

Interviewer: Could you state your full name and where you were born?

Williams: Harry Gant Williams Jr.

Interviewer: And where were you born?

Williams: Macon Georgia

Interviewer: What did your parents' do?

Williams: My father worked he was head of an art store at one time he framed pictures and sold art supplies. He went to work for the government and worked for the government for a while. He and my grandfather had this store and lost it during the depression. He worked for the government he worked on the side framing pictures and things like that.

Interviewer: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Williams: I have one little sister one little sister.

Interviewer: Their great.

Williams: Oh yeah when they get older. I went to the near high school if you want to know the kind of school system we had.

Interviewer: Sure

Williams: We had the boys and girls went to grammar school together the first through seventh grade. Then the girls went to high school and they boys went to high school we didn't go to school together. The first two years you were in high school boy you drilled an hour ever day close to the draft. The last three years you were in the ROTC you had a uniform 1903 riffle you took care of unless you were an officer and he had a stable. We did drill military style and tactics classes field it was occasionally that type of thing. Discipline was very strict these were public schools. And when we were in service we were five years ahead of everybody else learning how to drill really great.

Interviewer: Did they foresee something?

Williams: No they just believed in doing that they believed everybody should have some military training. And believed that the discipline was good for us and it was I mean they were very strict. For example if you were downtown and you had your tie loose and some officer ROTC officer saw you or a professor they wouldn't give gigs like they did to cadets they just gave tours. And a tour is where you spent one hour walking in a square with a 1903 riffle on your shoulder. So it was good discipline wherever you were.

Interviewer: What did they do with the girls?

Williams: Girls as I say they went to high school by themselves. And they drilled some too they had drill teams.

Interviewer: So did you enlist or were you drafted?

Williams: Well the day I was 18 I enlisted for the draft I couldn't wait to get in. I tried to get in the naval air core but I hadn't graduated from high school. So they told me the army would talk to me the army air core so I went out there. And thank the good Lord I got in there because when I took off from a base if I got back to a base that base was right where I left it. Flat and level not any bumps around. The navy I've got a lot of respect for the men that flew for the navy thank goodness I wasn't one I didn't make that.

Interviewer: Do you think because of the drills and things they did at school was that wide spread that most of the boys you know.

Williams: We were patriotic we were brought up to be patriotic all people that grew up were very patriotic. A lot of boys I knew had been in the National Guard. Of course one thing we got a dollar for every drill that meant a lot of money back in those days. But people we were brought up to believe in our country and to we were brought up to defend our country and very patriotic very patriotic.

Interviewer: What branch did you want to be in what did you kind of want to go into?

Williams: Well I always wanted to be a pilot from the time understood the definition of the term I wanted to be a pilot. And I used to read what was called pulp magazines today they are slick papered they were pulp papered a lot of them the cheap ones in those days. And there were magazines and stories about men flying and Lafayette Estrogel and WWI flying for the French and that type of thing. I just ate that up and made model airplanes wanted to be a pilot wanted to be a pilot get in combat. In fact I can remember me and this friend of mine were talking after our club meeting one night several of us had tried to get in cadets and didn't make it. Only two of us two of the group I was in right there made it. And we were just hanging around talking about the fact that the war was going to be over before we ever got to see any action. We changed our mind when we got closer to combat but that's how we felt at the time.

Interviewer: What year did you enlist?

Williams: 1942 was sworn in in 1942. Forwarded to active duty in 1943 two months later.

Interviewer: Where did you go where did you train.

Williams: They sent us to Miami Beach first. The air core had lost so many men and they were striving to get so many men and they all of a sudden they started bunching up. And instead of going right into cadet programs you went to what was called a CTD training detachment. And we went to Miami Beach spent a month down there drilling primarily. Then they sent us to college at the University of Chattanooga was there two months. This college training detachment we were talking about. It was enlarged to five months but a group of us just stayed two months. And then came in to Nashville for classification we spent a month at One Hundred Oaks. We classified either as pilot, bombardier, navigator or you were washed out.

Interviewer: And you were a pilot.

Williams: Yeah

Interviewer: And where did you go from there?

Williams: From there we went to Nature Field Alabama for what they called preflight you became a cadet at that time. Up until that time you were making \$50 a month after that you became a cadet you made \$75 a month. We were at Nature Field Alabama for a month and you were training you were taking a lot of courses on aircraft codes video I mean audio codes mores code that type of thing. And visual code meteorology and just various things we needed to know.

