

OREGON HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY HISTORY PROGRAM

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW

WITH

Grace Kingsley Williams

Interview conducted October 22, 1998

by

Barbara Conway Gaines

SUMMARY

In this interview, Grace Williams, niece and namesake of Grace Phelps, R.N., reminisces about her aunt, sharing anecdotes about her life and family history.

The interview began over dinner, and notes taken by interviewer Barbara Gaines, R.N., Ed.D., during that conversation precede the transcription of the audio recording. Ms. Williams, a lawyer and former district attorney in Grant County, OR, relates some of the history of the Phelps family and the connections between her parents and her aunt Grace. She shares her memories of her aunt's professional, civic, and social activities. She reminisces about the two world wars and the Great Depression, and tells anecdotes about herself, her aunt, and other members of the Phelps family. Throughout, she indicates that she will endeavor to gather more historical materials concerning her aunt for inclusion in an archive.

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Interview with Grace Kingsley Williams
Interviewed by Barbara Conway Gaines
October 22, 1998
Site: Sweetbrier Inn & Suites, Tualatin, OR

[Interviewer's note: Grace Kingsley Williams, niece and namesake of Miss Grace Phelps, was later arriving in Portland than anticipated and had not had dinner. Therefore, the first half of the interview was done only with notes taken by hand. The second half was taped.]

Grace Williams related the following information over dinner.

Indiana

Grace Phelps was one of ten children: five girls and five boys. She was the fifth child and as an older sister to Grace Williams' mother often took care of her. In fact, Grace Phelps took care of (nursed) Grace Williams' father during an illness and introduced Grace Williams' parents to each other. Grace Williams' family moved west to help him get over tuberculosis, first to Wyoming, then to Oregon. Grace Phelps came to Oregon to be with them.

Before Grace Phelps left Indiana she considered marrying. However, the man in question used alcohol, which she was against. The Phelps family was Quaker. Grace Williams recounts they were known as "quiet Quakers." Her mother and one sister like to dance and were known as the "dancing Quakers." The family did not find a Quaker church to their liking in Portland; Grace Williams remembers going to Westminster Presbyterian with Mrs. Chamberlain when she was a child in Portland.

Oregon

This is about Grace Williams herself and her relationship with her aunt Grace Phelps.

Grace Williams was born in Portland in January 1917. Her family moved to Eugene where her father attended law school. They returned to Portland where he practiced law. Grace Williams attended Beaumont Grade School and Grant High School. She graduated from Grant at mid-year and took a business course (typing/shorthand) in the spring. She had not given much thought to a career and when she entered University of Oregon in 1935, she declared pre-law as a major. Wayne Morse was Dean of the law school at this time. Grace Williams went to law school with Wendell Wyatt who she found to be very smart and very nice. After three years of pre-law and part of law school, she transferred to Northwestern School of Law and finished in the night school program.

Grace Williams met her first husband, Dave Rementeria, while she was at the University of Oregon Law School. He was a Basque from eastern Oregon and it is because of

this that she ended up in Canyon City which is her long-time home. Grace Williams' husband was a pilot/bombardier who entered World War II in 1942 as a pilot. They were unable to be married until he obtained his wings. He flew seventeen missions over Germany and was shot down and killed in 1944. They were only married ten months. He is buried in Cambridge, England.

Grace Williams went to John Day to take her husband Dave's place, when he went overseas, in the law office of Roy Kilpatrick (1943). Roy left John Day in August 1944 to try military cases in San Francisco. Grace Williams was left alone to run the practice, which she did successfully.

She returned to Portland for a while, and at her father's urging, traveled to Indiana, Boston, and Niagara Falls with her Aunt Grace Phelps, visiting their relatives and friends. In 1947, Grace Williams married Bill Williams, a cattle rancher in the Canyon City area. They had three sons: the oldest, an aeronautical engineer, is with Boeing in Seattle; the second is a consultant in land mergers in eastern Oregon; the third is the extension agent for Wallowa County (in Enterprise).

Grace Williams remains very active in state and county affairs and continues to practice law although she is trying to slow down in this arena. She was awarded the social service award from the Oregon Bar Association this year (1998) for her exemplary community service throughout her career.

Grace Williams recalled that she had a picture of herself and some friends all dressed up and serving the guests at the Doernbecher Spring Tea one year. She will send that picture to Barbara Gaines along with a typescript of a narrative her father wrote when Grace Phelps was honored by the Red Cross for her long service to the organization.

Grace Williams remembers playing, as a small child, at Doernbecher, both on the lawn and in her aunt's apartment at the hospital. (Grace Phelps made her home with the Williams family, but lived in Doernbecher during her tenure as Superintendent.)

We adjourned to Grace Williams' room at the Sweetbrier Motel to continue the interview on tape.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 1]

GAINES: This is Barbara Gaines, and I'm at the Sweetbrier Motel on I-5 in Portland, and I'm interviewing Grace Kingsley Williams, niece of Grace Phelps. Mrs. Williams is from Canyon City, Oregon, and is over here for a meeting and has agreed to be interviewed, so I think we'll start now.

As I remember, Grace, when we talked about it, your Aunt Grace was born in Hamilton City, Indiana, in 1871.

WILLIAMS: I'm not sure whether it's Hamilton City or Hamilton County, but—

GAINES: Oh, Hamilton County, maybe.

WILLIAMS: I think it's Hamilton County.

GAINES: Okay. And she died in June 1952 at the VA Hospital.

WILLIAMS: That's probably right. I had brought her back from Indiana. She had gotten sick back there; I brought her home. She did die at the hospital here.

GAINES: You were visiting or...?

WILLIAMS: No, she was back there with some of her family, and she had a stroke. And she was in the Veterans Hospital in Indianapolis, and my father asked me to go back. And so I went back there, and they were planning to put her in some kind of a residential place that she would be taken care of, and there was no point in that. This was her home. So I brought her home. I had a very nice nurse who came with me [laughs], and that was very fine.

