

Interview with Katie and Robert Dougal
Aleutian World War II National Historic Area
Oral History Program

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This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The telephone interview with Robert and Katie Dougal was recorded with their permission on a digital recorder. Copies of the audio file are preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and are on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska.

The transcript has been lightly edited.



Robert Dougal and clerk Gilbertson, Kiska, 1944. Photo courtesy Robert E. Dougal.

Janis Kozlowski: [00:00:00] ...how you got involved in World War II. Were you in the armed services when the war broke out?

Robert Dougal: When I was a kid in high school, I went to Fort Dix, in New Jersey. And then when I got in the service, I was at Fort Benning, Georgia - with General Patton [General George S. Patton, Jr.]

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!

Robert Dougal: After about a year, they sent me to officer candidate school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey; and I became a Second Lieutenant. And then I was sent down and went to Norfolk, Virginia, where I had ... was working at a radar station. The war hadn't started yet. And then I went down to Florida, and ... with another chap, and we made up a squadron. And he eventually went one way and went to the Philippines and I ended up going up to Alaska.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow. What ...and how old were you at the time?

Robert Dougal: I was about 26, 27.

Katie Dougal: 27.

Janis Kozlowski: Umm.

Robert Dougal: I wasn't a youngster. In fact, when I ... when the war started over in Europe, I volunteered to go and join the British forces, but I was too old; I was 27. And there was a cut off date, and they wouldn't let me go because [Chuckle] I was too old.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle] Isn't that funny, that at that age you could be too old. [Chuckle]

Robert Dougal: Yeah, I wanted to be a pilot, but they said, "No, you're too old."

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle] So, were you in the army?

Robert Dougal: I ended up ... when I joined, I was in the Army, yes. I went down to Fort Dix in New Jersey - that was a cut-off point - in New Jersey; was Fort Dix. They sent me then to Fort Benning, Georgia. And down there, I joined a new division, headed by General Patton; he was a full Colonel, then, called the Second Armored Division. They had one armored division at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and the Second Armored Division was at Fort Benning, Georgia, commanded by General Patton. And I was in his headquarters unit during the war, ah, I mean, before the war; when we were on maneuvers in Louisiana and learning how to drive tanks and other things.

And then, I was later sent to officer candidate school up in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. And I had been to a radio school at Fort Knox, Kentucky prior to that, when I was in the Armored Division.

But, when I got to Fort Monmouth and finished there and became a Second Lieutenant in the Signal Corps, they sent me to Norfolk, Virginia - I think I told you - and then on down into Florida and we started an outfit. I eventually ended up in an outfit that got on the train in, oh, I guess it was about March, or April - when they were going to invade Kiska. And we came up to Seattle and most of the troops went over to Kiska, because we had now invaded and owned Kiska.

[0:04:35] And I stayed behind in Seattle with nine men, and went to all of the stores. I was in radar, and I, being the Second Lieutenant, I had nine men. And we went to all the stores all over Seattle and the wharf, and that area, picking up supplies we thought we needed for our radar stations out at Kiska - had four of 'em that we were getting supplies for. And I went to many locations picking up these supplies.

And then we left and went on a ship, and went out to Kiska. When I got there, I helped unload the radars. And I put the first radar in operation on Kiska, and it looked out over the Bering Sea towards Attu. Our troops had taken Attu and Shemya. And then they invaded; the Americans and Canadians invaded Kiska and found out that the Japs had left. So, when I got to Kiska with the radar stations, I put the first radar station up, and it looked out towards the Attu and Shemya area. And that's where I stayed for about two years during the war.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you happen to remember what bay, or what area you put that radar up on, in Kiska?

Robert Dougal: Well it, on Kiska, it was called; it was a high ridge, and it looked over the Bering Sea, out towards Attu and Shemya.

Janis Kozlowski: OK.

Robert Dougal: And it was called "Roberts Ridge" - a high ridge. And the island at that point was only about a half a mile wide. And we put that radar up, and ... watching the aircraft that used to fly from Attu and Shemya over Kiska, and go on down to Amchitka and on ... maybe, into Anchorage.

Janis Kozlowski: Tell me more about your job as a radar operator on Kiska.

Robert Dougal: Well, I was a, I was in command of the radar station; I was a Second Lieutenant and I was in charge. I had about 40 men. And we had the radar station that we installed. And we had four crews that worked eight hours each. The fourth crew did work around the camp - as KP and helping the cooks, and so forth. And the four crews rotated

all during the war in that manner. And we ran that radar station for two years before I left and went to ... left and went out to Anchorage.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:08:12] And so, what was the purpose of the radar; was it guiding airplanes, or?

Robert Dougal: At that time, the Japs had invaded Attu and Shemya. And then they came to Kiska, and they invaded Kiska. There was nobody on it. The Japanese that were there had been taken off. The Japs were there, and then the Americans invaded Kiska - with the Canadians. One, group came in one side of the island and the other group on the other side. And they met, and they found out that during the night the Japs had got in their ships and had left the island of Kiska during the night. And when our troops got there, they found out that there were no Japs on the island at all. They expected to see some, but I was back in Seattle with those, the nine men I mentioned before, getting supplies that we needed for our radar equipment.

Now, there were four radars....

Katie Dougal: But, the purpose, Bob, of the radars, was? She wanted to know.

Robert Dougal: What was your question?

Janis Kozlowski: What was the radar used for? Was it for guiding ... for aircraft, guiding them into the landing field, or...?

Robert Dougal: No, no, our radar was a search radar; early warning radar. And its purpose was to check on any Japanese aircraft that might come from Japan, up to the Aleutians; out at the end, there, of the chain. And we also knew that we had troops at Attu and Shemya, and our job, then, was, when they left their place, and we knew they were coming; we picked them up and guided them in, in case one of them would crash. And we knew where to send search crews out to pick them up.

