

## Transcription: Millie Dalrymple

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*Today is Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010. My name is James Crabtree and I'll be interviewing Ms. Mildred, Millie Dalrymple. This interview is being done over the phone. I'm at the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Ms. Dalrymple is at her home. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Ma'am, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an extreme honor, and I guess the first question we almost always start off with is please tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went in the military.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** It just depends on how much you want to hear. I was born in Llano, Texas, and I grew up there until I went to the University of Texas. I graduated and then I got married and he got killed and I went into the WASP.

*Yes ma'am. Well I guess share with us a little bit maybe about your family background, siblings, parents, that sort of thing.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** OK. Our grandfather had a large ranch in Llano and we spent a lot of time out there. But my father was Roy Inks, and he was the mayor of the small town I grew up in, and we lived in the town, and because it was a small town and because my family was prominent, I was probably spoiled. But after I started school at 5 because you know, I don't know why. But anyway I started school at 5 and graduated from Llano High School when I was 19, and started the University of Texas. It was a happy childhood.

*And growing up in Llano, did you have any brothers and sisters?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I had one brother who was a year and a half younger than I, and he was a brat who was always in trouble but I managed to keep him out. I mean he had boyfriends and I didn't have any girlfriends, so I read a lot and he played with the boys. And after we grew up, he was the best friend I ever had.

*That's great. I know ma'am, you mentioned your father and your maiden name is Inks, is that the same as, I believe there's a lake up there named Inks Lake?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** That's right, Inks Lake, it was for my father. He was on the first Board of the Colorado River that got the dam eventually built there.

*Wow, that's fascinating. So you had a great childhood then in Llano, and you went to the University of Texas. And I guess at that time it was not common for females to go to college, is that right?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No, that's not right. There were females and it was very common.

*Oh OK. Well tell us a little bit then what the University of Texas was like when you got there.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** It was fun. I went to a girl's school first because my family thought I was too young to start the university, so I went to Texas State, at that time it was TSCW, Texas State College for Women the first year. Then I transferred to Texas, and I liked it. I didn't, I majored

in journalism, with a minor in English I guess. But I wasn't a very good student. I'd rather dance at the student union than go to classes. I got by.

*Did you join any clubs or sororities or that sort of thing?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No, I did not. I don't know. I just didn't. But you know, I worked on the *Daily Texan* and I had lots of friends. It was a happy time. I was not a very good student but I managed to get by with the grades of roughly I guess B's.

*Were you attending the university when Pearl Harbor was attacked?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I'm trying to remember. I'm sure I was, yes. As a matter of fact, I think I was having dinner over at one of the cafes next to the university. Can't remember the name.

*Do you remember what your thoughts were when you heard that? I'm sure it was a shock to you.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well I know that I was having dinner with a boy who became my future husband, and his remark was I guess this is the last time I'll wear civilian clothes. He was a cadet over at, in San Antonio, and it was the last time he wore civilian clothes.

*Tell us a little bit about him if you would.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I might have to get my other telephone.

*I'll try to speak a little louder if that will help.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** That will help.

*Could you tell us a little bit if you would about your boyfriend, a little bit about how you met him and that sort of thing?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** He was Bill Davidson, and he was my boyfriend in college and I had his fraternity pin, and we were having dinner that day, and he went into the service right after that. He volunteered and became a pilot.

*Where was he from?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Houston.

*So you met in college.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes, he was of Sigma Nu fraternity, but mostly we worked in the legislature together. That's the reason I met him. He worked in the enrolling department and I worked in the engrossing department of the legislature.

*That's fascinating.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Then when we were not busy typing, we sat in the balcony together and talked, and then at night if we had to work late, I had my mother's car and I'd drive him home, and one thing led to another like a romance.

*So were you already engaged when Pearl Harbor was bombed? Were you already an engaged couple?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Not engaged, no, just stay I guess you'd call it.

*How much longer was it after Pearl Harbor was bombed before he was actually on active duty?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I guess, I don't remember.

*But a pretty quick period of time.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes. It's sort of vague now. I think he went to, I'm sorry, I'm lost. I just can't remember right now.

