

National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Williams

Date of Interview: February 22, 2016

National Museum of the Pacific War

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with Mr. William O. Williams

Mike Zambrano: Okay, today is February 22, 2016. This is Mike Zambrano, and today I'll be interviewing Mr. William Otis Williams at his home in Lakeway, 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. And, as I always start with, could you please tell me where and when you were born.

Mr. Williams: I was born in Chicago, Illinois, December 31st, 1926.

Mike Zambrano: Close to New Year's Eve.

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Well, what were your parents' names?

Mr. Williams: My ... my father's name was Paul Glen (sp?) Williams, and my mother's name was Ethra (sp?) Claire Will, uh, her maiden name was Doane (sp?) and ... and was Canadian originally.

Mike Zambrano: Oh! Okay.

Mr. Williams: But oh from ... uh, original origin in the U.S. in 1730 ... 1630 ... the fam ... the Doane family (unintelligible). So, they know the Doanes there ... there's thousands and thousands of them but they're all related in the United States or in Canada. And its spelled U-n-e or D-a-u-n, but they're all related.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. Alright. Uhm, did you have any ... any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Williams: Yes, I have ... had a twin brother, which is my age, and had a ... had a brother, Dale (sp?) who was born in 1929, and a sister who was born in 1928, and they're both deceased.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm. But they're four ... four ...

Mr. Williams: Four children.

Mike Zambrano: ... children, okay. Uhm, what did your father do for a living?

Mr. Williams: My father was an ... he worked for General Electric for most of his career. He was a electrical engineer. In fact, he was a ... a World War I veteran in the Navy. He started out in the Army, joined the Navy and was a Radio ... and into radio, and he was a Chief at a naval, I mean, Chief at the time he got out of the service.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: And he had three brothers that served in the trenches at the same time in France in 1918.

Mike Zambrano: Did they all come out alright?

Mr. Williams: They all came out.

Mike Zambrano: Wow!

Mr. Williams: Somewhat gassed a little bit, but they came out alright. And his father actually went over there and with the Red Cross and kind of kept an eye on them (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles), wow. That's pretty good that all of them came back.

Mr. Williams: They all came back, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. I ... I take it that your mother was a homemaker?

Mr. Williams: My mother was a homemaker, yeah. She worked for a short time at the time she finished high school till ... till she got married, and they were married in 1925 in ... in Toronto, Canada.

Mike Zambrano: Now, was all of your schooling done in Chicago?

Mr. Williams: In ... in Arlington Heights, Illinois. We moved to Arlington Heights in 1929.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: So, all the ... all of ... my youngest brother was several months old. So, we were all ... and ... and I consider that home really 'cause my parents built a house, moved into a house in 1929 about the time of the Crash and then lived there until they ... till they both passed away. And my mother passed away in 1983.

Mike Zambrano: How did your family fare during the Depression?

Mr. Williams: Well, during the Depression, of course, as my sister once said, “You know, we were poor but we didn’t know it.” (Chuckle). But my father worked and he had a house that ... that he had to borrow on, the bank closed, but he found from ... out from the bank who would loan him the money. It was a farmer so he paid the farmer until the thirty year would end, but whatever ... when the house was paid off.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: I mean, it was a new house on the edge of town (unintelligible) where the farm ... where it was subdivided but never hardly any houses on it at the time.

Mike Zambrano: Wow. So, yeah, I’ve heard that a lot that, you know, didn’t notice the Depression was going on.

Mr. Williams: (Chuckle).

Mike Zambrano: So, it was ...

Mr. Williams: But my father was working and that’s ... that, of course, is ... you got income.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: And with four kids about the same age, its, you know ... I mean, and he would commute to Chicago on the ... on the train and ... early in the morning and get home at ... not, you know, six o’clock and leave, but yeah, and he did that ... his ... his career.

Mike Zambrano: I’m guessing you’re probably still in high school when World War II broke.

Mr. Williams: That I was, yes, yes.

Mike Zambrano: Do you happen to remember where you were or what you might have been doing when you heard about (unintelligible)?

Mr. Williams: Uh, yeah, I ... I think on ... if I’m not mistaken, I think we were having Sunday dinner in the afternoon.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: I don’t remember whether we had any ... anybody over at the time. I know that shortly before that, we had had a friend over, and he was ... he was in the Navy. He was a Navy Radio Operator, but he ... what he was doing, he

was recruit ... he was (pause) oh, he was a Ham Operator originally, and he was recruiting Ham Operators for the ... for the Navy. And he told my father, he said if ... if the war ... if we ever get in the war, it'll be in the Pacific. And I have ... I actually have an article on him; he claimed to have ... to ... well, anyway ...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: Yeah, he was fine. And if I can find that, I'll give it to you before you go.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: I got it off the internet, but it was (unintelligible) he was a very good friend of the family's, and the family was over, but I can ... that I can remember.

Mike Zambrano: Do you remember his name?

Mr. Williams: Briggs(sp?)

Mike Zambrano: Briggs?

Mr. Williams: Briggs.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: Uh hum. I ... and I'll ... I'll give ... and it tells you in the article there.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. What was the general reaction about that time, do you remember (unintelligible) attack?

Mr. Williams: You know, the war had been on for quite a while in ... in Europe, so you know, I don't ... don't remember a whole lot. I mean, even though I'm a teenager, still it wasn't ... didn't seem to have affected me until ... until that time of course.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Williams: And even then, it was still, I mean, okay, in 1941 I would be uh, three ... maybe twelve, thirteen years old.

Mike Zambrano: Eventually you decide ... well, are you ... eventually you're in ... you enlist or you're drafted into the service?

Mr. Williams: I enlisted. I enlisted, of course, I was seventeen years old, the draft was in effect, I was getting out of high school in June of 1944, so I enlisted in a ... a Navy program. Well, you had to take ... take a test for it, and when ... and they were hiring ... or they were encouraging people to ... to join the Air

(unintelligible) Program, and I have a little bit on that right here (searching for documents).

Mike Zambrano: The called the *what* program?

Mr. Williams: Its the Air Crewmen Program which ... its a ... its a V-6 Program is what it is. You can see it in there. It says they're only taking people who are enlisted. But I'm not completely ... early of course, they didn't. But ...

Mike Zambrano: And ... and is this the original?

Mr. Williams: Yes, yeah uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Williams: Uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! Its in great condition after all these years!

Mr. Williams: Well, I ... for ... I'd somehow ... now, see, this ... this is the (clock chiming in background) those are the ...

Mike Zambrano: The wings?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, and you see its got holes in it, and ...

Mike Zambrano: And three holes at the top to ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah, that's ...

Mike Zambrano: ... (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: ... that's so if you were in ... in combat, those would ... those would get filled up depending on it. I think there's anoth ... I have a item here in this folder somewhere here that, oh, this is it I think here.

Mike Zambrano: So, it says, "Bombing Squadron 75," and its dated 23 July, 1946. Okay, its ...

Mr. Williams: Maybe that's not the one I'm not the one I'm looking at. What ... oh, there's another one here.

Mike Zambrano: So, it says, "Authority is hereby granted you to wear the Aircrew (unintelligible) ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah okay.

Mike Zambrano: ... with no stars."

Mr. Williams: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: If ... if it did have a star, what was the significance of it?

Mr. Williams: Combat.

Mike Zambrano: Ah okay.

Mr. Williams: Certain ... certain combat.

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible) so, it also says, "This letter shall be presented to the ship's service stores selling insignia as to authority to purchase ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ... purchase the same.

Mr. Williams: I'm sure this was ... this was given at the time, but ... but ... and I don't know how I've even kept that, but ...

Mike Zambrano: Can I take a quick picture of it?

Mr. Williams: Oh, certainly! Certainly. And there's ... there's a ...

Mike Zambrano: Not very big, pair of wings and it has the ... an anchor in the middle and at the bottom it says, "Air crew." Now, what ... what ... now, you go into this program right away, correct?

Mr. Williams: Correct. I ... you join that, you went to Navy boot camp, I mean boot camp, but it ... you went ... I went to ...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Williams: ... are we down to where you're going ... going to ask me about ...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, sure!