GAINES: Good. We're glad to hear that, at least.

Now, as you told me, Grace came out to Portland in the early teens to be with your family.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

GAINES: And this was before you were born, of course, but do you know if she had a job when she came?

WILLIAMS: I may be—I will look, when I have the opportunity, and see if I have some historical things that tell about that, and I think I may have some letters or something like that. My father wrote a number of things, and I believe he wrote—now that I remember it, I believe I have a history that he wrote up of Aunt Grace. He was a writer, in any event, and if I can get that, I will do it. But I think she got a job after she came back out here. She became a nurse by going to school in Ohio, I believe, and then, later, I can remember that she went to California and took some training in administrative work.

GAINES: Yes, with a woman named—I can't remember her name, but I know that also.

WILLIAMS: Yes. I remember when she did that.

GAINES: My sense was that she would have been here fairly early, because she was quite instrumental in the passage of the Nurse Practice Act.

WILLIAMS: Yes, she was.

GAINES: And that was 1912.

WILLIAMS: Well, then, she did—they came, yes. And I could check those years, because she participated and helped my parents, who filed on a timber homestead in Lincoln County before my brother was born, so—and he was born—he was almost six years older than I, so, you see.

GAINES: So he was born in 1911.

WILLIAMS: Eleven, um-hmm. And if he was born in '11, it was prior to that time, you see. So they were here, and she actually filed on one of those timber homesteads, but my folks and her brother helped prove up on it.

GAINES: Well, then, I think probably my information is correct, that she was here at an earlier time.

WILLIAMS: I'm sure she was.

GAINES: And you told me earlier she was the fifth child in a family of ten, and she was several years older than your mother, who was the second youngest child in the family.

WILLIAMS: Well, no, she was the second from the youngest. There was just one girl younger than she, and all the others were older.

GAINES: And you also told me, I believe, that Grace knew your father before your mother, perhaps, is that right?

WILLIAMS: I didn't get a chance to finish that. I will have to tell you that he had a serious disease, illness, which the doctor felt he couldn't do anymore to help him, and my aunt—I don't know whether she was hired or—but that's where she met my father. And my mother—because she became his nurse. And in those days you went twenty-four hours a day.

GAINES: Yes, private duty.

WILLIAMS: Private duty, and went to the home and took care of him. And he lived, and she brought him out of it. And then she used—and then, of course, he met my mother through her, and she used to laughingly say, “Well, look what he did. He married my sister” [laughter].

GAINES: She had a good sense of humor.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. She thought, “Well, look what he did to me!” [laughter].

GAINES: Did she ever consider marrying?

WILLIAMS: Yes. She considered marrying once back, in—I don't know how far

back, back in Indiana. And I can tell you that she was very definitely against alcohol and the use of alcohol, and she wouldn't marry the young man she considered marrying because he drank alcohol. That's all that anybody ever told me. That's the only time.

GAINES: Well, of course, she grew up in the age of the temperance movement, didn't she?

WILLIAMS: Very definitely.

GAINES: So that makes a big difference, certainly.

WILLIAMS: And the family were Quakers in Indiana. The Quiet Quakers, the kind who—I think I read something about it recently, in which they went to church and sat quietly until someone was moved to speak, and they would get up and speak. But they were not—they didn't come on loudly or do anything like that. It was a very quiet—and the clothes they wore were all quiet colors, grays and lavenders. It was interesting. But she wasn't one of the group, but my mother and her younger sister happened to enjoy life quite a bit, and they got to be known as the dancing Quakers [laughs]. That was their—my grandmother was a very fine lady, the mother of all these children. She was a sweet little Quaker lady.

GAINES: That's great. You know, I'm going to put this on *stop* and just replay it for a minute.

[Tape stopped.]

Now we know for sure we're recording, and that's the important thing.

So when you were born, then, in 1917, your aunt was at the Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital.

WILLIAMS: I don't know.

GAINES: No, she was still at the school, I think.

WILLIAMS: Let's see.

GAINES: Yeah, I think she was, I think she was still at the School of Nursing and that she left there to go to the Red Cross.

WILLIAMS: To the war. She was Chief Nurse of Base Hospital 46.

GAINES: We have the wonderful memorabilia you've lent us from that period to look at, which we're really enjoying. Do you have recollections of stories that you were told as a child, about when she came home, or her experiences?

WILLIAMS: I do know that she did not—she saved everything, including the little

pieces of paper that described what they took overseas, and who got this, and all the things, and it was interesting, because she brought it home, and I have it. I have more, which I will dig up and bring to you later, and she has many pictures of France, of the troops, the people over there, the soldiers, the hospitals, and so forth. But she told lots of stories. She had a good many friends, because, of course, she—and I have—I didn't give you the book, did I, that had the list of all the ladies that were in that, the nurses?

GAINES: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I did; I left that with you. And she had a connection and got together with those people, a number of them, frequently through the years, which was very interesting, so she—but she told of some stories of traveling. They only got away once to go on a trip, and she and another nurse, I believe, went down into southern France and up into Spain, I think, that direction. I may think of more, and if I do, I'll write them down and let you know.

GAINES: Wonderful.

WILLIAMS: I can't think right now of any—she told lots of interesting stories. Oh, one story, one thing that—I don't know whether it's in the things that you have or not, but one of our very well known movie actors was their bugler. He joined their group overseas to be—because he was a bugler for Base Hospital 46; and he wrote poems. And if I didn't give you that, I have his poems. You don't have that, I don't think.

GAINES: I think I have one of them.

WILLIAMS: You may have one of those. He was a very interesting person, so they enjoyed him in that group. I might have some in my mind. If I do, I'll write them down.

GAINES: Okay, great. So there were lots of stories told to you as a child.

WILLIAMS: Of course, through the years, because she made her home with us always.

