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Interview with
Morris Williamson
April 25, 1977

Place of Interview: Granbury, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Mr. and Mrs. Morris Williamson

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Granbury, Texas

Date: April 25, 1977

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Morris Williamson for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 25, 1977, in Granbury, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Williamson in order to get their reminiscences and experiences and impressions while they were at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack there on December 7, 1941. Mr. Williamson was actually stationed at the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base, but happened to be at home in Honolulu with his wife during the first part of the attack.

Mr. Williamson, to begin this interview, would you just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself? In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Williamson: I was born in Hood County, Granbury, Texas, and at the present time my education involves four years of college, which I'm completing in two weeks.

Marcello: Did you mention in what year you were born?

Mr. Williamson: 1918.

Marcello: When did you enter the service?

Mr. Williamson: I entered the service on December 10, 1936.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Mr. Williamson: I wanted to see the world.

Marcello: Why did you pick the Navy as opposed to one of the other branches?

Mr. Williamson: I went over to enlist, and the Navy recruiting station happened to be the closest office that I went to, and therefore I joined the Navy.

Marcello: Did you enlist in Fort Worth?

Mr. Williamson: I enlisted in Fort Worth.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Mr. Williamson: I went to San Diego, California, and spent six months there taking training.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened during your boot camp days that you think we need to get as part of the record, or was it just the normal Navy boot camp?

Mr. Williamson: It was a normal Navy boot camp, but I think that while I was in this boot camp I've become very democratic toward our flag. I felt real proud that I was in the Navy.

Marcello: Now at the time that you were in boot camp, or even before that, when you enlisted in the Navy, how closely

were you keeping abreast with current events and world affairs and things of that nature?

Mr. Williamson: Well, I lived on a farm, and I knew hardly anything that was going on in the world--mostly just around our locality.

Marcello: Mrs. Williamson, I'd like to have you do the same thing at this stage. In other words, I want you to give me a biographical sketch of yourself.

Mrs. Williamson: Well, I was born on one of the outer islands--the Island of Maui--and I went to public grade school and finished high school. It was a seaport town, and between islands was a wonderful channel. The Navy used the channel, and so the ships came in regularly, and that was how I met my husband.

Marcello: When were you born?

Mrs. Williamson: I was born in 1922. Jack, my husband, was on a submarine tender at that time. And so they came in, and I was just fifteen, and I met him on the beach, and I was still in high school. So we started a correspondence, and that went on until I finished high school. Then I went to Honolulu to enter the University of Hawaii. But I only lasted one semester because he wooed me (laughter) and we got married. And we were married in Honolulu, and unfortunately his ship was supposed to sail for the Philippines the day after we got married.

Marcello: When did you get married?

Mrs. Williamson: On January 4, 1940--two days before I was eighteen--and I was still underage. We had to send for my father from the other island to come down and give his consent or I couldn't get a marriage license because I was underage. He pulled some strings with his officer aboard his ship and got him transferred to the submarine base, so he didn't have to sail with the ship when the ship left the day after we were married.

So we stayed down there, in Honolulu, in the little apartment, and he was on the submarine base. And then we had a little child. Our son was born. And the child was . . . on December 7th our oldest boy was six months old. No . . . well, he was how old? That was in '41.

Mr. Williamson: He was born in June.

Mrs. Williamson: No, he was older than that, wasn't he?

Mr. Williamson: About seven months old.

Mrs. Williamson: He was born in '40, and the war was in '41, so he was quite a bit older than that.

Mr. Williamson: Seven months old.

Mrs. Williamson: I went to work at Pearl Harbor right after we were attacked. We were in our apartment and we had a son, and he was on the submarine base.

Marcello: Okay, let's back up a little bit. For the record, what is your nationality?

Mrs. Williamson: My father was Korean, and my mother was Spanish, so I am a mixture.

Marcello: Which in a way is very representative of the Hawaiian Islands, is it not?

Mrs. Williamson: Yes, that is why they call it the "melting pot" of the Pacific. It is very common out there--the racial mixtures.

Marcello: Mr. Williamson, did you go to any special school or anything of that nature after you had completed boot camp?

Mr. Williamson: I didn't go to any school until I was assigned to the submarine base.

Marcello: Did you go directly from boot camp to the submarine base?

Mr. Williamson: I went directly by ship. I was put on a ship, and we sailed to Pearl Harbor, and from there I went to the submarine base.

Mrs. Williamson: You were on the Beaver first, remember? That's when we met.

Mr. Williamson: That's right. I went to the USS Beaver.

Mrs. Williamson: And that's a submarine tender.

Marcello: Okay, let's back up here now and just get the record straight. You went directly from the training station at San Diego over to the Hawaiian Islands.

Mr. Williamson: Right.

Marcello: Okay, now at the time you got to the Hawaiian Islands, then you were aboard this ship--the USS Beaver?

Mr. Williamson: I was assigned to the USS Beaver.

Marcello: What sort of a ship was the Beaver?

Mr. Williamson: The USS Beaver was a submarine tender and we took care of a group of submarines there at Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to the Hawaiian Islands?

Mr. Williamson: I looked forward to it because it was . . . I'd heard about the Hawaiian Islands, but I had no idea of what they were like or what I would find out there. And I wasn't disappointed; it was a beautiful place.

Marcello: Were you simply assigned the Hawaiian Islands, or did you volunteer for it?

Mr. Williamson: As well as I remember, I volunteered for the Hawaiian Islands.

Marcello: Describe what the submarine base looked like from the physical standpoint.

Mr. Williamson: The barracks at the submarine base were shaped around a swimming pool; the buildings were built around a swimming pool. It was three stories high and the shops that took care of the different submarines--the different overhaul shops, torpedo shops, and repair shops--was adjacent to

the buildings, and we were able to sleep in the buildings and go down about a hundred yards to our work.

Marcello: What particular did you do there at the submarine base?

Mr. Williamson: At the submarine base I was a second class torpedoman. I started out as a third class torpedoman at the submarine base, and when the war started, I was a second class torpedoman, of course. I made chief while I was there.

Marcello: Now did you volunteer for this particular type of duty, that is, were you interested in submarines, and was this the sort of work that you wanted to get into?

Mr. Williamson: Well, at the time, I didn't have too much choice. You were more or less assigned to different divisions, and I happened to be assigned to a torpedo division. They sent me to torpedo school. I learned torpedoes, old steam torpedoes; and once I learned the steam torpedo, of course, I was able to make the rate of torpedoman, and from then on I did work on the steam torpedo. I went to electric torpedoes later on and then to acoustic torpedoes.

Marcello: Now awhile ago you mentioned that you were aboard the USS Beaver. I assume that for the most part, however, you were working right there at the submarine base itself. Or did you go out with the Beaver? How did that operate?

- Mr. Williamson: I was stationed on the Beaver, and the Beaver stayed tied up at the submarine base. But from time to time they would make a trip to the other islands, and we made a trip to Lahaina, Maui, and that's where I met my wife. And we would go over for what they called battle practice. And we would stay for approximately two weeks before we came back to the submarine base.
- Marcello: Now Lahaina Roads was an anchorage was it not?
- Mr. Williamson: Lahaina Roads was an anchorage out in the bay, right. That was in the channel. The town of Lahaina was a small little town, and we sent our boats, liberty boats, into the small town.
- Marcello: What was the reason for sometimes using Lahaina Roads for an anchorage? Was there any particular purpose in doing that.
- Mr. Williamson: The reason we would use Lahaina Roads for an anchorage was because, as I said, they did perform battle practice out there. And, of course, they gave the men liberty, and they would anchor near a small town so that the sailors could go over and chase the girls (laughter). Sometimes they caught them (laughter)!
- Marcello: Now your quarters, then, were actually aboard the Beaver, is that correct?
- Mr. Williamson: For two years, I was aboard the Beaver.

Marcello: In other words, you actually did not live in those barracks that were there at the submarine base?

Mr. Williamson: Not until I was transferred to the submarine base, and that was after I was married.

Marcello: Well, describe what the Beaver was like. It sounds like it must be an interesting type of vessel.

Mr. Williamson: The Beaver at one time was a commercial ship, and we had what was known as the "million dollar head." And a head, as most people know, is your toilet facilities. And the reason they called it that is because the floors and the walls had marble, inlaid marble, all over them. We had a lot of nice staterooms. Of course, the officers got the staterooms, but we all had good living quarters.

Marcello: Describe what the living quarters were like on the Beaver.

Mr. Williamson: We had living quarters in several places, but the predominant one, especially for the deck force, was in your mess hall. We had bunks. Instead of having hammocks, well, our bunks were . . . we could let them down from the wall. And we had nice mattresses. It was a real beautiful ship.

Marcello: What was the food like aboard the Beaver?

Mr. Williamson: The food was very good, and I just wish some of the things that I had then my wife knew how to cook now. Because there are one or two things that stand out in

my mind very much, and one of them was the carrot and apple salad that they would have. I think it was on a Saturday. I always enjoyed that. And she has tried to make it, but not quite like the Navy could.

