

Interview with

Jay Williams

November 5, 2004

by Lloyd O'Connell

for the

Highway 101 Association

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Interview with Jay Williams on November 5, 2004 at his home, 2005 Montgomery Avenue, Cardiff, California. Interviewer: Lloyd O'Connell of the Encinitas Historical Society. Transcribed by Kristi Hawthorne

Lloyd: Okay, we're with Jay Williams. It's November 5, 2004. Jay, I'm going to start by saying, please state your full name and address.

Jay: Jay Harold Williams, 2005 Montgomery Avenue, Cardiff By the Sea, California.

Lloyd: When were you born?

Jay: 1924.

Lloyd: What are your parents' names?

Jay: Dave Sibley Williams and Mary Coon Williams.

Lloyd: How did your family come to Southern California?

Jay: My step grandfather, Fred Shancks, wrote a letter to my dad in South Dakota in the late 1920s and said that his mother would like to see him out here and offered him a position in the Shancks stores. So my father and my mother decided to come out because South Dakota was rather poor at the time.

Lloyd: What was the date?

Jay: Approximately 1927.

Lloyd: Yes, hard times. Where did you come then as far as California is concerned?

Jay: We came to Oceanside first because that's where my grandparents had the store, the main store. Then we moved to Encinitas and then to Leucadia, which was South Coast Park at the time. Then we moved to Cardiff in 1931.

Lloyd: Can you tell me of any outstanding event that occurred and was meaningful to you as relating to Highway 101?

Jay: Oh yes, I think it was the time that President Roosevelt came through. He came through in an open car and it was all advertised. He had a motorcyclist escort and other cars with him, but this was a nice, open touring car. No protection such as we have today for presidents. He just sat there with his cigarette in his long cigarette holder, blue hat on and happily just waving to us. We were sitting on the bridge down here. We enjoyed it and we just thought that was a big thing.

Lloyd: Do you remember your first ride on the 101?

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Jay: No, I can't remember that. But we took very few rides. I know that I can remember in Leucadia going to the Blue Goose Café. It had a sign "The Blue Goose Café" on the west side and had one on the east side. The owner told my brother that he would give him the sign on the west side and when I said something about that, he said, "well, you can have the one on the east side." Of course we never got them, but we were kids and it was a big deal for us!

Lloyd: Do you remember the first trip when you were driving yourself?

Jay: No, I don't, but I do remember something that I did which was very stupid. In Leucadia, when the lanes were separated by the trees, at the northern end of Leucadia, I decided one day when I was driving that I would drive the wrong way on the 101. Which I did! I drove, probably it was only two or three blocks, but I drove it because there was no traffic. Rather than just cross over to the other side, I just went up the wrong side of the road and went over till I got to a point where I could cross over. Like I said, it was quite stupid, but as a youngster, no traffic, so I did it.

Lloyd: What date was that? You were probably 19?

Jay: I was younger than that because I went into the service when I was 18. I was probably 17.

Lloyd: Crazy kids, huh! Do you recall any of the other buildings besides the Blue Goose?

Jay: Noah's Ark, of course. Miller's store, obviously. I remember all those ones in Encinitas, Sturdivant's Drug Stores, all of those were there. I can remember Doris Delay's father, The Rendezvous. The La Paloma Theater was the focal point at that time. The Bank of America was there and next to the La Paloma we had the malt shop, which was wonderful. We thought that was great. I can remember Saturday night and the 101 through Encinitas, was the focal point for people around here because we didn't go up there except on Saturday night. Mom did her grocery shopping. Dad worked at Shanck's store and he kept open until maybe 11:00 at night. There was no set time, because we waited until all the customers were gone. But my brother and I would wait out in front and if Mr. Matthews would go by, who was the La Paloma manager, we would try to look sad so that he would give us a ticket to get into the theater! It was ten cents then and we just didn't have ten cents.

Lloyd: Isn't that something.

