force, had not necessarily had a happy ending. I want, I want to emphasize that in airport management as a career field, people have a tendency to get fired more often because they're doing their job, because they're not doing their job.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** Running an airport is a complex situation. You have to deal with the federal government, with state government, with local government, and the United States when you think about it, the air space is all controlled by the federal government. The air PLANES, except for the military airplanes of course, are owned by the private sector.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** But airports are owned by individual municipalities. So, there's uh, uh... a complex process that you need to go through to get something done, and that complex uh, process is not understood by everybody.  
[laughter]

**TM:** Right, right.

**DM:** And so, uh... that, I mean, there was uh, I guess a difference in management philosophy in Montrose, Colorado, and then I came to that situation that, well, we think it's best if you seek employment elsewhere.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** So I, you know, I could read the handwriting on the wall, I don't have to be told twice.

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** So the position came open here. Now, the part of the issue here before I got here, there was a tremendous um, public corruption problem here at the airport. And in fact the uh, previous staff, the previous airport manager, the operations director, and the uh, secretary all ended up with uh, charges being filed against one type or another, I think in most cases they were either dismissed or reduced. BUT, that was the... the what was going on here. And the, I think this is a good case in point, that the system works because... the people who appoint people to the board started thinking "Well, we better pay better attention to who we appoint to the board."

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** So, they got relatively a new board in here. The board looked around, said "Well, there's something... we've got to do something better with the airport management." So they went out looking for another airport manager, and I happened to be available because of the situation in, in Colorado. So, uh, came in for the interview, and there were I think 6 of us who came in for the interview, and then uh, they called me a month later and wanted me to come back, now there's only two people they were interviewing and they called me back on a third round of interviews and I looked around, I was the only one standing.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** So, I figured well, either I got the job or they, they're going to start all over again. So I came in here,

I've got to also uh, give credit to, uh, Dean Sweet. He was the airport attorney at the time...

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** Uh, became a judge eventually and, in his career path. But the board kinda knew that because of the public corruption problem they need to bring in a hired gun from somewhere to, to clean things up and so Dean and I worked as a team. It took about, uh, nine months to almost a year to get everything cleaned up but we did clean it up. And now we're moving, been moving forward with the airport ever since.

**TM:** What, what year did you... um, come into...?

**DM:** I came here in... 2003.

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** 2003.

**TM:** Okay, so you're going on about 15 years now.

**DM:** Right, right.

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** I'm on my 15th year, that's correct.

**TM:** Okay. What uh, what is the purpose of airport mission and purpose?

**DM:** The...

**TM:** For this airport?

**DM:** The ... some of that is, somewhat generic to all airports. You want to be able to provide a safe environment for aircraft to take off and land. So that is the primary uh, emphasis of the airport. It's uh, safety, is something we just beat into our heads ALL the time. But beyond that, the airport in most communities is a real player for the community. In fact, in our economic impact, we divide everything up into Aeronautical and Non-aeronautical. So you look at Aeronautical, that's things like the, you know, the control tower, like west star aviation, like anybody that repairs airplanes or provides flying instruction for airplane... those are aeronautic concerns. But there's a lot of non-aeronautical concerns. For example, the airport restaurant being one. As you go down Highway 40 a lot of people don't, may not realize this but QuikTrip is on airport property, Arby's roast beef, Ace Hardware, uh... go on down... Helmcamp Auto Service...

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** Um, Liberty Bank, all of these are on airport property. Now, in most cases we have no investment in their capital improvements, it's just a land lease and then they, they put on it uh, what they want. We have other things like a UPS sorting facility here. UPS could have an aviation arm, but they do not at this

airport. But it's the only sorting facility between Fairview Heights and Springfield.

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** But, uh, they could, by just putting down some asphalt between their facility and the ramp, and they could bring airplanes in here. And as we speak, I would have to classify them as a non- aeronautical business. A couple of business parks, uh, health care services, that sort of thing.

