

Interview with
WILLA NITA (BROOKS) DERRICK

September 4, 2019

**UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**UTAH TECH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ST. GEORGE, UTAH**

#2019-017

Utah Tech University provides access to its collections as an unaltered, authentic historical record to aid in the research and understanding of history, while acknowledging their impact on various peoples and groups. Some collection materials are reflective of past cultures and prejudices, including images or words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful. The University does not support, condone or endorse these harmful ideas, behaviors or attitudes, and they do not reflect the official opinion of the University. Rather, the University embraces a culture that prioritizes diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated in the University's Mission, Core Themes and Values.

Final editing was completed in 2019.
For permission to use any part of this transcript contact:

Special Collections and Archives
Utah Tech University Library
Holland Centennial Commons 330
Utah Tech University
St. George, UT 84770
(435) 634-2087.
specialcollections@utahtech.edu

INDEX

Animals household	12
Birthday party	11
Brooks, Antone "Tony" [brother]	13
Brooks, Bob [brother]	12
Brooks, Clair [brother]	12
Brooks, Ernie [brother]	5, 12
Brooks, Grant [brother]	8, 12
Brooks, Juanita (Leavitt Pulsipher) [mother]	5, 21, 25
Brooks, Karl [brother]	13, 14, 15, 23, 25
Brooks, Kay [brother]	13, 15, 23
Brooks, William "Will" [father]	5
Derrick, Thales A. "Tad" [husband]	16, 20, 22, 25
Derrick, Willa Nita (Brooks)	5, 16, 23
Dixie College	13, 19, 26
Fighter pilot	20, 22, 24
IRS [Internal Revenue Service]	9
Korea	8, 24
Lakenheath Airbase, England	23
Lyman, Smokey	6
MIA [Mutual Improvement Association]	10, 20
Military	6, 12
Moody, Dana Lee (Derrick) [daughter]	5, 20, 22
Nellis Air Force Base, NV	20
Pep Club	26
Postmaster	8, 25
Relief society	10, 15
Research	9
Root beer [homemade]	7, 18
Sheriff	6, 9, 25, 26
Student body officer candidates	19
St. George Tabernacle	11
Typewriter	6, 14

Woodward School

18, 19, 20

WILLA NITA (BROOKS) DERRICK

Willa Nita (Brooks) Derrick was interviewed by Kathleen Broeder on September 4, 2019 in St. George, Washington County, Utah in the Holland Centennial Commons Building at Dixie State University Campus. She related her experiences growing up in St. George with her family, as the daughter of Juanita Brooks, and her mothers work writing as a historical author. Thales A. Derrick, her husband, Dana Lee (Derrick) Moody, her daughter, also participated. Tracey O'Kelly assisted.

KB: Please introduce yourselves.

WD: I am the only daughter in the Brooks family, my name is Willa Nita Brooks Derrick.

DM: I am Willa's only daughter, Dana Lee (Derrick) Moody.

KB: Tell me when and where you were born?

WD: I was born in St. George, Utah on February 9, 1934.

KB: Tell me a little bit about your parents.

WD: I had a very interesting set of parents and family, as a matter of fact. My father was William Brooks who was the sheriff in St. George and sometime the post master as well. He was a widower with five sons, four sons living when he met my mother. My mother is Juanita Leavitt Brooks, well she had a Pulsipher in there too, Juanita Leavitt Pulsipher Brooks. She was a widow with one son. Older brother named Ernie Pulsipher after his father. So when mother and dad got married, they had a ready family of five sons, four sons living. That was an interesting way for them to begin and they immediately started having children even though they were older. There were three brothers that came rapidly after me. Finally, the four older brothers went into their bed one night and said this is enough, people in town are talking because you're having so many children at such an old age. It must have worked because there was not any more after that

DM: I need some clarification. How many boys did Nelly and William Brooks have?

WD: They had six boys but two of them passed away before my mom and dad got married, so there were four of my dad's sons and one of my mother's sons.

DM: So together they had five living sons.

WD: So together they had five living sons and they were teenagers.

- KB: So she had some teenagers and she started having new babies. Did that create any odd dynamics in your family having that big age gap?
- WB: It was helpful, it was helpful. The story is that I was idolized and that those older brothers just worshiped me and spent their whole time trying to keep me happy. And one story is that mother left and left them in charge of taking care of me and when she got home, they had a rope tied around my waist and they were lowering me out of the upstairs window to the ground and I was the bounty of the thieves and they were rushing me away where I could be saved and she almost had a heart attack on the spot.
- KB: I could imagine. So tell me some of your early childhood memories of your mother.
- WB: You know it is very interesting, as I have been reading this new book, all of the stuff that she was doing when we were just young children, we didn't think of her as anything except mother. Fortunately, she did not need a lot of sleep, she would put the children to bed and then we would hear the typewriter going for a long, long time. It is interesting to me also to think, this was before computers and she only had this old clacky typewriter and fortunately, she was very brilliant of course but every piece that she put in the typewriter, she put in a carbon. So she had a big, big, lots of carbons. When she died, the historical society would not allow the children, any of us in her house until they got what they wanted and they went in and took everything and that's one thing that this book has come from is the carbons of her letters that they took and held in the Historical Society.
- DM: Tell them a little about when you were young and if people came through town and needed food or like Smokey Lyman and things like that.
- WB: My father was the sheriff when mother and dad were married and she was very, very welcoming. He would bring the prisoners to our house to feed em. There were a couple of little children, I remember one time, that had gotten away from their parents or something and I can remember mother giving them a bath and cleaning em up and feeding em before they took them back to jail. Both of my parents were very, very compassionate. They were very loving, they were very kind. We were little children and I don't remember so much about that except sometimes there were extra people at the dinner table. That was an interesting thing especially when Dad was the sheriff.
- DM: Wasn't there a time when they were in bed asleep and Smokey Lyman let himself into the house?
- WB: Oh yeah. [Laughter] Smokey Lyman was the town drunk. He was an Indian and he had been in the military and if Indians are introduced to alcohol it is very difficult for them to overcome it. Of course in those days, nobody in St. George locked their doors. They were all unlocked. My dad and mom's bedroom was,