Jay: I worked at the Safeway when I was 17.

Lloyd: Did you really?

Jay: Yes. Mr. Owen was the manager. I remember crossing the 101 with huge boxes of groceries that we'd carry. We had no carts. We carried groceries out for customers.

Lloyd: Yes, they used to do that, I can remember as a young boy, too. That was our first modern grocery store, wasn't it?

Jay: Yes. Mom had bought at Miller's for many years and that was when you put it on the cuff.

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She found out that Safeway was so much cheaper, she got a loan at the bank and paid off Miller's and started buying at the Safeway. Then I got a job there, too. Which was very nice, because when I went into the service gum was extremely hard to find and they would save some for me at the Safeway and Mom would send it overseas to me. That was rare.

Lloyd: What landmarks or unusual structures come to your mind? Was there any when you were here?

Jay: Of course, the one at the Self-Realization Fellowship. Especially, the one over the side. That was an interesting time. The Beacon Inn down here in Cardiff, actually had a portion of the building that looked like a beacon, so that was interesting. They had a small café called "The Breakers." That was kind of a hangout for those of us who went down there to swim. There was Evans Motel, down here in Cardiff. There was a motel, let's see, it was called the Corrigan Lodge and it was named after "Wrong-way Corrigan."

Lloyd: Really?

Jay: Do you remember the one that supposedly was flying west and he flew east and crossed the ocean? That was named after him. Then there was Frankie's Café which was a neat place.

Lloyd: These were all in Cardiff?

Jay: In Cardiff, down here along the beach.

Lloyd: Do you remember Mr. Owens' first name at all or Mr. Matthews?

Jay: No. One was Vern Owens. He might have been at the Bank of America, but this Mr. Owens lived in Del Mar.

Lloyd: Was there any particular person associated with this stretch of the 101 that you recall? You talked about the President but anyone else that you can remember that was kind of notorious?

Jay: We did have people that I saw. I remember Cecil De Mille's daughter. Who was that Greek fellow she was married to? I don't remember his name. Anthony Quinn. He would stop by and we would see him occasionally.

Lloyd: Do you have any favorite memories of the road at all?

Jay: Yes. There was very little action around here unless we went to the beach, did something like that as kids. We went to the beach everyday, of course. On the 101 bridge down here, of course it crossed what we euphemistically called a "lagoon". It was deep enough so we could jump from the bridge into the slough. It was very, very good for that. So we could do high-jumping and whatever. But the thing that I remember most is that we knew that on Labor Day when the races were on and the traffic was heavy and it was three lanes, we were going to see accidents. So we would go down purposely and wait for the accidents to happen! Which we did! I can remember one of the accidents was a tank truck, gasoline tank truck, and a car that hit

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on the bridge and blocked it, totally blocked it, on Labor Day. We had traffic, including Greyhound Buses, Santa Fe or whatever, going inland at Solana Beach, going clear through the back country at El Camino Real, coming out on Manchester. Because I remember my Model A stopped down there right in the middle of the road and we had to get it going again so the traffic would go through. They'd come out here and go out and bypass the bridge. But that's what they had to do; it was backed up for miles. Another thing that I enjoyed on Labor Day was watching George Beach of George's Café because the traffic, so much traffic was going north, the highway was three lanes, had four lanes actually. It had one lane going south and three lanes going north. Then they used the passing lane and the shoulders to try to get through and then of course they got the bridge and it kind of got tangled. But because George wanted customers to come into his place, I can remember him being out there, I saw him. He had his chef's hat on, his aprons, he had an extra apron, and he would stop the traffic. If somebody wanted to go from the far lane into his place, he'd stop all the traffic and usher them into his place! It was amazing. That was something!

Lloyd: On a main highway?

Jay: Yes!

Lloyd: What about your favorite trip? Is there a favorite trip when you used the 101? 101 was the artery.

Jay: It was the artery.

