

Janis Kozlowski: When did you actually leave Alaska?

Harry Bailey: I because of being the radio man I was fortunate. I left in March of '45. I got there, like I say, in December, first part of January of '43 – first part of '44, I should say.

But, we ... another fellow we went up to a radio school in Anchorage, that was like, you know, going back to civilization again. But we were in a Quonset hut, living there, waiting for a flight to Anchorage. And they came in and said there is a flight coming in today or it's there now and you guys go down to the airstrip. And somebody took us down and we got there they decided the weather was too bad and the airplane hadn't arrived or was not going to take off. So we went back up to that Quonset hut.

Two or three days later they sent us down again. And we got down there and they said, "No, no, weathers bad." So, I think we went down three times and came back to the Quonset hut and the ... after that third time, my friend and I said, "We're not going back up to that Quonset hut. We'll just stay at this airstrip ... airport, call it what you will, until the day comes and they arrive." Well, we ... there were wooden benches there and I don't know, maybe, one or two o'clock in the morning, I was sleeping on the bench and this fellow come in and shook me and he says, "Come on, there's an airplane out there. It's gonna leave now."

And we went out there and you can't believe the snow storm. You ... I've never seen it snowing harder than that day. [laughing] There was that airplane and we got on it and off we went and I guess we stopped at Amchitka and Naknek and then finally to Anchorage. But I don't know how that airplane whether he came in that night in that, or how he got there. But, God, I mean, it wasn't a real storm, but it was snowing so hard when we got out there.

Janis Kozlowski: And those guys had probably little more navigation equipment than you might have had on your ships but they still didn't have a lot.

Harry Bailey: They didn't have a lot. After ... they had ... they learned the weather up there. I know little about it but, you know, when there'd be a big storm going on ... just about the time that that storm had ended and it was ... clouds might be breaking a little bit, them transport planes – C-47s – would come in to Attu just hugging along the side of the mountain and dropping down and landing. So they were flying when the storm would still be, you know, say at Adak. But they had that thing down to a science I thought.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, I guess if they waited for good weather they wouldn't be flying very much.

Harry Bailey: They wouldn't, no. I had a friend, another fellow who lived in my town, he went in right after they had the battle and they were building an airstrip at the so called Alexei Point was the name of it. He was with Air Transport and he said that they landed at that strip which was being built while the battle was going on and he said that they landed but they couldn't take off for two days because the runway wasn't long enough to go. So they could land but they couldn't take off. I guess they took wounded back.