

**Interview With
Raymond and Florence Bower**

This is Virginia Roberts. I am interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Bower on September 28, 2002. It is taking place in Fredericksburg, Texas. This interview is in support of the Center for Pacific War Studies, Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Parks and Wildlife for the Preservation of Historical Information related to the site.

Ms. Roberts: Mr. Bower, if you would, start off with the statistics about where you were born.

Mr. Bower: I was born in Oley, Pennsylvania, on a farm. I was born and raised on a farm until until we moved into Shanesville, Pennsylvania, and from there I went to school. I graduated from high school in Oley, Pennsylvania and after I graduated from high school we moved to Boyertown, Pennsylvania. I started working at the Boyertown Burial Casket Company for awhile. After I left there I went to work at a service station, and from the service station I enlisted in the Army. That was in 1940. After I enlisted in the Army, I was sent to Chenute Field, Illinois. At Chenute Field I went through basic training and I started my aircraft mechanics school. After I graduated from the aircraft mechanics school, I was sent to Hawaii, in 1940, the last part of 1940. In Hawaii I was assigned to the 86th Observation Squadron, which was part of the Seventh Air Force, and in that squadron, after I was assigned to duty as a crew chief for an aircraft, we were sent to Bellows Field. While we were on Bellows Field in 1941, in December, while I was outside preflighting my aircraft, I saw a plane fly in from the ocean.

Ms. Roberts: This was the morning of December the 7th.

Mr. Bower: December 7th.

Ms. Roberts: About what time, do you remember?

Mr. Bower: I was out there about seven o'clock in the morning. At about 7:30, as I was preparing the preflight, I saw this aircraft come in from the ocean. It didn't look proper to me, so I just watched it, and it was an airplane with a big red dot on the side, and right then is when he started shooting. He fired at all the aircraft that were there on the base, there were quite a few of them at the time. So I just lay flat on the ground, and he sprayed dust in my face. That's how close he came. And he destroyed my aircraft. Then after he left we tried to get my airplane out of the way and then they came back, a little squadron of Japanese fighters came back and started strafing the whole base. It was a fighter squadron that we were working with at the time, and they destroyed 71 of the fighters, they just destroyed the whole base. After they were gone, a B-17 that was coming in from the United States that we didn't know about, he landed on our runway, but he couldn't get his wheels down, so he just slid to the end of the runway. We all went out there to help him to see whether everything was all right, and the pilots came in and started strafing them again. So we were quite busy on that morning, December 7th.

Ms. Roberts: After the strafing, were any of your aircraft able to get into the air or were they all destroyed at that point?

Mr. Bower: Not all destroyed, but quite a few of them. We got two of them into the air after that, after we got all the guns loaded on the plane, and put ammunition on it. The commanding officer went out, and a couple of the other officers went out with him, and they flew around but the fighters were all gone. They'd gone back to their base, to the aircraft carrier they came from.

Ms. Roberts: If I remember correctly, at Bellows one of the midget subs had run aground. Were you there at the time they captured and removed the Japanese from the sub?

Mr. Bower: Yes. It was in the bay, stuck on the reef, and it couldn't get out so one of the men got out of the two-man sub and he tried to swim ashore and he couldn't, he was killed.

Ms. Roberts: Was he drowned?

Mr. Bower: Yes. The other man stayed inside. So when we went out there to pull the sub in, we had a big piece of machinery that we could pull it in, he came out of the two-man sub, put his hands up, and he wanted us to kill him, because he didn't want his country to know . . .

Ms. Roberts: I didn't hear that part of the story before.

Mr. Bower: . . . that he was captured. He was the first prisoner of war that was captured. The two-man sub was brought in. We cleaned it up, took all the ammunition and everything out of it that was explosive, and the commanding general of Wheeler Field, which was my home base, said "We're going to send the sub back to the States." And he sent it back to the States so they could sell War Bonds to finance the war. And that's where it went.

Ms. Roberts: So the prisoner, did he stay there?

