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Oral history interview transcript with Ruth Williamson

Ruth G. Williamson

Meta Gibbs

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RUTH WILLIAMSON
INTERVIEWED BY META GIBBS
EWU's Women's Oral History Project
EWU 984-0094 #97
JANUARY 25, 1983

M. GIBBS: , 3, Testing 1, 2, 3. This Meta Gibbs interviewing Ruth Williamson for the Cheney Women's Oral History Project. Today is January 25th, 1983. We will focus on her role as a resident of Cheney and as a faculty wife. [Tape cuts out]

M. GIBBS: Ruth, what year did you come to Cheney?

R. WILLIAMSON: 1932.

M. GIBBS: And why , what brought you to Cheney, Washington?

R. WILLIAMSON: Olgood was getting a position here at Eastern.

M. GIBBS: And what was that position?

R. WILLIAMSON: Head of the education psychology department.

M. GIBBS: All right, and what was the name of the school at that time? [long pause]
Was it a university at that, was it a college or was it still the Cheney Normal?

R. WILLIAMSON: Normal school. The Cheney Normal School at that time.

M. GIBBS: Where did you live when you first came to Cheney?

R. WILLIAMSON: We lived in a furnished house on, on , .5th Ave, 6th street.

M. GIBBS: Does that house still exist?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yeah.

M. GIBBS: And did you rent the house at that time?

R. WILLIAMSON: Rented the house furnished, then we decided to build. And we built that present house that we're in and this was 5 - 0 - 16 [sounds like an address, Cheney].

M. GIBBS: And what year did you build your house?

R. WILLIAMSON: 1935.

M. GIBBS: And ,how long did it take to build it?

R. WILLIAMSON: About 3 months.

M. GIBBS: And how did you decide on the design of the house? Did you look at some plans of the house or ,?

R. WILLIAMSON: It was a ,Better Homes and Gardens.

M. GIBBS: It had been a design in there? That you had seen and liked? And uh , when you moved into the house then, then while it was being built, you were in the furnished house on North 5th then?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, we moved around to several places before we finally moved in here, and we didn't have any furniture at first.

M. GIBBS: So what did you do without any furniture?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, we got the bare essentials. We got a mattress, spring and mattress, and we slept on it awhile. And then um , as the rooms were finished, then we moved upstairs of course. And it was in this room that we first slept.

M. GIBBS: In what is now your living room. Right. At this time that we're talking about, this was still the effects of the Depression were going on in the country. Do you remember, were any particular effects in Cheney?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes, the teachers, public school teachers were on a, what do you call em, I can't think.

M. GIBBS: Were, were they not paid for a while?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, they got them, warrants.

M. GIBBS: And what did that mean?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, that meant that they didn't have any money, so they had different people to buy a warrant, and we bought a warrant.

M. GIBBS: And that meant that you were providing money for a teacher then and how long did that go on?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well quite a few people on the faculty got these warrants. Someone came to us and wanted to know if we'd buy a warrant, well we could and we helped people out.

M. GIBBS: Uhuh. And then did you buy it then for a one-year period? I mean, if you bought a warrant, then were they there for like a one-year or period? Their salary was paid for a year?

R. WILLIAMSON: When those warrants came due, the money was paid to us instead of the, the uh, chaps that they'd brought his warrant for.

M. GIBBS: And did you do this more than once?

R. WILLIAMSON: I think just once.

M. GIBBS: And what about your own salary at Eastern then? Were you paid? Were. . did they pay you?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yeah, we got paid up town. Do you want to know how much it is?

M. GIBBS: Yeah that would be interesting to know.

R. WILLIAMSON: Four thousand dollars.

M. GIBBS: Four thousand for the school year? The whole school year?

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh, yeah.

M. GIBBS: That was your starting, salary when you came here. Did you find it hard to provide with that, or did you feel comfortable?

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh, no. Everything was so much cheaper. You know, food and everything else.

M. GIBBS: Back to other effects besides, there were the warrants that the public school teachers had. Do you remember any other effects? Any other evidence that it was hard, times were hard around here.

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, the streets weren't paved. None of the streets were paved. But there were people living around here. That house, going through house, their house was in (indecipherable). The Rackler house was up.

M. GIBBS: Do you remember any evidence of, did they provide free food here in Cheney at all for people who were in down on their luck.

