

## **Interview with Robert Ingram**

### **Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Program**

**July 18, 2012, Fairbanks, Alaska**

Interviewed by Janis Kozlowski and Eileen Devinney, National Park Service  
Transcribed by Professional Transcripts

*This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Robert Ingram was recorded with his permission on video (mini-DV tape) and digital recorder. Copies of the audio file are preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and video on MP4 and DVD and are on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska.*

*The transcript has been lightly edited.*

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#### **0:00:00.1 Dialogue carried out before interview**

**Robert Ingram:** .....couple of days and then the parade is Saturday.

**Janis Kozlowski:** And is that downtown?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Will you go down to that?

**Robert Ingram:** No. It's too much activity and crowds and getting around is.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Yeah.

**Robert Ingram:** I was once a few years ago and that was enough.

**Eileen Devinney:** Okay, I'll just let it run and we can -- we can always edit bits.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Yeah. I think you have a good setup there. Tom Moyers.....

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** .....at Senator Begich's office, told me to ask you the story about the turtles swarming the beaches at Tinian.

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** So, do you mind if I ask you about that maybe later on?

**Robert Ingram:** But that's not -- that's not Alaska.

**Janis Kozlowski:** He thought that was a good -- he thought that was a good story. It's part of your life so if -- if you don't mind talking about it.

**Robert Ingram:** Oh, fine by me. It was a pleasant experience. Well, shall I start with why I came to Alaska and how it was and.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** Are things ready to go now?

**Eileen Devinney:** Yep. They should be. Both recorders are on.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Are they on?

**Eileen Devinney:** .....and you should be good.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay. So, today is Febru -- February..... Can we start over? (Laughter).

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah, we'll just edit the beginning out.

#### **0:01:46.4 Introduction and permission to record and film interview**

**Janis Kozlowski:** Today is July 18, 2012, and we're at the Pioneer Home in Fairbanks. We're talking to Mr. Robert Ingram. Today is -- we have Eileen Devinney from the National Parks Service and I'm Janis Kozlowski with the National Parks Service. We're going to talk with Mr. Ingram today about his life in Alaska and his experiences during World War II in Alaska. Is it okay if we film you and audio tape you today?

**Robert Ingram:** Fine with me.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay, thank you. So, I wonder if you might start out telling us maybe where you grew up and how you ended up in Alaska.

#### **0:02:32.9 Growing up and working in California**

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**Robert Ingram:** I was born in Oakland, California, in 1920. Our parents moved to Grass Valley, a small farm of about 500 acres, and after a few years -- it was a railroad property grant and the folks didn't get a clear title to it so they moved back to Oakland and I went to school there. I served my apprenticeship in a cabinet shop that was operated with a big steam engine for power. Before World War II, I was advised to leave the trade and get into boat building and shipwright, which I did. I worked for United Engineering and they were rebuilding passenger ships to make troop transports to go to Europe.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Do you remember about roughly what year that was?

**0:04:05.6 Traveling to San Francisco in 1942 to find work using his building trade**

**Robert Ingram:** 1941. And then I began thinking of where I could work to the advantage of my trade in the interest of what was happening so about that time Pearl Harbor was bombed and so I thought of working somewhere that my trade and occupation could be of use or advantage, so I..... It's an unusual beginning in that one morning as I was driving to work it occurred to me instead I'd go to San Francisco and inquire somewhere -- I didn't know where -- about hiring. I went in to Frisco -- into San Francisco and not knowing where to go I went to the post office and inquired. They thought it was a joke that I was looking for a hiring agency, and I went upstairs and the third man I asked, he told me they were hiring for Dutch Harbor. He told me where to go. Dutch Harbor, Kodiak and Prince Rupert, the same company -- construction company was Siems Drake Puget Sound Bridge and Dredging. They had these three contracts and I inquired where did they need the men the most. Oh, without hesitation they said Dutch Harbor because with the weather conditions and other conditions the men were not staying. They average stay was 29 days. So, I said, I'm prepared to go. This was in February of 1942; the earlier part of the month.

**0:06:24.4 Traveling to Dutch Harbor on the steam ship, the Mt. McKinley**

**Robert Ingram:** So I sailed from Seattle on the ship -- the Mt. McKinley, Alaska's steam ship, and at that time of the year there's lots of storms. The ship had about 4 or 500 construction workers. It had a deck load of lumber and Army trucks, and as we got fairly close to Dutch Harbor the storm was quite severe and everything on the deck began to go overboard, the trucks and the lumber. We stood on the upper deck and watched the ship in this rough seas and everything going overboard. We got to Dutch Harbor and about half of the men wouldn't get off the ship. They were ready to go home. They'd earned enough money, wages going up. It took about 12 days. They earned enough money to buy a ticket to return home, which they did, and after a few days the ship and a convoy was headed back to Seattle and it got into the same violent storm and it blew up on

the beach, high and dry, so I made the last trip up there. The Mt. McKinley, the ship is still there, rusted out pretty much after 70 years. During the war they -- they couldn't take time to salvage an old passenger ship.

**0:08:51.3 Making office furniture and equipment and repairing a patrol boat**

**Robert Ingram:** They assigned me to first a shop where it was a rather primitive setup and conditions. I was making furniture for the offices; desks and other necessary office equipment, and about then, during a little rough weather, a patrol boat -- a wooden patrol boat that had a large safe in it, they got tossing around and the safe went through the wall and over the side and is somewhere in the bottom up there yet. So they assigned me to repair this hole in this ship. It was only 85 feet long, a patrol boat. So that was completed and after about eight weeks I inquired about a raise because I was there longer than most and, they were hoping that I might stay, they gave me 13 cents per hour raise, which now paid me \$1.54 an hour. I was delighted.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Was that a good wage at the time?

**0:10:48.7 Room and board costs and living on an old ship called the Northwestern**

**Robert Ingram:** Very good. A Seattle wage for carpenters was \$1.41. We had to pay room and board. We paid \$1.95 a day for room and board and looking after our rooms. During the war of course we were in blackout conditions, so everything was boarded up and we lived in barracks and then I was assigned to live on an old ship called the Northwestern that the company had bought and it was used for housing for the construction workers. I'll just get ahead just a little here, but when the Japanese came in on the 3rd and the 4th of June of 1942, they thought the ship was in service of some kind, so anyway they bombed it and burned it and our supplies and, of course I had to move somewhere else to live, but I wasn't on the ship because it was during my work schedule.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Thankfully.

**0:12:31.0 Work contract in the Aleutians**

**Robert Ingram:** We worked -- we were under contract or agreement that we would have to work ten hours a day and seven days a week without ever a day off and that was our contract.

**Janis Kozlowski:** For the entire time that you were at.....

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh.

**Robert Ingram:** And we never considered any -- that we had any overtime unless we worked over the 70 hours because that was our normal work week for everyone.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh.

**Robert Ingram:** They were trying to build up this submarine base, Dutch Harbor, and everything was considered emergency.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Well, you were a young fellow at the time, so you were probably capable of working that many hours.

**Robert Ingram:** Oh yes, it didn't bother me. What was different about it, living right on the project, there was no wasted time or driving time between where you slept and where you ate was less than ten minutes and you were taken by trucks to your job sites. So there wasn't the wasted time in transportation and home maintenance and cars and..... So, ten hours a day was equivalent to what people were working eight hours and coming and going to work in the States, so it wasn't a hardship.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

#### **0:14:18.7 Adapting to weather conditions**

**Robert Ingram:** .....but then we worked lots of 12 and 14 and 16-hour days; however, there're not other things to do. Although the weather conditions, at the place where the lumber was stacked, they had to tie it down every time we took any lumber for our use. If you didn't tie it down, the wind would blow the lumber away. It would just unfold the top layer, just tumble it off, and then the next layer and this is the way it -- it was because of the wind and the conditions. While I was there a brief storm of a few days, it was 127 miles an hour winds. Lots of warehouses lost their roofs. Anything that wasn't secured would disappear and you might know that under these conditions a lot of the men didn't stay long.

**Janis Kozlowski:** What do you think they -- they disliked the most, the remoteness, the weather, the long work hours, or was it all of that?

#### **0:15:49.9 Short stays due to lack of communication and concern for family**

**Robert Ingram:** The married men -- our mail came in once a week. Everything that we wrote had to be, even though I was a civilian at that time, had to be censored. At the post office they would censor your letter and with a pair of scissors cut anything out that had to do with where you were, what you were doing, weather, and family men would get news about their wife or children, they were not well, or had they got the letter and then the outgoing mail would be a week and the uncertainty of whether the child lived or died, they were not -- it just wore them out. They wanted to..... We had no newspapers or magazines, no radios and so they were worried and concerned for their family and after two or three weeks they returned home.

**Janis Kozlowski:** So, did the single -- in other words, did the single men do better then because they didn't have a wife and children to worry about?

