

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mrs. Jean Adams

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Interviewer: Mike Zambrano

Mr. Zambrano: This is Mike Zambrano and today is January 25, 2016. Today I'm sitting here with Mrs. Jean Besson Adams at her home in Austin, Texas. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site.

Mrs. Adams: (Reacting to feedback in the recorder) Sometimes that happens; people doing something in the building.

Mr. Zambrano: Can you tell me where and when you were born?

Mrs. Adams: I was born in Washington, DC. Actually, I was born at Walter Reed Hospital. (Laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, really? Wow, well that's a name everyone knows.

Mrs. Adams: In 1919, December 20th. My father was in the military.

Mr. Zambrano: What was his name?

Mrs. Adams: Besson (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, but I mean his full name.

Mrs. Adams: Oh, Frank Besson. Frank Schafer Besson.

Mr. Zambrano: I read in the article that he was in the military. How long was he in?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, probably 35 years or so. My father and my two brothers went to West Point. My husband and his father, and his two grandfathers went to West Point, so it was pretty much of a military family.

Mr. Zambrano: It sounds like it. What was your mother's name?

Ms. Adams: Jean Sharp Besson.

Mr. Zambrano: I assume she was a homemaker?

Mrs. Adams: Yes. Well, before she was married, she was a nurse. She came from Scotland.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh! Was she--did she emigrate or did her parents emigrate?

Mrs. Adams: She emigrated with her parents, but she was grown. She was already a nurse.

Mr. Zambrano: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mrs. Adams: I had two brothers.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Mrs. Adams: One became head of the material command of the Army, and the other was a prisoner of the Japanese.

Mr. Zambrano: That was, is it Robert or Richard?

Mrs. Adams: Robert.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. What was your other brother's name?

Mrs. Adams: Frank.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, and he's the one who served in Europe?

Mrs. Adams: He served in Iran. He was head of getting the American articles of war into Russia through Iran, and that was his first, I guess that's his first war experience. Then he was in England, and I don't know where he went after that. As I say, he finally was head of the material command, four-star general.

Mr. Zambrano: I had read also that you had (some feedback coming through speaker).

Mrs. Adams: I don't know what to do about that.

Mr. Zambrano: I think the further away this is from the microphone, it should be all right. You grew up during the Depression. How does that affect your family?

Mrs. Adams: Well, my father was in the military, so they did reduce the pay 15 percent in the military, but we were so much better off than most

people that, actually, I don't think the Depression affected us much.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you as a family move around a lot because he was in the military?

Mrs. Adams: Yes, mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you ever have to move outside of the United States?

Mrs. Adams: Not with my father, no. I did go to visit my brother after I had finished school, who was stationed in the Philippines, and that's where he was captured. But that was the only time in my unmarried life that I went overseas (laughs). I went overseas two or three times during my married life.

Mr. Zambrano: You went to go visit your brother, just--?

Mrs. Adams: My parents--my brother and his wife invited me--and they said, "Well, you know, this is a good opportunity for you to see the Far East, and you haven't been out of the country, so why don't you go?" I thought, well that sounds pretty much fun (laughs), so I did.

Mr. Zambrano: What did you think of it?

Mrs. Adams: Well, I had a very good time. As a young unmarried girl, it a was pretty nice place to be.

Mr. Zambrano: That's what I hear; I went to school with a lot of Filipinos, years ago. Let's see, the article in The Statesman mentioned that you went to, I forget the name of the school.

Mrs. Adams: Ogontz?

Mr. Zambrano: Yes.

Mrs. Adams: That was my--it was, actually it was a girls' finishing school that you'd call it, but it had such good education that you could go to Smith or Bryn Mawr without taking any--as a junior, if you wanted to, but I went out to see my brother in the Philippines instead. It sounded like a more interesting thing to do at that time. (Laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Well, when I read that you had gone to visit your brother, I had never really run across anybody who said that they had actually

left the country to go visit somebody. I would think it was a more unique thing back then.

Mrs. Adams: Well, this was before the war. I was out there, and I was evacuated back. The war started December 7th, and I came back in June, I think it was. I was evacuated back by the military because my father was in the military. I went over on a commercial ship, the Taft, President Taft. We went to Japan and Hong Kong on the ship before I got to the Philippines.

Mr. Zambrano: I assume you got off at Japan.

Mrs. Adams: Yes, uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: What was your impression of it?