GAINES: And so what are your earliest recollections? Was she Superintendent at Doernbecher, or was she working at the Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital?

WILLIAMS: No, Eye, Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital. I have pictures of myself sitting on the lawn when I was about six years old, and so forth. In fact, one thing that she did was, about the time I was six years old—she always came to the house for everything, our home over in Northeast Portland—and I came downstairs on Easter morning, and there was a bowl on the table with two little baby ducks swimming that she brought to me, and they were named Waddles and Toddles. Toddles didn't survive long, but Waddles survived long enough that he—I had a little trouble when I walked to school because I had to bring him home. Waddles would follow me up the street [laughter]. Anyway, she always did things like that. She was very—

GAINES: Very generous.

WILLIAMS: Interested. Well, and then I never had a dog, so she used to—of course, she had a lot to do with the setting up of the Veterans Hospital in Portland, that she later died in, but she had a lot to do with that, so she was in contact continually with them. And whoever the gentleman was that was running the Veterans at that time had a dog. She was a stray that she had picked up. But he had a pup—they had a pup, and she brought that pup home to me from the hospital. But the mother of my dog would go up to the door of the office of the man who was running the Veterans, and she would get up on her hind feet and walk in up to his desk, and then he would give her something to eat, and she would walk out again. She was a very smart dog. And I enjoyed—the only dog I ever had, my pet. So she's the one that was part of my life that way.

GAINES: That's great.

WILLIAMS: But actually, when I was six, you see, she was at the Eye, Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital, and it was—of course, as you know, it was a beautiful big house out in Northwest Portland, and my father and I went there and had our tonsils out when I was five. Both of us. I had my tonsils out there. The eye, ear, nose, and throat specialists were the doctors. It was a very fine place.

And when they closed that up, then she went from there, very shortly, to the Doernbecher Hospital, except that she and her friend started the medical-dental surgeries in the—when they built the Medical-Dental Building, we put it in there. My mother ended up running it, but my aunt was one of the—there was only one other such thing, and it was in the Medical Arts Building, a similar type, at that time.

GAINES: They were way ahead of their time, weren't they?

WILLIAMS: Way ahead of their time for those things. But actually, my memory was that all—what would you call them, with good reputation, doctors had the opportunity to make—they could set up a time, an appointment, and do minor surgery. They had two surgeries and seven beds, five rooms, and a little kitchen, and they were open twenty-four hours.

And I stood out in the hall one time and watched a brain surgeon who was doing some—just a diagnostic thing—he brought a little child in to do it at that time—and something went wrong and they had to—they sent up to the Hill and got an iron lung, brought it down, put the child in the iron lung, and did the surgery right there.

GAINES: Oh, my goodness.

WILLIAMS: [Laughing] I watched in the hall. It was very interesting.

GAINES: I guess.

WILLIAMS: Remember those big—those first iron lungs. They were huge.

GAINES: But despite all those kind of experiences, you decided on law rather than medicine or nursing?

WILLIAMS: [Laughing] Yes, despite all of those. I don't think I ever really leaned toward nursing, not that I wasn't around it a great deal.

GAINES: Nor medicine.

WILLIAMS: But when I went to Oregon, you know, you have to sign up and put down something that's a major, so I put down law. I can't remember why, but I did.

GAINES: And here you are.

WILLIAMS: And here I am.

GAINES: During the time of the Depression, do you remember much of that time? I have a note that Aunt Grace worked for the Commission on the Administration of Relief Funds.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I'm sure she did.

GAINES: Do you have any recollections of that?

WILLIAMS: No, I don't have. I didn't—at that age, through those years, I know that—I can remember a lot about the Depression, but—and she did work with—I remember her working—

GAINES: But she would have still been at Doernbecher.

WILLIAMS: —with the Red Cross a lot. What?

GAINES: I'm sorry. I was saying she still would have been at Doernbecher also.

WILLIAMS: She was at Doernbecher, yes, and I was up there a good deal. Actually, I can remember about the surgeries she started. In those years, you know, people didn't have money to pay for things, and they did lots of things for trading?

GAINES: Um-hmm.

WILLIAMS: [Laughs] Well, I know my father used to trade legal services for other things. Like, when I graduated from high school, I got a wristwatch from somebody who worked in a jewelry store [laughs]. And, you know, there was very little insurance at that time, in the thirties, and people just couldn't pay. And we had a lot of things like that.

In my summers, when I was in college, I can remember going out and trying to collect bills, hospital bills [laughs]. It didn't always work but, you know, it was really an interesting period, because people just didn't have the money. And actually, we felt successful because we could always pay the nurses. Now, we didn't maybe pay the pharmacy and we maybe didn't pay for washing all the clothes that we had to, and it was a Catholic outfit that did the laundry for our surgeries. I've forgotten what it was called. We sometimes had to pile up all those things.

And during the early years of the '30s, many doctors and our surgeries, our hospital, could not pay our rent in the Medical-Dental Building; and when finally the Depression was over, I can remember my father saying, "Well, the building just forgave everything and started over." That's what they did—it was interesting—for doctors, dentists, and our surgeries, because there was no way to catch up that last—but those were the things that happened in those days.

My aunt did have a lot to do. She worked with all the nursing. And I'll tell you that my father and my aunt had such a good relationship through the years. He handled all of the business for her, but also, when it came to things that had to do with nursing and hospitals, he did a lot of legal work, helping her with research in all those areas; and because he could write well, he ended up—actually, he wrote editorials for *The Oregonian* for a period of years, through the '30s, and helped them out at that time from his office—but actually, he could write, so I've seen—I have some of these things that I have that I've run on to that he actually wrote up for her and helped her with some of those things. But she did a lot of work with all the nursing associations and was very active.

GAINES: Yes. Well, the Red Cross seems to have been very important to her.