#### **0:17:10.2 Punishments for drinking alcohol**

**Robert Ingram:** Well, there was no nightlife. You couldn't buy liquor or beer on the island. You had to go to Unalaska on a barge and you could not get back on the base if you were drunk and with those long hours a lot of the men would enjoy drinking a little and they wouldn't let them back on the island if they'd been. A security Marine was at the barge and they would restrain you. They had no place to live there except on the beach they were referred to. If they didn't behave or fight or something you'd end up on the beach and you'd get some driftwood and make a little somewhat of a shelter, survive, and after a few days the company hiring agent would go over and give you another chance, and after the third time that was the end. They wouldn't have you back. So if you were beached with the weather conditions and the lack of funds, it was really severe. And about once a month a ship that would be going back, they would just load all of them in the hull of the ship just like they would cargo or something and get them back so that they wouldn't die on the beach. Once in a while one would or two, but not many died on the beach. So that was the work conditions, but as a young man I managed it well. I didn't mind it.

**Janis Kozlowski:** So, did you ever think about leaving?

**Robert Ingram:** No.

**Janis Kozlowski:** It didn't bother you that much.

**Robert Ingram:** No, I'd gone up there with the interest of helping for a cause because of my occupation and it never occurred to me to quit.

**Janis Kozlowski:** What did you do with the money that you made?

### **0:19:32.5 Purchasing government bonds with earnings**

**Robert Ingram:** I saved every bit of it. Every week I bought a \$75 government bond. They took that out of your check. It was ten-year war bonds. It was very common. So I got -- got that and I'd go over to the island and deposit the rest. I had no need for money. One time I bought a box of candy bars for \$1.20 or something. That was it. There was no need of spending money. I had adequate clothes and somehow or other I enjoyed working, the conditions, and if a person felt like in the evening as things were getting lighter, go out in the country and watch the beavers, a lot of wildlife. I won't say a lot, but a bunch of eagles and beavers and.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** What about fishing? Was that a past-time?

### **0:21:07.3 Catching lingcod and trying to barter with a restaurant**

**Robert Ingram:** Mm-hmm. But there was no chance to -- to take them to eat them. One night I went out with two other men and we caught a lot of lingcod. They were quite large, about 30 -- 20 to 30 pounders. But after you had them we -- we came into -- to Unalaska. We went to a restaurant and asked them if they would give us an evening meal for all our fish and they said not at all. They had all the fish they wanted. If we wanted to give it to them that was all right, so we did, and bought a meal. That was the only time we ever did that.

### **0:22:13.0 Bombing on June 3, 1942, and building caskets**

**Robert Ingram:** On about the 1st of June of '42, all civilians were brought together and each group of where we worked were told in case of an emergency where would be a bomb shelter, which were Quonset huts, which as you know are worthless as far as a bomb shelter. Because our workplace -- it was very close to the radio station. So, on June 3rd, as we started to work at 6 o'clock, working 12 hours, at the mess hall the drivers would call out for the crews that would go to the different work sites and they called out the ones for the boat shop and we were building barges. The first time and the only time I felt every morning they were shouting at us to get up from the table, it was about ten minutes to 6. I thought to myself, I won't do that. I'll just walk out when I get ready. I was -- that's the way I felt. About five or six minutes later I was still in the mess hall when we heard some explosions and not knowing if the crews were dynamiting or -- it didn't occur to us that we were being bombed, and someone yelled air raid and those of us who were yet in the mess hall rushed out and saw lots of planes in the air and the bombs falling and I don't know where they got the news but very soon someone said that a number of men had been killed and they need caskets. Of all the things you don't need, is caskets during

an air raid. We were all shook up, so another man and I went to the shop that we were acquainted with and started making plywood caskets, 2 foot x 2 foot x 6. We would cut a sheet of plywood, nothing fancy about it.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did -- did you decide to do that yourself, or were you instructed to do that?

**Robert Ingram:** This other man and I, and whoever said they need caskets..... Not having -- the civilians had no supervision. We did that.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did -- did they -- hadn't -- they hadn't prepared you for the possibility.....

**Robert Ingram:** Nothing.

**Janis Kozlowski:** .....of an invasion or.....

**Robert Ingram:** No.

**Janis Kozlowski:** So you didn't know, you know, if we get invaded then this group will do this or.....

**Robert Ingram:** No, no. No, no.

**Janis Kozlowski:** No planning.

#### **0:25:45.6 Siren notification system**

**Robert Ingram:** You can't organize civilians like you can the military. The military has a chain of command and there is order, but the civilians are just like a bunch of ducks that get shot at. The bombing only lasted probably an hour and a half or two hours, but during that time we got lots -- for the rest of the day we got lots of alerts and we were informed that one -- one of the siren would be alert, three would be bombing and five would be an invasion. We didn't care about the one and the three. We were then concerned about the invasion.

#### **0:26:55.8 The bombing of the Quonset hut**

**Robert Ingram:** The military barracks, the men had come in during the night from a troop transport and were in bed and among the first bombed. The barracks got it and most of the men were killed in that group. The Japanese tried for the radio station. Our bomb shelter was this Quonset hut alongside and the bomb was a direct hit on the Quonset hut and our crew, the 40 of us, when they



saw the planes, they ran for this shelter and when the bomb hit it, as you know the Quonset hut went over the hillside. It only killed a few of them but the metal from the building..... A lot of them had broken legs, ribs, a few of them were buried. Well, I was down building these caskets and about 4 in the afternoon I was wondering, as you would know there were plenty of rumors..... So, I was wondering about our crew, so I walked ten minutes to the job site and there was a power shovel and they were digging, so I climbed on the -- on the rig and I asked the operator who they were looking for, and he said we found everyone but three. He described the first one and how he was dressed and what he looked like and, I said, that's me and then the others I knew who they were and they had been buried. But he said the superintendent of the job is down at the barracks and all the corpses were taken there and he's down there looking for you and others.

### **0:29:26.3 Searching for survivors**

**Robert Ingram:** So I walked back which took ten minutes, even less maybe, and got there. As I started up the stairs to the barracks, this man whose name was Cole Cummings, he was just coming out having looked over all these bodies that were covered with sheets. He'd uncover it and look, and he came out and I just said to him, Cole, who are you looking for? When he saw me he was sure I'd come back from the dead and he -- the porch was only about three or four steps and instead of coming down the steps he just made one big leap and he grabbed me and I went off balance and the two of us were struggling on the ground and he kept saying where did you come from, and I told him. He said, you know that's not true. He said, when they called for the truck to go you got on and everyone sat in our little special place as men do and he said the men can -- that survive will tell what you visited about en route. You being younger than most of them, when you changed your clothes and your work clothes, you outran the others and got to the Quonset hut among the first. It was only about 150 yards. You were among the first that got there. I had a difficult time to convince him and I don't know if I did. So we -- I took him down to the place where I made these caskets. We could not, because of the air raid and all, and the fires, we were not allowed to sleep on the island, so we got on the barge. There were about 1800 of us civilians and there was no place there except -- there's no such thing as sleeping bags, and we just took blankets and got some driftwood for a little shelter and, of course we slept with our clothes on and we all wore rubber hip boots and rubber trousers, so we were perfectly dry although it might be windy and rainy.

### **0:32:54.2 Bombed oil reservoir causing burning oil flow**

**Robert Ingram:** The next day, the 4th, by this time they had done the reconnaissance flying and pictures and they did the greater damage -- they had a

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huge oil reservoir for ships and tanks there. They bombed them and the oil flowed down the hill, burning and onto the water and, of course, it was floating. Wherever it would float, the wind and the tide, it would burn the bar -- the docks and wharfs, and our work -- we had just completed a hundred-foot wooden scow. It was on the launching waves and just ready to launch and I -- I wanted to do what I could to save whatever we could. I was pretty much alone. The other men had been injured. So, the Marine guard wouldn't allow me to get any closer, and I wanted to get to our tool room, and I was intending to take every man's tool chest and throw it out the window because the -- the shed was built over the water and would've gone into the sea. I could easily have thrown everything out the window, but the Marine wouldn't allow me, so I stood there and watched everything burn; our tools, the barge, and everything else.

### **0:35:00.3 Planned escape with friends**

**Robert Ingram:** Well, this Mr. Cummings, and another good friend, Al Panzer, they decided to escape. They included me in their plans, so about 20 miles away there was a cannery and they had fishing boats, 32-foot sailboats, so we decided to go down and get one and sail for the mainland. Just as we got our things together to go, the Navy went down and brought all of those boats, they were afraid the Japanese might make use of them if they landed. Here they brought them all in to the base and all hope of escaping was gone. So the two men decided to be a stowaway. There was a destroyer that had been torpedoed and it was headed for Bremerton. It could still function a little. So the two men got some sailor to lend them some clothes and they dressed as sailors and went aboard. The superintendent of the project came about three days later and he said to me, do you know where Cole and Al are? I said, no I don't. I knew they were on the boat, but I didn't know where the boat was, so I said I didn't know. So he said, if you find out let me know. About two days later he came and he said, are they aboard that destroyer that went to Bremerton? I said yes. Well, he said, you're promoted to foreman then. Mr. Cummings had gone so.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did you get another raise then?

