

**OH-3058, Mike LaSalle, 6-4-2014, Evanston, WY In Flight**

BOGART: OK, today is Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014. This is Barbara Bogart. I'm at Burns Field in Evanston, Wyoming, and I'm talking with Mike LaSalle, who is -- what's your title?

LASALLE: I guess, as far as the airport goes, I'm the airport manager. And then, also, I own Evanston Aviation.

BOGART: OK. And is that -- what's Evanston Aviation? Pretend I don't know anything.

LASALLE: Evanston Aviation is the service provider at the airport. OK, we provide fuel-- aircraft servicing, field maintenance, flight instruction, that type of stuff.

BOGART: Oh, OK. How long have you been here?

LASALLE: Well, 17 years this time, another 18, let's see, 22 years total, right in the area. Yeah, that's spread across four years in the '80s, one year in the mid-'90s, and I came back in '97.

BOGART: Where are you from originally?

LASALLE: [00:01:00] Good question. Moved here from Kentucky, spent more time in Kentucky than anywhere else, but also have lived in Texas a couple of times, Montana, Idaho. So, it's -- you know. Born in Michigan but left there when I was, you know, when we were -- or when I was -- we left

there probably when I was four, moved to Kentucky. So it's, you know, a combination, yeah.

BOGART: OK. So when did you come to Evanston, then, or you really can't...?

LASALLE: First time: 1983.

BOGART: OK, and what brought you here?

LASALLE: Dad bought the business, Evanston Aviation. We were -  
- we were at the old airport, north of town, where the drag strip is, yeah, that's, yeah. Bought that in '83, sold it in '87 to [Terry Shafer?] who was running the airport, Fort Bridger, at the time. He later got killed in an airplane crash at about '91, I think. And then my dad bought it back in '94 [00:02:00]. I came down the first winter, helped out, moved back to Billings, Montana. And then I came back in, what, spring of '97 -- there was [still a whole winter?], it was February, yeah, February of '97 and been here since. And then I bought -- bought what we had -  
- when we -- when we sold the company originally, it was Evanston Aviation. Sold it -- when we was told that Terry Shafer he renamed it Star West Aviation, or actually just, you know, put it under his corporation. And then we built up a good charter business and were -- most of our operations were out of the Denver area. And we sold that company in 2004, at the end of 2004. And you can't just,

as far as the FAA is goes, charter certificates are part of a corporation [00:03:00], so you can't transfer them. So we sold that corporation, kept the assets over here, and just renamed it Evanston Aviation again. Yeah. And I bought Evanston Aviation from him while I ran it the whole time. He moved to Texas, and then I finally made it official and bought it from him three years ago.

BOGART: And what's your dad's name?

LASALLE: John.

BOGART: Oh, OK, OK. So, when you talk about charter service, who were your clients for that?

LASALLE: The stuff that we had going was contract freight services. We were hauling canceled checks. Whatever the company we were working for was American... Wow... ACC, American Career Company? I can't believe I can't remember their name. I don't know how many checks was it on there. But, damn, yeah, AC-- American... Anyway, they were out of Lincoln, Nebraska [00:04:00]. They had some contracts with the Federal Reserve Banks to move canceled checks, and there is still some of it going on. Even with all the electronic stuff, there is still -- those checks still have to get through a clearing house and be canceled. Anyway, that's Amelia Earhart.

BOGART: OK, well --

LASALLE: So...

BOGART: -- she has good flight capabilities to search onto.

LASALLE: But -- and so we got into that, and we got into -- we had the DHL run before DHL pulled out of the US. Then that was our main stuff. Now we did have -- we had one route that went -- we started out of a corporate airport outside of Denver. They call it Rocky Mountain Metropolitan nowadays, I believe, out towards Boulder. And we were hauling passengers on that route because we had a -- we were only carrying a couple hundred pounds of cargo and it -- anyways, we're kind of running in a gray area of rules. But we were moving people between Jackson and -- because we ended up in Jackson [00:05:00] five days a week. A lot of people in that area going to Jackson, and so it was a good side business that went along with what we already had contracted, so we could. There were a lot of different things going on involved with that.

BOGART: How did your dad, and then you, get involved in aviation to begin with?

LASALLE: I got involved through family. I grew up in it. I got two older brothers. One of them is a corporate pilot. The other one flies for, oh let's see, it's -- I guess through American Airlines now, America West until he's fit, but you know, through all of the mergers. Just grew up in

it. I mean, I learned how to drive on a fuel truck, so, yeah. Yeah. Nowadays they'd probably throw you in jail for -- yeah, I mean, I was -- I was nine years old, driving a fuel truck around an airport, a little airport in Huntsville, Texas, about like this one here. And back then, though, it was, you know, in the '70s when there was a lot more general aviation, small airplane traffic [00:06:00], it's just, the... Between the economy and fuel prices, and then just the change in peoples, the way they do things, it just -- it's slowly fading away. But there was a lot more back, you know, I mean the business stuff keeps going into smaller stuff. But yeah, I mean, I was nine, you know, parking airplanes, fueling them up, you know. I grew up --and it was a college town, and so you'd see some different, you know. There was people from Sweden and well, I remember Sweden, and also Switzerland, that were in the US, flying around and visiting friends they had there. And they were just absolutely flabbergasted - there's kids out there running around and running stuff so that's... But my dad, he -- he had a neighbor that had an airplane. He grew up in northern Ohio, and there was a neighbor with an airplane that I remember him talking about. And he enjoyed -- I think he might have got a ride in it once, and just, you know, always wanted to do it.

And somewhere in the mid '60s [00:07:00], he had his own business going. He was a -- had a -- he was a -- had his own, well, he was a milkman, owned his own truck, had his own route and everything in Adrian, Michigan, which is in southeast Michigan. And just in the mid '60s, he decided to learn to fly, and really liked it, and just kept going and got all this -- the pilot ratings that he needed. And he wanted to fly and he -- back then it was a lot harder to get out in the airlines. They preferred ex-military. It was a different ballgame then than it was nowadays. I mean, there wasn't nearly as many pilots, you know, so. So he decided that, you know, that having a FBO -- that's what, a fixed base operation -- thought that would be the best route to go. So he bought a place in Georgetown, Kentucky, and it was on a grass strip, and they had [00:08:00] -- they said they were going to build a new airport there, and ended up -- the land that they had bought to build the airport on, they sold to Clark Industries or somebody that built forklifts. That lasted for about, you know, six or seven years before it was moved to Japan.

