



**Space and Missile Systems Center
Los Angeles Air Force Base, California
SMC History Office Oral History Program**

Interview With

SYLVIA (TRAVER) ZEMO

**DOUGLAS AIRCRAFT COMPANY,
EL SEGUNDO DIVISION**

(Oral History No. 4)



A Navy A3D Skywarrior (left) and an A4D Skyhawk at the Douglas Aircraft, El Segundo Division, circa 1955 (Photo courtesy of the Museum of Flight/David D. Hatfield Collection via Katherine Williams)

FOREWORD

One of the oldest and often-used sources for reconstructing the past is the personal recollections of the individuals who were involved. While of great value, memoirs and oral interviews are primary source documents rather than finished history. The following pages are the personal remembrances of the interviewee and not the official opinion of the United States Air Force History Program or of the Department of the Air Force. The Air Force has not verified the statements contained herein and does not assume any responsibility for their accuracy.

These pages are a transcript of an oral interview recorded on magnetic tape. Editorial notes and additions made by United States Air Force historians have been enclosed in brackets. When feasible, first names, ranks, or titles have been provided. For the sake of clarity, the transcript was edited before it was returned to the interviewee for final editing and approval. Readers must therefore remember that this is a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word.

The information within this oral history interview is unclassified.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS

That I, Sylvia Zemo

have on (date), 31 July 2001 participated in an audio/video-taped interview with

Robert Mulcahy
covering my best recollections of events and experiences, which may be of historical significance to the United States Air Force.

I understand that the tape(s) and the transcribed manuscript resulting therefrom will be accessioned into the United States Air Force Historical Research Agency to be used as the security classification permits. It is further understood and agreed that any copy or copies of this oral history interview given to me by the United States Air Force and in my possession or that of my executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns, may be used in any manner and for any purpose by me or them, subject to security classification restrictions.

Subject to the license to use reserved above, I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey, and assign all right, title, and interest in the memoirs and remembrances contained in the aforementioned magnetic tapes and manuscript to the Office of Air Force History, acting on behalf of the United States of America, to have and to hold the same forever, hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns all ownership, right, title, and interest therein to the donee.

Unrestricted Access for all military personnel and civilians except for information that is classified or deemed subject to Privacy Act restrictions by appropriate authority.

DONOR Sylvia Zemo

DATED July 31, 01

Accepted on behalf of the
United States Air Force
History Office

BY Robert Mulcahy

DATED 31 July 2001

SPACE AND MISSILE SYSTEMS CENTER (SMC)
LOS ANGELES AIR FORCE BASE, CALIFORNIA
SMC HISTORY OFFICE (SMC/HO) ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Douglas Aircraft Company, El Segundo Division Oral History (No. 4)

INTERVIEWEE: **Sylvia (Traver) Zemo** (deceased in 2005)

INTERVIEWER: **Robert Mulcahy** (SMC/HO Historian)

SUBJECT: Douglas Aircraft riveter during World War II

SUBJECT TIME FRAME: 1942-1945

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 31 July 2001

INTRODUCTION

This is Robert Mulcahy of the History Office at the Space and Missile Systems Center (AFMC) at Los Angeles Air Force Base, California. Today's date is 31 July 2001. I am going to interview Sylvia Zemo of Roy, Utah, about her experiences while working with the Douglas Aircraft Company in El Segundo where Area B of Los Angeles Air Force Base is currently located. We are conducting the interview at the home of Eloise Hartzel in Inglewood, California, who is Mrs. Zemo's sister.



Sylvia (Traver) Zemo on 31 July 2001
Zemo was one of the thousands of women who worked on the aircraft production line at the Douglas Aircraft, El Segundo Division during World War II.

INTERVIEW

Mulcahy: What was your last name when you worked for the Douglas Aircraft plant in El Segundo?

Zemo: Traver, T-R-A-V-E-R.

Mulcahy: Before you were hired, how did you first hear about your job at Douglas?

Zemo: I lived in Nebraska with my husband [Charles Traver]. We just moved out here and went to work when they started hiring at the plants in California.