**Robert Ingram:** Stayed the same, but I was getting 13 cents more than the other men anyway. With all the overtime and everything we could make \$125 a week, but that's a lot of hours. The unskilled were getting 96 cents an hour.

### **0:38:12.3 Civilians stealing Army rifles and ending up in the Army**

**Robert Ingram:** So, for the next few days we worked extinguishing the fires and filling sandbags and whatever we were inclined to do. We simply just were under martial law and the civilians broke into a warehouse and most all the men stole

rifles -- Army rifles. So then the military went around with a sound truck and they said if anyone took a -- a rifle to come in and they'd give you trousers and a coat to go with it so they'd be in the Army. It wouldn't be like guerilla warfare if they landed. I didn't steal a rifle, so I had no need for a uniform.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did some of the fellas actually take them up on that?

**Robert Ingram:** Oh yes, most of them did, of the civilians. They didn't want to just not defend themselves in case of invasion.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Was it frightening after you'd had two days of bombing? I mean, how did you feel about living there?

#### **0:39:45.1 Building a foxhole on the beach**

**Robert Ingram:** Well, that was part of war..... Not having any -- absolutely no news of what was going on and how many, or what support we had; we knew nothing. So they -- they lined the beaches with large black cans of explosives and they wired it so in case of an invasion they could set these things off and as the men would invade they'd blow the beaches. Well, I dug a foxhole over on..... Somewhat comfortable. I got enough driftwood in it and I could sleep there at night and, I don't know if it was the third day or whenever it was, we had an alert and I ran for the foxhole and two fellas were in it. It would be dangerous to try and get them out so I knew that my foxhole comforts were gone. So down on the beach where these explosives were, I took some driftwood and made a little sloping thing and that's where I slept by the dock. Nobody ever interfered or claimed it. I put some boards down and some on a slope, so that's where I slept for the next probably ten days.

**Janis Kozlowski:** That couldn't have been very comfortable.

**Robert Ingram:** When you're weary it's fine.

#### **0:41:36.0 Eating food out of cans without labels**

**Robert Ingram:** In the mess hall, the problem there was the ship, the Northwestern, had burned and all the supplies and we had to salvage the -- the food in gallon cans, but all the labels were burned off. So we ate family style-like. Everything was put on the table -- long tables of about 12 or 16 men at a table, so they just opened these cans and maybe it was peaches or maybe it was tomato sauce or something, but you could get enough to eat and survive. So it was -- we were glad to have food.

**Janis Kozlowski:** So you might have stewed tomatoes and peas for supper?

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**Robert Ingram:** Oh, yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** (Laughter.)

**0:42:47.3 Setting up a kitchen on the beach to feed soldiers**

**Robert Ingram:** Well, the men that were over on the beach stayed -- some of them were banged up a little, hobbling around, so -- but there was no place to eat there. So another fella and I -- there was a dump truck, a big Euclid. Drivers had disappeared and run around the island to find a way to escape. There was none but, nevertheless, we took this truck to a warehouse and we just loaded as much crates of food and canned goods and everything. We got the truck on the barge and got it over there and set up a kitchen. It's a wonder we didn't kill everybody. All we had was washtubs to cook in. We built -- built a wood fire and made pretty much like a stew of vegetables, meat or whatever. The Army, they were scattered around in foxholes and on the hillsides a lot of them, but they'd smell this stuff cooking and pretty soon we had over a hundred Army fellows eating. They'd bring their mess kit and it was better than C-rations.

**0:44:23.9 Getting arrested while loading more food supplies**

**Robert Ingram:** Well after about three or four days, we needed more supplies so another man and I just took one of these big trucks -- biggest dump truck there was -- loaded it, and some Army officers came by and found us doing it and we got arrested for confiscating supplies during an emergency, and they thought that we were doing it with the interest of -- in case of an invasion that the Japanese would be supplied with stuff. So they -- but we were civilians and we had a court martial. They gave us a few hours. We went over to the beach and got all the men to sign what we were doing and where the food was going. We did that. So the court martial, they found out that we were not confiscating it for the use of the enemy, and we were both forgiven and told not to do it any longer. It took about, like I say, about ten days before things got back to order where the mess halls were operating and back to a certain routine of things.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did more of the men want to leave after that?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did they allow them to?

**0:46:12.0 Termination requests for coverage of transportation**

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**Robert Ingram:** Well, the company agreement was if you quit, you'd have to pay your own way, but if the company terminated you, the company would pay. So, all they needed was to get laid off and every morning, of our group we had about 40 replacements after the others were not able, they'd come and beg to be fired. I would write them a termination slip so they didn't quit, so the company would pay their wages back -- their -- not their wages, but their transportation, which was about \$125. Then ships finally started coming in with supplies and the men could -- could leave.

**0:47:42.3 Navy Construction Battalion (Seabees) moved in to replace civilians**

**Robert Ingram:** And as soon as possible, the Navy Construction Battalion, called the Seabees, moved in to replace us civilians because the civilians were untrained. Although we were under martial law, we were still untrained and we needed to be replaced, so the Seabees moved in and this was probably about eight weeks after the bombing. So, they would pay our way out and by this time they were evacuating the Natives from the islands and the ship I got aboard was mostly Natives from various Aleutian Islands.

**0:48:52.4 Stopping in Kodiak and getting offered a job for the same construction company**

**Robert Ingram:** The ship stopped at Kodiak and the hiring agent came aboard and he said, are there any men here that want to go to work for the same construction company? When I offered to do that the rest of the men thought I'd lost my mind.

**Janis Kozlowski:** (Chuckling.)

**Robert Ingram:** I was the only one that volunteered to do that because I'd -- I'd gone with that interest of working and helping. But the unfortunate thing, all my tools had been burned. I had nothing and I went to work in the shop and there was a Native man there, Al Anderson, and right away he told me, you can work out of his toolbox until you get replacements. It's not easy to get replacements in a place like that, but nevertheless.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** I bet.

**0:50:10.6 Repairing the boats**

**Robert Ingram:** .....he was very kind and so we were teamed up as a pair. There were lots of small boats, patrol boats and work boats, that were always getting damaged on rock reefs because it was very uncharted and poor

navigation arrangements so we had a lot of repairs. If they ran on a reef, if they'd get off and land on the -- take a run for the beach, we'd go over at low tide and make a temporary repair and get the thing on the next tide floating and get it over..... They were small boats; under 100-foot long wooden boats. We would get it over to where we could put it on what they called a grid, a place where it floated on it and then the tide would go out and we could work on it between the tides. Most repairs you could do in -- just in one tide; that is, you'd have six or eight good hours to work, so that was my work assignment there. And after nearly a year, the Seabees moved in and moved us all out and.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** So did the Seabees actually replace you or did you work with them?

**Robert Ingram:** They replaced us because we were not committed to the military and fighting. They were tradesmen and there were around 2000 men that -- civilians they released and they kept eight or ten of us. I stayed and moved in with the Seabees. They tried to get me to join the Seabees. I wouldn't have to go to boot camp and I would have a good rating, but I wasn't inclined to do that, so I left.

#### **0:52:55.6 Signing up to fish at Uganik and applying for Merchant Marines**

**Robert Ingram:** Their fishing season had started near Kodiak, a place called Uganik. I signed up there to go fishing, but we didn't have any work skiff for the boats, so we were delayed, so I told the superintendent that I'd gladly build a boat. I thought we'd just have it for our use. When I finished it, he said that it's only right that they would pay me wages and told me any time I wanted a job I could forget fishing and work at the canneries in cannery maintenance building skiffs and things, just the two of us. So before the fishing season was over, I did that back in the cannery. So after that I went back to the states, and I went down to join the Merchant Marines. I was accepted and went down to the draft board and presented my application and they said that they'd give you a deferment because you were in Alaska, but now you've come out; the deferment is no longer valid. They threw my Marine -- Merchant Marine application in the wastepaper basket.

#### **0:54:43.3 Entering the Navy and being assigned to Mare Island, California, to build prostheses**

**Robert Ingram:** So, in a few days, I was headed for the Navy and I went to Farragut boot camp and Corps school, and I was assigned to a hospital in Seattle. After about a month, I was notified I was to leave within four hours with sealed orders to head for Mare Island, California, and I had no reason to know

what was going on. So they flew me down and I had these sealed orders that I got and I went to the hospital administrator. He made a joke out of it. He said, we got more good Corpsmen here than we want and here they send you down and we don't know what you're here for. I said, well, in that case, how about me going home? I was only 125 miles from home. Of course, that didn't work, so they found out that I'd been assigned to a shop to build prostheses, wooden legs, arms. The invasions in the Pacific -- lots of Marines had -- were amputees. Brought them in there by the busload. So Mare Island was the amputation center for the West Coast. There were eight of us and then pretty soon, there were 40 of us men making wooden legs.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did -- you were a woodworker, but did you have any experience doing that kind of thing?