BOGART: Yeah, industries buying out while they can.

LASALLE: OK, but, you know, then later on, right about a mile from the same area was where they built the first Toyota

plant in the US. So, yeah, that's... And you know, then, you know, we went to Huntsville, Texas. We were there for a while, and he had a guy who wanted to buy it so he sold it, got out of aviation, had some mini-marts in Kentucky for a couple of years and that's how he ended up back out here where he just wasn't happy, so...

BOGART: So how did he hear about...?

LASALLE: Through *Trade-A-Plane*. *Trade-A-Plane* is an industry newspaper, you know, big classified advertising thing and yeah, they have a... Nowadays it's -- with the internet, there are so many more different [00:09:00] areas to look. But it used to be that *Trade-A-Plane* was the one, that was, you know. You had a business for sale or selling an airplane, that was almost, you know, the dominant port for years.

BOGART: And you said that was in 1983.

LASALLE: Yeah, '83.

BOGART: OK. And when was that -- you talked about the -- the career bout on the --

LASALLE: Yeah, Almy.

BOGART: Yeah, OK. And I'm, as you remember, I did a little bit of the history of the airports in the county. And remind me when that was established in Almy?

LASALLE: I think --

BOGART: Sixties maybe?

LASALLE: -- late '50s, maybe late -- because I remember Bob Burns talking about... Originally they rolled -- it was a dirt strip. And I'm thinking late '50s. I want to say mid- to late '50s, because they... Bob even talked about, you know he helped [00:10:00] -- they cleared sagebrush. First it was dirt, and then they would roll it, and you know, yeah, it... I don't know when they paved it. I'm guessing it was in the '70s sometime.

BOGART: And when you say they rolled it, what does that mean exactly?

LASALLE: Oh they had a -- I mean, they, I guess they had -- they had a big, you know, like a big roller that you see on the road. Yeah, they would pull it behind a tractor out there to keep it smoothed out.

BOGART: Oh, OK, because it was just dirt.

LASALLE: Just dirt runway, yeah. So they'd roll it, yeah, keep it, you know. And then they eventually got a little bit of asphalt down. And I can't remember when I heard, it was late '60s, early '70s, it was paved? It might be somewhere in there, so -- it might have been before that but I don't... From stories I heard, I don't think it was.

BOGART: OK, so your family came out here in 1983, bought the -  
- what was it called?



LASALLE: Evanston Aviation was the name of the business.

BOGART: OK, what about the field, though?

LASALLE: Oh, the airport? It was just Evanston Municipal Airport [00:11:00], because it was -- there was no county involvement at that time. It was strictly, yeah, it was the city of Evanston's airport, yeah.

BOGART: OK, and who would be flying in and out of it? Who would be using it?

LASALLE: Well, when we got here, it was an oil field. Yeah, I mean, that was -- yeah, it was, that was the high end, well, wasn't the height, it was the tail end of the boom. But you had, you know, the gas plants, were just -- were brand new, or just getting opened, I mean, they were flying... The old runway was 5,800 foot long, 50 foot wide, had a small ramp area, and they were bringing in like, well, back then it was Amoco. When Amoco opened -- probably, when they opened [Payne?], I can't remember for sure, or was it Whitney Canyon? Anyways, they brought in a 50 passenger turboprop airplane.

BOGART: Oh my God!

LASALLE: Yeah, oh yeah. They -- you know, plus corporate jets, and you know, I mean there was -- that's what it was. [00:12:00] Back then even, you had Chevron coming in twice a day from Denver, plus just whatever else was going on. I

mean, that was -- there was -- it was just -- it was probably a lot like Williston, North Dakota is today, you know. Maybe even not quite as busy because we're a little too close to Salt Lake and that has really taken a lot out of what could've been up here. But anyway, yeah, that was the main thing, the oil field.

BOGART: Now was that -- how adequate was that strip for all that traffic?

LASALLE: Not very. You know, there was a hill on the north end. There was a story one night: [Art Lambert?], a guy that used to fly out of there late - he worked for us also - was in the office one night, and there was a leader jet coming in on a hot shot run. And the place wasn't certified for night runway use [00:13:00], or for night landings, but there were the end-identifier lights, and about two runway lights up off of each end, and plus reflectors. So you could, you know, technically, land there at night. But they were coming in from the north, landed to the south. And Art happened to be in the office, and he'd just gotten back from a charter, and somebody on the radio said, "Hey, turn your runway lights back on at Evanston." And Art grabbed radio said, "Start climbing, there's a hill out there." And sure enough, they, yeah, you know, they pulled it up, popped up, and there were

runway lights. Yeah, I mean, it was, no, it was -- it was too close to the, you know, you had the hills to the east, even, you know, they looked at trying to re-align it, and they [reached?] -- and tried to, you know -- trying to -- do something down in the valley there and they just, it, nothing would work, it just wasn't going to be...

BOGART: Sure, too narrow a space.

LASALLE: Yeah, too narrow a space, yeah. [00:14:00]

BOGART: So who started the move to find another location?

LASALLE: It was probably Bob -- I would -- it was Bob. I mean, I'm sure he was a major part of it. It started, you know, it was that and -- big push behind it too was -- who was mayor back then, Gene Martin? Yeah, Gene, yeah. Yeah, I mean, they -- I think originally when they first, you know, wanted to get in to building a new airport, they, I think they thought they had a chance at getting airline service. But, you know, it was... Then that was right as deregulation was hitting, and, you know, the airline industry changed dramatically and -- and, plus driving habits changed, and you know, we're so --- it's so easy to get to Salt Lake that, yeah. But -- but that was, you know, I think it was an overall community thing, but probably I would think that, you know, Bob Burns and Gene

Martin were probably [00:15:00], you know, the two most instrumental because, you know...