Marcello: What was the morale like in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy while you were aboard the Beaver?

Mr. Williamson: Well, on different ships the morale would be different from other ships. It was according to the captain you had, the officers you had, the living conditions you had.

Marcello: Yes.

Mr. Williamson: At that time there was very little Navy at Pearl Harbor --this was in 1939--and maybe there were fifteen or twenty ships. And you could go ashore, and you wouldn't see maybe another white uniform hardly because the town would just swallow you up. But the morale seemed very high.

Marcello: Of course, at that time everybody was a volunteer, also, and that helped, I'm sure.

Mr. Williamson: That's right. Come to think of it, everybody was a volunteer. And looking later on when there wasn't all volunteers, well, I could understand why we did have such high morale.

Marcello: In other words, at the time that you were on the Beaver, everybody was in the Navy because they wanted to be in the Navy.

Mr. Williamson: That's true.

Marcello: What part did athletics and sports in general play in the life of that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Mr. Williamson: We were very sports-minded, especially in . . . we were in what was known as Subron Four. This is the submarine fleet. And we had football teams that would be . . . the material would come from different submarines from the ships that were all in this Subron Four. And we had baseball teams, and they were involved with the teams in Honolulu. They would play baseball teams from Honolulu, and they would even play football teams from the University. And we had some good football teams, and very good baseball teams.

Marcello: And I gather there was a great deal of rivalry between the various units there in terms of the athletic competition and so on.

Mr. Williamson: There was a lot of rivalry, plus there was a tremendous rivalry between the civilians in Honolulu who played us and the sailors.

Marcello: At that particular time, how did the civilians and the sailors get along there in the Hawaiian Islands? I think

I'll ask you first, Mr. Williamson, and then we will see what sort of a reaction we can get from your wife.

Mr. Williamson: At that time, there was good relationship compared to the later years.

Marcello: Was this because there weren't as many sailors there as there were later on?

Mr. Williamson: That's right.

Marcello: What do you think about this, Mrs. Williamson?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, of course, I have a different viewpoint, because as most people know, in any seaport town with a fleet nearby, a sailor has a reputation. No decent girl dated a sailor. (Chuckle) My father would have killed me if he knew I was going out with him, so I had to do it on the sly. When the ship came in, I'd meet him down by the post office because I didn't dare tell my father. Like I said, a decent girl did not go out with a sailor; she lost her reputation when she did. And so for a long time decent girls did not go out with sailors. The sailors went out with girls that were. . . oh, I don't know what you . . . there's a word for them, but that is just the way it was. Of course, there were a lot of sad cases where it showed up, you know, where sailors went home and left behind families and things like that. But that's the way it is in San Diego, too.

And then, of course, there's always a bunch of young hoodlums that like to pick on sailors in uniform. For that reason, very few sailors ever went to town in their uniform. They always put their "civvies" on. That way, they'd be more blended with the crowd, you see, and you wouldn't know that they were sailors.

Marcello: Now once more for the record, when did you get to Honolulu?

Mr. Williamson: I left the training station, as well as I remember, in the winter of 1936. . . '37. I'm sorry. I left in the summer of '37. I arrived in Honolulu in the summer of '37.

Marcello: And you met your wife when?

Mr. Williamson: I believe I met her in '38.

Mrs. Williamson: I finished high school in '39.

Marcello: And he had met you in '38?

Mrs. Williamson: Let's see, I had met him earlier, and we corresponded. I finished high school in '39, and then I went to Honolulu. And like I said, I only lasted a semester at the University, and then we were married in '40.

Marcello: Well, let's just . . . Mr. Williamson, do you have something you want to say?

Mr. Williamson: Yes. I wanted to kind of straighten it out on what my wife said (laughter) a minute ago on sailors. Now when

I first went out there, this wasn't true. Now she doesn't know this because she lived in the small island, and she wasn't in Honolulu when I first went to the islands. At that time there was a good relationship. As the years went by, and as more and more sailors came out and several incidents came up, which were major incidents, this caused a hard feeling toward the Navy. And by this time, my wife had moved to Honolulu, and she saw this part of it.

Marcello: Okay, one more time, let's just describe now how you managed to meet one another and ultimately get married, and maybe we ought to ask Mrs. Williamson to do that.

Mrs. Williamson: Well, like I said, when you're in a small town . . . this is pre-television days, you know, and we didn't own a car. Very few people owned cars then. So our only recreation was to go to the beach and to go swimming. And the beach was close by; we had a beautiful beach. So my younger sister and I always went to the beach to swim. Of course, we met this young sailor walking up and down the beach, and so, as most young people do, they traded names and addresses. And when the ship sailed, he wrote and then I answered, and we just started a correspondence.

And everytime the ship came in, why, we would manage to see each other, and so then after I finished high

school and moved to Honolulu is when I actually started dating him. I lived with my brother who lived in Honolulu. My brother is a schoolteacher, and I lived with him while I was attending the University. And so he would call, and my sister-in-law always used to kid me when the phone would ring. Pearl Harbor then was long distance, and the operator would always say, "7-7-8-7-8? Pearl Harbor calling." And my sister-in-law always said "Mary." (chuckle) It was Jack on the phone, and he would call to see if I could go out with him, you know. So we dated up until we got married.

Marcello: Now during the period when you were corresponding, how often would you get to see each other?

Mrs. Williamson: Oh, approximately every three or four months we'd make a trip over to the other island.

Marcello: So it wasn't too often.

Mrs. Williamson: No (chuckle).

Mr. Williamson: Not too often.

Marcello: Okay, now you mentioned that you were striking to become a torpedoman. Describe the training you received here at the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base.

Mr. Williamson: They had a school set up at that submarine base itself, and while I was attached to the Beaver, well, there was other . . . the submarines would send sailors, young sailors, up that were striking for torpedoman. I was

striking for torpedoman, and I was sent over to the school. We had about twenty-five sailors that were striking for torpedoman that was in this school. And I can remember my professor very well. His name was Peter Chang. He was a Chinese man, a very brilliant man. He was educated, and he was a first class torpedoman. He became a chief. Later, he became an officer. And in this school, which was, as well as I remember, six months long, well, we went through all the theory of the torpedo; we broke the torpedo down into component parts. We studied each component part, such as the gyro, the exploder, the exercise section, and the after body. And we got to know these parts very well. We knew all the clearances; we knew all the dimensions that each valve had to be. And then the last day of the school we would assemble one on our own and get the torpedo ready for firing. And then they would take the torpedo out on a submarine and fire it as an exercise shot. And this would complete our training.

Marcello: As you look back on it, do you think that the training was excellent? Good? Fair? Poor? How would you rate it?

Mr. Williamson: I rated that training as excellent because of the teacher that we had. He was very thorough, and he

gained all of our respect, which means a lot for a teacher. And we learned a lot from that man.

Marcello: Now after you got out of this particular school, I assume what training you got from that point on was all on-the-job training.

Mr. Williamson: As the years went by and you went from steam torpedoes . . . well, we went to electric torpedoes. I had several months . . . I was sent back to the States for training as an electric torpedoman.

Marcello: Now when did this take place?

Mr. Williamson: This took place in the early '40's.

Marcello: In other words, this was after the war had started.

Mr. Williamson: After the war had started. And from the electric torpedo, I was sent back out to Pearl Harbor . . . I was sent to Key West, Florida, in 1943. And I was sent to study acoustic weapons, which is controlled by a . . . such as radar, sonar. And this is the weapon they are still using today. I was very proud of that school, and I was very proud of that torpedo. I was sent by the shop to be in charge and to get the material ready to bring back to Pearl Harbor and set up our own shop. The lieutenant commander's name that sent me was Lieutenant Higgins. I went to Key West, and I spent my time there. I got the equipment, and I followed

that equipment out and babied it all the way to Pearl Harbor.

In the meantime other people had gone through the school, and I never will forget as long as I live. . . it was a new weapon, and a lot of your higher ranked officers were very interested in it. They would come over and watch us setting up this shop. We set it up in the old electric torpedo shop. It was just a part because we still had the electric torpedo, and now we were going into the acoustic phase. They would come over and watch us, and we had two torpedoes we were getting ready to fire.

Admirals and captains were out the day that we put these aboard a ship to fire--to see if they would attack as they were supposed to attack by homing in. And the first one that we fired went out about fifty yards and flubbed, and, of course, I felt real bad. But the next one we fired--the second one--went out, and it chased its target and it attacked three times just as it was supposed to. We had 50 per cent luck, and so far as everything went, well, they felt like it was a success. And from then on things got better.

Marcello:

But at the time before Pearl Harbor, the Navy was still using the steam torpedo.

Mr. Williamson: And we used it on through. I have commendations in there of my work that was done on the steam torpedo. I still have those commendations.

Marcello: From what I've read, that steam torpedo wasn't the most reliable weapon in the world before Pearl Harbor and then during those months immediately after the attack.