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** Uh, comin' in to the non-aeronautical side of the airport.

**TM:** Okay, so you talked about some of the usage, so the, the big player here is probably West Star...

**DM:** West Star is... the... let's, let's define the airport, let's say it's a small village, it's a town.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** And it's kinda like my job, well I'm the city manager for this village or this town. West Star is the biggest corporation in town. Now, our auditors have documented that about 60% of our airport revenue comes through West Star in one form or another. It could be land leases, could be building leases, could be fuel and flowing fees, we had no landing fees with this airport...

**TM:** Oh, wow!

**DM:** ...which is one thing that, uh, makes us unique. So we have to make up for that type of revenue, uh, in in other, in other manners. So, that's kind of the relationship, uh, it's been a very good relationship, West Star is built one large hanger about 3 or 4 years ago and as we speak they're building another...

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** ...large hanger. And we are extending the airport ramp, the airport parking area, to cover the entry way to that new hanger.

**TM:** Wow. Now, um, your private usage, do you get a lot of business.... flights...

**DM:** A lot of corporate traffic... let me.... talk about.... what's called a "reliever airport"...

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** We're considered a reliever airport for Lambert. Likewise, Spirit airport on the other side of the Mississippi ocean is also considered a reliever airport and the downtown airport is considered a reliever airport. So, we take the... traffic here at these reliever airports because... something like Lambert, you know, big airplanes and small airplanes just don't mix!

**TM:** Right.



**DM:** Uh, um, 747 starts its engines and the Cessna 172 that's flipped upside down.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** So, uh, this is why we have this reliever airport. Now, we do not have commercial air service at this airport, but you get a lot of corporate traffic, uh, most of the customers coming in from West Star are, uh, corporate users. I'll talk a little bit about their, their balance, here, here in a moment. A lot of privately owned airplanes, uh, Cessnas, Bug Smashers, if you will, there's over 140 of those...

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** Uh, billeted here at the airport. West Star aviation uh, wow. With all of their expansion they are truly in a global market. And about 10% of their revenue comes from overseas sources. They have a contract with uh, the Egyptians doing 9 airplanes a year and...

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** Started out being for 5 years and now they've expanded that contract. I look out on the ramp and I almost have to go to a, a book somewhere to figure out where these airplanes are from. We have one out there from Pakistan, one from, uh, Malta, we've had airplanes in here from the Isle of Mann, all over South America and Europe, and it's to the point that I hardly even consider Canada and Mexico being foreign countries anymore.

**TM:** [laughter]

**DM:** The important part about all this international service is that is bringing U.S. dollars back into the United States right through this airport.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** And, the... uh, because of that this airport actually has the status of being an international exporter because the value added to these airplanes before they go back home.

**TM:** Wow. That's pretty impressive. Well, we talked about West Star, um... jobs, generally, how, how many jobs are out here? Um...

**DM:** There's over 500 jobs right here at the airport. There's uh, with West Star, they just topped 400 employee mark at this airport. Now, West Star, they have a carbon copy of this facility in Grand Junction, Colorado, another one in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and they are in 3 or 4 other much smaller locations uh, some of those locations I, I don't even think they have a hanger, for example, in Aspen, Colorado, uh they have a couple of fast-ride trucks that if you have to make an emergency landing out of [??] Nebraska they'll shoot one of those trucks out, to repair you enough for a one-time flight to the depot where...

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** ... where you can get it fixed. System-wide uh, West Star has over 1,000 employees but 400, uh 400 of them here, they consider this location right here in East Alton to be their corporate headquarters.

**TM:** Wow. I didn't know that.

**DM:** Yeah. Now all the billing comes out of here, all the payroll comes out of here, but they have a real synergistic effect by the other locations.

