



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

An interview with
Don Nelson Driese, 1918-1993

May 28, 1986

This interview was conducted by: Cora Jane Jenkins
Transcribed by: Shirley A. Brandes
Edited by: Cora Jane Jenkins
Final typed by: Dolores Osuna
Supervised by: Sylvia Arden, Head Library and Manuscript Collections

PREFACE

The Don Driese interview was done as a part of my project to document the history of the oral history program at the San Diego Historical Society. He was president of the Society, when the program began in the fifties, and he was able to shed much light on the reasons the program was started.

He also talks about his efforts to increase membership, the first gift shop at Serra Museum, and the beginnings of the *Journal of San Diego History*, all accomplished during his involvement. He speaks colorfully, with light heartedness, of his association with Jim Mills, Jerry MacMullen, and others. Regarding the oral history program, he gave me information unavailable from any other source.

Cora Jane Jenkins
January 1988

INTERVIEWER'S NOTE

This interview with Don Driese is being recorded on behalf of the San Diego Historical Society. The date is May 28, 1986.

CORAJANE CJ: Mr. Driese, please tell me where you were born.

DON NELSON DD: Valdez, Alaska, a town kind of southeast of Anchorage.

CJ: That was a complete surprise for me. How did that come about

DD: My mother was there at the time. [laughter] My family had been Alaskans since before the turn of the century. Grandfather had some mining property. He was also a circuit judge in the territory up there at that time. This necklace, as a matter of fact, is of nuggets that came from his claim at Nome. This was made for my mom when she was just a little girl. She gave it to me just a couple of years back.

CJ: Your family was from the United States and went up to Alaska as settlers and developers?

DD: My grandfather went up there initially as a circuit court judge and then to practice law. He also, in the middle of things, started the first newspaper in Alaska, *The Wrangell Island News*. I don't remember the year of the start but it was one of the first papers in Alaska.

CJ: How did you get to the states?

DD: My father had been associated with my grandfather in the law practice in Seattle. He went up to Alaska after he married my mom. They lived up there for a couple of years. I was born and a year or so later my father died. He had been practicing law [before he died] and my mother married one of his clients a couple of years later. That was my stepfather, Edward Driese. I took his name. As a young man he had done pretty well up there with mining and canneries and stuff. He retired and came to California in 1922. He was going to go down to San Diego but he got as far as La Jolla and stayed there for eleven years, and then finally made it on into San Diego. It was just a kind of a yen of the family. My stepfather had been in Alaska for quite some time, too.

CJ: Your primary education was where?

DD: La Jolla, the La Jolla Elementary School, then the La Jolla Junior High. I came to San Diego High and graduated from there.

CJ: What was it like at that time? Tell me about when you were in school in La Jolla.

DD: When we first went to La Jolla in 1922 there were about 3700 people in the town. It was an absolute delight. It was the most wonderful place in the world for a kid to grow up. We first lived in the south part of La Jolla on Nautilus Street. That runs up towards the high school. Then about 1930 we moved to La Jolla Shores where we rented a house just behind the beach club. At that time there were seven houses between the beach club and Scripps Institute so it was just a gigantic playground for kids. On the occasions when we went to school it was because it was raining or the water was too doggone cold, or something like that. We spent most of our time at the beach, in the water and diving. It was an absolute delight. It was the keenest place in the world to grow up.

CJ: What were the names of the schools you went to?

DD: The La Jolla Elementary and the La Jolla Junior-Senior High.

CJ: Who were your contemporaries?

DD: One of my best friends and my longest time friend--I saw him Sunday when he came in on the Star of India--was our former state senator, Jim Mills.

CJ: He went to school with you?

DD: He was a couple of years behind me. Then there was Bert McClintock who was editor and publisher later on of the *Escondido Times-Advocate*. [McClintock was Business Manager, son-in-law of longtime owner, Percy Evans]

CJ: Were you an only child, Mr. Driese?

DD: Yes, I was.

CJ: I don't know anything about La Jolla back in the early days. How did you get about? Did you ride a bicycle?

DD: Somewhat, but for the most part walking was the best method. As you can well imagine in 1922 there were not too many cars around. There weren't any horse and buggies, but not too many cars. If somebody saw a kid walking you generally would be able to hook a ride. The town was kind of interesting then because one of the things that was sort of fun was to go over the route of the old "abalone limited." That was the steam train that ran into La Jolla that began right at the turn of the century.

DD: There was one place where the train had come a cropper and blown up and there was a boiler sitting there. You could always find railroad spikes and stuff like that going back to those days when they didn't have the train. Then, of course, some years later in the early thirties the street car came to La Jolla. That was always fun to put money on the track and get it flattened out.

CJ: When did you move to San Diego? And where did you live?

DD: In 1936, (1935 or 1936) on North Avenue which is up by where the old Normal School was in University Heights.

CJ: And what school did you go to there?

DD: San Diego High.

CJ: I am very interested in University Heights.

DD: The thing that strikes me about that whole area--University Heights, Normal Heights, and so forth--is that it has, probably, next to Logan Heights, the best climate in San Diego. That would be one and two with Logan Heights and then perhaps Mission Hills the third. But it is sort of interesting to see--and this is true in every old community you run into--that the early settlers always moved into the good places, particularly in Southern California, which is all I can speak about with any authority, but moved into the areas where there was less fog and there was more sunlight,

where there was less wind, and so forth. And certainly those three places fill the bill. In University and Normal Heights I would say you would probably have less breeze--there was a little more breeze down in the Golden Hill area.

CJ: In your line of work, advertising, you would be aware of these selling points. The early brochures of University Heights say the same thing, that the climate is so ideal, and for those reasons that you just mentioned.

DD: It is funny that in the city the size of San Diego there could be so many different climates, for want of a better word, belts or areas, or something like that, but it certainly is the case. La Jolla was rather bad in that there was always that fog out there, but if you grew up with all the benefits of La Jolla, the weather didn't make too much difference.