BOGART: Now tell me about Bob Burns. I've heard of him, but he was gone, I think, by the time I moved to Evanston in '94. So tell me who he was.

LASALLE: Well, now, he was, yeah, he died in 2004.

BOGART: Oh, OK. Well, I never met him.

LASALLE: OK, well anyways. Bob -- Bob, I guess, you know, grew up here, I don't know if he was born here but he grew up here. Dad was a railroad guy, engineer. Like [Ryan?], World War II, he went -- he was in the navy, probably? Yeah it was in the navy. He talked about he was based in Greenland in a, yeah, they call it a PB4Y-1, which I think, if I remember right, is basically a floatplane version of the B-24 bomber. And it was a sub hunter, you know, that type of thing, deal, or, you know, [00:16:00] water patrol plane, so... He was an observer on it, wasn't a pilot. I know when he came back from the war, I don't -- I think he learned how to fly after he came back from the war, got into the -- what was this business? TV -- TV Sales and Repairs, initially. And also, you know, he's -- he flew, like I said, he was any -- was instrumental in getting the Almy Airport going, was mayor, what, in the '60s, I think? Yeah, you know, and the big thing, you know, then he stayed

in the business but when -- then he got -- you know, when cable came long, he was the first cable operator provider and sold that during the boom, and you know, then retired after that, like so many other people around here did.

BOGART: Cashed in, yeah.

LASALLE: Yeah. And he, you know, he was a political type [00:17:00], you know. He was a political person. He was involved in local politics and liked it a lot. He was on the airport board, or whatever airport board they had set up for the Almy Airport. He was on that, you know, probably from the beginning to the end. Because then when they built this, this was built as a Joint Powers with city-county, so... But he was the chairman of that board until, I want to say '96 or somewhere near, until he finally decided -- he stayed... We have two airport boards here: we have a Joint Powers Board, and we have a Management Board. The Joint Powers Board is basically more the political, the money board, the board that deals with the grants, big, you know, big construction projects. Then they have a Management Board that handles the day-to-day, and it's a sub-board of the Joint Powers anyway, and so... And he stayed on the Management Board [00:18:00]. I think it was in '96, he got off the Joint Powers Board. I'm thinking he was on the Management Board. I don't know, was

-- hey, was Bob still on the Management Board when he died?  
Do you remember? I think he got off of it a few years --

M1: I don't think so.

LASALLE: Yeah, I think he got off a few years --

M1: I think he was [gone before that?].

LASALLE: -- before that, yeah, so... And, you know, he just --  
he was -- then he was also on the Wyoming Aeronautics  
Commission for 16 years, and so... And he was the chairman  
of that for 8 years, I believe, so... He was inter-- you  
know, pretty instrumental in getting money, spent his way  
through the airport, I'm sure, yeah.

BOGART: That's good. OK, so in '83 the airport was still out  
there in Almy Road or in Almy. So, tell me about the  
process of getting this site chosen and this field  
established.

LASALLE: As far as I know, they -- it was already -- the  
construction was already in progress [00:19:00] when we  
moved here. But from the stories I've heard, they had --  
you know, they basically as they would with any, you know,  
like a lot of things, they selected four or five different  
spots they thought would be good. You know, they looked at  
-- like I said -- evaluated trying to keep it down in the  
valley there or even, there was, you know, that was the  
current site or they looked at moving it all the way up.

What were they going to try? One of the spots down there they wanted to try was bringing it about two miles closer in to town. It would have been right about where the LDS Steak Ranch is out there, right there in that area. But they just, you know, it just wasn't going to work for what they wanted. You know, they looked at some spots out of town, kind of the same issue, you know, you have terrain issues in the flat areas that were usable, you know. Then also, the farther south you go, the worse weather it is. I mean, you know, you get closer to the mountains, yeah. And then another -- they even looked at [00:20:00] the spot that was on the second sister out here, I believe, yeah, I mean halfway to Fort Bridger, so and, I'm glad they didn't do that.

BOGART: Yeah, and then there's weather issues there too.

LASALLE: Yeah, weather issues, distance, and... And then this hill here and, of course, this hill, you know, I mean is leveled off of mountain top or it's what they've done. But, you know, they pushed two hills together-ish and then, you know, when we re-did everything here 10 years ago, I mean, they finished leveling it off. But, yeah that -- and who, I don't remember the guy who was running the airport for most of the -- or part of the '60s and most of the '70s, Ray... I can't recall his last name. But anyways,

him and his wife stopped in here one time after it was opened up, and he said, you know, "I remember telling somebody," he said, [00:21:00] "years ago before they even thought about opening an airport, this would be the best spot close to town, because of just, you know, the alignment and yeah..." And that's -- and the other thing they had going for them was [Billen?] had a remote weather station sitting just over the hill here somewhere, so they had wind data and everything else and so they knew when they started align-- you know, when they started building it, they knew how to align the runway right into the wind and, I mean, you know, it worked out pretty good.

BOGART: Now what was the ownership of this property?

LASALLE: Chuck Nixon had part of it. Billen, and [Buzz Simms?] or I believe it was [Art Simms?], yeah. It is -- and I'm not sure if there were any other landowners. Those are the three I know of. Oh, Deseret, of course, I forgot about that, yeah. Anyway, [00:22:00] this -- where we're sitting right now is Billen property. The main part -- the main center part, there's Billen, you know, runs right through here. So it's leased out, you know, as airport use, it's like, you know, those 99-year lease things. But the airport can't sell anything, you know. They can do leases



on it, but it's all got to be more or less airport-related, I'd guess or, you know, so...

BOGART: Now, the Joint Powers Board, was that established to build this facility?

LASALLE: To build -- as far as I know, it was established to build this facility. I'm not exactly sure on the timeline on that. I don't know if the city got it going first, then got the city invol-- or got the county involved. But yeah, you know, this airport's always been under Joint, you know, or -- started out as Evanston-Uinta County Airport, so, yeah.

BOGART: But has never had commercial service, right?

