

**George Williams**  
**World War II Veterans History Project**  
**Interviewed: July 31, 2009**  
**By: Jean Reynolds**  
**Transcript by Sarah Katusa**

*(Note: transcript begins with conversation recorded while the video camera was being set up, George and Jean are looking at photos and talking about various topics, prior to interview beginning.)*

George Williams: *(looking at a photo of a pilot)* He flew a load of ammunition in.

Jean Reynolds: You rescued him?

GW: Yeah. And he got back with 88 holes in his plane.

JR: Hm'm.

GW: None of them were hurt.

JR: Wow.

GW: So that's lucky.

JR: That's pretty amazing. Kind of a miracle really.

GW: Yeah. So, but we had a great time on all these, when we get together, all these places. You know we end up at the last day we have a banquet. We had an all-female band playing '40's music.

JR: That must have been fun.

GW: Yeah, and went to the, we took the boat ride through town. Have you ever been to Chicago?

JR: I haven't.

GW: Well you know it's kinda like uh, what's that place in Italy where you ride the gondolas?

JR: Venice.

GW: Yeah Venice, they got all those places that they take you up right up town. And this is a group off of my ship here, plus the Captain and his family. All representatives of the USS Sargent Bay.

JR: Did you dance?

GW: Uh, no I didn't.

JR: Oh you didn't?

GW: But I usually do. You know I didn't dance much until I turned 81. And then Rose got me into dancing.

JR: What dance are you doing there? Do you remember?

GW: Uh Swing Dance. They were selling poodle skirts and it had something to do with the poodle skirts too.

JR: Oh, Ok.

GW: I know the photographer shot two or three shots of us 'cause he wanted to get a shot of that poodle.

(Both laugh)

JR: 'Kay, let's see your other photos here.

GW: OK, This, you've heard of Betty Grable?

JR: Yeah.

GW: Her photo is here on this plane. Here you can see it here on this plane.

JR: Yeah.

GW: And this here is a B-17, now this is a newer Betty Grable.

JR: Yeah, yeah that's funny.

GW: And if you know any veterans tell 'em that, that is a good place, they have a dance there every year.

JR: Where's that at?

GW: At Falcon Field. At the uh.. [Commemorative Air Force Museum]

GW: Yeah straight north. I'd say 75 to 80 percent of the men are veterans and I don't know what percentage of the ladies. But it's really a nice little area. They have a USO band which plays from about 5 o'clock in the evening to about 7 and 7:30 in the... They have a costume contest. And then from 7:30 to 11 they have the Sun Lakes big band that plays that from there on.

JR: That sounds fun.

GW: And this is my 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday at Hooters. And this is last year's.

GW: So some day they'll have this in the museum where you just find the name, push a button, and it'll come up on the screen or something like that.

JR: I'd like to have to have something like that. Or, we might, you know, these are fairly long interviews, so it might be a clip of an interview...but in a research setting if someone wants to come and do research on like say, people- men- that served in the Navy or something like that, they could come in and look through the interviews and watch it.

GW: Or make it a little more compact or something. Pick out.

JR: Hm'm. Yep.

GW: Or we could actually even do like a whole half an hour documentary or something that features the different people that we interviewed.

JR: That sounds good. If that chair's in the way just scoot it over a little bit.

GW: (in response to question about when he attended Chandler High)...A half of one year and then half of the next.

JR: So was that like your freshman and sophomore?

GW: Uh no it'd be my... sophomore, part of my sophomore and first part of my junior.

JR: First part of your junior, OK.

GW: Then I enlisted in the Navy. Well I'd seen that every...you know you was getting older and the war kept going on and it seemed like-- mothers begin to look at you and say well why isn't he going, you know you kinda heard it from lots of 'em .

JR: I think uh this is a very common theme that I'm hearing from a lot of the men that I'm talking to.

GW: Hm'm. Yeah.

JR: Because they were still in high school when they enlisted or were drafted because of their age.

GW: See, I came from Scottsdale over to Chandler and they really got, we really got hit. Scottsdale had to go from an 11-man football team to a 6-man football team. So, really we lost a lot of guys to the Service, that went in.

*(Interview begins)*

JR: OK, so Mr. Williams we'll start with your parents. Um, what were your parent's names and where were they from?

GW: OK, Ruby Dessie Cook was my mother's maiden name. And Earl Hatcher Williams was my father's name. And uh, we came from Oklahoma. My father, prior to coming to Arizona, my father was caretaker for an armory. In other words they had a large building there, they kept all leather harnesses, saddles, everything pertaining to horses. And outside they had the green wagons and the horses and everything that's needed for an armory. And me and my sister, we had this apartment that was sitting on top of the armory. And these stairs went down the side. We used to go down the sides to the window and watch in the window and watch the soldiers in there punch a punching bag or whatever and some of them were working on saddles and what have you.

JR: Hm'm. When you were little.

GW: Yeah when I was little. I was three years old when I came to Arizona.

JR: Um, OK. So they originated from Oklahoma. What part of Oklahoma?

GW: I was born in Sulpher, but, where he was taking care of armory wasn't in Sulpher, it was in a different town. I can't remember that town right now.

JR: And where is Sulpher located?

GW: Uh...

JR: Which part of Oklahoma?

GW: You know I left there at three.

JR: Oh, Ok.

GW: I went back at five but I don't remember exactly.

JR: Yeah, which part. OK.

GW: But, uh, they did have the Sulpher Springs there that claimed it was good for arthritis, and all kinds of health problems.

JR: OK. Alright did your mother work outside of the home?

GW: Uh, no she didn't. She never worked.

JR: OK. Um tell me how you spell your mothers name.

GW: R-U-B-Y, Ruby. Dessie, D-E-S-S-I-E.

JR: So it's Ruby Dessie Cook-

GW: Cook.

JR: Williams.

GW: Yes.

JR: OK, great. Now um, and when were you born?

GW: Uh, 5/12/26.

JR: 1926. And you were born in Sulpher, Oklahoma?

GW: Sulpher, hm'm.

JR: Not Sulpher Springs, it was just Sulpher?

GW: I, yeah, well there was the springs there but it's called Sulpher, Oklahoma.

JR: OK. There seems to be a lot of Sulpher Springs all out through the whole West.

GW: Hm'm.

JR: That's kind of a popular name. (laughs) Now you said you had a sister. Did you have other brothers and sisters.

GW: Yeah, I had the, I had one brother and two sisters.

JR: And, what were their names?

GW: OK. Annell Williams. Um, um, sorry. Roger Williams uh not Rog- Elston Williams was my brother. And Danna Williams.

JR: Diana?

GW: Yeah, but her married name was Nance, Danna Nance. And Annell's married name was Sandberg.

JR: And please spell Annell, just like-

GW: A-N-N-E-L-L.

JR: I was very close I just forgot the "E" on the end.

GW: Hm'm.

JR: OK. Now Annell, Elston, and Diana?

GW: Danna. D-A-N-N-A.

JR: Oh, sorry. And Elston is that E-L-S-T-O-N?

GW: -T-O-N. Hm'm.

JR: And where are you in the birth order?

GW: I'm next to the oldest. My- Danna is the oldest and I'm second, and then Elston, and then Annell is the youngest. She's about eleven years younger than me.

JR: OK. Now um when did you, when did your family come to Arizona?

GW: Uh we came to Arizona in 1929.

JR: What was it that brought your family to Arizona?

GW: Uh, well the doctors seemed to think my father was getting a little arthritis, and they seemed to think that it might get helped out if we come to Arizona. So that was one of the reasons.

JR: Was it because of the climate or...

GW: Yeah, the hot climate was supposed to help out.

JR: The dampness or cold or whatever. OK.

GW: Dry, hot.

JR: OK, so your family came in 1929. Was that before the Depression hit or afterwards?

GW: Well the Depression I think came in about '33, I believe. That was before the Depression, and we did come to Scottsdale. We were living most of that time three miles straight west of old town Scottsdale. And I was in Scottsdale up until late 1942, and then that's when we moved to Williams Air Force Base. The very first civilian houses being built there. In fact they didn't even have the trenches, sewer trenches, or the water line trenches covered when we moved in. So it was then, of course, I dropped out of Scottsdale High and started Chandler High.