*No that's fine, I understand completely. So he went into the service and you were still going to school there at the university. Tell us what that was like. I'm sure that was pretty tearful when he had to leave and you had to stay behind.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes, except that I was very proud and it was expected. I was looking at this. I had written down some of the stuff, but it was after he was gone that I was looking at it now, when I went into the WASP. But I've written Millie's Milestones, which is a small biography, autobiography, so if I glance back, I might remember better.

*Sure, well tell us maybe when was it that you two decided to get married and when did you get married?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, he was sent out on the training, he was sent to Coeur de Lane, Idaho or somewhere like that, up in the north. Then he got sent on, there was, they thought there was a Japanese submarine off the west coast, and he was sent out there to look, and I didn't. I don't know, he didn't call me for a while and I was really worried about it, and first thing you know, he called me and he said that he'd been on a patrol for submarines, and he had been stationed in Salt Lake City. And then when he called me and said he wanted to get married, and I said I do, too. So he got transferred to Spokane, Washington before I could even get there, but I went over and told my mother that we were gonna get married, and got on the train and got up there.

*Did your parents approve?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** My father was gone. I only had my mother, and I was a very headstrong, and I didn't ask her. I just told her. And then we went up to Llano to tell my grandparents and they thought, everybody knew him and approved of him. It was just that they'd rather that I hadn't married him until afterwards, but I didn't care.

*So you went up to Washington state to meet him. Who did the wedding for you?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** A chaplain of his group and there were two or three others got married at the same time.

*Wow, and I assume you didn't have really much of a chance to take a honeymoon, is that right?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Oh sure, we had a great honeymoon.

*Oh you did, OK. Tell us a little bit about that.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, it was sort of a stop and go. He had a plane and I had a car, and so first he would fly, I guess I remember driving down the west coast. It was really something, all by myself at 30 miles an hour while he was flying, and he went to Neerock, and I went to Neerock with another friend who was following her husband, and it was absolutely impossible. So we went to Hollywood and got us a really nice apartment, two bedrooms and two bathrooms, and around I remember a fountain and it was really, really, really nice. And so rather than our going to, they only had the weekends off, so instead of going over there, we left them one car, and they came to our lovely apartment in Hollywood for the weekend. And Bill and I explored Hollywood. It was fun.

*I'm sure it was. And you graduated from the University of Texas at this point, or did you put your studies on hold?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No, I had already graduated. He quit to get in and I had already finished there.

*So you're out in Hollywood and I guess he is still going through training at an air base near there, is that right?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** He was, yes, he was at Neerock, which is in California but it was a desert place and we didn't want to stay there, so the other wife and I got an apartment in Hollywood and they came on weekends. That's the only time they had free anyway.

*That's great. And did you get a job during that time as well?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No, I didn't have to. I mean we knew it was temporary. And then after that he was transferred to somewhere in Arizona I guess, and that was to be his last stop and wives were to leave, but I didn't. He went on, he drove and I went with the other wife and we went to Syracuse, New York, which was his port of embarkation. But then after we got to Syracuse, turned out we had a lot of good luck because the people of Syracuse threw the welcome out for the first group of American boys going to war. And there were eight or ten other wives in Syracuse, and they had to modify the B-17 bombers, so they had about ten days, I don't know whether it was a week or ten days, but they had a little extra time there and we just went to New York and did all the things that sightseers did before they had to leave.

*And then where did he go from there? Did he go to Europe?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, he went to Europe, yes. His B-17 group, he was the 305<sup>th</sup> bomber group.

*And was he a pilot?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** He was a pilot and we didn't know the day they left they were there, but very few of those bomber group, the 305<sup>th</sup> bomber group, ever returned. It was the first bomber group and they had no fighter escorts. And then one day he didn't call and we knew they were gone. So I got on the train and had a stopover in Monroe, Louisiana, where my brother was in navigation training, and that was the last time I would see my brother for two years, and then I never saw my husband again.

*I know this has got to be painful to talk about and I really appreciate you sharing this with us, but I think it's important, too, that people hear the story and understand the sacrifice that you and your husband made.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Everyone was making, it was just a time that was everybody was doing anything they could, and lots of people were, I met another, I went to work in an adjutant general department and met another war bride, Kay Drizzo. She'd been in the Philippines with her West Point husband when wives were evacuated. So she and I became friends and actually she and I went out after knowing her husband was a Japanese prisoner, that was the best they could hope for, and then after I got the message that Bill's plane had gone down, well we, that's when I went out, she and I went out to learn how to fly.