you went into the living room and then off was their bedroom, very close. One night they were in bed and they looked up and Smokey Lyman was standing in their bedroom. He said "Brooks, Smoke need money". Dad said "I'm sorry, I don't have any money", and he said "Brooks always got money", so Dad got up and in his underwear ushered him out the door and told him to go on home and he'd talk to him tomorrow [laughter]. But that's the way it was in St. George, nobody locked their doors. That was of course a long time ago.

KB: Yes I can see that. With your mom, how was she as a mother to you and your younger brothers?

WD: I thought she was a very good mother. We didn't know anything about her writing, what she was doing. She expected all of us to help and I can remember specifically we had a very long kitchen with a linoleum floor and it was our job to mop the floor and then we put wax on it. Then the children put on stockings and skated on the floor to polish it. It was part of our job but she made it fun. She was so good. I was reading recently, you know we used to make our own homemade root beer and talk about a messy job. Oh my goodness, I don't know how she ever, ever put up with that. [Laughter] We had to bottle it, put it down in the basement to let it cure for two or three days and then we would put it in the refrigerator and then open it for the 4th of July or the 24th of July. That was a real big treat but it was a mess. I would not let my children make root beer anymore [laughter].

DM: Was she a strict mother or lenient?

WD: Probably a little of both. With some things she was very strict about. Coming home at night, I particularly remember one night when I was later than I was supposed to get home, and I had been with a group of kids. We lived at the top of Main Street and they had this old car and it wouldn't make it up the hill frontwards so they turned around and we were going up the hill backwards. All of us were laughing and hooting and hollering, I don't know, it must have been one o'clock in the morning or something. When I got home, mother was waiting at the door. She said "the worse thing I could hope for you, is that you have a daughter just like you" [laughter].

DM: Careful what you wish for.

WD: I only have one daughter and she was not like me [laughter]! And always when we left the house she would say, "remember who you are and act the part". It was even on our windowsill. There was a thing that said "remember who you are". They were very proud of their Brooks heritage and of their Leavitt heritage and they didn't want us to do anything that would damage that.

DM: In what ways was she lenient? Didn't she have a phrase about good wholesome neglect or something like that?

WD: No, I am just trying to think, I don't remember that she was very lenient [laughter]. I am sure she probably was but she expected us to behave in a certain way and we mostly did, we mostly did. I guess she was lenient with my bothers. You know we lived at the top of Main Street, and they would go all day, every day on the red hill. They were like free range chickens. [Laughter] In the summer time, my brothers would become as brown as berries, cause they never wore shirts. There was the Cox's pond and the Brooks' pond and they would swim and they'd climb the red hill and they would bring home Gila monsters and all kinds of things that they would get on the hill. They had to be home by sundown, they were pretty free range. I was not so much, I was more homebody. Of course, there were three of them and there was just one of me.

KB: So did you think that you were more of a homebody just because of your personality or because of the fact that you are a girl?

WD: Probably a little both. Probably because I was a girl and there were no girls in our neighborhood and they had all kinds of boys. They always felt like at Christmas I got lots and lots because they had to share. They had to share a football, or they had to share a They always thought I got lots more for Christmas because I was the only one, the only girl.

KB: What were Christmases like for you?

WD: They were very, very good. We always had a real Christmas tree and we always threw icicles, you remember the icicles that hung down. Oh what a mess [laughter]. Of course, we had older brothers in town. Walt Brooks and his family and Grant and Erne. And anyway they always came for Christmas Eve. We had Christmas Eve, the traditional Christmas Eve program. Especially Walt's family, he was my dad's oldest son, and they were especially good to my parents and to us younger children. In fact, my husband was an air force officer and we lived all over the place. When we lived in New Mexico, he had an assignment to go to Korea when the Korean's took one of our boats or something, so I had to move all by myself from Clovis, New Mexico, sell the house, sell his sports car, and move to St. George. When I got here, my oldest brother, Walt and his boys, took over my little boys. They were so good to him. They took them to the football games and to the rodeo and all the things I couldn't do. One night they came home and they were just stuffed and I said what have you been doing? Well we had three or four hotdogs. Well how did you do that? He said, Uncle Walt said if we gathered up the pop bottles and took em and turned em in they would give us free food [laughter]. so they had spent the whole rodeo or football game or whatever it was, gathering up bottles and taking em in and they had stuffed themselves on hotdogs. Thought that was a great thing.

KB: Tell me a little bit more about your dad being a sheriff? What was that like for you as a kid?

WD: Well he was not a sheriff when I was young. He was the sheriff when my mom and dad got married and he was for a part time. But then he was the postmaster at the post office. And I thought Santa Clause lived at the post office because everything came from the post office. He was the postmaster for years. I would stop at the post office on my way home from school most everyday he'd give me a nickel to buy a treat on my way home, because we had to walk up the hill so. He was the sheriff in the early days of my mother and dad's marriage.

DM: Tell them a little bit about their marriage dynamics.