Mr. Williamson: Well, I don't know the statistics on the percentage of hits and misses, but looking back and knowing what happened, the torpedo for that day and time was a good weapon. We had problems with the exploder, and they re-worked the exploder later and made it from a contact exploder to an impulse exploder. The weapon was much better, but the main problem with a steam torpedo is just what it says it is--it was run from steam. We had air, and we had alcohol, and we had a flame. And the alcohol would burn and create a steam that would drive turbines. This in turn would drive the propeller of the torpedo, but the air that was left would have to come out through the stern of the torpedo. . . the prop of the torpedo. And when you fired at an enemy ship, they would see the bubbles coming from this steam torpedo, and they could chase the bubbles back to the firing submarine. This caused a lot of problems, and

they were very lucky . . . well, I won't say they were lucky, but they knew that they had to come up with something new, and that's when they came to the electric torpedo. But still the steam torpedo had its place at a time.

Marcello: Did you ever have any desire to go into the actual submarine service itself, that is, to go aboard a submarine?

Mr. Williamson: Oh, yes. I was liaison between the shop and a submarine. I was attached to submarines several times for long periods of time. I would go out on a submarine to show the people how to take care of the torpedo and to help these submarine torpedomen who didn't have as much technical knowledge about the weapon as I did. I liked the submarines, although, of course, later on, I went to a destroyer.

Marcello: Let's get back to the marriage one more time. Now what did your father think about the idea of you marrying a sailor?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, my father had always told us that he would not object to whoever we married if we loved him, except that he would not allow us to marry a Japanese. See, my father was Korean, and Japan took Korea, and my father's people were all killed. So he came to Hawaii

to get away, and he started his family here. But he had an undying hatred for them, and so he always used to tell us we could marry anybody except a Japanese. So when Jack and I decided to get married and he told my father, the first thing he asked Jack, he said, "Do you love my daughter?" That's all he wanted to know. Of course, he knew he was in the Navy . . . he knew he would be able to support me in a fashion (chuckle). But he wanted to know if we loved each other. And so he did not have any objections, you know. And we were married, and he used to come to visit us. But can I get back a minute to when he talked about the steam torpedoes. . .

Marcello: Sure.

Mrs. Williamson: . . . and the alcohol? During the war when things were very hard to get . . . you know, everything was shipped into the islands, and you couldn't get whiskey and all this stuff. Many of his submarine friends brought torpedo fuel and ran it off on my kitchen stove (laughter). But alcohol . . . I guess you realize the Navy, to thwart them from drinking it, put in this laxative. It turns the alcohol pink, so they called it "pink lady," and the men can't drink it until they

can distill it. So they rigged up a contraption with my Silex coffee pot, you know, and they'd bring these five-gallon cans to the house, and they'd sit there in that kitchen all night running off this "pink lady." Jack would let them use our kitchen, but they had to leave him a gallon (laughter).

Marcello: What sort of a policy did the Navy have toward marriage at that particular time? For example, you weren't making very much money . . .

Mr. Williamson: No.

Marcello: . . . and finding quarters was perhaps difficult.

Mr. Williamson: Yes.

Marcello: So what did the Navy . . . what was the Navy policy with regard to marriage?

Mrs. Williamson: They disapproved and frowned on sailors marrying the local girls, because so many times the marriages did not work out. You know, when a sailor brought a local girl home, people were not as tolerant then as they are now. And many of these marriages didn't work out. So you had to get permission from your commanding officer, and you had to go to . . . who did you have to go to when you told me that you wanted to get married? And he gave us an iron and a Navy blanket for a wedding gift (laughter).

Mr. Williamson: I don't remember.

Mrs. Williamson: I don't know his name. But anyway, they did frown on local marriages.

Mr. Williamson: His name was Wayman, Gunner Wayman. He was a gunner aboard the USS Beaver.

Mrs. Williamson: But he did give us a Navy blanket with "U.S. Navy" on it and an electric iron. It was a second-hand electric iron, but he did give that to us. And we started housekeeping with those two items.

Marcello: Okay, describe the whole process of finding an apartment in Honolulu.

Mrs. Williamson: Well, now. . .

Marcello: Who had to take care of that task, or was it a joint venture?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, at that time there were a lot of little apartments available, because the Navy was bringing in their wives. There were a lot of stateside sailors that brought their families to Hawaii. And there were a lot of big old houses that were cut up into little dinky apartments, you know. And so we looked, and through an add in the paper we were able to find a cute little one-bedroom apartment, furnished, for the sum of thirty dollars a month. But he was only making sixty dollars (laughter).

Mr. Williamson: Yes.

Mrs. Williamson: Sixty dollars a month! And we got an apartment for thirty dollars a month--completely furnished.

Marcello: Well, what it means, then, is that for a couple in your situation to get by financially, both husband and wife had to work.

Mrs. Williamson: No.

Marcello: No?

Mrs. Williamson: I didn't work. Well, see, back then you must realize that a loaf of bread cost ten cents. I would buy a half-pound of bacon for twelve cents, a half-pound of hamburger for ten cents. Food was cheaper, and since we had just recently gotten married, I still had a lot of clothes and he had clothes. We didn't have to buy new clothes. We just had to spend his money on groceries. We didn't own a car. . . we didn't own anything. The apartment was furnished, and, like I said, we had a Navy blanket and a few wedding gifts. His mother and father sent us a couple of quilts that she'd made; his sister sent us different things. And with that we started housekeeping.

And he was a diver in the Navy, and you made fifteen dollars extra by diving, and so we really got seventy-five dollars a month. And now imagine, we were able to save ten dollars a month (laughter), and then

when the baby was expected, you see, I had . . . well, I was leery of going to a Navy doctor, which would have been . . . everything would have been free. But my sister-in-law is a registered nurse, and she works at a hospital. I wanted to use her doctor, and so I did. To pay for this private doctor, we were saving . . . we put away ten dollars a month to pay the seventy-five dollars for the doctor bill. And then we went to the civilian . . . of course, there were no military hospitals then, and so I had to use a civilian hospital.

We still were able to save . . . I just managed well, and we didn't do anything much. I mean, to go to a movie we had to go and find all the dimes and nickels we could find, and we couldn't afford the bus fare. We lived--what--about twenty, thirty blocks from town? And we would walk downtown to go to the movie, buy the cheapest seats, and walk home. It got pretty bad when I was getting further along in my pregnancy; we'd have to stop and rest awhile (chuckle). But we look back, and it was fun, really.

Mr. Williamson: We lived near a park, and we spent a lot of time in the park. It was nice going out in the park watching the squirrels and the birds. We spent a lot of time out there, which cost no money at all.

- Marcello: Well, I would assume that, given your financial situation, you would have to learn how to make your own fun under those circumstances.
- Mrs. Williamson: Well, newlyweds really don't need much in the way of entertainment (laughter).
- Marcello: What did you do for entertainment and so on, other than going to the movies? Did you associate with other Navy married couples and so on and so forth?
- Mrs. Williamson: Not at first, but, see, my relatives lived out there. We had an aunt and an uncle that lived up in the valley, and we'd get on the bus and take the bus up to their home and spend the whole day visiting and have dinner with them. Then my uncle, who had a car, would always drive us home, bring us home. But other than that. . . then there were a few times when the Navy had a few picnics, you know, base picnics, and we went to those.
- Mr. Williamson: As the years went by, and I had higher ranks to come along, why, then we branched out, you know. We had more money, and I met more people, and we had a lot of Navy friends then. And we still have them today. They come to visit us here, and we go there to see them in California, Oklahoma. Most are still alive.
- Marcello: You mentioned a while ago that you did some diving. Did you do this principally for the extra money that you could earn, or were you interested in diving?

- Mr. Williamson: I did it for the money. I needed that fifteen dollars. I was what was known as a second class diver. A first class diver goes to school in Washington, D.C., but I went to school at the Submarine Base, Pearl Harbor. There was a diving tower there. And I was allowed to go down 120 feet under the water, and I would go down and work on propellers underneath the ships. And we would . . . if somebody dropped something overboard, well, they'd call on us to go and pick it up. And it was very interesting. After I had become involved in it, well, I liked it very much because it was a world all of its own once you got down underneath the ocean. You'd see all of your marine life, and I enjoyed it.
- Marcello: Now after you got married, were you able to spend every evening at home and so on, or were there certain evenings when you had the duty and you had to remain aboard the base?
- Mrs. Williamson: Every fourth night he had the duty. He had to stay there--what--twenty-four hours or so? But every fourth night was the duty, and it never failed that when there was a crisis, it was the night he had the duty (laughter).
- Mr. Williamson: That was still much better, though, than being on a ship and not being at home at all.
- Marcello: Well, yes, every fourth night probably was pretty ideal actually, given the circumstances. Now did this routine

change any as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate, or did you continue to have the duty every fourth day right up until the time of the attack?

Mr. Williamson: I continued to have the duty right on up--every fourth night--until December 7th.