My husband [later] wanted to go to war. Charles had his suitcase ready and everything, but he was exempted from the military because of his job. He was a boss at Douglas over a whole bunch of people. Because of his job, Douglas said they couldn't hire anybody to take his place. If he left, they'd be without his knowledge and everything. Charles was worth more to the country at Douglas than fighting in the war. He was already to go, and then he got notice that he'd been exempted. He didn't ask for it. They just did it. When they [Douglas] knew he was going, they hurried up and did whatever they had to do to exempt him.

Mulcahy: Did your husband encourage you to work at Douglas with him?

Zemo: Well, it was what everybody was doing. I didn't need to be encouraged. I wanted to do it, and Charles let me. He didn't care.

Mulcahy: Was your job at Douglas your first job?

Zemo: I tried to be a waitress, but that didn't last very long. I didn't like it. I didn't work very much. They didn't have many jobs. If I did, they were just little insignificant ones.

Mulcahy: Do you recall the qualifications Douglas was looking for when they hired you?

Zemo: They weren't much. You just had to be a willing worker. They would teach you what they wanted you to know. We had to bring our own tools. I had a great big, heavy toolbox with lots of tools in it. We had to have that. Of course, that was kind of expensive, but Douglas couldn't furnish all those tools for everybody, so we had to have our own.

Mulcahy: Do you recall which tools you brought to work?

Zemo: Drill bits and pliers. Just different things that you'd need while you were doing that kind of a job. It was surprising how many different tools you'd really need!

Mulcahy: When did you work for Douglas at their El Segundo plant?

Zemo: I can't tell you exactly when. It was during the war, and I was about 25. They didn't hire women before the war. After the men were gone, the women came in and took over their jobs. I was at Douglas for a couple of years, no more than that. It was a short war (laughs). I worked there until they shut down part of the production line, and then I went to work at Northrop. [Mrs. Zemo probably started working at Douglas in 1942 or 1943.]



*Sylvia (Traver) Zemo during World War II
(Photo courtesy of Sylvia Zemo)*

Mulcahy: How were you trained to do your job when you first started?

Zemo: They put us right on the job and just showed us how they did it. They said, "Now you try it." We just learned by watching. It's about the only way you could teach somebody to do the riveting. You had to do it yourself to teach the others how to do it.

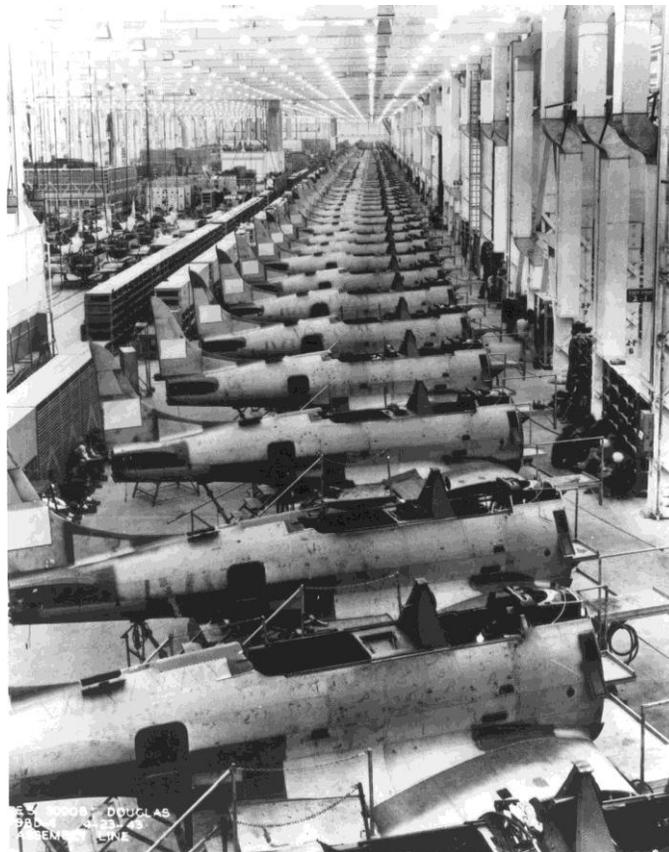
Mulcahy: Please describe your job at Douglas Aircraft.

Zemo: I was "Rosie the Riveter." I can't remember which airplane I worked on. [The airplane was probably the SBD Dauntless dive bomber.] I either drove the rivets or I bucked them. I did both. First we had to drill a rivet hole and then you had to put the rivet through. The rivet gun would be on one side of the rivet, and the bucking bar would be on the inside bucking the rivet. The end of the rivet pushed like that, and then the rivet gun shot it and flattened it out. You learned to do both so you could change. If you got tired on one job, you would just switch. "You buck for awhile." It took maybe half a minute to drill a hole and put a rivet in.