JR: OK. Alright, let's go back a little bit to Scottsdale. Um, you said you were three miles west of the town at that time?

GW: Yeah, the old town of Scottsdale. The old downtown of Scottsdale.

JR: And what was-

GW: That was Scottsdale School District though.

JR: Yeah. What did your father do?

GW: Well he worked as a carpenter and for a while he was into raising vegetables. A vegetable farmer, and we used to haul vegetables to the market in Phoenix. You'd haul all your market goods there, and the stores would come there and buy what they wanted, and go down, truck to truck, and buy what they wanted, you know. And then you'd come back home after that or, you know, try to sell off the remainder if you could get somebody to take it.

JR: Now um-

GW: And, and then he after that, that was just a short period. He went into farming, mainly taking care of citrus orchards for a gentleman by the name of Harry J. Lawson who was head of the Salt River Project. And he had his orchard plus three others, and he took care of all of them.

JR: So your father had an orchard and then he took care of Lawson's?

GW: Uh-

JR: Or only Lawson's?

GW: Lawson had one orchard but he took three other orchards under his hand and he dispersed all the finances to run 'em, and they in turn paid him, you know.

JR: OK. Do you remember-

GW: Everything from irrigation to harvesting and so forth.

JR: Do you remember where those citrus fields were located?

GW: Yes. On Osborne Road, just east of the old Crosscut Canal. Between Indian School and Osborne Road.

JR: That was a big citrus area.

GW: And yes, right straight down from Camelback Mountain.

JR: Hm'm. OK. OK. That's interesting. And how many, did your family have acreage at that time?

GW: Uh no we didn't, no. We just farmed, in fact you could have ground just taking it and farming it. There was- some of it was growing back, the mesquites and what have you. And they would be glad for you to take it for free. You buy the water and farm it while you keep the weeds and the mesquites from growing back.

JR: So that's how he grew the vegetables?

GW: Yeah. And he- we was neighbors to a gentleman by the name of Gosnell, the older Mr. Gosnell, he's the father of Bob Gosnell.

JR: The developer?

GW: Yeah, and now it's the Gosnell Development Company, and Bob Gosnell's children is the one that runs most all that now. Kids and grandkids.

JR: Hm'm. What kind of vegetables did your father grow?

GW: Uh, we had melons, we had- one year we grew nothing but tomatoes, and Gosnell was in partnership on the tomatoes the year we grew them. And sweet potatoes. We used to come to Mesa and get sweet potato shoots and plant sweet potatoes. And that's what we did back then.

JR: So you had good- some good soil out there?

GW: Yeah, that was good soil.

JR: Can you, did you ever go with your father to the market in Phoenix?

GW: Oh yes, yes.

JR: Can you describe what it was like?

GW: Yes, you'd get up at about 3 o'clock in the morning, and we had a model "A" truck, and we had loaded it down, and go to market. And you'd stay there 'til- a lot of the people had to leave in time to open their stores on time. They wanted to get there on time to open their stores on time, and disperse the vegetables they bought. So it was probably seven or eight o'clock before we ended up coming home.

JR: Did you go before school?

GW: Uh, well this was, when I went I wasn't in school yet.

JR: It was during the summer?

GW: Yes, well when I started school, well, he wasn't doing this anymore.

JR: Oh. OK. OK. So you were young.

GW: He was into citrus then.

JR: That's interesting. And that market, that was located in what's downtown Phoenix now, right?

GW: Yeah. Uh, they moved it from one place to another and I don't know how it is now. Of course the delivery trucks brings it to all their markets now. But there's still maybe some small markets working them.

JR: I almost wanna say that I think it used to be on Jackson Street

GW: Jackson- yeah it was somewhere down in there. Yep it was down in there somewhere.

JR: I interviewed- oh, go ahead.

GW: We used to haul citrus from all the places to the old Libby's packinghouse and it's- I think it's still there. It's from the Bank One Ballpark, it's catty corner and across the tracks, the old round Quonset hut looking buildings that are very dark- black, almost. That's Libby's packing shed there, we used to haul citrus there.

JR: That's always interesting to know, about where farmers take their things. And I interviewed someone from the Basha family and we talked about going to the market with their mother or their father to go actually pick up the produce to bring it back to the Basha's, way back when. In the '30's.

GW: And the farmers, they hauled to get rid of it, and load it. And CT Sharp and Son, they were operating out of Scottsdale, and they had a dairy. And then later they moved to Mesa and out near Williams Field Road and about Greenfield, I think, somewhere along in there, with their dairies. They had a- they went into the dairy business from sweet potatoes, but they used to grow lots of sweet potatoes.

JR: Yeah, OK, so you were going to the Scottsdale schools as you were growing up?

GW: Hm'm. Yes.

JR: And then in- what was it that brought your father to Williams Air Force base in '42?

GW: OK, he went to work with Del Webb 'cause he was a carpenter. And earlier too he worked a little on one building at the Papago Park area. And those buildings didn't last-- didn't stay there too long-- cause later came the Veterans Hospital and then the Prisoner of War camp, and all that, so those buildings weren't there too long. But anyway he did carpenter work there. And then he went to work with Del Webb, and when he finished with Del Webb, you know, while he was working there, he went to work for the Base in the wood mill.

JR: So Del Webb built some of the structures out at the base?

GW: Yeah, most of the structures out at the base.

JR: The housing?

GW: Uh, well some of the housing came... Yeah our housing came. I don't know if he did that or not. But all the runways, you know all the other things there he built. The barracks mainly.

JR: The barracks. OK, that's interesting. Yeah, Del Webb was a pretty busy guy during the World War II time period.

GW: Yes, yes he was. In much demand.

JR: Yes. OK, that's an interesting story about Del Webb. Uh, so what happened then, was your family then- did you sell the land in Scottsdale?

GW: Uh we didn't buy any land, didn't own any.

JR: OK.

GW: We rented all the time. Then, like, say, you get the farmland for- for free and just buy the water for it.

JR: Right. OK. So did you have water rights then, that you owned?

GW: Uh, no the water rights stays with the land. Yeah like I have here, but it stays with the land also when it sells.

JR: OK. Alright, so in 1942 you moved to Williams Air Force Base. Can you describe what it was like?

GW: It was late '42. Uh, well we had to get badges with our photos on to get in and get out. We rode the same bus as the soldiers rode, to the school. And Higley had a little grammar school there. I think there's less than 40 kids there, and my younger sister went to school there. But we went to Chandler, and we rode the bus. And they gave us for our trip, 15 cents each way, they gave us a break for all civilian kids. Of course they kept building more houses, and more civilian kids from the base was going to school there.

JR: So your family moved into the first civilian house that was built?

GW: Hm, not the very first house but the first group of houses, I'd say.

JR: Uh, do you remember where that was located?

GW: Yeah it was on the south side of the grounds. If you go in the Base and go right by the old water tank, it was just across the railroad tracks and south, oh about a quarter of a mile, it was. Then it run back east, and then it is desert from on out. 'Course they later built a shooting range out there and stuff.

JR: Is that little housing complex still there?

GW: You know I'm not sure. I think it is on the north side. They built that later after the war. I think that it is still intact but I'm not sure about the south side.

JR: OK. Can you describe your- the house a little bit?

GW: Uh, yeah it was a brand-new house, and they completed the inside and they was still doing work on the outside. You know, like they had to do the sidewalks and asphalt the driveways around the- all the homes there. And make parking areas and put in the curbing and all that. That all came later, so. And of course we were allowed a victory garden there. A little vegetable victory garden there. And then we started into school. We didn't wear anything but Levis and kept after Ernie Serrano all the time for a new pair of Levi's whenever the shipments weren't coming like they used to, because of the war. And so we always questioned him, "Do you have any Levi's in?" And he'd keep us posted when they came in. So we'd rush down at lunch hour and put them on hold till we could come down the next day with money and pay for them.

JR: So you were using that Popular Store a lot?

GW: Yeah Serrano's, it's called Serrano's Store.

JR: OK, great. Um, so by that time in '42 you were a sophomore?