R. WILLIAMSON: All I know is, the bums used to come around and knock on the door and see if you'd give them a sandwich or something, at the door in the back.

M. GIBBS: Really? Would they want to do work for you also or were they mainly needing food?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, no. I just gave it to them. And then we were told, "Don't give them food. Come down to the city hall and they can work for it."

M. GIBBS: And what would, the city would put them to work then?

R. WILLIAMSON: The city would put them to work.

M. GIBBS: Do you know what kinds of things they did?

R. WILLIAMSON: They did all kinds of things. They were chopping wood, and I don't know what else.

M. GIBBS: That's very interesting. Did you ever have any women come to your door asking for food?

R. WILLIAMSON: No. Just men.

M. GIBBS: Would any men come and say they had family?

R. WILLIAMSON: No.

M. GIBBS: Just single men. What ages were they, were they young men or were they older men?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, they weren't just young men, they were, men. They weren't , old men, they were passing through town, you know.

M. GIBBS: Were you ever frightened, of them?

R. WILLIAMSON: No. Never.

M. GIBBS: So you'd just give them a little lunch?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes, never gave them money.

M. GIBBS: You were home during the day then?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes.

M. GIBBS: After you , now have we , noted on your biographical sheet that while you were still in New York City, you had been the librarian at Horseman School for Boys for three years while Olgood finished his Ph.D. After you came to Cheney, did you continue to do any work as a librarian at that time?

R. WILLIAMSON: No. Didn't do anything. I did, I would like to have worked but that would have taken the bread out of other people's mouths, you know.

M. GIBBS: Your feeling was that since your husband had a very good job, that ,

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh, they would have resented it, of course, if I had any work ,

M. GIBBS: Did you ever hear any other people comment like that?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, but I just knew they did.

M. GIBBS: Just kind of a feeling that you had? So what were some of the activities that you became involved in then as a faculty wife? Was there a faculty wives organization?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes there was. And at one time I was president of it, and all the faculty wives belonged to it then. There weren't so many there then.

M. GIBBS: What were some of the activities that the club would have, the faculty wives organization would have?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, they had teas, they'd have speakers, and they didn't, none of them ever met in a person's home.

M. GIBBS: Where did you meet?

R. WILLIAMSON: Over in a large room in the , where was it, ?

M. GIBBS: On the campus?

R. WILLIAMSON: On the campus. I guess it was so long ago I can't remember.

M. GIBBS: That's all right. But it was interesting that you met on campus and not in homes.

R. WILLIAMSON: Not in homes.

M. GIBBS: And how often did you meet?

R. WILLIAMSON: Once a month.

M. GIBBS: For instance, what kind of speakers would you have come in? People from the college or...?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well sometimes they, no. Sometimes they'd be faculty husbands. They would talk about various things, you know.

M. GIBBS: Did some of the women faculty speak also to your group?

R. WILLIAMSON: I don't think so. Because they were in the faculty wives.

M. GIBBS: And then you would have teas, did you ever have any , dinners or did you ever entertain, ?

R. WILLIAMSON: They weren't dinner, they were just evening's, evening meetings.

M. GIBBS: Did you ever, do any projects to help the college or to help students?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well sometimes at Christmas, some of the students wouldn't go home. So I would take them in. I had no children so I would take them in.

M. GIBBS: And have them stay with you over the holidays and then you give for Christmas.

R. WILLIAMSON: For the holidays.

M. GIBBS: Wow, very generous. Where were some of these students from? Were they foreign students or?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yeah, one was from Guam, and she had never seen snow. She , went out and walked in the snow. Even though her feet were very cold, she wanted to walk in it.

M. GIBBS: [laughs] So there were some foreign students here in the 30s and 40s?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, yeah.

M. GIBBS: Do you remember any other countries that they were from?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, as the years went by, there was one from France, . one from Norway. You know, at different times.

M. GIBBS: What , effects do you remember, moving up now from the 1930s when you first came up to the time of World War II. Did you do anything to help out with World War II locally? Did you help with the Red Cross , ?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, I knitted. I did some knitting.

M. GIBBS: What kinds of , what kind of, what did you knit?

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh, I knitted a scarf.

M. GIBBS: That was supposed to be for a soldier? And what other effects of the war did you notice in Cheney? Did you have rationing here? Food rationing?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes there was rationing. For a while we didn't have any butter. And, what else, we had so much meat a week and so much sugar a week and a month it was I can't remember.