#### **0:56:43.9 Learning to make prostheses for wounded Marines**

**Robert Ingram:** No, but there was a man from San Francisco, Matt Lawrence, and he came up five days a week and spent four hours. He owned the shop -- a prosthesis shop in Frisco. He came up and worked with us every day. We had hundreds of boys that came in wheelchairs. They were so pleased to walk out. All young men. Most of them were maybe 18 to 21 or 22.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did you make them to order so that.....

**Robert Ingram:** Oh yes. Oh yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** And did you fit them also or did.....

**Robert Ingram:** Oh yes, yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** So you did that part also.

**Robert Ingram:** Yes, everything.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, that's.....

**Robert Ingram:** We -- we kind of set up a production setup where I was making the wooden feet and the wooden knees and the thigh part and then I got to doing the cast work with plaster of paris, making a cast of the stumps. You would just pour -- well actually you wrapped the stump with the same that they do for a broken limb, wrap it tight, then you slip it off the stump and then you pour that full of plaster of paris, then you have a perfect image of the -- of the leg or arm or whatever, then we'd go from there. I don't know how many hundred we did as a group.

**0:58:43.4 Interview break**

**Eileen Devinney:** We're about at an hour, so I can close it out if that's a good time to switch out real quick. I'm just going to run out of tape otherwise. Sorry.

**Janis Kozlowski:** How are you feeling? You want to.....

**Robert Ingram:** Oh, I'm all right.

**Janis Kozlowski:** You want to take a break, get a drink or something? Or can I get you a drink?

**Robert Ingram:** Well, in my little trolley out there.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Uh-huh.

**Robert Ingram:** .....under the seat there's three bottles of water, one for each of us.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh great!

**Eileen Devinney:** Let's see I will..... Before I do this..... Just double check. It's funny the things you don't notice until -- when I'm listening sometimes the fan comes on.

**Robert Ingram:** Oh.....

**Eileen Devinney:** But your voice is still predominant but.....

**Robert Ingram:** Is it?

**Eileen Devinney:** But it's funny the little -- there's a background sound here that I wouldn't have necessarily noticed but it's not -- it's okay.

**Robert Ingram:** I don't notice that.

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah. I didn't really until it kicked in and then I could hear the fan and when they're vacuuming in the hallway.

**Robert Ingram:** Thank you.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Thank you.



**Robert Ingram:** Each of you.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Do you want a water?

**Eileen Devinney:** Sure. I'm just gonna.....

**Robert Ingram:** If you want coffee there's a little cafeteria just down the hall a little bit.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, this water would be great, thank you. I'm good with this. Is it coming through good?

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah, it's a little -- I was saying to Mr. Ingram there's a fan that kicks in every once in a while. That's why I took that other mic away and the fabric on this is a little bit -- you can hear that a little. That's why I moved that, but.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, you could.....

**Eileen Devinney:** But your voice is predominant in the sound pattern, so.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh good.

**Eileen Devinney:** We couldn't maybe air it on, you know, national television, but.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Maybe we could. Maybe we.....

**Eileen Devinney:** (Laughter.)

**Janis Kozlowski:** .....could filter that out.

#### **1:00:32.6 Value of details during interview**

**Robert Ingram:** I've never had a review like this in my life. All this detail, I've never told it.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, really?

**Eileen Devinney:** That's great.

**Robert Ingram:** I've told a little bit. About six months ago a high school class came over and they were studying the Aleutian Islands, so I spoke for probably an hour.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh. Is -- is this too much?

**Robert Ingram:** No, no.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh. You know it's -- it's very interesting to get more pieces of the puzzle. I know you have specific experiences and stories that -- remembrances about what happened to you there, but it's kind of nice to have some details about what you experienced there and what you thought about things and -- so it's very helpful to have that information, but I don't want to overburden you with questions.

**Robert Ingram:** Well, there's probably times that you could ask things or maybe when I get through to fill in.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

**Robert Ingram:** .....some of the cracks.

**Janis Kozlowski:** We're very interested in all the details.

**Eileen Devinney:** It's really interesting.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Yeah.

**Robert Ingram:** Well, some of it is kind of tedious, I'm sure.

**Janis Kozlowski:** No. You know, nothing worse than people that are interested in a topic interviewing you because we'll -- we have all -- lots of questions.

**Eileen Devinney:** Well, I was really curious, but you answered it before I could ask, how many people were out there at the time, you know, like the civilian group. It was a pretty high number of individuals. I -- I didn't have anything to gauge that by, but 1800 people is, to me, a lot of people.

### **1:02:12.9 Repairing submarine walkways and a dry dock**

**Robert Ingram:** It was a fair-sized contract, you know, to build a submarine base and docks and warehouses and maintenance to repair. Once in a while a submarine would come in and the Japanese would drop some charges on them but on the top of the submarines there's a little walkway made out of hardwood slats and it would blow them off and I'd get the job of repairing some of those on the submarines. It's just a matter of maybe a two-day job or something. I could replace the cleats. Anyway, a lot of little things that just -- just part of everyday

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work. It's like at Kodiak, they brought up a floating dry dock so -- it's a big device where they submerge it and the ship goes over it and then they pump the water out of this thing and it lifts the ship out of the water and it was all made of wood, a huge thing. It's towed up there and on the way up they were going through icy straits and rammed into an iceberg. It wasn't like the Titanic. This thing couldn't sink; it was all made out of wood, put a big hole in the bottom. They got it to Kodiak and they needed it repaired. There was no way to get it out of the water, so they'd take on water on one side and tip it way up and then two of us would float underneath on a float and make the repair, which was a wet job because the sea water was -- on the float you were just laying on our back and partly in the water anyway.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Sounds dangerous and un.....

**Robert Ingram:** Well, not so.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** .....cold and.....

**Robert Ingram:** .....not so much dangerous, but it was awkward. The planks were about 5 inches thick and you had to clean up the broken parts and then replace the planks and then spike them in there while you're laying on your back. It was all part of the work and.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did -- did you have materials to work with and.....

### **1:05:03.0 Improvising to make necessary repairs**

**Robert Ingram:** Not really, but we -- we would improvise. The material would be maybe a half inch or three-quarters inch, too thick, so then we'd have to by hand what they call an adze, had a big flat chisel called a slick. We would make it the thickness we wanted. Lots of hand work. Lots of hours of -- as though you weren't accomplishing much, but yet you were working a lot to get it done. Just lots of things were awkward. Sometimes a ship would come in and unloading something quite heavy and the man at the wench would let it down on the dock -- a piece of machinery or something -- too fast. Well then he put on the brake and it would break the boom on the ship and it was only about 40 feet long and then we'd have to replace that, get a log and then shape it to -- just like the one that was broken. It'd take us about three days, just the two of us, to replace it, and the ship would have to have it before it could leave, so that was some of the 16-hour days we did. But I enjoyed it because everything was a challenge and it was for the cause. We ended up with the prosthesis and I was only 125 miles from home, so I bought a car and on the weekend we -- well, we worked five-and-a-half days in the shop, so the doctor in charge he just said, if you men will work like civilians I'll treat you like civilians, and we did.

**Janis Kozlowski:** That was a whole different life for you then.

**Robert Ingram:** Oh, very. Very different. It was all new and learning and lots of things, a challenge. Just lots of things that you'd never expect to -- to do.

#### **1:08:07.7 Making molds of a surgeon's face**

**Robert Ingram:** The doctor -- the surgeon in charge of the outfit -- he wanted an image made of his face. He wanted his children and grandchildren to remember him for what he looked like, so he'd come in and ask us when we had time and opportunity to do this so we'd lay him flat on the table and put straws in -- in his nostrils and then pour a big glob of warm plaster of paris -- the warmer it is, the quicker it sets -- with the promise that we weren't going to tell any jokes because if he laughed then it would crack it. It would take probably five or six minutes to set up enough. We Vaseline'd his face first and then we would move it off and then pour that full of plaster of paris and then peel off the outer mold and then made a wooden plaque so it'd be mounted for a wall mount. Every one we had to start right from scratch. You couldn't -- the mold you made you couldn't -- we couldn't use it over again, so..... Oh, about once a month he'd want one, and it was quite a process -- for each of his grandchildren and -- but you might know when it was finished it all -- looked all like a dead person, but that was to his liking and we did that.

#### **1:10:19.2 Civil service taking over the shop after the war was over**

Well then, of course, the war was over and the atomic bomb brought it to an abrupt end, and we were glad. So, the civil service took over the shop and hired everyone back, the 40 of us that wished to do that, but by that time about four or five of the men decided to go into their own practice making legs and I -- I terminated it and then I went into missionary work and -- but I didn't come back here until '65. I continued until I had health problems, a heart attack, cancer, and a hip replacement, so I've only been here now 20 years in Fairbanks.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, in Fairbanks?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay. So you said after -- when you got out of -- you went over to this new comp -- the civil -- you became a civil servant and did prosthetics for a little while?