CJ: Back to University Heights for a minute, the Normal School. When you moved there in 1936....

DD: It had moved out, I believe it went out to its present location of San Diego State in 1931.

CJ: But the old building was still there.

DD: Oh, yes. I remember my father was quite irate about the thing that the real estate developers had conned the educators into moving the school way to hell-and-gone out into the country there where there was nobody living nearby and it was just a miserable place.

CJ: You went to San Diego High. After that what happened?

DD: My father by that time had acquired an interest in tuna boats and I spent a year or so on tuna boats, between here and Peru and Ecuador, Galapagos Island and the whole darn works. That was very interesting. Those were the old type tuna boats; not the modern purse seiners. But these were the hook-and-line boats, where they lowered the little thing over the side. You've seen the pictures.

CJ: He was an independent fisherman, then?

DD: Oh, yes. They were all independent; they weren't affiliated with anything. They would have a contract with a cannery, but they were not in any way organized in groups.

CJ: It seems to me like the fishing industry here locally has always been controlled by the Portuguese families.

DD: They were the first--the Medinas, the Silvas and those--but I would say by the time we got into the mid-thirties they were still predominant, but there were an awful lot in there who were Japanese, Americans, and so forth.

CJ: In other words there was a lot of independent enterprise. A single man with a single boat could go out and still make some money?

DD: Oh, sure, absolutely. As a matter of fact the money was pretty good because, well, tuna prices would get up to \$250 a ton. Some of those little boats would carry a couple of hundred tons. They would be gone for six or eight weeks, something like that. But that was still not bad income.

CJ: How big was this boat?

DD: We owned two of them. One of them was ninety feet which was pretty small; the other was 120 feet. That was a fair size.

CJ: And you actually fished?

DD: Oh, gosh, we did everything. When you are the youngster on the ship you did everything from helping in the kitchen to oiling diesel engines and everything that comes along.

CJ: Well, being the son of the owner, too, you were kind of working your way along.

DD: Always getting the dirty end of the stick.

CJ: I have heard fisherman usually get shares or quarter shares. How did you get paid?

DD: I really don't recall. I seemed to make out pretty well. I don't remember what the arrangement was. I spent just about a year on the boat. I think when I got all through on the boat I had several thousand dollars.

CJ: What did you do with all that money?

DD: I put most of it in the bank and a car. Then I got a job at Consolidated Aircraft, but I still didn't have enough money to get through school. [college] So I worked at Convair and got a little more money for about a year at school, at State. I went back and worked some more and got another year in and did it that way.

CJ: That was the plant out on Pacific Highway: Consolidated Vultee?

DD: It wasn't Vultee at that time, it was Consolidated Aircraft. Then later it became Consolidated Vultee and still known as Convair.

CJ: What did you do there?

DD: I was a riveter.

CJ: Were you still there when the war started?

DD: Oh, yes. In fact I was frozen there. By that time I had kind of moved up the line because I was a general foreman. I wanted so badly to get into the navy and went down to the naval officer recruitment, procurement, or whatever they called the darn thing. They checked back with Convair and I nearly got in trouble because I was frozen. They said that they had told me that I was frozen and couldn't get out of it.

CJ: You had to stay and work there because they said you were in a vital job? How old were you then?

DD: I was twenty-three.

CJ: And you had been there three or four years?

DD: Yeah. I spent a total of eight years there, on and off. When I first went to Convair all the aircraft plants were having trouble in the pre-war period in that there weren't many contracts for building aircraft, and so there would be massive layoffs and stuff like that, and so I kind of jumped between Convair and Ryan and managed to stay working most of the time.

CJ: Tell me about the physical location and appearance of the plant when you went to work there.

DD: It was on Pacific Highway at the south end--you know where the Port Authority building is. That pretty much marked the southern boundary of the plant. The plant went north about maybe 1200 feet, or something like that. There was only one building there. The buildings at the north end of that complex were added, I'd say, probably about 1940. The building was completed and production started there in September, 1935. I went to work there in April, 1936. I was very fortunate in going to work when I did because I came there just about a month after the beginning wage went up from thirty-five to forty cents an hour. At that time thirty-five cents an hour looked pretty darn good to so many fellows who came out from the east with families. That would probably add up to less than fifteen dollars a week. So everybody then got forty cents an hour and worked half-day on Saturday. My salary came up to about eighteen bucks a week, which was fine.

CJ: The company at that time was dealing primarily in private contracts to build airplanes?

DD: Yes, it was entirely that. The company had developed a singularly good flying boat when the company was in Buffalo. But in New York State with the snow, and so forth, in the winter you can't fly the things off an icy river. So they selected San Diego as a site where they could fly year around. They came out here with a pretty good contract, I think it was to build twenty-five, or something like that, PBY flying boats. That was the first aircraft that was really built out here. They did have the residue of a contract for a single engine army attack plane called PB2A. They built about thirty of those out here. That was to wrap up a contract that they had started back in Buffalo. Then from the PBY they went into the B-24 and the whole wartime aircraft.

CJ: Tell me what changes you noticed when the war started. What happened there at work?

DD: Nothing, really, aside from the physical. Well, there was heightened security, but that was minimal. The principal thing was the appearance throughout San Diego of an armed camp because, unrealistic as it seems today, there was a lot of thought about the Japanese flying in and bombing the area. Barrage balloons were up over the city in a number of areas. There were anti-aircraft guns in various placements. There was one at the southeast corner of First and Kalmia, just to give you a reference point.

CJ: An anti-aircraft gun?

DD: Right. There was a vacant lot and there was a two-story building and on the top floor was this anti-aircraft gun to take care of any Japanese who happened to be coming in. Then a little later--and this would be in late 1941 or early 1941--the Convair plant was entirely covered with camouflage matting. I remember seeing that and that was very effective. The only thing was that the stuff that was glued to this matting or wire mesh was chicken feathers which were spray-painted to resemble roads and houses and stuff like that. It had a god-awful smell to it. But aside from that there weren't too many changes.