LASALLE: No, no. Just too close to Salt Lake, you know, you're -- and that's -- [00:23:00] that's the factor. I've had a lot of people ask over the years, and you look at the economic factors of it. Look at Logan, you know, there's 100,000 people in that valley and they're close -- they might be a little bit farther away from Salt Lake than we are, I guess, but same, you know, same issue. I mean, there some people who've tried over the years there but it just doesn't work. [Probo's?] trying, but they can't even keep, you know, consistent services, just... The business model nowadays is just -- yeah, it's to keep everything -- to try and, you know, keep it bus fare style, and you can

only do that by, you know, keeping it all in one area, so yeah.

BOGART: So when did this field open, then?

LASALLE: April 1985, right in that very early April, dedication was sometime in June, and, yeah.

BOGART: So talk about the use of this field [00:24:00], then, compared to the Almy installation.

LASALLE: It's pretty much the same, you know, the same type of usage. I mean, I'd say the major play-- and it has been, the major players over the years have been the oil field. You know, you've always got your local guys. You know, we've got 20 airplanes based here. So, you've got some local guys doing some flying, but it's -- in the aviation industry, they -- the term for an airplane flying in from somewhere else is "transit." And that transit traffic has been the major player here, even at the old airport. The thing that just didn't happen here that's happened in some other boom towns was the businesses that were here or got established just weren't the type of businesses that got into utilizing an airplane on your own, you know.

[00:25:00] We did some charter for local companies, things like that, but they just never... You go to some areas, you know, I -- you just don't have the business traffic here. But you've got, I mean, the busin-- the local

business traffic, but you've got the transit business traffic. Now also, we get a lot more it -- are cross country fuel stops by small airplanes picked up, and we do get a little bit of the bigger stuff, but not much. But it, you know, it's just kind of the -- it's really about the same thing that was used down at the other place. It's just, I've seen more of it, you know, I mean, yeah.

BOGART: So the oil companies still --

LASALLE: Some, yeah.

BOGART: -- run in and out of here?

LASALLE: Some, yeah, Chevron is still going on three days a week, more or less. Then you still see some different service providers beyond that. It just depends on who's got anything left in town, you know, Frank's West State, [Quayle?] Tools...

BOGART: So those are oil field service --

LASALLE: [00:26:00] Yeah, oil field service companies, yeah. Yeah, and then during -- another thing that's popped up now is, hunting has changed so much in this area. Yeah, I mean, it used to be, hunting was hunting. Now it's big business, and it really is something, especially on the ranches that border here with Utah. The big one is down Tall Creek Canyon, there's several down through there. And, Oct--they're starting in late August through October,

we get quite a bit of traffic. Corporate traffic does come in on hunting trips, from, yeah, from the East Coast, from California, Texas, you know. There are guys that are, you know, I mean, they're flying in on jets. There's a company out of Houston that brings a Gulfstream IV in, and they bring in clients that, you know, clients that can accept [00:27:00] these perks that do business with them. They bring in about three planeloads a year doing hunting trips up here, you know, that's, yeah --

BOGART: That's interesting.

LASALLE: -- it's kind of a different deal.

BOGART: That's -- so that's something relatively new that you've seen.

LASALLE: In the last -- it started -- you know, there'd always been a little bit. Deseret, for years, you know, you'd always have somebody, because they've had it going on for years. But it's about probably, you know, you have a littl-- it was always a little bit going on, but about five, six years ago, all of a sudden, it just really started picking up and it just -- it's gotten bigger each year since then, so...

BOGART: So the planes that are coming in are charter planes bringing the hunters in.

LASALLE: Yeah, charter planes or, you know, guys who don't own airplanes, you know, that type of stuff, yeah. Yeah, that's -- they're bringing them in and, yeah, that's...

BOGART: That's interesting. Now does Deseret Land use the airport at all?

LASALLE: You know, I'm sure [00:28:00] there's some stuff involved in them, yeah, a little bit, you know, I mean, but not --

BOGART: Or do they have their own air strip somewhere out there?

LASALLE: No, no. They, no, when they, you know, when they got somebody coming in, no, they're coming in here. They don't have -- you know, unless, you know, it's a helicopter, then they land out there, yeah.

BOGART: So there are 20 planes based here. Now what kinds of people own those planes? Are they just recreational?

LASALLE: Yeah, pretty much. There's a -- I'd say probably, truly, one airplane here that's mainly used for business, and then the rest of them are all, you know, some guys might do a little bit of business here and there, but, you know, it's mainly recreational, you know, personal use. You've got -- what do we got? -- three, four airplanes for people that are out of Utah, they're up here. And, you

know, the rest of them are locals and yeah, it's just mainly personal use, yeah.

BOGART: And you have a flight school [00:29:00] here in the sense that you provide flying lessons?

LASALLE: Yes, yeah we do provide flight training.

BOGART: What kinds of flying lessons were there in the past where people could learn to fly here?

LASALLE: It's -- well, as far back as I know, it's always kind of been the same way. It's -- I don't know, you know, what they did exactly, you know, back, say in the '60s. But from pretty much from the '70s forward, it's kind of been the same -- the -- you've had two options. But I mean here, it would have been about the same as you could do anywhere else: you got to have a certified flight instructor with an airplane, and that's -- I know that's been available here from, you know, from at least somewhere in the '70s forward, probably even in the '60s from what I understand.

BOGART: Do you know any of the people who would have been doing that?

LASALLE: Yeah, you know, I don't. I know I said the guy who was running the airport in the '70s, Ray - I don't remember his name [00:30:00]. The people we bought the business from, then that was a partnership of guys that had bought

it right at the beginning of the boom. There was a company out of Texas involved, and the local guys was -- were [Gaylen?], [Pennington?], and, who was the other partner in on that? God, there was another guy... Vance Saxton, an old railroad guy had a piece of that, too. But they had a flight instructor, you know, kind of the same deal, you know, you just... And these smaller towns, it's kind of a dwindling thing, because it's hard to do. It's -- you know, the insurance is expensive, finding some way a flight instructor that wants to do it, that can do it on the side, that enjoys it. It just gets to be -- it gets hard to keep going, and nowadays there's, you know, around the bigger cities, it seems to go pretty good. But smaller towns, it's just getting less and less of --

BOGART: [00:31:00] Do you know have much call for it here?