GW: Uh yeah, I was a sophomore there, second half of sophomore year and then the next year I started the first half of my junior year. Then in February the third of '44, I talked to Bob West, and I said- I think he dropped out of school or maybe he had graduated I can't remember for sure. But anyway he was working the service station there, and I came by at lunchtime, and I said, "Let's go join the Navy." And we ended up doing that.

JR: So you joined with Bob West?

GW: Uh-

JR: With Bob West?

GW: With Bob West, yeah, and we enlisted. My service number was 581-11 and his was 581-12.

(Both laugh)

JR: OK. Let's- I want to talk a little bit more. I have not ever interviewed anybody who was living at Williams and was coming back and forth to school. That seems like a very long trip. Can you tell me what that was like?

GW: Yeah, it was quite interesting. I mean, seems like everyday, but I'm sure it was like once a week, the wreckage truck was hauling back a wrecked plane. And they were wrecking planes a something fierce out there. And the P-38's had a cross section on their tail and when they would come down they would cut the brush-- you know, the grease wood brush, and stuff-- and even kill rabbits sometimes. We used to take our bows and arrows and go out there hunting rattlesnakes. And I guess when they cleared off the Base there to build the runways they pushed the rattlesnakes back more or less into the bushes. And they seemed to be kind of thick, so that's one thing we did out there. There were certain areas that was restricted, you couldn't go into. You could go up to the fence where they had all the wrecked planes but going inside you couldn't. And anywhere up around the hangars you couldn't go. Uh, you could go to the wood mill, but it's best to be escorted there you know. And of course we'd go to the PX, you'd get your malts. That was really good. Fifteen, either fifteen or twenty cents a malt. And they poured you the big can full and you had a glass full, almost two glass fulls out of it. And uh, let's see what else I'd say. Every time you lost your pass you'd have to go to the Provost Marshall's Office and they'd snap another picture of you, and get you another pass. So, that wasn't too bad. And then the people at the gate get to where they know you're going to school every morning and night. And uh, lets see...

JR: Did your mother work at the Base at all?

GW: Uh, no she didn't. And...

JR: What else do you remember about either the men who were training or um you know the planes? Do you have any other memories of that?

GW: At the Base?

JR: Yeah the Base.

GW: Uh, yeah. You know I talked to a lot of them. I bought a midget racecar. You know gasoline got to where it was kind of non-existent. And there was a midget racecar, a genuine factory built racecar, in the Texaco station in Tempe, and it had been wrecked. The front axle was sitting in the seat of it. But, uh, the guy says, "I'll sell it for 65 dollars. The gentlemen that brought it here said he owed me a bill and he's going into the



Service so he'd give it to him for \$65, that's all I want of it." So I talked my mother into going and getting this racecar. And of all places out on the Base, you know it was supposed to be fifteen miles an hour around it, but anyway I bought it and played around with that. And one of my neighbors fixed it for me. It had a little spring shackle that was broken and he fixed that up for me. And we got it all together and it took off running like a scared rabbit. 'Course we just tested it short- short distances. We couldn't really get out and run with it. So-

JR: That sounds fun.

GW: Yeah it would have been fun if we had been off the Base with it. But I sold it three months later when I went into the Navy so...

JR: Oh yeah. Were there a lot of other young people from the Base going to Chandler High School?

GW: Uh yes, it was Bill Reynolds there, and there was some girls there. Um, I'd say there was probably, in the end it was probably ten or twelve going, you know. So-

JR: Do you remember what it was like taking the bus out from Williams all the way to the high school?

GW: Uh- well we would walk down to where we'd catch the bus. Well there's a couple places they'd stop inside the Base there, and we'd have to walk down there and catch the bus there. And of course us kids would usually kinda sit together, you know, but we just mingled in with the rest of the soldiers and we treated each other good, is all. It worked out anyway, we got along with them pretty well. And they dropped us off at the corner of Williams Field Road and Arizona Avenue.

JR: So you were just right there.

GW: And the old Chandler school building, which just expanded quite a bit, just had the old four columns. I think it was in front and back, and it had the upstairs and all of that. And while we were going to school there they were building runways out at the Base and they had this Winkler Truck lines coming by there with these dump trucks. And this gentleman that owned this trucking company, he was kind of a hot rodder, and he had straight pipes on all these trucks. And when they'd down shift them, getting ready to make the turn on Williams Field Road, well they made quite a bit of noise. Anyway I guess they kind of disrupted the classes a little with their noise.

JR: Sounds like it might. And so you guys must have seen a lot of planes flying overhead.

GW: Oh yes, constantly. The P-38's and then the Black Widows came in at last, but just before I went in Service. Then they had a little bit of these smaller T-6's and stuff that went earlier, which was flying around the base. That was about it you know.

JR: Was that the A-T6?

GW: Yeah. The A-T6, hm'm.

JR: Yeah those are kind of small.

GW: Yep just room for the pilot and the trainer

JR: Like a trainer?

GW: Hm'm. You got all the gages in the back seat, all- everything that's in the front seat. They can run it in the back seat.

JR: OK. So um, where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

GW: When Pearl Harbor was attacked I guess I was going to school in Scottsdale. That was, yeah hm'm.

JR: Do you remember what you were doing at the time when you heard about it?

GW: That day I couldn't tell you exactly what happened that day.

JR: OK.

GW: I know at Scottsdale, a lot of times, one boy used to drive down from Granite Reef Dam, they didn't have bus service but he had an old Model-A. He'd drive down to school and at lunch hour, instead of going and eating, we'd hop in that old Model-A and zoom down to the Arizona Canal right below the new Cross Cut Canal, where it connects to it. And we had some big cable swings we used to swing out and go swimming in our shorts then get back in our Levis and make it back to school in time for classes.

JR: That sounds fun. OK, so you said in February of 1944 is when you decided to enlist?

GW: Yeah February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Well we signed up a little before that but we went in on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, I believe it was.

JR: OK, and you were with Bob West who was-

GW: Bob West-

JR: -another Chandler High student?

GW: Yes, hm'm. And after boot camp we split and I didn't, we didn't keep up with each other from that point on too much. Then he got out. When he got out of the Service he got married right away. And he didn't live in Chandler there, I don't guess, for a while. I'm not for sure he did. But I never did run into him anyway.

JR: Right. OK, so you said that you joined the Navy?

GW: Hm'm, yes.

JR: Why did you choose the Navy?

GW: Well I thought I'd see more, get out and see more. You know I had a lot of land around me so I thought I'd go out and try the Navy and see how that was. And I was experienced a little- I was a little bit mechanically inclined and I asked to become an Aviation Machinist Mate. However I didn't know anything about that trade. I hadn't done any work in that trade. So, but anyway, I ended up in the engine room of the ship. And I did go through a basic engineering school after I went through basic training. And then while in school I got some Tomain poisoning. They called in a tonsil-ectomy, but it wasn't, because I had my tonsils out in 1933. But I sent off and got my records, and I just found that out about seven, eight years ago. But anyway, uh, what was I gonna say?

JR: Getting that poisoning.

GW: Yeah. Anyway I got a week behind and I got caught up on that. And I had to catch, my ship came and left, and so I had to catch another ship, the USS Shipley Bay. And I went over to the Hawaiian Islands and had a little time, and was in the Naval barracks until my ship came in, which was just shortly. And I boarded the Sargent Bay then.

JR: OK. All right, let's go back a little bit. You were, I think the induction center, where was that at?

GW: In Phoenix. You know when you get to that induction center they wanted you to stay at a hotel, then, for the day and night. Then we were gonna catch the train. And we caught the train about nine o'clock one night, and they wanted us to stay all day in Phoenix. Of course they bought all our meals and all that. And we did, and that evening before we caught the train, Jerry Skousen and Verna, which were just high school sweethearts then, came over to send us off. And it seemed like we went through old Mexico on the way on this train. Like a twelve-hour ride to San Diego, they took the long way around. Anyway, you know going in while the other guys that had been through it, they'd holler

at you, "You'll be sorry!" when you were coming in, because they knew you was a bunch of raw recruits coming in.

JR: Right. Well where did you receive your basic training?

GW: At San Diego Naval Training Station. And that's- all my training was there.

JR: Do you have any specific memories about basic training?