Interviewer: Did was that kind of easy to you or did you

Williams: Well it wasn't hard it wasn't too hard. To me it was a tough school a real tough school and I was I don't know I was not the student then that I am today. As my father said it took a war to get me out of high school and if it wasn't for the war I never would have got through college. But those things some of the things I found out I was really interested in and they became easy but except code I had an awful time with that.

Interviewer: Mores code?

Williams: Mores code yeah you had to be able to type seven words a minute visual so many words a minute. My trouble of course was I couldn't spell anyway that created a problem for me.

Interviewer: Where did you go from there?

Williams: From there I went to primary flight school Bernville South Carolina. It was a private it wasn't private but it wasn't an army school the army commissioned it but you had private instructions they weren't in the army. Because the army just didn't have enough instructors to go around and so it was you went there and they had PT19 which is a biplane open cockpits two place. It is the closest you will ever come to flying I think beautiful airplane. It was just a fabulous airplane wonderful easy to fly and everything. There I would out I really wasn't that interested in acrobatics. So I decided I was going to be a fighter pilot at that point. So that's why I decided when you left there you chose what you wanted to fly and I chose heavy bombers. Two or three months flying 60 hours I think 60 or 80 hours flying. And from there we went to Charlotte Field South Carolina to basic. You had a different type airplane it was one wing had radios in it flaps. Had a lot more instruments in the cockpit to watch and I learned to night fly there flying at night. And from there I went to Freeman Field Seymour Indiana after there we went to advanced flying school twin engines and you even had more instruments you were supposed to take care of watch and that type of thing. While I was there just before I graduated was the first time I got shot at. I was another cadet and I were up just flying around putting in this because we that's what we're supposed to be doing. And we were just a week or two from graduation and we got up over the clouds and we were listening to the radio and talking and just flying around not paying attention to where we were going. Well north of where we were there was a restricted area that you were not supposed to go into which we knew about and stayed away from. But up there flying above the clouds you're just not paying attention to where you are and all of a sudden ahead of us there was a puff of smoke in the air. And I said look at that isn't that strange and the boy said yeah it is. And another one popped up I said look at that one they looked like key holes sort of. Then he said yeah I wonder what that is and he said you know he said well it looks like when you watch the newsreels and the planes are running into flack that's what it looks like. I said flak where are we he said I don't know he said I don't either. Well I took that plane 180 degrees and got out of there. I thought that would be something get

shot down by your own people before you even graduated from cadet school. But we were in that restricted area and they were letting us know to stay away from there.

Interviewer: When you first started flying how were your nerves were you nervous at all?

Williams: No well the first time I ever went up was at UCT University of Chattanooga and they were going to give us ten hours training in cubs. We were at the airport one day and it was a nice warm spring day and I came out there to fly in that cub and I got in it thrilled to get in it not nervous or anything like that. But I got up there and he never did go very high and it bounced around and I got sick. I never tossed my cookies but I came back and I told my lieutenant I said I want out. He said you want to get out of flight and I said no sir I want to get out of the air core. I want to walk or ride a truck he said you can't do that. He said did you get sick I said lieutenant I'd have to get better to die. He said well big planes don't bounce around like that I said what's the biggest plane we've got. He said B17 I said that's what I want to fly.

Interviewer: And that never bothered you?

Williams: No it didn't airsickness never bothered me again except sometimes when we were being moved from one airbase to another any distance if we were flying I was sitting in the back of the plane somewhere I'd get a little queasy sometimes but. Flying when I was actually flying no I never did never did.

Interviewer: Where did you go after there?

Williams: From there I graduated there February of 1944 we went to Seban Florida for B17 transition. And we were there about three months learned to fly B17s Es and Fs. Then we went from there to Tampa Florida where we picked up the crew. The copilot all of the crew were together and the pilot was assigned to them. But we stayed there for crew training Drew Field Tampa Florida for roughly three months where the crew was trained together working together. And from there we went to Savanna Georgia and picked up an airplane to take it overseas. And it had it was a brand new plane so it had to be calibrated all the instruments had to be calibrated and all like that. And the navigation equipment had to be checked and so forth. We were there several days and one of the things that happened there before they turned the new plane over to us. The sergeant was checking out some other things and he said lieutenant sign this I said what's that and he said a receipt and I said for what. He said for the B17 I said you mean to tell me I've got to sign a receipt for that airplane he said yeah. I said what does that plane cost, and I'll never forget this, he said \$250,000 a quarter of a million dollars. Now that was back when a dollar was worth about \$500 to what it is today. I said son if I lose this airplane my great great great great grandchildren are probably going to be paying. He said that's probably right sign it. And later when we got shot at I'll never forget as I dropped out of that plane and I turned and I saw it going on up there just before it crashed I thought I wonder if that colonel is going to make me pay for that airplane. But we went there and went to Bagwell Maine stayed there four days waiting for the weather to clear up. And from there we went to Goose bay Labrador Goose bay got gas and we went across Greenland to Iceland Chekavick Reykjavik Iceland I can't don't know how to pronounce it not sure of the pronunciation. And there they fed us a meal and let us sleep about four or five hours and from there we flew to on into England. From England we returned the plane there and got on a train and went to a replacement depot. They sent everybody into replacement depots and then they sent you out to different units. And we were there in the replacement depot about three days and we were sent to Paddington 92<sup>nd</sup> bombardier 327<sup>th</sup> bomb squadron and that was our base.