CJ: It got larger?

DD: Oh, the plant grew, yes. They continued to expand and they moved to Plant 2 which was down by Old Town.

CJ: Your security was increased and you got more people and your contracts changed, that is about it, really.

DD: Right. It was sort of interesting that one order for B-24 bombers--that's the four-engine bomber--was a large order which I think was for 140, or something like that, which is quite a few airplanes. In the middle of the production of these planes, before any of them had been delivered, France fell so there were a whole bunch of planes sitting out on Lindbergh Field bearing the French insignia. They were suddenly lend-leased to the Britons and all of a sudden they appeared in British colors and away they went.

CJ: Did your security include military personnel being on the job site with guns?

DD: No. Just the venerable guys that you still see guarding buildings. No, I don't think security was very strong.

CJ: Apart from your job, how did the war coming affect your life, your social life, for instance?

DD: There weren't many things to do, but all the guys I had grown up with and had known for so long, we spent most of our time in Baja anyway. Anytime we had a chance to get away we would go down there to hike and stuff like that. The thing was that for a long, long time we were working eleven hours a day and it was six days a week and sometimes seven days a week. Gosh, I worked a couple of periods there when we would go for three or four months without a day off. But it was one of those things; it was kind of interesting.

CJ: Were you using women on the assembly line before the war?

DD: No.

CJ: Did you use them during the war?

DD: Yes.

CJ: Do you remember any policies regarding the hiring of women?

DD: No, I think it was pretty much the same as hiring men. If they were able to walk in a straight line and had two hands, they were pretty well fixed.

CJ: As general foreman, did you have any instructions from management about how to handle the situation?

DD: No. I had a couple of tests I used to determine manual dexterity. That would determine pretty much where a new employee, be it man or woman, would go to work, in what section.

CJ: The same test was given to men and women?

DD: Yes. Just a simple thing of handing them a tool and see how they would grab it and so forth. It made no difference.

CJ: How did they perform on the job?

DD: Just fine.

CJ: You found them to be as satisfactory as the men?

DD: Sure. I think back now though, since OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Act] and all these organizations have come along, of the tremendous number of errors in safety, and so

DD: forth, that were committed during the war. It was just incredible! I am very hard of hearing in my left ear. That, of course, was because when we were youngsters and we were riveting, the use of ear plugs and things like that were completely ignored. You'd be riveting with your ear up against a metal panel and it was pretty deafening, and none of that stuff.

CJ: Well, it didn't exist that time, did it?

DD: No. Some people might put a little piece of cotton in their ear or something like that, but it was a matter of personal choice. Later, when the war was about halfway along, safety glasses came in. If you did wear specs you could get ones with safety glass. A lot of cases you'd wear a shield if you were doing something that was hazardous. But things were pretty relaxed, not like it is now.

CJ: Were you able to attend to your schooling at all during the war?

DD: Yeah. I got quite a lot in and I had gotten married in the meantime.

CJ: Did you wife work, too?

DD: Yeah. She worked at Convair at bookkeeping.

CJ: Where did you live?

DD: In the 30th Street area, 30th and Adams, around in there.

CJ: And you continued at State?

DD: I got a couple of classes in and then things got a bit hairy from a time standpoint, you know getting from point A to point B. The University of California at Berkeley had a correspondence thing which was really great. I took a number of the correspondence courses in English, literature and so forth. It just worked out beautifully. You'd get your lessons in the mail, you'd fill out your quizzes and you'd do your writing assignments and mail them in. They would come back to you with grades. It was just wonderful.

CJ: That was a popular form of education at that time.

DD: I don't know if it is still going or not, but it was effective. You had one person who was your teacher, or something like that. I certainly didn't finish college. I got so bored at State. The only thing I wanted to do was to learn how to write and I figured I'd learned that well enough.

DD: Actually during the war I started writing for money--oh, before the war--and started writing for aviation trade papers and stuff like that, little items that I picked up hanging around Lindbergh Field.

CJ: That is what you wanted to be, a writer? Fiction?

DD: More interested in non-fiction types of articles, not books or anything like that. The advantage of that is it gives curiosity a sense of legitimacy. You know you can be curious about something and if you like to write you can play with your curiosity a little bit. It is kind of fun.

CJ: Tell me about that. Did you continue with your writing?

DD: Oh, gosh, yes. That is how I got into this business as a matter of fact, advertising. I'd known Bob Wilson who was our congressman for a long time. At the tail-end of the war, Bob had gone to work for an advertising agency. It came to the end of the war my dad needed me to help him out with a mining property in Mexico, and I was down there. But prior to my going down to Mexico, Bob said, "Hey, better meet this guy who is running this advertising agency, perhaps he can use you sometime." Because Bob knew, of course, my writing. So I went down to Mexico and worked there for I guess around nine months, something like that. I got malaria so badly I wanted to get the heck out and at the most opportune time I got a telegram from the fellow from the Tolle Company, Norman W. Tolle, who said, "Come up to San Diego if you can, we can sure put you to work." I got the heck out of Mexico as fast as I could.

CJ: That would have been when? DD; In 1946.

CJ: What did he want you to do?

DD: Writing. Advertising, copy writing, feature writing, and so forth. He had in mind at that time--one of his clients was Union Title Insurance and Trust Company--they wanted to come up with a monthly or bi-monthly house organ. The key on that would be a lot of historical articles about San Diego County. I had been a history buff for a long, long time. That was my prime writing chore so I wrote most of the features, most of the darn magazine, as a matter of fact, for I guess about ten years.

CJ: What was this magazine?