Mr. Bower: He stayed in Hawaii. When we went back to the 50th Reunion he came to our squadron and thanked us for saving his life. He lived until 1991.

Ms. Roberts: In Hawaii?

Mr. Bower: Yes.

Ms. Roberts: Were you involved in the capture, or were you busy with your airplane?

Mr. Bower: Mine was destroyed, so I didn't have any.

Ms. Roberts: You didn't have any airplane to be busy with.

Mr. Bower: No, I helped them, whatever they had to have done, I helped them bring the submarine in and everything else.

Ms. Roberts: I understand that he eventually converted and became a Christian. Is that right?

Mr. Bower: Yes, he did.

Ms. Roberts: That's what I have heard. In preparing for this interview I did a lot of reading, and that's one of the things I learned. What was the aftermath of the strafing on the base? How long did it take the squadron to get back in the air? Were any of the airplanes reparable?

Mr. Bower: We tried and we got several of them repaired. It took us about a week. Then we went back to Wheeler Field, to our home base.

Mrs. Bower: They had the three bases there; Hickam, Wheeler, and Bellows. Hickam and Wheeler also had many planes.

Ms. Roberts: Pretty much all gone.

Mrs. Bower: No, they weren't. There were some planes left at Hickam and Wheeler.

Ms. Roberts: How much longer did you serve in Hawaii?

Mr. Bower: I stayed there until . . .

Mrs. Bower: You came back to the States in July of '45.

Ms. Roberts: So he stayed in Hawaii until '45.

Mr. Bower: That was our home base. But we flew all over the South Pacific. We got B-24s. The B-24s were loaded, then we were converted to a combat mapping squadron. We had a B-24 that was converted into a photo ship. Wherever we went we took pictures at low altitude and high, several altitudes. So we flew . . .

Ms. Roberts: You were in harm's way the rest of the war.

Mr. Bower: Yes. We flew from Honolulu to Saipan, but first we flew from Honolulu to Kwajalein, then to Saipan, and from Saipan we flew over Japan and took pictures of it before they even bombed it.

Mrs. Bower: Trying to find out what the Japanese were hiding.

Mr. Bower: Coming back, we were shot down. We made it to the channel between Saipan and Tinian, and in the channel was where we lost our airplane. But they picked us all up and took us

into Saipan by boat.

Ms. Roberts: After you were picked up, after your plane went down, after you were rescued, how did you get back to your squadron?

Mr. Bower: We had B-25s down there, and the B-25s went back to the squadron and then we came back to Hawaii.

Ms. Roberts: What were your duties after that? As soon as the war was over you came back to the States, or did you stay in the service a little while longer?

Mr. Bower: I came back to the states in 1945 . . .

Mrs. Bower: For separation.

Mr. Bower: Yes, for separation.

Ms. Roberts: And where did you go to for that?

Mr. Bower: Fort Dix, New Jersey. That's where I met my wife.

Ms. Roberts: Were you in the service also, Mrs. Bower?

Mrs. Bower: Yes ma'm, I'm a World War II veteran. We were married three days after we met.

Ms. Roberts: My goodness! Did you know each other before that?

Mrs. Bower: No.

Ms. Roberts: And your home town is where?

Mrs. Bower: Massachusetts.

Ms. Roberts: What city?

Mrs. Bower: Amesbury. A small town.

Ms. Roberts: And tell me your date of birth.

Mrs. Bower: May 11, 1922.

Ms. Roberts: And Mr. Bower, I didn't get your date of birth.

Mr. Bower: December 19th, 1919.

Ms. Roberts: 1919. And you both look wonderful.

Mr. Bower: It's easy to remember.

Mrs. Bower: We do a lot of volunteer work—hospitals, Red Cross.

Ms. Roberts: You were at Fort Dix. What were your responsibilities at Fort Dix?

Mrs. Bower: Do you want me to go back a little further and give you a little bit of how . . .

Ms. Roberts: Family history? Yes, I'd really like to hear that.