**TM:** Cool. Um, how many flights do you say a day, a year...?

**DM:** [crosstalk] That's difficult, that's difficult to say. A lot of it is weather related. We may go for, you know, 4 or 5 days and there's hardly any maybe 1, 2, 3 flights a day. Then the weather is nice, a week, a 3 day weekend comes in, and we had several hundred in one day. Uh, all total, if you put it over a year's average, I've seen it as high as 70,000 a year and as low as 40,000 a year. But, since we have no schedule airline service in here, this kind of potluck...

**TM:** Right, right.

**DM:** ...is uh, is what comes in now.

**TM:** The refueling companies and stuff, I mean, who, who fuels the planes and who...

**DM:** Right now, West Star aviation is the only company that provides those fueling services. It is fairly competitive. I would like to get a self-fueling unit in here for the smaller airplanes, they use aviation gasoline. I don't wanna get into the jet fuel business...

**TM:** Right, right.

**DM:** ...business. But for the uh, smaller uh, airplanes, people like to, you know, save a buck for their hobby, allow them to self-fuel their airplanes.

**TM:** Okay. All right, um, that's great information. Now we're gonna get into the history of this place.

**DM:** The airport?

**TM:** Yes. So, um, I noticed that, that it was created in 1946, uh, what was the purpose, why did 1946 they say "hey, let's build this thing"?

**DM:** Yeah. The 1946 date, that is the date that the... St. Louis Regional Airport Authority was established. Some of the actual flying history off the dirt here goes back as far as 1928.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** Uh, Wood River had a flying college here, if you will, and then uh, through the years, that expanded. The thing about the 1946 date that kinda makes this airport unique, it is a post-World War II airport.

**TM:** Oh, wow.

**DM:** Most airports like the other ones that I mentioned, you know, Lambert uh, Scott Field, those go back

into the beginning, you know the 1920s. But this was established as an airport authority just after World War II.

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** Then, uh, the Walston Aviation Company sort of... they were the airport. And they built up a Cessna business that become the largest Cessna dealer in the world. It was right here.

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** And as the... uh, Walston family aged and grew older, uh, the older Walston's died off, the younger Walston's did not wanna have anything to do with airplanes, and so Premiere Air Center took over. Uh, couple people took that over, named it Premiere Air Center. They ran ultimately into a bunch of red ink, and this was, uh, about the time I, I got here about 15 years ago.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** And then another set of developers came in, took it over, got it out of the red ink and then it became West Star Aviation. So that's the audit history, first Walston Aviation, then Premiere Air Center, and then uh, and then West Star Aviation.

**TM:** That's cool. Now um... it's pretty 1928, wow. What kind of famous pilots, planes... uh, is there any records of...

**DM:** I... no. I wish we had some type of a log book of all of the famous people that have uh, that have flown in here. At least on my watch, uh... Bill Clinton came in here, this is post, uh, in his post-president years.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** But he came in here and then um, more recently, uh, Joe Biden flew in when he was the Vice President, and that was a big, huge event, when he came in. And then, uh, other... people that come in here from time to time to get their airplanes serviced.

**TM:** 'Kay

**DM:** And we do have to be somewhat careful about, uh, that because... you know, if, if people... thought that this particular corporation well if they have airplanes oh let's... that's why my Pampers cost so much at Walmart you know, that type of thing. But, these corporations, they're not stupid, if they could not pencil these things off uh, they would not have aircraft and we saw that in 2008 during the big economic downturn. A lot of uh, people got out of the corporate aviation business. The thing that was unique there is that there were another bunch of companies that were thinking, "Well, maybe we oughta get into corporate a... well, I don't know, it's kinda... well it'll be nice... well, da da da," so that went back and forth. And somebody walks through the door, says, "We can get a Falcon 50 for 50 cents on the dollar." Oh, really? So, there again that's where West Star was very significant in that turnaround because these companies would get an airplane at a very reasonable price, and they wanna have it painted in their

company colors, they wanna redo the interior to fit their particular mission, and oh and while we're at it lets upgrade the avionics and make sure all the landing struts are repacked, all that sort of stuff.

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** And that's the niche of West Star, they're called an MRO stands for Maintenance Repair and Overhaul.