*Wow, so you really honored your husband by joining the service.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes.

*When you were notified, did they come to your door or did you get a telegram? How did that happen?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, I was at the office. I was working in the adjutant general office, and she was, too, and I used to go to the office, or the right building, and go to work. And then one day my mother came into the office with a telegram in her hand, and I hadn't heard from Bill in two weeks and my birthday had passed without any word from him, and when I saw the telegram, I knew. And she handed it to the colonel I was working for, but after I read it, I just breathed a sigh of relief, because it was not that he had been killed, it was that he was missing. And I knew he'd be fine because he was such a great guy and he would find a way to get home. But he didn't. His plane was damaged by flack. I had letters from his friends in combat with him, and they described his February the 4<sup>th</sup> flight. His plane had been damaged, I'm reading this, by flack over a target, a German ball bearing plant, and he couldn't keep up with the rest of the formation. He dropped back and radioed he would seek cloud cover. The bombers had to stay together to protect each other with their gunners, and when one of them was injured and dropped out of the formation, they were targets for all of the German fighters. So they wrote and told me that his bomber had been hurt and injured and they thought he might have been able to reach the English Channel. But apparently he didn't.

*How long was it before you got final word?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Oh, about a month. I returned to work and got the telegram that he was missing in action, but I had gotten letters from the other young men in his flight to say that at best he was a German prisoner, and at worst he had crashed into the North Sea. So I decided that I read an article about women flying, and I decided that if Bill wasn't coming home soon, that's what I would do, so I did.

*Tell us, you went and signed up to go into the service -*

**Millie Dalrymple:** The article said that women had to have a commercial license. Well that was impossible, but they didn't get enough people with that, so they had to lower it and lower it to 35 hours with a private pilot's license, so I just went out to Doc Hale's airport on the edge of town and I had enough money because I was working to fly all the time.

*Where was that airport located?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Where Highland Mall is now.

*So you went out there and you found -*

**Millie Dalrymple:** A Ronka 65 horsepower plane. My first lesson was March the 29<sup>th</sup>, 1942, and I soloed 11 days later.

*That's amazing.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Probably not, I was just happy to do it.

*So you didn't have any fear or trepidation about flying at all.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Oh no, as a matter of fact, my friend who went with me whose husband was a Japanese prisoner, the first time she went up, she went out and was sick at her stomach and vomited. But she went up two more times and she finally soloed safely, and we both were accepted into the WASP. Oh, we both got orders to report to Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, on November the 5<sup>th</sup>, 1943.

*So you two went together then. Did you drive from Austin out to Sweetwater?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes I had a car, but I had gotten a ticket for something or other, and so she had to drive.

*Well tell us what it was like the first day you got to the training camp there in Sweetwater.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, it was an awful lot of girls from an awful lot of places. They were from all over the United States, and there were about 70 or 80 of us. We went to the Bluebonnet Hotel in Sweetwater and most of us had the minimum hours of 35 hours, but no, some of them were real pilots, had lots and lots of hours. But it sort of didn't make any difference how many hours you had because you had to go to learn to fly the military way. I was fortunate in that Kay, my friend, and I were in the same, with our names each, she was a Drezzo and I was a Davidson, so we were both in Flight D, and we were roommates with six other girls whose last names began with E and F. That was 12 young girls with two commodes, two showers, and two sinks. We shared those with the next adjacent room. It was not exactly, not even Motel 6. There were 12 of us to share just those two commodes and things, and Sweetwater is a dust bowl, unless it rains, and then it becomes a mud bowl. And I was from Texas, so it wasn't all that big of a shock to me, but it was to the girls from the north that came down there and hadn't even been to Texas before. And Kay, my friend's military background made her a good selection for the honor of being our squadron commander, so she appointed me Flight 1 Lieutenant. I had to wake everyone up and shout cadence while we marched to all of our classes and to the flight

line. It was a new experience and sort of fun. Two, three, four, hup, two, three, four. Have you been in the military?

*Yes ma'am, in the Marine Corps, so I know what you're talking about a little bit.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** OK, but it was sort of fun. We were in primary training in the Fairchild PT-19, and then it was Richton Bi-wings Steerman PT-17. And our instructors were civilians, and each had three students assigned by our heights. That was because we had to check out cushions to be able to see over the instrument panels, and I was, these are metal bucket seats. We didn't have cushions, and so you sat on your parachute, and if the parachute wasn't big enough, you had to have a cushion, and I was a three cushion pilot.