GW: It was kind of in the wintertime there. Two or three times it was kind of cold and, you know, windy, but outside of that, they keep you out on the ramp and play the march tunes. You know they would pick- you went to lunch according to how good the whole group was acting as a group. And if somebody was acting up in the group, you stood out on the asphalt longer before you had anything to eat. So anyway that's what they used to do, and they'd play these march songs as long as you were out there.

JR: Tell me a little bit about what your military specialty was.

GW: OK. Down in the engine room I had to start. I started out as an Oiler, then a Condensate Watch. Oiler, he goes around, takes all the readings, checks the oil, makes sure everything has oil cups on it, had oil in it. And you test the water to make sure it didn't have salt in it. Salt was a very grave enemy to your boiler water. And it was tested hourly to see how much salt was in it. And you'd take your readings hourly, the Oiler did. Then I went on Condensate Watch. This engine, it's a five cylinder engine-reciprocating engine, and it exhausts in the center of your cylinder, OK. You have a set of, not of evaps, well I can't recall it now. Anyway you had twenty-seven inches of vacuum on that. You were pulling that steam out more or less with the vacuum. We had to have a perfect twenty-seven inches of vacuum. If any time the vacuum dropped, you was in trouble, you know. You had to either slow down or do something for it. But it was a double acting steam engine, a reciprocating steam engine. It had two camshafts, and you could stop it on a dime by freezing, by changing the throw of the cams and shutting down the steam. But at the same time, that would blow off steam in the boiler. They'd have to blow off steam to get rid of it.

But anyway, Rukavina became the chief of the watch and he wanted me to be on Throttle. Throttle was pretty responsible job. In fact we had an officer on watch because we were control engine room. All there was, was a forward engine room, the steering room, and back and forth to the bridge, all were together. The steering room, before we get underway they'd have to test the rudder both mechanically and manually, the same way they had to test everything up in the forward engine room. They'd call us and let us know. The Throttle-man had one headset on and he left his left ear uncovered, and he had the mic here, and you had to squeeze the button to talk on it. We had three hand phones on the side, 21 MC, you could talk on. You was almost a telephone operator actually. Plus your- we had as many gages as a commercial air line at that time, that you had to keep an eye on all that. The Throttle-man had to keep an eye on all that. Beside you had your three levers there, two of the levers were to operate the two cam shafts, and the third one was steam. And our engine used super heated steam and therefore the engine had to have oil. Saturated steam, the moisture and the steam acted as lubricant. That's the difference on that.

JR: How many men would be in this control engine room?

GW: There would be a Chief of the watch, an Officer, and let's see, the Oiler, and myself. About four of us on a shift plus the Officer. And then we had the Oil king and he's

constantly coming in and out of the engine room. He kept the ship on even keel, and he'd shift oil and stuff, and water, to keep- to balance the ship. And then we had one gentleman that come down and he took care of filters. They filtered the oil out of the water because all of the water was re-used. This condensate water was re-used back in the tanks and was re-used in the boilers again.

JR: So it just cycles?

GW: Yeah, 'cause you only had so much pure water, because, you know, we had taken the salt out with the evaporators.

JR: How long did your shifts go for?

GW: Four-hour shift.

JR: Four hours?

GW: You might think well, gee, four hours on and eight off, that's an easy job. But, you take like for instance the graveyard shift. OK, this was over in the war area, war zone. Say you're on from twelve noon to four, OK, then you get off at four and its about five o'clock. For two hours they had general quarters for sub-watch, then again at four o'clock in the morning two hours. So, you know, and getting your meals and getting back and taking a bath, and get in your bunks. Like on graveyard shift you get off at four o'clock in the morning, you would go down and get in line to eat- well for two hours you'd be on duty for sub watch, and that'd be six o'clock. Then you go eat. Then you go take a bath and to get in your sack. Well then they come to wake you up at 11:30 to go on shift again, so you didn't get much sleep. You might just get to your sack and general quarters would sound, and you'd come back.

JR: Wow. So that was kind of tiring.

GW: We had lots of general quarters when you was in the war zone.

JR: Now when did you deploy over seas?

GW: About, let me look. I think, where's that at? What number is that?

JR: That's number thirteen.

GW: Oh, around May of '44 I think it was. Cause you know I was a week behind because of the sickness, and I went to the Naval barracks, and so forth, and then went on to my ship. But where our first encounter was with war, was when we- almost directly, when I got onto the ship to the Marianas, Saipan, Tinian.

JR: OK. What was the name of your ship again?

GW: USS Sargent Bay, that's CVE-A3. And if you go on the website, Yahoo!, Viewpoint or any of those, put that in and it'll come up and look for Art Plum. Military photos by Art Plum. And there's almost 100 photos there that shows different photos.

(miscellaneous staging conversation)

JR: OK, so you were on the USS Sargent Bay?

GW: Hm'm.

JR: And, the next question is of course, what theater of operations were you in? And that was the Pacific.

GW: Pacific.

JR: And you said that when you first entered the war zone it was in the Marianas?

GW: The Mariana, Northern Mariana. Saipan Tinian was our first invasion. We hit more or less in the middle of it.

JR: Can you describe that?

GW: Well you know what, I was down in the engine room, I was really learning the engine room, and all I got was the powder coming down the vents you know. We had strong vents a blowing because it was very hot there. Going down the engine room, that first step down the engine room was our first tier, was right by the stack, and it was like 150 degrees there and you didn't tarry there. You went right on by it, then over to the second floor. And we just hold on to the rails and slide, your hands were sweaty enough, you just slide to the bottom. Keep your feet up and don't let 'em touch the steps till you touch the bottom.

JR: OK.

GW: And actually I was seriously learning the engine room at that time, and I guess that's how I got promoted to Throttleman. And Rukavina, he made Chief of the watch. He was Second Class Machinist Mate, but he was Chief of the watch, but he wanted me on there, so I got that.

JR: How long did it take you to go from San Diego to where you were deployed to?

GW: To the Marianas?

JR: Yeah to the Marianas.

GW: Oh I went to San Diego, then we was- I was there at the barracks for a little while. Probably three weeks or so at least. At least.

JR: Now did the ship come under fire at all?

GW: Well yeah when we was out there, you're subject to fire. We hadn't been hit or anything, yet. We was in the Mariana then we went from there to, well I may not have them in order. Leyte, Palau, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and I'm missing one other one there. Maybe Luzon.

JR: Luzon.

GW: But at, let's see... There was several times that dive bombers, the suicide bombers, almost hit. While we were at- we were reloading or re-filling with food and stuff at the- let me look at the...

JR: You can flip maybe to the second page...

GW: I was trying to find the place, the location. I think... We were in the Atolls, Ulithi and the Atolls. Ulithi in the Atoll Islands. And that's where we'd meet with other ships and pick up our food supplies, ammunition, everything. Bombs and everything. Loading bombs at sea was a no-no. But rockets and everything else, though rockets wasn't used until the last part of the war. But the time we run out of bombs, we did load bombs at sea. But we were a fast moving ship. I don't mean we traveled fast. Everything was lined up for us more or less. So we were able to be refueled at sea, (with) aviation and ship fuel, we loaded parts at sea, plane parts. We'd have pilots, new pilots come in from various places- fly in you know- when we needed more planes, as we lost planes. Some of them, we'd lose them in the drink and that was it. And others were too bad to keep, shot up or something. The USS Bismarck Sea broke an anchor chain when we were at Ulithi and the Atolls. It was drifting at a fast pace to us. And it was cross ways to us and it was gonna hit our bow, which would have really tore their ship up. Probably done enough damage we'd have been out of it too. But anyway we were dead in the water, we couldn't go ahead. All the fire brick out of our boiler. It was coming at us at a pretty good clip, but they managed to get up enough steam. They stopped at fifteen foot of us. And you know two things that size, our flight deck was 498 foot long. Two things that

big, and our hull's only 5/8" thick, so that was real close. That same ship in 1945, the night it was joining us at Iwo Jima, it was traveling with the Lexington and the Lexington took... one hit- suicide... and the Bismarck she took two suicide planes and sunk. Three hundred and twenty-one men gone.