LASALLE: -- what's available. I, what do we have? Well, right now my flight instructor is "out of service" -- best way to put it. He's got some health problems. But we had three active students, or four, that he was working with, so yeah, you know. It's, you know, it's not where it's -- nobody's going to make a living off of it, but it was some activity. So you know, I mean it, you know, it's like anything else nowadays. It just seems like nothing small

can make it. Everything has got to go huge or, you know, just, anyway...

BOGART: Now what was the -- the size -- tell me, when this field opened, how many runways did they have, how long were they --

LASALLE: OK, well.

BOGART: -- what could it take?

LASALLE: OK, one -- they're -- same as it is now: one runway, 7300 foot long. And just over the years, what's gone on was, like, [00:32:00] the old airport, or the Almy Airport -- Evanston Municipal -- had a 58 -- 5800 foot long runway and it was 50 foot wide. This one is 100 foot wide and, like I said, 7300 foot long, got runway lights. And you know, when it initially opened, there wasn't a taxiway, it was just, you know, a single out to the runway, taxiway connecting to the ramp. And then they built a partial parallel taxiway that they can go full length, probably in the early '90s, I believe, is when that opened. And that was -- everything was that way until it was rebuilt and, you know, starting in 2001.

BOGART: Now, what -- and I was here then, and I remember, you know, hearing about the changes in the airfield. What was the push behind that? What was the reason behind it?



LASALLE: I think a lot of it [00:33:00] got started with we wanted to upgrade out instrument approach facilities. We had a VOR approach, which -- those are -- the FAA is working on. They thought they'd have most of them de-commissioned by now, but due to delays and stuff involving GPS, it's, I think, 2020 is about where it's going. But, you know, we initially wanted to try and upgrade our approach facilities. And we had some different thoughts on things we could do, and people gave us different ideas. And so we were trying to get some money to put a localizer in here, which is a type of navigation that's part of an approach, and basically it just aimed right down the runway and the guy would use it to tune in. It's aligned right down the center line of the runway, and you would tune it in and, you know, just use it.

BOGART: So it's like a radio signal?

LASALLE: Yeah, it's like a radio signal, like a VOR is a radio signal. But this is more of a -- [00:34:00] a VOR is an omni-directional, so it's just broadcast like a radio station broadcasting outward and you pick up your -- you use it for alignment. But the localizer would have been aligned right down the runway, and it's a little more precise. And so we got -- no one's really said who did it, I mean, you know, I have a pretty good idea that it was

Clarence [Brannish?], but he won't say it was him that wrote the letter. But we had -- we got \$500,000 earmarked by Senator Thomas for the localizer. We had a big -- every 10 years or so, you have a joint planning meeting with the state and the FAA for the direction you want your airport to go and to discuss all the things you've got in mind. And at this meeting, Craig Sparks, who was the head of the airport district's office in Denver, which we're under their district, said that, [00:35:00] "You guys, really, for what you want to do, \$500,000 won't do it. Go back and ask for a total of \$3 million. And that way, we can put in" -- at that time he said we can put in a full ILS, which gives you vertical and horizontal guidance. You get the localizer, plus you also get a glide slope, which is all coupled together so that, you know, it -- you've got the -- you've got your horizontal guidance right down the runway and then the glide slope and yeah, anyways, you just, you know, it all... So it's -- and so they did. We went back and got, you know, Thomas got the rest of the money. Then the FAA comes back and says, "OK, now that you've got the money to put an ILS in, you don't meet our cookie cutter standards." I mean, that's paraphrasing but that is basically what it was. And so [00:36:00] they said, "We want to, you know, make this -- everything, get it, you

know, meeting our standards to what you're wanting for that ILS, and here's what we're going to do." And initially, after construction got going, somebody else from the -- another FAA person come along and said, "Well, if we're going to be putting this much money into the place, we want to up the category aircraft bit that it's being built for." So it was originally going to be designed for, you know, your corporate -- your average corporate jet. And what they did was, they came back and said it's not -- at this point, it's not going to cost us that much more to go ahead and push the maximum design out to -- up to a 737-type aircraft. And so, we had to -- part of that, it did cost more money, but they had to move the taxiway farther away from the runway. And also [00:37:00] they built -- the taxiway has large -- they call it "fillets" -- large turning radiuses so that you can get the larger aircraft around the corners and everything, so that's, you know, basically how most of this came about, you know, yeah.

BOGART: OK, so where does -- what are the sources of the funding for, like?

LASALLE: All right, the average funding formula with the FAA right now, it's mostly federal funding: federal, state, and local. The formula is, let's see, it kind of varies at times, depending on funding levels, but I believe, right

now it's 95% federal, 3% state, 2% local. Now that has, over the years, it's fluctuated from 90% federal to, you know, and then the other 10% state and local. And normally, the state will match 8% [00:38:00] on federal funding, or, you know. Normally, whatever it is, the state tries to match to where it's only costing local government 2% so that's... So they, you know, to get down to it, I mean, it's still all taxpayer money, but we got \$30 million spent up here. And it cost whatever 2% of that is -- 600 thous-- or no, yeah, \$600,000, yeah. Or, well, probably a little more, because there was -- what happened was, towards the end of the project, the economy had slowed down, funding was getting tight, and there was a few things we had to get cut out, and we had to get a large state grant to finish some issues -- some things. And on a state grant normally, you've got to cover 20% so, you know, I mean still, it -- maybe it was a million at the most.

BOGART: So was the idea behind the expansion: build it and they will come, or did you anticipate increased traffic?

LASALLE: [00:39:00] Well, part of this all got started before the Olympics. (phone ringing) We were, you know, hoping... (phone ringing)

BOGART: Yeah, I was wondering about the Olympics.