Mr. Williams: Okay, so I ... I ... so, I took these tests in May, let's say, of ... of '44.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And eventually and ... and just like all programs and then enrollment actually began in October; oh, I'll give you the right date, but I have something here (rustling through documents noises).

Mike Zambrano: But when you actually start the program its ...

Mr. Williams: Well, I ... when I went ... actually left, yeah, and they ... they'd asked how the transportation was by train and it went to Millington, Tennessee which is outside ... just outside of Memphis, and ... and then the boot camp itself were for all ... for ev ... for people who were going to be Air Crewmen.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And that ...

Mike Zambrano: There ... there at Millington?

Mr. Williams: In Millington, uh hum, technical. And at Millington was a Technical Training Center, but the boot camp uh, I guess they said ... it wasn't ... I don't know how long that ... that camp was there for ... just for ... for Air Crewmen.

Mike Zambrano: Well, well looking at the ... at the booklet here, it looks like they're (rustling through documents sounds) teaching a number of things.

Mr. Williams: Yeah. That is correct. Uh, in fact, I have something here. (Unintelligible) I didn't ... I didn't know I had these things; I just noticed it today, but here's a ... here's a ... so, I was a Avia ... I ... my final ranking or whatever it was ... rating was a ... an Aviation Airman Third-Class.

Mike Zambrano: Huh!

Mr. Williams: But you learned, well okay, boot camp was like any boot camp, living in barracks uh, and the Technical Training Center, and I ... I was in ... Radio Operator. So, at the time, the Crewman could be a Radio Operator, an Ordnance man or a Mechan ... uh, and Mechanics. And the ... the Radio Operators stayed in ... in ... in Millington, and that's where they were trained. I think the Ordnance men went to Oklahoma.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And the Mechanics, I ... I don't know, uh, in this group. And you could ... I think ... I, yeah, I think you could pick which one you wanted if they ... depending on how many they had or how ... what they ... what the complement was or their ... they were doing at the time.

Mike Zambrano: Right. Or what they needed?

Mr. Williams: Uh hum, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: And, you know, before I go too far, why ... why did you pick the Navy?

Mr. Williams: Well, it was a program, uh ... one thing, training was going to be about a year, and the ... and even though the war was moving on pretty heavy then, but it was a good chance that it would be over near ... or nearly over at the time of the ... of my ... end of my training.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: Of ... of which it was. (Unintelligible) and its ... and you could, during that training or during it, well, you could ... you could fail. I mean, you could fail certain things, then you'd have to go to regular sea duty or something and end up in ... I had a number of friends that leave ... ended up on ...

Mike Zambrano: Washing out?

Mr. Williams: ... out ... out in the Pacific, yeah. But one of them, for instance, "What ... what did you learn here?" Well, we ... radio operating was the main thing, radar, radio and radio operating, but you learned Semaphore, you ... and you learned to use the light and you learned the col ... and the flags. And this guy ended up on a ship where he did almost all the ... the signaling.

Mike Zambrano: Oh ...

Mr. Williams: He'd learned it well enough to ... to ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh, it showed some ... some men shooting machine guns there, too.

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah. The training was so the ... the technical training as a Radio Operator was eighteen weeks. So, let's see, I went in in October, boot camp, finished around Thanksgiving.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: Because I was ... had ... asked in there, "Did you ever do KP?" I did KP but not uh, because that was filling in a period between the time you finished boot camp and the time you're ... you're class started, your Radar, I mean, your Radio class started because it was a period, and they had lots of them. I mean, you weren't just the only one going through, and they were doing these ... turning these out week ... week by week.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: So ... uh, so, we had ... while we were waiting, ended up working in the scullery giving on a big base twenty-five thousand people (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: So ... but so, was it aft ...

Mr. Williams: It was a ...

Mike Zambrano: ... so it was after Thanksgiving that ... that you began the ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah, began ... began, and it was the outfit was R-26 Easy, and the ... the 26, that's a week, so, it lasted from October, I mean, from let's say around the first of the year ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: ... uh, that ... and we finished Radio School, uh, let me think now, yeah about eighteen, twenty weeks later (women talking in background). Two weeks of radar, eighteen weeks of Radio School, two weeks of Radar School.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: And ... and it was during that time, I know I ... we ... my brother ... uh, I'm still with my ... my brother's with ... where ... we're together, and he got scarlet fever, and that takes several weeks to get over with, just about the time we'd finished our training.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Williams: So ... so, it wasn't easy to stay together at that point. But we ... well, we were able to only by ... by, not by accident, but by chance.

Mike Zambrano: So, you went in together, these twins going together?

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Williams: Oh yeah, we're ... we're together, and we, at that time. And (unintelligible) and ... and I don't know whether its because we ... we're both "Ws" or ... or, you know, we could go, but ... but there were a couple of times it ... we had to ... to work on it, but it worked. He ... it so happened that he'd ... he'd had a period of where he had to ... some kind ... (unintelligible) stomach problem and he was in a dispensary for about a week. Well, while he was in that dispensary, there was another young man there who had ... was in there for a long time for something, so he'd ... I mean, he was just waiting there to get cured and everything. So, that was before we started our training.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Williams: So, this was after we ... and he got this scarlet fever. And I saw this fellow; by this time, he's back going through like everybody else, and he said, "You

want to stay with your brother?" he said. So, I said, "Yeah." He says, "Well, get in this sick ... sick bay this morning." So, I got in the sick bay and the doctor came to, and "Yeah, I think you've got cat fever; you could ... ," so, I'm the dispensary. And this base has many dispensaries, I mean, the ... and a hospital, so ... and so, I ... and so, about three days later another doctor came by and he said, "Well, you can get out now." Well, I wasn't in any particular (chuckles) didn't want to get out, and it is the same dispensary that my brother had been in before, and the WAVES nurses were in there; he knew them. He (unintelligible) because they recognized him because I was there 'cause he was there (unintelligible) a week.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: And they said, "Well, let's go in and talk to the doctor," you know, that ... that ... whatever he was, and I went in there and kind of ... and I ... I stayed there until ... well, you know, it was a matter of just a couple of weeks. And then in the Radar School which I'd finished, and ... and then we ... then you'll be shipped out, why, there ... there was somebody in the Radar School whose father ... who was the father of a guy, someone we went to school with, I mean, he was just a Chief, but he worked there.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And ... and I don't know, I ... I went over there and guarded the civilians because the Radar School was highly confidential or whatever you call it, and so, I stayed there for the two weeks and we ... we went on to our next assignment ... was to Gunnery School.

Mike Zambrano: You're ... all the while, you're still at Millington?

Mr. Williams: Millington.

Mike Zambrano: Millington.

Mr. Williams: Its still in Millington, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: And what ... I guess, the same base. I don't know what ... remember ... I don't think the accommodations changed even after ... after boot camp.

Mike Zambrano: Did you live like in a two-story barracks? The (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: At least one story; I think one story, a large barracks, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: Not two story, but large barracks, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Now, you said before you spent about a year at Millington, or ...

Mr. Williams: The ... the whole training program was almost a year.

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Williams: So, from ... from the eighth that's ... and the radar ... got down ... the Radar School, I mean, not the Radar School, Radio School was there. We went to Gunnery School in Opa-locka, Florida which is outside of Miami. And that was a ... I don't remember quite how long that was.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And at Opa-locka we were going through Gunnery School, and at that time, there were actually Air Crewmen coming back from overseas being retrained. So, we went through Gunnery School, uh, didn't ... there's a gun ... there's an insignia on ... for that Gunnery School. That's the ... that's the insignia that ... for the Gunnery School (showing the insignia to the interviewer.)

Mike Zambrano: Oh, the ... the one with the wings ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ... and ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah, uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: ... what's the thing sticking up on that?