WD: Well I'm not exactly how to.... They had a very good marriage. My dad supported my mother in everything, everything, in fact she would have been unable to any of the things she did without my dad. When she was doing research, we thought we were going on vacations. We would go somewhere and dad would take us, like at a big courthouse where they had a big lawn and we would run and play in the lawn while Mother was inside doing research. So he took care of us. When we went to the Huntington Library in California, when she was working with them, we stopped on the way down, there were no motels at least not many in those days so we slept out on the road. Our car did not go very fast and then ...

DM: Would you sleep out on the side of the road?

WD: Uh huh, yeah, we did. When we got to California, dad took care of entertaining us while mother went in to do her research and her study. He took us a lot of....we went to the ocean several days, 'course, we were just young and that was our first experience down there. My mother could not have done anything that she did without my dad. He was a catalyst for her [emotional]. Her work was important to him, and so he made it happen. I think he often doesn't get enough, I don't know what the right word is, enough knowing that he was the one that really did facilitate her. He was a good dad, too. It was interesting because he was so much older.

DM: How much older?

WD: Well he and mother were, what twenty some years apart. I would have to go back and look. When we were young teenagers the IRS came to investigate our family because they were claiming four little deductions and mother said a man in his 70s and a woman in her 50s could have four teenagers [laughter]. They did, they came to investigate us because they thought that they were trying to cheat the government I guess.

KB: But you were all theirs, huh.

DM: I remember, I don't know if you remember, her saying something like a woman's life doesn't even start until she hits forty.

WD: Yeah, that probably was true. Do you remember mother very much?

DM: A bit.

WD: She has been gone a long, long time. They were very good to us when my husband was gone, and we moved to St. George, they were very, very good to us. We had family home evenings in their home. We were there one year at Christmas time and the children were welcome to come. She was just a baby in those days, she was our baby sweetie. We had three boys, then her and then one more boy. [inaudible]

KB: So that kind of brings up the question, you said you observed family home evening with your mother when you came back. How did your mother observe religion and your dad especially in your home when you were a child?

WD: We always had family prayer. My father would kneel at the kitchen table until everyone got there. We were not to leave until we had family prayer together and that was a very, very important thing in our family. We were taught the gospel. I have to say that in those days we did not do scripture study together. Mother taught gospel doctrine at church for years. She was the stake Relief Society president when we were very young. Everyone always went to church. Sometimes I remember that, that's when they had the divided meetings, mother would send us to Sunday school and she would stay home and in fact I am coming across a lot of letters that she wrote during that time. And then we'd all come home to eat and then we would all go back for sacrament meeting. It was a whole day thing then for Sunday. We spent all day going to church. Then we had MIA on the separate day and relief society on the separate day, and primary on the separate day, so the whole week was taken up going to church.

KB: So what was MIA like for you when you were a girl? The Mutual Improvement Association.

WD: I would think it was very much like it is now. I have a picture that was taken when I wore something for Gleaner Night you know we all looked like weird little girls.

DM: Awkward age!

WD: Hair styles were weird and clothing was different. I had wonderful, wonderful teachers in Young Women. Ann Peterson is one that I remember. She was a remarkable, beautiful lady that inspired all of us young girls to be more feminine and to be better. [inaudible]

DM: What type of activities would you have? What types of things would you do on your weekly meetings? Where they lessons or activities?

WD: I think they were both. We had a lot of lessons. I can't remember any real specific activities. Of course, they had a Gold and Green Ball which was for both young men and young women. It was very different than the kids are now [inaudible], I really can't remember very much except about having lessons. I am sure there was other things.

KB: What happened at this Gold and Green Ball?

WD: It was for the [inaudible] Gleaners who were the oldest kids in the young men, young women. It was decorated with gold and green and I don't know exactly now what the purpose of the gold and green was but it was one formal really nice dance at church. You did not have to have a date, everybody just went.

DM: Was it annual?

WD: It was, it was every year was a Gold and Green Ball. Even after I was teaching school in Las Vegas, the Gold and Green Ball was very important. In fact, your dad and I helped decorate for one of the Gold and Green Balls while we were still dating.

KB: Where did you go to church at? Where was your chapel?

WD: Our chapel was the Tabernacle when I was a little girl. We had Primary in the basement of the Tabernacle, I don't remember, of course that was when I was primary age, sacrament meetings and Sunday school was upstairs and then later on as we got older, the first chapel was built and it was the third ward chapel. It is still there, but now it is the senior citizen's center, and that was our chapel when I moved back to St. George with my children, that was when my husband was gone, that was the building that we went to and that's where my parents went then. When we were young, we went to primary and church in the Tabernacle. Very young, very young.

KB: So, you said you did not have very many other girls in your neighborhood to play with, did you find other girls maybe at church or school maybe that you could associate with?

WD: There were no girls in my neighborhood. There were not very many houses in our neighborhood then. My association with other girls was always at church or always at school. So, I do remember one birthday particularly, my mother had a hobo party for me and all the kids came dressed in raggedy clothes like, you know hobos were a big deal in the war years, and we had fire outside and she had the kids all eat their stuff out of old tin cans that had been opened and so it was a real hobo party. That was really memorable. In fact, just recently one of my classmates told me that that was the very first birthday party that they ever remembered. [Laughter] because mostly they did not do things like that, but we

dressed up like... and that was in the days of hobos too, a lot of men were wondering around without jobs and would come to the door and ask for food. Mother always fed 'em. Always fed 'em.

KB: So this party was in the 1930's, in the depression era?

WB: It was later than that. I was born in 1934 so it would have been in the probably, early '40's.