Mrs. Adams: It was just a very pretty little country. We really didn't realize they had in mind to bomb Pearl Harbor. I mean, little, teeny Japan, it seemed kind of ridiculous. But they did, and they came in and certainly wiped out the Americans in the Philippines. I don't think we were as prepared as we might have been there. My brother was captured on the 21st or something of December, so he wasn't in the war very long. His wife and child had already been evacuated, of course. Most of us were all gone by June, so somebody knew something was funny.

Mr. Zambrano: So this was in--?

Mrs. Adams: Forty-one.

Mr. Zambrano: Forty-one that you would have gone to visit him. Okay. Let's see, so you had been to Japan; what was the other place you said you had been?

Mrs. Adams: Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Mr. Zambrano: How long was this trip, considering you were taking it on a boat?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, gosh. It took a long time. I can't remember; that was 70-odd years ago, 75, 78 (laughs), longer than you've been alive. So I don't remember how long the trip was, but it was over a month.

Mr. Zambrano: I mean, today you'd just hop on a plane (unclear).

Mrs. Adams: But we had to stop. We stopped in Hawaii, and then we stopped there, too.

Mr. Zambrano: Did your father have any objection to your going out?

Mrs. Adams: It was perfectly safe. My goodness, I was 20, old enough.

Mr. Zambrano: The Statesman also mentioned that you had a two-year degree, but it didn't--it just says liberal arts degree.

Mrs. Adams: Liberal arts, right.

Mr. Zambrano: It was just liberal arts?

Mrs. Adams: Just liberal arts.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. And that was from where?

Mrs. Adams: Ogontz.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mrs. Adams: It's now part of the University of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Zambrano: That's right. Do you remember where you were when you heard that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor?

Mrs. Adams: I was in Kansas City. My father was stationed there in river and harbor work. He was an engineer in the Army. He was with the Army Engineers; you know, they are blamed for all the floods and everything else (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Was he a member of the Corps of Engineers?

Mrs. Adams: Yes, uh-huh. So he was there as river and harbors, head of the--in Kansas City. The Mississippi and Missouri.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you remember what the general feeling was when people heard about Pearl Harbor?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, they were horrified. It's amazing how fast people went to the enlistment places to enlist. I mean men, not women.

Mr. Zambrano: You father, did he--do you recall him having any certain reaction or emotions that stood out?

Mrs. Adams: He just was ready to get it over with (laughs). Of course, you know, the war in Europe had been going on for a couple of years, so it wasn't that they weren't getting ready for a war. I think

everybody in the military felt like at one time or another that Roosevelt was going to send them in to help in Europe.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, we certainly prepared things very slowly and quietly. What was the branch your brother was in?

Mrs. Adams: Which brother?

Mr. Zambrano: Robert.

Mrs. Adams: He was in the Infantry.

Mr. Zambrano: And your other brother?

Mrs. Adams: He was in the Transportation Corps.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Do you remember when you heard that he had been captured?

Mrs. Adams: Where I was when I heard that he was captured?

Mr. Zambrano: Well, when you--no, I guess where were you when you heard that he had been captured?

Mrs. Adams: I was in Kansas City.

Mr. Zambrano: That must have been a big shock.

Mrs. Adams: Yes, it was, terrible.

Mr. Zambrano: When was the next time you saw him after that?

Mrs. Adams: After the war. He was one of the last found, in Japan.

Mr. Zambrano: Can you tell me a little bit about what prompted you to join the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps?

Mrs. Adams: Well, one of my mother's friends was an assistant to Oveta Culp Hobby. Her name was Helen Gruber. Her husband was also Army. I can't remember, but they were stationed in Washington, DC, so she went in to help Oveta. She and mother corresponded a lot, and I guess she must have suggested to mother that it would be something for me to do that I might enjoy. You know, feel good about doing. So then, when my brother was captured; I mean, my brother had been captured and my father even got in on the act and thought, well, the whole idea for a woman to join to take the place so a man could go and fight. So he said, "You know, if you can be

of any help, it would certainly be something that you should do.”
So, I did.

Mr. Zambrano: If you hadn't gone in, would you have done something different?

Mrs. Adams: I don't know; probably become a secretary (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: You didn't have any specific thing that you--

Mrs. Adams: No, I didn't have any--you know, people pretty much, women pretty much just grew up and went to school, went to college, got out, and got married, and children.

Mr. Zambrano: That was (unclear).