Interviewer: Where is that?

Williams: That is about its north west of London about 80 to 100 miles maybe 80 to 100 miles somewhere in that vicinity. But most of the bases were down in the south east so they wouldn't have as far to fly. We were probably one of the furthest west north west there were a few more around us one of the furthest north west of this place.

Interviewer: And so that was your base?

Williams: Yeah.

Interviewer: And from there when you weren't in the air what were you doing? Or what did you do from there?

Williams: You when you first got there you weren't given anything to do for two or three days. The pilot was assigned to fly practice missions or slow time in the engine. An engine may be damaged just old plane and they'd have to put a new engine on it and you'd take off with and fly around for four hours and let that engine run slowly to slow tie it to break it in. Then you were finally assigned to fly on a combat mission. Well the pilot the crew didn't go on that mission you flew as a copilot with an established crew to kindly get the feel of the thing and see what happened and how it went and what combat was like. And the pilot did that two times to get that feel then he took his own crew up. That's where you got started you'd fly for maybe two days three days depending on the weather then you were off for a day or two then you'd fly back. I guess four days is the longest we ever flew you know four days in succession. And every about every two weeks you got a 48 hour pass and we'd go to London or something like that. Halfway through your missions you got a 7 day pass. You had a choice of going to what they called a flack home or the beach.

Interviewer: What's a flack home?

Williams: Flack homes they took over a lot of the manor houses in England and the family maybe lived in one little apartment in one corner. But the rest of it was taken over by the air core. And you'd go there and when you'd check in they would give you civilian pants and a shirt and a sweater or two you would wear those during the day. A butler would wake you up in the morning and give you fresh grapefruit juice fresh orange juice which we never touched once we got to England except there. You'd go down at breakfast and you could have your choice of scrambled eggs fried fixed the way you wanted toast bacon or sausage which never saw that in the mess hall. And during the day you had a bicycle and you could ride around visit the town or you could just go out in the countryside or you could play basketball or volleyball baseball or football or croquet or just sit down and read. Whatever you wanted to do but at night you dressed for dinner and had a ball and you played ping pong or whatever.

Interviewer: Which one did you usually, what did you do when you went down to the beach?

Williams: I didn't go to the beach you had to sleep on the beach I slept at the flack home I had been to the beach before. I wanted to see what this was like and it was great it was really great. I have a daughter who lives in Asia she is an archeologist she married an Asian and they live over there. And I've been because we go over there every year and they come over to see us once a year. But I want to go

back to that flack home I'd like to find it and just see what it looks like now talk to the people or whoever I could.

Interviewer: Did you go to London very often?

Williams: Every two weeks every two weeks we went to London.

Interviewer: What did you do just sight see?

Williams: The next question is what? No we'd go down there and check into a hotel we usually stayed at the Russell Square Hotel that's the first and only time I had ever seen a lift instead of an elevator. You know what a lift is it's an elevator but they have an elevator operator in this case a girl and she would pull by ropes and she would pull the elevator up or pull it down because of the way the balance and all that's where they get the name lift. And we'd stay at the Russell Square Hotel and we'd go to pick a day and try to find someplace to eat try to find bourbon whiskey you could sometimes buy scotch sometimes very rarely. Or just mess around go to the movie what have you stay down there spend the night two days and come home. I mean come back to the base.