KB: What are your recollections of the war era in St. George?

WD: There were no televisions in those days and I had four brothers who were in the military. My four older brothers. My dad had a small radio and he would sit by that radio turned up and listening as hard as he could. Letters were few and far between. We didn't get any letters. My one brother was in Europe...

DM: Which brother was in Europe?

WD: Bob, my brother Bob was in Europe and my brother Ernie was on a boat, my brother Clair was in the Philippines and all of the ground fighting. Where was Grant? I think Grant was on a boat as well.

DM: Was Clair too young to serve?

WD: Oh no, he was in the Philippines or somewhere, I can remember well his leaving. He was only eighteen years old and we went down to the bus stop which was at the corner where Heritage Square is now, Ancestor Square. They picked up the boys there to go in the service. Clair was barely eighteen years old and I remember my mother crying and saying..., of course I cried. He picked me up and gave me a big hug before he got on the bus and that was really a very sad day. He had some terrible experiences in the war. When he got home, I remember this specifically, you know my family were hunters and we had bullets around and everything, but somehow a bullet had gotten into the fire place where a fire was burning and it exploded and my brother just, quickly [slaps hand on the table] just flat on the ground with his legs spread. An automatic reaction that happened. That was very, I don't know what the right word is, for me to see that that had influenced him that way. Of course I was still just a little girl, anyway, four of them were serving at that time. Dad would set with his ear by the radio, trying to listen the various places where they were. It was a lot different than now adays when you can find out what's goin on anywhere.

KB: So it seems like your dad was always very conscious making sure his boys were safe even though they were serving in the military. What did your mom do during the war years?

WD: Well, she, I don't remember anything specifically. That would have been before she really started much writing. Taking care of us I guess, I don't know that was a long time ago. I can't remember [laughter]. We always had a garden and we always had animals in the back that had to be cared for.

DM: What kind of animals?

WD: Well we had chickens, chicken coop, and we had a cow, and we had....

DM: You had a corral in the back yard?

WD: Oh yeah we did, we had a corral in the back yard and we had a cow.

KB: Was it for milk?

WD: Yeah, they had to milk it every day.

KB: Did you milk the cow?

WD: Oh, not me [laughter]. They had me try once but I couldn't get any milk out.

DM: Who milked the cow?

WD: The boys all took turns. Dad a lot of times of course. When the older boys were gone, it was only Dad and the younger boys. They helped with the gardening. The only thing I can remember about the garden is that, I would go out and sit in the peas and I would eat the peas as I went along cause they were so good to sit and eat. The boys all helped, they all had chores to do. I guess they were pretty easy on me, cause I was the only girl.

DM: Truly, now was it having three younger brothers? [Laughter]. Truly, your relationship with your younger brothers?

WD: Well I loved them. They were really, really good kids. Especially as we got to be teenagers. My younger brother Karl Brooks, was the vice president at Dixie College and he was always in everything growing up. Each of them was. They were all very involved. My brother Antone, Tony, was the brain and Kay was the one who had fun and Karl who was the leader in school. They all made their mark in life and as young people. Did either of you know Karl when he was here?

DM: Weren't ya a little bit of a mother to your younger brothers? Did they give you a little teasing?

WD: I was, mother would assign me to comb their hair and to wash their face and make sure they were presentable and ...

DM: You were very much responsible for your three younger brothers.

WD: I was. I was. Especially if she was working, if she was writing. I can remember one time we were going to have our picture taken and she assigned me to make sure their faces were washed and their shirts were buttoned and their hair was combed. And a lot of that kind of stuff. Yeah, I was a little mother to the three younger boys when they were growing up.

KB: So, as you got a little bit older, it seems like your Mom started writing more and you had to become more active. Tell me a little bit more about that.

WD: Well she was writing all the time. That's why this book has been so interesting to me. This is started when I was six and seven years old, her letters and she didn't need a lot of sleep and so we would all go to bed and we could hear the typewriter and she would work then she would get the children off to school, then sleep a couple of hours. But she didn't need a lot of sleep so most of her work was done in the night. I can remember the typewriter going, and you know it was just one of those ole clacky typewriters I don't know how she ever did it. There was no way to correct mistake and she was so smart to know that she should keep a record of those things. That's why this has been so interesting to me. These first letters were written when I was 6 years old and talks about "I finally got the family off to Sunday school and though the dishes are still in the sink and my weekly letters to the soldier lads haven't been written, I am going to take a few minutes to write to you. If I hurry, I can get it done and still have the dishes washed and dinner ready when they get home." Anyway, that... It has been interesting for me to see this because it gives me a whole new perspective of my mother.

DM: You've told me before that when she was working on the Mountain Meadows book, that she would keep laundry...

WD: Oh that's true.

DM: ...in the area.

WD: She did that all the time.

DM: So that she could cover the ...

WD: She didn't want anybody to know what she was doing. I told ya that Karl went downtown and somebody said your moms writing a book and he said, she is not. She is not writing a book. But that true she always had the ironing board set up and with something that needed ironing. Her typewriter was nearby and if any one came to the door, she'd cover the typewriter and plug in the iron and when they came in, they would visit while she ironed.

KB: So why did she feel the need to hide her writing?

WD: Well because it was a very controversial subject. It was something that the church had ignored for years. They would just as soon not had anything done with it at all. She was determined. She had done enough studying about John D. Lee and about the pioneers, she was an advocate for pioneer diaries. She was horrified that people were destroying the pioneer...she found one diary that the woman had pasted recipes over the stories that were written in there and they gave her, she worked for a long time getting those recipes off there so they could read what the pioneers had written underneath. So, she spent a lot of time reading and studying and understanding what happened in those early days. That was an important thing. That was one of the things she did for the Huntington Library is that she would send them down and they would make Photostats for they made one for the owner and then send both the Photostats and the original back so that they had a record of it.