WILLIAMS: It was, extremely. Well, of course, Base Hospital 46 was put together by the University of Oregon—the hospital—and the Red Cross, together; they went together and did that. So actually it always was—I have pictures of various times when, you know, they'd take pictures of people doing things for—the Red Cross was active—well, still is, but I have pictures of my mother and father and my aunt working with them.

GAINES: I read a wonderful comment in one of the articles that you lent to us, and it was that Jane Doyle was to go and that they determined, from Washington, D.C., that she was too old, and then that, ironically, Miss Phelps, who was appointed, was actually four years older than Miss Doyle. But she went anyway, and then Miss Doyle went later to another hospital.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'm sure she did. I knew all of those ladies that they mention that went with them.

GAINES: Well, I think I remember Peggy Ross telling me that the two of you used to play up at Doernbecher when you were little.

WILLIAMS: Yes, she went with me. She was just about a year younger than I, but we were close, and we played together and did lots of things. She had older brothers and sisters that we had to do with, too, but she really enjoyed that.

GAINES: Did you play in your aunt's apartment or out on the grounds?

WILLIAMS: Oh yes, or out on the lawn. Outside a lot.

GAINES: What about all the sick kids?

WILLIAMS: Not around the sick kids, I'm sure, no; but we were at her—she lived on the third floor, looking right out at the door, I can always remember.

Yes, she did. And she enjoyed going to nursing school up there, Peggy did. And then, you realize, that when she became a public health nurse, then she came over to Grant County and helped in our—

GAINES: Oh, Peggy did, huh?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Well, when she and her husband got out of the Navy—see, she was in the Navy in the Second World War, and so was her husband, Jim, and when they came home, they came over to Grant County and stayed a year in Grant County, but it happened to be the year I spent in Portland.

GAINES: Oh, of course, right [laughter].

WILLIAMS: Naturally. But she lived in the same apartment house where I had an apartment. I don't know whether it was the same apartment or not. She may have taken it over. But I know she had her first child over there. And she enjoyed it, and we had a good time having her there. It was nice.

GAINES: You know, your Aunt Grace was very instrumental in being sure that all the students in the state of Oregon had pediatric experience, and we have some wonderful letters back and forth between other hospitals saying, oh, you know, "We just really need help;" and she was always trying to find spaces for them. What do you think made her choose pediatrics? Do you have any idea?

WILLIAMS: Well, I don't know. It probably was a result of her working within the hospitals that she did through the years, because she had a lot to do with children. And probably just—she had always had that leaning anyway, I think. I don't know that anything—she just leaned that way.

GAINES: Probably taking care of those little brothers and sisters.

WILLIAMS: That was her start [laughter]. She took care of them when they were growing, and it was wonderful. She—well, just like with me, you know. She reached out all

the time to kids in the way that she—[laughing] those ducks that she gave me were one of the biggest memories that I have.

GAINES: That's great. She was just that kind of lady, huh?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

GAINES: Do you remember her having any adverse effects from her experience in World War I, or did it just make her stronger, do you think?

WILLIAMS: Just made her stronger. It was just good experience. I don't think she had any adverse effects at all. She wrote letters home that—I'm saying that I will hunt for the letter I say I have, or the thing that my father wrote, which is a history on her that I know I have someplace.

GAINES: Yes. He did that for the Red Cross, I think you noted, at some point when you nominated her for the notable women in Oregon history.

WILLIAMS: Yes, we did that. I have that, the papers on that.

GAINES: That would be very helpful and very interesting.

WILLIAMS: I'll get that. Yes, I did that, and came down when they presented the award.

GAINES: Yes. Sonia Buist did the presentation, I noticed.

WILLIAMS: I was there.

GAINES: Yeah. I saw your name.

WILLIAMS: Yes. I enjoyed that; that was interesting. And I appreciated that; it was nice to have her recognized, because, as far as I am concerned, she spent her whole life directed in that direction, of the things that she did. And it was well worth the experience for me. It was wonderful to spend a lot of time with her. I got probably more chance at wandering around in the Doernbecher than a lot of people might have because I was there with her.

GAINES: You two traveled, you said to me?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. Well, before Larry and I were married is when Aunt Grace and I actually—we went to Chicago, and I can remember at that time spent—with some friend of hers there I got a chance to visit. I can't remember now who it was, but she had people that she knew all over the country.

GAINES: This was just after she retired from Doernbecher as the Superintendent,

probably.

WILLIAMS: No. She was still there, she was just—because we were married in '47, and she didn't retire—I'm pretty sure. When did she retire?

GAINES: Well, the notes say she retired in 1942, but then she stayed on to do public relations for them.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, she did. But she was coming and going more then. I couldn't remember when she retired.

GAINES: It says 1942.

WILLIAMS: Forty-two. She was there from the time they opened until '42.

GAINES: Yes. So you went to Chicago.

WILLIAMS: Went to Chicago and visited, and then she—of course, she frequently went back to Indiana, because the older sister who lived—the oldest sister died as a teenager from one of those things that people died of in those days, diseases that I forget about, but Etta lived there and was one of—she and her husband had a chicken ranch back there, a chicken farm; they had a chicken farm in those days, they were farms.

It might be interesting to you that within the last couple of weeks, or within the last month, I finally ran down her great-grandson, who is my age—maybe it's her grandson.

GAINES: Marietta's?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, Marietta's. Macy is their name, in Indiana—and sent him a book I'd found, which is an annual of his grandfather's 1910 graduation from high school. And those are interesting, the way they did it in those days. It was very beautifully done. So I had run on to that, and I thought he'd like—and he's still there, he and his wife, and I was able to talk to him.

Interestingly, you know, you can—if you know what town somebody's in, you can call maybe and get a phone number.

GAINES: Yes.

WILLIAMS: And I did that, which I had lost, because I hadn't had it for quite a while. I asked him if they traveled, and he said no [laughter]. The only times I've seen him is when I went back there a couple of times.