*And with these instructors, were they men primarily, or women?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** There was only one woman instructor and she later became a student because she couldn't become a WASP unless she'd gone through training, so she who had been an instructor had to go through training to become a WASP.

*So how long was your training program there in Sweetwater?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I think, you know I don't remember for absolute sure, but we had three phases of training – primary, basic, and I guess it was 9 months before we got our wings, and an awful lot of them washed out. It was tough.

*What was the hardest part for most of them that washed out?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Primary, they just couldn't fly the planes the way the instructors wanted them to. Many of them didn't pass the first week's check flights. I was always terrified. The instructors felt very responsible. They were severe and profane, and they felt that our lives depended on their teaching us to fly safely. So in primary, you learned aerobatics, so that you knew how to handle the plane in all kinds of attitudes, and so we had spins and loops and rolls and pie on 8's and anything to make us be sure that we were familiar with the plane in all sorts of situations. We flew a railroad track from where we lived at Avenger Field out to a practice area and then did our maneuvers. At the end of our practicing, then we followed the railroad track back home. There were no auto-gyro compasses. And one day to my horror, the railroad track had disappeared under a complete blanket of snow, and nobody knew how to get home. All of us were kind of milling around like a bee without a queen, and we circled and stayed as close as practical at our misery knowing that when the tower realized we were late, they would send a rescue plane. It seemed a long time before that AT-6, that's the Army plane, came near, and I and about 50 other girls tried to get as near to him as we could. It's a good thing his plane was faster because no one wanted to be left behind. We didn't have that much gas and we were frightened. But his plane, he was an AT-6 so he could get there safely and we got back to Avenger and all of us landed safely.

*So you didn't even have, did you have a radio to talk?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No.

*Wow.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No. We had an auto gyro compass, and when they were circling around, I mean looping, it spilled our gyros, and so we were following the railroad track. And then when the snow covered up the railroad track, even if it had been there, we didn't know which way to go, and it was so cold we wore fleece-lined pants and a jacket and helmet and goggles, and the planes had no heaters.

*Yeah, I imagine that was very cold.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** It was interesting, but we got back safely.

*Was that perhaps your scariest time in training or where there other instances?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Oh no sir, that comes later.

*Tell us a little then about some of the other times in training that were pretty hair-raising for you.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well the training was not, I mean I was a good pilot and I was comfortable and I knew I was, whereas a lot of them washed out because they couldn't fly the planes. I could and I was comfortable. And then as we got through the basic, it was just a matter of navigation and navigation was easy, too. We used the radio beam and Morse Code. Do you fly?

*No, I'm not a pilot, never flown.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, you use Morse Code, you have to use dit-dah's and to know where you are, like I don't remember Morse Code. We didn't have enough radio instruments to use, so we had to learn Morse Code when you found your dah-dah, duh-dah, dah-dah was the signal that was sent out by your base so then you had to bracket the beam to find out which way to go. It was really, really hard, but most of us passed. We'd find a cone of silence at the air base, and from Abilene, from Sweetwater we had to find the cone of silence in Abilene and then we could get it back to Sweetwater. Anyway, it worked out.

*Did you ever have any doubts during your training that you were gonna make it? I know you said a lot of other girls had washed out, but did you think in the back of your mind that you were always gonna make it?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** You know, the fact that I lost my father young and that he had great faith in me before he died, and my mother depended on me for the things that me, at 15 I was sort of the boss of my family, and I had a lot, and this is putting it mildly, I had a lot of self confidence.

*And you probably had to to be able to go through the training you were in.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, I had to in my home life, too, because after my father died, my mother had never, my mother was a daughter of a big rancher and she had been sent to boarding school and she just could never learn to become an independent person. Anyway, I was bossy.

*How about your friend that you mentioned earlier? How did she do during training?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Oh, Kay? She did just fine, too. She graduated. We didn't get to go together, but we stayed together all during training and then I went to one base and she went to another.

*So after the 9 months of training and you finally graduate, where did they send you to next?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well I went to Maxwell Family Government Alabama, and she went to Love Field, Dallas, Texas, and there was only one other WASP that went to Maxwell with me.