LASALLE: Yeah, well what happened was, you know, a lot of this planning that we talked about and what we wanted to do started for the Olympics. And so we actually thought some of this might be in place by the Olympics. Of course, once we found out what was going to happen, we knew it was, you know, no way. But, you know, that was kind of what a lot of it was about initially. And then the other thing was, I think the FAA thought, you know, and we even thought too, build [out?] there's so much build and they will come, but I think there was some of that mentality going on. You know, it's like anything else, it's -- we've, you know, it's here but -- and we have gotten more, some traff-- definitely more traffic that we wouldn't have got, like that hunting traffic I'm talking about. I know I get more airplanes here, without everything that's been done [00:40:00] than we, you know, than we would without it, so... But the Olympics, yeah, the Olympics, I mean, it was just -- that was, you know, 9/11 hit... In December, they had some meetings down in Salt Lake, and I went to one of them where they were discussing what was going to happen, what their plan was, and how it was going to work out, and, you know, what they -- how they thought was go-- things were going to work out. And at that meeting it was, you know, it was brought out that they were putting a TFR, or a

Temporary Flight Restriction around Salt Lake City. Well, we were seven miles outside of it. And the other thing that they'd done with that flight restriction was that any airports that were in that zone, you would have to go through, basically, a customs inspection at a gateway airport before you were going to be allowed to fly into Salt Lake City. And yeah, you could fly in right here and drive 45 minutes, be in Park City, [00:41:00] or an hour, you know, in Salt Lake, and it just -- yeah, I was sitting there and I heard that and I thought there's a good chance that we might really get something out of this, you know. And then, it wasn't, you know, at that meeting, they hadn't announc-- they didn't really have all of the stuff in place for what they were planning. So the other stuff started coming down the line, as far as all the pilots were going to have their credentials verified, and they'd have badges to go in there so, and you had a narrow window to get that done. And so it just all kind of -- the way it all worked out, we were sitting in the right spot at the right time, and so it was, yeah, I mean, it was crazy.

BOGART: And tell me about that crazy, because I really want to get the...

LASALLE: Well, I mean, the first, you know, we had a few airplanes show up, you know, a couple days ear-- like the

day before. But the opening ceremonies day [00:42:00], we really had, I mean, we were kind of ready. We'd bought -- we had some extra people lined up to work. I'd never had a fuel truck up here, so I bought, you know, I mean, we had fuel tanks with pumps. So we went out -- Evanston Aviation went out and bought a fuel truck, and well, I guess for Star West Aviation then, bought a fuel truck. And opening day, we just got slammed. You know, I mean, I don't even know, at this point, I can't remember how much fuel, but I mean, it was -- we had snowstorms, snow squalls, or snow showers in and out, the wind was howling. I mean, we were trying to plow snow. We had airplanes piling up on the ramp. They were stacked up in holding patterns to get in here, you know. I mean, we ran out of room on the ramp and having to park people on the taxiway to get them in, you know, and [00:43:00] run out there and pick them up, bring them in. It was just -- yeah, we did get overwhelmed that first day. We really weren't expecting it to be that way. And we had a lot of phone calls. I was trying to keep track of who, you know, we were expecting. But the, you know, the big thing was, the fractional operators - the timeshare aircraft ownership companies - they were not real good at that time on letting people know what was going on. And so, I might, you know, we planned well for some stuff,

but when they had, like, five or six airplanes here that we weren't expecting, it's just, oh, OK. And I mean, yeah, it was just, I mean, it was a zoo. We were -- there were guys, I can remember, well, then we're -- with only one fuel truck, we found out, we weren't going to be able to keep up because I could pum-- we could pump out of the truck [some of the planes?] could take 150 gallons a minute when we were pumping into them. But no matter what, my ground pump only pumped 28 gallons a minute, so, you know, you'd sit there, and [00:44:00] get filled back up. You'd have guys, you know, [corps?] pilots tend to be high-strung at times, and you'd have guys getting upset, they're waiting on fuel. And it was a pretty wild ordeal the first time around, so we made arrangements to lease another fuel truck from our fuel supplier. And then, you know, and then it just, it jus-- you know, after that, we kind of, we're ready. I mean, it was, you know --

BOGART: So that first -- that first day that --

LASALLE: -- first day really got us. Yeah, we still had some issues here and there. I mean, there -- you know, we got the picture on the wall out there and we kind of made a joke: there's an area out here that, you know, we had smaller airplanes then. You know, smaller, some of them were 8-passenger turbo props and, I mean, we joked that was



Poor Man's Corner. And it just -- and we had, let's see, had Avis, Hertz, and Enterprise renting cars here. It just [00:45:00] -- you know, when it first started out, you know, I kind of figured out what was going on, I called -- I remember I called Hertz and they weren't interested in talking to me. I got a hold of the operators at Avis in Rock Springs and they said yeah, you know. And so we got something set up with them. Well the next thing you know, Hertz was getting phone calls left and right, trying to get, you know, cars out of Evanston, Wyoming. They called me back, and I said just -- I said I'm not getting anything off of any of this, just bring a table over, set it up in the lobby, and you know. I said our biggest thing is, I get people taken care of till their airplanes get here, because they will buy fuel, you know, yeah. Do it that way, and... But over time, you know, I mean, you know, we had a big push that way, then it, you know, slowed down for a little bit. You'd have busier periods, you know, the -- and like the picture on the wall -- there was Presidents' Day weekend. Well, by then, we had it down pretty good, you know, I mean. We pulled all those airplanes out of the way for that BBJ [00:46:00], Boeing Business Jet, to come in. And they left here twice, going non-stop to Oslo, Norway, yeah, it was. The first trip, I believe, was,

yeah, they were picking up the Norwegian hockey team. They got knocked out early, and you know, back then it was a different style tournament than they do now. And they got knocked out early, and they loaded them up, took them out of here. And originally they were going to stop in Casper but (inaudible) at random numbers and said he could do it out of here. On the way back, they did stop at Casper to clear customs, then dropped some people off here, and went there, the plane was out of Van Nuys. And then closing day, they came up, did the same thing, picked up a whole load of people. And closing day was actually the busiest day we had. And you know, I -- opening day was kind of a zoo, President's Day weekend, it was definitely -- a couple days were busier than opening day. But the big thing that happened was [00:47:00] the weather got good. Opening day was about the only bad weather we had. And then, closing night, late at night, it started going, it started getting, you know, some snow again. But closing day was just steady, all day long, just, I mean, busy all day long. I mean, you know, looking back on our sales figures, I think we did three times as much on closing day as we did opening day, and it just... And I don't know, yeah, I can't -- I'm trying to remember who I ever saw, if I saw any, oh, well, Howie Mandel was here. That's back when he was doing that

stuff for Jay Leno where, you know. And if he wasn't putting on a show, he was in his own world, I know that much. I don't think he was putting on a show, because they had a guy -- one of the guys with him was trying to keep him, you know, just, from falling over, more or less.