M. GIBBS: Did you find it hard to, ?

R. WILLIAMSON: No.

M. GIBBS: , provide with that or was it adequate for you?

R. WILLIAMSON: It was adequate for two people.

M. GIBBS: Any other effects? What about the students up at Eastern? Did you notice were there not as many students or, ?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, some of them didn't have much money. I know, they could borrow money from the school, but never from us.

M. GIBBS: And do you remember any particular students that Olgood had , had at that time, who went to join the war effort that had to become soldiers? Do you remember?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well at the time of the war, almost all the men in the town left. The school, you know, they left so there was just women in the college. A couple of them were for [inaudible: sounds like "actually"] didn't go.

M. GIBBS: Hmm. Now why was it that your husband didn't have to go?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, he tried to enlist, but they found that on our honeymoon he had had a , .an accident that the , this side, and they wouldn't take him because if he were in the war, he couldn't stand a concussion. It was this side, the left side.

M. GIBBS: So he'd had a slight injury to his head then?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yeah, he didn't have a plate or anything but ,

M. GIBBS: But he had a slight, slight concussion.

R. WILLIAMSON: And then the , it was a , cartilage that grew over, But he didn't have to have a plate or anything like that.

M. GIBBS: Right. But it might have been dangerous if he'd had another accident?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes.

M. GIBBS: So he didn't have to go because of that? He was able to continue teaching then.

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes.

M. GIBBS: , during the war? Well that was fortunate. What uh, are any other memories you have of that period in Cheney up till the end of the war in terms of the effects of the war,

R. WILLIAMSON: There weren't very many men in the school, you know, they almost closed the school because all our men were going to war. Most of the women didn't. So most of the classes were just women. And , there weren't many going so they urged the faculty wives to take the, courses and I took some courses, I don't know what they were.

M. GIBBS: Oh, interesting.

R. WILLIAMSON: To increase , the enrollment.

M. GIBBS: Right, yeah. So you went back to school and took some classes?

R. WILLIAMSON: Just because there were only about 200 in school, so faculty wives took things well then make , 25 more in school or 50 more in school.

M. GIBBS: Right, right. That was an interesting idea they had to try to bolster enrollment. Anything else that you remember from that period?

R. WILLIAMSON: Are you saying something to me?

M. GIBBS: Yes, [louder] anything else from that period that you want to add?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well , some of the faculty wives went out to work at Fairchild. It wasn't Fairchild, it was,

M. GIBBS: Geiger field?

R. WILLIAMSON: Geiger field.

M. GIBBS: What was going on there?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well they were some were uh putting things together in case of war. But there was never any war, it never came here. But they were afraid it would.

M. GIBBS: So they were involved with preparing? Doing things with regard to security?

R. WILLIAMSON: They took all the rubber from school, you know. Under all the men's chairs and on the seats and things like that.

M. GIBBS: All to be used for, to make things for the war effort? After the war effort in the 1950s, there were some , in the 1950s there were some changes and uh, variety of events at the college. Could you talk a little bit about what happened among the faculty up at Eastern at that time?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well then a lot of them from the war, they came back and went to college and they had them. Oh, I think they had kind of a, they brought some things in from Fairchild. And the kids lived there with their children and ,

M. GIBBS: Yes, right. The Married Student Housing.

R. WILLIAMSON: Yeah, Married Student Housing.

M. GIBBS: Yeah, right. The early housing that they had on campus. And after this post-war era, we had an event up at the school, the Red Reece affair that was involved with that.

R. WILLIAMSON: Reece was quite a ways afterwards.

M. GIBBS: Right, that was a little, what year was that? Well, what time period was that? Was that the early 1950s? That would be about 1953?

R. WILLIAMSON: 1952, '3, '4 or something like that, I don't know.

M. GIBBS: Right, right. Tell us a little bit about who Red Reece was and what ,

R. WILLIAMSON: Well he was a coach there who wanted to be head of the department,

M. GIBBS: Now, which department? The PE department?

R. WILLIAMSON: The PE Department. And he , said he had taken some courses when he really hadn't and they turned in grades for him and he hadn't been in any of the classes. So some of the students went in and looked at the grades and he had a grade A something and he had never even been in the class. And the kids didn't like it and so they rebelled.