*What was Maxwell Field like when you got there?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I want to tell you about something else.

*OK, sure.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** On one trip, let me think, where is it – after advanced, I was going by my grandparents and followed the Colorado River until I got to Sandy Creek and then saw the pink granite rock that's near their house, but when I got back to the base I found out that I had deviated and waggled my wings at my grandparents and then a little bit further down at my aunt and uncle, and when I got back I was about oh, not more than 15 minutes off my ETA, but Kay, my friend climbed up on the wing after I taxied in and told me that Mary Helson, one of our classmates, had been killed in a mid-air collision with a trainee who was on her very first solo. Both girls were killed, but because I was also late and because they had crashed before they got onto the pattern, they didn't know which of the AT-6's, the advanced trainers, were involved in the crash the other girl had been on her first solo. So they knew who she was, but they didn't know which of the AT-6's that were missing.

*And so there was some fear then that they thought you had crashed.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** It was either me or the other girl, because both, we were the only two planes that were late and they hadn't gotten to the crash site by the time I got back. So Kay my friend finally phoned the friend, my wing, as soon as I taxied in and said that Mary Helson had been killed in a mid-air collision. And there wasn't any provision for sending her body back either. So each class took up a collection to send their fellow pilot's body back to their family because there was no provision for it in our civil service contract.

*Do you remember where the girls were from?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I met Mary's mother later. I think she was from somewhere up East. I'm not sure where they're from.

*That's got to have been pretty traumatic, but I'm sure your friend was relieved that you were OK.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** You know, we just had our last reunion in Washington, D.C. and I met Mary's, not, I had met her mother at another time, but I met her sister and some other members of their family that came to D.C., and it was just, they were interested because they hadn't known about Mary's experiences in training because she didn't get to go home before and tell 'em all about it, so I told them all about her flight training because I knew her well and I knew what had happened, and by this time, you know, it can be done without tears.

*Well I'm sure they appreciated that.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes, I did, too. I was very fond of her and it was nice to talk to her sister.

*That's great. You mentioned, I know this is jumping ahead a bit, you mentioned being in D.C. You're part of the group that recently received the Congressional Gold Medal, is that correct?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yeah, Congressional Gold Medal.

*I know it was a long time in coming, but I'm sure you felt like that was a great honor.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** It was a great honor, but it wasn't something that I felt we deserved anymore than anybody else who served. It just happened to be us. And I know why. We have the daughter of one of our classmates is a great publicity for the WASPs, and she lobbied for something for us and it worked.

*I think it's always good to honor veterans for their service and I think it's tremendous that you were awarded that. It's a great honor.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, it was fun to see all my classmates and their families there, too. I took my whole family.

*Oh, that's great. I guess now go back a little bit. Tell us what it was like when you got to Maxwell Field in Alabama.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well it was paradise compared to Avenger. There was just one other girl who went named Eloise Huffein. She was from Dallas and she and I reported to Operations Officer at Maxwell Field. And on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944, D-Day in England and D-Day for us, we lived in nurse's quarters across from the officer's club and took our meals at the officer's mess. We had all the privileges of officers and were treated with respect and camaraderie on the fly lines, but we weren't military so we could wear, we had to go shopping. We could even wear formals to the Saturday night dances, so we had to go buy some clothes. And I checked out in B-24's which is a four-engine bomber, and I was 5 feet 3 inches tall and I think I weighed about 120 pounds. And I couldn't, well I really couldn't fly the airplane by myself. It was just too heavy. You had to trim it up and synchronize the props and hold one wing up almost physically with the steering column until you got the other one up. I didn't do a very good job, but I was checking out as a copilot, so it wasn't all that big a deal and he passed me. And I also qualified as a first pilot in twin engine UC78. I didn't like it. And HE-11 and C-45 and a YC-78 which was an experimental thing, and I had both flying and written tests.

*What was your favorite plane of all the planes that you flew in?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** A C-45.

*And why was that?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** It was easy to fly and it was, it held enough, I mean you could take 4 other people besides your copilot, and it just was, it was a big plane but a little plane, you know?

*So it handled well for you.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yeah.

*And so once you got to Maxwell and it was just you and one other lady –*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, they had to use the scissors of B-24 base, and as the B-24's came back from combat, they had to have new engines put in 'em and then slow time. How old are you?