Each airplane needed hundreds of rivets. I don't know how many, but it was an awful lot. An airplane was covered with rivets. We were putting rivets in all over the airplanes, wherever they were needed. If you were assigned one job permanently, then you would always be on the same job. Sometimes they'd say, "We need you over here. Would you come over and do these rivets today?" It wasn't always the same. It was quite interesting.

Mulcahy: About how long would you would work on a single airplane?

Zemo: I would say several hours on one job [airplane]. It took quite awhile to first drill all those holes for the rivets, mark where you drilled all those holes, and then put the rivets in. It took quite awhile. You did your job and sent the airplane down the assembly line, and then somebody else did the next job on it and it kept moving.



A Douglas Aircraft SBD Dauntless production line at El Segundo on 23 April 1943 (Photo courtesy of Boeing via Patricia McGinnis)

Mulcahy: Did you usually have the same partner everyday?

Zemo: Yes. We kind of liked to keep the same partner, because you got so you could go real fast with them. The first thing we had to do was drill a hole for the rivet. If it was a flush rivet, then you had to use a [countersink] bit [to clear out the hole]. When you

drove a flush screw in, it was flush with the wall [airplane panel]. Your little drill had a little bit in it that made a little flush hole there for the rivet to fit in so it was nice and smooth.

Mulcahy: What did an airplane begin with when it started down the production line?

Zemo: By the time an airplane got to our station, it was all set up. That's what we saw. We didn't see how an airplane started, how it ended, or anything. We saw just our part of the job. Some of us worked with jigs, on small parts of the plane. We could assemble it on these jigs and then it could be moved to the assembly line, just little parts that a couple of men could handle. They could carry it up to the plane and assemble it.

Mulcahy: Did an airplane have a fuselage and wings on it by the time it got to your station?

Zemo: Sometimes there was nothing done. Sometimes we started on a bare, brand new piece that needed to be all assembled, all riveted together. Then they would carry that away, and we'd put another one on that jig. It was just the same thing over and over. I don't know how many planes Douglas put out, but it was an awful lot, day, after day, after day.



*The Douglas Aircraft, El Segundo Division about 1940. The intersection of Aviation Boulevard and Imperial Highway is at the lower left. Area B was a wheat field at this time.
(Photo courtesy of the Boeing Company via Patricia McGinnis)*

Mulcahy: Was the assembly line ever done outside?

Zemo: Not that I know of. They had to have electricity to do it for the guns. They had to be connected. No, I don't know that they ever did anything outside. They did inspection and things like that [outside].

[Editor's note: A 1948 Douglas Aircraft document describes how in 1942 a portion of the Dauntless production line at the El Segundo Division was "in an uncovered area of 75,700 sq. ft. in order to meet accelerated delivery schedules..."]

Mulcahy: Where were the airplanes stored after you finished building them?

Zemo: Outside near the runway [at Los Angeles Airport]. They had to store them outside. They couldn't store them all inside. They needed that space for working.

Mulcahy: Were you under a lot of pressure to work quickly on the production line?

Zemo: They weren't cruel to us. They expected us to keep up. They weren't pushing us too much. Everybody was trying to do their share. Those women were trying so hard. They wanted their husbands home from the war. They were trying to do their share.

Mulcahy: How was your work inspected?

Zemo: The inspector would come around and look at it. He was moving around inspecting as often as he could. Of course, each piece had to be inspected, because if there was a flaw in it they had to know right away. Flaw wasn't tolerated at all.

If a rivet didn't go down quite enough, you could hit the metal panel with the bucking bar to signal the riveter to shoot the rivet again. Then whoever was driving the rivets would give it a little more shot. It was quite common that the rivet didn't quite get all the way down like you wanted it to. It had to pass inspection.

An inspector would run a finger across the rivet. If the rivet flushed like it was supposed to, it was so smooth the finger didn't catch. If the rivet caught the finger, it wasn't flush enough. The rivet had to be hit again or taken out and done over.

One time when I was lead woman, somebody hit a hole in the metal they were working on, and someone stuffed it with gum. I told my boss about it and they took care of it. I don't know how, but they did something. It was pretty serious! A plane can go down over the least little thing.