Janis Kozlowski: OK. So, did you see a lot of activity?

Robert Dougal: I didn't see any ... we had no enemy activity at all when I got there. On Kiska there was no enemy activity, because the Japs had packed up and left. And when the Americans and Canadians invaded Kiska, the Japs had already left and gone back down towards Japan.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:11:15] So, how soon did you set your radar up after the Japanese left Kiska? Was it within a matter of months after they had abandoned the island?

Robert Dougal: Well they had abandoned the island and I was at Seattle when the, when they abandoned the island. Originally, we were in Florida training the radar operators. And then, when we went up to Seattle, the main group that I had of the company - I

wasn't the commander, I was a Second Lieutenant - they went out to Kiska. I stayed behind in Seattle to pick up supplies, because, we never had adequate radar supplies when we left Florida. So, I went with nine men to all the hardware stores in Seattle, Washington - up and down, around the area, picking up supplies that would be needed by four radar stations and nine men, like I said. And that was why I was left behind, to do that work. We were there about 10 days after the main body went over to Kiska - when they invaded it.

Janis Kozlowski: So, after all your shopping trips and trying to get prepared, when you ended up on Kiska, did you have everything you needed; in other words, did you really understand what you needed before you got there?

Robert Dougal: No, we, well, on the radar side, we knew what we needed when we left Florida. And we never had everything we needed until we got to Seattle and picked it up. And we picked up ... a lot of supplies. As far as clothing went, we started from Florida, and I had "Sun-tans" - cotton, sun-tan uniforms on. And I wore those all the way 'till I got to Kiska. I had no warm clothes until I got to Kiska. And we then picked up some warm clothes before we put the radar up.

Janis Kozlowski: So, other than being prepared to do your radar responsibilities, the other pa... you know, your living conditions in Alaska; you probably didn't really understand what you were walking into very well?

Robert Dougal: We didn't know at all. We lived ... if in your years you heard your dad and other folks talk about living in tents, pyramidal tents, and so forth, down in the states - that's what we lived in, on Kiska. That's all we had when we got up there. And we all wore sun-tan uniforms that we wore when we left Florida and no winter clothing.

And when we got there, we were given warmer clothes and so forth. And as the months went on, we got warmer clothes - parkas and so forth, that you know about.

Janis Kozlowski: So, then, so after they re-equipped you, were you in pretty good shape for the weather conditions that you experienced on Kiska?

Robert Dougal: Well, I wouldn't say [Laugh] ... we didn't expect it. One day it would be sunny, the next day would be snowy, the next day it would be rainy, and then it would be foggy. And it was the worst weather you would ever want to encounter. And coming from Florida, we didn't, we didn't know how to combat that stuff. We had to learn how to do it.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, I bet that was probably your hardest task on the island.

Robert Dougal: It was. When we got there, and you lived in a canvas tent; and you know Alaska - you'd have no way to stay warm. You put a parka on, or ... with sleep.... Or, what we used to, when we slept at night, we'd put a mummy bag on and then a sleeping

bag - it was so cold - to keep warm. Everything that.... We were all guys from Florida, now, and were [now] in Kiska. Nobody instructed us, we had no warm clothes, and it was real, real rough living in canvas tents. And it would snow at night, and the tent would get heavy, and it'd fall down on top of the men. I'm talking too loud I'm sorry.

Janis Kozlowski: So, did you have to stay in those pyramidal tents the entire two years?

Robert Dougal: Oh, no. No, no. No, we started out in pyramidal tents. I called [them] pyramidal tents, and you probably don't know what I'm talking about. But....

Janis Kozlowski: I've seen pictures of them.

Robert Dougal: OK. And they only held about six men.

[00:17:30] Everything up there was ... unusual to us, if you can imagine living in Florida, and then going up to Kiska. We, went through an experience that ... that made us pretty tough. That a... take into account the weather and everything we had, due to the elements out there.

Janis Kozlowski: I imagine. And I bet it was hard to operate that station there, given the conditions you were under, as well.

Robert Dougal: Well it was, it was rough. Yeah, that was the first ... we put the first radar station up on Kiska and I've got it in my diary when we did it, and so forth. But, after living in tents, and we got a ... Pacific Huts, which I guess you don't know about - they were sort of made out of not cardboard, but....

Janis Kozlowski: Like, corrugated metal?

Robert Dougal: No, no, they weren't metal; they were fiber things, like Quonset huts, if you know what a Quonset hut was.



Photo courtesy Robert E. Dougal

Janis Kozlowski: I do.

Robert Dougal: It was prior to the time Quonset huts came along.

Janis Kozlowski: OK, I do know what you're talking about. In fact I saw some remnants of them. I was on Kiska in June this year, and I saw some of the remnants of the side boards and the canvas, I guess; that were along the sides of them.

Robert Dougal: Yeah. Did you go to Kiska?

Janis Kozlowski: We went for two weeks; we went to Kiska to map the American and Canadian occupation sites on Kiska.

Robert Dougal: OK. How did you go? Did you ... went by boat in the harbor?

Janis Kozlowski: Yes. We flew to Adak, and then a boat picked us up, and we had, like, a 36 hour ride over to Kiska.

Robert Dougal: And what did you do when you got in the harbor at Kiska? How did you get out to the other side of the island? - It's only about a half a mile. Did you have to walk, or, what?

Janis Kozlowski: Yes, we walked.

Robert Dougal: You walked?

Janis Kozlowski: [Um-hum]

Robert Dougal: [0:19:59] OK, well that was a ... that walk you took was our road between our radar station and the camp that was down near the water. It's only a half a mile, but it took a long time to do it. We used tractors, ATs we called them; tractors with AT trailers. And you'd go over a volcanic rock, and then the tractor would come to a bang, on the ground, and then you'd keep on movin'. [It] took a long time to do that [Chuckle] half mile.