Marcello: Now as conditions between the two countries deteriorated, did your routine change any? You just mentioned, of course, that your duty remained the same in terms of having to remain on base every fourth day, but did your routine begin to change any as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941?

Mr. Williamson: The only thing that I can remember . . . on my routine it remained the same, but on some of the other higher ranked personnel that was in the shop, such as the chiefs, I noticed that they begin to become more involved in the explosives--the warheads, the exploders, the detonators, the boosters. But for my part, I was only twenty-two years old, and, as I said, I was a second class torpedoman. I still remained working on the other components of the torpedo, going home every day except every fourth night.

Marcello: Did you notice any build-up occurring, that is, in terms of new equipment coming in and more equipment coming in and things of that nature?

Mr. Williamson: No, I didn't see any new equipment whatsoever. A while before the attack, I did see some guns brought in and placed outside with bags around them.

Marcello: Now as the two countries were heading on a course toward war, how safe and secure did you feel on the Hawaiian Islands? In other words, did either of you give very much thought to the possibility of those islands ever being attacked?

Mrs. Williamson: We had no idea of the way the situation was. I mean, as far as we knew, we didn't know that things were deteriorating. Really, we went on living like we always did. We couldn't tell any change. That's why, when they attacked us that morning, it was such a shock.

Marcello: Did you ever talk about the possibility of an attack when you got together with your friends and so on and so forth? Or your family?

Mr. Williamson: No, it was never mentioned. Just like Mary says, that was the farthest thing away from our thoughts--that we would be attacked.

Mrs. Williamson: The only thing was . . . you know, there is a pre-dominantly Japanese population in the Hawaiian Islands, and being from a small town, from another island--small island--I went to school with a lot of Japanese classmates. And we got to talking about the Japanese. . .

it was a classroom discussion. And at that time the Japanese clung to their culture, and the old folk were very pro-Japanese, but the younger ones were Americanized. So the question was asked--we were seniors in high school--that if the United States went to war with Japan, what side would you fight on? And I'll never forget. . . this one boy said . . . well, as American as he was, he would know that his father would expect him to fight for Japan. He said, "Japan, I guess." That's the only thing that ever came up, and long after that I always thought that if we did go to war, we could not trust the Japanese, that they would all go toward Japan. But it was proved wrong because the young fellows, you know . . . as history has proved, the men in the Army, the younger Japanese, were very loyal to the United States.

Mr. Williamson: Well, that division from . . . that Japanese division from Honolulu, I think they were the most decorated division. . .

Mrs. Williamson: The 442nd, wasn't it? Yes.

Marcello: In any of your bull sessions, did you talk or hear any of the old salts talk about the fighting abilities of the Japanese Navy or anything of that nature? In other words, I am referring to those people who had perhaps served with the Asiatic Fleet or something of that sort.

- Mr. Williamson: The only thing . . . I can remember one person, and I remember his name. His name is Joe Ferrero, an Italian man. He was an old, old sailor, and he had served in the Asiatic Fleet. And one day he said, "Well, if we ever fight the Japanese, we'll whip them in six months." And I remember that for a long time after the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor, because we were still fighting them up four years later.
- Marcello: Well, I'm not sure how much credence you could put in what those Asiatic sailors said, anyhow, because I gather they were a different breed altogether.
- Mr. Williamson: They were a different breed, and you can understand why. But it was real nice being around them. They were all individuals, real individuals.
- Marcello: I'll bet they had all sorts of sea stories to tell, too.
- Mr. Williamson: (Chuckle) They sure did. And some you could believe, like you said, and some you couldn't believe.
- Marcello: Now this, I think, brings us up to those days immediately prior to the actual Japanese attack itself. What I want you to do at this stage is to describe your particular activities or routine as they unfolded during that period. Why don't we start, let's say, on the weekend of December 7th. Let's go back to Friday, which

would be December 5, 1941. Can you remember what sort of plans you had for that weekend, or what you did?

Mrs. Williamson: Yes, I can remember because, you know, when you have a little child and not much money, any big event you plan for. There happened to . . . the Shrine football game was a big thing out there, and this team and this Texas team, had come to Honolulu to play in the Shrine game. We had bought tickets. They were pretty expensive, but we had our tickets and we were going to go to the Shrine football game on Saturday. My aunt and uncle were going to keep our child--babysit. I don't know what we did on Friday, but we were planning for Saturday. And on Saturday we got on the bus, took the bus up to the valley to deposit our son with my aunt and uncle, and took the bus back down to the stadium which was in another part of town. We went to that Shrine football game. I'll never forget it. When the game was over, we took the bus and went back up to my aunt and uncle's to pick up our child. And then my aunt and uncle drove us home. See, my uncle always took us home in his car. We stayed there until rather late, and he drove us home to our apartment where we lived.

Incidentally, we had now gone up in the world a little bit. Where we started our marriage in a little

dinky furnished apartment, well, the low cost housing . . . the housing authority built about 200 and something brand new apartments in this part of town for low cost housing. And the Navy, not having any housing of its own . . . they had allowed the Navy to take seventy-five of these apartments and put Navy people in it. I went and applied for one when our baby was about six weeks old. I applied for an apartment, and we got one. It was so wonderful to move into a brand new one-bedroom apartment with a bath and a kitchen and whatnot. And so all the other neighbors around us were sailors, Navy people, on different ships. We lost a lot of our neighbors after that attack. But my uncle brought us home that night, and he visited with us a while.

And do you remember crossing the intersection when this Army soldier almost ran into us on his motorcycle? He skidded and he went sliding down the road, so we had to help him to our apartment. He wasn't hurt too badly, but his motorcycle was pretty badly damaged. He left it sitting on our front porch, and he said he would be back for it. Well, the war broke out and we didn't see him for six months or more, and that motorcycle sat on our front porch! And Uncle and

Auntie left late that night, didn't they? We tried to talk them into staying, spending the night with us, because my uncle had had a few beers and we didn't want him to drive home. But he was hard-headed. We'd even gone so far as to put a pallet, a mattress, on the living room floor--tried to fix them a bed. But they refused to stay, and they left. So we thought it was a shame to let that bed go to waste, so we slept on the living room floor (chuckle). And then I'll let him tell you what happened on Sunday morning--the morning of the attack--when we heard all the antiaircraft guns go off.

Marcello: Do you recall what time you went to bed that night?

Mrs. Williamson: It was after midnight, wasn't it?

Mr. Williamson: It was well after midnight because we were drinking beer and having a big time, you know, with the family together.

Marcello: Your wife mentioned that her uncle evidently had a . . .

Mrs. Williamson: Few too many.

Marcello: . . . few too many. What sort of shape were you in? Or maybe I shouldn't ask you that. Maybe I should ask her.

Mr. Williamson: Well, I was a sailor, and the way I looked at it--being a sailor--you always drank lots of beer, and I drank

my part of the beer. And what she failed to add about the young soldier that had the accident in front of the house. . . I brought him inside, and I also had some whiskey in the house. I remember pouring him out a big glass of whiskey because he had a . . . his leg was all scraped, and it was real bloody. . . and his hip. I took him in the bathroom to see how bad he was hurt, and I gave him this big shot of whiskey, and he got to feeling better. So then my wife's uncle and I drove him up to . . . I believe it was Wheeler Field.

Mrs. Williamson: It was Fort Shafter. Isn't that where he was? Wheeler Field is clear on the other side of the island.

Mr. Williamson: But we went on the other side of the island. We were gone for about two hours. It was way on . . . it was several . . . fifty miles over there. And then, of course, we took a lot of drinks along with us, and we were all drinking. We dropped him off, and then he and I came back. Your uncle and I came back.

Marcello: You mentioned the subject, and I think I need to pursue it just a little bit further. Now many people say that if the Japanese or any other enemy were going to attack Pearl Harbor, the best time to have done so would have been on a Sunday morning. What these people are implying is that Saturday nights were times of a great deal of

partying, drinking, and things of this nature. Consequently, the military personnel would be in no shape to fight on a Sunday morning. Mr. Williamson, how would you answer that particular assertion?

Mr. Williamson: Well, it's true that Sunday morning would be the ideal time, but I think it would be more so only 25 per cent of your crew is aboard your ship and aboard your submarine bases and your different bases. So that means that most of them are on liberty. Of course, the married people are at home, and your other sailors are shackled up with some of the girls, and others have been drinking late. And they are going to be sleeping late aboard the ship. And drinking probably affected the ability of these people, but I don't think it affected that much.

Marcello: Is it more accurate to say that Sundays were a day of leisure. In other words, if you didn't have the duty, you were pretty much free to do what you wanted to do.

Mr. Williamson: You could sleep late on Sunday mornings; you didn't have reveille. And that's why so many people were still in their bunks.

Marcello: You mentioned this incident involving the soldier who had the accident on his motorcycle. Were there any other incidents that happened that night that seemed

to be out of the ordinary? Or other than that soldier's accident, was it a rather routine Saturday night?

