

Janis Kozlowski: So did you enlist or were you drafted?

Robert Buchanan: I enlisted.

As a matter of fact I had a deferment because at that time apprentices that were machinists and electricians were ... they were deferred. And I decided I didn't want the deferment so I joined the Navy and it almost cost me my job at the Goodrich because they said that I didn't work out, when I got back, that I didn't work out a notice and then leave. Instead, on Monday morning I joined the Navy and signed up to leave on the following Friday so all I did was go in and get my tool box and go home and that was it. But they had to give me back my job when I got out, it was a law then.

Janis Kozlowski: Why did they offer you a deferment?

Robert Buchanan: Well, they ... skilled trades were deferred, if you were in a school doing that. In other words, machinists, electricians and probably sheet metal workers, they were wanted in the plants here in the States that were doing work like that because there really was a, probably a shortage of it for the war effort at the time. All of us were deferred. And we could ... but we didn't have to keep the deferment we could, like I did, turn them down and join. So that's how I got in the Navy.

Janis Kozlowski: So how old were you at the time?

Robert Buchanan: Then I was, let's see ... I just had my 20th birthday.

Janis Kozlowski: Were you married?

Robert Buchanan: No, I didn't even know my wife then.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, ok. So, after ... so you went through training at Great Lakes in Chicago and then what happened to you ... where did you go after that?

Robert Buchanan: You mean ... well I went to school in Chicago at 87th and Anthony which was a public school, that the Navy ... a brand new public school that the Navy took over and trained Aviation Machinist's Mates in that school.

Then I went to Millington, Tennessee, which is right by Memphis and did some more training there. And Millington is where I went also to the radar operator's school. Like I said, then aerial gunnery in Hollywood, Florida and then Jacksonville for air operations, and then on to the west coast to be put in a squadron.

Janis Kozlowski: So, what squadron were you attached to there?

Robert Buchanan: VP-61 which was later ... well, after we got overseas it was then designated as VPB-61 which the V stands for heavier than air, the P stands for patrol and the B stands for bombing. The number, of course, is just the number of the squadron.

Janis Kozlowski: And then where did they send you?

Robert Buchanan: From there I was sent to Attu.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, lucky you! [both laughing]

Robert Buchanan: I stayed at Attu – let me see.... I brought down, I figured maybe some of these things you had so I brought down a couple of these books. Let's see here. I'm gonna lay the phone down a minute here.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. [pause]

Robert Buchanan: We got to Attu on, let's see, the 8th of April of 1944 and stayed there until the 11th of September in '44. And I went to Amchitka on the 11th of September and stayed there until the 16th of December of '44.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that your whole, excuse me, your whole tour of duty in the Aleutians was from April to December of '44 in those two places?

Robert Buchanan: From April until December that is right. I went to South Pacific then later.