Mr. Williams: Uh, probably a sight or something like that; I'm not quite sure. I don't (noises in background) ... I don't know where my ... I think I have some ... have that some place, but I ... I'm ... I don't know where. And so, that was in Opa-locka. When you finish Gunnery School, then you went to Operations Training. And in Operations Training, you were actually flying with ... in a ... in a aircraft. Now, this was ... so, this was training, and these are carrier aircraft rather than the large ... , I mean, you could have gone off into Mariners or Liberators or something like that, but ... so, these are carrier aircraft. So, they had ... they were train ... they had Operations Training for

carrier aircraft both in Miami and in Fort Lauderdale. We went to Fort Lauderdale.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay, for the Operational Training?

Mr. Williams: For the Operational Training.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: So, we had about six weeks there where we had to do other duties, you know, ship ... uh, you know, cleaning up or something like that or we ended up working on the line out on the air ... uh, on the tarmac where the planes were in a coffee shop or something like that; it wasn't ...

Mike Zambrano: And ... and can you describe it once more about the Operational training? I mean, you ... you said you got to fly aircraft.

Mr. Williams: Yeah, we ... we flew an aircraft. Now, we're flying ... so, we're flying with ... with a Pilot and these are TBMs or TBFs which is your torpedo bomber, so they have a turr, a fifty-caliber turret and ... and a bilge underneath where the Radio Operator is sitting and so, you could ... it could be ... could be a two-passenger, I mean, two crew besides the Pilot.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Williams: And if you were in combat, you could lay down on the back, and there was thirty-caliber, but I don't ever remember getting any training in ... in that. And ... and you sat, I mean, your ... your parachute was a chest parachute, so it hung up and you would put it on. And so, about that time ... so that ... the war ended in August of '4

Mike Zambrano: '45.

Mr. Williams: ... of '45, and we were pretty well good way through that training, not completely. So, I don't remember exactly what the training was, but we would fly with these Pilots and do whatever ... whatever we had to do.

Mike Zambrano: Was there a ... a Pilot with that you flew with consistently?

Mr. Williams: Uhm, yes and no. Uh, the ... now, okay, that's August, so, when we trained, I think, until early, I'm going to say, some ... maybe February of '46.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And our next ... our next assignment was to ... you can see this (showing a document) I don't know, uh, our next assignment was ... where does it say, Cecil Field, Jacksonville.

Mike Zambrano: Cecil Field.

Mr. Williams: From Fort Lauderdale; you see that uh, that's not very good; I got the original of that.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: Here ... yeah, I think this one is a little easier to read, and I got the original there some place (noises while looking for document). And at Cecil Field, again, about this time, people are starting to get out of the ... get out of service.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Williams: And some of the Pilots are getting out of service. So, you're flying, well, we were both flying with Pilots regularly; I can remember my Pilot's name. And then, I think, my brother is flying with a Pilot, so he got out of service, so then we would fly with the same Pilot. And we did that till just before we went up to Cecil Field, and then we said, "Well, you know, we're going to get assigned," and they're not going to put two ... they're not ... we were ... because there were two could fly in each plane. I don't know how ... that worked, but so we decided to get different Pilots because there weren't enough ... we could fly with different Pilots. So, when we got to Cecil Field, Pilots had to check out on carrier landings, and without ... without their ... and so, we kind of waited there for that to happen, and so, his Pilot checked out. And we went on leave for the first time, or not even leave, it was ... it was delayed enroute to ... to receivership in Norfolk, Virginia. So, by the time I got the delayed enroute, he was already stationed in ... in Norfolk.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: And with that, we were split up at that time, but it did ... but then I caught up with him and I caught up with the other people that had gone with him and gone in there with me. And that was in, I'm going to say around February ...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Williams: ... of 1946.

Mike Zambrano: Now, on ... on the first document that you have, there was a ... was it a squadron number on there?

Mr. Williams: Yes, that's right.

Mike Zambrano: What ... what (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: That is correct. So, when we got, again, this is in February, so our training is finished, and we're ... we're going to be a ... assigned to a air group, or that's ... at least, so ... so, we waited at ... at this receiving ship in Norfolk, Virginia to be assigned. And so, the assignments came out, and ... and the people that came in with him were assigned, people came in to the [USS] Princeton or something, so ... so, he was assigned to the ... the VB-75 which is a dive bombing squadron or a ... Air Group 75, and it ... it was a ... I'm sure it was a new ... it was new and it was on the Franklin D. Roosevelt which is CVB-42 [s/b CV-42].

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: And it was commissioned in ... in January of 1946, so they had gone ... they'd gone to commission and come back, and they were ... and the planes they had weren't very good. That ... they lost ... they lost a lot of planes, they lost people just in training.

Mike Zambrano: Oh really?

Mr. Williams: But when they got back, they got all new planes so that ... that Squadron 75 had, for fighters and fighter bombers for Corsairs, that's a Navy Corsair. Ordinarily, the Marines will fly the Corsairs ... the Corsairs. The dive bombers and the torpedo bombers were both SB2Cs. So, and SB2C only carried one person, you sat up behind the Pilot, you could see, you weren't down in the bilge, it was ... it was pretty nice flying. One of the things that ... uh why we were get ... why we were training in Fort Lauderdale Operations ... why the ... The Lost Squadron was out of Fort Lauderdale, and they were training with us.

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Williams: It was one ... and so, that was a ... it was a squadron of six planes, but there were only five. It was a make-up squadron because ... or a make-up flight. It ... and there was a navigation flight to Fort Lauderdale, The Bahamas, Bermuda, back ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: ... and ... and it was lost. So we ... we did quite a bit of flying because aircraft carrier's planes don't stay out very long any ... anyway, and especially in training.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: But we were probably three or four hours searching for the group.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, really? I remember that.

Mr. Williams: And ...

Mike Zambrano: That's what ... that's (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: ... and ... and it ... that group included Marines because, again, some of the Pilots had recycled, and some of the Air Crewmen had recycled and there were probably fifteen, I mean, let's say five ... there were only five planes spotted later and a ... two Wingmen and two ... and there prob ... not ... and let's say three in each plane, there would be fifteen. I don't think ... I think maybe there were twelve or something like that. And it included some of them that would ... uh, redone. So, I didn't know any of them personally because our people ... I didn't ... we didn't have to make anything up. But that ... that was one of the things that happened. And that, I think, if I'm not right, it was kind of ... around December 7th, 194 ... '45.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, that was Flight 19, I think right?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, and it was ... they were, as I said, they were just doing their training on ... on navig ... the ... Taylor was the Squadron Leader and he was court-martialed and took about ten years before that was taken away from his record. And my ... I had an uncle living in Fort Lauderdale and they ... I remem ... they told us that he fin ... his parents had finally gotten it off his ... off his records. So ...

Mike Zambrano: So ...

Mr. Williams: ... any ... anyway, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: so ... so, your ... your squadron took part in the search of the airplanes?

Mr. Williams: Certainly, I mean, the training, yeah, the training squadrons, yeah, the people that were training because they were doing exactly the same thing ... every ... what we were doing. I don't know whether ... everybody finished at the same time their training, but it was ... that's right. It could have well been, you know, same ... the same (unintelligible). And some of the people that we were trained with as ... as far as ... in Gunnery School, they went to Miami and ... and trained out ... uh, that. And in Miami, you didn't have to wait five or six weeks; you maybe had to wait a week and you'd go into training right away.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: But I remember some of the guys we knew collided and were killed just training over uh, over the Naval Air Station in ... in Miami.

Mike Zambrano: Were there quite a few accidents?

Mr. Williams: Uh, enough, yeah; not a lot, but that was one of them.

Mike Zambrano: Well, the whole Flight 19 thing, uh, because you know, people call it Bermuda Triangle and UFOs and all of that stuff, uh, you're searching for them; what ... what did, what was the first thing in your mind, you think that ... what do you think happened? I mean, you're ... (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: I just ... its ... its very difficult to decide. I mean, they're ... they're running out of gas maybe.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Williams: But they ... even though if they run out of gas, they won't all run at the same time. They're flying ... following their Squadron Leader. If I remember right, he reported at one time he didn't know whether he was on the east side or west side of the ... of the Florida peninsula, that was one of the things. Maybe that was one of the things that court-martialed him to begin with.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Williams: Uh, none ... none of the Radio Operators, and then I ... and these are all new ... locked down their key to send out a signal, so they weren't ... I ... it could have been ... and the weather is bad pretty ... pretty much, I mean ...