Lloyd: What was your favorite trip on the 101?

Jay: Probably, because it was so rare, it was going to LA. I think in all my years of living here, we only went to LA twice, that I can remember. So that trip was a big deal to me.

Lloyd: That was a long trip, too.

Jay: It was.

Lloyd: Any other destinations that you can recall?

Jay: To La Jolla.

Lloyd: You went over the hill to Five Corners, what they used to call Five Corners?

Jay: Yes.

Lloyd: You told me about one bad accident, did you have any more bad accidents that occurred, that you remember?

Jay: Well, one that turned right off of the 101 onto Chesterfield, is when the Hershey truck was hit by the train. This was just before we moved to Cardiff, but I heard about it. It scattered chocolate and cocoa and whatever everywhere. People were gathering it up because it was

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during the Depression and you didn't let anything go to waste.

Lloyd: Isn't that the truth. What about stories of patrol officers or cops?

Jay: Probably the best known one was Thompson who lived in Del Mar. I remember his daughter Bobbie in school and of course she told about him. I don't know any stories about him as far as the 101 is concerned. I do know that he had quite a small track laid out in his basement.

Lloyd: For trains?

Jay: Yes, for trains.

Lloyd: Was he particularly tough with everybody?

Jay: Well, he was quite well known around here, so I would imagine that he knew most everybody.

Lloyd: You never got a ticket, of course?

Jay: No, I've never gotten a ticket. In eighty years, I've never gotten a ticket.

Lloyd: I can't say that I'm afraid.

Jay: I've been lucky that's why. Driving the wrong way on the highway!

Lloyd: Well, no one was around, so I guess we can excuse that! Besides the president, were there any other celebrities that you can recall in a parade route or anything of that nature? Did you attend the flower festivals or anything like that?

Jay: Oh, yes. We used to go up there to those. But, who was the one who played with John Wayne and played his antagonist in that Irish picture, the Quiet Man? Victor McLaughlin. I can remember when he came through he had a motorcycle escort and they found out later that he had apparently provided liquor to some of the motorcyclists and one of them was killed in his motorcade. He appeared as a drinking soul on screen and I think he was off screen, too.

Lloyd: Not too smart.

Jay: No.

Lloyd: Do you remember the first traffic light that was installed?

Jay: In Encinitas?

Lloyd: Or along the 101.

Jay: I can remember when the one was put in down here on Chesterfield. I don't remember the date but I do remember what led to that. We had several deaths that occurred there. One was

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when a school bus pulled out and this Marine who had just come back from the war had to avoid the school bus and he ran off the road and was killed. There were several people killed at that place and we used to say, “how many does it take before we get a light?”

Lloyd: Did you have any stations in Cardiff?

Jay: A depot? Oh yes. A beautiful station down there with Spanish tile. It was wonderful and for a long time that station was there and I think they even had one of the dray carts for unloading and loading freight. That was there for a long time but apparently the railroad company decided that it was too costly to keep or it was a danger and they wiped it out. There's still a few remnants of concrete down there from it.

Lloyd: That was a railroad station?

Jay: Yes. We used to have regular bus stops in Encinitas, of course. They stopped there at the drug store and people bought tickets in there and got on the bus.

Lloyd: But not in Cardiff?

Jay: Not in Cardiff, no. I was going to say, of course, the old, old 101 crossed the tracks at Chesterfield and went up San Elijo and then crossed back over before it got to the SRF, crossed the tracks there and back went on the other side of the hotel there. The back is to this side and the front is on the other side and went in front of what is now the auto parts store. That was aligned I guess several times before it straightened out completely, as I understand it. Of course, I never saw it, I only saw it when it was completely done.

Lloyd: Anything else that you can recall?

Jay: I've told my fun things about it. The only thing is, of course, that when it was a three lane that's always been called “killer highway” because two cars can't occupy that center lane at the same time going in opposite directions. That really was a bad situation.