GAINES: I'm from the Midwest, and they're kind of stick-in-the-muds [laughter].

WILLIAMS: [Laughing] Yeah, that's right.

GAINES: It seems also that—and perhaps this was through your father or your mother, but your Aunt Grace seemed quite well connected with women in the city of Portland.

WILLIAMS: Oh, yes. What are the women's organizations?

GAINES: Wasn't it the Portland Women's Federation, I think, that—

WILLIAMS: Well, the Women's Federation, and then there's a—what's—

GAINES: Soroptimists?

WILLIAMS: She was head of the Soroptimists at times, she was a Soroptimist, and, yes, she was very active in the organizations, very much. Enjoyed it. She enjoyed giving her time and her energy and enjoyed getting people involved with that. You say it was George Chamberlain that gave you that picture?

GAINES: Um-hmm.

WILLIAMS: Yes. Through Dr. Chamberlain and the doctors that he worked with she had a lot of connections with a lot of those people in the medical profession, too. I was—you think about—my connection, having her, kept—we were always in touch so that if something was wrong, you had it taken care of, you know. Like when I was five years old, they finally decided I should—I was having asthma and lots of hay fever in Eugene, and so she takes me up here to a specialist in—oh, what is it? I was allergic. In allergies, and so forth.

GAINES: Um-hmm, an allergist.

WILLIAMS: And they gave me tests, and I took—every spring till I was married, and that was after I went through law school, I took shots for my hay fever [laughs]. So you had connections with that.

And I just had to laugh, because I was talking with our circuit judge, who is a young man from Burns, whose father is a lawyer that I've known there for years, and he and I were talking in the law library, and we both found out that we had the same kinds of allergies. He was—this has been a bad year, in our part of the country I know it has—with lots of drainage and lots of allergies, and so he was having the same things. But he didn't ever get those [laughs]. I guess he had some, but not like I did. I had the advantage of having my aunt, and so it's—she was very interested in children.

GAINES: Was she active in a church in Portland?

WILLIAMS: No, because when they came to Portland, came out from Indiana, they had been in the Quaker church back there, and my mother never found a Quaker church that she felt fit her feelings, but that didn't stop her. We were active. I always went to the

Westminster Presbyterian in Portland because Dr. Chamberlain, George Chamberlain's mother is the one that got us started there, and she was a friend of my mother's. And my aunt, I think, as far as—just through my family she was only active in the—but no particular activities in any particular church.

GAINES: But many civic activities.

WILLIAMS: It was civic activities, mostly, that she was in.

GAINES: And were most of her friends, then, from the hospital or from the civic groups?

WILLIAMS: Yes. There were nurses, many nurses, who were good friends of hers.

GAINES: Well, she was very busy.

WILLIAMS: Very busy with those things. And that's—we enjoyed. But, as I say, I always—I felt bad later that I wasn't interested in being a nurse [laughs], because I enjoyed what she did so much, but—it's strange, it just never was my choice.

GAINES: It seems to me your contribution's been just as big.

WILLIAMS: Well, I just received an award from the Oregon State Bar. They give awards every year for social services, and I went to Eugene and got an award from the Bar. Social services.

GAINES: Well, congratulations.

WILLIAMS: Good. [Laughing] And I said that's probably because you spend a lot of time *pro bono*, without charging for anything. That's part of it.

GAINES: I'm sure that's true.

WILLIAMS: Well, I work with those areas, all right.

GAINES: Can you tell me a bit about your aunt's experiences with the—a bit more with her experiences with the Red Cross? She was involved with them for quite a long time.

WILLIAMS: She always was, yes. Well, you know, I will tell you that since...

[End Tape 1, Side 1/Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

GAINES: Now we're on again.

WILLIAMS: Well, since I am aware of what you're—from this angle with her—I know that when I came down before and brought the things, I was looking at them from

certain angles, but I can find more, I know, that would be interesting, perhaps, to you that—more details along those lines, because she was active. That was—she enjoyed it. She liked people, and she worked with people. My mother got into things that way with her because of that, and my father was able to help a lot, too.

But, you know—I don't know whether I ever told you that my father—it's nice to know when a son-in-law has a feeling about someone like he did about my grandmother, because she spent her last—well, she spent her last years living with us in Eugene when I was a baby and growing up, and my father always said if I ever amounted to anything it was because my grandmother was there my first four years, before she died [laughs].

GAINES: Oh, that's wonderful. That's very nice. That's a really deep sense of family, isn't it?

WILLIAMS: That was a sense of family. Other members of Grace's and my mother's—one brother and one sister, [Berdore?] and Burt both spent quite a bit of time living with us in Portland, also. Well, when Aunt [Lennie?], who lived in San—the oldest one, just older than Etta—she came up after her husband died in California and spent her last years—well, not her last years. She was going to spend her years with us. She had a room at our house, and the war started, and do you know that—I don't know if you realize in Portland at that time people were afraid of what might happen. We might have attacks in the air or from people who were in the country who did things that were—so people began to worry about the safety of people even in Portland. We had—so my Aunt Lennie went back to—everybody decided she should go back to Indiana. It was safer there.

GAINES: And this was World War II?

WILLIAMS: World War II.

GAINES: That's when they thought we were going to get bombed and the submarines would come up the coast, and all.

WILLIAMS: And I was going to night school, law school at night, in Portland through those years, and I was very amused—we were all very amused one night because after the law school—after we finished our law school, a number of us walked up to—it used to be the old Multnomah Hotel, I think they called it. It was downtown in Portland. I think it was Multnomah. Whatever it was, there was a hotel on about Fourth Street or Fifth Street, down toward Burnside, okay, that nice big hotel that was there. And we were standing there watching, because that was the night they were going to—at a certain hour they were going to turn off all the lights downtown. And they did that, and they all turned off, except there was a jeweler there who had a clock out in front [laughs], and the light didn't get turned off. Here was this one light. But they were testing, see, because they were afraid. And in our neighborhoods we had people who went around, seeing that everybody turned their lights off at night and pulled their shades. It was interesting. They were afraid.