**Robert Ingram:** That was the Navy.

**Janis Kozlowski:** With the Navy.

**Robert Ingram:** All together that was -- once I joined the Navy, went through Corps school, I was assigned to that shop. The 40 of us -- or there was eight of us and then in the next month perhaps they increased the number to 40, so it was just a new thing because as before civilian shops would furnish all the -- the need they had, but all of a sudden the -- the amount of amputees, particularly foot injuries from land mines, and as you know the Marine Corps has no medical Corps. It's the Navy that's part of the Marine Corps in that regard. Nearly all of our casualties that came in were Marines.

**Janis Kozlowski:** So we -- you said then when you terminated from the Navy you did some missionary work?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Where was that?

#### **1:13:04.5 Missionary work after leaving the Navy**

**Robert Ingram:** I was in California nine years and then in Washington 11 years.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Washington State?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes, and then I was 24 years here in Alaska.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Where -- where in Alaska did you go?

**Robert Ingram:** It's easier to ask me where didn't I go.

**Janis Kozlowski:** (Laughter).

**Robert Ingram:** Lots of villages. Anaktuvuk (for two months) or Port Heiden or Kake or lots of time in Kodiak.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did you get back to the Aleutians on your missionary work?

**Robert Ingram:** Only in visiting some families that knew of this faith in Adak. I was assigned there so I went down and spent two weeks. It wasn't -- it wasn't as though I was a long time there; but just a short time.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Which church were you affiliated with?

**Robert Ingram:** It's a nondenominational Christian fellowship that we meet in homes. We didn't have church property.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

**Robert Ingram:** And here in Fairbanks there are three congregations and they are just extremely a great kindness to me while I'm here to get out and dinners, which I enjoy.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

### **1:15:09.8 Living on Saipan for a year and the sea turtles**

**Robert Ingram:** Well after I had a heart attack, I had some health problems and a doctor that was a psychiatrist was assigned to Saipan. That's near the island of Tinian. So he asked me if I wished to join him, so I lived with him for one year on Saipan and during that time I often went to Tinian. I told Tom Moyer in the past year about [having seen] during a typhoon, the sea turtles, for what reason none of them ever told me but, they'd congregate in a little harbor there on Tinian and it'd be calm -- quite calm in that area, and I'd go down, which was only a quarter of a mile near the beach and watch them. Several hundred of them. These sea turtles were large, five or six feet long. At the same time they'd be unloading tuna fish, which were all frozen, 400 or 500-pound fish, and they would offload them from the fishing boat, so they could be shipped back to the States. So I'd watch that for half an hour and then watch the turtles. I didn't have any other assignments or anything to do. I stayed with a schoolteacher. Both -- He and she both taught. He taught at a college on Saipan and she taught in Tinian. Their home was on Tinian, so I'd often go -- it was only probably a mile and a half between the two islands, and that's where they took the two bombs, is from Tinian.

### **1:17:42.3 Plane traffic on Tinian and the transporting of bombs**

**Robert Ingram:** They could make the round trip to Japan without refueling and I think there were seven runways, one next to the other, and planes were leaving or coming back at least one every minute around the clock, hundreds, hundreds, and there they had -- they built a -- a pit for the atomic bomb and when it was brought in they transferred it from the -- Indianapolis to the pit. It was very well constructed of concrete and the lid and everything, it was elaborate, two of them. Then the time came when they loaded -- were loaded and flew off from Tinian. Saipan is very mountainous and there was no room there for landing strips; maybe a little. But Tinian is flat enough they could have over a mile long runways, all tarmac, one right next to another, and the Seabees and military

Army men put those strips in. Of course, first they had to get the Japanese off of Saipan.

#### **1:19:45.9 Battle on Saipan and the large number of suicides**

**Robert Ingram:** That was one of the bloodiest next to Iwo Jima. Next to there was Saipan on the mountain. From the time you left the ship, a great lot of the men, they died within less than a minute at landing because the amount of Japanese on shore were there with machine guns. But once they -- they made a little landing, then they started to..... The island is small. Saipan is only about 14 miles long and about 3 miles wide, so they started pushing them and they were getting to the other end. There were two places that are convenient for suicide and thousands and thousands of Japanese jumped. It was to them more honorable to -- to die than surrender. They thought it was a cowardly thing to do, and on Saipan they had -- before the war, they had lots of farmers that had sugar cane and other crops that they exported, so all those farmers and their families, they all took the same jump and the one at the -- at the ocean, though I -- of course I wasn't there to see this, but they claimed that families would hold hands and go backwards; get to the edge and as they held hands the whole family would go over. It had extremely violent waves against the -- the rocks. There was no way of surviving. It's called Suicide -- Suicide Cliff, I think.

#### **1:22:05.0 Invasion of Tinian**

So once they -- they got Saipan, then they had to get Tinian. The Japanese had well fortified it, though it was close by. So our invasion force -- we had two large forces, and one of them came up close to the beach for a suitable place to land and invade and all the Japanese to defend their island -- Tinian is much smaller than Saipan -- they all congregated there in their defense and at the other end they -- they landed -- we landed troops just without any opposition. Once they got enough equipment then they started across the island and those Japanese had no chance at all. Again, they have a suitable place there for suicides.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did you see evidence of the war when you were there?

**Robert Ingram:** Lots of it.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did you?

#### **1:23:35.9 Remnants of the war**

**Robert Ingram:** Lots of it. Military equipment that were left, a number of tanks. There would be Sherman tanks that would be on a little barge and the Japanese would shoot the barge out from under it and it would sink and it's quite shallow

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and those Sherman tanks are maybe half a mile off shore and you can even walk out there. It's about 5 or 6 feet deep even. I have been out there lots of times, especially the tropical fish, there's just thousands of them finding safety in and around the old tanks, the tracks and the wheels. I'd often go out there.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I understand it's a really nice place to dive for that reason.

**Robert Ingram:** Yeah, it is. Lots and lots of Japanese. It's not too far from Japan. I think it's about two hours, so they have lots of golf courses there. It's cheaper for the Japanese to fly to Saipan to play golf than to play golf in Japan because of the cost of getting on the links over there, so lots of Filipinos and lots of fine hotels for the tourists. Unfortunately it's -- the water is too warm to comfortably swim. You can just be in it for about 20 minutes and then it's too warm to stay longer. The island people, you never see them out there swimming.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Now you -- you went to Adak after the war too. Did you see a lot of World War II remnants there also? Do you remember looking around?

**Robert Ingram:** Adak?

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did -- did you -- did you tell me you did go to Adak?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Yeah, did.....

#### **1:26:01.4 Visiting the Aleutians after the war**

**Robert Ingram:** No. When the Navy and then the Coast Guard took over, they cleaned all that up and built suitable housing and all. There's a fine landing strip there -- the best in the Aleutians. They invested a lot of money and then they turned the whole thing over to the Natives and we just -- after they turned it over, we went back, a group of us, I think 25, for the dedication of the memorial stone at Attu. But, going out we stopped at Adak and coming back we stopped at Dutch Harbor. We spent at night at Shemya. There were about 25 of us. Most of them were pilots. This was about 12 or 14 years ago and that's when I first met Tom Moyer. He went. General McCloud was there to read the governor's proclamation. Every ten years after 40 years, we went back to Dutch Harbor. At the 40-year reunion they brought in the two men from the Japanese carrier; one that flew the -- led the squadron of bombers and the other man was the reconnaissant, so they were there for the 40-year reunion. At the 50-year, they had brought in a Japanese Zero and a Val bomber, and had a fly over. There



were quite a few that attended. At the 60-year reunion there was very few of us and I don't know how it worked out, but I was to read the governor's proclamation and there were very few of us that had worked there. Then the 70-year they canceled it all together because I don't know if they could find anyone but me. Most of them had -- were too ill to travel or deceased.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Well, did you say you were one of the younger men there?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes. I was 21 when I went there.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I -- I'd like to go back and ask you some questions about Dutch Harbor if -- if you have -- have a little more time to spend?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** You mentioned that people went to Unalaska sometimes to drink. Did you have much contact with the Native people that lived in Unalaska, other than if you went over to -- to one of the bars there?

**[Robert Ingram's response post interview:** Our union meeting was once or twice a month. We met in the back room of the bar, the only time I was in the bar.]

#### **1:29:15.8 Native baskets**

**Robert Ingram:** That was all, although they made very nice baskets. The girls would make nice baskets and sell them and I bought probably five or six nice baskets. Well then, when I was -- left the island to return and I got as far as Kodiak, I had them boxed up and ready to mail and a fella I thought was my friend, I gave him the money for the postage and asked if he'd mail them. That's the last I saw of the baskets ever again. Here I'd paid him to take them that is the money from the postage was a few dollars, but anyway, that's all part of living and people anyway.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Yeah. That kind of brings up a question. You know, some of the people that you worked with at Siems Drake, it sounds like a lot of them passed through and didn't stay very long, but did you get to be friends with some of them that stayed longer and did you keep in contact with them over the years at all?

