

Janis Kozlowski: So, what were your, what was it like on Shemya where you lived? What kind of quarters did you have, what kind of food, and that kind of thing. What do you remember?

Jim Schroeder: Well, we had one Quonset hut, you know. And they had, I think 12, not 12 – maybe eight guys in it. And it was just the crew, you know - the Non-Coms. The officers had their own place there. So we more or less, we had a radio, and you could listen to the old songs, you know - back in the 40s and that. And we'd get news about what's happening, you know - in the states and all over. So, we weren't without the knowledge of what was happening.

And we had ... some of the ... a couple of guys, we liked to fish. So we'd go down - we had enough line and that. And we pounded up pennies for spinners to catch fish on. And get chunks of meat and go down to the docks down there, and catch pretty good size cod fish and bring 'em home. Then we'd cook over the stove in the Quonset huts.

But, we'd go off the islands and see, you know - you'd find pieces of ... well, they had Blue Fox on the island. But they had also, not walrus, but seals. And you'd find different things with seals and stuff like that - teeth and things like that. But, we more or less, you know, spent our time. Because, you just didn't fly that much when the weather was bad. You maybe [had] three missions a month, you know. And then, you just sit there and do nothing. Like I said, I'm lucky, I didn't have to pull KP. Because, on the crews, they never had to do anything like that. So, I [Chuckle] wasn't bothered with that. But, the Non-....

The officer's were very nice, you know. You done [sic] no saluting or nothing like that- you just ... they were just one of the bunch of guys with us.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, well, it's like, being 19 as you were and not having a whole lot to do, I can imagine that could get pretty darn boring for a young guy. [Chuckle]

Jim Schroeder: Well, they played cards and stuff like that, you know ... listen to the radio, or, and sleep, you know. And [Chuckle] when you didn't have anything to do, you'd try to find something. But, you got by, you know - you just had to find something to do all the time, that's all.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have any recreational facilities on Shemya?

Jim Schroeder: I think they did have a club there you could go [to], you know. And we got [Chuckle] rations of six cans of beer a month. Which, of course, we were on ... not many of us drank. But one, Sample, the one from Texas, he [Chuckle] lived in Nuevo Laredo, which is right at the Mexican border. And he had quite an interesting childhood, really - he told us about it.

He wrote a book, and I wish I would have kept it. He sent it to me, and I sent it back. It was called, "Toys by Us." And it was one of the funniest things; of all the things that he did when he was a kid - make up things, and doing this and that. And I wish I could have got the book, because I would have printed the thing and it would have sold, because it had so many different things in there that he did.

But, like I said, he was a clown, you know. [Chuckle] And when ... if I gave him my beer, you know, and ... of course, he didn't, he could hold it. But after a while ... then he'd get a little drunk. If he cut, you know, he always cut himself - I don't know why. And he'd damage his, rip up the sheet and bandage his hand with his whole sheet. And if it was dark, he had to sit there with a flashlight under his [Chuckle] face, because he was afraid to go to sleep.

You know, you meet so many different characters like that [Chuckle] ... when you sit back and think about 'em, you know. But, Hubert Altman, he was one of the older ones on the crew. He was from Georgia. He was like a father to us, you know. [Chuckle] And he was really great. And he belonged to ... his family belonged in Congress. And I didn't know that until I tried to get in contact with him - and he had passed away, I think, six months before. And that's how I got to get together with Watkins' crew when they had the reunion - because, they passed my name on to one of the other people, and they called me to see if I wanted to come down to the reunion. Which, we had a lot of fun down there too.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, it sounds like a good way for you guys to get together.

Jim Schroeder: Yeah. And it was, you know. We always, it was about two or three days that we'd be down [at] the different places. We were down when the Oklahoma bombing was down there. So we saw the building that was really blown up down there.