GAINES: We had a number graduates of the school tell me that they had to have all

these blackout curtains, you know, in the hospitals, and it was just crazy to try and work, you know, or to get back and forth.

WILLIAMS: It was very interesting. I have memories of those because I was in Portland, actually, from—I went up there in—well, I was there '40, '41, '42, '43, all through those years in Portland. We had good times. There were lots of funny things happened.

GAINES: Oh, I'm sure.

WILLIAMS: We didn't get bombed [laughs], although somebody did drop something out there in eastern Oregon. I can always remember there was—somebody had dropped some kind of bomb out in there in the woods. It didn't do any damage, but—and I read something recently about—someone brought that up.

GAINES: I think somebody recovered it or dug it up or something. Yes, I think I remember that also.

Do you remember your aunt talking about any issues about it being difficult to be a woman and be practicing in the professional fields at that time?

WILLIAMS: I'm sure they did discuss it quite a bit. It was brought up at different times. There was quite a bit of interest in giving credit for women for things. Yes, it was.

GAINES: Were either she or your mother active in suffrage?

WILLIAMS: Not particularly. I mean, they just—they never—you know, I've been somewhat the same way. [Laughing] It's never bothered me particularly. I was over there in eastern Oregon, and they were always talking about people getting picked on, you know, or harassed, and so forth. Well, I practiced law there in this little town in eastern Oregon, but I always felt like the men in my life and the men that I had to do with helped me. I never remember being—maybe I wasn't paying attention to it [laughs].

GAINES: Well, or maybe you were secure enough to—

WILLIAMS: I'll tell you, though—did I tell you? I may have told you the story in that relationship of the fact that I was practicing there in Canyon City. There are 630 people in Canyon City. Well, I had my office there, and one day I walked in—did I tell you this? I don't think I did.

GAINES: Uh-uh.

WILLIAMS: I was in my office, and my secretary—a great big logger walked in the front door, and he says, [shouting] “I want to see the lawyer.” And so my secretary said, “Well, she's coming through the door right now. She's coming in.” And he looked at me, and he just fell into a chair and says, “Now, I've seen everything” [laughter].

GAINES: That's a wonderful story. You were just too little for him, right?

WILLIAMS: I was too little for it, and I was a woman. But the funny thing was that he had a claim, and I took care of it, and we completed everything beautifully for him [laughs] and did the job, so I felt good about that.

GAINES: That's great. That's good.

WILLIAMS: [Laughing] "Now I've seen everything."

GAINES: Right.

WILLIAMS: No, I didn't run into that. Aunt Grace, she felt strongly, yes, and she stood up for the rights of women. She was good that way—without any particular conflicts, but she was there.

GAINES: There was a very nice group of women in Portland at that time who were very active.

WILLIAMS: Yes, there were. I felt that there were.

GAINES: They made their statements maybe fairly quietly in some ways, but they clearly were there and they were counted.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I thought so. As I say, she had her interests, and she pursued them all her life. I was very pleased that I could get her back here in her last—when she was here, because this was—she made this her home. My family, for some reason or other, didn't feel like they had to go back to Indiana for anything except to see their family [laughs]. But she was very good at that.

GAINES: What do you think she thought was probably her greatest accomplishment?

WILLIAMS: You know, I don't think she thought about her accomplishing things. I don't think she felt—I think she was pleased to be able to do the things that she did. I think she particularly—I think the Doernbecher Hospital was probably her—and the Nursing School. I think those two were her—she felt more strongly about. I can't—I know she worked at whatever she went into, but she thoroughly enjoyed that opportunity to do what she did with the Doernbecher. But that never stopped her from working with the School.

GAINES: No. And if you were to say what you thought was her greatest accomplishment, what would that be? Did your father have any thoughts that would be different?

WILLIAMS: I would have to look at his—I can look at what he said, and I would be agreeable with that, I know. And I will look that up, because I can almost see it right now, talking to you, his expression. And he was able to say things in a way that most of us can't.

[Laughing] That's why I—

GAINES: Eloquence is a wonderful thing, isn't it? Because she was nominated for this big award from the Red Cross.

WILLIAMS: Yes. And they felt—and it was very nice. I appreciated that very much. Portland is a—it's interesting. I think my father felt the same way, that it—and she did when she came here and lived here. It was a nice place, a wonderful place to work with people. Father never left. It was interesting. He got off a boat; never got to Seattle until he drove up there later to buy antiques or something like that [laughs]. But he felt that—and she did, too.

Oh, George Chamberlain could give you lots of stories on things.

GAINES: Oh, that's interesting. I should think about that, shouldn't I?

WILLIAMS: He might be able to, yeah, more—because he not only grew up with her and with his father—because his father was a wonderful person. Charles Chamberlain. He put my first glasses on me.

GAINES: Oh, really.

WILLIAMS: It was my sixth birthday, is when I put them on.

GAINES: Oh, my goodness.

WILLIAMS: Well, my mother—I was going to a music kindergarten down in Eugene, and my mother caught me sitting up at the piano going [demonstrates].

GAINES: Pointing your finger to read the notes?

WILLIAMS: Pinning down the notes. And she said, "Hey, we better check." So my eyes never come together.

GAINES: No focus.

WILLIAMS: No focus. But I have twenty-twenty vision now, or I did the last time I was in, but I've always had to wear glasses to do it. So my glasses, you see, are right here every morning, and I put them on as I get out of bed [laughs].

GAINES: You and my husband. He does the same thing. It's a very good habit to be in, I think, actually.

WILLIAMS: I had to do it.

GAINES: Let me think. Any other things you think I should think about in terms of your aunt?