Mrs. Adams: You really didn't think about becoming a doctor or anything, for some reason.

Mr. Zambrano: So, she suggested that you go in, and you decide to do that.

Mrs. Adams: I decided to join.

Mr. Zambrano: Where was it that you went to enlist?

Mrs. Adams: I went to join as an officer candidate; this is what it was called. I don't know how I did it; I must have sent in a piece of paper. Then they contacted me and told me that I was accepted and to go to Des Moines, Iowa. I would go through the officer candidate training, which lasted, I guess, about six weeks, and then I would become an officer.

Mr. Zambrano: Having a two-year degree obviously helped, right?

Mrs. Adams: How did it help?

Mr. Zambrano: I mean, having your two-year liberal arts degree helped.

Mrs. Adams: My becoming an officer?

Mr. Zambrano: Yes.

Mrs. Adams: I don't know whether it did or not. I think most everybody--most of the officer candidates were older than I. I was really almost the youngest one there.

Mr. Zambrano: You were 23?

Mrs. Adams: No, I was 21, I guess. 22. 22. Most of them--

Mr. Zambrano: They were older?

Mrs. Adams: (Laughs). Most of them were in their 30s, I think.

Mr. Zambrano: How do you get to Des Moines?

Mrs. Adams: Train. That's how you got everywhere in those days.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you recall what that was like?

Mrs. Adams: The train? Well, it was dirty (both laugh).

Mr. Zambrano: It was dirty?

Mrs. Adams: Well, because everything flew in the windows. The windows were open because it was hot in the train, so you know, gravel and everything came in.

Mr. Zambrano: When you enlist, it's just you; you don't have a friend that goes with you?

Mrs. Adams: No, I just took the train up there and there I was. But I had taken trains before, because when my father and mother were stationed in Laredo, Texas, when I went to college, and so I would come home from college on the train. It took a couple of days (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Well, you sound pretty independent. I mean, you've gone to the Far East; you entered into military service. Were you always independent?

Mrs. Adams: I think so.

Mr. Zambrano: How did you feel going into the military service, such a male-dominated profession?

Mrs. Adams: We were all women up there at our post up there, except we had all men training us. All the officers were male, because they were the only ones that knew how to do it. We just had six weeks of indoctrinating us into what the Army would be like. Things I remember are stupid (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Well, actually, what do you remember?

Mrs. Adams: We had to--we learned how to march and they taught us--we had some, I guess he was a sergeant that was a cook or ran a kitchen, because as an officer, we would run a kitchen when we would become an officer. (Laughs) I remember he said, "And don't ever

use the coffee grounds more than twice,” which I still remember. It remains with me. Then we would learn something about accounting and a few other things like that because we would take care of the--we would be the ones that would order the goods and see to it that they were--that was the kind of things I guess they thought we would do when we became an officer.

Mr. Zambrano: Were they, I guess, somewhat clerical then?

Mrs. Adams: No. I mean we might run a motor pool, or we might run the supply room, or--I didn't do any of those things, so I'm not sure what they (unclear, laughing as she speaks).

Mr. Zambrano: So what was your focus since you didn't do those things?

Mrs. Adams: Well, when I first became an officer after the six weeks, I stayed on and still had a man over me, but I was supposed to be the commander of the company, teaching these people what I had just learned. I did that for a couple of classes; I think maybe two or three, and then I was sent to go to the Inspector General School to learn how to be an inspector general.

Mr. Zambrano: Where was that?

Mrs. Adams: In Washington, DC.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, the school for the inspector general?

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Just a little--

Mrs. Adams: And that one didn't last very long, either. I mean it was only a couple of weeks, just indoctrination. It wasn't really a school, just an indoctrination.

Mr. Zambrano: Just backing up a little bit to basic training, you didn't have any kinds of weapons training, right?

Mrs. Adams: What?

Mr. Zambrano: You didn't have any kind of pistol training or rifle training or anything like that.

Mrs. Adams: No. Mm-mm.

Mr. Zambrano: Did they administer PT?

Mrs. Adams: Yeah, we had PT. Mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: The usual, every morning.

Mrs. Adams: Every morning, got up and go out and get in line. A cannon would go off because it was an old Army post.

Mr. Zambrano: A cannon would go off?

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh, so that we'd know we were up, and then we would do PT, and then we would march, and then we would go in and have different officers come from different kinds of things that they thought we would be doing and tell us about them.