**TM:** Okay, now how many times did this airport expand runway wise or... I mean, how many, how many runways they currently have?

**DM:** Good question. We have uh, 2 runways depending on how you count 'em, maybe we have 4 but there are 2 runways because it's going to the north one direction and the same concrete is going south in the opposite direction...

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** ... so that's one run way...

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** ...that counts for 2 different uh, uh, sets of approaches. The thing that is fortunate that kinda gives us bragging rights, these 2 runways are not parallel to each other. They intersect. Is what this means, is, if you have a crosswind, you can find a runway that will keep you out of the crosswind.

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** That's happened 3 times since I've been here. Weather front comes through, and typically, I don't wanna get into a lot of weather phenomena, but when a weather front comes through, wind direction changes 180 degrees. So, as it's swinging around, you know, from northwest to southeast or vice versa, quite often the winds will go out of limits over Lambert. And it's happened 3 times since I've been out here, I looked out on the ramp and we have 13 or 14 or 15 commercial airliners...

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** ...on the ramp.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** Because they came over here because they couldn't land in, in a crosswind over there. And typically they know that the fronts going to be through in 30 or 40 minutes, so the passengers don't even get off the airplane, they just give 'em another round of drinks and then take off and, and go on to Lambert. So having those intersecting runways is, uh, is valuable. Now, if you're training pilots, and you want to train somebody how to land in a crosswind, then you can find a crosswind here, for....

**TM:** Oh, really?

**DM:** ...for training purposes. 'Nother bragging right we have about this air field is that we're the only airport that's above all flood plains, which is significant when you have the mighty Mississippi that...

**TM:** Yea.

**DM:** ...get's outta control.

**TM:** Yeah.

**DM:** Lambert as an airport, is out in the flood plain which is completely surrounded by the flood plain, so if you're landing there, you can't get home. Maybe you're changing airplanes that's okay. The downtown airport, that's in the flood plain. Spirit is in the flood plain. Mid America Airport's kinda unusual. When they first built that airport, it was not in any flood plain, but then they decided to extend the runway for 'nother 1,000 feet. And that put it in the...

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** ...in in the flood plain with Creek down there.

**TM:** Um.

**DM:** And, yea.

**TM:** Uh, did Charles Lindbergh ever venture over here, maybe?

**DM:** I've... heard stories that he did land at the air strip up in Jerseyville.

**TM:** Oh, really?

**DM:** But I don't have any... documentation or any information or even any tall tales...

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** ...that he landed here.

**TM:** What about military? I know um...

**DM:** Yes.

**TM:** We got Scott Air force Base and, uh, has this airport been, seen a lot of military action?

**DM:** Yes it has. Before... Mid America airport came in, they had just the one runway down there, so, they'd have to close down that runway for resurfacing, the entire squadron of C-9's operated out of here for quite some time. They still come up here to uh, do practice, instrument approaches, because, for a number of reasons. You look at the other 4 airports, and they're pretty much in a line against the prevailing winds. So that means air traffic control has to protect all 4 airports even though somebody just landing at, at 1 of the 4.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** In case they have to go missed approach or somebody from another airport goes missed approach, how are they going to protect that airspace? On the other hand, we're located tangent to that straight line, by about 20 miles. So, there's not... they don't have to protect as much air space. Still have to protect it, but not as much. Okay. What's the bottom line to that? That means that, let's say a KC-135 come up, come up here from Scott Air force Base, and they can get 4 approaches in here, at the same time they can get only 3 in at uh, even at Scott Air force Base. So, quite often we'll see that airplane come up here, maybe in a traffic pattern for, you know, an hour or an hour and fifteen minutes, and what it is, I mean it has 12 and 15 pilots on board, and they're trying to get their monthly proficiency training in, so they'll do a touch and go, uh on downwind have a seat change, get the next pilot in, touch and go, seat change, touch and go, seat change...