Back to Ulithi, I went on the whale boat to get a load of fire brick, and you won't believe this. We got this firebrick off of a cement ship, this cement ship had a hull about a foot thick, and you would think that darn thing shouldn't be floatin'. But if you looked inside of it and seen all that iron, parts for everything, including firebrick for the boilers, you know. We got a load of firebrick there and had to load it down to the gunnels on the whale boat, just a regular little whale boat. And boy we sat real gently all the way back to the boat with that. You didn't want to rock the boat with that!

JR: So the cement ship that was kind of a supply ship?

GW: A supply, yeah. It was towed there, it had no engines. It was towed.

JR: So it was kind of where'd you go to get, pick up...

GW: Supplies yes.

JR: -or get repairs or whatever. Yeah. Um, let's go, if you want to look at the second page for your notes there, we're gonna move a little bit to... Which invasions were you involved in- was your ship involved in?

GW: Leyte, Palau, then Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Well at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, I guess our VC83 squadron took the hardest beating there. We had the USS Spikefish, which is a submarine, picked up one of our pilots from the sea. And we had one TBM crew at sea for eleven days before they were ever found. Two of them were still alive.

JR: What's the TBM?

GW: TBM plane.

JR: Oh, OK.

GW: That's a picture of the plane, that plane right up there.

JR: Oh so it got shot down.

GW: Hm'm, it's a three man crew.

JR: OK, so it got shot down but the crew survived?

GW: Yeah. Two of them were still alive but one of them just washed off about four hours before they found them, so...

(going through notes)

GW: This is at June 6<sup>th</sup> - well three different times, we had suicide planes dive on us, but one of them you could have said if he went the other way, he could maybe be on another ship. You couldn't tell which ship he was after, but he was shot down. Several times we lucked out that way. We considered ourselves a lucky ship. But we had one that come pretty close to us at Okinawa, I guess it was. June 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> at Okinawa. We had a Zeke dive on us, and he didn't start shooting. I had been on the fan tail and seen him. I was talking to this other guy, and looked up, and happened to see him before general quarters sounded. Of course the conversation didn't last long. General quarters went off and anyway he come down, he was diving. After he got down so low he opened fire on us and he shot up a few planes and guys on the flight deck. But we hit him with a five-inch. In fact he was so close to us that parts of the plane fell on the flight deck. Then he crashed in the ocean about 100 yards at our bow. They knocked the whole tail end of him; he went into the ocean on fire.

JR: That must have been kind of scary.

GW: Yeah. Yeah, he had it coming. Forty minutes, forty second sooner than that we got some, there are pictures of what we shot from our ship of the Natoma Bay, it took a hit, a suicide plane got it and they didn't even get to fire a shot at it. Which was bad, sad that they didn't. Anyway, they lost a few men there.

JR: So, answer this question as you feel comfortable answering the question. You were talking about a lot of these...you're right in the middle of a battle and there's a lot of bombing and that kind of thing happening, and you're young at that point. What kind of feelings were you having at that time?

GW: You know I handled it better then than I do now. It didn't bother me then, so... And I never talked about it afterwards, after the war. So yeah. While we were at the Ulithi and the Atolls, the USS Mississinewa- it's a tanker ship- and it had loaded us with fuel several times. It was just below a ways from us anchored there. Early one morning a Kaiten- it's a two-man suicide sub- or you can call it a two-man suicide torpedo- either way you want to call it, it was sunk by that. And it was loaded with aviation gasoline. But we'd, you know, we'd take time to load up with food from one place, and we'd do it in about a day, a day and a half's time, and we'd move on. 'Cause we'd get our fuel at sea, and a lot of other things at sea, mail and all that. So we could go from one invasion to the next, so you know you didn't have to stop and take two weeks to load up or anything. Except one time we were putting in firebricks, we were tied up a few days there.

JR: So what was the major role of your ship do you think for the war effort?

GW: Well you know originally a lot of these ships were built for England. You know, to give to England. In fact our ship was. And it had changed because the war, I guess, had lingered on. Anyway it was used for us. A lot of the escorts were to haul planes to the war front, you might say. And they was always needing more pilots and more planes, 'cause they was wrecking a lot of them and losing a lot. So that's what they were for, and then they escorted tankers. We escorted tankers for a short while, but not too long. And let's see, what else.

JR: Let me talk a little bit about sort of... you kind of got into life on the ship. You know with your ships, you'd be doing different things at different hours. Um, do you remember what the food was like on the ship?

GW: You know we used to get sponge eggs. You know it's just like a layer cake, you know? Only they'd cut it and it was spongy. You know, imitation eggs and imitation cheese. And sometimes you couldn't chew it all. You didn't get no fresh vegetables, and on and on. The doctors would tell you that you're not getting enough fresh vegetables, but there wasn't nothing you could do about it, you know.

JR: Did you ever think about those malts back at the base?

GW: Oh you bet. That, I mean, that was the first thing we got. You wanted an old greasy hamburger, that sounded so good. Or a ham sandwich, you know, just a ham and cheese sandwich. Oh boy. And we would con the officers you know, the engineering officers. We got along with the engineering officer real good. And when we'd get underway, you know, you had a little bit more than you could handle, so we'd take the headset and give it to the officer and give him the log. Because every time you made a change in speed it had to be logged, written down, you know. We had, most of our changes, speed changes, had an RPM indicator. You know I could turn it to 140 RPM or you'd answer by putting

your's to 140. And then you had one-thirds, two-thirds and all that, which we didn't use that much. And course they could give us speeds over the phones, you know, in emergencies if things got out of hand and wasn't working or something.

But the officers were good to work with us, and they would do more than that you know. So that made it nice, cause you had all the gauges to watch. When we'd get underway and any time we got kicked up to a pretty good speed, and we didn't have the steam, we'd scream over at the fire room- just about eight feet over to the fire room- and we'd scream over at them there, it was set back just a little bit. But they were right in between there. And if they weren't watching the gauges and you'd start pulling that steam down, and you could pull it down pretty good, you'd have to stop and wait for them to build it up. You know they'd throw in another burner or two. All this fuel is pre-heated before, and it's blown in there under pressure. Otherwise it would've been ready to explode. You know it's heated just to that point. And we used super heated steam. And like I said, we had two oil pumps, two feed pumps, four pumps for fire pumps. In our engine room we had a bottom level, a second level, and then on up to the top of the second level. Right over top of us was the lunch room or the cafeteria, whatever you want to call it.

JR: Where you had the spongy eggs?

GW: Yeah! The spongy eggs and cheese. OK, and another thing about the food. Bug got into our white flour so from that point on we had whole wheat bread with the little seeds on it. So that lasted a while. We ate lots of rice and beans. On every Thursday I believe it was we had beans.

JR: What was that like being on the ship and being a young man that kind of grew up in Arizona and the desert-

GW: Well...

JR: -and being on the water?

GW: I'll tell you that I would enjoy being back here in the heat. I didn't get away from the heat let's put it that way. 'Cause it was hot down in the engine room. It was a difference, the constant noise of the machinery around you. In fact I had a buddy from Iowa, just recently I wrote a couple of letters for him and he wanted me to write them. He's having a hearing problem and he wasn't having much success getting help from his doctor, so I wrote two letters for him, and told him how noisy it was in the engine room. See we had this big generator that would probably, well not as big as Chandler is now, but it would have generated enough power for Chandler a few years back. And we had a big generator in the forward engine room and one in the back. And this guy, he run the switchboard right in front of that generator. And of course I could see up through the grating-- it was just a steel grating-- and you could see through it to the second floor of the engine room. And of course on the second floor you had air injectors. That was that vacuum thing I was trying to think of a while ago. It pulls the vacuum out of the exhaust out of the engine. And you had the evaporators to make fresh water for baths and for boilers. But you know, by having two oil pumps and two feed pumps, you could take one oil pump and overhaul it with the other one. May speed it up. And your oil tank would hold about 60 gallons of oil and kept circulating through the engine. So that worked out. We had several fire pumps. You could overhaul any one of them, you know, while the others was working. And a few times overseas we had to take saltwater baths because



there was chipping in both sets of evaps at the same time. But they kept enough fresh water for drinking.

JR: OK. Now did you say that there was someone from Chandler, or someone from the area, that served on the ship with you?