Mr. Zambrano: What would you do in your spare time?

Mrs. Adams: What did I do there in my spare time?

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, what would you do in your spare time? Not that you would have a lot, but would you write home--?

Mrs. Adams: Did I do what?

Mr. Zambrano: Would you write home; would you read?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, I always read; I read a lot. I'd write home. I can't remember doing anything particular.

Mr. Zambrano: That's okay. The Statesman article also said that, while you were a company commander of one of the classes, that Eleanor Roosevelt came to visit?

Mrs. Adams: She did, mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Mrs. Adams: I know that--I'm a Republican and everything--but she was one of the most fascinating women I've ever met in my whole life. She just really, if she'd been there another day, I would have become a Democrat (both laugh).

Mr. Zambrano: What was so fascinating about her?

Mrs. Adams: She just had charm, and she just was so interested in the world and everything. She just was a wonderful woman. She just knew

everything, and what she didn't know, she wanted to find out about it.

Mr. Zambrano: How long did you host her?

Mrs. Adams: It was just a day.

Mr. Zambrano: Just a day?

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: I guess she must have sat down and ate with folks?

Mrs. Adams: She ate with us, and watched what we were doing, watched us march (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Did she have like a general opinion of how everything, she thought everything was run?

Mrs. Adams: If she did, I wouldn't know. That was 75 years ago. (Laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Speaking of the food, what did you think of the service food?

Mrs. Adams: Well, it wasn't the best, but it was edible.

Mr. Zambrano: It passed for food?

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: I also read in the article that your husband-to-be came to visit you while you were in Des Moines?

Mrs. Adams: Yes. He came back from Trinidad. He was a fighter pilot, and he was on his way to California, and so he came. I had known him before, but when he came, we decided that we would get married.

Mr. Zambrano: What was his name?

Mrs. Adams: Milton Adams. He spent 22 months out in the Philippines--not in the Philippines, in the Pacific.

Mr. Zambrano: That was going to be my next question.

Mrs. Adams: He was a group commander for the fighter pilots.

Mr. Zambrano: Army, of course.

Mrs. Adams: Air Force.

Mr. Zambrano: Army Air Corps.

Mrs. Adams: Yeah, Air Corps, yes.

Mr. Zambrano: I probably shouldn't have even asked, as everyone in your family was Army.

Mrs. Adams: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you recall what unit he was with?

Mrs. Adams: Yeah, he was the 22nd Pursuit Squadron. Let me see, what was his group?

Mr. Zambrano: If you're a WAAC, what about things like lipstick and makeup and fingernails?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, sure. There wasn't anything about not using that.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, but you couldn't--were you restricted to certain colors?

Mrs. Adams: I don't remember being restricted to anything.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Your basic training, what kind of place did you sleep in?

Mrs. Adams: Well, it was a barracks, which had been used as a barracks when the men were there, I think, and afterward, probably where the enlisted personnel were in there. So we just--the beds were lined up with a footlocker at the bottom.

Mr. Zambrano: Pretty typical, it sounds like.

Mrs. Adams: Beg pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: It sounds pretty typical.

Mrs. Adams: Yeah, uh-huh. I think it was.

Mr. Zambrano: What was the weather like in Des Moines?

Mrs. Adams: Cold. (Laughs) it was cold.

Mr. Zambrano: While you're in basic training, what's your everyday uniform that you would wear?

Mrs. Adams: Khaki skirt; we always wore skirts, and a jacket.

Mr. Zambrano: And a tie, as well, right?

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Mrs. Adams: A hat with a bill.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, but I assume when it came to physical training that it would be something different that you would wear, something, I don't know, did they issue you fatigues as well, for physical training?

Mrs. Adams: I don't remember that they did. (Laughing) I can't remember those details.

Mr. Zambrano: I wouldn't imagine you running around in--

Mrs. Adams: I know. I can't remember our doing PT or anything but I'm sure we had something to wear.

Mr. Zambrano: When you were at Des Moines, were there any African-American WAACs there as well?

Mrs. Adams: Not the first classes, but then we started getting, we got some African-Americans, yes. I think maybe in the class that I had, I had some black people, African-American, excuse me.

Mr. Zambrano: Were there any other dignitaries that came to visit while you were there?

Mrs. Adams: May have been but I don't--my husband (laughs). He was a colonel.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, he was a colonel at that point?