#### **1:30:35.6 Keeping in contact with coworkers from Siems Drake over the years**

**Robert Ingram:** A few, yes. I just -- I was down to Spokane. I go once a year to -- to the Heart Institute there and I looked up a man that -- we'd been together for -- 70 years ago. We've kept in contact ever since. He's my age. At Kodiak, the company had bought an old passenger ship called the Yale. It was a fine luxurious that ran between San Francisco and San Diego, and the other ship was the Harvard. Anyway, the Harvard burned and they condemned the Yale, so the company bought it for -- for our living quarters and it was excellent. You couldn't find nicer accommodations. We had staterooms and privacy that you like, but you'd eat aboard the ship and it was floating right close to where I worked, two or three minutes. I'd get up on the gangplank and I'd be at work, so that's pleasant. Come in -- I could come in and have a nice warm meal and this man, Al, was a table flunky. He waited the table and we got acquainted and we had a real friendship and I kept in touch with him. He moved finally later in life to Idaho where he grew up, so I've been in his home lots of times. Anyway, it was pleasant after 70 years to meet with him last May. I hadn't been to his home for over 20 years.

#### **1:32:50.5 Native people's work style**

**Robert Ingram:** The problem with the Native people working..... They like to work as a group. You can't single them out and say to them, I want you to paint that skiff. They don't work like that. They -- they want their whole group to be in, and one man is in charge. They're pleasant to be with and all, but if you..... At Dutch Harbor, I would say you go over there and paint that skiff and give the others an assignment, right away he comes over to me with this little group. They're like we should all do it and so I'd say, hey get back there, and then the whole bunch would quit. So then the foreman would say, you can't do that. He said, if you got any reason, you talk to me and then I'll talk to them. But you certainly can't single one man out to have him do a little something. They don't -- they work as a group. That's very good, but at the same time, we Americans don't do that.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Right.

**Robert Ingram:** We put two men or one man to an assignment and here, in Fairbanks, I'd have some Native boys to help me when I lived over across town, to do the yard and breakup and a little landscaping. There were three of them that liked to come. If I would assign them one to rake over here and the other one do some -- they couldn't do that. They'd come together and I'd say, well, I want you to clean up that area there and all those leaves and stuff. Yeah, but he said, I want to be with the others. That's the way they worked, which was okay, but you have to learn that working with them if you're going to get anything done. Keep the group together. That's why they have villages and that's why they can't

-- they can't come out of the village and say go -- go to some other state and get a job. If a group of them would do it, that would be fine, but a family wouldn't do that. So, it creates a problem because they want to stay in the village. Well, then the young men, they are after night life, city, movies and drinking, they'd want to come to town and it's very awkward for them to hold down employment.

### **1:35:59.3 Contacting a bulldozer operator that worked on Mount Ballyhoo**

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did you -- when you were working for Siems Drake at Dutch Harbor, did you ever do any work up on Mount Ballyhoo?

**Robert Ingram:** I went up a few times. I knew some men that worked up there. It was our 60-year reunion I went up again to see what was left up there. I got in touch with a man in Olympia that was a bulldozer operator who put the road up and where he spent all of his time, so I got him touch with him here about ten years ago. We kept up correspondence, phoning. He's deceased now.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I bet he had a frightening job if he was a bulldozer operator on that steep hill and with the cliffs and all.

**Robert Ingram:** Sounds like you've been there.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I have, and I've seen pictures of them working and it looks very dangerous.

**Robert Ingram:** I was given a picture of the crew of men, oh probably maybe our 60-year reunion and after all these years I couldn't identify any of the men. I have it in my briefcase.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I noticed that you did have a picture book. Is that something that you wanted to look at today?

### **1:37:44.6 No cameras allowed for civilians during War**

**Robert Ingram:** Whatever's convenient. We civilians were not allowed to have cameras at all. A nurse took a few pictures, or she acquired a few pictures, but it was our 40-year reunion I got pictures, and then 50 and the 60.

**Janis Kozlowski:** People shared them with each other?

**Robert Ingram:** Well, now of course, we can take all the pictures we want, but when we worked out there, we civilians were not allowed to have a camera.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

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**Robert Ingram:** .....but the nurse was, Margaret Blair -- Margaret Jackson. She's -- her married name is Blair. She was there for, I think, 18 months or so as a Navy nurse. [Margaret Jackson was a Navy nurse for 18 months in Dutch Harbor. She later married Walter Blair. Note from Robert Ingram]

**Eileen Devinney:** Did the military screen their pictures at all, so if the military folks had cameras, did they pay attention to what they were photographing?

**Robert Ingram:** I don't know. I don't know how -- how that worked with the military. We -- we had very little interacting with the military. Civilians were.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Was that by choice, or did they really keep you separate?

**Robert Ingram:** Well, as you know, we didn't have leisure time to socialize. That's what it amounted to. And not -- not having clubs or shows or anything there, and your work hours, there wasn't that much leisure time. By the time you did your laundry or whatever, you didn't have that much spare time, so there was no interacting. After the war was over then this Margaret Blair gave me a few photos.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm. Are you interested in taking a look at them with us?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

**Robert Ingram:** I could do that. We don't want to miss our supper.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, yeah, what does the time look like?

**Eileen Devinney:** 3:20.

**Janis Kozlowski:** 3:20.

**Eileen Devinney:** Or 3:25.

**Robert Ingram:** Oh, yeah, we have an hour and a half before supper. Supper's at 5.

**1:40:22.9 Setting up video footage of photographs**

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**Eileen Devinney:** I can turn the camera behind you and then film over your shoulder if you want to point out things.....

**Robert Ingram:** All right.

**Eileen Devinney:** We can just stop and reset everything.

**Robert Ingram:** As you know, I'm not very photogenic. These are..... I haven't had much experience in this so it's a little bit awkward.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I think you're doing a fine job.

**Eileen Devinney:** You're doing fine.

**Robert Ingram:** I don't know what to do with my hands.

**Janis Kozlowski:** (Laughter.)

**Eileen Devinney:** You can -- I know it's a -- it makes you all of the sudden very conscious of..... Yeah.

**Janis Kozlowski:** That's why I sit back here.

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah. She cleverly avoided.....

**Robert Ingram:** Maybe we want to trade the seats (laughter).

**Janis Kozlowski:** (Laughter.) Not a chance!

**Eileen Devinney:** We could film over this chair just because there's room behind without the plant. Do you want to do that?

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

**Robert Ingram:** It's -- it's your choice, not mine.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Do you think the light's good enough there?

**Eileen Devinney:** I think it will be because there's this light here. I'm not sure how different it is over there.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I was just thinking he had the window that would illuminate the book a little bit.

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah, maybe I can move the plant. It's on wheels.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Yeah. Here, I'll help do that.

**Eileen Devinney:** Watch yourself with the cords.

#### **1:41:32.8 Reviewing and describing photographs**

**Robert Ingram:** The author of the Forgotten War, he was along.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, he was just up here this summer. Well, he was in Anchorage for a short while.

**Robert Ingram:** I forget where -- where I saw him not long ago. Here's the.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** How is this?

**Robert Ingram:** .....the 60-year proclamation that I read out at -- at Unalaska for the 60-year reunion.

**Janis Kozlowski:** And you -- this is what you read?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes. You can keep that.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, thank you.

**Robert Ingram:** You probably knew that General Doolittle.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Yes.

**Robert Ingram:** .....was born in Nome.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** I took this excerpt out of a book written on Kodiak. This particular phrase where he was..... The Kodiak Mirror wouldn't publish it until they got in touch with his brother and then they published it. (Papers rustling.)

**Eileen Devinney:** We can give it a shot whenever we -- it's on now -- just.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** (Laughter.) He didn't Doolittle, he did a lot. That's funny!

#### **1:43:35.5 The inscription on the stone at Attu**

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**Robert Ingram:** I'm not sure if you saw the -- the inscription on the stone at Attu. That's what's written on it.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Well, you know what, that's interesting because we wanted to know what was on that.

**Robert Ingram:** That's it.

**Janis Kozlowski:** We were trying to get somebody to, you know, make a pencil sketch of it or something, so we had the inscription on it. Can I copy this down?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

**Robert Ingram:** And do you know why -- what Taps mean and how it came about? Because they.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh.

**Robert Ingram:** You can have that one too.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Is -- is the Dutch Harbor inscription a copy or should I copy it down?

**Robert Ingram:** Uh.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Is that your only copy?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes, it is.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay, let me -- I'll copy it real quick.

**Robert Ingram:** Here's -- here's the -- have you seen the stone?

**Janis Kozlowski:** No.

**Eileen Devinney:** We could photograph it too, if that would help you.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, yeah, probably.

**Eileen Devinney:** I can do it with my phone.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay, thanks.

**Robert Ingram:** There's the stone.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh!

**Robert Ingram:** We -- see we took the stone out, but the weather was so bad we couldn't get out there so we stopped at Shemya and had the dedication there. Then we -- it cleared up the next day so we flew out, but our time span was so short we couldn't take the stone. We left it at Shemya and it was a couple of years before it was taken out.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** It takes some equipment. It weighed several tons.