DD: *Union Title Trust Topics*. It was a pretty good house magazine. Had a circulation of about six or eight thousand. I had an opportunity to do quite a lot of historical research on it for the feature articles. It was quite interesting work.

CJ: I was going to ask you about how you got interested in not only our city but in community involvement in our city. I see that your job led you to that.

DD: I had been interested in history in 1928 when the Marston Company had its 50th anniversary and they gave out a whimsical map of the city. The border of the thing showed Father Louie Jaime being loaded up with arrows by some irate Indians out at San Diego de Alcala. Up to that time I had thought that the Indians here were pretty dull. And I realized that if they had enough moxie to do in a Spaniard they couldn't be all bad. So I got into studying history and began working on it from that point. So I've been interested in the history of the San Diego area since I was a kid. In La Jolla, of course, with a little digging you could find pot shards and arrow points, bone tools and stuff like that.

CJ: You still could?

DD: Oh, yes. Just on that field south of the Beach and Tennis Club--there weren't any houses there. That was all fire pits, pyre mounds, and stuff like that all the way up the hill.

CJ: Did you do that as a child or after you got interested in history?

DD: I was about twelve or thirteen years old. You could find so much stuff there. Now it's just houses all over it.

CJ: So then starting out with Tolle you entered the business you were going to be in forever. You are still in it today: advertising.

DD: Yeah, right.

CJ: And that led you to....I know you were involved with the Chamber of Commerce.

DD: With the Junior Chamber. Then Frank Forward--the Forward family owned Union Title Insurance and Trust Company--Frank was senior vice president, or something like that, and he was also very active in the historical society. Through Frank I became active in the society and took on more and more jobs and I became president in 1958, served through 1958 to 1960.

CJ: Tell me about the society then.

DD: It was funny. When I first became active in the society John Davidson, wonderful old guy, was director. His number-one man was Ben Dixon ...There were three-and-a-half full-time staff members up there. Their pay was minimal, something like \$175 a month. But they enjoyed it and they ran it like more as a hobby than anything else. John Davidson and Ben Dixon, for instance, would go out and shake and rattle the olive trees in front of the Serra Museum and bring down olives by the bushel and haul them into the museum and cure them. It was quite an interesting thing to be going on as a sideline. They took care of all friends with home-cured olives. But they did some pretty good historical research during that time.

CJ: Was there a research library at that time?

DD: Oh, yes. Pretty darn good one on the basis of what it is now. Then, of course, the society was very close to the public library. What you couldn't find in one you could find in the other library, so things were pretty good. There were some nice people up at the Bancroft [library] corresponding with them. You could generally get pretty much what you needed. The resources are so much better in San Diego now. Golly, it's just great!

CJ: Did you operate essentially the same as we operate now? Did you have these functions, the fund-raisers, these social activities?

DD: No. When I first became president of the society, I think there were around 250 members, someplace around there. For the most part they were sweet little old ladies who had grown up in San Diego. I would say women constituted seventy-five percent of the membership. They were all old or very, very old people, very few young people in there. The functions were few and far between, the annual meeting, and that was about it. They began publishing the quarterly, I don't know what year that was, but I think it was 1967. That began to work a little bit better; it gave the society a little more reason for being, in that there was something that people could really see what the society was doing. The early days of the quarterly were pretty tough. Jerry MacMullen had by that time come aboard. He was curator of the museum. Jerry and I wrote an awful lot of the pieces in the first issues of the thing. We had different names because it wouldn't look too good to have three articles by one guy and three by another guy, so we took different names, as a nom de plume.

CJ: Now the Journal, you are saying, was in the sixties and it was 1958 when you became president?

DD: No, it was 1957, I guess, when the Journal started.

CJ: So you were working on the Journal in its infancy, you and Jerry MacMullen?

DD: Then Jim Mills was there, too. By that time Jim had become tired of teaching junior high school and wanted to devote himself full time to historical research, and writing. John Davidson retired, Jerry MacMullen became a director and Jim Mills became curator. We got another good guy in about that time, Bill Virden who later became director of the Humane Society. He died a couple of years ago. That gave us a nucleus of a pretty fair team. We got entwined in a tough problem. The organizations in town with a little more class--the art gallery and the Museum of Man--had better entree into the city and county offices for getting money. We thought we had to do something to learn the ropes of how to get in. Ed Hastings who had served on the County Board of Supervisors for many years and who was retired was looking for something to do so we hired him as a consultant. We needed something to keep him busy and we thought about this oral history deal. We put Ed in charge of that and while he operated that and did a marvelous job in collecting information, his principal chore, though was to advise us on how to get this and that out of city and county governments. Because of his long experience in there, it worked out very, very well.

I remember one time the building was in dire need of painting--the Serra Museum--and the city would not come through with the necessary labor. I asked Ed Hastings, "Do you think you could bum some paint from the city or county and we can get a crew of our guys together and paint the darn thing?" He said, "Well, let me look into it." He called me one Saturday morning and said, "Don, I have your paint but I can't get guys together today. I have to have a little time to get a crew together, but come on up to the Museum." I went up to the Museum and I'll be damned if there weren't ladders all over the place and people were painting. He had called in some due bills some place or other and got a county crew in on Saturday and Sunday to repaint the city building, which was a neat trick, but it proved the wisdom of getting Ed Hastings aboard anyway as our political consultant.

CJ: Let's define exactly what the president of the society--that was your title--what did that mean at that time? Did you work full time there?

DD: At the Museum? Oh, heavens, no. I was working at the advertising agency and that was just sort of a hobby.

CJ: You were president of the board of directors?

DD: President of the Society and the chairman of the board.

CJ: So you were another person with clout that could get things done?

DD: Yeah, I think probably a little more than some of the people who had preceded me as president because they were all older fellows, retired. While they had a lot of experience they weren't too anxious to do a heck of a lot.

CJ: Was yours a volunteer position?

DD: Oh, sure.