M. GIBBS: They had been upset. And what part did your husband have in this event, or your husband and a number of the other faculty people?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well at first they didn't have anything to do with it. They had an investigating committee and he wasn't in the investigating committee. But when they met, they had a vote and they voted votes of no confidence for the registrar, votes of no confidence for Red Reece, and votes of no confidence for the man who was vice president then. And , then it got in the paper. There were long spiels about it, almost every week, get in the paper. That would be the Spokesman Review.

M. GIBBS: There was a lot of attention to this problem?

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh, yes. It got all over. And then , they had a hearing and. . . and all the stakes (indecipherable) got very vociferous about that and nothing happened till

,the day after school was out and then a lot of them were fired. And Olgood was one that was fired.

M. GIBBS: Is that right?

R. WILLIAMSON: Then , then in another month they had another meeting, and this time it was in Spokane and they repeated the firing.

M. GIBBS: Yes.

R. WILLIAMSON: And , let's see, a lot of PE people resigned and , four of them were fired. Olgood was fired. Then , see, they needed faculty, so just before school started, Olgood was brought back. They needed someone but he wasn't head of the department anymore. He was just a teacher. And he was brought back for one year and then he was let go again.

M. GIBBS: [laughs] This must have been frustrating for you and for him.

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh, Olgood thought he was back for good, you know, but he wasn't. So then , then he was off and , we lived here in this house for two years without any job.

M. GIBBS: You didn't consider moving at that point? You stayed here and what did you do, what did you do? Did you consider going back to work then?

R. WILLIAMSON: It just happened that we had enough money in the bank that, we didn't have to leave. Some of them had to leave because they didn't have enough money. But we were, we were very frugal people and we lived here, for two years until Olgood got this position in Tehran in the, Iran. For,

M. GIBBS: So for the previous two years, he didn't teach at all?

R. WILLIAMSON: Didn't teach. Well, yes, he, I said "you've got to do something" so he went to Chicago to a meeting and there he got a job at Yankton college for a quarter or something or a half year. And then when he came back, he had this job in Iran, see?

M. GIBBS: Now, so when he was gone, you stayed here and you had your children then. Right. And was this hard for you, to be alone with the children?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, my mother was here then, again. No, we didn't have a . . . we didn't have heat like this. We didn't have a,

M. GIBBS: Coal?

R. WILLIAMSON: A coal furnace, a two column furnace, and so I had to stoke it.

M. GIBBS: This had not been one of your jobs, had not been one of your chores previously?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, it wasn't, but you see, Olgood wasn't here so I had to do it.

M. GIBBS: Right. Do you remember, and you had your mother to help with the children,

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, yes, well the children were, well they were all right. They were 3 and 4.

M. GIBBS: Did you have any other help from anyone. Did you have students living with you?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, not at that time, no. Not at that time. I had before but, part of the time, my cousin was here. She now lives in , Kirkland, but she went to school here and helped with the children, you know. I didn't pay her. She just took care and helped with the meals and such.

M. GIBBS: Tell us a little bit about, he got the job in Iran and then uh, did you go with him to Iran?

R. WILLIAMSON: No I didn't, and by the way, my mother had passed away in the meantime and I had to see about her estate. So Olgood went to Iran and I came several months later.

M. GIBBS: And what year was that?

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh dear, it was about 19,

M. GIBBS: '55, about?

R. WILLIAMSON: '56, I think.

M. GIBBS: And you,

R. WILLIAMSON: And I was there for five years,

M. GIBBS: And you took your children,

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes.

M. GIBBS: , with you.

R. WILLIAMSON: And we went on the train and I had to do all the packing and decide what we'd take with us and that was a chore, you know, but uh Olgood couldn't stay and do it, so I had to do it.

M. GIBBS: So here you were off with a totally, off to a totally different life and you've had to close up your house and take care of all the arrangements.

R. WILLIAMSON: And I had made arrangements, houses were a little scarce then. So I, a coach at the high school needed a house, so he came and took this house for a very little sum, we'll say 80 dollars or something like that and then he, lived here and then he got cancer and had to move out and then somebody else moved in, oh, about four people moved in while we were in Iran.