*I'm 33.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** You don't even remember it. They used to put several I think it was, I don't know how it was on a car, new cars, you had to drive them under 30 mph to break in the engines, well, that's what we had to put slow time on the B-24's, and we flew as copilot and it was a very dull thing that the pilot and you took it off and then flew across country for maybe 5 or 6 hours and then came back and landed at Maxwell Field. You had the engineers, the maintenance people on board, but there wasn't any trouble, at least I didn't have any.

*How much slower did you have to fly it than you normally would fly it to give us some sort of understanding?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I have no idea.

*But it was quite a bit slower than you otherwise would fly it.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I think so, I'm sure it was.

*How long would you have to do that with a plane before it was ready to move on?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I'm not sure about that either, maybe about 10 or 15 hours, just to be sure everything was put together right, and you always had a mechanic on board to listen. I don't know, it was just a check flight sort of.

*Did you do any ferrying of planes from one base to another and that sort of thing?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, other WASPs did, but I did not. My main job was whatever happened at Maxwell Field, and it was mostly copilot on the B-24's, or if Mission Headquarters of Eastern Training Command and a lot of them had to go to Washington and so they needed a pilot to take 'em to Washington. Well also, if there was a plane down somewhere, we had to take parts. We just had a variety of things that we did there. We put slow time on the new engines, and well, the only problem was, you see, and I've written this down and I can mention it, those B-24's could fly many, many hours and our bladders had to be pretty well taken care of because there were no relief tubes for women. So we didn't drink much before going on one of those missions.

*It seems like you would get dehydrated not being able to drink anything.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** That's right.

*Going back a little bit, you mentioned at Maxwell there being you and one other female and the formal dances and that sort of thing, what was that environment like to be one of the few females and I assume be surrounded by a lot of young men?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** It was fun. It really was. I don't know. You didn't dare get attached. They probably were married. So you just liked to dance with them or fly with them, but you didn't, weren't serious about any of these officers. We were only girls and we knew better.

*What about the town? Did you get out into the town very much or did you stay pretty much on base?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, we went to town to buy some evening dresses. We didn't have that kind of clothes with us. We just had our uniforms and we wanted to go buy some evening dresses and we had money, so we did. And then one time one of my things I had to do was to fly to Mobile, Alabama to pick up a supply of booze for the officer's club, and I landed very, very carefully when returning from my whiskey. But I didn't know why I had to go to Mobile until I was making a speech a lot of years later, and they said the reason I had to go to Mobile was because Montgomery was a dry county.

*Hey, that makes sense now.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I had to go down and bring back, I knew I was bringing back whiskey, and I was very careful when I was flying it, but I couldn't figure out why I had to go to Mobile to get it. Then I found out later. That same, well I don't remember when it was, but we were going to Orlando to combat survival school. I remember this. On the way down there, we were going in my car but we didn't want to go because we'd miss flying hours. So we decided we'd drive straight through and then somewhere in the upper part of Florida which is not very well habited, my car died, and it was midnight. We had left there thinking we could get to Orlando in one night.

*And it was just the two of you?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes, two girls, and hot, and the car dead in the Panhandle of Florida. And a truck came by eventually and so we hailed him down, and I forgot what was the matter with my car, but he took both of us in to whatever it was we needed and brought, I guess it was gas maybe, I don't know, we were so dumb, and brought it back and put it in the car and then we drove on into Orlando. And then I was only there one day when I got a telegram from my mother that my brother was missing in action and she wanted me to come home. So I did. His plane had been shot down over Yugoslavia.

*Was he a pilot as well?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes, after a raid on the Palesti oil fields.

*I've definitely heard a lot about the Palesti oil fields.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well, that's where his plane was shot down, so I went home to be with mother for a while, and then went back to, I hitched a ride on B-24's going to and from and got back and was only gone about a week, but we didn't know anymore about my brother til' last of

the war. And by the end of September of that year, that would be 1944, we were told that December the 20<sup>th</sup> the WASPs were gonna be deactivated.

*Why was that? Did they feel they had enough manpower at that point?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I think it's because Jacqueline Cochran and Jovita Coldpowell, they had an argument. She was in charge of the WACs, and Jacqueline Cochran was a WASP, and men were coming back from combat so the WASPs weren't needed and they could put us as non-flying WACs, and Cochran didn't want us to accept that so we were sent home. And I wouldn't have done it anyway. I mean it just was, sorry about this, but it was just a let-down to know that you weren't flying and that you'd be a ground soldier.