Interviewer: So how did you I'm trying to word this. So you're at the base did they give you missions from the base or did you go

Williams: no that's right you stayed on the base. What they would do they the orders would come into the base headquarters from I think the air force headquarters. Sometime during the night usually by 11 o'clock they had the orders that we were going to fly tomorrow or you weren't going to fly tomorrow. And each squad that was the 327<sup>th</sup> squad there were four squadrons and the bomb group was the 92<sup>nd</sup> four squadrons of the group. In your squadron area of your squadron office these was a pole like a flag pole. And on top of that pole they had two lights one was red one was green. And we'd usually stay up until about 11 o'clock at night to find out what color the light was going to be. If it was red you were flying in the morning if it was white you weren't so you could relax go to sleep get a good night sleep. If you were going to fly in the morning you were going to fly and that was it. It depended on a lot of different things but 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning a sergeant would come and wake you up and tell you to get up breakfast at four briefing at 5 breakfast at 3 briefing at 4 something like that. You'd ask the sergeant how much gas and he'd tell you how many gallons of gas they were putting in that plane. And you were interested in that because if you had 2780 2,780 gallons of gas which is the most the B17 could carry you were going in deep. If it was 2300 2400 or something like that you knew you weren't going to fly in deep and you probably had a milk run where you could get in and get out. Because most of the time you were bombing the railroad marshal yards and factories and things like that deep into Germany. You asked how many gallons of gas then you got up and got dressed and you went to the mess hall and you had breakfast. I remember a lot of times we would have pancakes kind of done on the inside and burnt on the edges and green syrup I'll never forget that. Here you are your fixin to go off and fly a mission and you get green syrup or pancakes that are doughy. But that was life. Then you'd go back and you'd go to the briefing. You'd go the briefing and it was like a school at the theatre with a stage or at least that's what we had we had a stage there curtains and had chairs out here in front. And there were the curtain was closed and they had a lectern up there where they would come up a major or something would come up and tell us something about the mission where we were going to fly and what times and all. And that's when we had an Act watch you'd set your watches at the same time and they called it an Act watch because when you pulled out the button to set the time the second hand went back to 12. And everybody's was the same thing and when it goes 5, 10, 9, 5 so forth back to one you'd have to hit it

accurate. And everybody's time was the same then they would draw the curtain and there would be a map there a huge map of England and Europe and there would be a red string from where you took off to the buncher, I'll tell you about the buncher in a minute. Go around the buncher and down the coast in kind of a zig zag way because you had to hit the English coast the exact time the exact place because you had 36 planes flying there you had 36 more coming in 3 minutes later from here and from her and from here. So they had to be careful how they got them in there because you can't move 36 planes real easy and the direction changed. So they had to go across and the way we were flying across and around big cities where the flack was to the what's called the initial point which was about 20 minutes flying time until you got to the target then the target and then the way we would come back home back to the base. One morning we went in there and the red string went like this went way up into Northern Germany and came back and got not quite back to England. And we said what did you do run out of string and they said no we've got plenty of string. And somebody said well why did you stop there? And this major said well that's where you use up all of your gas. Somebody said well how are we going to get home from there and I'll never forget this he said that's where you use good old American ingenuity. And boy we did we you can thin the gas you're flying with and stretch your gas we did. Some of them didn't quite make it back though. Anyway you would do that then you would leave and you would go out now while the pilots were getting a briefing the navigators were getting a briefing and the bombardiers were getting a briefing. You have to plan a crew yourself and you would check everything over everybody in at a certain time they'd fire a flare and you'd crank the engines up. Then you'd pull out then you would get in line go out and get on the runway. They would flash a light at you and tell you to take off you'd take off go out to form the squadrons go out to form the flying formation you went out to what they call a buncher. It was a transmitter on the ground that sent a signal up like this and the first plane was the lead plane and he would go out and he would circle that. And the next plane that took off would come up and go out to the buncher and get in position and everybody would do this and you had 36 planes do it and then you would take off. Then you like I said you'd go to the initial point and the bombardiers in the lead plane would take over the flying of that plane. And we didn't have a bombardier in every plane we had a bombardier in about 4 or 5 or six planes. If you're going to bomb visually when the cloud no clouds you'd take your 36 ships and move them into groups of 12 one behind the other. And the lead plane when the bomb bay doors open everybody opens their bomb bay doors. The lead planes first bomb was a smoke bomb and that when that bomb went out it started smoking. And in your plane you didn't have a bombardier you had a togglier the man that sat there and there was a toggle switch and he kept his eyes on that plane lead plane when the first bomb went out he hit the toggle switch. And that's the why you call them a togglier and our bombs started falling and that's the way you bombed. So after you bombed and you left that closed the bomb bay doors and came on back home got back in the group of 36 and you flew as tight as you could supposedly so that you had more fire power to keep fighters out. But when I was over there we had fighters but thank the good Lord they never fit our group when I was flying. Because the Germans just didn't have that many and we had a lot of fighter support at that time. Our big problem was flack that's what got us. I got shot at along Christmas Eve December 24, 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge.

