

Janis Kozlowski: Now, you said you were a radar operator, right - that's what you ended up being trained for?

Jim Schroeder: That's right.

Janis Kozlowski: And radar was a pretty new thing at the time, wasn't it?

Jim Schroeder: Yeah, it wasn't really up to date like they do have now. It was like pips on the screen - and it really wasn't the best. But it did help you to find the islands and things like that. But otherwise, you know, it just showed how far away you were from an island. But, not like, well, dropping.... Well, the newer ships had better radar than the ones we got. The ones we got were from Africa, and they weren't up to date. And we had all the old equipment - D models. Finally, when they got up to the end of the war, we were buying, K and M model planes - which were a lot newer and had more equipment on them. So, the radar sets were definitely a lot better then.

Janis Kozlowski: And what kind of airplanes were you in?

Jim Schroeder: B-24s.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. Always in B-24?

Jim Schroeder: Yeah, that's all they flew up there was B-24s. And the fighter planes were P-38s and P-40s. But, all I flew was B-24s - that's all they had. And the most we had was 12 ships up there. But, [Chuckle] and we always had one for a spare. But, the most we ever flew was 12 plane missions up there.

Janis Kozlowski: And you were in the 404th Bomb Squadron, right?

Jim Schroeder: Correct. Right.

Janis Kozlowski: OK. So, you couldn't really navigate with this radar in the airplane - you would just see kind of gross images?

Jim Schroeder: Yeah, that's it. You didn't, you could say, you know, the pilots that fly up close to the plane. Because you were all over water, and you aren't picking up anything until you spotted an island or some something in the ocean there that would show you - show up like a pip on screen. But it wasn't definite, like I said. What they have now is completely different than what we had back then. And seeing they were old ships, that's, that's all they had in the beginning.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have other responsibilities, besides as radar operator, on the airplane?

Jim Schroeder: No, because I didn't have any gunnery school. That's all. There was another pio... radar man before I was, but he was transferred to another ship. So that's why I was with

Watkins' crew. And then after a new crew - Howlands, came in, then I was transferred to his crew. And so I flew approximately 14 missions total all together up there.

Janis Kozlowski: OK.

Jim Schroeder: But, now Watkins' crew ended up with 35 missions, which was all they had to fly. But then they, then they were returned back to the states. But, we all went back after the war just about the same time.

Janis Kozlowski: And did Watkins' get all 35 missions in the Aleutians?

Jim Schroeder: Yep, all 35. That was a long, long time. And some of those missions were 12 hours over the water.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, but that must have been grueling.

Jim Schroeder: It is, you know - sitting there. And if you went down, you had 30, ah, 15 minutes in the water - that's all. Because, no one's gonna find you.

Janis Kozlowski: Right. I guess that's the case were they wanted you to have some sort of a life jacket on - so they can find your body later on, maybe.

Jim Schroeder: That's about it.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle]

Jim Schroeder: You aren't [Chuckle] gonna survive in that water at all.