M. GIBBS: For heaven's sakes.

R. WILLIAMSON: Four families.

M. GIBBS: What brought you back to Cheney then from this, life?

R. WILLIAMSON: He was reinstated. Olgood was reinstated here.

M. GIBBS: And what reasons were given that he was, ?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, when we came back on home leave, see, and we were here living in Cheney in somebody else's house, and uh ,

M. GIBBS: Because this house was still rented?

R. WILLIAMSON: Rented, yeah. And that was a furnished house and we lived there and it was a very hot little house, but we lived there. And then, he appeared at a board meeting was reinstated and they wanted to know if he wanted to come back and he said, "No, I want to go to Iran again." So he went to Iran and we were there all together five years.

M. GIBBS: Oh. Okay. So the first time he'd been reinstated, he'd said, "No I want to go back to Iran."

R. WILLIAMSON: Well he had promised he'd go back to there.

M. GIBBS: Right, so he finished up there and then, ?

R. WILLIAMSON: And then he came back here. And he'd been there 5 years and 5 days, that was civil service there, and so he got a pension for that. Then when we got here, he was reinstated and he was, got his pension here at the college, that would be

teacher's pension and he got , was here long enough he got, social security. So in the end it was better that he had, he went to Iran and came back because he had all this , and when he retired, he was, made Emeritus.

M. GIBBS: Yes, yes. When you came back from Iran to Cheney, did you notice were there any effects of the fact that you had been gone from the school? Or did everyone welcome you back just as before?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, you see, all our furniture had been placed by the government, had been placed in storage. So they just brought it out and so we had the initial part of our furniture.

M. GIBBS: Mmmhmm. Were there any effects in terms, did everyone welcome you back? Were there any hard feelings?

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh, yes. Everybody was very glad to have us back. Because they didn't like, well, a lot of them didn't like Red Reece. And they didn't like Fraser.

M. GIBBS: Now what had happened, what had happened to these people? Had they left the school by then?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, Clark Fraser was, he had been vice president but he had the to do, well he did then had to take his car and drove around to various schools and examine students, teachers, you know.

M. GIBBS: Right, right. So he was still here then or he had left then?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, he moved out to the lake to Loon Lake and we moved back in this house.

M. GIBBS: Was Red Reece still in Cheney?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yeah, he was still here.

M. GIBBS: At the school?

R. WILLIAMSON: At the school.

M. GIBBS: He was still, Red Reece was still in the PE department? Was he still coaching, or,?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well he was demoted. He was just a coach.

M. GIBBS: But he was never totally removed from the school?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, and, Clark Fraser didn't live, he lived over here, but he moved into Spokane and, did an area in Spokane, you know, but he didn't live in Cheney anymore.

M. GIBBS: I'm going to turn this one off. [young girls talking and laughing for 20 seconds]

>>>>>>>>End of Side 1<<<<<<<<<<<

>>>>>>>>Beginning of Side 2<<<<<<<<<<<

[this interview has been recorded over a used tape. The following is not part of the interview]

GIRL; Now, it's time for the Crazy hour with Sarah Gibbs and Liza Gibbs!

GIBBS': La La La La La.

SARAH: Liza?

LIZA: What?

SARAH: What has four wheels and flies?

LIZA: A garbage truck.

SARAH: Right!

[interview begins again here]

M. GIBBS: Ruth, let me ask you a little bit about, there were two other important movements, well, a number of important movements. One of them is: Do you remember any effects of the Civil Rights Movement here in Cheney? Were there any minority students in Cheney around that time?

R. WILLIAMSON: A little later, yes there were, . and, they resented it. They . . well there were some blacks in town at that time and they resented the whites, there weren't very many blacks here then.

M. GIBBS: Yeah. And do you remember any particular incidents or,?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes, they went up the to, someplace in the old, there was a floor a, not a paved floor and they started a little fire but it didn't burn anything.

M. GIBBS: Just kind of a protest?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes.

M. GIBBS: Were they, arrested for that?

R. WILLIAMSON: No. They were reprimanded. There was the old, what do you call it?

M. GIBBS: The old field house? The field house?

R. WILLIAMSON: Field house.

M. GIBBS: Right.

R. WILLIAMSON: The one that burned, you know.

M. GIBBS: Right. And do you remember where these students were from, the ones that, ?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, I think,

M. GIBBS: The black students in Cheney where they had come from?

R. WILLIAMSON: I think many of them were from Chicago. I don't think any of them were from Spokane. They were resentful, you see? And,