Mrs. Adams: No, major, major, because when we were married, he was a major.

Mr. Zambrano: That was before he--oh, yeah, of course. It's got to be before he went to the Pacific.

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: And you said he was out there for 22 months? Did he come home during that time at all?

Mrs. Adams: Mm-mm, mm-mm.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! You know, I think about that. That must be so hard to go two years without seeing somebody.

Mrs. Adams: Well, it was what everybody was doing, you know. I think it's harder then than it is with these people going to Iraq and things, because everybody's not doing it. Everybody was--there was nobody left at home.

Mr. Zambrano: And you come back after a year or so. It's different. It's not for-- they used to say, for the duration.

Mrs. Adams: Beg pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: They used to say, for the duration.

Mrs. Adams: Actually, he stayed until the end of war. He came home for leave, just before they dropped the bomb. He was to go back and take a wing of fighters. He had a group; he was to go back and take a wing and fight the battle of Japan. They dropped the bomb, so he didn't have to go back.

Mr. Zambrano: That's good that he didn't.

Mrs. Adams: So I've always said I'm glad they dropped the bomb.

Mr. Zambrano: Yes. I hear that from a lot of veterans. Do you recall any of your classmates during basic training, or any officers?

Mrs. Adams: I don't really remember any of their names. Isn't that funny? But I don't because I never ran into them much in my married life. I don't know where they all went, but they never showed up where I was.

Mr. Zambrano: Is this right; was your husband from Eagle Pass?

Mrs. Adams: Well, he left there. His father was stationed there, fighting--what's the name of that Mexican?

Mr. Zambrano: Pancho Villa?

Mrs. Adams: Pancho Villa. He also was in the Corps of Engineers, but he was there and so Milt was born there, but they left it when he was six weeks old, so he really wasn't from there.

Mr. Zambrano: I had to ask because my wife grew up in Eagle Pass

Mrs. Adams: Oh, uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: So, every time I see it pop up, I have to ask about it.

Mrs. Adams: Well, he only was there until six weeks old, so he doesn't remember much about it. But it must have gotten in his blood, because when we retired, when he retired from the Air Force, we moved back to Laredo, where he had the wing at one time.

Mr. Zambrano: Where did you meet your husband?

Mrs. Adams: Where did I meet my husband? On my front porch in Galveston, Texas. My father--I left there to go to the Philippines--but Galveston was where my father at that time was in river and harbor work. Milt's father and mother--the Army was very small before the war--and both my father and his father were in the Corps of Engineers, so they knew each other fairly well. So they had gone up to West Point for my husband's graduation and came back, and on their way back to Corpus Christi, where Milt's father was then living--he had retired from the Army and was the port director of Corpus--they stopped off in Galveston to see my family on their way home, and I met Milt.

Mr. Zambrano: Getting back to what you mentioned about the inspector general school, and you said that was in Washington; you said it was a fairly short course.

Mrs. Adams: Yes. I think it was only a couple of weeks. It was indoctrination, not a course really.

Mr. Zambrano: What were they indoctrinating you in, exactly?

Mrs. Adams: Well, I guess telling you how you would handle it when you got to wherever you were going, to talk to them about whatever was wrong with whichever problem was facing a WAAC at that time.

Mr. Zambrano: And you from there are stationed at the Pentagon, is that it?

Mrs. Adams: I was stationed in the Pentagon, uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you happen to recall what the title of your position was?

Mrs. Adams: Just that I was in the Inspector General's department.

Mr. Zambrano: You do mention in the article that--no, well let me back that up. If someone had a complaint about something or--I'm sorry--how does your job work? Does somebody report something, and you go investigate it?

Mrs. Adams: They would decide--not I, somebody higher ranking than I was at the time--would decide whether I should go out and--somebody,

because there were more people than I--should go out and talk to them about it.

Mr. Zambrano: Where would you go? Would you travel overseas? Was it just in (unclear)?

Mrs. Adams: I went to Fort Oglethorpe, where they were training the enlisted personnel at that time, because there were some complaints about treatment there. So I went to see how it was going. Then I went someplace where they were running a kitchen on an Army base, and there were complaints about the fact that the equipment was too heavy.

Mr. Zambrano: The pots were too big (unclear)?

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: I read that, and I thought (unclear). How did you handle that?

Mrs. Adams: I carried them around; (laughing) I said, "See, these aren't too heavy." I almost fell down; they were pretty heavy. But anyway, they got over it; at least I think they got over it.