Mrs. Bower: I was born in the little town of Amesbury, Massachusetts, went through school, parochial school, and then graduated from the high school in 1940. From there I went into nurse's training in the fall, at the hospital in Arlington, Massachusetts, at which time the war was going on. (Now we live in Arlington, Texas—seems strange.) I had completed about one and a half years of training and I had about six months left. I went into the service in 1943 and I served until 1945, I had two years in the military. I joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps—this is one reason I stopped my training, I figured I could pick it up after I served my country. I wanted to serve the country first, they were crying for women to come in and help these men to leave and go to duty wherever they had to go, the European Theater or the Pacific Theater. they needed women, and they asked for women. When I joined it was the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. About four months after I had taken my oath, we had to take it again because we had dropped the "auxiliary" and we became the Women's Army Corps, WAC.

I took my basic training at Ft. Oglethorpe, Georgia, which I enjoyed. They interviewed all of us for whatever position they'd like to send us, give us whatever type of duties to do in the military. After they got through, the commanding officer called me and she said, "Well, Florence, where would you like to serve?" We had a choice of anywhere at that point. They promised you would go to wherever they told you to go. I wasn't quite sure and she knew what my background was because she had a list of the training I had, and all the things I had done, so she said "We're going to give you a series of tests." They gave me all kinds of tests—mental, physical. When they got through, she evaluated me, and she said, "We think you'd make a lovely recruiter." And I said, "Whatever you want me to do, I'm here to do whatever you want me to do." So she said, "Well, we'd like to have you go to recruiting school, it will be three weeks, which means you'll stay here after your basic training. You'll finish your basic training and now you'll have another three weeks with us here in Georgia." This was fine. I went to recruiting school and then I was assigned to the Northern New Jersey-Delaware recruiting area. I wound up in New Jersey, the Newark Post Office, the recruiting office was in the basement.

Ms. Roberts: In your recruiting duties, tell me a little bit about that.

Mrs. Bower: It was exciting, it really was very exciting.

Ms. Roberts: What did you have to do? Did you speak?

Mrs. Bower: Oh, yes. I had to speak on the radio, no TV then, talked to women about coming into the military, and I had scripts that I had to follow. I had to approach the schools and the colleges in this whole area and speak to the young ladies at the colleges, and of course it wouldn't do any good to go to the high schools, actually, but we did talk to the seniors because we knew that shortly—to be in military service, you had to be at least 20 or 21 years old when you went in. They wouldn't take teenagers. Now they do, down to 18. And we were not allowed to serve overseas when I was in the service. Right after I left, or shortly before then, we were allowed to go. After I was in Newark, New Jersey, they assigned me to Phillipsburg, New Jersey, which is right on the Pennsylvania border. I lived with an elderly couple, in their home, I rented, and then right down the street from their lovely home was—in fact [speaking to Mr. Bower] you could show her that picture that you have in your wallet, that is right outside of Mom and Pop Stamet's home. He's been carrying that picture since 1945.

Ms. Roberts: When the two of you met?

Mrs. Bower: Yes. But not yet. They made me sit down, we had to pose for that. He shows that to everybody. They sort of adopted me, they were so wonderful to me, they were an elderly couple. They would not take a large amount of rent from me, which was wonderful because we were not getting paid that much to begin with.

Ms. Roberts: What was your salary?

Mrs. Bower: Twenty-one dollars a month, it doesn't go very far when you have to buy female clothes, and you'd have to have your shirts pressed. The rest of the things we had to wash by hand in wash tubs.

Ms. Roberts: Was your uniform assigned to you?

Mrs. Bower: Yes, they were all issued when I left—they were issued after basic training was completed. They did give us a few things for basic training like boots and fatigue suits, one piece. When we left we had all the clothes assigned. I waited for some of the winter clothes because they didn't know at that time they were going to assign me to New Jersey and New York, I went to New York also. I enjoyed so much being at Phillipsburg, that was enjoyable, I contacted all the women's clubs and made speeches there. I made speech after speech. I'm a speech major now. I went back to college when we were here before from 1966 to 1982 in Arlington, Texas, and I received one whole year of credits from UTA.