M. GIBBS: What about the effects, we have this movement now for the ERA in.

R. WILLIAMSON: What?

M. GIBBS: The ERA. The Equal Rights Amendment for women.

R. WILLIAMSON: I had nothing to do with that.

M. GIBBS: You don't have any, do you think that,

R. WILLIAMSON: I was never very interested either in that.

M. GIBBS: You never had any particular involvement? Or do you think that had a particular effect?

R. WILLIAMSON: Never. I always said that all I wanted was equal rights in my home and I didn't care what they were,

M. GIBBS: You think you have achieved equal rights in your home?

R. WILLIAMSON: I think so.

M. GIBBS: You feel that was a pretty successful battle on your home ground here? What would you say if you were , wanted to think about women that you knew in Cheney? Particularly when you were first here in the 30s and the 40s. Were there any women who were particularly important in Cheney in terms of the history of this area?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, Sarah Rolls. She was here one year before I.

M. GIBBS: What was something she was involved in? Was there anything in particular that she was involved in in Cheney.

R. WILLIAMSON: Well. Not then. We were all Fullarums at that time. And her husband was in the music department. And, Florence Rew, she's still living here. But she wasn't active in anything.

M. GIBBS: What, what,

R. WILLIAMSON: And, there was Mrs. Mark Radcliffe(spelled as sounds), but she's moved away.

M. GIBBS: So they were all women who were here around the time that you came? What would you say, has been, well, let me think about this for a moment. If you, okay, to think about something that's been most fulfilling about your staying in Cheney and your association with Eastern Washington University.

R. WILLIAMSON: A lot of it, since I've been here so long, I've made a lot of friends. And uh, a lot of my friends have built houses and they all have telephones and we call each other. And . .

M. GIBBS: Which was something new, to have a telephone?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, no, I had a telephone from the very beginning.

M. GIBBS: From the time when your house was built?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, when I first moved here, had the house, they had one of these phones that you would ring, you know, like this.

M. GIBBS: Yes, yes.

R. WILLIAMSON: But then they changed that. I never had a ringing phone here in our house.

M. GIBBS: Yes. The time in the 50s, you know, with this Red Reece business and Olgood being fired or dismissed, that was a frustrating time I guess, I mean would you call that a frustrating time or can you think of any other times that were more frustrating.

R. WILLIAMSON: Olgood, no. Olgood said he was going to get back and he did get back.

M. GIBBS: So you felt hopeful about that situation?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, I think he was more hopeful than I was [laughs].

M. GIBBS: Had you thought about any alternatives if he hadn't.

R. WILLIAMSON: No we hadn't gotten, well, our alternative then was to go to Iran and then we came back when he was reinstated. There wasn't need for an alternative. We came back into this house.

M. GIBBS: Can you think of any other frustrating times during your stay here in Cheney?

R. WILLIAMSON: Not really. At first, you know, the streets weren't paved. This is Tranton over here.

M. GIBBS: Right, 6th street.

R. WILLIAMSON: Eventually they were paved. Are you taking this down?

M. GIBBS: So part of the progress was getting things paved out here?

R. WILLIAMSON: Oh, and when we first came here, we had to go down to the post office for the mail.

M. GIBBS: Is that right? You had a box? A post office box?

R. WILLIAMSON: Box. And, when we came back, there was mail delivery.

M. GIBBS: That had been instituted while you were gone in Iran?

R. WILLIAMSON: I remember,

M. GIBBS: That's very recent then. I mean, that was like in the 1960s.

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, it would be '61. And I remember I went in once to the post, the postmaster in Spokane, and I said, how large does a town have to be? And he said, "Cheney is large enough, but people don't want it out there."

M. GIBBS: Is that right?

R. WILLIAMSON: They wanted the people to go downtown to the grocery store, see?

M. GIBBS: So it was the businessmen who were opposed to door to door delivery? Is that right?

R. WILLIAMSON: See, if people went downtown, they bought. They'd buy,

M. GIBBS: And you go into Spokane to complain about this before you went to Iran?

R. WILLIAMSON: I think so.

M. GIBBS: And I know I came back and I said, "This town is big enough." And somebody said, "I wish you could still about that " They did!

M. GIBBS: One of the businessmen?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, one of the wives.

M. GIBBS: Oh. They was, one of the faculty wives or one of the business people . .

R. WILLIAMSON: No, one of the people in the town. And uh, we were good friends and she said, "When it comes time, we'll have free delivery but right now, we're not going to have free delivery. You can't make it happen. "I, a lone person, couldn't make it happen."