BOGART: Being a handler, huh? [00:48:00] Well, now, what's -- I'd always heard a rumor about royalty flying in and out of here.

LASALLE: We had -- well, first of all, we did have, OK at that time, and I don't remember her name, but the Vice Premier of Russia came through. They had a little meeting in the back room, had KGB guys running around with some sort of gu-- I mean, they, you know, baby beret jackets with -- thick red jackets with, you know, guns bulging out from underneath them. Yeah, they had some sort of little meeting in the back room before she left, you know, but they -- she did fly in here. I think they later made arrangements to get an airplane to Salt Lake to pick her up when she left. And then the King and Queen of Sweden left out of here. I don't think they flew in here, but they did leave from here because, and I'm not sure why, how that all -- because that was right at the end of things... Maybe it was [Saint Bill?], they just still hadn't, they'd already made arrangements to have it done up here, [00:49:00] they

hadn't completely opened things up in Salt Lake and so they probably didn't have pilots that could get in there and so, yeah. Yep, but...

BOGART: That's very cool.

LASALLE: Oh, no, wait a minute. I said Sweden, or is it Norway? No, it was Sweden, because I think there's, yeah, I think it was Sweden, because somebody said because they do -- something about West Valley City and anyways, so, yeah.

BOGART: Very cool. So, because of all that traffic, just for the Olympics, do you think there was -- did that create some visibility for the airport? Did that generate business afterwards, do you think?

LASALLE: Yeah, some. I think it did create some, some visibility, some business, some activity. But it's like a lot of things. Once things got back to normal, you know, we're 20 minutes farther away from Park City [00:50:00] than [Hever?] is, so, you know, driving or whatever or, 25, so, you know, things just went back to where they were, pretty much, so.

BOGART: Now, it -- over the past five years, since the recession, has that had an impact?

LASALLE: Yeah, yeah. The -- like I said, that's where my talk about dwindling general aviation traffic, yeah, it's -- it

is really dropped off. I look at my sales figures, and it is -- it is definitely off. The business traffic is [awesome?] selling, you know, has picked up overall. But the -- just the average personal flier, it just -- and you can tell that by your avgas sales, because the sales are down, traffic is not there as much. It's a change in deal. What I'm worried is that it's getting more and more European [00:51:00], because in Europe, they had it so everything so tightly regulated that it was only the people with money that got into it. And over here, I'm not so worried about the regulations -- being regulated out, as it's just the -- less and less people with money that are learning to fly, or having enough money, or having the desire, you know. Some people, or, you know, I guess the other thing too is everybody is spending money in different ways. I know in the '70s, you didn't see the huge fifth wheels, the -- near as many boats, guys with motorcycles, trailer full of four wheelers and snowmobiles sitting in houses. So it's -- your money is being pulled in a lot of different directions nowadays too, and I think that's part of it also. But also, you know, I know the guys that ran it, and people that look at it, you know, your six dollars a gallon [00:52:00] for avgas. It's probably not going to get cheaper because there was a push by -- there was a push

early in Obama's first term by the EPA, they were by environmental groups pushing the EPA to try and force a change in -- trying -- regulate out avgas because it's the only fuel still made with lead. It is leaded, yeah, it is leaded, but it's what they call a "boutique fuel" --

BOGART: (laughter)

LASALLE: -- because of, honestly, I, you know, that's what they say.

BOGART: That's funny!

LASALLE: Yeah. Three hundred million gallons a year is all that's made, yeah, I mean, it's so -- but that -- which is a drop in the bucket when think, you look at everything else. And the lead in it --

BOGART: And is that for commercial aircraft too as well as...?

LASALLE: No, that's just -- no, avgas is what's -- is what the piston engineered planes run on. Yeah, no, the -- like your jets and all, they're running on jet fuel, which is a derivative of diesel fuel, you know, so it's all -- it's a whole different, you know. It's -- [00:53:00] when you're making that, they're making kerosene. Kerosene is what jet fuel basically is.

BOGART: Oh, OK. That explains the smell at the airport.

LASALLE: So, yeah, that's, yeah -- there you go. So, and, yeah, that's kind -- but there was a big push, and then it

came out that, it turns out that the EPA can't re-- just issue an order and say you've got to stop making fuel with lead in it. But there are alternatives being worked on, but no matter what, I don't see getting any cheaper, you know. And that's, you know, that's an issue.

BOGART: Now do you carry, do you have both kinds here?

LASALLE: Yeah, yeah.

BOGART: Because you say you have cross country traffic coming here.

LASALLE: Yeah, yeah, oh yeah. Well and the locals, like, you know, any of the -- well I've got smaller airplanes, you know, it runs on avgas, so. But sales -- the difference is, I'm selling four times more jet fuel, somewhere in that neighborhood, and actually I think that's getting wider, so.

BOGART: Now, one more question, well, maybe --

LASALLE: Yeah, that's OK.

BOGART: -- not just one. [00:54:00] But how does this -- this is going to sound really silly, but how do you know when somebody is coming?