Mrs. Williamson: For us it was a routine. Like I said, we might go up to my aunt and uncle's, and they'd bring us home, and they'd visit awhile with us before they'd leave. And, of course, the soldier and the accident made it a little different because. . . and they stayed a little later because, like you said, they ran the soldier back to his base. Like I said, it was late, and we tried to get them to stay with us, and they wouldn't do it, and so they went home.

And, of course, we slept late the next morning, and the . . . I don't know if you want me to start going into what happened Sunday morning. We slept on the floor on the mattress and heard the guns going off. Now where we lived there was this Army fort right . . . oh, a few miles . . . not very far from where we lived. It was called Fort Shafter. Okay, see, now Pearl Harbor is seven miles. . . there's Hickam Field that protects Pearl Harbor, the opening to Pearl Harbor, but we were near this Army fort, Fort Shafter. They would always have their antiaircraft guns, you know, going off and doing practice.

Marcello: Even on a Sunday morning was this a common thing?

Mrs. Williamson: We didn't pay too much attention to the time. We'd hear it so often that you pay no attention to when. So this particular morning we heard the guns going off, and, you know, you just say to yourself, "Well, they're practicing again." And it was a little heavier concentration, but we didn't think to go out, you know, to see what they were shooting at. We just laid there in bed, and they kept shooting.

Marcello: You did not hear any aerial activity or anything of that sort?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, see, Pearl Harbor . . . like I say, we're seven miles . . . we could hear none of the explosions. And then we were still in bed when we heard this pounding on the door. And my brother that was a schoolteacher . . . you know, teachers are all underpaid. He was trying to raise a family, and naturally to do that he would take on this extra job on Saturdays and on Sundays. He drove a taxi that brought the sailors in from Pearl Harbor to town--the Pearl Harbor taxi. He would drive for them on weekends, and he was driving a taxi that morning. And he had made a run into town, and he was pounding on our door. And we got up and there was my brother. And he said, "Did you hear all that shooting?" And we said, "Sure. What happened?"

And he said, "Feel this!" And he poured some warm metal in our hands, and he said, "That's shrapnel!" He said, "We're being bombed!"

And, of course, we couldn't believe him, so he said, "Turn your radio on!" And we turned on the radio, and the announcer was saying that we had been attacked and for all military personnel to report to their bases immediately. And all doctors were to report to Pearl Harbor. They were asking for firemen, for doctors, for policemen, for all military personnel. So then he said, "Where's my whites? Where's my uniform?" And we couldn't . . . you know, you're not prepared, and I remember you putting on your Navy whites inside out--backwards or something. You had to pull it off again and put it on right.

Marcello: What sort of a reaction did you have when you heard that the military installations were under Japanese attack?

Mr. Williamson: Well, just like my wife said, I was shocked. At first I couldn't believe it, and then after I did realize it was true, well, I knew that my place was out at the submarine base. And I was very excited--I was young then--and the first of battle and all those guns, realizing they were actually the real thing, that's

why I was putting on my trousers in the wrong direction. And at the same time they were calling for us to return, they were also calling for the civil service workers to return to Pearl Harbor, and all the Navy yard workers. As soon as I got my uniform on, I ran outside because I knew there'd be cars coming by. And the first one that came by with sailors in it, well, it picked me up.

Marcello: Did you have any second thoughts about leaving your wife there alone?

Mr. Williamson: No, no, I didn't even think about her once I started. I knew what my duty was.

Marcello: How did his leaving affect you?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, you know, you see it in the movies, but you never really think it's happening to you. And we really . . . the attitude was that if Japan ever attacked, that we would just put it out in no time (snaps fingers). We didn't think it was going to be a long, drawn out affair. We didn't think that we were going to have to suffer or anything like that. Actually, you don't have time to think, and I just got him in his uniform, and he jumped in the first car that came by, and he left.

Marcello: In the meantime where was the baby?

Mrs. Williamson: The baby is in the bedroom. Now he left that morning, and then I did not see or hear from him for over two weeks. You see, there . . . the minute . . . when Pearl Harbor was bombed, naturally martial law was clamped down on the island. All communications ceased, you see, and the radios went silent, went dead. All us women and the . . . my Navy neighbors . . . my neighbors were panic-stricken, and some of them, oh, their husband was aboard this or . . . well, actually, like I said, we . . . the neighbor to the right of us went down on the submarine, the Argonaut. The one next to him on the Sea Lion was captured in the Philippines. The neighbor across from us . . . that morning he had had the duty, and he decided to go visit a friend, and the ship got bombed. It wasn't his ship that went down, but he was aboard this other one, and he was killed. He was a redhead; his name was Marsie. I used to admire him because he was a tall redhead and had a lovely little wife, and they'd push their little readheaded baby every Sunday in the stroller and go to the mass. The Catholic Church was down the street, and they'd always go to mass on Sunday mornings. And he was killed that morning--Marsie.

But the Navy wives were . . . we were all . . . some of them were panic-stricken because their husbands

were off on ships. And my husband was the only one on the submarine base. And so like I said, we didn't know what was going on, or we would look towards Pearl Harbor, and we could see all the black smoke. But we had no idea about how much damage was done.

Marcello: In the meantime, even after he left, I assume you still continued to hear the firing of the guns and so on and so forth.

Mrs. Williamson: Well, they came in in waves, and we were able to get the second wave. In fact, you were back at the shop when the next wave hit, or the third wave or whatever.

Mr. Williamson: Second.

Marcello: Okay, let's go back to you again, Mr. Williamson. Now you rushed out of the apartment, and you . . . well, I'll let you pick up the story at this point.

Mr. Williamson: Well, of course, when they picked me up in the car, and we were . . .

Marcello: Did the first car pick you up that came along?

Mr. Williamson: The first one that came along picked me up, and they were already loaded, but I just piled in the back. I guess it was seven or eight of us in this car.

Marcello: How long did it normally take you to get from your home to the submarine base?

Mr. Williamson: Normally, it would take about fifteen minutes because of the traffic in town.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get there that morning?

Mr. Williamson: I can't remember. I don't remember how long it took, but I know we were going at a tremendous speed. And as we got closer to Pearl Harbor, well, we could see the damage. And you could see the planes in the air. I mean, even from the first wave there was still a lot of the Japanese planes in the air, and a few of our planes had been able to get off the ground--very few. But they were dogfighting in the air. You could . . . the explosions were still going on in the Navy yard. We didn't know what was being blown up.

As we went inside the gate, the Marines normally stopped all cars, but they were just waving you on in. To get to the submarine base, we had to swing to the right, and as we were swinging to the right going down, well, a Japanese plane came down low and strafed all along the ground and killed several people on our way--none of us. And we got onto the submarine base. I jumped off at the submarine base; they were going on to other places. And I rushed down to the torpedo shop. This was, I imagine, around 8:30.

Marcello: So the attack has been going on for approximately thirty-five minutes by this time.

Mr. Williamson: Probably so.

Marcello: Half an hour or a little bit more than a half an hour.

Mr. Williamson: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, what's happening down at the submarine base when you arrived in the torpedo shop?

Mr. Williamson: Well, as we came in on this submarine base, of course, you saw people running in all directions, and trucks --big trucks--were being moved out. I went into the shop, and right away, well, the chief in charge of the shop. . . his name was Gallegher, and he was a very efficient chief. He was very calm. He just said, "Williamson, you go in and help them load ammunition." We had a few rounds of ammunition in the armory. I went in and we started putting this ammunition in clips.

Marcello: What sort of ammunition? Was this small arms ammunition?

Mr. Williamson: As well as I remember, it was .50-caliber machine gun ammunition.

Marcello: Now at this point, is everybody more or less acting in a professional manner?

Mr. Williamson: Inside the shop they were because of the . . .the old-timers were very calm, and they were able to . . . the

young sailors like me and the others, well, we had confidence in them. As soon as we walked in there, it was very efficient as well as I remember. I know there was no problem as far as my part went, because I was told what to do and I started doing it.

And from time to time, we would be able to . . . there was windows in this shop, and, also, there was big overhead doors that ran down on tracks. These doors were up a few feet, and we would go and look, and we could see them hitting the battleships over at Ford Island, which were about a quarter to half a mile away.

Marcello: What sort of visibility did you have?

Mr. Williamson: We had very good visibility. It was clear. There was quite a bit of smoke. But you could see these planes in the air dogfighting, and you could see the ships that was on fire at Ford Island. You could see the planes coming down and still bombing them over there.

I did see. . . the one thing I remember very well . . . one of the . . . of course, the guns on the different ships were locked up in the armories, normally. And this young sailor on one of these submarines--I don't remember his name; I do remember he was an Italian

boy--and he was a torpedoman. He had worked in our shop before. And he broke into the armory and got a .30-caliber machine gun. Whether it was him that shot down this plane . . . but there was a plane shot down about fifty yards astern of this submarine. It was said that he shot it down. Now whether it was his bullets that actually shot the plane down . . . later they raised the plane, and the Japanese pilot was in the plane. A few days later, they brought it in to find out all the information they could.