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Williams: ... I mean maybe squalls or something; that's probably what got ... what happened, flying close formation but, I mean, they're ... they're fairly close formation anyway. Even ... so, everybody got assigned there in ... in Norfolk, but I didn't get an assignment.

Mike Zambrano: You didn't?!

Mr. Williams: I didn't. And my brother, he happened to get his late in the day, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt was tied up at a pier. I mean, it was big, it was ... and so, he went down and by that time, the only people working in this large area ... receive ... I mean, this is the Atlantic Fleet that was an ... was an an Officer of the Day, and my brother said to him, he said, "I got a brother who didn't get assigned," and he knew that the ... that the squadron and stuff was under complemented, so there was an opening.

Mike Zambrano: Hum!

Mr. Williams: And he said, "I'm going to leave a note on the OD's, Officer of the Day's desk, you have him come down here in the morning." And then I ... I got permission from the people that were in charge of, you know, these ... making sure everybody got to what ... what they were supposed to do that. So, next morning I went down there, and there's ... there's kind of a bar like and all the desks behind; it's a hundred feet long, and there's maybe thirty people working behind it ...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Williams: ... and the Officer of the Day is a female, and I'm going to tell a Seaman that I ... there's a note on her desk ... it was ... and about that ... an officer walked by, he saw me, and he said, "Come with me." And it was the guy that was on duty the night before. And he took me in, he got a Chief Radio Operator, they sent a telex or ... up to Bureau of Personnel in Washington D.C. and said, "Get your stuff and go out on the carrier."

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Williams: That's one way of staying together (laughter).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter). So then, you and your ... your twin brother serve on the FDR ...

Mr. Williams: FDR, and ...

Mike Zambrano: ... together!

Mr. Williams: ... and ... and were in the ... uh, well, and we were assigned to the dive bombing squadron which was VB ... they're calling themselves the VB ...

Mike Zambrano: 75?

Mr. Williams: ... what, 75, yeah. I think I have, yes, this here (looking through documents) ... their ... their insignia, their ...

Mike Zambrano: Oh! Wow! This is great! It's ... it's a squadron patch, and it has a ... is it a wasp on it?

Mr. Williams: It's a bee, it's a bee, yeah, it's VB ...

Mike Zambrano: It's a ...

Mr. Williams: VB means V means aviation and B means bomber, you see?

Mike Zambrano: Ah, right.

Mr. Williams: And these are dive bomb ... was a dive bombing squadron, SV2Cs.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Williams: And there were SV2C5s which was a new plane with a ... people in those planes that knew that was a ... a good one. Of course, we had trained in torpedo bombers, so we didn't do any diving. The first diving we did was off the carrier and so, that took a little bit to uh ...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Williams: ... to get used to. But it was ... it was good.

Mike Zambrano: Well, when ... when you go into a dive, I hear that, if ... if it's not secured, then it starts kind of coming up; is that true when you're going into a dive?

Mr. Williams: Uh, if you're going into a dive ... well, with the old planes, when the ... when they went on shakedown, they lost the tails off of some of them.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I mean ...

Mr. Williams: And they ... it did happen, I don't know if you can be sure its that, but it did happen. But so, you ... you could ... you're in a seat like this, its locked,

now you can go straight down and look down or you can turn the seat down and look back. You ... so, you have to decide which way you want to go.

Mike Zambrano: What ... what did you prefer?

Mr. Williams: Well, I ... I think most ... most the time I was ... was forward. But it ... what ... after the first time, it was (unintelligible), but it was still ... I mean, you're up about ten thousand feet, theoretically, you should be using oxygen or something like that. But ... but ... and we went on these maneuvers, and I want to show you something here. This is ... I found this stuff (looking through documents), these are the uh ...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, Admiral Mitscher.

Mr. Williams: And my Pilot that I flew with, and then, we didn't see these Pilots again. These Pilots that we trained with for months, and ... and never saw them; don't know what happened to them 'cause we were just assigned a new ... new Pilot, I mean a Pilot. One of these ... now, these ... this was ... these were written probably about the time that they went on the ... on the ... the first fleet maneuvers after the war, after World War II went out, and this was the first Atlantic Fleet maneuvers.

Mike Zambrano: Ah! Did read ... I did read about that. How did those maneuvers go?

Mr. Williams: It was good, good. You went down, I ... you went down in the ... into the Caribbean area – Guantan ... you went to Guantanamo, and got ... you got leave. You ... Culebra, I ... I noticed on there they ... they were at Culebra. It says ... does it say ... these guys is ... there's a word Culebra in there, that was the island we bomb ... we would go in on bombing runs, and I think in the ... in the last few years, I think those people were trying to get ... I think they used it for years, sure, but there were people living on it.

Mike Zambrano: Oh. I think I've heard of it, yeah.

Mr. Williams: Culebra.

Mike Zambrano: But they don't bomb it anymore then?

Mr. Williams: Uh, no, I think they finally ... I mean, they probably had mission and probably paid them. I mean ... I mean, I ... the ... I don't think Cuba will

ever let the U.S. give up Guantanamo because it's ... it's a big income for them.

Mike Zambrano: Right. So, uh, just ... just so the recorder will know here, these are ... uh, well, they're like newspapers, ship newspapers, right?

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Called the FDR Reporter, and one's for May of '46. Oh, actually, May ... one's May 8th and one's May 25th, and one's got the picture of Admiral Mitscher on it. Uh, "Decorate seventeen heroes as the Eight Fleet heads for New York."

Mr. Williams: I ... I strapped Mitscher in the plane that I flew in because my Pilot was ... he was ... he was probably the number one Pilot in the ... in our squadron.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Williams: Yeah. He wasn't a ... he wasn't the command ... Commander, but he's was a Pilot, and so we ... he flew Mitscher back to the ... I don't know ... when he went back to the ...

Mike Zambrano: Well ...

Mr. Williams: And the other thing that came up at that time, yeah, uh, where is it here (searching through documents).

Mike Zambrano: And he was ... he was flying off of the ... the FDR?

Mr. Williams: The FDR, yeah. Oh, this is something I missed. This was after we joined the Navy. Here, the Navy used ... this is ... I think the date on this ... the news ... these are the Chicago newspapers, all the newspapers had pictures of us joining the Navy for the publicity. And unfortunate ... well, unfortunately, the ... and the Air Crew group was the one that was doing this ... but when they went down to do it, there was another set of twins joining the Navy, so they (chuckles) ...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Williams: ... so, they were disappointed, but they included them in there.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Williams: In there ... thing. So, that's ...

Mike Zambrano: (Looking at document), oh, that ... that is interesting! That was a great promotion.

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, that's what ... September ... (unintelligible) 1944.

Mr. Williams: September 17th, is that what it is? Yeah, there's another one there. It's three or four pages.

Mike Zambrano: Is this ... but ... what newspaper is it, (unintelligible)?

Mr. Williams: One is Chicago ... Chicago Daily News, Chicago Tribune, and I don't think, yeah, maybe the other one is The Sun. There's a date on here, September 28th, 194 ... so, I mean, our ... our initial contact with the Navy was done in ... in May, and we took ... we had to take tests to ... to be able to ... to get into the Air Crew.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: But then I wasn't ...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: ... so, I say, I wasn't smart if I didn't pass the test to get into the V-12 Program or the V-5 Program, so ended up in the V-6 Program.

Mike Zambrano: So, flying on the Avenger, uhm, what are your thoughts about it? What do you recall?

Mr. Williams: It felt ... it slow, I didn't think I'd ... it ... if you ... if something happened, it would, you know, to land on water to be able to get out, but ... but the Radio Operator, if he wasn't in the turret, he couldn't see anything, and the smell of the ... of the fuel was always in that turret. It wasn't ...