*I bet that was pretty dispiriting.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well typewriters, you could be typewriters and get paid for -

*Yeah, that's not the same.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No. So we at that time, a lot of the B-24's were going out to be scrapped to build the B-29's which were to replace them, and our demolition depot was at Ogden, Utah, and so that's where the mountains begin at the runway's end and stretched into the clouds almost immediately, and so slow turns were a necessity after lift-off, but those of us who flew the B-24's up got out and got on this one carry plane that had to bring us back. And sometimes on take-off we could look back and see that the crushers were hammering down on those planes we just landed. But they were being used for metal to build the new planes.

*I'm sure that had to have been bittersweet to see that.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Oh, we had another person besides the woman we first went to was Heloise Helfinzaby, and then we had another pilot that came in and the three of us had one harrowing experience which was our own fault. We were supposed to fly three PT-19's, that's a single engine, to the demolition depot at Cape Gerardo, Missouri, where they were gonna be crushed and metal used. So all of the instruments had been stripped, and so had to sit around and wait for contact flying from Maxwell Field to Cape Gerardo, Missouri, which wasn't very long but we couldn't go unless it was contact all the way because they were taking all the instruments off of the ones we had to fly. And we already knew that the program was to be over, and we had wanted to get real flying time and we just hated sitting in those little PT's trying to find the green light saying we could go, and we were losing time on our own log books, but we had to sit there. I don't know, maybe it was only two days or three. At the time every hour was miserable. But finally we got a green light signifying that Cape Gerardo was clear. Well I have it noted here, it came the fourth day. When we reached the X of Cape Gerardo, oh, OK, there were clouds there but it was supposed to be clear at Cape Gerardo, so we took off, and all three of us, and you measured the air space, and you said you do or don't fly?

*I don't fly, no.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** You would do the same thing in a car I guess if you could do it straight, you'd measure how much gas you've got and how long it'll take to get to where you're gonna go and how much gas it takes per hour. So we did all that and they set the planes up with a minimum amount of gas because they were gonna be destroyed anyway. So we were flying

planes that didn't have very much gas, and we got the green light saying that Cape Gerardo was clear on the fourth day, and we went up into the clouds and it was supposed to be clear at Cape Gerardo and we figured out the time and decided this ought to be the place, but it wasn't. I mean there were solid clouds. But there was, you know, the planes were gonna be demolished anyway, so we decided OK, if it doesn't come up pretty quick, we'll just head 'em off into the mountains and parachute. But so we circled as long as we dared with the amount of gas we had and then decided whether we were gonna make it to the mountains to dump the planes, and then one of us found a little hole in the side of a tea cup in the clouds and she dove down and didn't come back up, so we figured there was clear ground underneath and we did. And there was, but the city wasn't very high. As a matter of fact it was just barely over the river, and we skimmed the water and prayed for the gas to hold out, and we didn't know whether we were going the right direction or not. What if we had overflowed Gerardo? But if we'd had a bridge, we'd been in trouble. But we weren't. We found Cape Gerardo and went up to check in and decided we would tell 'em, and when we got there, there was a pick-up pilot from Maxwell who arrived an hour previously on instruments to take us back. He said he had stayed because the airport had been closed down soon after he arrived, and he knew we couldn't get in. Well, we did.

*I'm sure that is pretty harrowing especially when you're talking about having to ditch a plane and bail out.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yeah, you know these things are dumb and they sound dumb and then we were young and we probably, I don't know whether we would have done it or not. It's just that I don't remember it as being a narrow escape.

*Well it's got to be a little nervewracking.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Anyway it was all over and 38 WASPs had been killed and were not given military status until 37 years afterwards and we received no GI benefits, but I felt very fortunate to have been at the right place at the right time and to have been a WASP.

*And you know in your heart that you did something that helped our nation in time of war and ultimately into victory.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** You know, I knew that but that was not paramount in my thoughts. I just liked flying and I was glad I was able to and I don't know, I just felt lucky and I was sorry about the war and all that, but I didn't feel like I was helping all that much just flying that, I don't know, it was something I could do and I did.

*Well I assure you, everything helped and I know that definitely helped. I've read enough history to know that what you did was important.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** It may have been later, but they didn't put women into the military airplanes for a long time.

