

Jim Schroeder: That flight to Paramushiru - that was something. When you get up there, and you see all this gasoline in the bottom, bottom of the bomb bay. You know, if anybody would have been smoking, we'd never been here to tell about it.

Janis Kozlowski: Right. And people did smoke in the airplanes, didn't they?

Jim Schroeder: Yeah, but luckily we were up at 20,000' and nobody was smoking. Well, I didn't have my set on either - that's another thing - because you get a spark from the set. And a set - it doesn't take much to set off 100 octane gas.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, now what kind of a set are you referring to?

Jim Schroeder: A radar set. See, its right by the bomb bay. And Mitch was up in the top turret, the engineer. So, as soon as I smelled the gasoline, why, I called him. And he took off his [Chuckle] parachute harness - a lot of good that would have done after were blown up [Chuckle]. But, he went there and turned off one of the valves that was - all the gas was coming out of. And then he opened up the bomb bay and most of it went out of the bottom of the bomb bay. But, the rest of it all splashed back on these gunners back in the back part of the plane. So, they were all covered with gasoline back there.

Janis Kozlowski: Were you scared?

Jim Schroeder: Well, you know, at the time you don't think about it. But, after you realize.... And then, one of the engines stopped. And like I said, we had a.... And once we got the engine started, we'd take, we'd be back on three engines - going back to Shemya, or going to, to Russia and being interned there. So, we had a choice there. But once Mitch got the engine started again, we decided to go back to Shemya.

Then, once we get back to Shemya, and with all the fog over the island - we flew over it three times at 25' and we couldn't find the island. So that's when we decided to go on to Attu, and we stayed there over night. And as soon as we got there, the fog moved in there. So, otherwise, I don't know where we would have gone to.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that, that was Howlands [crew], right?

Jim Schroeder: Yeah, that was Howlands crew. Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Mitch Howlands? OK.

Jim Schroeder: H-o-w-l-a-n-d-s.

Janis Kozlowski: OK. So if you, I know you didn't end up - you ended up back in the Aleutians on that trip - when the gas spewed all over. But, what would, do you have any idea what your preference would have been if you guys would have had to ditch? Would you...

Jim Schroeder: Well, you ... I don't know. See, that's up to the pilot to decide whether he can. Usually [with] three engines, you can - you lose a little bit of altitude all the time, but you have to decide to get back there if you're gonna make it or not. But, we had Russia to go to, which was only about 40 - 50 miles away. See, that was Russia and Japan weren't at war at the time. So, they would take us, and then intern the guys for six months. And then work them back into the states. But then, you know, you have a choice of one thing or the other. But luckily, we just got the engine started and we decided to go back to Shemya.