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Williams: ... it was ... didn't mind it, but it was, you know, you couldn't see anything and you didn't ... and then when ... and compared with the dive bombers where you sat up right up behind the Pilot and you had a canopy and you ... you had a seat pack that you had on that, you know, you ... you wore, and so, it was lot ... lot nicer.

Mike Zambrano: Did you fly in the SB ... SBDs also?

Mr. Williams: Not the SBDs, no.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: Just the TBFs. But on ... on the ... mostly T ... by that time, I think they were using TBMs rather than the TBFs.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: And the SBDs were out. The only thing that ... while we were training there in uh, the ... S7F was coming in, but it was strictly uh, shrouded, you know? Yeah, nobody would ... could ... could see that. I ... I think it was a night ... a night fighter that flew out of uh, well, I don't know what ... what they were doing with it. I remember seeing it is all.

Mike Zambrano: Which one was this?

Mr. Williams: I think it was the F ... F7F, does that sound right?

Mike Zambrano: F7F, hum.

Mr. Williams: It was, I think, a night fighter. I think it was to be a night fighter.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: You ... you might ... might check on that, but that ... somewhere on the ... one of the bases we were, it was ... it was shown.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, you keep mentioning two people on the Avenger, but doesn't it usually have three, a crew of three?

Mr. Williams: Three, yeah, so we flew ... yeah, that's right. One ... so, you would have the ... the Gunner, I mean, it might be a Mechanic or something ... like the Ordnance man would be in a turret and the Radio Operator would be on the ... on the seat.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: So, it ... as ... so, as I said, my brother and I flew in those two bases for a long time with the same Pilot. And then, as we were ... realized we were going to be assigned, we couldn't, so it ... we ... took different Pilots because they'd been ... some of them probably ended up flying (recording disturbances) with anybody, and ... and because they didn't check out the same time, they ... they had split us up, but we got back together. And then, per chance, we were able to stay together. But that's just a side story of ...

of the thing. And here's a ... there's another, I don't know whether you've seen this before, but you can take ... oh, this ...

Mike Zambrano: President Truman.

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, he ... he came to visit?

Mr. Williams: Oh yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Huh!

Mr. Williams: Yeah. Yeah, and ... there was a ... I'm looking through these two magazines, I mean, these two ships thing. There ... there's a picture of the photographer here, but I think ... and we were an air group, so we were just assigned temporarily to that ...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: ... to them. So, when we came back from our ... from our shakedown, uh, not shakedown, but the maneuvers, we ... we ended up in uh, in ... Norfolk, and we were assigned to the Naval Air Station Norfolk. And we ... we continued to train out at ... out of there during that period of time.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: And you asked ... and ... and during that training time, one time they were talking about accidents. Somebody said, "May Day, May Day, my ... my head ... my Squadron Leader and Wingman just dove in." So, that was, again, the Wingman is following the ... the Squadron Leader rather than ... and ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Williams: ... that was the one got ... got away. But ... and ...

Mike Zambrano: That's ... well, I know the Wingman generally ... always stays with the ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ... the lead flight and ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ... follow him into the ... right into the water?!

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah, uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: Uh ...

Mr. Williams: But it was ...

Mike Zambrano: That's a little odd.

Mr. Williams: So, when we came back from the ... those ... that maneuvers ... and that was big, I think twenty-five thousand sailors involved in that thing. There were several carriers, the Princeton was one of them 'cause we ... some of our people who we trained with were on the Princeton.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: And we were ... we were flying ... we were going to ticker parade down 5th ... 5th Avenue or 42nd Street in New York.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Williams: And the ... and the weather was bad.

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Williams: Well, that would have been ... that was something. And my Pilot and I were going to catapult, be the first to catapult off, and the whole thing was cancelled. But ... but we did spend time in New York. Its ... if ... in these magazines, it talks about (pounding sounds) going on shore leave in New York and behaving (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles). Well, when ...

Mr. Williams: It said twenty-five thousand in there, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: That's a ... that's a lot of ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ... sailors.

Mr. Williams: And it was ... and it was, and so, we got, I'm saying we got back around May, and then we discharged in June 29th, is it?

Other Person: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: So, reported ...

Mike Zambrano: Of '46, right?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, I mean, uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: So, oh, when you got back from the fleet (unintelligible). But you were ... you were discharged?

Mr. Williams: We, well no, we were, uh, so, no, we got back and then during that time people are being discharged. Now (phone ringing in background), our enlistments were in the reserves to begin with.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: (Phone ringing in background). So, we didn't get a two year or four year, we got a reserve. So, when we were no longer needed, we would ... we would be discharged.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay. I was reading a little bit about that. Seemed a little bit odd to ... to implement that at the end of the war, but I ... I guess (phone ringing in background), it made sense.

Mr. Williams: You ... you, yeah, it made sense because then they didn't have to ... people they didn't need, they could get rid of.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: But the other thing is that when we did get out, we joined the re ... inactive reserves for four years, four years. So, from uh, and the ... those ... that enlistment ran out the day Truman froze all reserve enlistments.

Mike Zambrano: You [s/b He] froze all?

Mr. Williams: Do ... yeah, so in ... in 19 ... in the summer of '50 ... '50, he said, Truman said, "No more," I mean, "reservists can't get out." I mean, they have to stay in. But our ... our reservist ran out that day.

Mike Zambrano: Huh, boy!

Mr. Williams: So, we were trying to find out, you know? I ... we'd try to find ... are we in or out? And some place we were ... we were discharged in uh, Navy, uh, in the Great Lakes.

Mike Zambrano: Great Lakes?

Mr. Williams: Great Lakes.

Mike Zambrano: Okay, Great Lakes.

Mr. Williams: And you ... in your questions here, "How did we travel?" We traveled by train. I can remember going from Memphis to Florida for ... took several days by train and everything. And then, of course, train ... uh, train up to ...

to Great Lakes, and then we discharged. So, we were living close by, so that wasn't difficult.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm! Since you have the picture of President Truman, what ... what do you remember about that visit?

Mr. Williams: Well, I ... I remember we were all ... had to stand out on deck, so we had a lot of Marines onboard because we ... it was the ... the Admiral was ... it was the Fleet, you know, head of the Fleet when they brought, anyway, so he walked by the front of the ... of the Marines, and the Aircrewmen were standing just behind them, so it wasn't very far away.

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Williams: And but the rest is ... and ... and some place you asked ... our quarters onboard the carrier were ... were between the flight deck and the hangar deck, and they were like the ... very nice quarters.

Mike Zambrano: So, right ... just like one ... one floor below?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: Uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: And was this a situation where it was two men sharing one bunk?

Mr. Williams: No, no.

Mike Zambrano: Everyone had their own bunk?

Mr. Williams: Everyone had their own bunk, uh huh. And, I mean, again, we had a ready room where ... where we waited or hung out. And most the time we wore dungarees, but when we flew, we wore flight ... uh, flight suits.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And I think my helmet is there (showing helmet).

Mike Zambrano: Yeah, I noticed it here. You kept a lot of really interesting things.

Mr. Williams: Well, I ... I don't know how I ... I did it because (pause) (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: I would imagine it wouldn't be something you would be allowed to keep really.

Mr. Williams: Well, they didn't, no, I think, yeah, it was issue, but I mean, you kept ... you ... you were able to keep your issue or nobody collected it.

Mike Zambrano: Huh.

Mr. Williams: And I have a ... air ... uh, I mean oxygen mask, so, never used, but you'd ... if we're taking the dive bombers, you could use a (unintelligible), about ten thousand feet would be the limit anyway. But ... and you have, I mean, he's got ... that's a Navy uh, looks like Navy, but you had a ... we had a leather flight ... flight jacket.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Williams: And my ... my daughter has one, uh, has mine, and then we had lighter one. I've got, you know a khaki one with ... with the VB on it, and ... and I ... I hope at some place in the house, but I don't ... couldn't (unintelligible) find it.

Mike Zambrano: Can I take a picture of this?

Mr. Williams: Certainly, you're welcome. I'd almost give it to you, but I ... I ...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, no, no, that's okay.