CJ: What was the funding that you had to work with?

DD: When I first went up there was \$5,000 from the county and \$7,500 from the city. That pretty well took care of salaries. We would generally get, oh, maybe another \$1,000 in donations in the year from the various people in the community whom we could buttonhole. Dues were three dollars a year which didn't even pay for sending out the quarterly. I was appalled when I discovered that, so dues went up to five dollars. Membership raised

hell; they were quite irate about it. Gradually we got the thing balanced off to where the membership dues would at least pay for the membership services, such as a quarterly, the newspaper and the like.

Bill Virden who had come aboard--I don't know what his title was, I think assistant curator, or something like that, and I agree that the only way the darn thing would go would be to increase membership in the society. That was the main function of our society for about two years and we did pull in about almost another thousand members in that period so it brought the membership to over 1200. That was done by having lectures and stuff like that to which the public was invited. We wouldn't let them get out without a membership application in their hot little hands.

CJ: Let's go back to Ed Hastings for a minute. You said you were interested in oral history. Had you heard about it?

DD: Yes. The University of Pennsylvania, I guess, was the pioneer in it, or at least they had done some stuff in it, and we were kinda interested in that. We got a huge darn recorder that Ed who was then in his eighties could barely maneuver. Later we got a Wollensak, which was a little bit smaller. But this was a Telefunken, or some German thing that was about the size of a large suitcase and weighed two tons, a reel-to-reel gadget. But Ed did very well with that. He took it with him and he covered the county pretty thoroughly. I think we were very fortunate in that he got out into Padre Barona and Santa Isabel and the various mission areas where there were Sistencios and talked to people who had been out there for a long time, and to the Anglos who had been ranching in the areas for a long, long time. He got this background that had never been committed to paper. It was just excellent. He was a pretty darn discerning guy. I think he did some pretty good interviews.

CJ: How did they get transcribed?

DD: Martha Nielsen who was working for the San Diego Trust and Savings Bank--still is. She took that on in the evenings as sort of a hobby and got paid a couple of bucks for transcribing. I don't know what the pay arrangement was, but she did that and did it very well.

CJ: We have a few letters remaining of correspondence between you and Hastings. They indicate that he also was to help establish other historical societies in the county. That was in the county funding agreement.

DD: I don't remember that at all. I think we'd probably tell the county just about anything to get some money from them.

CJ: Also, I was under the impression that the county was giving us money just to continue the interview programs.

DD: No, not really, because we came up with a figure, and I think it was a pretty legitimate one--and this would have been about maybe 1959--that better than ten thousand kids from the city and county schools went through the museum every year. We had a fair docent program going. That provided a pretty good entree to get some county money, because probably half the kids had gone through from county schools. We put on a pretty good show there.

CJ: Mr. Hastings, as you say, was elderly, he was eighty. His health was failing? He died in 1961, and we are talking 1958 and 1959.

DD: No, he was a big husky man. He seemed to be going along all right. He never had any problems that I know about. Did he die of a heart attack?

CJ: I don't recall right now. Were you still president when he died?

DD: No.

CJ: But you remained active.

DD: Oh, yes.

CJ: You don't recall what happened to the interview program afterwards? Let me ask another question first. Was there any real interest in it or was it just a sham to get funding?

DD: Oh, no. As the thing was going along the worth of it became more and more apparent. You can go back and find an interview with Art Stone, a rancher in Santa Isabel and some of these old fellows who had been out in that neck of the woods since the nineties. They had a lot of stuff to say about everything. Colonel Ed Fletcher, his was an interview that was a gas. With his ego and everything, that took up quite a lot of time. Everybody was aware of the benefits of it. [the interview program]

CJ: What you are saying then is that the program had petered out when Mr. Hastings died.

DD: Yeah, I know that Bill Virden did a few interviews--how many he did I don't know--and then I kind of lost track of it. There was one nice thing about some of those interview programs in that when the friends of the old settlers were made aware that their knowledge and background was of value to the society, in addition to giving a darn good interview, they oftentimes would come up with photographs and diaries and other things that could be incorporated into the files.

CJ: Another thing that I read in our archives somewhere was that Mr. Hastings more or less based his interview program on the Pioneers of San Diego. Is that an organization that cooperated with him?

DD: No. There was a Pioneer Society which disappeared in the early twenties, I guess. George Marston then came in and organized the present society. As a matter of fact you will find an awful lot of documents in the files that bears the stamp on the back, "The Pioneer Society of San Diego." Ed,

DD: of course, was aware of that and contacted a number of people in there. It was never a large professional society so eventually it just died.

CJ: While you were there volunteering your time as president did you deal exclusively with administration or did you get involved with the collections.

DD: Oh, gosh, everything. It wouldn't be any fun just sitting around there. We'd do everything, helped restore stuff. We came up with the concept of a store which drove a number of people up the wall. They thought it was out of keeping for a museum.

CJ: The gift shop, you mean?

DD: Yes. I don't remember what year it was, it must have been 1958, but we finally got an agreement with the board that it would be okay to have such an establishment in the museum. But what we were going to stock the darn thing with, that was a question. Jerry MacMullen went up to Los Angeles and went to some of the brokers who sell giftware and stuff like that and came back with the most appalling load of trash which people bought avidly. A stupid looking ashtray with Dumbo the Cow, saying San Diego on the bottom and all sorts of junk, but it worked out pretty well. Then, of course, we began selling books and stuff in there. The thing was profitable from the word "go." I don't recall exactly what it was the first couple of months of operation but later on as time passed we could count on a couple of hundred dollars a month clear from the store.

CJ: What other things did you innovate?

DD: I don't think anything.

CJ: You were instrumental in a strong foundation for the Journal?

DD: Oh, yeah.

CJ: What were some of the nom de plumes for you and Jerry?

DD: I was looking for some of those things; I'll be darned but I can't remember.