Janis Kozlowski: I'll bet. So, did you stay in the camp on the north side, and then you went to over to the radar station when you were on duty?

Robert Dougal: When I was up there, I put the first radar installed on Kiska. I, you know, I stayed there for my tour.

Janis Kozlowski: Now, did you ... you said you didn't see any Japanese aircraft come over the island.

Robert Dougal: [Unclear word] ... There was there.

Janis Kozlowski: But, how about American aircraft; were you able to help in some of the downed aircraft that you...?

Robert Dougal: When the Japs were there, they started to hand dig the ground for their strip. And it was so rocky and volcanic, they gave up - you couldn't land an aircraft. Although we did have aircraft land - some of them crashed in the Kiska Volcano.

Katie Dougal: The worst enemy was the weather.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, it sure sounds like it. [Laugh] It affected everything they did.

Katie Dougal: They were trying to go get mail and supplies, and the blizzards - it was dreadful what they went through at times.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:21:58] Well tell me what your daily life was like there. Um, you had to run the radar station, but what was that like for a young guy to be kind of stuck on this island? And how did you feel about that? And what did you do to pass the time?

Robert Dougal: Well, I was the Second Lieutenant, and I had about 35 men that were under me: I had another Second Lieutenant and a Warrant Officer, and I had sergeants and then the airmen. We had the radar station, and we divided the crew up so that we had four working crews on the radar. They worked eight hours ... I told you, didn't I?

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, but, I'm curious; you said you worked eight hours, but then what did you do after that?

Robert Dougal: Well, [Chuckle] you got up in the morning, [Katie and Robert Chuckle] maybe you had your meal in the hut, because you couldn't get to the kitchen; the doors were snowed under. You just ... sometimes you'd have eight foot [sic] of snow on top of the hut and you'd have to wait for it to be dug out by some of the other folks. And you'd go the mess hall, and ... we made out OK.

Katie Dougal: You had movies from time to time.

Robert Dougal: Oh, the movies we had were ... yeah, we did have a movie once in a while. I had no USO shows.

Janis Kozlowski: You didn't have any USO shows?

Robert Dougal: No, no. One time we had one person come out from the USO; it was too rough. They didn't want to come out where we were. [Laugh]

Katie Dougal: In his diary, I was reading, "And the first Pacific Huts arrived the 27th of October." And then they got a couple every couple days ... they'd get a couple more. So it wasn't until November that they were able to get into, to stay in the Pacific Huts.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. So, they suffered some pretty cold temperatures in those tents?

Katie Dougal: Yeah. [Um-hum]

Janis Kozlowski: [0:24:31] Now, what was the morale like for people there?

Robert Dougal: Well, we only had about, I only had about 30 men; and I kept 'em busy. I wasn't a slave driver. Our job was to keep the radar running, and had ... we divided it up; got together and talked about it, and they wanted to divide the crews up into four groups. And we'd use three of them every week, I've told you that. And then, of course, we had a medic and we had a, oh, two cooks.

Katie Dougal: They had games.

Robert Dougal: And the only thing we had was, maybe, to throw darts at a board, or something like that. But, most of the time, we were busy and didn't have any recreation.

Janis Kozlowski: So, did the guys get in a lot of fights because they were bored, or...? Or, did they get along pretty well?

Robert Dougal: They got along. We got along pretty good. We didn't have any fights, or anything like that. We knew we had a job to do, and our worst enemy was the weather.

Janis Kozlowski: So, what do you remember about the weather? Do you remember nice periods of weather there, or do you just remember the awful stuff?

Robert Dougal: Well, I kept a diary, and sometimes it would be cloudy in the morning and then it would snow. And then maybe in the ... later it would rain, and....

Katie Dougal: [Speaking to Robert] And nicer weather?

Robert Dougal: And the ... it was pretty, pretty unpredictable about what the weather'd be. If you saw sunshine, you stood outside to absorb some of the sun, but most of the time it was, it was cloudy and rainy and snowy and windy. So the best thing to do was stay inside if you could.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah. [Chuckle]

Katie Dougal: The Chaplin came, I think about every second or third week....

Robert Dougal: He did not!

Katie Dougal: Well, that's what your notes said, one time. OK.

Robert Dougal: I had one Chaplin. Oh, the Chaplin came out maybe one time. [The] rest of the time we did our own Chaplining.

Katie Dougal: Oh.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. So, did you get supplies, or mail and stuff like that very frequently on Kiska?

Robert Dougal: Well, I guess, whenever a boat came in from Seattle ... it probably came in through to Anchorage and then out the chain, and occasionally, we'd get mail but, it wasn't like having the mailman come by everyday with mail.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, I bet not. And did you have ways of communicating with people on other islands in the Aleutians, so that you knew what was going on? Or, for that matter, did you know what was going on in other parts of the war, like over in Europe, or in the south Pacific? Did you get news?

Robert Dougal: At one time I went to Anchorage; they sent me to Anchorage. And I bought a radio from a guy for \$100.00 of my own money; and it was only worth about \$15, but I paid \$100.00 for it. And we set that up when I got back. And the only communication we had was, Tokyo Rose.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, boy. [Chuckle]

Robert Dougal: She used to say, “You boys are losing the war, you better go home.”

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle]

Robert Dougal: And [Chuckle] we gave her the old boo-boo. And, but that’s, that’s all. But, we had no, we didn’t have, ever have any radio, other than Tokyo Rose. We couldn’t get any station at all from the States; heard no music, heard nothing.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh! So, did some people ... did you guys believe what Tokyo Rose was saying?

Robert Dougal: Oh, of course we knew we were losing the war. [Chuckle]

Katie Dougal: [Chuckle]

Robert Dougal: Baloney!

Katie Dougal: No.

Robert Dougal: [Chuckle] She, she was just propaganda. We used to ... we used to joke about it.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle] Well, how did people feel about serving in the Aleutians? Did they feel like they were contributing to the war effort, or did some of you really want be somewhere else?