DM: As a child did you ever sense her concern for her membership in the church for writing the book?

WD: Never, never. She always...she was the stake relief society president for a while and she was a very, very much loved Sunday school teacher. She was a remarkable teacher. She taught the gospel and she always went to church. We as children had no idea that she thought her church membership might be in jeopardy. In this book where I am reading these letters, she has mentioned that a number of times. But she has always said that she felt that the truth was very important. If that was something that she had to do, that she would do it because she felt that strongly about making the truth come out. So, she was... That was a worry for sometimes.

KB: So she had that worry but it sounds like it didn't really affect you as a kid or your family dynamic.

WD: Not at all. I was going through these papers and I saw a letter that I had copied that a man had written into the *Salt Lake Tribune* or something that was saying some terrible things about mother that she wasn't a member of the church. I found a letter that I had written in response to that and I listed how many in my family, we have had mission presidents, stake presidents, relief society presidents and people in leadership all because of our background in our home. Karl served in the stake presidency, my brother Kay was a mission president in South America and he was area authority secretary and he was....all of us were... if you looked at a family church wise to look at their worth, then our family was not affected by her work adversely. We were all always very active. The only one that was a challenge was her son by her first marriage. He did well for a while but in his later years he drifted away but he was always a good man. My brothers and the older Brooks brothers all were very active, served bishops and stake presidents and mission presidents and temple presidents and relief society presidents. We

certainly were not affected adversely by her works. She was concerned that she might be but of course she never was.

KB: How did the town react when her book on the Mountain Meadows Massacre came out?

WD: I was so young that I don't remember. Like I say, that somebody asked my bother about it and he didn't believe that it was true. So, as children we were not really aware of what she was doing.

DM: When did you become aware of it, at what point? Can you recollect in your feelings?

WD: I can't even remember. I guess maybe after it was printed. I can't really remember.

DM: What were the reactions after it was printed?

WD: Well I thought she had done a beautiful job. I was young enough that I wasn't too interested in reading it [laughter]. Those kind of things are not....

DM: Were there repercussions after it was printed and what kind?

WD: There were some people who that that it was not appropriate and that it shouldn't ought to have been done. But she always said, she said "nothing but the truth is good enough for the church that I belong to". She always felt that the truth would not hurt, that it would help. She was willing to take that [inaudible] and I as I am readin' this, I realize that she was more concerned about that than I knew. As a family we did not feel any repercussions especially as children. I did hear people talk but I don't remember any threatened or worried at all.

KB: So when do you remember becoming aware of your mom's work and that it was important.

WD: I guess, I'm just trying to remember. I knew that she was invited to speak at all kinds of places everywhere and I guess she got three honorary doctor degrees and that kind of got our eyes open and realize that what she has done. But I think I felt all the time like what she was doing was important and the fact that she pressed on and did it in spite of everything. She felt like it was so important that if it cost her the church membership then it would be worth it.

KB: I just want to stop for a moment and introduce Willa's husband. Would you mind saying your name?

TD: I'm Thales Derrick. People call me Tad. My initials, T.A.D.

KB: Gottcha'. Welcome Tad.

TO: Feel free to interject at any time.

KB: At this point I want to switch a little bit and I want to know what it was like to grow up in St. George?

WD: It was wonderful! It was wonderful. We were like free range chickens [laughter]. There was no worry about anything. We were able to come and go, as we pleased. My brothers would leave in the morning, and mother would pack 'em a sandwich, they'd go up on the red hill and be gone all day. Come back, they even came back with a Gila monster one day. It was a really great place to grow up. It really was. It always felt comfortable, always felt safe.

KB: So what did you do for fun?

WD: Well, my goodness, let's see if I can remember. I was taking piano lessons all the time so I had to practice piano every day and I tried to remember when I was a little girl, we used to play outside a lot, I remember in the ditch when the water came down. I always had a beautiful doll. My brothers used to think that I got lots more for Christmas than they did because they had to share a ball or a bike or whatever. I don't remember any childhood friends close on the hill. When we lived up there, there were not a lot of homes. We had friends at church and friends at school and I remember particularly when I was in first grade, I had to have my appendix out and the teacher, the children in my class wrote letters and send candy. It was at Easter time and sent candy and letters and everything to the hospital. I felt like a real celebrity. [Laughter] Well we had friends mostly at church because when you lived up on the hill there was not anything very much that people want to walk up the hill. [Laughter]

KB: It is a fairly steep hill.

WD: It is a really steep hill.

DM: Tell them a little about what you were telling us on Sunday on the 4th of July and 24th always sleeping out on the lawns.

WD: Oh yeah, we always did. And somebody came and bothered us with water balloons and [laughter]. That was a big time. My brothers were so bad, I probably shouldn't ought to tell ya this, don't put it in. They would go to the movie and they would buy a great big drink after it was over and drink it and then, you know we lived up the hill, so they would start at the bottom of the hill to see who could urinate the farthest [laughter]. Make the biggest puddle up the hill. They were, of course three boys could think of a lot of things to do to get into trouble. They were very, very close in age, so it was interesting, maybe I told you this, after my forth brother was born, the older boys went into mom and dad's bed one night, the

four of them. They said, this has got to stop, there's enough children. People in town are talking about how you are so old and you're having children. And so, it must have worked because they didn't have any more after that.