Ms. Roberts: For your time . . .

- Mrs. Bower:** And I went back, we had to leave—of course, I told you I was working with the State, I'm digressing here. I have to go back again to where I was stationed. Recruiting duty, it wasn't quite a year that I was in recruiting, but I loved it, I enjoyed it, I have lots of publicity pictures, I helped to sell the War Bonds, and talked to people. It was a tremendous amount of public relations work, and it was wonderful.
- Ms. Roberts:** Would you actually sign the young ladies up right at that point, did you get them to sign on the dotted line?
- Mrs. Bower:** Yes, we had the applications, the recruiters have applications.
- Ms. Roberts:** Tell them where to go . . .
- Mrs. Bower:** Absolutely. We usually volunteered to take them there.
- Ms. Roberts:** What was the reception, how were they receptive, were they really excited about it?
- Mrs. Bower:** Everybody was wonderful to me. All my life, people have been wonderful to me. About everybody.
- Ms. Roberts:** The young ladies that you recruited, were they really excited about going, or were they hesitant?
- Mrs. Bower:** No, they were excited. They were as excited as I was when I went in. Excited and challenged.
- Ms. Roberts:** Did they have to go back and counsel with their parents, or were they pretty independent?
- Mrs. Bower:** Oh no, they were pretty independent. The ones that we took in at age 21 . . .
- Ms. Roberts:** They were already adults.
- Mrs. Bower:** Yes. I did speak to many high school seniors, I told you that . . .
- Ms. Roberts:** Not knowing how long the war was going to last.
- Mrs. Bower:** Or whether the age would change, we didn't know, which of course it did. I went in to talk to my commanding officer, and she said "You're doing a wonderful job recruiting, and we love to have you here, thank you, you've brought in quite a few applicants." I said, "Well, I did come in a specific reason. I would like to be transferred to a military hospital, preferably an Army" (because I was in the Army), "medical hospital." And she looked at me and said, "Now, why would you want to do that?" I said, "I just feel like I'm wasting close to two years of nurse's training." I had just about everything and almost

all of my accreditations. I put it aside, and said, "I'll take care of it after I get out of the service." I didn't see what was forthcoming.

They granted my wish, and that was very unusual in those days. They were very specific about where they put you in one place and wanted you there. She said, "We really need you in recruiting, but if you insist." I said, "I insist." They sent me to Staten Island Area Station Hospital in Staten Island, New York. We drove the ambulances down to the piers in New York city and we picked up wounded young men coming back from the European Theater of Operations. Very sad. It gave me nightmares for many years. Some were young, teenage boys, and early twenties, my age, coming back. There were double amputees, there were blind, one of them trying to feel me, he said, "Let me feel your face. Oh, you're so pretty." He'd completely lost his eyesight. It stays with you. And then they had stepped on land mines and this was all put together after—it's very difficult to . . .

Ms. Roberts: How long were you there?

Ms. Bower: I was there until July, and . . .

Ms. Roberts: You went there . . .

Mrs. Bower: To the hospital?

Ms. Roberts: Yes.

Mrs. Bower: I would say, 1944—I went in the service in 1943, basic training, recruiting school and recruiting duty, until the middle of 1944. In '44 I transferred to a military hospital, and I was there until—I left the end of July of '45, with an honorable discharge, DD214.

Ms. Roberts: Tell me about how you two met.

Mrs. Bower: While I was at Staten Island Area Station Hospital, my C.O. called me in, Captain Robb, and she said, "Florence, I would ask you to do a favor for me." And I said, "Of course, anything. That's what I'm here for." And she said, "I need someone to do temporary duty at Fort Dix, New Jersey. You're competent as far as the typing is concerned, and the writing, and we need you to help fill out the separation papers for the young men coming back from their duty." Duty was what she said, she didn't tell me specifically north or east or whatever. I was sitting there when this handsome Adonis with blonde hair bleached out from the sun, tall man, was standing there in front of me, and it was this man that's sitting next to me.