Robert Dougal: Well I think you would find out they were all patriotic fellows. They knew they had to go to war, and this is where we finally ended up; we could have gone into Europe and been shot at. But, none of us were shot at. And we had a job to do, and that was to catch the ... watch the aircraft that took off at Attu and Shemya and flew over Kiska, on to Amchitka, and on down the chain to Anchorage. And that was our main job. And the guys knew that; that’s what we were there for. They knew the Japs weren’t going to come back; we knew that. And, they’d be crazy if they tried. So, we never worried. Our greatest worry was combating the weather.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:30:32] Did you see some bad things happen to people, as a result of the weather?

Robert Dougal: Oh well, I had a rule, I was the commander of the radar station, and I told the guys, "If you ever have to go out to the toilet, I want you to go in pairs; hold hands and go out to where the - we call it the latrine - and then come back." But, I had one person who did not adhere to that request. And he went out to go the latrine, and he got lost. And he hid behind a rock trying to keep warm; he froze.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, my.

Robert Dougal: He froze. The next morning, we didn't know where he was; we couldn't find him. And the snow was all over. We called down to the base - the home base. And the Canadians came out with sticks about 10' long, and they formed a line. And they would go on, one foot at a time, poking the ground until they finally found this one fellow that was lost. He was behind a rock, froze [sic] to death. So, he went out on his own to go the latrine; I said, to go in pairs. So after that death, I got rope, and I tried to rope the area in so that you could hang on to a rope and go out to the latrine and get back without getting lost.

Janis Kozlowski: Sounds like you're a very smart man.

Robert Dougal: I wasn't any smart man; just that we were just lucky. [Katie and Robert Chuckle]

Janis Kozlowski: Well, how far was the latrine from where the, where your Pacific Huts were?

Robert Dougal: Oh, maybe a 100 feet.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow. [Chuckle]

Robert Dougal: We had to keep the latrine away from the main camp.

Janis Kozlowski: So, the weather must have been....

Robert Dougal: We only lived, we only ... well, we lived in tents when we got up there ... and you know that. Then they got what they call, "Pacific Huts."

Janis Kozlowski: [0:33:18] Well, what was your food like? Did you guys have good, good chow on, on Kiska?

Robert Dougal: I had two good cooks. They were both mechanics [Chuckle] - automobile mechanics [Katie and Robert Chuckle] made into cooks.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle]

Robert Dougal: They [Chuckle] were assigned as my cooks. And when they started, [Chuckle] when they started in, they [Chuckle] weren't very good. But, they got a lot better. But, [Chuckle] we did eat, and the food was ... was good. And it got better as these fellows learned how to operate the stoves and cook and mix food together. But, it wasn't like going down to the restaurant and [Chuckle] putting your order in for fried eggs and pancakes.

Well you know what a 55 gallon oil drum looks like?

Janis Kozlowski: I sure do.

Robert Dougal: OK. And we had those scattered all over the island, and when they were empty, they would blow around. And we used to get those drums and we'd put garbage in it [sic] from the kitchen. And the cooks would dump their garbage in there at night and in the morning, why, there'd be a red fox down in the, froze down there. His tail got ... he went after the food, and his tail got in the ... into some of the water that was in that garbage can, and it froze and it held him. And then when the cooks came, in the morning, they found him. And they'd wrap him in a burlap bag and take him into the kitchen and put him near the stove to thaw out. You'd have to chop him out of the ice in the can, and then take 'em inside. And after a while, he became a pet.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh!

Robert Dougal: And he would come over every night [Chuckle] to get something to eat.

Janis Kozlowski: Really? So he just hung around the camp, then?

Robert Dougal: Oh, yeah. He was ... he didn't come in the day time; he did it at night.

Katie Dougal: I have a picture of 'em sending....

Robert Dougal: But, we, we kept him as a pet; it was almost like a dog.

Janis Kozlowski: [Laugh]

Robert Dougal: You could hold 'em. I've got pictures of some of the fellows holding this fox that became a pet.

Janis Kozlowski: So, he didn't sleep inside the huts with you guys, but he just stuck around?

Robert Dougal: No, he stayed out in the hill someplace. But he came in at night. And we always had something for him to eat. We used to look forward to; every morning, or every night, we'd have 'em around. I guess he had a family some place in the hills [he] was taking care of.

Katie Dougal: Or, maybe he was alone.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle] Anything else come to mind; anything other remembrances from your time then?

Robert Dougal: No. Kiska Volcano was inactive at the time I was there.

Janis Kozlowski: Thankfully.

Robert Dougal: Well, we did have a Kiska Volcano. I don't know how high it is; it isn't too high. But, airplanes coming from Attu would fly over the island. And a couple of them crashed in the Kiska Volcano. Nobody knew it, you couldn't hear the noise, you couldn't see any flame, and you, you didn't know about it for six months, when the snow would melt and you see parts of the fuselage shining in the sun, whenever it came out. We knew that it ... they ran into the Kiska Volcano [and] that was the end of 'em.

Janis Kozlowski: Um. [0:37:46] Did you walk around and explore the Japanese camp area, and the guns and stuff that were there?

Robert Dougal: I never saw ... I think.... I don't know, maybe I saw an antiaircraft gun the Japs left. But, they were down at the main base - down near the bay.

Janis Kozlowski: [Um-hum]

Robert Dougal: And they lived there. They dug, apparently, dug holes and made caves, and lived in that.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you see any of those?

Robert Dougal: I didn't see any of 'em. There were none; no we never saw any Japs.

Katie Dougal: What about the caves?

Robert Dougal: The caves; I never was in one of 'em. [But] I know the men were. I stayed out at the camp all the time, taking care of the radar and stuff.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, was the radar equipment you had; it was pretty sophisticated for its time, wasn't it?

