

Janis Kozlowski: What do you remember about Aleutian weather?

Jim Schroeder: It was bad. [Chuckle] It was windy. Aleutian Islands didn't have anything but tundra on it - and nothing grew. If we had a spring, the flowers would grow from maybe mid-June to mid July. After that, there was nothing – no trees, no nothing. So, it was always windy and foggy. And it didn't really get any colder, because, you know, the Aleutian Islands go down too far - the tip almost down to where Seattle is. So, you didn't get real cold weather there, but, a lot of fog from the ocean, and that.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember getting much snow?

Jim Schroeder: No, hardly any snow. Well it blew so much, you know – blew! The island was two by four [miles], so it was a.... But, we had one of the largest runways – it was a 10,000' runway. So we had ... you needed it sometimes, when it was really bad weather, to, you know, to come in and find the thing. In fact, after the war, we had a B-29 come in there to land. So, it had to be a fairly good size runway.

Janis Kozlowski: OK, yeah.

Jim Schroeder: That was right after the war ended.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so you saw a B-29 come in after?

Jim Schroeder: Yeah. Right. They came in just before we left to go back to the states. They were using those. Eventually, they were photography, and you know, after the cold war, they were up there taking pictures all along the Japanese Islands and stuff like that. Because they, you know, they didn't know what Russia was gonna do. And so they had to keep constant over flying over the Kuriles and stuff like that.

But, now on Watkins' crew, there was an article - he was the last one to fly up missions in the Aleutians, and photographing the islands and [to] see what was going up there. And at the time, the Russians came up in their fighters and they wanted him to land. But they, they just turned around and went back. And they followed them for quite a while, and then they left them alone. But he was the last one to make a trip over the Kurile Islands.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember about when that was? Was that before VJ Day?

Jim Schroeder: No, it was afterwards – just before we left to come back to the states.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, I see. OK.

Jim Schroeder: So, it had to be in around September when, just before we left to come back to the states.

Janis Kozlowski: OK.

Jim Schroeder: He and another crew - I don't know what they, who the other crew ... there was two, two planes that went up over there.

Janis Kozlowski: And were you on either of those flights?

Jim Schroeder: Oh no, I wasn't. That's when I was still on Howlands crew, see. I left the Watkins' crew and then went to Howlands crew.