M. GIBBS: But you're opinion was probably registered out at the post office?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, it was just an inquiry.

M. GIBBS: So you don't know exactly how they happened to start delivery or how they convinced ,

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, when we came back, it was done. I hadn't anything to do with it. But I did want it here.

M. GIBBS: That is very interesting because we're so used to having a personal delivery and a post office box is gotten something,

R. WILLIAMSON: And I , well every town that I had ever lived in, there was delivery, you know.

M. GIBBS: Well, you'd been living in the bigger cities in the United States. I mean, you'd been living in New York City, right?

R. WILLIAMSON: Yeah. Well, and then uh , in New York. I think when I taught school we had to go for our mail. In this little town in Wyoming.

M. GIBBS: Was there any other time that you voiced displeasure with, any other time you voiced displeasure with ,

R. WILLIAMSON: Well I went down and attended some of the council meetings, and . . someone came to me and she said, "You'd better not go down there, the men don't like

it.” See, I'd have gone down to talk, but they said, “you'd better not, the men don't like it.”

M. GIBBS: About this issue or about,

R. WILLIAMSON: About a lot of issues.

M. GIBBS: So what did you decide to do after that comment?

R. WILLIAMSON: I stayed home. I didn't go down.

M. GIBBS: Was this a friend that had commented to you about that or a business acquaintance?

R. WILLIAMSON: A friend of mine. But , the men were talking about me and being too uh, shall we say bossy or too forthright. And if I stayed home it would be better.

M. GIBBS: Were there any women on the council at that time?

R. WILLIAMSON: No.

M. GIBBS: Did any women go with you to the meetings?

R. WILLIAMSON: No, I went all by myself.

M. GIBBS: What were some of the issues you wanted to complain about while you were down there?

R. WILLIAMSON: Well one was, I wanted the mail you know.

M. GIBBS: Yes.

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes , and I wanted the streets paved, they weren't always paved. They said at the time, “Well, they'll all be paved when it comes time, see?” But this street out here, it wasn't paved for a while and for a long time then this street wasn't paved.

M. GIBBS: Did you ever write any letters to the city council or to the Free Press?

R. WILLIAMSON: No. I just talked.

M. GIBBS: You talked to people though and made your opinions known.

R. WILLIAMSON: Are you taking this down?

M. GIBBS: I think this is very interesting, because we tend to forget now living in this town that, we have had women here on the City Council in Cheney.

R. WILLIAMSON: Now, yes. I didn't want to be on the council.

M. GIBBS: But right then, women's groups go to meetings, or women go.

R. WILLIAMSON: I think maybe once or twice, I took somebody with me.

M. GIBBS: Well, it's much more common now, but that was an unusual thing then.

R. WILLIAMSON: I didn't go all by myself, but I was the only one that talked.

M. GIBBS: I think that's very interesting because this was a more unusual setting in those days than we think of now, so you were unique in doing this.

R. WILLIAMSON: Well, in those days. I don't think I had any children then, I don't think. Yeah, then when I got back I had some children , two children.

M. GIBBS: So the, the part about the , did you ever hear any comment about whether the business in Cheney was affected after they started delivering the mail to the homes?

R. WILLIAMSON: No. It didn't make a bit of difference. But then they built a new post office, you know, this is the one we have now.

M. GIBBS: Yeah.

R. WILLIAMSON: And there are some boxes in it. And some people prefer to have boxes rather than delivery.

M. GIBBS: I wanted to make , a comment back about your stay in Cheney that your husband's Olgood Williamson's tenure at the university has been, shall we say, permanently noted by the fact that a building has been named for him.

R. WILLIAMSON: Yes. That was um , I think after he retired.

M. GIBBS: Yes. And it's the education building.

R. WILLIAMSON: And then the building was named for him, and it's not a complete. . it's a building that's tacked on to another because at that time there was a rule they had a building that it would have to be a detached building, but if they attached it on to someone, then they , some other building went up.

M. GIBBS: Yes, and it's called Williamson Hall.

R. WILLIAMSON: Williamson Hall.

M. GIBBS: And it's the education building on our campus. [tape cuts out]

>>>>>>>End of Interview<<<<<<<<<

[SARAH and LIZA Gibbs can be heard singing for a few seconds, but the rest of their material has been recorded over with silence for the remainder of the tape.]