Robert Dougal: Well, I guess. [Chuckle] We thought it was ... it was the best they had about that time.

Janis Kozlowski: And that was sort of the start of the birth of the radar period, right?

Robert Dougal: Yeah, that's right. It started during World War ... yeah. It started way back when I was a Second Lieutenant. When we had the first radar, they were on the east coast and the west coast.

Janis Kozlowski: It must have proven to be pretty valuable to us during the war.

Robert Dougal: I think it was. I think it was. It only had a 200 mile range, but the ... I guess we ... we helped a lot of the aircraft when they got lost, or something ... flying over Kiska, going to Amchitka and on.

Katie Dougal: The blizzards were, was hard. They had to tie down the radar, and sometimes it would go off the air, according to your notes.

Robert Dougal: Yeah. Yeah, when it got too windy, we had to tie the radar down, or it would have blown over.

Janis Kozlowski: Is that right. [Chuckle] So it was up on an exposed ridge?

Robert Dougal: Yeah, we were on a [sic] exposed ridge; on the top of it. And we kept the radar running, going back and forth. It didn't do a complete circle; it only did about a 180 degree arc ... back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Because there wasn't anything to pickup, except the guys coming in from Attu and Shemya and stuff, while it was in there. We couldn't see down the island towards Anchorage, because of the Kiska Volcano.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, OK. So, were you tracking the airplanes, the navy and army guys that were flying from Amchitka or Attu, towards the Kuril Islands? Could you; that, that was probably too far, wasn't it?

Robert Dougal: Yeah, that's too far away. We ... we had no contact with the aircraft; the only way we knew they were there, is picking them on the radar. We had no ground radio...

Janis Kozlowski: OK.

Robert Dougal: ... with any aircraft.

Janis Kozlowski: And, were there other, was there a radar station on Little Kiska and other places down the chain?

Robert Dougal: Later in the war, we took four radars to Kiska. And I put the first one up, and I had it up going for a year and a half. And then they decided they'd send ... to keep the guys busy, they put another radar on Little Kiska. Don, Don Poling was the Lieutenant in charge and Legs Fansler [Wilburn L. "Legs" Fansler]. And they had a radar on Little Kiska.

Katie Dougal: They were old friends of ours from Florida.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Robert Dougal: And the only purpose of that radar, was to keep the men busy.

Janis Kozlowski: [Laugh] So it didn't serve much of a function, then?

Robert Dougal: No, it did it - didn't! No, no.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, you said that you knew the guys, some of the guys, or at least one of the guys that worked on Little Kiska; did, did you make good friends during the war that you've kept over the years?

Robert Dougal: Yes. I knew all of these guys from Florida. And I knew ... after the war, yeah, I knew one of 'em; [he] lived up in West Virginia - him and his wife. And he turned out to be the sheriff of the town.

Katie Dougal: [Laugh]

Robert Dougal: ... and he was a big tall guy. He was at Little Kiska. But, Don Poling, went down to ... Louisiana, someplace; where they had a, the radar school and an electronic school. And he was in charge of that. He was a Second Lieutenant when I was up there ... at radar; same as me. And he went down there to, to attend a school, and run a school down there.
'em.

Janis Kozlowski: Um. [0:37:46] Did you walk around and explore the Japanese camp area, and the guns and stuff that were there?

Robert Dougal: I never saw ... I think.... I don't know, maybe I saw an anti-aircraft gun the Japs left. But, they were down at the main base - down near the bay.

Janis Kozlowski: [Um-hum]

Robert Dougal: And they lived there. They dug, apparently, dug holes and made caves, and lived in that.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you see any of those?

Robert Dougal: I didn't see any of 'em. There were none; no we never saw any Japs.

Katie Dougal: What about the caves?

Robert Dougal: The caves; I never was in one of 'em. [But] I know the men were. I stayed out at the camp all the time, taking care of the radar and stuff.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, was the radar equipment you had; it was pretty sophisticated for its time, wasn't it?

Robert Dougal: Well, I guess. [Chuckle] We thought it was ... it was the best they had about that time.

Janis Kozlowski: And that was sort of the start of the birth of the radar period, right?

Robert Dougal: Yeah, that's right. It started during World War ... yeah. It started way back when I was a Second Lieutenant. When we had the first radar, they were on the east coast and the west coast.

Janis Kozlowski: It must have proven to be pretty valuable to us during the war.

Robert Dougal: I think it was. I think it was. It only had a 200 mile range, but the ... I guess we ... we helped a lot of the aircraft when they got lost, or something ... flying over Kiska, going to Amchitka and on.

Katie Dougal: The blizzards were, was hard. They had to tie down the radar, and sometimes it would go off the air, according to your notes.

Robert Dougal: Yeah. Yeah, when it got too windy, we had to tie the radar down, or it would have blown over.

Janis Kozlowski: Is that right. [Chuckle] So it was up on an exposed ridge?

Robert Dougal: Yeah, we were on a [sic] exposed ridge; on the top of it. And we kept the radar running, going back and forth. It didn't do a complete circle; it only did about a 180 degree arc ... back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. Because there wasn't anything to pickup, except the guys coming in from Attu and Shemya and stuff, while it was in there. We couldn't see down the island towards Anchorage, because of the Kiska Volcano.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, OK. So, were you tracking the airplanes, the navy and army guys that were flying from Amchitka or Attu, towards the Kuril Islands? Could you; that, that was probably too far, wasn't it?

Robert Dougal: Yeah, that's too far away. We ... we had no contact with the aircraft; the only way we knew they were there, is picking them on the radar. We had no ground radio...

Janis Kozlowski: OK.

Robert Dougal: ... with any aircraft.

Janis Kozlowski: And, were there other, was there a radar station on Little Kiska and other places down the chain?