DM: Do you want to tell them a little more about what 4th of July celebrations were like and 24th?

WD: Well, we always had homemade root beer, we always had sparklers and we always had sleepovers outside and if the girls were outside the boys would come and throw water on them and you slept all night and we lived at the hill where the Marshall Band would start at the top of the hill and they would start down and play all through the town.

TD: Tell them about the cannon.

WD: Oh yeah. They had a cannon on the red hill. The one that's at the temple now, isn't it?

TD: I don't know where it is.

WD: Anyway, they would shoot the canon from off the red hill and make a big noise.

TD: And start the day.

DM: Is that the morning?

TD: Yes.

WD: What?

DM: Was that in the morning?

WD: Yes in the morning, in the early morning. Then the marshall band would get in the back of a truck and drive through town playing patriotic songs. It was....

TD: Tell them about touching the letters in the Dixie.

WD: No don't tell them that. When I was a young girl we climbed on the hill all the time and he's horrified to think that I did this, but I climbed up the face of the Dixie and I shimmied along and touched all of the letters of the Dixie without falling and killing myself.

ALL: That's pretty cool!

KB: So it sounds like you got up on the red hills quite a bit too then.

WD: Yes I did. I did. There was the Cox's pond that the boys swam in every day, I don't think I ever swam in it. They were as brown as berries in the summer time. Except when the swimming pool opened, there was a lot of chlorine in the swimming pool and they swam there regularly and all of us had green hair.

KB: That will do it. What schools did you go to while you moved to St. George?

WD: I went to the West, well it's not even there anymore, it was an elementary school right across the street from the Woodward building. It was a two story building. When you got a little older you go to be on the second story, that was a really big deal, you know. When you were in the little classes you were on the bottom floor. We walked home from there for lunch and back. Then after we got through the elementary school we walked across to the Woodward School. The Woodward School was a 7th, 8th, and ninth and 10th, then we went over to the Dixie College buildings for the last two years of high school and then the first two years of college were in the buildings at the same time. Most of us stayed and went on for at least two years of college and then I went on to the BYU and got my degree at the Y. We were never in our family, you were not through until you graduated from college. There was no question about that. You went all the way.

KB: So all of your brothers got at least their bachelors?

WD: They did, they did. There are two with PhD's and one with a master's degree. These are the younger boys. They all were very educated. My youngest brother is the only one who is still alive and he is an expert on radiation fallout and he has studied the atomic bomb.

KB: He had a book came out a year or two back on it.

DM: *Low Dosage Radiation.*

WD: They are good men, they are good people.

KB: So what was your experience while you were at the Dixie High / Junior College?

WD: Well, we were small then so everybody was involved in everything. If you start to list the things that you did it looks really, really ridiculous [laughter]. Because you were a part of everything, I was a class officer, I was the cheerleader, I was in the choir, you know, you just did everything.

TD: Tell them about spigmuffs.

WD: That was when we ran for student body officer of the Woodward and we took the first letter of each of our names and made a word up and said it was spigmuffs, we were the men from Mars. We died our hair with food coloring and so I had green on one side and red on one side for about four months. It didn't wash out.

DM: That was before it was a thing.

KB: That's awesome. So did you win student body...?

WD: Yes, oh yes. Everybody on our party ticket won. It was a fun....

TD: Tell about how close you all have remained over the years.

WD: Yes we have. We have our friends from the Woodward and Dixie High School have remained very close. We had a reunion again this summer at Dean Terry's in Pine Valley, no it was at Mark Wells house. We are down to a precious few. We had a really, really nice group get together there. That is another thing about growing up in a small town like St. George your classmates are lifetime friends. Even Dana's friends are her lifetime friends and they still get together and do things together even though they're scattered in various places. That's one nice thing.

KB: You got through school and high school and did your two years here and then you went to the Y. What did you graduate from BYU with?

WD: Elementary education. Then I got a job teaching school in Provo, I taught kindergarten in Provo for two years and then I decided that the money was better in Las Vegas. I went to Las Vegas and I taught school. My roommates were, one was my cousin, one was a classmate and one was a good friend. We lived in a small apartment right on Las Vegas Blvd. I don't know how we ever survived, then I taught school in Las Vegas and I met my husband at church. He was a fighter pilot in the Air Force and was there for some training at Nellis Air Force Base.

KB: Tell us more about how you two met.

WD: We met at Church. We were doing a speakers choir and he came in and he came in and sat behind us. Of course, we were four single girls, ladies or old women or whatever we were at that point, and for any of the young men, we were a good place to start [laughter].

TD: In those days, they didn't have young single adult programs, everybody went to MIA, mutual, until you were thirty. So that's why they were still there.

KB: How old were you when met?

WD: How old, I was twenty-four, twenty-three, we got married when I was twenty-five.

KB: My question is, how did you go from being the guy sitting right behind them to being married?

WD: Well he started coming around and visiting. He had a girlfriend in Provo and he felt like, before he could do anything serious he had to go break up with her. He did that but we were kind of a magnet for single guys because there were 4 of us and they knew that we'd feed them and have treats. So we had a lot of guys in and out all the time. One of my roommates started dating a guy quite regularly. It was funny 'cause he would watch Tad and everything that Tad would do for me, then he would do for Audrey [laughter]. They even got married two weeks after we did.

KB: So he was a good example.

WD: He was a good example. I thought he was the last of the big spenders. We went to see Nat King Cole and Lena Horne and all of those who were...Louis Prima. We had a really, really fun time. Lots of interesting eating places. A lot of church activities.