Interviewer: And could you elaborate on that.

Williams: Okay when the Battle of the Bulge happened the Germans were pushing the Americans and the British back. And we were it was a tough situation for a while because we had air superiority at that time in Europe really but we couldn't effectively use it because the weather was so bad over there. The planes couldn't fly couldn't see couldn't get towards the ground. When the weather broke they had been trying to get us up every day for I don't know how long you know a week and just couldn't we get ready maybe to take off and they'd scrap the mission. The day we took off the weather had cleared over

there but it was a messy day. I remember I couldn't see the end of the runway when I took off I couldn't even see 100 yards. And what I did is I took off and I was looking at the left side to stay in the road that was the main thing. And when we took off we had to make a sharp turn because another base was taking off close to us and they were coming this way. But anyway there was a plane behind us that went in right after us because he made his dropped his wings a little bit too much when he made the turn. We finally got off the ground we were going to a place called Giessen Germany it was an air base as I said we didn't bomb airbases and things like that close to the line normally. But they were trying to shut down the Germans wherever they were at. We cruised at 150 miles an hour and that day we had a head wind of about 70 or 70 miles an hours which meant we were going across the land at only 70 or 80 miles an hour. All of a sudden I was flying off the deputy lead and all of a sudden there was a burst of flack in front of us and he moved just a hair and the next person fired and you could feel the plane jump. And it knocked out the engine one of the engines the engine on the right. So I had to break out of formation I couldn't keep up with three engines and we laid low. So I dropped my wheels to let him know I was dropping out. And he called me and said what happened and I said I lost an engine. He said okay dropped you bombs when you can I said alright. So three engines you don't have any real big problem because you can make it back to England with three engines get your bombs out and everything lighten it up. If you weren't hit by fighters you could make it okay. I said get us some fighter support he said well call the fighters well before I could get it trimmed out good they knocked out one of the engines on the left side made it easier to fly. Well with two engines you're not going to go as far and but I knew with two engines we could get back to where our lines were without no problem. Then pretty soon they knocked out another engine that's three gone. Now we've really got a problem because you don't go very far with one engine and then pretty soon they knocked out another engine. And me there was a fire somewhere back here I never did find out what that was but a lot of smoke was coming up behind me. And two of the engines were on fire and the fire extinguishers wouldn't put them out. I told the crew to get ready to bail out I had already told them when the second engine went out we've got to get ready to bail out probably we just don't know yet don't know yet. But I was trying to keep that plane going as long as I possibly could to get us back as far if we possibly get to our line so we wouldn't be prisoners. So finally when it all went I told then we're going to have to get out. They couldn't get the hatches open first because the plane was twisted but they found a way in the meantime to open the bomb bay doors so we jump out there if we had to. We finally I told them when the fourth engine went we're going to have to bail out. I don't remember how high we were at that time but we started off at about around 20,000 18 to 20,000 feet and we had been coming down all the time. And so like I said I just don't remember how high we were we weren't very high. I told them to bailout they called back and said we're here and we're going I said okay I told the copilot to leave and I knew the bombardier and the toggaller and lavradier were down on the deck below. And I could see that they were gone when I got there so we all start down and when I got down on the low deck the navigator was still there he was just sitting there looking out of the hatch. And I grabbed his harness and I said get out of here and he looked at me and just dove out. I talked to him later and I said what in the world were you doing and he said well I never saw the copilot go out. He didn't know the copilot delayed his jump because you don't want to hang up there any longer than you have to because sometimes they'd shoot at you again. If you were over Germany we didn't know where we were really so he said as long as you were up there flying it I was going to stay in it. I said I appreciate the confidence but when I tell you to get out of the airplane get out of it. We all got out thank the good lord and I landed between the lines and some infantry men came out and got me to stop me from because I was headed back towards Germany because I knew the Germans would expect me to go toward our lines. And I was about to walk into a hill full of Germans and I said they came out and spotted me and said let's go back this way and they sent a jeep up there. And I said why they said we were trying to stop you from going back to the hill full of Germans back there. I said Germans why aren't they shooting at us he said they don't do that he said if they start shooting at



us we'll start shooting back at them. We've got a 155 millimeter howitzer we'll throw in there and they don't want that. He said we'd start a war here if they did that. I said man I thought we were at war because we did up there. And so they I got on back to our lines and then the rest of them got out. Some of them took three days to get to walk out but they all got out okay. It was quite an experience quite an experience.

Interviewer: You said you saw your plane crash?