CJ: Can we about assume that everything that is in those early Journals was written by you or Jerry or Mills?

DD: Well, yes ...let's see, there was Colonel George Ruhlen, he did some writing; Ben Dixon did. We got quite a few in there. It is sort of funny, on these meetings the story was, we had an annual meeting scheduled and were getting someone down from the University of California, Berkeley, to be the speaker. We put out our bulletin and, gosh, we got a good turnout on that, 150 people. John Davidson came to me on the afternoon before this evening event and, said, "Hey, we've got a big problem. The guy is not going to be able to get down here to speak, but he did send a tape of his talk so we can play the tape." So we did that and it was well received. A little checking revealed that John Davidson had forgotten to contact the person and when he got down to the wire a couple of days before John figured he had to do something. He found one of this man's books and got somebody else to read a section out of the book, a couple of chapters, and put it on tape. That was delivered to an applauding audience.

CJ: That is a wonderful, priceless story. Do you have any more?

DD: Oh, the time that Jerry MacMullen wanted his vacation. He had a book rack over his desk where his reference books could be grabbed like that. Jim Mills and I made up a bunch of phony dust jackets for these books, like Fun and Games With Nuclear Waste, Gifts You Can Make With Human Skin, just a whole bunch of really grotesque titles, dust jackets for a dozen or so books up there. So Jerry returns from his vacation and Jim and I made the point of being in his office at the time he came back. His reaction when he saw these things was amazing. [laughter]

CJ: Did he laugh or cry?

DD: Jerry had spent time in the Naval Reserve and could speak in a fairly salty fashion. So there were quite a few gags going on there. It was a lot of fun.

CJ: The society, as small as it was, was not really fledgling at that time because it was thirty years old.

DD: Right, but you see nobody had ever done anything and it was so darn small. I think as we built up... It is easy to say that when you invite somebody to speak to the society and say maybe we will have fifty or seventy-five people for our meeting, that isn't as much a lure as saying, oh, maybe, we'll have as much as 200 or 300 people. We weren't able to say that for years. We could get legitimate speakers who would come down, from various places.

CJ: You increased the membership in such great numbers. How did you do that?

DD: Primarily through inviting people to be at the events that the society put on, these talks and so forth, and making darn sure they didn't get away without having a membership application in their hand. Then getting a lot of publicity which is something the society had not been doing up to that time.

CJ: And that is your field, so you were good at that.

DD: Right. So anytime we had an acquisition of any importance we'd get it in the paper. Any unusual visitors who might come to the museum. Of course, Jerry MacMullen was a newspaper man, a darn good one, and he would prepare some material for us.

CJ: Would you say you were a good team?

DD: Oh, yeah, fine.

CJ: You were president for three years and after that ... you've been active all these years?

DD: Not really. There was some political infighting in the museum. I got kind of turned off by it. Elvira Wittenberg and [Jim] Reading, so I kind of got out of the picture for five, six years. The Museum took it on the chin during that period. I came back later, but I never became terribly active again.

CJ: Mrs. Driese [Romilya McGrew Driese] is on the board, so you are active.

DD: Oh, yes. It was kind of funny. Her grandfather was on the board, Clarence A. McGrew, who was editor of the [San Diego] *Union* for many, many years. I knew him a long time, long before I met Milya. He was a delightful guy on the board.

CJ: Now let's leave the historical society and go to other things. What did you do for the Junior Chamber of Commerce?

DD: That is how Bob Wilson and I first became acquainted. I was doing some research and ran into something that indicated that a fellow had flown at Otay in 1882. I saw something in the paper saying that the Junior Chamber of Commerce was interested in securing recognition for John J. Montgomery who flew at Otay in 1882. The chairman of the committee was Bob Wilson. I chased Bob down who was then working at the Tolle Company--that must have been 1939 or 1940. We immedi-

DD: ately hit it off, and kind of contributed stuff that we had researched and began working on what became the Montgomery Memorial Committee. The committee is still in existence, Bob and I are still kind of the honchos of the darn thing. The Junior Chamber, through the Montgomery Memorial Committee, did quite a lot to get recognition for John Montgomery. Bob, I would say, did the lion's share of the research on it, and found out that some of Montgomery's kin were still living in Oakland. He contacted his brother, James, who witnessed John's first flight in 1882; his sister, Mary, who had sewn fabric for John Montgomery's first glider, got the people down to San Diego and they identified the first flight site. Publicity accrued, the naming of the Montgomery Freeway, the naming of Montgomery Field. In a burst of enthusiasm the JCs convinced Columbia Pictures that we had rights to sell the life story of Montgomery to them, and did, for \$25,000. Columbia produced the movie, "Gallant Journey" with Glenn Ford and Janet Blair, Charlie Ruggles, I don't know who else. It was a fair movie. It did do quite a lot for Montgomery and with the \$25,000 we received from it we put up the monument down there at Otay Mesa. You've probably seen the stainless steel wing standing up there.

The committee wrote articles and did quite a lot of ongoing stuff to get credit for Montgomery. He still hasn't received the credit he possibly should but that is something we are still working on.

CJ: Your committee, it probably is like a little historical society all of its own.

DD: Right. It's a funny thing: when Bob and I went into the Junior Chamber we were named in the by-laws which for some amazing reason, said that Bob Wilson and Don Driese will be members of the Montgomery Memorial Committee for as long as they both shall live, or whatever. So the JCs may come and go but the memorial committee stays together and Bob and I have been doing that. We lost one of our great associates, a fellow by the name of Jim Spurgeon, he died just last year. Jim had done an awful lot of research. He made a replica of Montgomery's 1883 model. He had flown the replica and it was pretty good.

CJ: How is Mr. Wilson doing since he retired from politics?

