

2016 Ammunition Hall of Fame Inductee

LOUIS DELLAMONICA



Mr. Louis “Louie” Dellamonica was born March 23, 1912, in Yerington, Nevada and began his federal career one week after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 at the Hawthorne Naval Ammunition Depot, Hawthorne, Nevada. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Nevada – Reno in 1934. He began working as an electrician at the Hawthorne Naval Facility, Nev., in 1941 in the battery shop, but his recognized talent soon led to more challenging tasks. At the time, Hawthorne was a Loading, Assembly, and Packing (LAP) plant for ammunition. As the facility expanded to support wartime requirements, Mr. Dellamonica was tasked with designing and overseeing the installation of new, anti-spark, explosion-proofed electrical and lighting systems in the plant and on the production lines. In 1948, his position was converted to Electrical Engineer and in 1977 to General Engineer. In 1978, he was appointed Chief of the Engineering Division. During this period, Mr. Dellamonica shouldered increasing responsibilities.

Following World War II, as many ammunition facilities were shutting down, Hawthorne continued operations and even expanded. Dellamonica acquired machinery from closing installations to install in new LAP lines at Hawthorne. He was increasingly involved in improving and modernizing the production lines. He and his engineering team became adept at modifying Hawthorne’s four production lines to accommodate new or different ammunition items. In addition to LAP operations, research, development and testing were also carried out at Hawthorne. Mr. Dellamonica developed test systems for the increasing work done on rockets, to include the 2.75-inch and 5-inch Zuni rockets. He also devised testing equipment for naval mines being loaded at Hawthorne. In 1969, Mr. Dellamonica took on his biggest project, the design and construction of the Western Area Demilitarization Facility (WADF) at Hawthorne to be used for the demilitarization of ammunition. He drew up the plans and oversaw contractor construction of a complex that eventually expanded to 15 buildings. As the WADF was nearing full completion in 1976, the Army was designated as the Department of Defense Single Manager for Conventional Ammunition. Hawthorne became an Army depot and Mr. Dellamonica a Department of the Army Civilian.

Mr. Dellamonica was involved in ensuring that the WADF conformed to Army safety, environmental and operational standards. The Army estimated that \$25 million would be needed to modify and upgrade the WADF. He designed and implemented the needed changes and improvements at a cost of \$8 million. He continued to upgrade and modernize the facility in the years to come. He introduced a series of new, safer, more efficient ammunition demilitarizing techniques, to include contour drilling, hot gas decontamination, plasma arc demilitarizing, and propellant to fertilizer conversion, thermal shock cryogenic treatment and hot paraffin melt out.

Mr. Dellamonica demonstrated an exemplary work ethic. His achievements serve as a role model for all of us. He had a rare combination of practicality, vision, common sense and

uncommon intellect. He mentored several generations of Navy, Army and Contractor personnel in achieving engineering excellence at Hawthorne Army Depot. His engineering expertise was a guiding force on the development of a multitude of critical defense related projects beginning in World War II through Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

Mr. Dellamonica was very active in the local community and served in the Civil Air Patrol for 40 years, obtaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He obtained his pilot license in 1935 and has flown hundreds of search and rescue missions throughout Nevada and California. He was also a licensed "ham radio operator" and maintained the radio equipment for the Mineral County Fire Department and Sheriff's Office for numerous years. Mr. Dellamonica was the driving force in bringing television to the town of Hawthorne in the mid-1950s and was actively involved in maintenance and upgrading of this system until 1995.

Mr. Dellamonica received numerous awards and recognition for his outstanding and unselfish dedication to duty in service of his country. His life was characterized by selfless service and loyalty to the Hawthorne installation and community. He was a quiet, unassuming gentleman who was embarrassed by praise and lived a personal philosophy of service to others. Mr. Dellamonica's personal qualities are best summed up in his own words: "pride means do-it-yourself to the best of your ability, disregarding whether you are a big wheel, little log, keystone or cobblestone." Mr. Dellamonica retired in 2007 at age 94 after more than 65 years of devoted service. Sadly, Mr. Dellamonica passed away in 2009 and he is inducted posthumously into the Ammunition Hall of Fame.