Robert Dougal: Later in the war, we took four radars to Kiska. And I put the first one up, and I had it up going for a year and a half. And then they decided they'd send ... to keep the guys busy, they put another radar on Little Kiska. Don, Don Poling was the Lieutenant in charge and Legs Fansler [Wilburn L. "Legs" Fansler]. And they had a radar on Little Kiska.

Katie Dougal: They were old friends of ours from Florida.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Robert Dougal: And the only purpose of that radar, was to keep the men busy.

Janis Kozlowski: [Laugh] So it didn't serve much of a function, then?

Robert Dougal: No, it did it - didn't! No, no.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, you said that you knew the guys, some of the guys, or at least one of the guys that worked on Little Kiska; did, did you make good friends during the war that you've kept over the years?

Robert Dougal: Yes. I knew all of these guys from Florida. And I knew ... after the war, yeah, I knew one of 'em; [he] lived up in West Virginia - him and his wife. And he turned out to be the sheriff of the town.

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Janis Kozlowski: [0:43:34] So did you maintain friendships with any of your fellow servicemen, over the years?

Robert Dougal: Yes, I ...

Katie Dougal: They're all gone now.

Robert Dougal: I did. I'm about the only one left. I'll be 96 in another three weeks. And ... I get an Eleventh Air Force newsletter. I don't know, do you ever see it?

Janis Kozlowski: Yes, I do. In fact, I wrote something for it, this time.

Katie Dougal: Oh!

Robert Dougal: Yeah. Well. OK. I get, I get that ... I subscribe to that. And ... that's about the only contact I have ... reading about those guys. The ones I knew, the guys that I knew, I've outlived 'em. And so, I don't hear about 'em anymore. I don't know where any of my men went ... when they went home. They've all died and gone away.

Katie Dougal: So, may I say something here?

Janis Kozlowski: Sure.

Katie Dougal: It'd be after the war, oh, probably 10 years later, we, he stayed in the military and made a career of it, you know. But, we were still living in Washington, DC, and went to the Army/Navy football game. And ... I think it was over at Annapolis. Anyway, we went to a restaurant to eat before the game. And who ... we had a glass of beer, I think or something in the bar. And who was the bartender [Chuckle] but one of the guys that worked for him up there.

Janis Kozlowski: Is that right? [Chuckle]

Robert Dougal: What was he, up there? I don't know.

Katie Dougal: I'll say, "It was some reunion!" [Laugh]

Janis Kozlowski: That's funny. It's a small world when you bump into somebody like that. [Chuckle]

Katie Dougal: Its fun to be palsy-walsy with the men under him, you know. He and the officers were maybe; did more things together. But, it's because he was in charge. But, their; it was really nice. I think he was the only one you've ever seen, other than Legs Fansler, right?

Robert Dougal: I think, I think so. Yeah.

Katie Dougal: But Bob stayed in and we had some nice tours after that. We lived in the Philippines, we lived in England, and Hawaii. Two of our children were born in Hawaii, and one was born in London.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow, you really did get around the world.

Katie Dougal: He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. [Um-hum]

Janis Kozlowski: [0:46:23] So, did you leave after the Japanese surrendered then ... then you left Alaska?

Robert Dougal: I stayed there about a year and a half at Kiska. And then they transferred me to Amchitka. And another officer from Amchitka came over and took my place at Kiska. I stayed at Amchitka, and then, I ... until near the end of the war. And I said I'd stay on and come back. So, they gave me a vacation, and I went to New Jersey and New England for R&R for 30 days. And by that time, the Japs surrendered and the war was over, so, I never did go back to Alaska and Kiska.

Katie Dougal: But, didn't, that's not what she asked, I don't think; you misunderstood her. See, he was not there for any active fighting. When he went, they had already taken over Kiska, and Attu.

Janis Kozlowski: Right. I was just wondering when he left. So, it sounds like he left just before VJ day, and that happened while he was on....

Katie Dougal: OK, on the way home, he was on an airplane, flying home for R&R. And they took him off the plane in Edmonton, Canada and said, "You'll have to take the train back to the states, we need the airplane." And the airplane was going to Japan to take, maybe - I don't know about President Truman - but to take people, I guess. Because they knew that the Japanese, they were going, they were going to be dropping the bomb. And they were hoping ... they were pretty sure that they would surrender.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, OK.

Katie Dougal: So, he was just arriving home when that happened. And so we went to, to Connecticut for a second honey-moon. And anyway, we visited relatives from the southland and went back. In the meantime, he got orders to ... that his next base would be in California - he wouldn't be going back. They sent him his clothes - or whatever he left up there - was shipped to him at his mother's house.

Janis Kozlowski: OK.

Katie Dougal: And he, after that month off, he was assigned in California. So, I went back to Washington. I worked for the government during the war, and I went back to work. And when he got out there and got a place to live, I took the train and went out. OK.

Janis Kozlowski: So, it sounds like you were a war bride.

Katie Dougal: I was a war bride. [Chuckle] And I did a lot of; I was working. But I did a lot of volunteer work during the war.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, OK.

Katie Dougal: The AWVS, American Woman's Volunteer Services ...

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Katie Dougal: Red Cross.

Janis Kozlowski: So, what kind of volunteer work did you do?

Katie Dougal: One thing I did; I went to Walter Reed [Army Medical Center] twice a week and I looked after two boys that were double, well...

Robert Dougal: Amputees.

Katie Dougal: ... they had lost two legs and one arm, one of them; the other one, just two legs - in North Africa. And I ... they ... their arms; the one boy had very strong arms - he said, "It made up for no legs."

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. [Chuckle]

Katie Dougal: He could get around fairly good with his wheelchair. The other one couldn't. But, I would push them down to the USO shows every Saturday night. I got to see Bob Hope and Ester Williams, and there were tons of movie stars. And I was always ... they always had a little book, to collect an autograph or two of the movie stars at the end of the show. Because, I could get up front and do it, and take it back to them. I'd wheel those boys from their, from their hospital, down about three, or four ramps, this way and that way, you know, to the main - to the place where they have the stadium, or the ... well, gathering.