Ms. Roberts: He just reached in and grabbed your heart, didn't he.

Mrs. Bower: When I saw him at the door I said, this is mine. This is my husband. I did. I asked him, he said he thought the same thing when he saw me behind the desk.

Ms. Roberts: That's a beautiful story.

Mrs. Bower: We were together almost all that day, whenever I was able to leave, and we had dinner that evening and we went to the movie on base, and sat out on a bench talking until about two o'clock in the morning. After the movie was over, and while we were talking he asked me where I came from, and I told him a little town in Massachusetts, and he said "I understand New England is beautiful," and I said "Yes, New England is beautiful. We have beautiful mountains and hills, and it's just very lovely country." My town in Massachusetts is right near the Atlantic Ocean where I used to go swimming at the beaches on Saturdays and Sundays as a teenager, and even as a child when my mother would take me there. He said he would like to go, he had been born and raised on a farm, and he told me about his background, that he was one of seven children. There were five brothers and one sister and himself, and he was the baby. I said, "Would you like to go to Massachusetts? You could stay with my mother and grandmother, I have a little leave coming over the weekend." He said that would be fine, so we left the base the next day, and went to New York on a bus. When we got to New York we took the train out of New York, that took us to Boston. I asked him what time the train—well, we didn't get to Boston, the conductor was calling out stops. We were sitting there on the train, holding hands all the way, I wouldn't let go and he wouldn't let go . . .

Ms. Roberts: You'd found him, and . . .

Mrs. Bower: We both felt the same way. The conductor called out "Bridgeport, Bridgeport," in Connecticut. I said "Oh my goodness, I worked here for a little bit in the summertime before I started my nurse's training." I worked as a control station clerk for Vought Sikorsky Aircraft. He looked at me, and he said "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" And I said, "I don't know. Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" And he said, "I don't know, let's get off." So he took his piece of luggage and my piece of luggage and we got off. We wandered up the street in Bridgeport. When I was there I lived in a home, a private home where a woman had a dormitory for all of us young girls, 18, 19 years old, who'd graduated from high school and came to work at Vought Sikorsky. That's where I was, in the women's dormitory. So I had never gone to any of the hotels. We stopped and asked a man if he could tell us where there was a nice family hotel, and he said "Yes, there's a hotel right up the street here, just another block or so. That's the nicest hotel we have in Bridgeport. It has a cocktail lounge, a pianist playing in the evening." Well, that really hit the spot, because I played for the USO as a teenager, for the Coast Guard, playing the piano and singing.

We went into the lobby of the Barnham Hotel in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Ray walked up to the desk and there I began to have a little bit of reservations, because I had had problems when I was in the service, long before I met him, and I had to walk out on one of these situations, and I didn't want this to occur again. He said to the desk clerk, "Do you have single rooms, one for me and one for my fiancée, and what time does the marriage license bureau close?"

Ms. Roberts: And that's the first that either one of you had even said anything about marriage.

Mr. Bower: That's right.

Ms. Roberts: That solidified your whole relationship.

Mrs. Bower: It surely did. That's what we did. I went up and asked the organist and he found out I also was an organist. I was an organist for my children's masses back in St. Joseph's church in Anesbury when I was growing up, from 12 years of age until 18 I played for the children's choir. Of course when he knew I was a pianist and an organist, he offered me to sit in while he was taking a few breaks, a respite. So I played a few tunes on the organ and both of us enjoyed so much of the club that night for dinner. Wonderful things like—do you remember some of them? [to Mr. Bower]

Mr. Bower: No, that was too long ago.