LASALLE: You don't always know. You know, we have a radio. This is an uncontrolled airport. So we have a UNICOM that's -- which -- UNICOM, well they kind of changed the name over the years. They -- now they call it the Common

Traffic Advisory Frequency. And so, a lot of times, they'll make a report that they're in-bound on that frequency, which you can, oh, have you seen FlightOfWord.com? It's an aircraft tracking website, OK. You can get on there, but it's only for aircraft that are on arranged flight plans. And -- but there's a caveat to that too becaus-- or, well, that's not the right word. But anyways, you -- somewhere, some private operators can have their information blocked, you know, like maybe some companies don't want, you know, people knowing where they're going. So if it's blocked, FlightOfWord doesn't show that. But I have [00:55:00] another subscription service that will show it. So you can -- there's a way -- a lot of ways to find out if you've got an airplane in-bound that -- maybe that way. But as far as the, like, you know, like the small guys, just, you know, flying -- because you don't have to fly a flight plan to fly, you know, anywhere in this area out here when the weather is good. You know, they -- a lot of them, most of them won't, you know, I don't know they're coming until I hear them on the radio, so, yeah, that's... It's like I had a guy come through this morning that -- his daughter lives here. And he picked up -- I think he dropped off one granddaughter



and picked another one up, you know. No clue, you know, just, he calls in 10 miles out, yeah, so yeah.

BOGART: So, then, back to the Olympics. So you didn't really have any idea --

LASALLE: Well...

BOGART: -- it wasn't like you had people calling up and making reservations.

LASALLE: There were people calling up, making reservations, and the other thing was, I did have FlightOfWord? I don't know if FlightOfWord was around back then, [00:56:00] but I still -- I was on another -- I had -- what's the one I've got now, FlightTracks? No, FlightExplorer. FlightExplorer is a subscription service that is talked about, and I did have that so, I could, yeah, I mean, I clicked on, you know. There was one time, my -- one of my brothers is a corporate pilot and Teterboro is the real big -- the big corporate airport in the New York City area. And he sent me an email joking about we were Teterboro of the West for that day, because, you know, I clicked on that, I was looking on FlightExplorer and there was, like, you know, 10 airplanes in-bound to here, which, you know, that's what you see going on in Jackson, not here, so yeah. That is -- so you did have some, you know, I mean that's, you know, what -- that's one thing like that first day when we were

really getting slammed, I went in there and looked and, well how much more of this is out there, you know, and that's, yeah. OK, there's still five guys out here holding, trying to get in because [00:57:00] what would go on is: one airplane would have to fly the approach and he'd have to cancel his flight plan before ATC can clear another one to even, you know, start the approach, and so, it takes longer. Whereas, you know, at a controlled airfield, you know, they can zip them in faster because they don't -- it's a quicker process.

BOGART: Right, so ATC is...?

LASALLE: Air Traffic Control.

BOGART: And that's out of, where?

LASALLE: Salt Lake City. We're under --

BOGART: That makes sense.

LASALLE: -- yeah, yeah. They have Air Traffic Control centers around the country. For this region, Salt Lake City is where it's at.

BOGART: That makes sense. OK, oh this has just been so interesting!

LASALLE: Well, I hope so.

BOGART: Oh, this is just great! This will be a big, big help. Anything else you want to add?

LASALLE: Ah, I don't know. I'm not good at thinking what to add --

BOGART: No, that's all right.

LASALLE: Any more questions? I mean, I can --

BOGART: Have you enjoyed -- do you enjoy this?

LASALLE: Yeah, oh yeah, I mean, I've been doing this really my whole life. Like I said, I grew -- I started -- I learned how to drive [00:58:00], and it was an open-cab fuel truck, stick shift, yeah, so I learned, you know, I learned how to drive and --

BOGART: I wonder how you could reach the pedals --

LASALLE: -- probably was, you know, probably a mistake on my dad's part because I never got out of it. I did here and there a few times, but just never -- it never -- nothing else ever stuck, so yeah, that's...

BOGART: Oh, this is just great. I've been looking forward to this. What I am trying to do, as I explained, this is a project for the Wyoming State archives, documenting aviation in Wyoming. And I'm real interested in aviation in the smaller communities and since I lived here for so long, this was really cool.

LASALLE: Yeah, well, you know, like I said, it's what I'm worried about. Around the big cities, it's going to be there: the money is there, and the other thing is, that's

where the business stuff is. You don't see -- Wyoming is so rural and like Evanston, I guess had the businesses here. There's definitely some individuals [00:59:00] and businesses here, based here, that could use an airplane, utilize one, and could afford it quite easily. But you don't see it as much out in this region as you do. Like you go to the Midwest and you go to those small towns and, you know, there's like a jet, two or three jets, on a lot of these airports, that you would think, you know, just -- it's just a different deal out in the west, but...

BOGART: Yeah, and as you say, so close to Salt Lake.

LASALLE: Yeah, and that's something too -- I think over the years, economically, it has taken so much money out of this town, and also, I think during the boom, that's what happened. You didn't -- you had so many companies from Salt Lake area appear, work, and then stuff, so that when things died down, they just, you know, shut down, went back to Salt Lake, yeah.

BOGART: OK, now I have to do paperwork. [01:00:00] And both of us will sign -- what this is, is the release form that gives the information on the recording character --

LASALLE: Oh, yeah (inaudible) that one works or not.

BOGART: -- that gives the information to the state archives.

And they have permission to make it available for

researchers, and they're talking about maybe doing some podcast or something, I'm not quite sure. That's just --

LASALLE: You want my address on here?

BOGART: Yeah, yeah, the mailing address, that would be great.

No, there won't be any commercial use of it. No one is going to make money off of it, but we have to give them permission.

LASALLE: OK.

BOGART: And I have a copy for you, too. Great, thanks, let me fill this out.

LASALLE: Right, somewhere around the Olympics, I can't remember, was that after the Olympics or before the Olympics? Must have been after. I got -- NPR interviewed me one time on the ph-- did a -- and it was [01:01:00] -- was that bef-- remember when the kid flew an airplane into the tower in Tampa or Saint Petersburg? I think it was -- it had something to do with that and yeah, it just was... Don't remember if they ever asked permission. They just called me up and started asking me questions.

BOGART: Yeah, radio is operating on a different kind of system, but anyway. OK, I'm going to fill this out, that's your copy that I've signed, and I've got the copy you signed, so we're all good. OK, let me shut this off.

END OF AUDIO FILE