DD: Oh, fine. He has a firm in Washington, kind of a legislative consultant group. Bob is now just about retired from that and will be moving to San Diego full time before the

DD: end of the year. He has a house in Point Loma now. He is one of the great guys. Every once in a while when we get a chance we will take off with some of our sidekicks and go down to Baja.

CJ: You still go to Baja?

DD: Oh, sure.

CJ: And you camp? Do you fish, hunt, hike, or what do you do?

DD: We look at rocks, look for old minerals, or just anything. That's the thing about Baja, you don't have to have any reason for going, you just go down there.

CJ: Do you have a special place you like down there?

DD: Oh, just all over. We've probably hiked all over everything of the northern part of the Sierra Juarez Mountains. It is kind of interesting, there was a Tahoe Canyon, I think it goes down from the Sierra Juarez into Laguna Salida. It was described by some naturalists around the turn of the century. Bob ran into some mention of it and nobody had been in the thing. There was one thing that identified this Tahoe Canyon, it was a huge rock like Half Dome up at Yosemite. It was a rock akin to that at the head of this canyon. We got a friend to fly us down there and circling around in the general area Bob spotted the rock and, sure enough, he spotted a trail, there was a trail to get to the place. We got a group of fellows together from the Museum of Man, the Historical Society and friends and we went down there. There were about twelve of us. We drove to the top of the Sierra Juarez range and wandered into this canyon and then down the canyon. Another guy met us down in the desert in a truck so we didn't have to climb back up again. It was about twelve miles long. It was very, very interesting. The botanist from the Natural History Museum, Charles Harbison, went out of his mind because in this canyon plants would be out of range. One that should have stopped fifty or sixty miles north were in the canyon and one that should have stopped fifty or sixty miles south were in the canyon. It was a gigantic mish-mash of plants. There were a lot of artifacts. The Indians had been there; here were cave carvings, and so forth. It was typical of the fun you could have in Baja.

CJ: You are still able to remain active since your surgery?

DD: Oh, sure.

CJ: When was that surgery?

DD: May 13th last year. [1985] Seven bypasses and the old pumper is working like mad!

CJ: You look wonderful. You certainly don't look as old as you are, and you look in the peak of health.

DD: Well, thank you, that is nice. This Baja thing, though, is pretty good. Another great desert rat, a fellow called Woody Valverde. Bob and I went down to visit a nothing place between San Felipe and Mexicali a few months back. That was interesting. We drove down about seventy miles and inland about thirty miles into a complete nothing area. I had never been there before. There is so much to see in Baja.

CJ: Being in advertising you touch all areas. What other community involvement have you pursued?

DD: I've been a member of the Downtown Kiwanis Club for thirty-five years, I was president. I was in Rotary and Lions, all the clubs. I think that disservice was done by Sinclair Lewis to these service clubs. He makes all the guys look like a bunch of silly clods who are members of service organizations and I think the role they play in the community is really important. For instance, the San Diego Kiwanis Club has a budget of about \$60,000 a year that they raise through their members and it supports the Kiwanis Foundation, which provides, well, last year there were twenty-some scholarships, medical equipment and supplies for establishments in Baja. All the clubs do that, and I think the whole area of our contributions to the community welfare really haven't been fully explored and perhaps should be sometime, without making people look like a bunch of "George Babbitts." The fellows dedicate themselves to doing that [type of service]. A good project is going on right now is Kiwanis support for a remedial-type--a thing in the city schools to catch kids who are liable to stray off-base a little bit, particularly in the elementary schools. It works out darn well. I think that in the last two years they contributed about \$12,000, or something like that, to help out this program, along with providing literature for them to raise funds for the school. The city schools don't have a lot of money for this sort of thing. But there are a lot of projects like that. There is a "Service in Kiwanis" fund.

CJ: Did you have a particular project that you were active in during your Kiwanis years, one that you are particularly proud of?

DD: No, nothing in particular, just working with anything that came along.

CJ: Just generally, a service organization that is a part of the community, nice way to get something done to help in a club environment?

DD: Yes, it is, and you make a lot of good friends in there and, obviously, a businessman joins Kiwanis to make business contacts. Although he gets caught up in the activities of the club and he meets fellows who might not have had any other entree into community service. And then he finds himself involved. I have seen this happen so many times in Kiwanis. And I know it happens in the other clubs because they are all a bunch of fine organizations.

CJ: You've lived in San Diego proper all of your adult life, for fifty years, and you've been in advertising which pretty much gets you all around. Tell me about the city, how has it changed and is it good or bad?

DD: Everybody is squawking about growth. Heck, you can't do a damned thing about growth unless you can figure some way to make birth control retroactive. The town is going to grow and we might as well make it as comfortable as we can. I think that the city well, it makes me mad to see the heel dragging going on, and it has been going on for years, about doing something about a public library. Darn it, we need a good one. We have the most wonderful, dedicated people down there and yet they are not getting the support they need. Again, another organization that is helping them is the "Friends of the Public Library."

CJ: What kind of support do you think they should get?

DD: They should get one hell of a lot more money. For so many, many years the city tax structure included one mil per buck for the zoo. I submit that maybe the library work won't draw as many tourists as the zoo but a good library is darned important to San Diego.

CJ: So you think their budget should be increased by the council?

DD: Oh, absolutely. I think the council should do more, do a little thinking about the facility. Like that idiotic thing about wanting to put the library in Golden Hall down there.

CJ: What about the Sears Building?

DD: I think that is a good site. The building is no good, but the site is great, and so is the Navy Hospital, so is the present site, whatever. You know, there are all sorts of places where a good library could be put, but it takes money, dedication and work to do it.

CJ: Do you think we need more money to buy--for acquisitions?

DD: No, that takes care of itself pretty well. I think we need more money for people; that is the principal thing. Just like that Wagenheim down there; it is not open full time because there is the lack of people.

CJ: Isn't it run by volunteers?