GW: Yeah, Bobby Novak. I didn't see much of him on board ship. But like when we came home, we hitchhiked home together one time. Things like that. Same with the Odom twins, I didn't see them. You kind of hung with your own crew. In fact you stayed so darn sleepy all the time, any time you could crash anywhere and sleep, hell, on the iron or whatever, you slept. Now there was a few guys, photographers and things like that, they had chances, they got their sleep in. But not us, shift workers, you didn't.

JR: So Bobby Novak, he was from Chandler?

GW: Yeah, he was from Chandler, yeah. His parents used to run Novak's Jewelry there, in town there. I think what happened, he was kind of about to run into a little trouble. Now don't quote this, but they kind of enlisted him in early at fifteen and a half 'cause they were expanding in their shop, I think, because of Williams Base-- Air Force Base-- you know, cause it just came in. His father was a watch repairman.

JR: I want to ask you something. This was something you mentioned before we started the interview, which I thought was sort of interesting. You know in 1943 or early 1944, the war has already been going on and there have already been some young men from Chandler that have gone into the war, and you talked about how you felt about that. How did you feel, did you feel like you needed to go, or how did you feel?

GW: Yeah. I felt that we should go, you know we was old enough. When you get old enough...hm'm.

JR: Did you feel like, some pressure?

GW: Well I don't know, I guess you could call it pressure. I didn't let it bother me too much but I thought I owed it to my country. My father was in World War I.

JR: World War I, that's right. Can you, um, your father was one of the...did you say your father was one of the bonus... oh gosh I forgot the name of it. Not bonus soldiers but-

GW: He was just a regular soldier in France. Foot soldier I guess.

JR: Yeah. Maybe I'm thinking of a different person. It might have been a different person who was there. What do you remember about the other men that you served with?

GW: You know most of them was just super guys. I, when you see them, you're glad to see them. You know what I mean? We got along together and we go to shore together. You know you might go with two or three guys one time and then another two or three the next and so on, like that. But usually hung to one or two, it seemed like. The Odom twins, at the end of the war, we took our ship. I was on throttle going through the Panama Canal, and we drug bottom going up. We went up, we took a load of planes around to Jacksonville, Florida. And going up that little river to Jacksonville, Florida, why we drug bottom going up there, 'cause when we got to Boston, you know, we had to tear everything down, and put it out of commission, and spray it with preservative. And we ran into a lot of this stuff, seaweed and stuff.

JR: Now were you ever wounded?

GW: No, no. Now this guy right up here, this guy right here was, he was on the flight deck. There was just three of us there that year. At the...

JR: Is this the gentleman that, is this the time that you talked about where there was the Japanese suicide bomber?

GW: Yeah, that one plane that strafed us. He was on the flight deck and got nipped on that. He was just wounded so he wasn't...

When that picture was made there he had cancer, he'd had cancer for about four years. Bladder cancer. And he got an infection of the bladder and almost died.

JR: OK. How did you feel about the people that you were fighting?

GW: Well you know...you was ticked off at 'em to say the least at the time. After the war I worked with a Japanese person, and in fact I was just talking to his sister-in-law yesterday. We learned to get along, we didn't talk about the war for a long time, or maybe never. I don't remember us ever talking about it. But anyway we, you know, I got over it and got along.

JR: What are some of your strongest memories of your experiences during the war?

GW: Uh, let's see. I guess, you know, when I came home I didn't consider myself a hero or anywhere near one. So, I didn't even talk about it, in fact. I'd hear other people talk and I'd listen to them, you know, put time in it. But you know if they seemed like they was going into it deeply and bragging, I'd walk away, or you know get out of it some way. But now it's, well I think what happened, the wife said 'I'm going downtown to buy a computer.' This in '01. Anyway we had a little gal who really knew computers. Her sweetheart put them together, made them, and she helped her out, got her started on it. She came running in one day and said, "your ships just had a gathering." I said "you gotta be kiddin' me." I said "Boy if they have another one I'm going." Anyway we discovered in '03 there was one in San Diego- in '02 there wasn't one. So I called and made all the arrangements and went. I was glad I did, had a great time there. We was right on the- overlooking the pier there on Harbor Street, I believe it was. Oh, and this is strictly the Sargent Bay. And there was eight of our pilots there. So I got to talk to all of them. I'll show you some pictures of them.

JR: How did it feel seeing all of your old shipmates?

GW: Well it was pretty good, you know. I went in, just walked in, and told them who I was and what I did, and what my rank was, and where I worked, and what I did. And this little, a Captain's little daughter, there in that picture in '07 in Chicago, she says, "I'm gonna call granddad tonight and see if he remember you." He wasn't able to come. He was 84 back in '03. And so I told her what to tell him so he'd remember me. And she did. She come back the next day, "yeah he remembered you!"

JR: Did you have like a nickname or anything like that?

GW: Uh, yeah they called me Little Willy. There was two Williams down there, and the other guy he had been in Navy before, and served about four to six years, I can't remember now. And they called him Williams. He was smaller than I was, shorter, had a lot of tattoos. So 'cause I was younger, they called me Little Willy.

JR: Did you receive a lot of mail from home and stuff like that?

GW: Yeah, I wasn't too good at writing letters. One of the little gals, I can't think of her name, she lived on the Base and she moved and went to California. I wrote her and we wrote back and forth a few times. Then after the war I met a gal in Long Beach and we wrote back and forth. I broke up, and thought well not mature enough yet, I got to settle down a little bit more before I marry.

- JR: Yeah. I ask about that because when I interviewed Corley ([Haggarton] he said something interesting, that his family would send him copies of the old *Chandler Arizonan* newspaper so he was able to see what-
- GW: Was going on.
- JR: -was happening in town, and then also with the other boys in other areas of the war. Which was kind of neat.
- GW: Yeah, I, I didn't, my folks didn't send me that.
- JR: And the newspaper would publish some of the letters and things like that.
- GW: Yeah they did, they used to publish a lot of that.
- JR: OK. Well where were you on VE Day?
- GW: VE Day I was probably... VE Day I was what, probably about in Okinawa somewhere, Iwo Jima, Okinawa. Oh another thing, our pilots at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, after the initial bombing and, you know, the troops started to go in, our pilots was chosen to, as spotters. Well spotters fly 200 to 600 feet off the ground and take pictures. And I know there was a deal in the, I have a copy of the ships log, and I know one day they copied over 940 photos. And back then they had to hang them on clotheslines, and you know, all that. And anyway, these pilots would fly over and shoot these pictures, and then they'd develop them, and fly them over. And they had little parachute things for them and they'd drop them on the control carrier or ship for the Admirals to look at, and see what needed to be hit. You know, so they could see what the progress was. And then too, we'd go back and hit certain areas, and they would call for help just like those Marines called for help. They had run out of ammunition and they needed help.
- JR: What, where was that at when that happened?
- GW: That was at Iwo Jima.
- JR: In Iwo Jima?
- GW: Hm'm.
- JR: And what had happened, what happened actually to those Marines?
- GW: Uh, well I can't tell you exactly what happened to them, but I guess they was pleased to get the ammunition. They was totally surrounded and when they landed they had 88 holes in the plane. I say, s "Mary Grace how many holes you say they had?" She said, "88." I said, "OK." You know the ships log keep up with all that. All the repair work and everything on the plane, so, and how much ammunition is used, bombs and stuff.
- JR: Do you have a copy of all that?
- GW: Yeah.
- JR: Do, can you describe what it was like being in Okinawa and Iwo Jima?
- GW: Yeah, like I say they were on that- you know we didn't get off the ship except once in a while, we go back to an island and get off for- and they'd get us some green beer and stuff. And back on and back to work. But that was mainly our part cause you know we was constantly getting into battle. And a time or two there'd be... all over, several places there was some of the islands was just rocks you know, and some of the islands had a lot of growth on them, you know, a lot of coconut trees. We run into tons of coconut trees floating out in the ocean there, where they bombed the heck out of the island there, you know. And big coconuts, unpeeled coconuts. And that's kind of how...
- JR: OK, and where were you on VJ Day?
- GW: VJ Day, we just landed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August and just a few days later this older Williams boy- I went to shore with him and one or two other guys, I can't remember, it was four of

us together I guess. We went into a bar there and had a drink, and he says, "You guys better buy yourself a bottle this place in gonna be closed." "How does he know all that?" I wondered. But sure enough in a little bit they closed the place down ... We just happened to wander out into the street there and here come a Chief and his girlfriend in a convertible Chrysler, a two-seated convertible. And he said, "Come on, jump in!" They picked up two or three other sailors and there was about oh, I don't know, we was all sitting up on the top and we just drove. I think we drove till midnight that night and this was probably- Oh, we did go to her house for a while, and we might have ate something there I don't know.