Mr. Williams: And I ... I think I had more, and I got that picture, as I said, one of the Crewmen in our group we did have a photographer, and it was the ... uh, maybe the Radio Operator. I ... I'm assum ... I'm assuming he was a Radio Operator that ... that flew with the executive, and he was ... he took pictures in that ... of that, so that's probably why I came ... became of that picture.

Mike Zambrano: And its actually Truman, I think, doesn't ... isn't he the one that requested ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ... the name to be changed because originally it was the [USS] Coral Sea, wasn't it?

Mr. Williams: Uh well, the [USS] Franklin Dewey Roosevelt, [USS] Cora Sea, I'm not sure. Uh, my ... my son would know because he was on the ... [USS] Eisenhower.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Williams: The ... the Eisenhower which is a ... CV uh ...

Mike Zambrano: Might be ... C ...

Mr. Williams: Uh no, wait, CVN, nuclear carrier.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Williams: [CVN nuclear carrier]-69.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: It was one of the first nuclear carrier, and my son was a nuclear officer, and he was in about six years, stayed in the reserved, was called to Afghanistan for a ... with the naval group ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: ... and then came back and he got out this past summer because he had twenty-one years in ...

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Williams: ... as a Lieutenant Commander and he ... he couldn't get up ... are you familiar with the slow pin?

Mike Zambrano: Yeah (laughter).

Mr. Williams: He couldn't get his slow pin when he was out on ... on sea because they kept him down in the ... in the bilge all the time.

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Williams: And that kept him from ... if he'd of gotten Commander, he might have stayed in. But he's a very ... he was a very good Navy man, keen Navy man.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, you know, I read that at some point there's a ... the cruise down to Rio De Janeiro?

Mr. Williams: Yes, that is correct.

Mike Zambrano: Can you ...

Mr. Williams: That was the ... but we weren't on that ... that was a shakedown.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, that was a shakedown?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, I think a shakedown, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, so the ...

Mr. Williams: From January to ... what did we ... we went onboard in March I think.

Mike Zambrano: Ah, so you just missed it!

Mr. Williams: Just missed it, uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: Wow.

Mr. Williams: Uh huh. And prob ... and ... and in a way, a good thing because I think there was a few people that lost their lives. And in fact, when we went out on the ... on the Roosevelt in these maneuvers, why, one of the Pilots and his ... and his crewman were coming in for a landing, and they went into the water. And they got out.

Mike Zambrano: So, they made it out of the ship?

Mr. Williams: They made it out, but they'd also, at ... during training ... at one time, they'd caught fire and they had to bail out. So, they ... they'd had that happen to them, so they didn't ... they finally started flying again after we got back.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Williams: But ... yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, not the ... not the ... sounds like not the entire squadron went down there.

Mr. Williams: No. No, in fact, I would say ... and ... and our ... and somewhere it asks who your supervisor was. We had a Chief Mechanic, and he ... as far as I know, he was probably our supervisor, and he had joined the Navy in the 30s at Floyd Bennett Field in ... outside of New York.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And this was ... this was his first sea duty.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Williams: When ... when it ... uh, when it ... when that 75 went to ... went out, Air ... Air group 75 was assigned to the Franklin D. Roosevelt. But ...

Mike Zambrano: Do you ... do you recall where you were when uh, you heard that the war was over?

Mr. Williams: That ... that would have been ... when we ... that would be August of ...

Mike Zambrano: '45.

Mr. Williams: I was certainly in Fort Lauderdale. And ... and we, you know, we ... and during this training program, we were five and a half days at least of ... of training and we didn't get much time off.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And it asked, "What did you do in your spare time?" Anyway, we joined the choir when we were in ... in ... by belonging to the choir, you could get

the weekends off or what there was of the weekends, and only have to be ... and then sing at ... sing at ... sing at both ... twice a month, but one of them you just had to sing and the other you had duty. And we weren't very good singers, but ...

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Williams: ... he ... he did let us, because we sang in the church choir and ... but somebody, well, he'd let us in finally. He wanted to sing us aca ... acapella, we couldn't ... there wasn't any way we could do that.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Williams: (Laughter).

Mike Zambrano: Oh (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: So, that was a ... so, we belonged to the choir while we were in, I guess, there in ... in Millington, yeah (unintelligible).

Mike Zambrano: What else did you do in your spare time? Did you write home? Did you ...

Mr. Williams: Well, you know, we were in Fort Lauderdale, spent a lot of time at the beach.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: Particularly when the was over, we'd have weekends off, and the ... so ... and I ... we had relatives living there, so I mean, hopefully, I mean, I think weren't with them too much, but it wasn't a whole lot, just go to beach I guess.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah. Wow, nice. (Unintelligible) Florida is very nice.

Mr. Williams: I think athletics, I mean, we were fairly athletic, but I don't think we got into ... went any place where we could get into ... my father, for instance, when he was in the Navy, he played a lot of football, lots of football. And I mean, he, in his short career, he got Chief, so ... and he moved. But he end up teaching Radio up at uh, Harvard, so, they kid ... when he retired, they kid him about that (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter). Well, Harvard, is a good school.

Mr. Williams: (Laughter), yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Uh, what rank did you get out at?

Mr. Williams: Well, we got out as Aviation Radiomen Third-Class.

Mike Zambrano: So, was that pretty, uhm, pretty much what you graduated from when you ...

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: ... got out?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Williams: Yeah. So, it was a short time. And you asked if I'd staying in the Navy. Uh, only because, at that time, it seemed like we were making ... making some money, and somewhere I'm in ... yeah, I think you can see it on here, uh, one of these, I worked ... did you ... where did you work? I worked in the post off ... I delivered mail for at least two summers in my hometown.

Mike Zambrano: Oh! Before you went into the service?

Mr. Williams: Uh hum, as ... I was delivering mail that summer that I went in service and ... and the summer before that. And then before that, I delivered special deliveries for the ... both ... for the post office.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, you know, before you go into service ...

Mr. Williams: (Unintelligible) here.

Mike Zambrano: ... uh, during the war, did you remember any ... like ... like any steel drives, or ... or did your mom make a victory garden or (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: Oh, we had a ... certainly had a garden, yeah. We always had a garden. In fact, we ... since we were out and there weren't any houses around us, we plowed up a ... a lot next to us and ... and planted. But we al ... always had a garden.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: And used it a lot, uh hum. And we can remember rationing. I remember I had to get a ration ticket to get a pair of shoes.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! For shoes?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: I knew they rationed a lot of things; I didn't know they rationed shoes.

Mr. Williams: Oh yeah, shoes, yeah uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: So, how often do you get a pair ... how often? Once a year?

Mr. Williams: Oh, probably wasn't, it was just once. I mean, I ... I can, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: I can't remember being ... lacked ... lacked of something. The only thing I know that, you know, my wife is a holocaust survivor.

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Williams: And friends of hers. Her parents, and her parents (unintelligible), they had to hide, but she was hid. She was moved (unintelligible), but I remember her dad was talking about somebody that they knew had ... was going down to get food stamps or something, and this is in Holland, and he said ... told them not to take the ... the cable car or the ... then, the bus, and they went on the bus and never came back.

Mike Zambrano: And ...

Mr. Williams: So, that was going after rations; that's why I brought that up, so ...

Mike Zambrano: ... these ... these, I'm sorry, these are friends or relatives of your wife?

Mr. Williams: They were both, I think. They were distant relatives, but they ... her parents, I mean, not much of the family survived, but I mean, she did. They moved her; she ended up in a way up ... and they moved ... underground moved them frequently so if somebody got caught, they couldn't tell where ... where somebody was. Her brother was, her younger brother, was put on a train to go to concentration camp, and somebody ... and there was a woman on the train that recognized him as a friend of the families, so she said, "I'm going to take care of him." And she turned around and he was gone, and she heard somebody say, "This is one they won't get." So, the war was over for a year, and somebody wanted to adopt him, and they found ... eventually he got ... because, I mean, people aren't going to, uh, not going to give up somebody that ...