Williams: Yeah as I hung there like I said I didn't hang there I wasn't in the air a minute two minutes maybe three minutes at the longest. I could see it watch it go down and finally the smoke came up. I went back one time and tried to find where that was and that's another long story but I was unable to at that time. I could do it now because I found out they have a record of where every plane went down where it was. If somebody had taken some of the aluminum out of it to make a chicken house or something I could get a piece of it as a souvenir. Nobody on our crew was injured at that time. We had one of the waste gunners lost these two fingers on each hand. The temperature up there was about 35 or 40 degrees below zero. We had heaters but they really didn't do the job. The pilots probably had more heat than anywhere else because we were close to the engine. But the gunners back there they had heated suits on but still it was bitter cold bitter cold. I felt real sorry for those guys because they put up with a lot. Had one gunner that got a piece of flack through his arm here and we brought back planes with just holes all in them. Then one day we got two holes one in the vertical stabilizer and one in the top turn and that one killed my engineer. A real real good man one of the finest young men I've ever known. The only two I lost two pieces of flack. Sometimes you'd have flack you could hear it ricocheting in the cockpit ting ting something like that. But and you know someone asked me if I was scared particularly when we were shot up. I said well you don't get scared your busy I was busy trying to do my best to keep that airplane in the air as long as I could. Keep it together keep us going so you don't get scared now as far as being scared over there it's hard to describe it. Because different people are affected different ways but you have a fear a constant knowing at you that you can have a few drinks with people and sit and talk then it comes back. But you know that you're going you've still got so many more missions to go before you come home. And you don't know you don't think it's going to be you you never get wounded or that type thing. But you know people and you see people killed in your own plane and all that. But I don't know for some reason you don't think it's going to be you. But you know that you're in a lot of danger a lot of danger. And somebody said Jerry are you scared and I said no I just stay terrified the whole time to avoid getting scared. It's difficult to like the red light and white light like when the white light was on you just felt a sigh of relief you didn't fly the next day. We were free you had one more day of living. And when you finished 35 missions and I looked at that airplane I cannot tell you how I felt I mean there's no way to describe the feeling that you have. You are through you are through. How guys on the ground stood not knowing you know you weren't there so many days and you got to go home so many months or something like that. That was real tough for them real tough.

Interviewer: So was that base was that the only place?

Williams: That was the only place I stayed yes.

Interviewer: How long were you there?

Williams: I was there from September 44 to March of 45. Then I was sent home came home on a troop ship. Had a real experience on that we were lined up getting on the ship the crew was myself, the copilot, navigator and so forth. We walked up there and you would just stand in line with a bunch of

people got up there and went to a little window and the handed you a little slip. You were on such and such deck such and such place and I was on some deck copilot right behind me he's on another deck. I go to where I am I'm in a stateroom it's an inside stateroom they have five bunks in it where normally there'd be two people but they had double bunks. We were on the USS United States real real fancy ship we went in and ate at the officers' quarters we had linen napkins have stewards serve you food it was great. The copilot and the rest of the crew they were down below and they had four or six canvas bunks stacked one on top of the other. A lot of people sick they ate out of mess kits standing up and when they found out where I was and what they walked into I thought they were going to throw me overboard. I said man I had nothing to do with it I just happen to be the last one to get one of those slots. We came back it took us about five days to come back and six days ran into some bad weather. Came back to the states and was sent home for 21 days leave. We went to Miami Beach and there you had to make a decision if you had enough points and you got points for the amount of time you were overseas and the war time that you had and all that stuff added up to points. If you had enough points you could get out if you wanted to if you didn't have enough you just stayed in. Well the war was over in Europe and I know the war was still going on in the Pacific and I knew that I would be over there flying B29s before it was over with. And as I had told somebody I had had all of the glory I wanted I wanted to give somebody else a chance at it I didn't want to be a hog about it. And so I decided to get out I didn't want to get out because I was young, single, flying had a great life out of combat as long as I could have stayed out of combat I would have been happy to stay in. If I had any idea that the war was going to be over as soon as it was I would have stayed in. But I didn't know nobody knew so I got out. Got out and went back to Macon ran in to a professor on the street one day and he said what are you going to do I said well I guess go to college. Well I had to graduate from high school first because I hadn't graduated from high school. When I was taken in enlisted in October I was sworn in in December of 42 this major told me that personally guaranteed me that it would be six months before I was called up and I could finish high school. Two months later I was in Miami Beach so I went back to see the principle and he talked about what we studied and all and he gave me a diploma for 1945 graduating class that was the only one he had. So I went to the University of Georgia stayed there four years graduated.

Interviewer: What did you major in?