**Janis Kozlowski:** What's this one?

**Robert Ingram:** That's..... To tell you the truth, I don't know, but I'm going to say Attu.

**1:45:48.1 Mr. Ingram showing a photograph book of Attu and Shemya**

**Robert Ingram:** There's a little area, I'll show you a picture, of what they consider a Memorial Park, an area where there are a few relics and stuff there.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Hmm. Can you take a picture of this one too?

**Eileen Devinney:** I'm not sure about the focus. Let me check it really quick.....

**Robert Ingram:** Let's see..... This is the -- the Attu memorial.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Did you put this book together?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, it's very nice!

**Robert Ingram:** .....myself, but we were getting ready to fly out in this C-130. Now this little area on Attu, this is a little cemetery. I'll show you where the -- this is inside the plane as we traveled. We stopped at Adak, saw some of the buildings, had lunch at the school. There's the stone and there's the plaque at Shemya and this is of Shemya Island and the landing strip.



**Janis Kozlowski:** There -- there's this one here and then that one also?

#### **1:47:29.2 Photographs of the landing strips on Shemya**

**Robert Ingram:** This landing strip and there's these landing strips. The thing was designed so that it was -- if it was bombed, none of the hangars were close to the runway, so they had auxiliary runways. The hangars were set back so they wouldn't get all bombed at the same time.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** There's Stan Cohen, and there's a few of us sitting on the stone over at Shemya. There's some of the men, a few of them, myself and then this is the Russian -- one of the Russian priests. This is Stan Cohen. This is the General reading the proclamation, McCloud. There's Stan again. This is Gary Huff, the historian from Elmendorf. He's retired now. [Huff was a military support coordinator -- note from Robert Ingram]

**Janis Kozlowski:** Hmm.

#### **1:48:55.8 Photographs of the Coast Guard station and Memorial Site**

**Robert Ingram:** There's the Coast Guard station. There were, I think 20. Now, here's the Memorial Site. Over in here, maybe up in here, there's a few relics, airplane propellers and stuff and they were going to put the stone right in this area. Like I say, you couldn't get in there because of the weather.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mmm. There's that -- right there is that picture that we were looking at before, whatever that is. This I think.

**Robert Ingram:** Yes, it is, and a few other things. There were some aircraft propellers.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mmm.

**Robert Ingram:** .....but I hadn't properly put it together. As you see, it's just an open field. Here's the Coast Guard station. Twenty Coast Guard but its closed. Now, that's -- and on return it flew all the way around the island and each of us could go up to the cockpit for about ten minutes or so and view the place. The pilots particularly were pleased about that. This is Dutch Harbor. This is the high school. A girl wrote this for our 40-year reunion and this was put at the -- in the Memorial Park. That's some of the monuments there. That's the -- have you been there at Dutch Harbor?

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** The Grand Aleutian.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** This is where the archaeologists are digging a lot up in there. This is the propeller off of the old Northwestern. They salvaged it all. This girl, once I met her, her mother was on the same ship I was when we left and they were evacuating the Natives down to Southeast. Right in this area when I was at..... There's Blackie's Bar and we had our -- our union meetings there, I think once a month, in the back of the bar.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mmm.

#### **1:51:36.0 Photos of Adak photographs and the Northwestern wreckage**

**Robert Ingram:** That's inside the Russian church. A little bit of that area that you're familiar with. This is Adak. I went out to visit this family. This is where they lived. There they are in their home. I don't know how these ended up in this book but, before the bombing, the Northwestern is here and the hangar is here and then when they bombed they hit the hangar and the Northwestern was burning here. That's me, and now out at Captain's Bay there's what's left of the Northwestern. They towed it out to sink it, but it was too shallow so the bow was sticking out. Here's an eagle.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I saw just a -- the top of it -- just the upper bow part and I guess.....

**Robert Ingram:** Well, it would be rusting away now.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** .....it's been over 70 years. It was an old Alaska steamship before.

#### **1:52:58.9 Photographs at the 50-year reunion**

**Robert Ingram:** Then this is our 50-year reunion. The Japanese.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh.

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**Robert Ingram:** .....they brought in a -- a Zero, and they brought in a Val. The two of them they brought in from -- from Texas.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh.

**Robert Ingram:** That was in '92. Here's the old propeller they were just putting in place and I was standing here taking pictures of it. Then they had the 21-gun salute. When I took this picture, this Japanese was flying over and here was the plane we had flown in. It was on the ground. It looks like he's going piggyback.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Yeah, yeah it does!

**Robert Ingram:** The -- the pilot offered me a ride in the Zero, but he said -- because of the insurance, it would be forbidden.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** That's the -- the old radio station. It's the only brick building on the Aleutians.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** And our Quonset hut was right alongside.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Over -- over to this side of it if you were on the.....

**Robert Ingram:** Yes. Yes.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

#### **1:54:31.5 Various photographs from 1942**

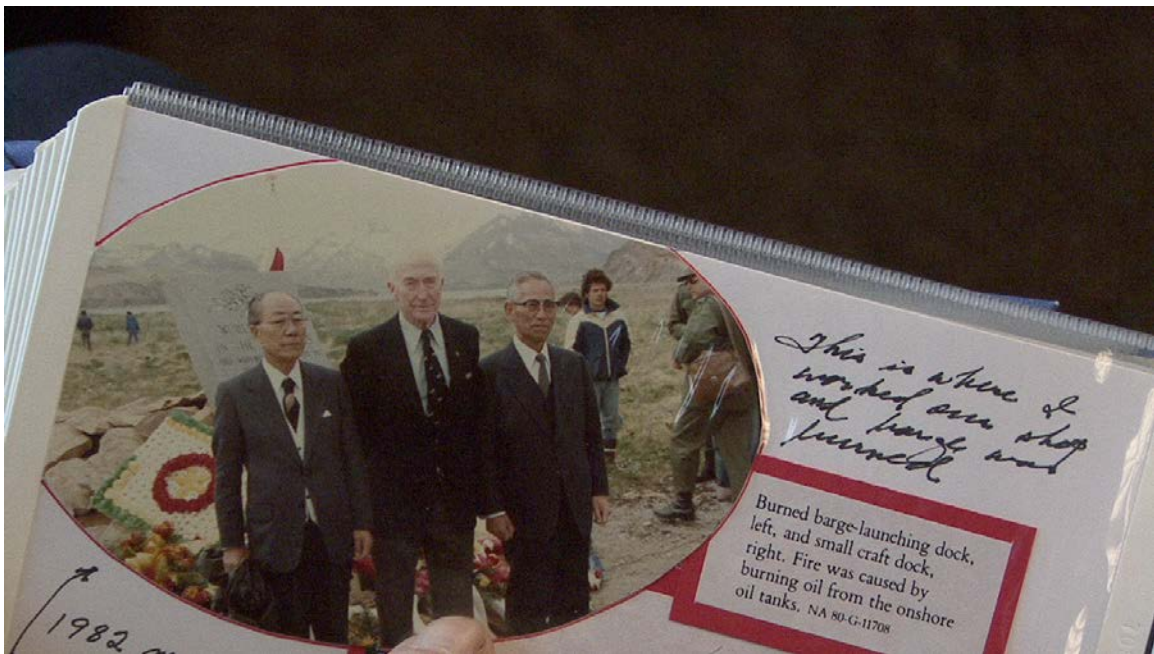
**Robert Ingram:** Just very close. And now we're going back to 1942, and some Admirals and Generals and pilots. This man was Phil. He was in charge of the Natives of the Aleutian Islands. Since then he's deceased. Admiral Russell, and this is the man that flew the squadron of bombers in, Samejima [Vice Admiral Hioichi Samejima] and Colonel Abe [Zenji Abe], he did the reconnaissance flying. This is General Talley. He was in charge of the construction on the Aleutians for the building of the bases.

**Janis Kozlowski:** You've got some important people in that picture.

**Robert Ingram:** Here we were during the -- the 21-gun salute.



Dutch Harbor, 40 year reunion, June 1982. Photo courtesy Robert Ingram.



Colonel Abe, Admiral Russell, Vice Admiral Samejima, Dutch Harbor, 40<sup>th</sup> reunion, June 1982. Photo courtesy Robert Ingram.



Dutch Harbor for the 40<sup>th</sup> reunion, June 1982. Robert Ingram in center behind Admiral Russell. Photo courtesy Robert Ingram.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Were -- I see the Canadian flag. Were they represented at that.....

**Robert Ingram:** Oh, yes. Here is the pilot, one of them that represented for the 40-year reunion. Here's General Talley and Admiral Russell.

#### 1:56:01.7 Making copies of photograph album for attendees

**Robert Ingram:** I made up books after this and sent it to every one of these men -- an album -- and he invited us to his home, so I went down there to.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Where did he live in Califor -- or, Washington State?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes, near Tacoma. Here's Samejima and Russell and Colonel Abe. Here's our boat by the water, floating all this oil around and it burned. Our shop was here and here's the launching wave where we're launching and our barge that burned. There's that site again of the Quonset huts and radio stations right up in here.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** This is.....

