



US Army Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame Nomination



NOMINEE DATA

NOMINEE’S NAME: Louis Dellamonica

RANK/GRADE: GS-12, Civilian Employee

TITLE: General Engineer

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH: March 23, 1912 in Yerington, Nevada

DATE RETIRED: 2007

DATE DECEASED: N/A

CURRENT/LAST DUTY POSITION/OCCUPATION: Hawthorne Army Depot’s only Engineer

PUBLICATIONS/CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERIODICALS: Nothing published

SIGNIFICANT CITATIONS AND AWARDS:

Length of Service Awards for various years within 64 years of civilian service to the DoD
1991 - 50 yr Length of Service Certificate & Pin
1991 - Decoration for Meritorious Civilian Service
1997 - Achievement Medal for Civilian Service in recognition of 55 years of service in the United States government
Letters of Appreciation and Congratulations from Senator Harry Reid and Senator Richard Bryan
2001 - Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service
2002 - The Ordnance Order of Samuel Sharpe awarded by the U.S. Ordnance Corps Association
Performance Awards – 1991 thru 2000
Member of the Civil Air Patrol 42 years

SIGNIFICANT ASSIGNMENTS/DUTY POSITIONS:

FROM	TO	ASSIGNMENTS
1941	1948	Hired at Hawthorne Naval Facility as an Electrician

1948	1977	Position was converted to an Electrical Engineer as the Navy added the Electrical Engineering Division for the first time
1977	1978	Position was converted from Electrical Engineer to a General Engineer
1978	1990	General Engineer Division Chief in charge of the Engineering Division at Hawthorne
1990	Present	Mr. Dellamonica is no longer head of the Engineering Division as the division was disbanded. However, he remains employed at the plant as the only General Engineer left on staff.

EDUCATION: University of Nevada, Reno - BA Degree – Electrical Engineering, 1934

LIST OF POSSIBLE SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE NOMINEE:

JMC History Office

AFSC/JMC History Office. *Oral History Interview with Mr. Louis “Louie” Dellamonica, Hawthorne Army Depot, 16 December 1941 to Present.”* U.S. Army Joint Munitions Command.

Hawthorne AD Annual Historical Summaries and Briefs located in the JMC History Office

SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO US ARMY ORDNANCE:

Mr. Louis Dellamonica is currently the oldest and longest serving Department of the Army Civilian on active duty status. At 93 years old, if you were to call upon him today, you might expect to receive his voicemail as he is still actively involved in management of construction projects and manages three contracts for Hawthorne Army Depot. Louis or “Louie” is a quiet, unassuming gentleman who is embarrassed by the well deserved praise he receives for his dedication. He would tell you he lives by a personal philosophy of service to others and his life resembles that truth. Mr. Dellamonica continues to work at Hawthorne Army Depot after 64 years of service. He was present for the ground breaking ceremonies at Hawthorne in 1929 and started his career there on December 13, 1941. In 2005 Hawthorne AD was placed on the BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) list for the upcoming phase of Army realignment and closings. Mr. Dellamonica is unique as he is witness to and participant in an ordnance installation’s journey and mission from beginning to closing stages. Mr. Dellamonica’s immense experience and wisdom gained over the past 64 years is irreplaceable to the Ordnance Corps, the Army, and the Navy. He is unique in regards to the historical information he holds about Hawthorne AD, the city of Hawthorne, the Army, and Ordnance ammunition operations from 1941 to present and beyond.

Mr. Louis Dellamonica was born March 23, 1912 in Yerington, Nevada. In his childhood he experienced the tribulations a nation faced in WWI. He grew to young adulthood in the 1920s and can remember the impact that electricity was having on the countryside. Louie tells a story about driving to a nearby copper smelter plant to acquire materials to help install electrical

lighting in his father's home. He attended the University of Nevada in Reno from 1931-1934 where he received his degree in Electrical Engineering. It was in college that Louie's connection to the depot began as he worked on various electrical projects to supply the depot with electricity. In the Fall of 1941 Louie applied for work at Hawthorne. He was offered a job and began work less than a week after the attacks on Pearl Harbor.