Mrs. Bower: But anyway, I played a few tunes. And we sat down, and had a drink, and neither of us drank but we had a Tom Collins or something, that was the one and only for us, and this gentleman kept waving to us, he was sitting with a woman and another couple. I didn't know what he was trying to say, and Ray didn't look up, so he didn't see him. I looked up again, and he went like this, and I thought, what is this man doing? I said to Ray, "There's a man over there, and he keeps waving his hand at me, and I don't know what he needs." He finally came over and said, "Would you two people"—we were in uniform—"would you two people please come over and join us. It's nice to talk to young people in the military service. This is my wife, and tomorrow we're celebrating our ninth wedding anniversary, we're doing it tonight." They told us the names of the other couple who were friends of theirs. We told them that we—after we'd talked to the desk clerk we'd got the marriage license done—they sent us to see a judge in the same building and he talked to us like a Dutch uncle. He said, "How long have you people known one another?" and when we told him, he said, "You young people who go into the military service, you know, these marriages never last. One will be separated from the other and it usually ends up in a divorce." He just went on and on, talked and talked, tried to . . .

Ms. Roberts: Talk you out of it.

Mrs. Bower: Yes. Of course they waived the blood test because they knew we were military. We had those constantly. He looked at both of us, and he said "Well, it's your decision. I can't tell you what to do, but I can suggest like I just did, that you wait." He looked at Ray and he said "You still want to get married?" and Ray said "Yes." He looked at me and I looked at Ray and I said "Yes" and he said "All right" and he signed it off. So we were sitting that evening, this had been done during the day. Ray took me to a jewelry store and he got me my first little—not this one—orange blossom gold wedding ring, very pretty. I got him his, and he has never ever taken it off. Never.

Mr. Bower: I've never taken it off.

Mrs. Bower: It'll never come off now.

Mr. Bower: Now I can't get it off.

Mrs. Bower: It'll be 57 years July 9th of next year, he's never taken that wedding ring off. And I didn't take mine off either until I had to because it was worn. You couldn't see any more blossoms on it, it was getting thin, so on our 25th was when he got me this one. Bill Lillis and his wife, Charlotte, had two lovely children, a boy and a girl. They stood up for us, they were our best man and matron of honor, and the other couple was with us also. We knew we were going to have to get back on the train again, so we didn't even get a chance to sleep at the hotel. We had that one the first night, and he was way up on the fourth floor and I was way down on the second floor. That's the evening we met them, the Lillises. We told them we had to go, because my mother was expecting me the day before, and my grandmother, and I had to get home, so Bill and Charlotte said, "Well, that's fine, but you're going to have dinner with us first." They had ordered a fantastic meal, these were people we'd just met. We had a wedding dinner, and then they had ordered a lovely wedding cake for us. It was a beautiful, beautiful evening. Everyone, almost everyone we have met, has been that good to us.

Ms. Roberts: So you finally got home, introducing him instead of as your fiancé as "My husband."

Mrs. Bower: We went to Boston by train from Grand Central in New York. They saw us off at the train, took us, walked down to the train station which wasn't too far from the hotel. Then we went into Boston. It was nighttime, the dinner and all, it was evening, and by the time we got into Boston, the train station, it was what? It was midnight or one o'clock?

Mr. Bower: It was midnight, a little after midnight.

Mrs. Bower: It was between twelve and one, or one and two, or whatever it was, the very wee hours of the morning. And here we were, we hadn't had a night's sleep, and we were sitting on these long wooden benches they had in railway stations and bus stations, no padding like they do today. We sat there and sat there, and it was getting so uncomfortable, there wasn't anybody in the station, we were the only ones, and one ticket agent. So we went out and asked him if there was a way that we could get to Amesbury, what time does the train leave here? And he said, "Ma'm, the train's not leaving until 5:30 in the morning," and I said "Oh, we just can't sit here for three hours or more, we have to leave." He said, "Well, you might possibly look outside. There might possibly be—I doubt it very much—but you might find a taxi cab." So we went outside, and there was one—it was as though God had put this together for us. There was the cab waiting, and we walked up to the cabbie, in our uniforms, and said, "Would you please take us to Amesbury?" It is about 30 miles northeast of Boston, and he said "Well, all right, I'll do it. But I can't take you in the taxi, because I'm not allowed to leave the metropolitan area, but if you

two will get in, I'll take you over to my home and I'll put the cab in my garage and I will take you in my personal car." So he drove us all the way to AMesbury.