KB: What was it like living in Vegas at that time?

WD: We felt very safe. We really did. I can't believe that we lived then where it is then. It was a major thoroughfare. The mortuary was only a block or two away. People were going by. We were very safe. We felt safe. I enjoyed my school. I had wonderful children in the school. I left in the middle of the 2nd year to get married. The superintendent was a member of the church and when I told him I had found a good Mormon guy to marry, he said okay, you go.

KB: So you didn't work anymore after you were married?

TD: Let me just tell you a little about the courtship. She was dating a Marine and a basketball coach.

WD: You don't need to tell them all that [laughter].

KB: You had to work for it.

DM: He had to drive off the other suitors.

TD: I did. The Marine had a date one night and I got her roommates involved. "How about I come down and I want to harass this guy a little bit, see if I can get him not come around anymore"... the Marine. They said that would be cool. So I came down and when they came home, I flashed the porch light on and off, and opened the door and looked out with a stern face. I was a lieutenant and he was an enlisted guy, poor guy [laughter]. He felt intimidated I think. Anyway, that was the end of the Marine. The basketball coach hung around a little bit longer.

- WD: This is grandma's story, not ours.
- TD: This is ours. You were talking about Juanita. During our courtship years, she invited her to come down and talk to our older young people in our ward, people our age. She talked about the pioneers and the experiences of Southern Utah and Nevada. That was fascinating, she was a wonderful speaker.
- DM: Was that your first time meeting her?
- TD: That was the first time I met her. I was very impressed with her and come to find out that she knew my great grandfather was Thales Haskell. He came into St. George with Jacob Hamblin and they were in the first six to come into the valley. She knew all about him. I knew nothing about him so I found out all about my great grandfather from her. Which was wonderful. Just after we were married, I always want to tell this because it is a true thing. Before we got married, she said "I don't know if you love me more or my mom".
- WD: Mother was an excellent speaker. She was an excellent speaker. She was in great demand as a speaker and she did lots of firesides and lots of things. She was a very good speaker.
- TD: I just want to say, the joke about mother-in-law jokes abound. She did not fit that stereotype at all. She was the sweetest, kindest person that you can imagine. I was in awe of her all the time. She was so nice to me, to us, after we were married. It was wonderful. It really was.
- KB: That's pretty lucky. After you married, it sounds like you were a fighter pilot for Air force. What happened with you two after you married? I guess you wound up traveling some?
- WD: We traveled a lot. We lived in Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii, England, Alabama. We moved a lot. Las Vegas. Where were you born [Dana]?
- DM: In New Mexico. In Clovis.
- KB: You traveled while you were having your kids. Did they grow up as the proverbial army brat moving from base to base?
- WD: They were I guess army brats in the fact that we moved a lot but they were not brats, let me tell you! Any of them. Our children are all wonderful children we are very, very blessed. Dana is the only daughter that we have and we are so grateful that we have her. We celebrate her. She was Tad's baby sweetie from the time she was born and she still is [laughter]. Our poor boys, we have, our oldest son was killed in a tragic accident. Father of four children. They lived in Arizona. And our second son has Southland Electric which is a big electrical company

here. He has about forty employees. Our next son works for a company in New York. He travels all the time from here to New York. I don't know exactly what he does. Anyway it doesn't matter. Dana's husband has a very big complex out here called Inomark and it is very successful. Our youngest son is a professor at the university in Nebraska, in Omaha. And they're all active and strong positions in the church. Dana's husband is in the stake presidency, our youngest son is a stake president. The other have all been in bishopric, bishops and are doing very well. We are proud of them. My brothers who came from mother, her oldest son Ernest, his family is not active in the church. He had a tragic divorce in his life, but he was always a wonderful loving brother. The others, my brother Karl of course, was the Vice President of Dixie. My brother Kay was a FBI. He served the Church in South America in many, many different roles. He opened the Moon of the Dao Temple [Temple of the Moon in Machu Picchu]. My brother Tony is an atomic scientist. You have probably heard of Tony, he was here and gave a lecture not long ago. So she produced some good children with strong testimonies, all of them. And with firm foundation in education and education things. She was quite remarkable in the things that she did with the small family, it was very interesting to me to find out all that she was doing when we were little kids.

TD: Giving credit to Willa as well. She talks about what a wonderful job that her mother did and that's true, I totally agree. But she did a wonderful job as well. You talk about army brats. When we got to England, we had one child at that point, we couldn't find any place to rent near the base but we found some homes that were being built. So we talked to the builder and asked if any of these were going to be for rent, he said not but I will sell this one to ya'. It was a two bedroom single bath, kitchen, living room, bungalow they called it. How much is it? \$4,500 US dollars. Can I get a loan over here? Yeah. So I went to the place he directed, applied for the loan, you might remember an IBM card. I filled out an IBM card, that was my loan application. That's all there was to it. And they loaned me the full amount to buy the house. So we lived off base and our second son was born in England. We sold the home to a British couple, our area was designated as a London overspill area, so the prices went up and we sold it for twice as much as we paid for it, which gave us a wonderful nest egg to start where we went. So wherever we went thereafter, we bought a house. So the kids grew up in a community, they never grew up on base. They were just community kids whose dad happened to be in the air force.

KB: That probably helped a lot, I would think.

TD: It did I think. You have to ask them.

DM: It felt like we had a dad that went to work and life was the same as our friends.

TO: Do you remember what the base was called in England?

TD: Lakenheath. Lakenheath Airbase.

WD: We lived in Brandon, Suffolk England.

WD: Do you have more to ask me?