Marcello: Did you actually see the plane being shot down?

Mr. Williamson: I didn't see the plane shot down. I saw him running back with his machine gun, and then the plane was shot down. I didn't see it. I just heard that it was. And it was shot down a very short distance from the submarine.

Marcello: How long were you putting the ammunition in these clips?

Mr. Williamson: I worked several hours on the ammunition. In the meantime, of course, you have to go through orders to find out what is expected of the people in the shop. Even the lieutenant commander, whose name was Hodgekiss, didn't know what to do. The old gunner we had, his name was Fitzgerald. He didn't know what to do because he didn't know what they wanted him to do. But in the

meantime the orders was coming out from up above, and they were told to bring in warheads from Lualualei. Lualualei lies up in the mountains about forty miles from Pearl Harbor.

And that five-ton or ten-ton truck driver was an Indian. His name was Clearwater, and we called him old "Muddy" Clearwater. He was a machinist in the shop. He was also the truck driver. I remember him jumping in this truck, and when he went around the corner, somebody said, "He'll never make it to Lualualei driving like that." But he did make it to Lualualei, and he came back with a warhead.

In the meantime, since they found out that we were to get the torpedoes ready to put on these submarines. . . because the Japanese had not bombed our submarines and they had not bombed our repair shops, which was a big mistake, they found out later. So they said, "Start getting torpedoes ready for war shots," which is somewhat different from getting them ready for exercise shots.

So several of us had had training on putting "finals" on torpedoes, which is . . . you have "preliminaries" that you put on them, but the "finals" is the thing that you do just before you install the warhead

and explode it. Now as I said, I had never had any training in the exploders and the boosters and the warheads. This was for the higher ranks. But I went and started to work getting the components ready for war shots that I worked on. And we started working that day about eleven o'clock on these torpedoes. We got the warheads down. It takes time to do this. We worked on through the day, we worked all night, and then we worked all the next day. Late in the second day, well, we began to complete our job as far as the torpedoes went.

Marcello: In the meantime, while you're doing this work, either putting the ammunition in clips or working on these torpedoes, are you conversing with one another? What's going on in your mind, and what are you talking about?

Mr. Williamson: Yes, we were wondering what was going to happen as far as our part went--whether we would be transferred to the submarines; whether we would stay in the shops. It was the normal conversation that would go on when something like this would happen. "How long will it be before the war will be over?" We were already thinking of the war being over. It was the normal type of conversation. I can't remember any specific conversation.

I sure remember one thing. I don't remember the man's name. I say man. He was a young fellow about twenty years old. He was big and fat, and he was always a little excitable. He went to the end of the shop to look out underneath this door to see these planes. Somebody said, "There's one right over here going down," or something. And he stuck his head out. About that time, somebody said, "Look out! Here comes one right for the shop!" And he jumped up to run. Commander Hodgekiss just happened to be directly behind him, and he ran into Commander Hodgekiss and knocked Commander Hodgkiss down--completely down. So you can see there was some excitement. Everything wasn't under full control with everybody (chuckle).

Marcello: What was the commander's reaction when this occurred?

Mr. Williamson: He didn't say a word. He just got up and brushed his clothes and looked at the boy, but he didn't say a word.

Marcello: Normally, would you all rush over to the doors and look out when you heard Japanese planes coming?

Mr. Williamson: No, no. No, we were told to stay away from the doors. But, of course, there's always 10 per cent that doesn't get the word, and he happened to be the 10 per cent. And he went over to peek out. But we weren't supposed to go to the doors. We were supposed to do our job.

Marcello: In the meantime, are you thinking about your wife and child?

Mr. Williamson: I don't think that . . . as well as I remember now . . . of course, it's been a long time ago, but I don't believe I thought about them until somebody said they heard over the radio that there was a bomb dropped in Kalihi Valley, and that's where we lived.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned the place where the torpedoes were stored. What was that?

Mr. Williamson: Lualualei.

Marcello: Okay, in the meantime, now, while he's belting ammunition or putting ammunition in clips and working on torpedoes, what is taking place back at the apartment, Mrs. Williamson?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, now like I said, this is a low cost housing project, and each building had four apartments. The two one-bedroom apartments were on the end, and the two apartments in the middle were two-bedroom apartments. The two bedrooms were upstairs; they were two-story. We had what we called a bungalow. Because we just had one child, we only rated a one-bedroom apartment.

Well, you know, there's safety in numbers, and that first night we didn't know what was going to happen.

We didn't know whether the planes were going to come back and bomb us again or if we would die in our beds or what. So all us wives got together in the apartment next door to mine, which was the two-bedroom apartment. We all huddled together in the living room, and we said if a bomb came it would have to go through the upper story first before it got to us. And so I even took my baby's crib apart and put it in her living room because we were going to spend the night there. I had the baby there, and . . .

Marcello: Were there any other children there?

Mrs. Williamson: Oh, yes. The woman whose apartment we were in, her husband was on a submarine. That was . . . what was her name? But anyway, she had two children. The lady on the other side had two; she brought hers over. The one at the other bungalow. . . so there we were, all piled up in this one room with babies crying. And when one baby cried, it would wake the other one up. I stood it for two nights, and then after that I took my crib and went back home. I said, "If I'm going to die, I'm going to die in my own bed." We sat there at night, and, of course, the first thing . . . we were not allowed to have lights, you know--blackout, total blackout. The radio was out. We just sat there with

our radios turned on. Occasionally, the announcer would come on the radio. He'd break the silence and would give some information. We would listen for . . . the sirens would go off, and we would think, "Oh, the airplanes are coming back!" But . . . and we could listen on the radio--the conversation--and we could hear them say, "So-and-so, identify yourself," you know. And until they did . . . until they were identified as friendly, we were to assume they were enemy planes and to prepare ourselves. And so we had our ears glued to that radio listening. And, of course, like I said, we didn't know what to expect.

Marcello: What sort of conversation was going on?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, women talk, I guess, and wondering. See, I was the only island girl in this group. The rest were from the mainland that had come over with their . . . their husbands had sent for them. I was the only local girl there. I was young. I was only about nineteen I think, it was. I was just out of high school. And so most of these women smoked, and I picked up the bad habit while I was cooped up with them. I decided to try smoking, too. Anything to break the monotony. I took up crocheting. We would sit there and crochet until it got so dark that you couldn't see. And we

would get the babies to bed and sit up most of the night. Then, of course, I decided to go back home. After two nights of nothing happening, I decided to go back to my own apartment. It was preferable to the madhouse over there.

Marcello: Now I do know that a lot of shrapnel fell on Honolulu during the attack, and this was actually falling shrapnel from the ships that were shooting. I assume that you were probably too far away to have been affected by any of that shrapnel.

Mrs. Williamson: Well, the Japanese did bomb parts of town and did some damage and killed some people, but not right in the area we lived in.

Mr. Williamson: You know, Honey, that one bomb that I spoke about earlier did drop in Kalihi Valley, which was only up about, oh, about a half a mile from our house, wasn't it? Maybe about a mile? How far was it up there?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, it was several miles. But you know how rumors will run rampant when you don't know what's happening, and so we all got panicky. Some woman had said that the Japanese had landed; they were up in the valley; they were poisoning our water supply. So we'd run to the store. We stocked up on soda pop--anything in can goods. We bought candles. We filled the bathtubs with

water in case the water supply . . . we had to be prepared, you know. And during all of that . . . I know I bought canned milk by the case because I had this baby. And I remember buying canned milk by the case. I thought, well, I'd have that.

And then, of course, we had no idea. They did not tell us anything. And we were under strict martial law. We didn't dare to go out of our homes at . . . you were shot if you stepped out of your house after six o'clock without proper credentials. Doctors were allowed out, police, but civilians stayed in their homes.

Marcello: Was it perhaps even a little bit more risky for you, being of Oriental extraction?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, no, not really, because, like I said, the islands was full of Orientals. I wouldn't have stood out at all. It's predominantly Oriental. You wouldn't know the difference between a Japanese or Chinese or Korean. We had lots of Japanese. But if you lump all Orientals together, well, you would think the islands were nothing but Orientals.

Marcello: Well, this is what I was referring to. Suppose, you know, you come across some American soldiers or what

have you and so on during this period of martial law

. . . but there was really no problem?

Mrs. Williamson: No, because we were all . . . we were all citizens. Our facial features are different, but we're all American citizens whether we look Japanese, Chinese or whatever. And so maybe even though we may have suspected that the Japanese might be pro-Japan and that there might be acts of sabotage, we couldn't prove it. We just had to wait and see whether the Japanese were going to be loyal or not. And that was a wait-and-see game. But being . . . since I was with the . . . being married to an American serviceman, and we lived amongst all of the other servicemen, we were in a kind of a different situation. Our lives were affected directly. And after two weeks, lo and behold, he walked in one day unexpected, unannounced. They let him off for four hours. They gave him liberty for four hours.