Janis Kozlowski: Ah-huh.

Katie Dougal: Ah, [Chuckle] get them to [a] place right near the front - maybe front row if I could; right next to it, I should say. Because they had to stay in their chairs; wheel chairs. And I'd go with one, and then I'd run back and get the next one and bring him. Then when it was over, I'd take one back - haul 'em back to his room, hospital room, and go back and get the other. And I wrote letters for them. And I'd stay after work and type them and mail them to their ... one had a wife and one had a sweetheart. [Chuckle] And then to their mothers. I'd take it, take it down in shorthand, and type them and mail them for them.

The phone was out in the ... down the hall. You could go and get it and bring it and plug it in. And I'd make a call for them so they could talk to their mothers, or whatever. That, what I did for them.

And then, I worked at the children's hospital for a short time. I quit that – they had me working with the deformed babies, trying to feed them; babies with real problems. And I came home at night and I told my sister - I lived with my sister - I said, "I'll never have a baby, never have a baby; it might be like this one, or that one." And she said, "It's time you, time you stopped working there." [Chuckle]

Janis Kozlowski: Umm.

Katie Dougal: And I did, because I had nightmares and stuff. So, I quit that. But, I did some other volunteer work around. But, that was ... ah, it kept me busy.

Janis Kozlowski: Sounds like you did some good, good service for people during the war then.

Katie Dougal: And I would fix box... fix boxes and send 'em to Bob. I baked Toll-House cookies - his favorite. And package them: popcorn under, and popcorn around them, and then popcorn on top. And it would [Chuckle] take three months [Chuckle] for them to get there.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. Did you know where he was at?

Katie Dougal: The first class mail got there faster, like, in about, what, three weeks, by ship. I'd get them to him, by ship. But, third class mail went also by ship. But, they took their time. And I know, he said.... [Now talking to Robert] you, you said there were crumbs and... a couple [Chuckle] of times, when you got 'em. [Now speaking to Janis] But, I think they, he must have eaten them with [Chuckle] his food. [Laugh]

Janis Kozlowski: [00:53:19] I don't know if you're aware, but there is, in Alaska, there is the Aleutian World War National Historic Area, which is on private land. But there is a, the Navy/Army base there at Dutch Harbor, is still ... parts of it are preserved. And there is a visitor center there, so people can learn about the war in the Aleutians during World War II. And then, last December, President Bush dedicated a new National Monument, called, "Valor in the Pacific." And three sites in Alaska are part of that new designation, as well as one of the Japanese internment camps in California. And then, four sites at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. And I was just wondering, how, do you think it's important that we recognize your contributions to the war in the Aleutian... when you served in the Aleutians? And are these designations important to you?

Robert Dougal: Well, it, what we did, on Kiska, after the Japs left, we never knew whether the Japs were coming back. So we always were on the alert. So, we always thought we were important. And we were also watching those aircraft fly from Attu over Kiska and on up the chain. And, if any of them had emergencies, why, we were there to pick them up on the radar. But, that was our contribution.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, you did serve an important role in the war, for sure.

Robert Dougal: Yeah. Get shot at ...we didn't shoot anybody. But, the weather, you know what the weather's like in Alaska, and what it would be like out on the chain. And, it took a lot to just live and combat that weather.

[00:55:14] It was named Robert's Ridge after me, that was sort of the unofficial name they, they had. My name was Robert, so they said you're gonna put the radar on, "Robert's Ridge."

Janis Kozlowski: [Laugh] So, you think....

Robert Dougal: Robert's Ridge.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you think that name stuck; will I find it on the map?

Katie Dougal: No, it probably [Chuckle] was not on the map.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, OK.

Robert Dougal: Map. No this was, this was sort of a joke during the war - what the areas was where I had the radar.

Janis Kozlowski: [Laugh]

Robert Dougal: I was gonna say, "If you got there, I'd be interested - was the radar still there?" And did the, "How about the camp, was it destroyed? Or the radar; what was it like?"

Katie Dougal: You saw Quonset huts didn't you?

Janis Kozlowski: We did, we saw remnants of Pacific Huts. And we had a map of, um; Kiska, the occupation sites on Kiska Harbor. One of the veterans gave me a copy. So we had his map of what the camps looked like on that side. Now, were you on the side where the Canadians were?

Robert Dougal: Ah, the Cana... When they invaded, the Americans came in on one side, and the Canadians came in on the other, and I was on the side that faces Attu.

Janis Kozlowski: Right, OK.

Robert Dougal: And it was only about a half a mile from that harbor there at Kiska, out to the radar station. But it was over those volcanic rocks that used to take an hour; and what we called an AV trailer and a tractor, bumping over those rocks each time. We went down to the base to get supplies and food.

Well, I, I was just interested, whether ... because I left Kiska, and they, and they sent me to Amchitka to do another job. And so I didn't close the camp down, and just wondered if it ... just, everybody left and the radar stayed there, and ... if you were there now, you could see the radar - all rusty, or something like that. Because they didn't bring that stuff home; I don't know what they did with it.

Katie Dougal: Are you sure they didn't bring any of that?

Robert Dougal: No, they didn't bring them home and as I, I've never been there, and I went to Japan, and the ship went past there, but we never went off...

Katie Dougal: [0:57:52] Janis, ah, I'm pitchin' in here again. Ah, they did have some, a little, little bit of sports - they went salmon fishing.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, really?

Katie Dougal: [Not] often, but in his dairy, Bob went one time with some men. And then after that, several men went ... you know, maybe every week for a few weeks during the warmer, better weather, I guess. It had to be. But, they'd been salmon fishing and they walked....