Williams: Majored in finance with a year of law. I took a lot of tests when I started and I got credit for a lot of subjects. I've always been a big reader and the high school was a very very tough school public high schools were very very tough. And well me and anybody else that had been there and graduated got a lot of learned a lot and got a lot of hours given to them. For example when I went to school human biology was the pain of the freshman class I mean everybody hated it and everybody had to take it. I escaped it I got a credit for it eventually I became unpleasant around people I let them know I wasn't taking that. But it was I guess when I started I was declared I was a sophomore I had enough hours to be a sophomore. And then I went to at the end of three years if you wanted to you could go to law school take a year of law get your BBA or BA degree. And then take two more years of law and get your law degree so you were doing it in 6 years when they would do it in 7 years.

Interviewer: Where did you meet your wife?

Williams: I was when I graduated I went to Atlanta looking for a job and talked to some people at General Motors. And some fraternity brothers had got jobs at General Motors and I went to see them and they sent me to Chattanooga. And when I was in Chattanooga I met some people and she was in Athens Tennessee which was about 60 miles away. And she had gone to Parson School of Design in New York and she was coming back to Chattanooga and a friend of a girl I was dating was dating a boy also in

Athens. We just were friends and she met Nancy and said I want you to call this girl have a date with her she's a great girl.

Interviewer: Where did you work where did you end up?

Williams: Well I went to work in Chattanooga for GMAC General Motors Acceptance Corporation for two years and then a friend of mine talked me into told me I was a salesman I should go to State farm Insurance Company that was where he worked. And I became an agent with State Farm Insurance. I was an agent for 2 and half years the manger died and I was promoted to general manger then stayed there three years. Was an agent supervisor and was moved to Nashville and became an agent director so I stayed with State Farm and traveled in agency management the whole time the rest of the time.

Interviewer: Do you have any children?

Williams: Two daughters. One daughter like I said was an archeologist both of them went to Ole Miss she was the oldest one was an archeologist and she in working on her masters and so forth she was digging in ruins and she met this boy and they started dating the next year and eventually they fell in love. She liked England and they got married they were going to live over here but he wanted to go back home. That's you know my job is to follow my husband and she liked England anyway so they moved back to England. They have two children and two dogs they live in a place call Malvern England which is two and a half hours North West of London. And I have another daughter that she and her husband both work for a firm call Crabtree and she was in charge of company stores in Hawaii and the United States. Traveled a lot he traveled a lot they were living in Connecticut the company sold and they were just seeing each other passing almost. And they found out about a gift store in Athens Tennessee where my wife was from originally it was being sold so they came down and looked at it and decided that's what they wanted to do. So they left Crabtree and came to Athens and bought the gift store and they live they don't have any children they have two cats.

Interviewer: Well I think that might just about cover it. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Williams: I got to fly in a B17 the other day.

Interviewer: Oh really?

Williams: Yeah they have 12 of them left in this country and two in Europe. And there was one that was restored one of the most recent restorations and it was an outfit in Douglas Georgia. And they were coming up here the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month to fly and to give people an opportunity to fly in a B17 charge them for it. So the Monday preceding that they wanted to come in here had the television stations come down to Smyrna and they wanted to get some publicity. One of the men one of the pilots knew one of the men in the organization we had an organization here in Nashville of men who had flew as crew members of multi-engine bombers in WWII. And they knew one of the members of our group and asked if any of any of us that flew these would come down that day they would like to interview us. And so I went down there my daughter from England was here and my daughter from Athens was here took them both down to see if they would let them walk through the plane. They had heard me talk about it all of their life and never been in one. And they got on the plane and said I thought you said it was a big airplane. They said it was awfully awfully small I said well it was a big airplane when I was flying I said it has shrunk some. And someone said you mean it's shrunk or you've gotten bigger, I've gotten bigger. Anyway they said they wanted us to fly in it and they took us up no cost. It was something to get back in

I didn't sit in the seat I sat right behind the pilot watching him could see what the dials and switches were. And it brought back many memories of what it was like.

Interviewer: Do you keep in contact with anybody you knew?

Williams: Well I see I've lost contact with virtually all of them. I ran into one of them there was just no way it could have happened. But I was going through the town of Bowling Green Kentucky one day and stopped to get a cup of coffee and there were dozens of people and ran into a man and he said Lieutenant Williams and I turned around he was one of the gunners one of the gunners. He and his wife and children were sitting in the booth there and they had moved into town and waiting on their luggage to come into town. Just happened to run into him and I stayed in touch with him for a while. The copilot and I stayed in touch for a while but we just kind of lost relations somewhere.