Mulcahy: Did people get fired very often for negligence or making mistakes?

Zemo: I don't recall that they did, not very often. People who worked at Douglas wanted to help. They were conscientious about their jobs for the most part. You didn't see any people standing around gabbing or anything like that. They were on the job. They saw to it that you worked.

Mulcahy: About how many people would you say worked in your department at El Segundo?

Zemo: Hundreds. I can't tell you how many.

Mulcahy: About what percent of the production line employees would you say were women?

Zemo: Oh, I would say more than half. The men that worked there were too old, had flat feet or they didn't pass a service physical. You couldn't go into the [military] service if you had flat feet, or if you had some other physical thing wrong with you. Then they would hire you in the factories. Most of the men that worked there had something physically wrong with them. The inspectors and the bosses, they didn't have anything physically wrong. They were exempt from the service because of their jobs.

The poor men who weren't in the service were abused by the men who were. The service men thought it was their fault. Men who weren't in uniform were tormented or beat up by those who were. The service men thought they didn't want to serve and it wasn't true at all. They were just exempt because of their health conditions or their jobs. Of course, things are never fair are they?

Mulcahy: Were the women employees at Douglas treated any differently than the male employees?

Zemo: Well, (laughs) men tried to take advantage of the women a little bit, but the women were treated well. We were needed. They couldn't do without the women, because there wouldn't have been anybody to work on the airplanes. There weren't enough men. The men were all in the service.

The women couldn't wear dresses to work. We had to wear slacks. We also weren't allowed to wear see-through blouses, because it attracted the men and could cause an accident. A man could walk by and turn to stare. Things like that. So, if you wore that kind of a blouse they would tell you to put on a jacket or something, and not to wear a see-through blouse again. We were also not allowed to wear real tight sweaters or anything that would make the men watch you when they should be working (laughs). Men do those things, you know (laughs)? They do turn and look, so the women had to keep it modest so they didn't attract the men's attention.

We had to wear hairnets or what they called "snoods." A snood is a hairnet that has great big holes instead of real fine ones. The snoods were made out of heavier material and they could be in colors. They were just more attractive to wear than a hairnet, so quite a few of us wore the snoods. If we had long hair we had to wear something like that, because your hair might be pulled into the drills and machinery. It would be dangerous.

Mulcahy: Were most of the women working at Douglas in their 20s?

Zemo: They were all pretty young, most were in their early 20s, not teens, that would be too young. Some of them were older, but for the most part they were young women.

Mulcahy: Did many of the ladies who worked at Douglas have children?

Zemo: Some of the women had children, and their husbands were still off at war. They had to have babysitters, of course. They would talk about their kids, so I knew they had them. I never had children, so I didn't have to worry about that.

Mulcahy: Was patriotism a large part of what motivated the women to work at Douglas?

Zemo: I think patriotism played a big part. Of course, a lot of people wanted the jobs, too. It was good to be able to get a job. I think they were patriotic for the most part.

I was patriotic. I wanted to help. I wanted a job too, I guess. It was pretty nice to be able to work and make that kind of money. I could have worked at something else, but I chose to work at Douglas. I found it very interesting, and I made a lot of friends. It was a little of friendship, patriotism. It was just the war, you know? That's what everybody did. All my friends went to work in the plants.

Mulcahy: Did you feel like you were making a contribution to the war effort?

Zemo: I wasn't sure about me. I was doing my job the best I could, but I didn't feel like I was accomplishing that much. I guess every little bit helps, doesn't it (laughs)?



The Douglas Aircraft El Segundo Division beneath camouflage nets during World War II. (Photo courtesy of the Historical Society of Centinela Valley via Jim Robertson)

Mulcahy: How would you describe the working conditions at El Segundo?

Zemo: Good, I'd say. We were required to keep the floors and everything clean. The riveting was so loud we couldn't talk to each other. You couldn't talk to your boss. They had little soundproof rooms if you needed to talk to him about anything. He would go in there with us and we'd tell him what the problem was, and then we would go back to work. You had to do it that way, because you couldn't hear each other.

