

Janis Kozlowski: Well, first of all, let me ask you ... you served in WWII, how did you get into the service? Were you drafted, or enlisted? And which branch of the military did you go into?

Joseph D. Hutchison: I enlisted in the Air Force - Army Air Corp.

Janis Kozlowski: And where were you at the time? Were you in Michigan then?

Joseph D. Hutchison: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: How old were you?



S/Sgt. Joseph Donald Hutchison – 21st Bomb Squadron, Ball Turret Gunner – Radar Operator, Asst. Radio Operator on Captain Irving L. Wadlington's second crew. Aleutian Islands, Alaska, April – October 1943. Participated in August 11, 1943 Paramushiru raid. Photo courtesy Joseph D. Hutchison, 21st Bomb Squadron, Staff Sgt., Adak, Umnak, Amchitka, Shemya and Attu.

Janis Kozlowski: 19. Was there anything particularly that compelled you to go?

Joseph D. Hutchison: Well, [Chuckle] there was a war on. I was in the ROTC in high school, and our instructor, almost the day we enrolled in the program, told us there was going to be a war in the near future and we should learn everything we could about it. And he was promoted from buck sergeant to major, I think, as soon as the war started. That was the beginning of it.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have family that were in the military as well?

Joseph D. Hutchison: No. My brother enlisted after I did. Actually, he was the reason I got into the ROTC. He had been in it first, and then he dropped out of it after I got in. But, we went to the CMTC [Citizen's Military Training Camp] camps in the summer at Fort Custer, here in Michigan, for the field training. Our high school was an elite high school in the downtown area. It didn't have a playground, or anything; we had no place to march. So we marched on the roof of the building for our close-order drills.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh my, that must have been quite a site.

Joseph D. Hutchison: Well, it was a flat area.

Janis Kozlowski: OK. So where did you end up serving in WWII?

Joseph D. Hutchison: Up in Alaska.

Janis Kozlowski: The entire time?

Joseph D. Hutchison: No, I was moving most of the time. The little letter that I sent you essentially covers all of my duty in Alaska, pretty much; other than the background story [photos and letter in file]. I tried to enlist in the Marines out of high school and they laughed me out of the office, because I looked so young and ... just [like] a little kid. In fact, I had problems in the ROTC. Most of the promotions, you had to have your school grades up at least to a "B" average, and the guys that he wanted to promote to the officer rank could never maintain their averages. It was a tough school, and I was able to do that; and [Chuckle] so he had to promote me every once in a while. And he didn't like me because of that. So, eventually, I took the ... test for field rank. And I passed a perfect test. I knew I'd have to write a perfect test, because he was going to knock it down if he could. And so I wrote a perfect test. But he still came out with a major instead of a colonel. [Laugh]

Anyway ... then the day I got out of school, as I said, I tried to enlist in the Marines, and they refused me. So I went to work for General Motors. And then my dad told me not to enlist for at least a year after Pearl Harbor, because he had been in WW I and he knew what was going on. So, I waited almost a year. And then I went down and took the test for pilot cadet. And I passed everything, except that I had; the depth perception on my eyes - I failed. [I] went to the Navy and the Army, and the same result. So, I enlisted as an aerial gunner ... and I took my physical at the American Lady Corset Factory [Chuckle] in Detroit.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle]