

Janis Kozlowski: And you just flew the early model B-26s in the Aleutians?

John Pletcher: Yeah, well after I got back down to the United States, lower 48 as we call it, I was stationed first at MacDill Field in Tampa, Florida and they had the later model Bs and Cs and I was an instructor down there. I also instructed at Alexander, Louisiana but that was in B-17s. So my B-26 instructor experience was at Tampa Florida with MacDill Field and these were the later model airplanes that they flew down there. I don't think they had any of the short winged ones.

Janis Kozlowski: Are these the early model airplanes [*looking at pictures 3 of a straight on view of a B-26 and 4 of a B-26 from the side with men at the nose, tail and left wing*] you flew?

John Pletcher: These are both early model ones. Because we didn't have any, at the time I was up here, and up to the time I left, we didn't have any of the later models we had only the early model B-26 short winged version.

[0:05:39] Now later they used B-26s up here, as I understand it, as tow target airplanes, towing targets for the artillery. And I don't know if they were some of the original B-26s or whether they were later model B-26s that were flown up from the United ... lower 48.

Now, Martin built some airplanes that were stripped down B or C models, - they were the longer wing and so forth - and they built them solely for the purpose of towing targets. They had no armor plate, no turrets, just a bare airplane and they designated that as an AT-23. I flew one of those for several months at Mitchell Field, at Long Island New York, so I know what the B-23 or the AT-23 rather ... I know what it was. It flew like a fighter airplane, it had lots of power and it was light so it flew like crazy. In fact, I towed targets off of the runway with 500 feet of rope with the airplane that I was flying and towing targets for an airplane that was flown for the General Electric Company.

General Electric had a contract to design and build the fire control systems for the B-29 and for their experimental work the Air Force had loaned them a B-24 in which they installed this equipment. And the B-24 was maintained and flown by crews from American Airlines and based at LaGuardia Airport at New York and my tow target airplane, an AT-23, was based at Mitchell Field New York. I towed targets for them so I was partly involved, in that respect, involved in getting the fire control system built and operational for the B-29. And I later flew in B-29s and instructed in B-29s and commanded a B-29 training outfit at Tucson, Arizona in 1945 at the end of World War II.

But back to my experience here in Alaska, to my knowledge B-29s never operated in Alaska. They may have flown one airplane up here, I understand that they did fly one airplane clear out to Shemya but I'm not positive of that. But the B-29 was used in the South Pacific and was not used in Alaska to my knowledge.