A man at Douglas went crazy from the noise. One day, the noise was so intense that he couldn't take it. He went screaming through the plant, all over. They finally had to subdue him. He really went crazy from the noise. I guess, he had a nervous breakdown from it. He never came back. I suppose they later assigned him to something that he could handle, if he ever did come back. None of us ever saw him again. We were supposed to wear earplugs, and not everybody wanted to do that, but it sure helped a lot. If you couldn't hear anyway, you might as well wear the earplugs.

We worked long, long hours at Douglas a lot of times. When the war picked up, they worked us awfully hard, 12 hours a day, seven days a week. If we got too weary, they would give us an hour off to go into this room where they had these cots. They'd let us lie down. Then they'd come in an hour and wake us and send us back to work. Those long hours lasted maybe a couple of months. It wasn't like that always, but for that one time, all of us had to pitch in.

Mulcahy: Did you work during the day shift?

Zemo: I worked the day shift and the night shift. Douglas switched us around. For awhile I was on the 12-hour night shift. I didn't even get Sunday off. That was when it was pressing. They pressed all of us. We had to hurry. I don't know what happened, but they wanted us to hurry, hurry, hurry. They worked us that many hours and that many days for quite awhile. Eventually, that went by and we went back to a regular shift again.

Mulcahy: Was it voluntary to work that many hours?

Zemo: No. They told you how many hours you were supposed to work. I don't know what would have happened if you couldn't work that many hours. I never knew it to happen. Maybe some of them got off easier.

Mulcahy: Did the Douglas plant have a blackout when you worked the night shift?

Zemo: If they did, I didn't know about it. They probably could have kept that plant completely dark during the war.

Mulcahy: Did you have blackouts at night in the Los Angeles area during World War II?

Zemo: I lived right here in Inglewood. It was quite frightening at first, because we weren't used to war. The sirens would blow, and then everybody put their lights out.

One time my sister-in-law's brother was bringing me home, and there was a blackout. Well, you were supposed to stop your car and turn off your lights, of course. We sat in that car for quite awhile before we could get home. That was one experience.

Another time here in Inglewood, we thought we were being attacked. They were trying to bomb us, and I was afraid to go into the bathroom (laughs). I wanted to wait until it

was all over with. I was quite frightened, everybody was. No one was hurt, but they did shoot at us.

[Editor's note: the anti-aircraft guns in Los Angeles opened fire at what they thought were Japanese aircraft during the "Battle" of Los Angeles on the night of 24 February 1942]

Zemo: My brother was an air raid warden [in Los Angeles]. He didn't have much of a problem enforcing the blackouts. All he had to do is tell them to turn their lights out and they obeyed. He'd just rap on the door and say, "Get your lights out!" He'd tell them he was the air raid warden, of course. They'd know who he was, but they had armbands to identify them.

Mulcahy: Would these blackouts happen every night after the war started?

Zemo: Oh, no. Not that often.

One time, 10 or 20 soldiers on maneuvers went by when my husband and I were in our home. Charles and I were sitting in the living room, and we saw these soldiers creeping by our window. It scared us out of our wits, because we didn't know they were ours. It was unusual for us. There was a whole group of them that went by. That was quite frightening.

Mulcahy: Were there any injuries among the employees while you were at Douglas?

Zemo: There was bound to be some, but I don't recall any real serious ones. The worst thing I remember is that poor man that lost his mind over the noise. I heard a lot of people say, "I can't take the noise any longer." But they did. They kept on going. That riveting was terrible. It hurt your ears a lot if you didn't wear the earplugs.

You know how these airplanes [landing at Los Angeles International Airport] irritate you when they go over my sister's house? They're so loud! You might as well shut the TV off while they're going over. Well, you can hear them today, but you ought to be around at night when they all come in. It's terrible.

We had live entertainment at Douglas. They would come in during our lunch hour. We'd have wrestling matches. We had singers come in, and some of them would be famous, which was pretty nice. It kept the moral up. Some of those ladies had their husbands off to war, and they were pretty unhappy, so they needed a little bit of recreation. That was nice. Although our lunch hour was short, we still had something to look forward to.

Mulcahy: Do you recall who some of the famous singers were who came by?

Zemo: Now I don't.

Mulcahy: Do you recall war bond drives at the plant?

Zemo: Oh, yes. I had a lot of war bonds. At lunchtime they encouraged us to sign up for them. They took the cost out of our checks, and then they would hand the war bonds to us. A lot of us bought war bonds. I had a big stack of them at one time. I thought that was the thing to do, and it was nice. I needed it at one time. I had to go to the hospital, and my war bonds came in handy. Eventually, they all got cashed.