By the time we got into AMesbury it was about four o'clock in the morning and we were both fast asleep, just completely exhausted. No honeymoon. No honeymoon that night either, we were very, very exhausted. When we stopped he said, "We're here," and I said, "Thank you, and what do we owe you." And he said, "That will be fifty dollars." We just could not believe fifty dollars. Fortunately Ray had that bonus they gave him, and it wasn't very much either. We gave him the fifty dollars, and he said "Incidentally, I know that you people get coffee ration books, and that you get gas ration books, and I'll need to have about half of those books to make up for this." And we thought, oh my God. As I said, everybody had been wonderful to us and we thought this gentleman—but it didn't turn out that way. So after that disappointment, we were right at the sidewalk, we walked up the sidewalk to the two steps to the third step, and I stood in front and knocked on the door. It was a hot day, my mother had the door open and the screen was locked so we could get air in the house. We had no air conditioning at that time.

Ms. Roberts: Were your knees knocking?

Mrs. Bower: No. Very calm, but very tired and exhausted. I knocked at the door. My mother came down the stairs in her nightgown. My grandmother, God love her, had severe arthritis, her legs and feet were so painful. She came out of the kitchen in her nightgown, and they came to the door. Immediately my mother said "Where have you been? We expected you yesterday, we were afraid something had happened to you." And I said, "Mom, I want you and Grammy to meet your new son-in-law." Four o'clock in the morning, we're getting them both out of bed! But from that day on, he could do no wrong. They just adored him. Oh, they adored him, my mother and grandmother.

Ms. Roberts: What a wonderful story!

Mrs. Bower: That's our life.

Ms. Roberts: So your anniversary date—I don't think we got that.

Mrs. Bower: July 9, 1945. It will be 57 years this coming July 9th.

Ms. Roberts: What a beautiful story.

Mrs. Bower: It's a nice story. We love our story.

Ms. Roberts: You had wonderful service in Pearl Harbor, and a wonderful marriage, and you have children?

Mrs. Bower: We have three sons. One is in California with his family, another is in New Jersey with

his family, and the "baby"—they are 56 and 53—the "baby" was 49, he's the baby, but he'll be 50 in January. Both of his kidneys are necrosing, and he's on dialysis.

Ms. Roberts: Did any of them go into the military?

Mrs. Bower: Oh yes, the two older boys. It was '66 when Bob went in. He went into the Navy, the oldest one. Our adopted son. We lost our first baby girl. That's why I came out of the service the end of July, the beginning of August, because I found I was pregnant. I was very happy to be pregnant. We lost the baby. At seven months, it was an emergency C-section. She died at two weeks old. And they told us we'd never have another child.

Ms. Roberts: You proved medicine wrong. Good for you.

Mrs. Bower: We adopted a little boy, 18 months old, from St. Francis Orphanage in Pottsville, Pennsylvania. We decided, I guess, this is all the Lord wants us to do. And then two years later I got pregnant with Curtis.

Ms. Roberts: You were mustering out when you met her. You were getting out of the service.

Mr. Bower: That's what they call it. Yes.

Ms. Roberts: And you went back in the service?

Mrs. Bower: Yes, ma'am. Oh, yes.

Ms. Roberts: Why?

Mrs. Bower: Oh, we couldn't make it on the outside.

Ms. Roberts: Did you go back in the Army?

Mrs. Bower: No.

Mr. Bower: Air Force.

Ms. Roberts: So you're a pilot.

Mr. Bower: No.

Mrs. Bower: No, he's an engineer.

Mr. Bower: Flight engineer.

Ms. Roberts: Well, this has been a wonderful story, and I want to thank both of you so much. We appreciate you coming in this morning. Your story will be in our archives for the people to read and enjoy. Thank you so much.

Transcribed by: Betty Paieda
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