Mr. Zambrano: So, at least in that case, nothing was really done, because it was--it didn't seem to be an issue?

Mrs. Adams: Beg pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: Nothing was really done because it didn't seem that it was an issue?

Mrs. Adams: You mean about the kitchen?

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah.

Mrs. Adams: Not that I remember, they didn't do anything.

Mr. Zambrano: Would you suggest recommendations?

Mrs. Adams: Yes. I would suggest--I'd just go back and tell people above me what I had seen or heard.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you have to write a report?

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: Because you're an officer at this point, did you have anybody that worked for you?

Mrs. Adams: No. I was the lowest man on the totem pole.

Mr. Zambrano: So you had to type up all your own reports then.

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: On a typewriter.

Mrs. Adams: On a typewriter, that's right.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, boy. I still remember the typewriter; I had one when I was a kid. It was just difficult (unclear; Mrs. Adams laughs) make copies.

Mrs. Adams: Certainly not what these new iPads are, is it?

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I know. It's just touch here and there and change a word; it corrects your words. Incredibly different. Who was your supervisor while you were at the Pentagon?

Mrs. Adams: I don't know. I was in the office of Oveta Culp Hobby and General Faith, who was the military head of the WAACs.

Mr. Zambrano: General who?

Mrs. Adams: Faith. F-a-i-t-h. I don't know what his first name was; I don't remember his first name.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I did ask on the phone; you did interact with, was it Colonel Hobby or General Hobby?

Mrs. Adams: I don't know; we always called her Mrs. Hobby, but I think she did have a--I think she was Colonel Hobby.

Mr. Zambrano: But you interacted with her?

Mrs. Adams: Well, not terribly much, but I mean, she was really not involved with things that I was doing. But I did see her every once in a while. As I say, she did come to my wedding.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! It's interesting that she came to your wedding. I guess you were in the same section where her office was?

Mrs. Adams: That's right; that's right.

Mr. Zambrano: How did she end up coming to your wedding?

Mrs. Adams: Why? Because I think that the WAAC was trying very hard to make it into a very public relations thing. I think it was in

(laughs), I can't tell you how many newspapers it was in, but the picture of me and my husband getting married, it was good publicity for the WAAC, you know, all these military fathers and grandfathers and brothers all over fighting, and prisoner in Japan, and so, see how important it is for you to come and join and help these people.

Mr. Zambrano: Women doing their part at home to help as well

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: The article said that you were married in a white WAAC uniform?

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm. It was the first white WAAC uniform and Mrs. Hobby got one, too. The two of us had our white WAAC uniforms and then they had more of them, but that was something.

Mr. Zambrano: Whose decision was that; were you asked to, or did you choose it?

Mrs. Adams: To wear it? I don't know, but I suddenly was having one made (laughs). I can't remember.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you still have a picture of that?

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm. (Background noise; apparently Mrs. Adams is looking for the picture). I did; what did I do with it? Oh, I think my daughter took it.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. Well, that's all right.

Mrs. Adams: I don't think (unclear, background noise continues). I got this out to see if I could find any pictures (unclear). Maybe there's still one in here. I'll go through this while you continue.

Mr. Zambrano: Let's see; how long were you with the Inspector General's office?

Mrs. Adams: Until I left the WAAC.

Mr. Zambrano: And the general rule was that, if you got married, then you had to leave military service?

Mrs. Adams: No, no, uh-uh.

Mr. Zambrano: No?

Mrs. Adams: The WAACs became part of the Army, so we had to sign up again to be in the Army, and I'd gotten married and I feel kind of funny

about this, but I was in Washington, my husband was in California, and I went in to see General Faith and said, "You know, I would like to be transferred out to California because my husband's out there." And he said, "Jean, you know we can't do that." And I said, "Well, if we can't, I'm not going to put my hand up and swear to be in the W.A.C." So, when the day happened to come, just a couple of days beforehand, he said, "Well, Jean, we will transfer you out there." (Mr. Zambrano laughs). But I said, "I've already told him I'm coming out." So I went ahead and got out.

Mr. Zambrano: Was this--because I see you had to enlist again--was this on an annual basis?

Mrs. Adams: No, just one time. It was the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, and then the powers that be decided to take us into the Army. So we had to all swear up again because that was an entirely different organization. So I--

Mr. Zambrano: I didn't know that. I mean, (unclear) about that transfer, but everyone had to swear again.