While working in the battery shop, Louie's capabilities were soon recognized and he obtained more challenging tasks. Despite being in operation for almost 10 years, the US Navy continued to develop Hawthorne. Furnishing the electrical supply to it was a challenge. For example, they had to ensure that the construction of an ammunition loading facility and the equipment used to load ammo items were explosion proof. Louie was immediately utilized for his expertise in the electrical engineering field by contractors such as Westinghouse who were completing construction at Hawthorne. Mr. Dellamonica explains that "this was a new art" in the 40s and many electricians did not have the skills to install explosive proof wiring and electricity. At an early stage in his career Mr. Dellamonica was instrumental in making sure that electrical systems installed at the plant and equipment used in the loading facilities were explosion proofed. He trained all contractors or new electricians at the plant of the necessities of creating an anti-spark or contained electrical system. He also is responsible for the design, implementation, testing, and installation of many pieces of equipment used in the production lines and buildings at the plant. His efforts in the development of ammunition quality electrical systems and lights, as well as his training of contractors and employees, were significant contributions to Ordnance during WWII.

After WWII Hawthorne was still busy loading Navy mines, bombs and shells to fill various requirements. This was at a time when many Army and Navy facilities built for wartime production were shut down; and Hawthorne kept working. The Navy had created an Engineering Department at Hawthorne and Louie was promoted to a General Engineer. In this capacity he installed equipment in order to keep up with the workload that was created by the need for low drag bombs and rockets. He was instrumental in the constant improving of processes in the loading of various items. From this time on Louie was an expert in the implementation of ammunition production lines to include engineering, adaptation, acquisition of equipment, troubleshooting, and ammunition production improvements. His efforts at Hawthorne were a significant contribution to Ordnance as he influenced ammunition production design for the Navy and the Army.

Between WWII and the Korean War the Engineering department at Hawthorne continued expanding as did the installation itself. Louie was responsible for acquiring equipment from Army and Navy plants that had been shut down at the end of WWII and then installing the equipment on several production lines at Hawthorne. He was also responsible for the design and building of ammunition production equipment to facilitate a larger capacity for filling operations. One of the challenges Mr. Dellamonica tackled was the design and installation of larger kettles on a line in order to facilitate filling of 2000 pound bombs. Another challenge that Mr. Dellamonica faced was loading many different items on only four production lines. As new items were sent to Hawthorne for LAP, the Engineering team was responsible for modifying the production lines to accommodate the item. Dellamonica became an expert at rapidly altering lines for different products.

Hawthorne did not perform only LAP missions. The depot was also associated with research, development, production, and testing. As rocket work began coming in Dellamonica designed and built test equipment for their production and also conducted the rocket testing on Hawthorne's test ranges. In the 1950s one of Hawthorne's missions was to work with China Lake and design and build the rocket launchers for various rockets like the 5" Zuni and the 2.75". The 5-inch Zuni rocket was heavily used over the years and Mr. Dellamonica played an important role in Zuni's successful production. Mr. Dellamonica worked closely with the Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake to observe their prototype fuse line and see what was required to create a similar production line at Hawthorne. He worked on this project and re-designed the safety equipment associated with assembling the booster into the rest of the fuse for the Zuni Rocket.

Dellamonica was instrumental in developing and implementing testing systems and ranges. During the 1950s Mr. Dellamonica built and designed automated testing equipment associated with running electrical tests on rockets. He utilized telephone switchboard stepping switch technology and designed automated checking of the primers of each rocket. After the testing was completed, the rockets were able to be tested at testing sites developed by the Engineering Department on Hawthorne's property. They were also testing the rockets at different temperatures. Mr. Dellamonica was in charge of this sort of testing and ensuring that all the data was captured by instrumentation and photos. During this time period Louie also created and modified testing equipment for the mines the Navy was performing LAP operations on at Hawthorne. Through his actions in the electrical design and building of these projects and creating automatic and safe testing devices, Louie made further significant contributions to Ordnance and ammunition production.

In the time period between the Korea and Vietnam wars, 1953-1963, Hawthorne's focus had primarily shifted to demilitarization of munitions. Mr. Dellamonica retained his active design and implementation role and was designing and installing demil equipment in locations at Hawthorne. Louie was instrumental in establishing equipment and procedures for the TNT wash out taking place at Hawthorne.

In 1969 Louie began work on his largest project during his career at Hawthorne. As Hawthorne's role in demilitarization emerged, Louie accepted the task and was responsible for the programming, design, and construction of what would become the Western Area Demilitarization Facility (WADF). He prepared the first request for Congressional funding to construct a facility to be the solution for unserviceable ammunition for all Services. He submitted his plans to the NAPEC (Naval Ammunition Production Engineering Center) where the plan was signed for approval. Later, NAPEC decided it would expand the project to be used for more demil in the future and planned on constructing over 15 buildings. Louie was assigned the task of completing further design work for the larger complex. Building WADF at Hawthorne was the answer to consolidate DOD's small, decaying, and environmentally unfriendly demilitarization sites in scattered CONUS locations into one modernized central facility for demil. Though the ultimate engineering and construction was contracted out, Louie coordinated very closely with contractors and had the final say on numerous engineering designs of buildings and process engineering projects in the facility. He developed original plans with the idea of converging the washout of yellow D, high pressure wash, and the breakdown process into one building. The contractors worked from his plans and expanded upon his ideas. He