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: ... because the chances of anybody ... relatives living are about one in seven, so ...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Williams: ... anyway, I mean, rationing, that was ... that I always remember his story about his ... that ... that family going after rations (unintelligible). The ... I don't think ...

Mike Zambrano: Is that your honorable discharge there?

Mr. Williams: Pardon?

Mike Zambrano: Is ... is that your discharge?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah. You can take a photograph of it or whatever; that's alright.

Mike Zambrano: I've never seen them with the ... the service and remarks and all that (unintelligible) on the back.

Mr. Williams: And this, you know, where I ... I ran across this stuff.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckle).

Mr. Williams: (Showing documents), But this is interesting. And these are interesting. And here's a picture, for instance, of the ...

Mike Zambrano: So, its your class picture ... class ...

Mr. Williams: Oh, that's ... and that's the uh ...

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible) oh, the Gunners School.

Mr. Williams: Gunnery School, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So, you're Class 5145, oh, the year of '45, okay. Class 51 of the year '45.

Mr. Williams: Now, we went in ... we went into the Navy as Seamen Second Class, that's already ... never Apprentice Seaman.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: So, when you were able to get into this picture, uh, in this program, you became a ... a Seaman Second Class, and First Class, and then you got your ... your rating.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: And this ... this is, for instance, this is our training group, I mean, yeah, that's the boot camp group. There were more in boot camp, but that was that one ... that particular week or something like that.

Mike Zambrano: It says on this November '44, so, oh, in Memphis, okay, Memphis. And its ...

Mr. Williams: That's the time we finished boot camp.

Mike Zambrano: So, its Recruit Training, Company Six.

Mr. Williams: Yeah. Uh ...

Mike Zambrano: Platoon Three, now, I've never actually seen somebody's platoon (chuckles) from boot camp. Most of that stuff (unintelligible) the picture right here. Well, where are you in the picture?

Mr. Williams: Uh, I should have looked. This guy in the front was one of the ... this ... leaders. I mean, he wasn't ...

Mike Zambrano: Mind if I take a picture of this one? This for you to see (chuckles).

Mr. Williams: No, you can ... you can take that. You can a picture.

Mike Zambrano: Its ...

Mr. Williams: You know what I'm going to do ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Williams: I'm going to let you take some of this stuff if you want to read it. Are you interested in reading? For instance, this.

Mike Zambrano: What is it?

Mr. Williams: That's the newspaper.

Mike Zambrano: Oh!

Mr. Williams: And there's ...

Mike Zambrano: Well, I can just take some pictures of this ...

Mr. Williams: 'Cause there's ... because I found that I didn't read them. I read, I mean, there was somebody ... one of these onboard ship there that somebody got the ... it said here, "Awarded Seventeen Heroes serving the FDR." You know, they were ship's company probably most of them, rather than the Air Group.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: But I know there was some Pilots that did it. But there was a ... Distinguished Flying Cross, I think, received the Navy Cross. You know, this is just what happened onboard the ...

Mike Zambrano: Right, just ...

Mr. Williams: But anyway ...

Mike Zambrano: Oh, its ... its what, one, two, three, four, five, uh, six page newspaper, and it looks like they're printing it pretty often since one's (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: Yeah, that was every two weeks it looks like, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Really?! Well, there was a lot ... must have been a lot going on on the ship.

Mr. Williams: That's a lot of, well, I think that was what - how many thousand, three thousand?

Mike Zambrano: "Sweethearts on Parade."

Mr. Williams: (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: I guess Sweethearts is some of the crewmen?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, yeah, I guess, yeah. Have you ever seen this magazine?

Mike Zambrano: No, I don't think I have.

Mr. Williams: I don't know where that came from. I mean, its in my stuff but ...

Mike Zambrano: So, this magazine's called "Our Navy," first of December, 1945. It looks a little bit like a Life magazine. You don't recall where you got it from?

Mr. Williams: Uh, probably available on ...

Mike Zambrano: The ... the FDR is not in it, is it?

Mr. Williams: No.

Mike Zambrano: A fleet was pretty huge back then.

Mr. Williams: Anyway, that's ... I just happened to have ... have ... find this stuff with my ... and these are ... this ... this is a pin here that says ... I got ... I was discharged honorably from the Navy reserve, and these, of course, are whatever they call that.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, the, uhm ...

Mr. Williams: It, yeah ... Dutch, I mean, the duck, the lame duck, isn't that what they call ...

Mike Zambrano: Is it ruptured duck?

Mr. Williams: Ruptured Duck, yeah, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: So ... and you had to wear, let me see, if I recall, you could wear your uniform thir ... up to thirty days after being discharged but you had to wear the ... the pin on your patch.

Mr. Williams: Pin ... it ... it's some place it says here you have to be ... (unintelligible) you have to be very careful and show them that you have a ... you have been discharged, carry something or ... because the FBI or somebody could question you.

Mike Zambrano: Or they might that ... what, you were ... the person was going AWOL or something?

Mr. Williams: Yeah well, I don't know, maybe it was ... maybe it was when you were on leave and still in the, I mean, I guess the ... I guess, no, uhm, the draft was still in effect.

Mike Zambrano: Uhm.

Mr. Williams: I don't know when ... oh, I know when they stopped drafting, but still had to register and ... and be ... go to a draft. And I know my younger brother was ... when the Korean War came on, I mean, he was dra ... and he was working on his PhD and somebody in the draft board, "I think that's more important than let him ... than to draft him," so he was able to finish that.

Mike Zambrano: Did ... did you get called up for Korea?

Mr. Williams: No, that's when I ... that's the reserve; the reserves ran out and never got called. The reserves ran out the day he was, uh, he froze them, and ... and never did ... I didn't hear ... I was getting letters from Glenview to come down and join our reserve unit about that time.

Mike Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Williams: And ... and I ... I think ... I don't think ... I think I was out. I'm ... studied geology and we were ... had a field camp that summer out in Wyoming, so I think that ... or I decide ... I might have even resigned up in the reserves for another four ... this goes in after the reserve, you didn't ... didn't have to do anything.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Williams: I went to Beloit College and they had a ... they did have some kind of semi-active reservists because they had radio equipment, and they would go up there and work on it and do stuff, but I ... I never ... I saw them doing it, but I never got involved in that. (Phone ringing in background).

Mike Zambrano: What did ... what did you do when you got out of the service?

Mr. Williams: Well, I went to ... I got out and ... and (phone ringing in background), and ... and July ...

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: ... and ... and in August I (phone ringing in backgroup) reported for football at Beloit College by the middle of July (phone ringing in background), and I can remember that.

Mike Zambrano: Is that in Chicago area?

Mr. Williams: Its in ... its in Wisconsin on the Illinois, Wisconsin border.

Mike Zambrano: Okay. And is ... is it a four-year college?

Mr. Williams: Four-year college, yeah, I got a B.S. degree in geology and then I went to graduate school for a year at Indiana University till '51, you know, finished. And during ... and the Korean War opened up jobs for geologists.

Mike Zambrano: Really?!

Mr. Williams: I mean, I ... there weren't any jobs in '50, it was about like it is now, but the war opened up ... and the jobs were available, so, I didn't have any more money to ... I went to the ... uh, four years of college on the G.I. Bill.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: But no, no, didn't have enough to do any graduate work.

Mike Zambrano: Did you finish your graduate degree?

Mr. Williams: No, just the one year.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Williams: And I was able to get a job.

Mike Zambrano: And what were you ... what was the grad ... what would it have been in?

Mr. Williams: In ... in geology.

Mike Zambrano: Oh okay.

Mr. Williams: Yeah, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Alright. And ...

Mr. Williams: So, and then I looked for a job; I started work in August of 1951 and worked till November, uh no, December 31st, 1990.

Mike Zambrano: Who did you work for?

Mr. Williams: I worked for Gulf Oil which became Chevron, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Gulf became Chevron?

Mr. Williams: Uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Williams: Or that was the first company that I took, and I ... my career, I had a four-year career, just short of four-year career, and thirty years of that was overseas.

Mike Zambrano: So, you did a lot of traveling for the company?

Mr. Williams: No, I lived in various places ...

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Williams: ... for a ... for a long time.

Mike Zambrano: Wow, hum.

Mr. Williams: Traveled a little bit at the end to ... to stand in for somebody till they ... but ... but otherwise, I did a lot of traveling but not ... not ... on ... only once a year or something like that.

Mike Zambrano: What about your ... your time in service during the war, uhm, stands out to you the most?

Mr. Williams: Uh, let's ... that's an interesting question I suppose. Uh, I used to be able to perform properly when ... during the training so that you could stay in and not ... I mean, if you couldn't read the code or didn't send code very well, they might not think you would make it. Uhm, and of course, being able to stay with my brother was nice, but ... and that wasn't ... was just per chance in ... in some ways.

Mike Zambrano: What is your brother's name anyway?

Mr. Williams: Bob, uh, Robert. So, it was Bob, Dylan (sp?) Bob.

Mike Zambrano: And, yeah, that's ... that's pretty unique. I mean, you spent most of the time in the service with your brother. What ... you were discharged on the same day (unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: It so ... yeah, we were together, yeah, always together.

Mike Zambrano: What did he get his doctorate in?

Mr. Williams: The ... that was my other brother.

Mike Zambrano: Oh.

Mr. Williams: He was a ... he was, well my brother studied geology, my twin brother studied geology.

Mike Zambrano: (Chuckles).

Mr. Williams: But he ... he went ... he went to a school that was on the quarter system.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Williams: And so, after the first quarter, because the ... the jobs came up and he was working with somebody that got a job and he went down and got a job. So, he worked for almost the same length of time for another ... for another oil company.

Mike Zambrano: As a geologist?

Mr. Williams: As a geologist, uh hum.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Williams: And my ... my other brother got his PhD in ... in chemistry in x-ray diffraction they'll call it. He would grow crystals to study the crystal system.

Mike Zambrano: Uh huh.

Mr. Williams: And you couldn't do that until they got the computer, so, it was a big ... at that time, they were using these rooms full of computers to do it. And he found that you couldn't get a vacuum stable enough so that the crystal system was continually to change. You know, one of the first things they did when they went up to space, was grow crystals.

Mike Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Williams: Yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Huh! So, all of you went to some type of science field then?

Mr. Williams: Yeah. My sister went to college, I mean, my parents had four kids in school at the same time, but the kid ... man, they were ... they were both very bright, so they ... they worked and went to school and did ... did good.

Mike Zambrano: Well, your sis ... your sister went to college, too, you said?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: And what did she study?

Mr. Williams: She studied ... she went to graduate school into marine zoology in graduate school.

Mike Zambrano: Wow! So, (unintelligible), hum.

Mr. Williams: But ...

Mike Zambrano: Okay. I only ask because I'm still ... back then, its ... kind of a period where women get married and so forth and so on.

Mr. Williams: Yeah, she ... she met ... she was going to graduate school in ... in University of Washington and she met her husband there who was doing graduate work in ... anyway, he got called up to a MASH unit, you know, and ... and came back, and he got a PhD in parasitology (?), and had a chair at the ... at the Tulane University in the tropical medicine.

Mike Zambrano: (Unintelligible).

Mr. Williams: And she ... she was a mother (chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: All of this is pretty impressive.

Mr. Williams: I want to find out where we were on in this picture. I probably find this in there, but I don't know.

Mike Zambrano: Can I ... can I get a picture of your frame, too, here?

Mr. Williams: Oh yes, certainly, you certainly can, yeah.

Mike Zambrano: Let me see if I can guess which one is you, Uhm, is that you?

Mr. Williams: Yeah, I think ... I think so, yeah, yeah. I ... I think ...

Mike Zambrano: Wow! Did you ever run into any instances where people confused you on the ship or not or ...

Mr. Williams: Oh well, the ship, yeah, you know, it was interesting. One of the guys in the ... that was in the ... the uh, the other ... the torpedo bombers were also

SB2Cs on that ship and ... and one of the guys that flew as a crewman, well, ended up at Beloit playing football.

Mike Zambrano: Oh really (chuckles)?

Mr. Williams: And then, another one, a guy ... the guy that flew for ... for ... with the Executive Officer, you know, the squadron thing, I ran into him in ... in Wyoming working as a geologist.

Mike Zambrano: (Laughter).

Mr. Williams: And one ... one of the Pilots that my brother flew with was a ... ended up being a geologist ...

Mike Zambrano: Wow! Well, that's ...

Mr. Williams: ... from Texas, I mean ...

Mike Zambrano: ... (unintelligible) geologist.

Mr. Williams: Yes, yeah, well he ... we never saw him, but he read ... knew his name and ... and everything. So ...

Mike Zambrano: Now, I'm curious, why the picture of the SBD here?

Mr. Williams: Oh, that's the SB2C, that's the squadron, you see it? See all the planes, and that's the squadron and then that's ... and that's ... that's SB2C. So, that's some of them ... some of the train ... flew ... fleet uh, maneuvers there.

Mike Zambrano: Quite a picture.

Mr. Williams: Oh, I just put that together on ... some time ago. And ... and that's my ... my brother and I.

Mike Zambrano: It looks like he's a little shorter.

Mr. Williams: No, he just ... no, it ... its the same. He just ...

Mike Zambrano: And ...

Mr. Williams: ... leaned against me, uh huh.

Mike Zambrano: Well, yeah, this is ... I've never interviewed anybody who was a ... a twin of somebody else, so ...

Mr. Williams: (Chuckles).

Mike Zambrano: ... this ... this is interesting. Well, is there anything else I might not have asked you that ... you'd like to share or ...

Mr. Williams: Well, I ... I'm sorry I skipped around a little bit. No, I ... I ... is there anything that you think I ... we missed or (chuckles) ...

Mike Zambrano: Uhm, no I don't think so. Uhm, well, did ... did you feel that your time in the Navy influenced your life later on or ...

Mr. Williams: Uh, no, I don't think so, not particularly because it was so short in ... in many ways, huh? And ... and quick, I mean, that was ... training is training. When you're going to training for five and a half days a week, you don't have much time.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Williams: And, I mean, it didn't last that long, and ... but on the ... on the ... and once ... once we got in the air group that was assigned to the Roosevelt and then was assigned to the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, that's where, I mean, next time I went ... I know that the ... the thing with the Roosevelt eventually went to the Pacific, but what, whoever it had ... had asked about reunions, well, I mean, Air Group ... I don't know whether Air Group ever had that. Frankline D. Roosevelt had air groups but weren't ... weren't ... we weren't really ship's company and ... and I never paid that much attention to it.

Mike Zambrano: Hum.

Mr. Williams: I ... I have run ... I did run across two people that I noticed that had ... had ... were ... were in ... had been in also on the Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Air Group, but I didn't really know them; I just saw one ... one maybe had the VB on it and not ... the other one.

Mike Zambrano: Well, I think those all the questions I have for you today.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you very much, and ...

Mike Zambrano: Well ...

Mr. Williams: ... enjoyed visiting with you.

Mike Zambrano: Thank you for your service.

Mr. Williams: It's not many ... it's not many people you get to talk to and recall a little bit of stuff. I'm glad I ran across this stuff (unintelligible) pull it up ...

Mike Zambrano: You've got quite a collection of ... of things which is ... which is nice!

Mr. Williams: Its ...

Mike Zambrano: 'Cause ... some folks don't ... don't keep them.

Mr. Williams: Well, its ... and the pictures, if you remem ... photography you're not ... it was hard to get pictures because you couldn't get them developed, you couldn't ... then the can ... you know, I remember we took some pictures some place and never got developed or ... or some, so I don't have very many pictures.

Mike Zambrano: Uh hum.

Mr. Williams: I remember taking pictures in ... in Miami, and for ... with ... with guys that were, you know, they were actually ... had got most of them were guys that were going back, going through again, for the second time.

Mike Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Williams: At that time, at ... at that point.

(end of interview)

FINAL copy

CD – #OH04562 – Mr. William O. Williams

Transcribed by: K. Matras

Houston, TX

July 11, 2021