Mrs. Adams: Everybody had to swear again. There's Mrs. Roosevelt.

Mr. Zambrano: Could I take a picture?

Mrs. Adams: Hmm?

Mr. Zambrano: Could I take a picture of that?

Mrs. Adams: Sure! Go right ahead. (Background noise; apparently Mr. Zambrano is moving a photo album around to take a picture of a picture). That's Mrs. Roosevelt.

Mr. Zambrano: And the wedding picture was in a lot of different newspapers?

Mrs. Adams: Yes. I'm surprised that I don't have that there. I think I gave that to my daughter because I don't see it.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow, Washington Post. Yeah, she was quite an intelligent woman. I mean, she really seemed to have an interest in people and the nation. A just fascinating woman.

Mrs. Adams: That's the white uniform. It's out of the newspaper and that doesn't come out very clear. I'm sorry I don't have it.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, no, no; that's okay. You look really happy in this picture.

Mrs. Adams: I know I look silly; that's why (both laugh). I look really silly!

Mr. Zambrano: Well, it's your wedding day--

Mrs. Adams: I know.

Mr. Zambrano: --you're entitled to look silly. That's something. So you got out in what year?

Mrs. Adams: In--

Mr. Zambrano: 1943, was it?

Mrs. Adams: Yes, I think so. I should have stayed in because he left in two more months (laughs) I got out there. But one thing is that they do transfer people now and try to keep the husband and wife together.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, they do try to work with that.

Mrs. Adams: So I think that was probably my--if I didn't do anything else in the W.A.A.C., I got that put through (both laugh), that they decided it would be a good idea to let wives and husbands be stationed as close together as possible.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, I can see why. Working for the Inspector General, what was your daily uniform?

Mrs. Adams: Just that one I had on with Mrs. Roosevelt.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, the dark brown coat with the light skirt, okay. Where were you living when you were living in Washington, DC?

Mrs. Adams: In an apartment with two or three other WAACs; I can't remember how many of us there were, but we just lived in an apartment. We were in the Pentagon. I think we were in Alexandria.

Mr. Zambrano: And again, what did you do in your spare time, when you weren't working at the Pentagon?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, we'd go to movies and concerts, symphony. Lots to do in Washington.

Mr. Zambrano: I'm curious. Was your family well-off?

Mrs. Adams: No, not any more well-off than being in the military. But you weren't poor. You know, nobody had any money then. A dollar was a lot of money in those days (laughs). I made \$124.00 a month.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh. As a WAAC.

Mr. Zambrano: And you're a first lieutenant, right?

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh.

Mr. Zambrano: \$124.00 a month.

Mrs. Adams: Or maybe it was \$125.00, but it was just about that.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you think that was good pay for that time?

Mrs. Adams: It was! That was enough to get an apartment. I mean, I couldn't get it by myself, but I was with a couple of other people; enough to eat food and get dressed.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I'm curious because the military usually pays for your housing. If you didn't get an apartment, where would you stay?

Mrs. Adams: I think maybe that included our housing. I mean if we were on a post--now, I think they do give you some money if you're living off-base, but I can't remember that you do. I don't remember that.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Your uniforms, would you have to pay for your uniforms, or were they--?

Mrs. Adams: Uh-huh. No, you paid for your uniforms.

Mr. Zambrano: Is there anything else that stands out about working in the Inspector General's office? Any odd things, any funny stories?

Mrs. Adams: (Laughs). I remember having to remember, after I was married, because I was still in the WAACs for another six or seven months after that, I had to go and inspect the VD rate down in Oglethorpe or something. (Mr. Zambrano laughs). I had to call my husband to find out what VD was, because I had never heard about it (laughs). Women were pretty sheltered.

Mr. Zambrano: Was he shocked that you were asking him?

Mrs. Adams: No, he wasn't shocked. He laughed.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, boy. So, I think you said '43 was the time, about the time you got out, 1943. Was it like the middle of the year?

Mrs. Adams: What, when I got out?

Mr. Zambrano: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. Adams: I can't remember when they turned it over from the WAACS to the--it was whenever they turned the WAACs over to the Army is when I got out. And I was in from two weeks after it started to then, because I was in the second class and the second class of officer candidates was two weeks after the first one. So that's how long I was in, but I don't remember dates.

