

Hale Burge: While we were working out on the extended end of the runway down by where we first landed on the island we built a place to work out of. They had a U-64, UC-64 [Norseman] and it was having engine trouble. It'd fly around ... they were convinced they couldn't find it, nobody could fix it. Well, I wasn't allowed to work on airplanes at that time. Anyway, that airplane, I couldn't work on it. They had a Crew Chief, a Line Chief and whoever. They eventually changed the engine.

Well later on when they worked on this C-45 my friend from Knox, Indiana, I was quite sure that the engine on the UC-64 was having a valve problem. I'd bet my life on it to this day.

Anyway, I'd worked on this aircraft, not daily maintenance no, I was rebuilding crashed aircraft. And that was on B-24s, B-26s, C-45s, I mean, P-40s -- that was most of them and they were all big jobs. A wing on the C-46, I mean the Martin B-26, that crashed and buckled the landing gear and tore the right wing up in the aft section so I took it off of another plane that bellied in pretty good. [I] changed the wing and the aft section on the B-26, different engine and everything, and had some sheet metal work on the firewall. And I done all the trimming of ... potentiometer on the cables and trim tabs, whatever, everything was manual back then. You didn't have any hydraulics to help anybody.

So when it come time to fly that airplane for a test hop, I walked around with the pilot and for about an hour he kept questioning me, questioning: what'd you do? How'd you do this? Well, I thought, "Well, I'll tell him. So I told him I checked the tech order and what it said about adjusting the trim tab tensions and the ailerons and that's all I did." I said, "I trimmed it up to what the book said."

And he took it and flew it. He come back an hour or so later and he says to the Major -- the Majors name was Tracey, Colonel Bassett was the Base Commander. And he never congratulated anybody or give you credit for doing anything. It was always, "hmmph." Every time he said a couple of words it was, "hmmph." Anyway, he told that Major, he said, "That's the best flying airplane we've got in the squadron." But I didn't get any recognition out of that but just routine day to day work for us.

And our work, we didn't have much else to do around there but work. We worked 6 to 7 days a week, sometimes later on just 6 days a week. And we had a little hobby shop by then built up where we'd work. I learned a little photography from an old boy, Spanish guy, older than me, from down in the Rio Grande valley of Texas by the name of Sanchez. And he taught me a little bit of photography which I don't mess with today other than take pictures now and then.