WILLIAMS: Well, maybe more will come to me if I get to looking again, because I can look back. As I say, I thought I had that box where I could find it, but when I started out this morning looking for it, I thought, “Good night, is it in this room or is in that one or this one?” I wasn’t sure. But it’s there, and I work at those things. But I’ve been involved in too many things lately myself, to the point where I couldn’t find it.

GAINES: We all understand that. It’s important that we all stay active, though.

WILLIAMS: But my father’s writing concerning her I think will be of help.

GAINES: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I will try to get that.

GAINES: I would really appreciate that.

WILLIAMS: But I can’t think of anything else, other than when it comes to the hospital and nursing history in Portland, she’s a big part of it.

GAINES: Yes, she certainly is. I was pleased to find as much as I could so that we could nominate her for one of the endowed professorships.

WILLIAMS: I think that’s wonderful. She was—that was her life. And the fact that she could work through what she did to get to that place was wonderful, that she could actually get into it, so she was very fortunate, in my opinion.

GAINES: Well, she clearly worked hard. I mean, taking herself to San Francisco to get—you know, basically she got one of the first master’s degrees, I think.

WILLIAMS: I’m not sure.

GAINES: But, you know, to get that additional training.

WILLIAMS: To get that additional, um-hmm. And I was so young that, you know, I have vague memories of these things, but I—and she didn’t ever talk about them very much. You had to get it from some other place.

GAINES: Quite unassuming.

WILLIAMS: Unassuming. But she had lots of friends. That was what I enjoyed with her in Portland, with all the—in the different areas that she worked, but the nurses particularly.

I have a friend over there who is a retired nurse who was a neighbor of ours. You know, ranches’ neighbors, you aren’t right next to each other, but they were right on the road

that we go to town on out of our ranch. And her husband had gone to war. They were both in the Second World War, and he came from our country, and she—let's see. I can't remember whether she was in Washington or where, but she wasn't from there, but she met him—he was injured and he got a bad—something blew up and injured his foot during the war, and she nursed him.

I can always remember as—I was at home, and he had been going with a rancher's daughter there as his girlfriend. The only trouble was that Ella intervened [laughs] and ended up marrying him. Oh, and they actually—then he went to school. He was going to school down here after the war, and they lived at Vanport when it had its flood.

GAINES: Oh, did they?

WILLIAMS: Yes, it was interesting.

Then, they raised their kids right between us and the highway going to town, and she worked. She was a nurse and worked at the hospital and was always very active in our country then; and their kids were, like, just a step behind mine, so they would wear my kids' clothes after my kids [laughs]. And there were a couple of boys—well, they had a girl—let's see. A couple of girls, but they had at least one boy, maybe two.

But she was—as I say, I've enjoyed her, and she and I are both now on the Grant County Republican Central Committee [laughs]. We see each other. I saw her just the other day and had a visit. She recently—she's gone through having, well, a little tumor, brain, had surgery, gotten over it fine. She has grown back the most beautiful head of hair I ever saw. She had her hair cut off, see, for this surgery.

GAINES: Well, there ought to be some benefits for going through that.

WILLIAMS: Oh, boy, I'm telling you, she has beautiful hair [laughter].

GAINES: Oh, that's great.

Well, I would appreciate it if you would think about—if you find that. And I'll give you a card with my home address.

WILLIAMS: Yes, I'd like you to give that to me so I can—

GAINES: Yeah, I'll just give you one of my cards. And, then, if there's anything else you want to tell me, please don't hesitate to let me know.

WILLIAMS: I will let you know. I appreciate your coming and talking to me at this time, because it does give me a little bit more push to get this stuff, because now I see it would help; some of the things I have would help.

GAINES: Oh, absolutely.

WILLIAMS: I can remember now—but, you know, when I came down before, I was looking particularly at the Doernbecher and for some of the Red Cross overseas. But there's more, I'm sure.

GAINES: Well, your father's papers, and any of the pictures from World War I, any of those things. The paper I'd like to write would probably be around that period of time in her life, as opposed to her time at the school, because that's so much more significant to the nation in that sense.

WILLIAMS: To the nation. Those are interesting. I was looking the other day. I have a picture—did I give you a picture of the nurses marching in New York City on their way overseas?

GAINES: Yes.

WILLIAMS: I have another one or two pictures similar to that. I don't think they're the same thing, but I was looking at them the other day. They look so interesting, with their hats and their uniforms. They were so interesting. See, I was young enough through those years that it's a matter of hearing later and maybe seeing the pictures and so forth. She didn't talk about it a lot, although when things came up, why, sometimes she did.

I'll look at the book with the—I did leave that book, though, with you.

GAINES: Yes, you did, yes, and I will use that substantially.

WILLIAMS: And I think in there most of it tells maybe the ones that died. Did you notice that?

GAINES: I'm hoping so. I haven't had a chance to look at it yet.

WILLIAMS: I've got some information on—it might be some additional information on some of those, although probably most of the stuff is in there. But they were interesting people.

GAINES: Yes. Well, you know, she was supposed to recruit sixty nurses, and she recruited a hundred. They changed the order and asked to have more, and she got a hundred, and they took off. It's just amazing.

WILLIAMS: She didn't have any trouble. People were interesting that way in those years. But imagine going over there, and the things they had to do.

GAINES: She was clearly a leader, you know, and just had all those kind of skills. We just don't know how people get them, if they're born with them or if they learn them.

WILLIAMS: Isn't that interesting, yes. And the people are all so different, because I

look at even the members of her family and their different abilities, and so forth. But I'm sure my mother never—

GAINES: Was she really different than her brothers and sisters?

WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah, they're all different. But I am amused. My father was always so much support to my mother. My father's—you seldom run into the fact that there's a—his feelings. He adored my mother. He made a wonderful life for her, always, and you just can't say anything else. Now, he wasn't perfect, you know that, but Mother—none of us were, but she was awfully close to it.