JR: So you were kind of celebrating?

GW: Yeah just celebrating. We drove around to all the hotels and everything, wherever we thought we might run into servicemen. We drove down on the beach. We just kept driving that night I think you might say. [George adds after interview that he remembers that every two-story or higher building had people in them who were throwing down paper. He recalls that the streets were covered in paper.]

JR: And where were you at?

GW: In Long Beach, California.

JR: Oh so you were back in the U.S. by then?

GW: Yes, we just got here on the 9<sup>th</sup> and...

JR: So you returned back on August 9<sup>th</sup>?

GW: Hm'm. I guess while we were on our way back they were dropping the big bombs probably.

JR: What did you think when you heard about that? About the dropping of those bombs.

GW: Well considering what, there was going to be a lot more Americans killed if we kept going on, and as bad as it sounds, it had to be done. So I think that, because, you know, afterwards I found out all the planes that they had about ready to go, that was going to be faster than ours, that was jet planes. And they, if that be true, if this lasted another year or two, we might of lost the war, or at least have lost a lot more lives anyway.

JR: Um, what do you recall about the day that you left the service?

GW: You know I was kind of looking forward to it in a way. I had hesitations and everything. Probably if I had had a higher rank, I would have stayed. In fact I was offered a higher rank one time, but I didn't take advantage of it. When we decommissioned the ship at Boston, we was cleaning out the feed tanks, that's fresh water tanks for the boilers in the forward engine room. I took care of the back engine room too, I had it perfect. I had 22 men working under me, and just me and one Warrant Officer, and that's all, and then the Captain. So, somebody was smoking down in the tank and there was some rags there-- cleaning rags-- and I'm sure that's what happened, or an electrical fire anyway. And anyway that was on a weekend and Monday morning I come back, I was on Captain report. And so we went down in the engine room. I says, "I don't care what the rest of you guys do, I'm sitting." I didn't know, I hardly knew what to do. The Warrant Officer come down 'cause we was running behind on getting decommissioned, you know. They took so many guys out of the forward engine room there was nobody there to finish it off. So anyway the Warrant Officer come down and says, "What the hell's going on?" I says "Well I'm a prisoner and I don't think I'm allowed to work with these guys." He says "We'll see about this." He went up off there, and we get a long real well, me and him,

we got a long real well, and he come back about 45 minutes later and continued to sit there. And he says, "You're no longer on report, I put your grade in for Second-Class." And sure enough he did, he gave me a good score too. And he went up to talk to the Captain and gave me a good score. I didn't know whether he was going to come back and put me in the pen or what. But, the war was over and there wasn't no dang rush, and we was coming back at night and working there you know.

JR: Right.

GW: And that was a bit too much so I just...

JR: What did you do when you returned from the war? Did you go right to Chandler or what did you do?

GW: Yeah I lived in Chandler. I stayed with my folks for a while there in Chandler. I worked, did some work in construction, cement work, just a little. And I went to Body and Fender school, and I think Corley went to that same Body and Fender school, and two or three others.

JR: Where was this school at?

GW: Out at Falcon Field. And then I got a chance to go to work as a parts man at downtown Mesa at Robson Pontiac. They had Pontiacs and they also had Massey Harris tractors and combines. Combines they really sold good. And then all the parts, they had a whale of a parts department for combines. And uh, I worked there for a few years and ended up married.

JR: Now who did you marry?

GW: Della Lorene Williams. Robertson was her maiden.

JR: Is it D-E?

GW: D-E-L-L-A.

JR: And her maiden name was Robinson?

GW: Robertson. R-O-B-E-R-T-S-O-N.

JR: Robertson, OK. And when did you get married?

GW: Umm. We went down to Florence and got married. Lottie P. Divine, female Justice of the Peace.

JR: Oh yeah?

GW: Oh gosh.

JR: Well you came back in 1945?

GW: Yeah.

JR: So how long after you returned from the war did you get married?

GW: We got married in '47 I think something like that. [actually 1950]

JR: '47. And you have one son?

GW: One son, yeah.

JR: And what's his name?

GW: Roger Leon Williams. And he's deceased. At age 33, why he started having problems and his heart, having heart problems you know. And course the enzyme test showed it was the heart. But he didn't have cholesterol, high cholesterol, or anything like that, but later on they found, they finally did a scan and he had a humongous brain tumor. They said it was right in the stem of his brain and they couldn't operate. But it was malignant. But whether it was malignant or not, it was going to get him, cause the growth of it was crushing the brain. They felt that he had had this for a long time, and that he would retrain his brain, other parts of his brain, as this was squeezing out the other part. Even,

you know after he had his heart surgery, why, he had a heart attack, you know, and after that, when he had his heart surgery, why he told them, he says... Anyway he went back to work, he worked for the steel company. And it turned out, his school teacher- they came to his school, I guess it was, or his school teacher, and asked for a reference, or if they had any student that would be willing to go to work for this steel company. And he was studying to be a computer...engine- oh.

JR: Like a programmer?

GW: No to build, and build construction. Drafting, drafting that's what it was.

JR: OK. Yeah.

GW: And so the teacher told him about him, so they took him. It was Schuff Steel. They're still in Phoenix I think.

JR: Hm'm.

GW: And he worked for them even up until he died. One of the ladies come to the funeral and I talked to her. I said, "Was there any indication that he wasn't functioning properly or did you see any thing?" They said, "No we didn't see anything." But he came home one day and couldn't find his home so he had to ask Police.

JR: Yeah that's really very tragic. That's sad. So how long were you married for? To Delle?

GW: Oh gosh about 57 years or so, something...

JR: That's a long time.

GW: She died in '05.

JR: So you were married 57 years.

GW: She- cancer runs in her family.

JR: Did you all live in Chandler or somewhere else?

GW: Well most of time we lived in Mesa and Gilbert, all these years, yeah.

JR: Hm'm, OK.

GW: Well actually we used to have Chandler water right here, I mean Mesa water, and a Mesa address here. And then they decided Baseline would be the separation center so they disconnected the water. Mesa unhooked and hooked up Gilbert, so...

JR: When did you move to this house that you're in now?

GW: About 32 years ago, 17<sup>th</sup> of February...1977

JR: Seventeen years ago so...

GW: No 32 years ago.

JR: 32 years ago. So that'd be...

GW: We bought it in '50... My minds not working. [actually 1952]

JR: That's ok, we have it down that it was 32 years ago, we'll just subtract 32 from 2009.

GW: Yeah I have a custom-built home. I owned this whole five acres then and sold the rest of it off.

JR: OK. Thinking back after you came back from the war and you were kind of around in the Chandler-Mesa area, how do you think Chandler was impacted by World War II?

GW: It was impacted by Williams Field quite a bit. It put it on the map you might say. And course the hotel was already on the map, but that added to it I guess.

JR: What do you remember about the San Marcos Hotel?

GW: Well I used to get off the bus downtown, you know it dropped us off over near, right downtown right in front of the drug store at Boston and right straight up from the hotel. What you call it?

JR: Buffalo?

GW: Buffalo.

JR: San Marcos? Yeah, San Marcos Way.

GW: San Marcos Way or somethin'. OK. Yeah I used to get off there and go right by their window and stop and look at the Indian goodies in the window.

JR: The Indian Den?

GW: Yeah the Indian Den.

JR: Did you ever go in the hotel?

GW: Uh, no I don't think so. I might have been in there once, seems like I might have, I can't remember. I know we used it for our class gatherings, you know, somebody got the prices set and notified everybody on what the prices were for our get togethers.

JR: Like a dance?

GW: Yeah, for dancing and all that.

JR: OK. It's been interesting asking people about the hotel because a lot of people who grew up in the town seem to have a strong association with the hotel. You know they remember it to some extent but they didn't really go in there or anything like that.