Mulcahy: Did the Douglas plant also have blood drives?

Zemo: Yes. I did that too. You just volunteered to give your blood and they took it at the nurse's station at work. Lots of us gave blood. Douglas needed a first aide station with a big plant like that. If anybody got a cut or anything like that, they needed a nurse there to fix it.

Mulcahy: Did Douglas have tight security at El Segundo?

Zemo: Yes. We weren't allowed to have cameras or anything like that. We weren't aware of everything that went on there. We did our jobs and went home. You didn't wander around through the plant. Everybody had an identity badge.

Mulcahy: Did Douglas tell you not to talk about your work to people outside of the plant?

Zemo: Yes! Absolutely, you didn't talk about it. You could say something at Douglas. It was more secretive at Northrop.

Mulcahy: How did most of the Douglas employees get to work during the war?

Zemo: We shared rides. Anybody that drove a car was requested to take as many riders as possible so the parking lot at the plant wouldn't be crowded. It was maybe five people per car. It made sense to double up like that. You made your own arrangements with the people. Some took turns driving. They did a lot of that, so everybody had about the same amount of driving.

I recall that you couldn't get the kind of cigarettes you wanted (laughs). I was smoking then. I don't smoke anymore. We had to buy these old yucky cigarettes. We would trade sugar for cigarettes. We had a neighbor that could buy cigarettes, but he didn't have enough sugar for his family, so we'd trade sugar for cigarettes. It was the same with butter. We didn't have enough red stamps to buy meat. You had to have a family to get enough stamps to buy meat. If there was just two of you, you didn't get enough, so you ate out a lot.

Mulcahy: Did you ever go to the soldiers' recreation hall at the Douglas plant where they had dances?

Zemo: I didn't even know they had one at the Douglas plant. I used to go and dance with the service men. They had dance halls all over. The one we went to wasn't so very far away from here.

Mulcahy: Where did these service men come from?

Zemo: I suppose they were stationed around here. I don't know where they came from, but they were here. They enjoyed it, and they danced all night. They didn't have a closing time. You could dance as long as you felt like it. I was married, and my husband went along with me. Charles didn't like dancing as much as I did, but I got to dance a lot. We would go to a regular dance hall, and when they closed, then we would switch and go to the USO [United Service Organizations].

Mulcahy: Were there any military personnel working on the Douglas plant that you recall?

Zemo: I'm pretty sure there must have been. I wish I could say my memory was better, but it isn't. I'm 84 years old.

Mulcahy: Did Douglas pay you a good wage?

Zemo: I thought it was at the time. It was a fair wage.



*Sylvia (Traver) Zemo with her brother-in-law
Harold Traver during World War II
(Photo courtesy of Sylvia Zemo)*

Mulcahy: Did Douglas eventually lay you off?

Zemo: Yes. There was maybe a little over a year left in the war [1944]. They announced our layoff over the loudspeaker. They told our group that they were shutting down, and we had to go home. We didn't know anything about the layoff. All of a sudden, they just told us all to go home. We picked up our toolboxes, they mailed us our checks, and that was it.

Mulcahy: Were most of you disappointed?

Zemo: Yes. We lost our jobs (laughs)! We didn't expect to be without work all of a sudden. I wasn't happy about losing my job at Douglas.

Of course (laughs), we were surprised by the layoff. We thought maybe the war was over, but it wasn't. They had filled their quota. I suppose there were a certain number of planes ordered, and they finished them. They had so many of those parts they didn't need anymore at that time, so they let us go. We could have gone back to work later on, but I didn't. I went to Northrop instead.

I liked Northrop a lot. They were inventing things. It was pretty much the same kind of work at Northrop, but on a different airplane. I worked on the flying wing. One day, one of the men was working in the tip of the wing, and someone came along and riveted him in there. They didn't know he was in there (laughs). They closed it up, and then they had to take all the rivets out to let him out. It was just a thing that happened.

Mulcahy: This was the Northrop plant at Hawthorne [California]?