DD: Not that, they do have some volunteer help down there, but there simply aren't enough professional people that they can hire. The poor souls are being asked to do too darn much. Bill Sannwald is an outstanding man for a librarian. I guess they call him the director. Now there is a sexist thing for you. Not wanting to call a man a librarian because librarians have always been women. What the hell is a librarian? I think librarian is a title that could probably be borne by either a man or a woman.

CJ: About your career, tell me some of the interesting projects that you have worked on, some of the clients you've had.

DD: Oh, gosh, every so many. I think the most interesting thing has been in the areas of political campaigns. The one I am still crying about is was the battle we lost in 1948, I guess it was: the Cedar Street Mall campaign. The plan was that Cedar Street from what is now the County Administration building, all the way up Cedar on either side of the street would be city and county buildings; the library, the courthouse and stuff like that. The plan was absolutely great.

CJ: Was this part of the Nolen plan?

DD: It was tied into what was suggested by the Nolen plan. But it was a pretty good concept in itself, it was like the Nolen plan. It was way ahead of its time. Had that been done at that time we would have been so much better off right now because land would have been dedicated for various structures that would be coming up in the years ahead. That was defeated and that was just a crying shame. I hated to lose that one. That was on the city ballot. Then there were some fun campaigns. Bob Wilson and I worked on this one together, handling Don Keller's campaign when he knocked over Tommy Whelan for district attorney.

CJ: Whom did you work with on this Cedar Street Mall project?

DD: That was Norman Tolle, Bob Wilson, and Chuck Kerch. Harley Knox was then mayor. He was a great mayor. He was fine. All the political campaigns were always a lot of fun for me to do.

CJ: Were you involved in any way when we lost the Republican convention?

DD: No, I wasn't. That happened after Bob had gone back to Congress.

CJ: For a while you lived in Escondido. How did that come about?

DD: My second wife--my first wife died in 1965--Milya (Romilya) and I were married in 1966. She had a couple of children and she wanted to get them out of San Diego at that time. We were living in Del Cerro and we didn't particularly care for the way the community was going at that time, so primarily because of the kids we moved to Escondido.

CJ: Was Romilya from Escondido?

DD: She was born in San Diego but raised in Escondido and Vista.

CJ: Alan McGrew, an old timer of Escondido, that's her dad. She has lived in the entire county, then, throughout her life.

DD: From the time we moved to Escondido we probably thought it was a temporary thing, not that fifteen years is too darn temporary.

CJ: Did it work out well with the kids, then?

DD: Oh, sure. CJ- Did you have children before you married Romilya?

DD: Oh, yes, I have two girls, one is forty-three, Susan, who has two children and a grandchild, which makes me a great-grandfather. How about that! The other one [Sandra] is forty and she lives with her husband in Minnesota on a farm back there.

CJ: Mrs. Driese now is on the Board of Directors of the Historical Society. What is your assessment of the society today? How do you think it is doing?

DD: I think it is good. I am very disappointed in the size of the membership. It is under 3,000 people and I think that until it is 6,000 or thereabouts it just doesn't rate. It is just not logical that it is that small.

CJ: What do you recommend?

DD: More membership activities at perhaps a lower cost; more free lectures, meetings and so forth, where you can hand out membership applications. San Diego has such a wealth now of fine people to speak on historical subjects from the various schools around here. I think the society should be doing something like that at least six times a year, or perhaps twelve times a year, to have a public meeting to which people are invited.

CJ: It sounds like what you are saying is reach the common man instead of so much emphasis on the big fund raising projects we are having.

DD: I think you have to have the fund raising projects but I would like to see more people brought into the society who are twenty-five/thirty years old and who become active in the society through having a variety of programs available to them. And when those twenty-five to thirty year olds become fifty-five or sixty years old they may have the wherewithal to where they can endow the society with a little bit more money. I think you have to bet the come line. It doesn't cost anything to have those people in the society.

CJ: Isn't that what the Horton League is doing?

DD: Correct, and I think that is a good start. But I think there should be a lot more activity in getting the younger people.

CJ: Have you made some suggestions to anyone we know?

DD: No, what I'm saying is not unusual. Everyone knows what they should be doing, because they are in a bind to try to finance this new museum in the park and obviously that is an important job to be done.

CJ: The changes that have happened in the last three years since the move [from the Serra Museum to Casa de Balboa] are incredible. It must really be strange for you to see the size and the importance of the society now compared to what it was when you were there.

DD: Oh, yeah. Oh, I am just delighted to see the growth. As I say it is going well, very well, and it just needs more people. Another thing, too, and that was one of the key reasons for getting members, increasing membership back when I was president, is that when you go to the City Council and Board of Supervisors asking for something you have a heck of a lot more heft if you can say we have 5,000 members instead of saying we have 2,700 members. Those people respond to numbers.

CJ: It does seem, considering that we have over two million people in the county, and we have less than 3,000 members in our historical society. But then, too, currently there is just a rash of enthusiasm for regional historical societies. They are becoming very active. History is in now. We have so many small communities [which have historical societies] in our county. That might be detracting from our overall membership.

DD: I think so, but I think within the city there are enough people who are interested.

CJ: What have I forgotten to ask you? What do you want to be on the record that I don't know about?

DD: [after some time in thought] I think the fund raising activity that is going on now for the society is darn good, in that the board and members are getting out and seeing broad segment of the community to find people who may not be members but who can make worthwhile contributions. So I think the awareness of the society is being increased through this fund-raising activity. I do think that publicity is a factor that shouldn't be overlooked. Again, publicity for acquisitions and to get people to shake things out of their attics that belong in the museum and should not be handed

down to their families but should be used where lots of people could enjoy and benefit from them. I think these community societies are a great idea. That wonderful little one up there in Julian looks like a rat's nest, but it's still in a good building and they have some good material in there. I think the small societies are just great. It all ties together.

CJ: I am out of questions.

DD: And I think I am out of answers.

END OF INTERVIEW