GW: Hm'm. Yeah I don't know, maybe we felt that was out of our class at the time.

JR: A little more exclusive?

GW: Yeah.

JR: OK.

GW: But I played football and track and basketball, I wasn't super at any of it. Delbert Brooks he was a running back and Gerry Skousen was center. I just played that one fall season.

JR: Did you go back to high school when you came back?

GW: No I didn't and I probably should have. I thought well I'm too old you know, and didn't want to be dating those young girls.

JR: Yeah. But some of the men did.

GW: Yeah Corley did. Hm'm. And I thought well, maybe you shouldn't.

JR: Right, OK. Did you know anyone in Chandler that lost his or her life during the war?

GW: You know I studied on that and I can't think of anybody. Maybe that's a good thing.

JR: Yeah. Do you feel like your service in World War II affected the rest of your life?

GW: Not in a bad way, no. It's been in a good way. I've enjoyed it these last few years.

JR: Yeah. So how do you think it affected you? Positively?

GW: In the last few years I'll tell you going to this dance out here in Falcon Field I just enjoy the heck out of that. Anytime there's a Veterans Day thing, I'm gonna try to make more of 'em for what time I have left. And I got to do a fly over, three planes, three T-6's. Had four lined up and one of them broke down at the last minute, couldn't go.

JR: Oh.

GW: Susan Churchill, her father was on our ship, and of course Brian, his father used to repair old planes and keep them going. So that's how Brian got into it as a kid he worked on as a kid, and he's been a pilot for US Airlines for 20 years now. They're just a great couple and they come to all of our meetings and everything. So they're just a great couple to know and be with. She treats me almost like I'm her father and she calls Jesse her uncle. Jesse Odom, one of the twins.

JR: And you have a grandson right?

GW: One grandson, yeah.

JR: And what's his name?

GW: Roger L. Williams.

JR: And one thing I didn't ask was, how did you meet your wife?

GW: Uh, let's see, where did I meet her? Oh, on a blind date I guess.

JR: Oh yeah?

GW: A Chandler boy, Jim Jones. Do you know him? Eddie Jones? Yeah, Jim Jones from Chandler, he's a married man now, he married a, she's an ex teacher. He was dating a little girl over there, in fact one of the other guys I knew, a sailor, was home on leave. He was dating her first, then Jim Jones started dating her, and then I asked her to find me another girlfriend so she did. So I ended up marrying her.

JR: And was she a local Chandler girl?

GW: No she was from Glendale. Glendale.

JR: OK. What lessons did you learn from this time in your life? During the World War II period.

GW: I think we learned to do things better, to try and do 'em right. Seems like people are getting away from that, you know, and when you promise something, stick by it, all that, you know. I think that's what got us through the war, you know, on all fronts, was people working together and everything, and that hasn't seemed to happen since. You know from the ladies that worked in the factory down to the serviceman, all of them, they just tried a little harder I think.

JR: What lessons for today's generation would you like to pass on?

GW: I'd like to see them do a little more of that. Be a little more like that, be a little more for their country, do things for each other... Maybe they're playing too much and not working enough, which we used to do. Of course now at my age I'm trying to play a little bit.

JR: Right. Well you earned it. Do you have any other thoughts that you'd like to share?

GW: Let's see.

JR: Anything that I might have missed that was important?

GW: Oh we were the first American aircraft carriers, the USS Sargent Bay and the USS Makin Island was, the first two American aircraft carriers to ever drop anchor in Japanese home waters during the war. I didn't know that until I read it and I got it in our ships log. And of course it's in the Makin Island log too. I know a couple bomber pilots off the Makin Island too.

JR: Hm'm.

GW: And let's see if there's anything else. And we were shot at by three or four times by suicide planes, but only that one came the closest to getting us that I told you about. And then the (inaudible), I told you about that.

JR: You mentioned the Bismarck.

GW: The Bismarck Sea.

JR: And it sinking.

GW: Yeah.

JR: Where was that at?

GW: That was in Iwo Jima. I think it was traveling with the Lexington. The Lexington took one hit and they took two hits and there were about 321 deceased. Let's see... Oh yeah there were several, of the eight pilots that showed up in '03 Reunion, every one of 'em had been down at least once, and some of 'em twice. Jack Durham, and I can't seem to remember his pilot, they were both shot down at Iwo Jima. That's the same place Bush was, went down. And they made it back through water, but they was about 35 miles



away from us. One plane circled them and another plane went after a destroyer to come pick 'em up. The destroyers did all the work for us 'cause they were faster than we were. They could pick up. We kept on our regular course. They come pick 'em up and bring 'em back to us, you know. One of those had to go to the hospital but, the other two come on back.

JR: Hm'm.

GW: That was one thing I forgot. There was a lot of other things that happened. Incidents, and a lot of plane crashes. We had one plane hung over the side and they thought the pilot had dropped in the drink. Somebody said I seen him hit the water. It was searchin' the water, every one lookin' down, and here he was, the plane was upside down hanging over the side. He was still up in the plane. But uh, you know it was easy for them to come in and miss a cable, you know. They had the cable running across there and they had a tail hook. And then go and crash, turn one way or the other.

JR: It seems like it'd be kind of tricky trying to land on the ship.

GW: Yes. Hm'm.

JR: You'd have to be pretty skilled.

GW: We had some killed in plane crashes on the deck you know, in different ways, you know, things like that. And when they discard an old plane why they'd take all the good things off of it they could. Push it over the side. And so we were over seas there that main time, over 14 months I guess. And we go from place to place, and we, like I say, we just went from one invasion to the next, you might say. And loading up, we'd stop a day or two and load up and move on, and we could refuel at sea.

JR: Yeah. So you guys were an important support element basically?

GW: Yes, yes. Seemed like that the last six invasions was bang bang bang, went along down the line with them.

JR: So you were right in the middle of it.

GW: Yeah. So.

JR: All right. Well great. Well thank you very much Mr. Williams.

*Earnest: I'm just kind of curious, Jean in this instance, she never really asks this but this is more... Just kind of curious when you guys, did you guys get messages? How did you get messages of what was going on in the war on the ship? Do they do any announcement over speakers or anything?*

GW: We had one little radio in the kitchen there which is right above the, not the kitchen but the dining area and that's where you went to listen to Rose. Tokyo Rose.

JR: Tokyo Rose.

GW: Yeah and course you couldn't believe that. You know you was so tired you didn't take time to go in there, if you had a minute you wanted to go to sleep if you could.

*Earnest: I was just kind of curious cause you know you always see those pictures you know of the guys hunkered over the radio or-*

GW: And they did have to have inspection every so often; well they didn't make it too often. They had compartments you know and they had to be mopped clean as a whip and everything. And boy we just crashed on cold iron anywhere, course it wasn't to cold over there it was pretty hot. And then, all the time you know if you come off shift- say you work swing shift- you come off shift and you take a little piece of tarp and go to the flight deck, roll it out cause you wasn't gonna sleep past four o'clock. They get you up for GQ

at four. And the planes wait for the bombin', we bombed, 'cause they start bombing before daylight you know. They'd take off and try to be at the island just as it'd be getting light enough to see. And we'd fly combat, if it was, when we was in bombing groups. Say there was five carriers, one would fly combat, combat air patrol. They'd circle us all day while the other would bomb the island you know, and that's the way they worked it. And they would alternate that. Maybe one carrier would get it one time, you know, until they just keep circling that way. And the time when the Mississinewa was sunk, we found another suicide sub or torpedo, whatever you want to call it, a Kaiten. They sunk it from about five miles from where we were located.

JR: How do you spell that? Kaiten?

GW: It's K-A-I-T-E-N, something like that. They got one on display in... In fact I think there's one, a picture of one in the pictures I told you about. And you know I tried to bring up some of those pictures, was gonna print 'em. It brings up everything, you know all the writing around it and everything but it don't print the picture, and I don't know if that's some kind of a protection.

JR: Umm...

GW: I thought maybe it was to keep people maybe from using those photos to advertise or something. But I don't know. Maybe I don't know that much about computers.

JR: Well yeah. Probably where it just comes up with the little box. Yeah, not sure on that one. OK. Great, all right, well maybe we can take a look at a couple photographs.

END OF INTERVIEW