

John Pletcher: ...and, eh, bombers.

Janis Kozlowski: The 50 caliber gun was standard?

John Pletcher: Standard, yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you normally fly with escorts in the B-26?

John Pletcher: Well [*pause*] I wouldn't say normally. I'd say normally we were on our patrols...no, we did not have P-38s. P-38s went out to Kiska with the B-17s and 24s sometimes as escort and sometimes they'd go in and strafe positions. They had the best airplane, and the most suitable airplane up here for the fighters was the P-38 which was a twin engine, twin tail airplane, tricycle gear and it was a quite famous airplane, made famous during the war. The squadron that has those up here was the number 54 fighter squadron, the 54th fighter, had the P-38s up here. But they would go out as escorts sometimes and sometimes I had to go on individual missions.

Janis Kozlowski: There probably weren't enough of them to escort you all the time, right?

John Pletcher: Well, they weren't, there weren't really enough airplanes around for any of the time to suit everybody. Colonel Eareckson, who was our group commander -Composite Group – at the time of the bombing at Dutch Harbor I was at Cold Bay and he made the remark, he says, "I've got more crews down here than I had airplanes on commission". So, he had the crews but he needed more airplanes in commission. You have an airplane sitting there that can't be used is a matter of if you don't have a crew for it, it didn't count, that airplane can't be used, the crew is wasted. So, he said I got more crews than I got airplanes.