

Janis Kozlowski: So did you become interested in aviation when you were a young kid?

Robert Buchanan: Well, I might have been interested but getting into aviation in the Navy was kind of a [laughing], just kind of a mistake really. When I was in boot camp they gave us tests we took and these tests they rated you ... I forget what they call that – by a percentile. Then I was up pretty high on the percentile on it and so I got to pick out just about anything I wanted.

But I was serving an apprenticeship in a machine shop at the Goodrich in Akron and I'd see on here "Aviation Machinists Mate." I thought well, that'd be right down my alley, get some more experience there as a machinist some place. Little did I know that an Aviation Machinist Mate in the Navy was an airplane mechanic. [laughing] So I didn't find that out until after I signed up for AMM school [laughing]. That's how I got into the....

And then, of course, I went to school as a Aviation Machinist, or as, you know, a mechanic and then they asked for volunteers for ... to fly in crews and I signed up for that. And so then I went to radar operator's school. I couldn't ... I wasn't trained to repair radars but I could operate a radar. And then I was sent to aerial gunnery school in Hollywood, Florida, and then back to ... I signed up ... they asked you to sign up what you wanted to fly in and I signed up to fly in TBFs – torpedo bombers. Well, everybody that signed up for ... all they wanted was ordnance men and radio men in that, and me being a mech I was sent then to Jacksonville, Florida and put in a ... trained in PBYs right there and then sent to the West Coast going to a squadron.

Janis Kozlowski: So was it a disappointment to get the PBYs since that's not what you wanted?

Robert Buchanan: Not really, no. You know, I don't think it made too much difference to me really. But I was ... after I got into it I was well pleased, I mean I enjoyed it.

Janis Kozlowski: And you said you didn't at first know that ... when you took the job there in Ohio that you were going to be working on airplanes. Did that turn out to be something that you really enjoyed?

Robert Buchanan: That was in boot camp in Great Lakes, Illinois, is where I was in boot camp. That's where I signed up for that. It was there that I did not realize that I was an airplane mechanic. I thought it was a machinist but it made no difference.