Interviewer: When you were in the service did you keep up with letters did you write letters?

Williams: Not as much as I should have I'm not a writer I never wrote like I should have. I regret not having kept a diary I really regret that. But they told us not that they didn't want us to do that.

Interviewer: Did they say why

Williams: Well if the diary was picked up by somebody or stolen or something like that. The thing about it they knew just as much about what we were doing as we did. We would you would come to your base and we all listened to Lord Ha Ha a lot of times they had good music great music. And they would tell well we understand that Lieutenant Williams and his crew have arrived from the United States and into the 92<sup>nd</sup> bomb group and we want to welcome you there and we're sorry that you won't be there long because you will probably get shot down and be POW if you lucky and things like that. They knew where we were so but anyway there were a lot of things you didn't do and shouldn't do and talk about and that type of things during war and you can understand why. So I wish I had written more letters.

Interviewer: Did you get letter?

Williams: Yeah I got a lot of letters. You wanted packages of food certain foods. I wanted some fried chicken my family canned some and sent it. The Red Cross I guess had places where you could take food and cook it and can it. And one thing I really missed was saltine crackers and I wanted a box of saltine crackers. Well by the time they got to me they were a saltine powder they weren't crackers. But there was boy from Texas in my barracks and he always asked for peppers. I don't know what kind of peppers they were but they were the hottest things I ever put in my mouth. But we of course we got food and cakes and cookies and things like that. Which meant an awful lot when you got stuff like that. But it's the bomber group I mentioned the fighter pilots have had a group here for years. And there have been nothing for the bomber people. I ran into a man onetime whose family owned several plants so he had secretarial help which is a help trying to start and association. So we got together and we formed a WWII bomber group and this is men that flew bombers flew any multi engine aircraft in WWII. Whatever position you flew we've got about 90 members and about 40 of them attend the meeting once a month. And listen to usually some people talking have a speaker get together and have lunch and tell tales. We listen about things we did have a big time have a big time.

Interviewer: What's the group called?

Williams: The WWII bomber group.

Interviewer: Where do they meet?

Williams: We meet at the university club over at Vanderbilt the first Friday of every month. And we want any kind of publicity we can get because we want everybody who is qualified welcome to our organization. No dues nothing like they just join. We have lunches once a month and once a year we get together at Christmas have a big Christmas dinner with the wives attending that type of thing. It's a lot of fun it's just a lot of fun.

Interviewer: Well anything else that covers my questions.

Williams: I can keep talking for a long time. Another thing that's interesting about the other day down at Smyrna they were interviewing me and the man asked me he said do you ever think about the men who were killed and their families and what they thought. I said sure you think about that you feel for the families but you didn't really understand what the families felt until you had children of your own then you could understand. I don't see how families lived through it. Parents but you wonder about what would have happened what would those men have accomplished had they have lived what would they have done. But I said you don't dwell on that you think about the funny things or the fun things that happened. After I said that I thought his next question he is going to ask you is what were some of the funny things? And I my mind went completely blank I spent an hour last week talking to a group in Gallatin talking about funny things that happened to me all the way through but I couldn't think of a funny thing. And I thought if he asks me that question I'm going to sit here I don't know what I'm going to do. But thank goodness he didn't ask me that question. But there were so many funny things that happened to you that you could go on for hours.

Interviewer: Well I guess that covers it.

Williams: When I was in high school that finance professor so and so was in WWI and I wanted to talk to him but he didn't want to talk about it. Another professor like that and I thought man if I ever get in combat I'm going to talk about it. Well when we got home from overseas they had told the families that the worse thing they could do was let them talk about it get their minds off of it change the subject. So my family wouldn't listen to my war stories. Well my dates didn't want to listen to my war stories it didn't take me long to figure out if I wanted to go on a second date I better forget about my war stories. So my wife will just eat them up she will just love them she could care less about my war stories. My children will like them they weren't interested at all until they got older. When they got older they wanted to listen to them they wanted me to write them down which I have done. In fact that is one of my pet projects everybody I don't care who you are you should have a journal. You should write down the things that happen in their lives I don't care you don't have to be in the military or not the military is immaterial but we owe it to each generation to write how we look how we observe how we think of things and how we look at things. So I'm willing to talk about war stories anytime. But a lot of people I understand people had certain things that happened to them that they don't want to talk about and I can understand that. So I'm not saying ones right and one's wrong. We've got some people in our organization that really don't talk about it they will come to the meeting but they won't talk about it. And I know some men that could join but they won't they don't want to talk about it. So don't turn me on too long.

Tape ended