*Sure, I understand. So when you finally got out or they shut down the WASPs, did you immediately come back home to Texas?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** I went back and got a job in the legislature where I had worked during my university years.

*What did you do at the legislature?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Typed bills all day and night, some from the engrossing department over to the enrolling department, and stayed on local bill nights, stayed on until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. Every bill had to go to the next chamber the next day. But it was a job and I liked it and I had fun. Oh, I had fun whatever I did.

*Did you fly anymore after that?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No, not until our kids were grown and asked me to fly with them.

*So you did go flying again with them later on.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yeah. About 30 years later.

*That's great. What did that feel like to get back in a plane and go flying again after having not done it for a period of time? Was it like riding a bicycle? Did it come back to you instantly?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No, it wasn't. In other words, once you have flown a really good plane, like the AT-6's, well they had these little I call them puddle jumpers, they had these little airplanes that were fun to fly but oh, first I flew one I couldn't land it. It just jumped and jumped and jumped and wouldn't sit down because I had flown heavier planes.

*That makes sense, yeah.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** But I don't know, I guess I had lost my thrill. Been there, done it, that's it.

*And I guess eventually you got remarried, is that right, and you said you have children?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yes. 3.

*3 children. And you raised your family here in Austin?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** My husband was an FBI agent. He had been a fighter pilot and was a friend of my first husband, and I knew him all my life, and after we were married he was an FBI agent and we lived in Washington and it was great. Then we finally got back to Austin.

*So did you primarily raise your family then, your children in Washington, or did they grow up in Austin?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** No, I think the first one was we had been in Newark, New Jersey when first, we were married in Austin, and he went to Newark, New Jersey, and then eventually I joined him up there and that's where my first child was, after about a year or two, and then we went to Washington D.C. where he was stationed, and lived in Virginia which is an adjacent place of state for about the next 10 or 15 years until he retired. Moved back to Houston and then after he retired from the FBI, we moved to Austin.

*That's great. Did you keep in touch at all with your first husband's family with his parents or any of that sort of thing?*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Oh yes, always. I haven't heard from his brother. I just haven't heard in a while from his brother. We kept in touch. I visited with him, when I came back to Austin I visited with his parents and then after they died, oh, after I got back from, when I got all of Bill's stuff back after he was missing in action, his brother came up, but his father came to Austin to get Bill's stuff, but his mother couldn't face it for a long time. So it was very difficult.

*I think that's great that you were able to keep in touch with them because I know that my wife's grandmother, she lost her first husband in World War II, and she's never really talked to anybody about it in the family, even all these years later it's too hard for her to talk about, and I think, I guess that happened with a lot of people that lost loved ones.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Yeah, you have to let some time pass. But then we became good friends. I took them up to the ranch with us, with my second husband, and it worked out all right.

*That's great. Yes, ma'am. Well I tell you ma'am, it's been a real honor to talk to you today and to hear your accounts and I truly mean it. It's been a great interview. I hope you've enjoyed it as much as I have.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well I have, but I have felt so dumb at times because I can't remember.

*Well I think you remember a lot of details and I've done a lot of interviews and I have to tell you you recall more details and things than a lot of people I've spoken with.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well if you need anything other, you can call me and I may have remembered it by then.

*Yes ma'am, and like what I've told you before, we'll make copies of this interview on disk, CD's, that we'll send to you that you can give to your family and friends and that sort of thing, and we'll also get this made into a transcript and then eventually with your permission we'd like to put this interview on our web page as well so that school children and others can listen to it.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Oh wow, is there anything I shouldn't have said for school children?

*No, everything in there, it was a great interview. It was a very good interview.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** OK, well you will edit out if I slipped some.

*There wasn't anything in there bad. I tell you, ma'am, it was a great interview, and then also if you have any pictures you would want us to put on that web page, I'll get in touch with you and we'll figure out a way to get some photographs put on our web site as well.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Well that'd be good. I've got some.

*I'd love to see 'em, and I know people that listen to this interview would love to see any photographs you want to share as well.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** OK.

*Well ma'am, thank you again very much. I know Commissioner Patterson and everybody here at the Land Office is very grateful for your service and very thankful.*

**Millie Dalrymple:** Thank you, bye bye.

*[End of recording]*