KB: We can wrap up if you would like. I can keep going.

WD: You can keep going, we don't have anything specifically to do.

TD: As a fighter pilot, I was deployed a lot. She reared our children and they have been wonderful and successful children. Most of the credit goes to her.

KB: It takes two you know.

TD: It does take two and I have tried to do my part. We communicated. In those days, there were no cell phones or anything like that. If I was going to gone a long time, we each had a little reel-to-reel tape recorders and I would send tapes and they would send tapes. We kept in touch that way.

WD: That was before the easy communications now.

TD: She did a great job with the children and I appreciated it. They've obviously turned out very well, thanks to their mom [laughter].

WD: When I wanted to speak to him in Korea, I had to go through somebody in Seattle, Washington and it was a complicated three or four process. There was no way that you could just talk to them. That's neither here nor there.

KB: So it didn't happen very often I would think.

WD: No.

TD: One time in thirteen months.

KB: Once, okay. When did you go to Korea?

TD: In 1967.

WD: It was a special reason, it wasn't during the Korean War.

TD: In 1967 the North Koreans captured an American boat called "Pueblo" it was an intelligence gathering ship. They monitored the North Korean communications. They took the boat to their harbor. Within a few weeks they shot down an unarmed intelligence airplane, so we were on the brink of war with North Korea at the same time we are already involved in Vietnam. They felt like they needed

to make some response. So they activated two National Guard squadrons who flew the same kind of airplanes that I did. They sent four regular officers to lead these guys, the [inaudible] so I had combat experience, so we went over there for thirteen months and we were in place in case things really went downhill.

WD: We lived in Clovis, NM. He left suddenly. I had to sell his sports car, I had to sell our house, I had to move all by myself and I came to St. George to live while he was gone.

KB: So you came to St. George. How long did you stay here?

WD: I was here all the time he was gone. Thirteen months.

TD: Her brother and I had bought a little home here as a rental, just as an investment. So she lived in that rental house. Which was really fortunate.

WD: My brother, did you know Walt?

TO: I didn't meet Walt.

WD: He is the oldest of my dad's boys. He is a very, very good man. You know the Walt Brooks stadium is named after him. The Karl Brooks stadium over here. We've taken a lot of time. Have you got any more questions?

KB: I think the last question I have is how was Juanita as a grandparent to your kids?

WD: She loved her grandchildren. She really did. When I was here, while Tad was gone, she would come and get the children or I would take them to her and she would give me a break. We would go to her home for family home evening many times. By then, my dad was getting fairly old, you know he was quite a bit older than mother, he loved children too. He loved children. They were a main stay for me while he was gone. My oldest brother, Walt, also was very, very helpful with the children. And with the things that had to be done in the house to make it livable. It had been rented and it was in horrible condition. The living room had three different colors on the walls. We had to put in new carpet and Walt and his boys were very, very helpful in helping me get settled. Mother and dad were still alive then, so we enjoyed family home evenings with them and Christmas Eve with them and a lot of good times. We were glad that we had that year with them because, of course Dad was older, and it was a sad day when he passed away and left Mother. Interesting thing after he died, she was going through papers, she found a descriptive letter that he had written of her and she had never seen that.

TD: It was a love letter.

KB: Oh, a love letter.

WD: She wrote to me, or I don't know if she called me, she said I have cried all afternoon. She said if your dad thought of me this way, I never thought of myself as this. He had written descriptive words for her. It was very, very touching for her. She was a remarkable lady.

TO: Your dad was a remarkable man too. He had quite the life.

WD: He was. She would not have been able to do anything if it were not for him.

TO: Even the things he did as the sheriff and then as the postmaster.

TD: Member of the pep club.

WD: Did you know that?

KB: I did not. Wow, okay!

WD: When my brother Walt was the coach at Dixie High School, dad went to all the games and the pep club, they had a really active pep club, they had uniforms and everything. They saved a place for dad right in the middle and he wore hearing aids so he would take them out during the ball game.

TD: They make a quilt for him, Uncle Will [laughter].

WD: When he died, the president of the Pep Club was one of the speakers at his funeral. He was a very loving man. He was very fun.

KB: It shows he loved kids. You said your mom couldn't have done what she did without the support of your dad, which I totally understand. My question is how did she feel about women's rights? She lived through, especially towards the end of her life, that second wave of feminism where it kind of came up.

WD: I do not remember her ever discussing women's rights. I think she always felt like that people were equal and there was, in fact I'm just at a place in here where she is talking about black people, of course we never had any blacks around here at all. How she felt that they should be able to have the priesthood and be honored in that way. That was years ago. In fact, I have a letter that she wrote to the first black student at Dixie College to welcome him and she told him her phone number and where she lived. She had no prejudice at all. I don't think dad did either. There were no blacks in town, so we didn't ever discuss that.

TD: He would bring his prisoners home when he was the sheriff for her mom to feed [laughter].

WD: He would bring the little children especially.

KB: Is there anything else you feel like you need to tell us about your mom, growing up in St. George or your Dad or your family?

WD: I think we pretty much covered it. She was a multi-faceted woman. She was a real intellect. She had a real soft side as well. She said she raised us with a good amount of healthy neglect. But we never felt neglected or left out. Reading this book is quite an eye-opener to me because we were not aware at all of what she was doing.

KB: How did her soft side come out?

WD: With people who were down trodden, babies, people she felt had been wronged. She was very compassionate and very kind. She was very strong too. She had very strong opinions, which was okay. I think that's probably about all. She was truly remarkable for her day and age and for her things that she did.

KB: Thank you so much.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]