Marcello: In the meantime, had you ever been able to call her at all?

Mr. Williamson: No.

Mrs. Williamson: No.

Marcello: Were there any communications at all during this two-week period?

- Mrs. Williamson: Absolutely nothing! From the day he left the house on December 7, I did not see or hear from him for two whole weeks. I didn't know whether they had put him on the ship and shipped him out or what.
- Marcello: Did you ever attempt to contact the base to find out?
- Mrs. Williamson: It was impossible. You couldn't get through. In fact, it was a week later. . . the day we were bombed and the message was announced here in the United States . . . all of the families worried about . . . his family sent us a telegram. I still have it. All it said was, "Are you alright? Wire Collect." The telegram was delivered one week later because of . . . you know, everything was closed down.
- Mr. Williamson: When did the Civil Defense have you to get all of your canned goods?
- Mrs. Williamson: That came later. That was at the Battle of Midway . . .
- Mr. Williamson: Oh, was it?
- Mrs. Williamson: . . . when we had to be evacuated to the mountains.
- Mr. Williamson: I'd forgotten.
- Mrs. Williamson: I had to have my little suitcase and my . . . we were . . . they . . . we're kind of getting ahead of ourselves. I started to tell you something, and then I forgot.
- Mr. Williamson: Let me break in here. She spoke of me coming home after two weeks. I never will forget. I had been

wanting. . . I began to worry about them, you know. After the excitement was over, things was calming down. I got after my old chief--old Gallegher--and so he made arrangements for me to leave for four hours. So I rode a bus into town.

Mrs. Williamson: It wasn't a bus.

Mr. Williamson: Well, a taxi. I forget now what I rode. I rode something into town. (Chuckle) I know I didn't walk. And I had to get off several blocks from where I lived. As I was walking up in my uniform, well, I didn't realize all of these Navy wives lived in these houses. They'd see my Navy uniform, and I was the only one. And here they'd come running and asking about their husbands. "What happened to ship so-and-so?" "Did you know so-and-so?" Because they hadn't heard from their husbands either. I don't remember walking into the house. I'll be honest with you. I don't remember. I just remember walking up the street and everybody running out and asking me . . .

Mrs. Williamson: I remember one thing. You were only home for four hours, and while he was home, the sirens went off--air raid. When they go off, you assume it's an air raid. And the safest place is under something sturdy, so we had to . . . you pulled off the mattress and put it under our dining room table. And we all got underneath that table--the baby, him, and me--and waited out

the air raid until the "all-clear" signal sounded, you know. And usually it was approaching aircraft, and when they identified themselves, then the "all-clear" sounded. So we would have more of these air raids. . . it frightens you because you stop what you're doing. If you're outside, you run in, grab your children, and prepare in case it's the real thing.

So then, of course, like he said, when my neighbors knew that he had come home, here they came. We didn't have any privacy whatsoever. They were at the door asking. . . well, a lot of the ships were sent out to sea right away--those that could get out. But there were those that weren't so lucky. And they were there asking him, "Did so-and-so and so-and-so . . . "

But one of the first things I asked him was . . . I said, "Honey, how bad is it?" And he said, "We were told . . . I was warned before I left that I was not to talk about it, not to say anything about it." And I said, "Well, you can tell me how bad it was. Is it real bad? I don't want to know how many ships are sunk or anything like that." He said, "Well, all I can say is that it's a lot worse than you can ever imagine." That's all he could tell me. And, of course, I realized how bad it was, but I had no idea, really, except we saw black smoke, you know. It was just all black.

But then, of course, he had no idea about what happened to the other ships. He couldn't tell those other Navy wives anything. And then the air raid came, and we stayed under that table.

Then pretty soon it was time for him to go back, and he went back. And then he didn't get leave again for another week or two. But at least I knew he was on the base. I knew he was safe. So he came home periodically every now and then from then on. Not on a regular basis, but whenever he could get leave, why, he'd come home.

Marcello: Let's back up just a little bit. Now Mr. Williamson, awhile ago your wife was talking about the rumors that she heard. Now I knew that women were not the only ones that were susceptible to these rumors. What were some of the rumors that you heard in the aftermath of the attack?

Mr. Williamson: Well, I can remember one rumor specifically, and that was that there was a lot of troopships lying outside the harbor and that we could expect an invasion at any time, see. And I remember that very definitely. And that's about the only thing that I can remember in the way of rumors.

Marcello: What went on that night of December 7th? I assume, for example, that there were a lot of trigger-happy servicemen around and so on.

Mr. Williamson: That's right. That night there were some bombers that came in. Probably someone else has told you about this, but there were several bombers that came in--our bombers. I believe they were B-24's, maybe B-17's, and for some reason or another they didn't identify themselves. I can't remember whether one of our planes was shot down that night or whether there were two or whether there was none. But I do know that they were fired on.

Marcello: Do you actually remember observing the firing?

Mr. Williamson: I remember that they . . . we. . .the siren went off, and we were all . . . we went . . . when the siren went off, we that weren't on duty were supposed to go to our specific buildings. And that particular night, we did go to this building. I can't remember what building it was, but I remember that we were told to go to this building. At the time we didn't know just what was happening. We just knew that there was some firing. They thought there was going to be another group of planes come in, evidently.

Marcello: Could you hear a lot of firing taking place?

Mr. Williamson: Not a lot. It just . . . it lasted for, oh, several minutes--like maybe four or five minutes--and then it stopped. Of course, you kept waiting, and we never did hear any more. And later we found out it was some of our planes.

Marcello: Mr. Williamson, describe what the harbor itself looked like in the aftermath of the attack when you were able to perhaps view it with a little bit more perspective, a little bit more calmness, and so on. What damage did you observe in the aftermath?

Mr. Williamson: Well, as I said, you could look across the bay, and you could see Ford Island. We could see all of our ships. We didn't know which ones it was. We'd heard it was first one and then the other. As it turned out, it was the Arizona and the Utah and the Oklahoma that had actually gone down. But you could see them almost under the water, and you could see the others still on fire. Of course, the water had a lot of oil on it. It had a lot of different types of materials floating around. You could see that there was a lot of damage done in the Navy yard and near the dry docks. We didn't know how much. But we could see this from our shop. I know during the Sunday morning that they were bombing, directly after the attack, well, they

began to bring in the dead sailors and a lot of the wounded sailors because there happened to be a landing dock there for the small boats.

Marcello: This was at the submarine base?

Mr. Williamson: This was at the submarine base. And they brought these sailors in, and they even brought some of them inside the shop because they didn't have enough ambulances to pick them up after these boats brought them in. Now I heard this story--I don't know whether it was true or not--but they said that there was a sailor that was on one of these battleships which was several hundred yards away--like a half a mile. And a bomb hit this battleship, and the next thing he knew, he was over in the baseball field. He woke up over there. Well, this would have blown him for a half a mile, and it didn't kill him. Now whether this is true or not, I don't know. But I heard this from several different sources after that--that he was blown for half a mile and wasn't killed.

Marcello: It must have been one of those Asiatic sailors, you know.

Mr. Williamson: (Laughter) Yes, probably. Rough and tough (chuckle).

Marcello: Now what were you doing in the days immediately after the attack? Were you still working on the torpedoes and so on?

Mr. Williamson: Yes. I was working. . . we were still working on torpedoes. Now also we . . . Ford Island was . . . I don't know whether their shop was torn up or what. But I do know that they brought their weapons--their torpedoes--over to our shop. An aircraft torpedo is somewhat different from the submarine torpedoes. And, also, the destroyer torpedoes. . . some of those came into our shop because we had all of the facilities. We had lots of room. We had the manpower plus the equipment, and they were bringing all of these types of torpedoes in. And, of course, all of us didn't know how to work on these torpedoes. And while we were working on them, we were also going through a training phase. I remember working on the aircraft torpedoes for the first time, and it was . . . as well, as I remember, it was a Mark 13 torpedo. Our torpedoes were the Mark 24's and the 27's. Later on, the destroyer torpedo came in. I believe it was a Mark 8, but I'm not sure.

Marcello: Now what sort of days were you putting in in terms of hours?

Mr. Williamson: We were put on two shifts. We were on night shift, and we were on day shift. I believe . . . I can't remember the exact hours, but we never thought anything

about working ten and twelve hours straight until the other shift came on. And then would tie them directly in to what we were doing. And the man . . . where I was working on the after bodies, well, after twelve hours, I'd be awfully tired. And I couldn't wait for that last hour to come. But he would come in and then he would take over. I would go up and eat and sleep so I could go back. And it was just kind of eating and sleeping and working, is what it amounted to.

Marcello: Now at this time I gather that you were staying in the barracks there at the base.

Mr. Williamson: I was staying in the barracks at that time, yes.

Marcello: Is there anything else that we need to get as part of the record relative to the Japanese attack? I still have plenty of tape, and if there's anything else that we need to have at this point, please feel free to comment.