**TM:** Wow.

**DM:** They're all done, they go home and you consider they can get 4 approaches in here at the same time they could only get 3 down there, what a tremendous savings in fuel.

**TM:** Yeah

**DM:** That is. But I also like to brag about our instrument approaches. We have a legacy of the modern approaches, we have uh, GPS approaches to all... to each end of both runways. We have the instrument landing system, the ILS um, precision approach in here. But, we have 3 approaches that are vastly, uh, disappearing. We have what's called a Non-Directional Beacon, and NDB approach. That radio signal uh, is, like I said is non-directional, it's just a signal that's out there, and the pilot's look at certain instruments on their panel that can figure out and kind of hone in on. And that is located way below the AM broadcast band. I mean, this approach has been, uh, the NDB approach has been around probably since Lindbergh...

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** He flew things like that. And we have the only one left, uh, here. We have uh, I mentioned we have the Instrument Landing System or ILS, we also have a published... what's it called, a Back Course ILS where pilots can come around and approach the airport from the opposite direction. And then there's what we call a Circling Approach off of the VLR that is located in Troy. The thing that's significant about the VLR approach is going away throughout the United States, but FAA is going to keep 30 of these VLR's as a tertiary backup in case somebody shoots satellites out of the sky...

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** ...and uh, Troy is one of those. Those we'll, we'll have that approach here. So, you know, what, what does it mean? Again, I go back to Scott Air force Base. A lot of the third world countries they fly into, these are the only approaches they have available.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** So we have the only ones they can train on.

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** Uh, they'll tell me in the same breath "Well, we can, uh accomplish our training in a simulator, but nothing beats the real thing."

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** Yea.

**TM:** And the... any significant um... crashes or damages. I know, I don't know what year it was, when there was uh, it was an F-18 maybe that crashed?

**DM:** An F-18 Super Hornet.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** That was just a couple of years before I got here. Let me go back to so why that airplane was here in the first place.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** This airport, believe it or not, is almost a perfect overlay for the Farm Burrow Airport over in England, big, huge, uh... air show in Farm Burrow every year. So, Boeing was trying to, to sell more of the F-18 Super Hornets, so they wanted to do a good performance at Farm Burrow, and what better way to do that then to practice over something that's uh...

**TM:** Similar.

**DM:** ...almost a perfect overlay for Farm Burrow. So the airplane was in here quite often, even after the crash they continued to use this as a Farm Burrow, uh, substitute. It's interesting about the, the noise, we had the uh, Harrier Jump Jet in here doing kinda the same thing. And the switchboard would light up, not so much people complaining about the noise, but number one, are we being attack?

**TM:** [laughter]

**DM:** No, we're not. Uh, well, where can I park to get a good view?

**TM:** Yea.

**DM:** My grandchildren are gonna be here next week, will they still be flying then? You know that, that...

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** ...that type of response, as opposed to compl... and there are a few curmudgeons that complain about the noise but, uh, anyway the... pilot of that particular aircraft uh, that crashed, this pilot had air all the way, all the way from beginning to end. He was doing an altitude losing maneuver right off the deck, and uh, didn't make it.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** And I, I guess to his credit, uh, he did not go down in a housing area, did not go down, um, in a populated area. I think some of the firebrands from the crash got onto somebody's garage but uh, I think our own airport crews that responded to that, they knocked down the firebrands so, uh, no private property went up in smoke.

**TM:** Yea.

**DM:** Uh, tragedy to be sure...

**TM:** Right, right.

**DM:** To be sure.

**TM:** That's....Yeah, I remember that story and, uh...

**DM:** Yea.

**TM:** ...that's the only significant, you know, crash I've ever heard that was been here.

**DM:** We've had some smaller airplanes come in with uh, minor things. They had one guy, he had pilot error on the way through taildragger type airplane, you don't land with a tailwind. And he did, and lost all control ability. The airplane is, the tailwind, all of the sudden he's in dead air because he's going just as fast as the tailwind and that flipped him upside down. And uh, but he got out okay. Uh, other minor emergencies, smoke in the cockpit, landing gear won't come down, uh, co-pilot's crying, somebody else is throwing up....