Zemo: Yes. I lived in Inglewood, so it was the closest one to Inglewood. I enjoyed working at Northrop. It had a slower pace. They were designing and building new things. It was a little different. Like that flying wing, I remember when they said, "Everybody that wants to see the flying wing, come in. They're going to take off and come in, so be here on that day." So, everybody drove out to watch it come in. It's common now, but at that time it was pretty special.

I saw a very, very small flying saucer Northrop was working on [probably the MX-334 wing]. My boss told me if I didn't tell anyone else that he'd take me back and show me the flying saucer. I thought he was kidding me, but when I got in there I saw that it was a very small thing. It was a flying saucer all right! The pilot had to lie down on his belly to fly it. That was quite interesting for me.

My job changed from time to time too. One time they gave me this big room full of old torn up blueprints, and I had to tape the blueprints all together and repair them as best I could. Then I filed them in there. That was to save the blueprints. I don't know if they didn't have new ones. It seems like they should have, but they didn't. They wanted those repaired, so that was my job for quite awhile.

Mulcahy: How did the Los Angeles area celebrate the end of World War II?

Zemo: I was working at Northrop when it ended. They told us in the morning that it was over, but they couldn't let us go home until they were sure it was official. When it became official, around noon I think, they turned us all loose. It was like everybody went crazy! They yelled and screamed and carried on. Then it went down into Inglewood. People danced around on the streets. They went crazy. Everybody was kissing each other and just going wild (laughs). It was the wildest party you ever went to. Nobody was being hurt or anything like that. There were no fights that I can recall. Everyone was just happy, happy, happy.

I got tired and went home (laughs). I couldn't keep up with them. They really wanted to celebrate! I went home and cried, and cried, and cried. I don't know why (laughs), but that was my reaction after seeing everybody celebrate like that, and I knew the war was finally over. Then it struck me, and I just cried, and cried, and cried. I imagine a lot of people did. You react differently to things. I was so relieved when the war ended. It was wonderful. It was just horrible what happened to our boys.

Mulcahy: When Northrop announced the end of the war, was it over a loudspeaker, or did they have a big gathering somewhere?

Zemo: I think we were told. They were expecting it. I remember when they said that it was over. They announced that the war was over, but they couldn't let us go until it was verified. So we had to wait for maybe three hours until it was authentic. Then they turned us loose. They said, "Go home." There wasn't one of us that could have worked after that! We were too excited about it.

Mulcahy: Did you prefer working at Northrop to Douglas?

Zemo: I think so. It was a little bit nicer. Douglas was much larger. Northrop was just a little more interesting, a little prettier.

Mulcahy: Would you say that your employment at Douglas was a good experience?

Zemo: Yes! I think so. They worked me awfully hard, harder than Northrop.

Mulcahy: Would you like to add anything to this interview?

Zemo: No.

Mulcahy: I would like to thank you for your time.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Teresa Pleasant

Photo selection and captions by Robert Mulcahy

Edited by Robert Mulcahy, Teresa Pleasant, Sylvia Zemo and Harry Waldron

Index

Aircraft:

- MX-334 wing, 13
- Northrop Flying Wing, 13
- SBD Dauntless, 3, 6

Cigarettes, 11

Dance halls, 12

Douglas Aircraft, El Segundo Division,
1-14 *passim*

- Assembly (production) line, 1, 3-7, 8,
10
- Blood drives, 11
- Entertainment (lunchtime), 10
- Hiring, 2, 3, 7
- Hours, 9
- Inspection, 5, 6, 7
- Layoff, 13
- Noise, 8-9, 10
- Riveting, 3-5, 6, 8-9, 10
- Security, 11
- Tools, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13
- Training, 2, 3
- Transportation, 11
- Women employees, 3, 6, 7-8
- Work clothes, 7
- Working conditions, 7, 8-9, 10

Inglewood, California, 9-10, 13, 14

Los Angeles, California, 1, 6, 9, 10, 14
Los Angeles International Airport
(LAX), 6, 10

Northrop Aircraft plant in Hawthorne, 3, 11,
13-14

Traver, Charles (former husband), 2, 10, 12
Traver, Harold, 12

United Service Organizations (USO), 12

World War II, 1-14 *passim*

- Air Raid Warden, 10
- “Battle” of Los Angeles, 9-10
- Blackouts, 9-10
- Day the war ended, 14
- Military conscription, 2, 7
- Patriotism, 6, 8
- Rationing, 11
- War bonds, 10-11