

Janis Kozlowski: OK. Did it make you feel isolated being on Umnak and not knowing what was happening in the other islands?

Charles Donovan: No. We knew that, basically, what was happening, because we knew the planes went out, and they'd come back, and this, that and the other thing. But, that didn't bother us. We weren't isolated or anything. There was plenty of personnel around – Army and then, at that time, Navy also. The Seabee's came up, and they did their thing and there was a number of them that I became acquainted with also. Ensign Gill – he was in charge of the Seabee contingent at Otter Point ... Ensign Eugene Gill.

Janis Kozlowski: I'm sorry, I was coughing; could you tell me his name again?

Charles Donovan: Ensign Eugene Gill, U.S. Navy. He was from Tennessee. And he was killed on a plane up there on his way back to the states.

Janis Kozlowski: On a Navy plane?

Charles Donovan: Yes. He was on his way back to the states – coming home.

Janis Kozlowski: Now that's a shame.

Charles Donovan: Yep. I was in touch with his sister for quite some time – in Tennessee.

Janis Kozlowski: What did the Seabees do on Umnak?

Charles Donovan: Oh, they built structures – many structures. And they helped with the laying of this Marston matting for the runways. And they did thing – they were a construction unit.

Janis Kozlowski: So, when you started out at Umnak in '42 there, it was a pretty small contingent of people, and probably not a lot of buildings. But, you said, then they started ramping up and the Seabees came in and started building things. Before you left, what did the base look like? What kind of facilities did you have, and how large was it?

Charles Donovan: Well ... it was basically the same facilities that [as] when we went there – just the Quonset huts and some tents and wooden huts, and so forth, but, no big buildings or anything of that nature. Of course, they had oil drums - they put in these oil drums so they'd have oil, and so forth. And they had the ... they build the revetments for the planes when they'd get back. And if they had to put them in there for ... if a williwaw was expected – 'course, you never know when they're expected, anyway. But, things of that nature – they did all of that construction.

Janis Kozlowski: OK. So the ... even though it was a small, kind of a small base when you got there, it sounds like it didn't ... they didn't increase facilities all that much when the new people came in - except for maybe sleeping quarters?

Charles Donovan: Mainly sleeping quarters, eating quarters.... And they had a, well, of course, a mess-hall - had a big mess-hall - a Quonset hut, and.... But, no real construction – no buildings of any kind, of that nature. A recreation Quonset hut, but, it was mainly, as I say, just the Quonset huts, and....

Janis Kozlowski: And how many runways did they build there?

Charles Donovan: Just the one.

Janis Kozlowski: Where was your radio station, with respect to the runways ... and your sleeping quarters – where were they?

Charles Donovan: Oh, with respect to the runway, maybe a quarter of a mile away – if that.

Janis Kozlowski: So, pretty close – within walking distance?

Charles Donovan: Oh, yes, yes. Yeah.