Mr. Zambrano: You were a first lieutenant when you left, right?

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you feel that your time in the WAACs had any influence on the rest of your life?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, yes. I learned a lot. I learned a lot about other people that lived in different backgrounds than I had, because as I say, my background was very sheltered. These people had been out and done things and been around, and certainly broadened my outlook.

Mr. Zambrano: All these people from across the nation.

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: At the Pentagon, at least, did you make any friends that you might have kept in touch with?

Mrs. Adams: No, I didn't keep in touch with any of them. It was a time of my life, and I did see some of them for a few years, you know, if they came where I was, but we moved around so much, and you just kind of lose track of people. When you start having five children and you move every four years, you don't really remember a lot of the people.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, that would have made it a lot harder. Today you have Facebook and other social media. Back then, yeah, I can see what

you mean. It said in the paper that you had directed a service club for enlisted personnel after you got out.

Mrs. Adams: Yes, yes, mm-hmm. That's what I did for the 22 months my husband was overseas.

Mr. Zambrano: And where was that? Was that in Washington, DC.

Mrs. Adams: At Camp Abbott, Oregon. Camp Abbott, Oregon, and Fort Lewis, Washington.

Mr. Zambrano: How did you get out there?

Mrs. Adams: My father was stationed there. He was the commander of the post (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, he was the commander of--?

Mrs. Adams: Of Camp Abbott, and then he was commander of the Engineer Training Center at Fort Lewis. So I don't know whether you'd call that nepotism or not, but I ran the service club (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Well, you were doing something that was helpful.

Mrs. Adams: Well, I wore a uniform.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm. Service club hostesses wore a blue uniform.

Mr. Zambrano: What would you do?

Mrs. Adams: Showed movies, you played ping-pong, you played cards, you got lectures for them and put on dances.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you have people working under you?

Mrs. Adams: No. People came in and cleaned the place and things; I didn't do that. I don't know who cleaned it, to tell you the truth (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: So you organized all these things yourself?

Mrs. Adams: Beg pardon?

Mr. Zambrano: You organized all these events yourself?

Mrs. Adams: Yes.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! Sounds like a lot of work!

Mrs. Adams: Well, it was fun.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you or your husband ever take advantage of the GI Bill after the war?

Mrs. Adams: No. My husband was already a colonel in the Air Force (laughing) when the war was finished, and I was already married and had a child, so no, I didn't need to do that. We were both--I mean; the government had educated him at West Point.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I just figured maybe to buy a house.

Mrs. Adams: Oh, no, no.

Mr. Zambrano: How many more years--when did your husband get out?

Mrs. Adams: After 35 years. I mean, he made a career of it.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. What year was that; I was just curious?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, '72. He came back from the war, and we went to Iran where he was an advisor to the Shah on air force.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow!

Mrs. Adams: Then we came back to Washington, and then we went to the Air War College, and then we went to the National War College, and then we went to Laredo and he had the wing there, where he trained pilots. We liked it and we liked the people. They said when you retire from the Air Force, if you come back to Laredo, we'll save you a membership in our hunting lease and find you something to do. So he went back and did industrial development for the last 30 years of his life. So we lived in Laredo longer than we lived anywhere. We lived in Hawaii five years; that was--and Viet Nam for two and a half years.

Mr. Zambrano: How was that?

Mrs. Adams: Oh, it was wonderful. When we were there, they were serving as advisor to the South Vietnamese government. The children--Saigon's a beautiful city and they had a very good school for children. The American school had Vietnamese in it, and lots of people from the other embassies were at that school. So, it worked out well. We saw a lot of the Far East while we were there.

Mr. Zambrano: So you're pretty well traveled then.

Mrs. Adams: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! Let's see. What do you think of--well, very recently the Secretary of Defense has allowed women to serve in combat roles. What do you think about that?

Mrs. Adams: Well, that wasn't my idea of what a woman should do (laughs). When they did the WAACs, W.A.A.C., that was to send a man to fight. I don't think it's any place for them to be, but I guess there are people who want to do it. I can't tell them not to, but it doesn't make sense to me. There are plenty of things that--

Mr. Zambrano: Let me see. Is there anything I haven't asked you that maybe you'd like to share about your time in the service?

Mrs. Adams: As I say, it was an eye opener, and I certainly learned a lot, and met some very interesting people. I wouldn't change it for the world, really. I'm blessed that I had the opportunity.

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