Mrs. Williamson: Well, what he brought up something about that evacuation. This came long after the attack. It was the turning point of the war. It's not connected to the attack. I don't know if you want me to bring that out.

Marcello: You're referring to the Battle of Midway, of course.

Mrs. Williamson: Yes.

Marcello: Now up until this time, there's really never any thought of evacuating dependents from the islands?

Mrs. Williamson: No. Yes, the first thing they did was . . . they sent back all of the dependents of the servicemen that had come from the States. In fact, the order read, "All dependents," but it would have been a hardship for me to go. My home was in the islands.

Marcello: Since you were a native islander.

Mrs. Williamson: That's right. So they had added that unless you were a native of the islands . . . you know, I was allowed to stay. But if you were not, you had to go. There were a lot of wives that did not want to go back, but they were forced to go back. They shipped them back.

Marcello: And this occurred very shortly after the attack took place, did it not?

Mrs. Williamson: Oh, not too long after--a month or two and maybe more. But they did send them back.

Marcello: Now in the meantime, were you still able to continue to live in this low cost housing?

Mrs. Williamson: I stayed in the housing, and they filled the empty apartments with local people--civilians--and they moved in and filled in the apartments since they'd moved out the Navy families. And I was one of the few Navy families still there.

Mr. Williamson: The thing that struck me, even though it was the Japanese that attacked Pearl Harbor, as far as our

relationship with the Japanese that we knew, there was no hard feelings whatsoever. I can't remember ever having any hard feelings toward any of the Japanese.

Mrs. Williamson: No, we didn't feel that they were Japanese, you know. They were like us. They were Americans, you know. They may look Japanese, but they were patriotic, and they didn't prove otherwise.

Marcello: Mrs. Williamson, what did your father think about what had happened?

Mrs. Williamson: Oh, well, I guess. . . the only way, I guess, would be to say, you know, that "I told you so." I guess in his mind he never trusted the Japanese. He felt they were treacherous and they were cruel and they were politically ambitious. All he had to go by was the history of what they had done to Korea. And in any country, to subdue a country you must subdue the thinkers, and those that can't think will follow, you know, without protest. And my father's family comes from a line of thinkers. His father was a college professor, and the father before that was a tutor.

Incidentally, my father left us--when he died--a legacy where we can trace direct descendents back to the year 930. I'm the thirty-fifth generation. And that was the only thing he left us. He didn't have any

money. But he left us this . . . in the Korean . . . they keep this family history. And it developed by generation to generation. Anyway, his family--his ancestors--were tutors to royalty and governors and . . . they were, you know, intellectuals.

Well, so when Japan ran over Korea, they killed his people. And my father, at that time, he said that as a young boy of fifteen, he ran away from home, and he went into the Russian Army where he was . . . what do you call these little boys that run errands for the officers? They become their little servants. Well, there's a word for them. But anyway, he worked for the . . . served the Russian officers. And so he said that when he . . . in the meantime, Japan came and took Korea. And when he came home, he said his father was dead, and his mother had died. All of his family was gone, and so there was nothing left for him in Korea.

He decided to leave the country as fast as he could, and when immigration started for the sugar plantations in the Hawaiian Islands, he came to Hawaii. He said one of the first things he wanted to do was that he had to keep the name going. The family name is very important, and he had to get his name going. And that

is why it was an unlikely marriage. My mother was Spanish, and my father was Korean. But he found a girl that was willing to marry him, and then he started his family to keep his family name alive. But he distrusted the Japanese for a long time. And they . . . I guess. . . he was still on the ther island, and I was in Honolulu. So I don't really know what his first reaction was. But I can just see him, you know. He would cuss, you know. He says, "Those S.O.B.'s," you know, like, "I knew it was going to happen!" (chuckle)

Marcello: Is there anything else that we need to add to get a part of the record concerning the Pearl Harbor attack?

Mr. Williamson: I can't think of anything now. I mean, later you always think of what you should have said maybe. But right now I can't think of a thing.

Mrs. Williamson: Well, there's one thing. After the attack, naturally they poured. . . they concentrated by pouring as much equipment into the islands to try to fortify the islands--planes, men, supplies. So the papers advertised they needed workers for Pearl Harbor. Well, I'd never worked, you know, and it seemed so ideal to be able to go to work at Pearl Harbor. I applied and I was accepted. Of course, I made arrangements with my nextdoor neighbor to take care of my little boy. He

wasn't quite two years old then. So I went to work at Pearl Harbor as a clerk-typist. He agreed grudgingly.

But he talked of Ford Island where the battleships were lined up on Battleship Row. Well, that's where they assigned me—to Ford Island as a clerk-typist. And we had to get to the Pearl Harbor at the submarine base side, and then the launch would come in . . . more like a big ferry, was what it was, and we would ride across to Ford Island. And we would have to go by these battleships all laying there like that, you know. It was sad; it was pitiful. But we were at Ford Island. You would be amazed at the amount of equipment that poured into the island, because we handled the paperwork—you know, all these bills of lading. And as inexperienced as we were, I don't know how they ever got anything straight (chuckle). You know, everything was messed up, and a lot of papers were damaged.

Then we had the air raids, constant air raids. We would have to rush down into the bomb shelters. They had hardly dug these bomb shelters, and whenever the sirens went off, we all had to go down into the bomb shelter, and I'd sit there and wonder about my baby at home, you know. I wondered, you know, if we were bombed, would I get killed there, or the baby might get killed.

He would meet me during his lunch hour. He'd come over to the island. We'd meet in the elevator and would be able to say hello to each other and what-not. And then he had to go back. He stood it for three months. And he came in one day, and he said, "You're quitting!" Because he'd come home and . . .

Mr. Williamson: That's male chauvinist (laughter).

Mrs. Williamson: . . . I'd be on the night shift and he worked days, and we left notes for each other at the house. And during the war, when you were hired on, you could not quit; you were frozen to your job. So he says, "You're quitting!" He says, "We don't need that money you're making anymore than . . . he said, "We can't tell that there is any difference, really." I guess it was because the more you have the more you spend. It was working a hardship on me, on him, and on the baby. I remember I had to go up to the commanding officer, and I told him I wanted out. And, of course, I had to have a very good reason. I said, "Well, I have a baby at home." I said, "I don't have anyone to take care of him." And that was a very good reason, so they gave me my release "without prejudice," is what they called it, and I was able to quit. And it felt so good to stay home (laughter).

Mr. Williamson: She's been staying home ever since (laughter).

Mrs. Williamson: That's the only time I have ever worked, and we have been married almost . . . we were married in 1940 . . .thirty-six years. The only time I've ever worked is those three months.

Marcello: In the meantime, I suppose you were shortly making more money because promotions came out very, very rapidly after the war started as opposed to how slow they had been before the war.

Mr. Williamson: Right. I made chief in 1942. I had only been in the Navy for six years. And prior to the war, you'd have to stay in twenty years or maybe eighteen years, but I . . . once I made chief, I was put in charge eventually of the shop. And then like I said, I set up the other shop, the acoustic shop, and later I was transferred to a destroyer. And I spent the latter days of my Navy career on destroyers up in Keyport, Washington. That's where I retired from. And since I was a Granbury boy. . . and I told my wife I was retiring. I said, "What do you think about it?" She said, "Well, it's up to you." She said, "You've always made me a living." She said, "I'll still depend on you to make me a living wherever you go." So I said, "Well, I'm putting my papers in, and I'll retire and we'll go back to Texas." And in the meantime, I sent resumes out. I was an

electronics man, and I came to Texas, and I went to work the first week I was here over at General Dynamics as an electronic technician. And I worked over there for seventeen years, and I retired from over there at fifty-five.

Mrs. Williamson: That was one time I had to eat my words.

Mr. Williamson: Why?

Mrs. Williamson: Well, you know, when we first came to the States after the war, we had two sons then, and we came to visit his family here in Texas. I had never been to Texas before. And it was in the summertime, and I pretty near died. I despise this heat. This was before air-conditioning. They didn't have air conditioning. I suffered . . . the chiggers ate me up (chuckle), and it was miserable. And so we were stationed in Florida; we were stationed in Virginia; and we'd make trips back to Texas. And we went to Washington, and it was getting time for retirement, and he had to decide where we were going to live when we retired. And I had always said, "I will never live in Texas--never!" And here I am. So Texas looked pretty good, I guess, after awhile. Of course, it's nicer now with air conditioning in the homes and in the cars. But they always used to ask me, you know, that I should be used to it. I

come from a warm climate. I said, "It's never like this in Hawaii. It might be warm, but here it's hot! It's terribly hot!" I still despise the heat; I hate it every summer, and I've lived here for . . . we've been here twenty years this past . . . going on twenty-one. And every summer I think of moving to California because the climate there is so good.

Marcello:

Well, Mr. and Mrs. Williamson, I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me. You've said some very interesting and very important things. I'm sure that scholars are going to find your comments very useful in the future years when they use this material.

Mr. Williamson:

Thank you.