But she was—my Aunt Grace, I can always remember, used to be kind of worried because Mother was kind of frail, fragile, and her younger sister, and she was always worrying about her for things like that. But my father was always getting my mother in a position where she had a chance to do more than just sit at home and raise kids and take care of a house. He wanted her to work in his office, and when it came to the point where somebody had to run the surgeries, she ended up doing it, which I'm sure she never thought something like that would happen. But she had the capability of doing it. She had the kind of ability to—she worked with people, with the doctors, with the people, everything. It was just—well, you could see that outside of her work, too. You could see it with her neighbors, you could see—she was the kind of a person that people came to her to get help, to get support, to get—just personally get help, always. And Father was there to see that she got all that she could get out of things.

And when she did end up with essential hypertension and there was no medicine to lower blood pressure, well, she—Father said, “You can't make a vegetable out of people,” so she had a life, and he saw that she had it always, including the fact he fed her breakfast in bed every day from the time he found out she was sick. How's that?

GAINES: That's special.

WILLIAMS: Now you see, a husband, who will give you breakfast in bed?

GAINES: I can think about it [laughter].

WILLIAMS: [Laughing] That's an example.

GAINES: That's great.

WILLIAMS: And my aunt appreciated him, too, because he was that way with her. So it was wonderful that they had that relationship, that he could help her when she needed it. But she was something you don't run into very often. That's why I know we appreciate that. And I appreciate the fact that people can see it. And I will find more about her [laughs].

GAINES: Okay. We'd appreciate that.

WILLIAMS: As soon as I go home and close the last estate, which is going to take me about—several weeks more. Then I have to have—and I am one of the co-chairmen of our local museum, and we have to have a dinner for the volunteers, because we're all—I do that every fall, too. But I have some people that help me, so we're going to have a dinner when I go home. When I get through that—[laughs].

GAINES: Okay. I can be patient.

WILLIAMS: Well, I didn't think—if it isn't—but I can move just as fast as I need to.

GAINES: Well, I would appreciate it if you can. I need to have an abstract in sooner rather than later.

WILLIAMS: I'll do it.

GAINES: I have to have it for next fall's meeting if I'm going to submit the paper.

WILLIAMS: When I go home I'll find out.

GAINES: Okay.

WILLIAMS: And I've enjoyed very much working with you on this. It's certainly nice.

Explain something a little bit more your position; what you did; what kind of work you did.

GAINES: At the School?

WILLIAMS: That you retired from.

GAINES: At the School?

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

GAINES: Well, I was on the faculty from 1965 until—well, almost for thirty years, basically; and I did a whole lot of things. I was in medical-surgical; I worked in the hospitals, I taught students there; I chaired Community Health; I was the Associate Dean, the Assistant Dean, you know, all those kind of things. And the last thing I did was be the Director of International Affairs last year.

WILLIAMS: So what did that require doing?

GAINES: Oh, it was a policy position primarily, but I went to Beijing for a week and did some work with the Communist party, and that kind of thing.

WILLIAMS: [Laughing] With the Communists?

GAINES: Yes. But anyway, that was very interesting, also. We don't need this on tape, though. I'll stop that.

[Tape stopped.]

You're going to tell me more.

WILLIAMS: Well, education was important to her, yes, that's fine. Most of us, you know, we go along with our lives, and we don't realize all the other areas that things are so interesting in [laughs] that you find out about. Just like you say, you asked me about my sons. They're all in different areas, to the point where it's fun for me to see—they've gone along—they're not as young as your daughter, they're older, but each one—my oldest son's wife, she's—well, the middle son's wife is a teacher, of course, special ed teacher. Very interesting. And, then, the youngest one had a knit and stitch shop in John Day, and she's—it took her till she got through college to realize what an artist she is, too, and she does all kinds of wonderful things and enjoys it so much, so it's fun to—you know, all the different areas that people are in.

GAINES: Well, it's very interesting to us, because your aunt was just very instrumental in trying to turn the diploma program at the hospital, that she was director of for a period of time, into a baccalaureate program; and if World War I hadn't come along, it would have happened much sooner, if she hadn't had to go to France, because she was really working with the University of Oregon to have that happen. You were just a baby.

WILLIAMS: I wasn't aware of it. My memories, then, had to come from what I found out later. But my memories, then—of course, from the time I was little, she was right there at the Doernbecher, you know, and I was up there a lot.

GAINES: Giving you ducks and puppies.

WILLIAMS: Ducks and puppies. I don't know whether she had to do with me getting—no. You remember Portland had some kind of a scourge of bugs? What were they? I can't think of it. But anyway, and people were encouraged to get banty chickens to eat the bugs. I forgot what they were. Little black things. And we did have a lot of them, and we got some banty chickens, and so I had them. And they had—the little hen sat on ten eggs and had eleven chickens the last time she did it. We took those up to Aunt Grace. I can always remember, we had them in the car. We were taking a bunch of these little chickens out some place, and they got loose in the car, and everybody at the Doernbecher Hospital had a good time looking at the chickens in our car [laughter].

GAINES: That's a wonderful story.

WILLIAMS: But I don't know, she—but out of the eleven there were seven roosters, so you know how they packed it.

GAINES: My goodness.

WILLIAMS: Lots of fun.

GAINES: I'm sure that's true.

WILLIAMS: Oh, good times.

GAINES: Well, I think I should probably let you go to bed.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I'm fine. Don't worry about it. I certainly appreciate your coming and doing this tonight.

GAINES: Well, I appreciate your taking the time to let us talk with you.

WILLIAMS: And I certainly appreciate what you people are doing about the history up there, because my aunt really—it was a good portion of her life in Oregon, here, actually.

But it seems wonderful to me that the Doernbecher continues to get better.

GAINES: Yes. Yes, it really is. I'm going to say thank you.

WILLIAMS: All right.

[End of interview]

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