

Janis Kozlowski: One of the pictures that I have of yours is one of a Quonset hut [picture 9] and I wondered if that, is that the housing for crews such as the 73rd?

John Pletcher: Yes, [pause] later on. Of course, when we were at Elmendorf Field we had barracks. But when we first got out to Adak and Cold Bay and Umnak and all of those places they put us in there just as quick as they had a runway that airplanes could land on. We went into Adak, I think it was the fourth day that the runway was useable our squadron went in there. So, we survived with tents, these were what they called pyramidal tents, they looked like a pyramid, you know. They were originally classified as officers tents, but, anyway, those were the type of tents we had and those were the first things that we were able to put up. At Cold Bay the crews were on their own. They didn't have people to go around and make your bed for you [laughing]. They told us, they said, if you want a tent, grab a truck and go down to supply and pick up a tent and stove and some sacks of coal and put up your own tent. And you ditch around the tent so you run the water off in a hole or whatever.

So we put up our own tent and they had the stoves - the stoves were sheet iron stoves – they were round and they were in sections. The bottom section was the ash pit and the grate set on that. Then the body of the stove sat on that, top of the stove sat on that and the stove pipe and everything went up through the top of the tent through a hole made for that. And it had a metal insulated arrangement there, fitting, for the stovepipe to go up through. Now this was low grade coal – soft coal – and it would soot up the stovepipe pretty readily. So, one of the common things to get the soot out of the stovepipe, you get the littlest, lightest guy you could find and have him crawl up the side of the tent while you kept the tent from falling over. And he'd drop pieces of coal down the stovepipe into the stove, knocking soot out of the stovepipe [laughing] and if you were unlucky the soot in the stovepipe would catch fire – it would get red hot, then you'd go back and get another tent! [laughing]

Well, anyway, we set our stove up, first time. We set it up, got a fire going, pretty soon we noticed steam coming out of the ground about three feet back from the stove. And we discovered that we were on tundra and the stove, the bottom of the stove, had gotten hot enough that that tundra under the stove was smoldering. So we had to put out the fire, tear the stove down, haul it outdoors and take a shovel and dig up all the tundra and then bring in sand, which was plentiful down there – volcanic sand - and haul this sand in a shovel at a time and put it down as a base with the stove on it so we wouldn't catch fire. We learned that by finding out, yeah, that tundra would [laughing] will burn! So, anyway, we learned that the first night. So we finally got that under control and then we lived in tents like that and I don't think while I was at Cold Bay – I wasn't there very long – but while I was there, I don't think we ever got into any shelter other than tents.

Then when we moved to Adak we were in tents there, I would say, well we were still in tents in November and it was getting pretty wintery by that time. In fact, we would sometimes have ice on the airplanes in the morning [crackling on tape]. On Adak we were definitely in tents and finally they said, if you want a Quonset we will detail a man to supervise your work, tell you how to put this thing together. We'll have a bulldozer bulldoze out a flat spot in one of these sand dunes facing towards the mess hall and the other Quonsets – and you guys put up your own Quonset and that's exactly what happened. They hauled up all the parts for the Quonset, all the

steel, these were steel rafters and they were nailed together, sort of, with nails and then they had man made siding and so forth for the siding and then they had wood floors. So they trucked up all the parts for a Quonset and the bulldozer came up and leveled us off a nice place. And it was, turned out that along the sides and back of the Quonset we ended up with banks about three feet high – sand, into this sand dune, which was kind of a revetment or protection so we felt pretty good about that. We got the Quonset put together and everything going and got the oil stove set up in there and that was a big improvement over the tent.