addressed their oversights and modified engineering plans to fit washout demil procedures. WADF was built with the potential of demilling large missiles such as the Polaris. A tremendous amount of planning, design, building and money was put into this effort. Mr. Dellamonica contributed significantly in the design of equipment to be used in the processes and in building design.

The WADF was just nearing completion in 1976 when as part of DoD's initiative to create a Single Manager For Conventional Ammunition (SMCA), Hawthorne was transferred to the Army in 1977. In 1980, the Army organized engineering teams of interdisciplinary experts to study WADF to determine what systems constructed under Navy standards would conform to Army safety, environmental and operational standards. Again, Louie was the sole source of information for the demilitarization processes. The Army team estimated an additional \$25M would be required to modify WADF to meet Army standards. The Hawthorne Commander was charged with the task of modifying WADF to meet the upgraded Army standards and relied on Mr. Dellamonica to be the principle coordinator as the demil systems expert to correct the conditions identified. During and after the construction of WADF Louie had been keeping track of the problem areas that still needed attention and was already in tune with some of the updates that would be needed. A plan was identified for facility maintenance, pre-operational and live system testing. The efforts during this phase were completed at a cost of only \$8M. The savings were attributed to Louie's engineering expertise and personal objective to have a working modern demil facility.

Despite the investment, the US Army never fully used the WADF as designed. However, Dellamonica continued to move forward in the engineering of advanced demil operations using the buildings of the WADF. In 1991, the Assistant Secretary of the Army authorized the incremental upgrade and workloading of the WADF. Mr. Dellamonica remained the WADF's driving force and provided guidance to operating contractors for upgrade, system checkout, and operations.

In more recent years more environmentally-safe, non-destructive alternatives have been adopted and used to demil munitions. Louis was essential in aiding the contractor in establishing the facilities and processes for the new demil operations at Hawthorne. His knowledge of the WADF and its processes were a valuable asset in the determination of how and where to implement the new projects. Louie continues to help address the technological challenges associated with contour drilling, Hot Gas Decontamination (HGD) and plasma arc demil processes. He has provided technical expertise has been a guiding force on the development of the Propellant to Fertilizer Conversion, Thermal Shock Cryogenic Treatment, Hot Paraffin Melt Out, and demil of the M687 155mm with OPA canister. Louie devoted a large part of his career and talent to the establishment of the WADF. He can view his efforts as a success, as over 67,000 short tons of ammunition have been demilitarized at WADF. His efforts have made significant contributions to the Ordnance Corps mission of ammunition peculiar equipment and demil equipment development.

In his free time Louie enjoyed being a member of the Civil Air Patrol and attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He acquired his pilot's license in 1935. He volunteered with the local Civil Air Patrol for over 42 years until his medical doctor advised him not to fly any longer. In the CAP he was involved in hundreds of search and rescue missions for missing airplane

searches, hikers, and more. On one particular mission he searched for U2 spy plane that had been lost between Hawthorne and Tonopah.

SYNOPSIS OF SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS

Louis Dellamonica is a walking encyclopedia of Hawthorne Army Depot, ammunition production, rocket testing, and ammunition demil. He has made remarkable and significant contributions to engineering projects and processes. He has also significantly contributed to the Ordnance Corps by designing, modifying, and implementing LAP and demil equipment for use in operations. His expertise of Hawthorne and his efforts in the design, construction and operations associated with the Western Area Demil Facility are especially notable. The completion of this project demonstrates his tremendous capabilities as an Electrical, Facilities, and General Engineer in support of Ordnance operations.

Louie has unselfishly devoted a lifetime to his career in ordnance at Hawthorne Army Depot. He has mentored several generations of Navy, Army and Contractor personnel in achieving engineering excellence at Hawthorne in production and, more significantly, ammunition demilitarization. His engineering expertise has been a guiding force on the development of a multitude of critical defense projects beginning in World War II and continuing through Operation Iraqi Freedom. He deserves to be recognized in the U.S. Army Ordnance Corp Hall of Fame for his contributions to ordnance.

Note: Louis Dellamonica retired in 2007 with 65 years of federal service. To date he is the longest service civilian employee in history.