Robert Dougal: The salmon went up the little streams that came out of the face of the volcano, to lay their eggs and stuff. And there wasn't any big deal. But, we did catch those salmon and eat 'em.

Katie Dougal: And as you were talking about keeping busy ... they had, they were always building, or doing something. Such as, they'd have to dynamite holes and move the, put the four, a four wheeler, hollow out a latrine; ah, they'd move it from place to place I guess - maybe every year, or something.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, yeah, yeah. It's shallow there, so they probably had to do that.

Katie Dougal: They tried to dig for water, they found a little trickle of water coming out of the hill somewhere, and I have the pictures. And moving.... So, he couldn't, you know, he could send pictures, but he couldn't tell what it was. But, after the war, he told me things. But, they dug a trench, oh, of, and put a pipe in, hoping that it'd bring water down so they have their own water. I imagine, that would be for ...

Robert Dougal: Just showers and stuff.

Katie Dougal: ... just showers and stuff. But it, and they had, they got ... they had a little bit of water come a time, or two, apparently. And that was it, no more. All that, but they'd worked for several months digging on that. [Now talking to Robert] And maybe you did some dynamiting for that too, I don't know.

Robert Dougal: Oh, yeah, well, everything ... with the permafrost - you're familiar with the permafrost?

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, yes I am.

Robert Dougal: And if we wanted to put a foundation in, you got the ... the tractor that had a front loader on it, to get under there. And the whole area would start to come up when you started to pull on it. And ... boy that permafrost was a nuisance.

Janis Kozlowski: I'll bet it was! [Chuckle] Between that and the water filling in your holes too, probably.

Robert Dougal: Yeah, yes; it was a rough life.

Katie Dougal: When they put the fence up, they had to dig, they, around the sides of them, to put the fence there. And then they put the sandbags ... according to the pictures, sand, looks like sandbags. Maybe they were wrong...

Robert Dougal: Sandbags.

Katie Dougal: ... to keep the wind from blowing 'em over. And they had the roof go off buildings. I

[1:00:57] Well, I love history, and I've, I've read everything I could have on Alaska; and especially on the Aleutians. And when he was out there, I'd go the library. I found, I didn't know, he didn't know where he was going when he left the states, of course, or he couldn't tell me. And we had, we fixed a little code, and I don't remember what it was. But somehow, after he got located, he was supposed to let me know where it was, and I wasn't supposed to tell anybody. [Laugh] I found out that he was on Kiska.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, you did figure it out!

Katie Dougal: Yeah, I figured it out from the code. And, but, you could never mention the word Kiska, or, well ... everything was censored, you know. Remember the old saying that, "Loose lips sink ships."

Janis Kozlowski: Right.

Katie Dougal: You couldn't talk and you couldn't write about it. But, I went to the library and got a book by, I think it was Doctor Hubbard, or ... maybe it wasn't Doctor, maybe it was just Hubbard.

Janis Kozlowski: Father Hubbard.

Katie Dougal: Father. Was he an explorer?

Janis Kozlowski: Yes. [Um-hum]

Katie Dougal: Wrote a book?

Janis Kozlowski: Yes.

Katie Dougal: [01:02:16] Ah, it would be ... we were in the Philippines, we went space-available to Thailand for a few days, and went on to India, and traveled around over there, you know, for a week, or so. And, well, if, in Euro... in London, we had took 'em on the continent, and we took our car, we went. One trip we took the air-ferry service. They don't, I don't think they have had it anymore; just one year, maybe. But you drive the car on to the airplane, and there's seats right behind. Two cars could go on it and about eight passengers, so it was enough for us and another couple. We took our two cars. Bob drove it on the airplane. And they got out, and they get in seats behind it, behind the car. Cars were tied down. And we flew across the channel. And we got off over there and get the car, and we drove.

Janis Kozlowski: That was in En... across from the English Channel?

Katie Dougal: Yeah, ah-huh.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh. What, what kind of airplane was it that they used, do you know?

Robert Dougal: Some amphibious big airplane, I don't know.

Katie Dougal: He [Robert] says amphibious. I don't know if it's; all I know is we weren't high above the water. And when they tilted, you know, to land, to come into the runway, Nancy looked out the window and it looked like we were going right down to the drink. And she let out a big scream; it scared her.

Janis Kozlowski: [Chuckle]

Katie Dougal: And spooked.... Anyway, it took her a few years to get over that fear.

Janis Kozlowski: So, she probably didn't like airplane flights after that.

Katie Dougal: Ah, funny. She wouldn't ride, didn't want to ride in an airplane for a while. But, ah....

Janis Kozlowski: So, so when did you retire?

Katie Dougal: Pardon?

Janis Kozlowski: When did you retire?

Katie Dougal: He retired in 1966; [Speaking to Robert] You tell her.

Robert Dougal: The last day of February of '66.

Janis Kozlowski: And then what did you do?

Robert Dougal: After the youngest girl went through college, we got a travel trailer. And for about eight, or ten years, we drove all over Canada, United States, and ... all over the place.

Katie Dougal: But, she said, "What did you do after you retired?"

Robert Dougal: I did nothing.

Katie Dougal: Yes, you were office manager for ...

Robert Dougal: Oh, I worked; yeah, just a ...

Katie Dougal: ... for 10 years ...

Robert Dougal: ... so I didn't go crazy.

Katie Dougal: He worked for 10 years for the air-conditioning company; he was their office manager.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, OK. And how did you end up in Kerrville, Texas?

Katie Dougal: Well, that was in Edinburg, Texas; down in the Rio Grande Valley.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, OK.

Katie Dougal: And it was after that Nancy -- or Bonnie, our youngest -- graduated from college. And ... we, you know, we kept the home going while they were in school. In fact, two of them went to the University of Texas, Pan-Am Branch - right there. All they had to walk, [was] two short blocks for [Unclear word, sounds like "Bash Hall"] to the campus. And it was very handy.