**Eileen Devinney:** I don't think that's us (responding to background beeping noise).

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay, good. That's a very nice book you put together.

#### **1:57:23.9 Reviewing the 40-year reunion photographs**

**Robert Ingram:** This is our 40-year reunion inflight. I put the - the old Northwestern, and this is Mr. Porter. He's the one that has to do with the hospital here. They got a section called the Harry Porter. He's at the Denali Center. I go over every week and visit him. He's the man that did the photography, flying out. It was smoking a little, flying around Dutch Harbor, Ballyhoo, and this is the man that put the program together, Ted Spencer. He was in Anchorage for this 40-year reunion. There's the -- that was the powerhouse. That was really the only bomb shelter on the island, but it was built so that it couldn't be destroyed with bombs. It would be there forever. Ballyhoo..... Here's the Canadian flying in for the service. There's the memorial stone and then each presenting their wreaths. Russell and the Japanese, they bring wine.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Sake?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes. Someone said when -- whenever did the deceased going drink this wine? Well, he says, when they come up to smell those flowers (laughter).

**Janis Kozlowski:** (Laughter.)

**Robert Ingram:** That's Phil, the Aleut Chief.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, Tutiakoff?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes. The Canadian Air Force presenting their wreath. This man was at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed and he was at Dutch Harbor when it was bombed, so I had him in there. Then my friend Norm.

#### **1:59:50.5 Photographs are in the Forgotten War book by Stan Cohen**

**Robert Ingram:** Some of these pictures, several of them, are in Stan Cohen's Forgotten War book.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mmm.

**Robert Ingram:** I never -- we sent the album to Admiral Russell and Russell sent it on to Stan, so it's in his book. Some of them kind of repeat. Ted presenting his wreath -- doesn't look like much, but there's more to it when you look down that road. There's a lot of them now.

**Janis Kozlowski:** The water -- the water tank. It's in a lot of the pictures of the bombing.

**Robert Ingram:** Yeah. And then they had -- the service was over. The evening dinner and all was at Walter Dyakanoff High School in Unalaska. He was an old island fella. Anyway, the Japanese had their flag there. Some of these are kind of duplications. General Talley wasn't too pleased about the whole thing. He didn't want to participate with the Japanese there. He was a little prejudiced, but people get over that when they die. Someone painted me an ostrich egg, so I made a little stand for it. It has roadrunners on it.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, nice.

**Robert Ingram:** So I can -- here I can twist it and there's roadrunners all the way around the egg.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh.

**Eileen Devinney:** Well, that's convenient because we are out of film on that one.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, really!

**Eileen Devinney:** Just -- just ran out in the last few seconds. Should we leave this on in case?

**Robert Ingram:** The Native people, as you know, don't like.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Should we wait for a second?

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah, just one second.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Can we wait just one minute?

**Robert Ingram:** Yeah.

**Janis Kozlowski:** She's putting a new.....



**Eileen Devinney:** I'm going to turn it a little too because the glare is hard for the right-hand pages.

**2:02:37.8 Reviewing photographs from the 60-year reunion**

**Robert Ingram:** This was the 60-year reunion. You probably know some of these people. This is the mayor.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I do not know her. (Background voices.)

**Robert Ingram:** Are you ready?

**Eileen Devinney:** Yep.

**Robert Ingram:** The Native people are not pleased about referring to the island as Dutch Harbor. The harbor is Dutch Harbor, but the island is Amaknak.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mm-hmm.

**Robert Ingram:** And they -- they like to let you know that. The Grand Aleutian from the Memorial Park, over in Unalaska, the Russian church.

**Janis Kozlowski:** This was 60 years?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes. It was in.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** 2002, okay.

**Robert Ingram:** Ten years ago. And I went out ahead of time and worked together with a girl by the name of Maya. She had to do with the \_\_\_\_\_. Later, I went out again and, that is within two weeks or less, she was wearing my dog tags. [Note from Robert Ingram – Pamela Fitch was mayor of Unalaska, she had my dog tags. Mya was in charge of tourism, all my arrangements for traveling and other social functions.]

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh.

**Robert Ingram:** Afterwards she gave them to me. I was reading the proclamation.

**Janis Kozlowski:** The Tony Knowles proclamation?



**Robert Ingram:** Yes, and it was very windy. There was a ship in that helped increase the crowd. There were a few there -- one history teacher, he said he taught history. He was from New York, but he said this was the first time he knew that there was any conflict on US soil. He never knew that before.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Hmm. Oh. Was that Jeff Dickrell? Was that the teacher? Do you remember his name?

**Robert Ingram:** I don't remember, although we corresponded and I sent him the Forgotten War book.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mmm.

**Robert Ingram:** They moved this from -- it was over at Dutch Harbor. They moved this Memorial over to this site. The Memorials, there's quite a few there; the propeller. Walter, he worked in the shop at one end and they assembled windows. They'd take me to the knockdown and I was at the other end, when I was building furniture, so that was -- would have been 60 years before that, had been in the same shop, so he -- he liked it. He's deceased now. That's his home and he just got a new Swanson, built in 1985. A load of fish.

#### **2:06:14.0 Donating a Japanese silk flag to a museum**

As you know, the Japanese, they have a silk flag they fold and put it in their helmet, with their history on it. So someone sent me one. He was at Attu and sent me the -- so I had a Japanese lady here in town, I met her and she interpreted what was on the flag and, of course, the point is trying to get it back to the widow or the family. Well, I -- I wasn't in a position to do all of that, so I gave it to the museum there, so it's there.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mmm, that's nice.

**Robert Ingram:** So, Norm, he did the photography four years ago. That's about Taps. Would -- would you know the lady that..... In Anchorage they interviewed me on this some years ago.

**Eileen Devinney:** Was that Lael Morgan?

**Robert Ingram:** It was the -- they had that little Native magazine.

**Eileen Devinney:** I'm not sure what it is.

**Robert Ingram:** Alaska One or something.

**Eileen Devinney:** There used to be a section in the Sunday paper that had profiles of people and I can't remember the woman. I thought it was Lael Morgan, but maybe not.

#### **2:07:55.1 Reviewing photographs of the ship he rode to Alaska**

**Robert Ingram:** This is the ship I went on and.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** The one you originally came up to Alaska in?

**Robert Ingram:** Yes, and then it's on the beach, it blew there less than a week after I made the trip. It's in either -- I don't know if it's King Cove or Cold Bay. It's -- I'm not sure. It's still there I know. They cut a big hole in the side so it wouldn't float.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Mmm.

**Robert Ingram:** Anyway, briefly that's..... If you want copies, do you have a way to copy it?

#### **2:08:41.9 Taking photographs of Mr. Ingram's pictures**

**Eileen Devinney:** We can photograph it with my camera or we can also take still shots on this, so if you hold it I can take some stills. I can let you know how.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

**Eileen Devinney:** ..... to angle it so that we can.....

**Robert Ingram:** I don't know if they can do color here, but they have a copy machine in the office.

**Janis Kozlowski:** We'll use the big picture.

**Eileen Devinney:** We can do it a couple of ways. Actually, let's see. I'm going to shut off the recording and just do the still frame.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay. Maybe this one's easier to photograph.

**Eileen Devinney:** I'm just not entirely sure. We'll do it with the phone as well, just to have kind of a double.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay.

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**Eileen Devinney:** It seems to have a glare but I.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Should I tip it?

**Eileen Devinney:** Tip it towards you a little bit and see if that helps.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Like this?

**Eileen Devinney:** It doesn't really. That looks substantial, like a big..... I have the other one over there.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay. I don't know if this one will..... Should I take it out of here?

**Eileen Devinney:** No, I think that's pretty good right like that. Hold on one second. If you tilt it a little towards him it will be flat, like it's tipped towards you a little, so if you.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Like this?

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah, maybe a little more. No, that doesn't work. That's all glary.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I could take it out of here. That might help a lot.

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oops.

**Eileen Devinney:** I zoomed in some.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Okay good.

**Eileen Devinney:** And we can check these tonight on the computer and then if there's some problem we can always see about reshooting them if we've made a.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** I'll grab that other one over there.

**Eileen Devinney:** Oh, okay, yeah sorry. Did you give me two things or just -- I think it's just one.

**Janis Kozlowski:** I think just one. Just this. He's got such good handwriting.

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**Robert Ingram:** Oh.

**Eileen Devinney:** Can you tilt it sideways? I know that seems silly, but it's.....

**Janis Kozlowski:** Sideways?

**Eileen Devinney:** If you do it sideways, hold it sideways.

**Janis Kozlowski:** Oh, like this?

**Eileen Devinney:** Yeah. Just because of the way the camera is.

**Robert Ingram:** Just twist your head to read it.

**Eileen Devinney:** (Laughter.) We'll flip the image around.

*End of interview at 2:11:24.9*