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** We had, um, uh, two uh... call out's uh, just this month already for minor stuff like that.

**TM:** Okay, 'kay. I guess you cover a lot of the questions from history, I guess the big thing going to finish up with here's what are you proud about this St. Louis Regional Airport? What, what makes you...

**DM:** Couple of things...

**TM:** You, you've said a couple things, but what...

**DM:** Yeah, uh, a couple things. For one thing, I got to be proud about the way the airport is governed. We had 7 commissioners, and this is out of the salient airports I mentioned earlier, this is the only airport that is governed by an independently empowered airport authority board. Uh, Lambert is a function of the city of St. Louis, Spirit Airport is a function of the county, uh, Mid America Airport is a function of St. Clair County, but poor colleague at downtown airport, that's a function of bi-state development. Bi-state development, of course they have the Metro Link Trains, they have the Bus System, they have the airport and surprise, surprise they have those little gondola's that go up in the Arch.



**TM:** Oh, really?

**DM:** That is not a park service concession.

**TM:** [crosstalk] I didn't know that.

**DM:** ...concession, that they uh, were not going to put any money into it, bi-state development did so, of course they get to enjoy the fruits of, of putting that in. So, uh, my colleague down there is always... has some issues with uh, diversion of revenue which is a big no-no I mentioned earlier in the interview about uh, airport managers being fired more often for doing their job than not doing their job. The FAA is pretty well bullet-proof in the diversion of revenue and, any revenues that are generated on the airport, including fuel taxes, must remain with the airport, not for operations and maintenance but for capital improvements. So, that is uh, a big rub that a lot of people do not understand.

**TM:** Okay. Okay. Um... yeah, I guess bringing up that question, um... uh... any other, um... things that... you know, I, this is the question I was gonna ask, the cemeteries...

**DM:** Yes, yes.

**TM:** ... located on the property. Are those family cemeteries or were they just here before or. ?

**DM:** We have two uh, cemeteries on the airport, neither one of them are active. One of them in particular has lots of room for expansion but to be honest with ya', I have enough on my plate managing an airport let alone trying to manage a cemetery.

**TM:** Right.

**DM:** But the uh, Pruitt Cemetery which is off of Mooreland Road, that is not exactly a family cemetery but there's an awful lot of Pruitt's in there. And as you look at the grave markers there's about 4 or 5 different ways to spell Pruitt. The thing that is uh, remarkable about that particular cemetery, you know, both cemeteries have Civil War veterans buried in them.

**TM:** Okay.

**DM:** The one uh, the Pruitt Cemetery [phone ringing in background] has a... Revolutionary War veteran buried there, and a veteran from the War of 1812, and the two of them are related.

**TM:** Wow. I didn't know that.

**DM:** Yes, and the DAR's been over, they've done a big, um, ceremony on the Revolutionary War markers been replaced, there's a certain ceremony that those belong with that. So we're real proud of that. The other cemetery, the Montgomery Cemetery's over next to the Belk Park Golf Course. Also has Civil War people buried in it, and a number of other little family plots. There, there the most recent burial in there was in the year 2000 and the... I don't know which died first, the husband or the wife, but they, they were within 6 years of each other and both of 'em are buried over there. So we have the 1994 grave and a 2000 grave, but nothing since and, again, they're not active cemeteries that I really, at this point in time, I don't

have the time to go through all the bureaucracy...

**TM:** Mm-hmm.

**DM:** ...of making the, the getting the licenses for opening up another cemetery.

**TM:** Okay. Well, I appreciate your time today, I mean, I learned a lot and can't wait to, to get this information out there.

**DM:** Good.

**TM:** And thank you very much. Thank you.

**DM:** You think of anything comes up in the future, give me another call and we'll publish an amendment to this one.

**TM:** Alright, thank you very much.