

Interview with Walter “Andy” Andersen

Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project

January 28, 2009, Roseville, California

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This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Mr. Andersen was conducted via the telephone and recorded 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. All photos courtesy of Walter Andersen.



Photo 1: Walter “Andy” Andersen, 1944. Hut 32, Cape Wrangell, Attu Island, Alaska

Walter Andersen: I grew up in Chicago, Illinois.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you spend your whole life there until you went into the service?

Walter Andersen: Then I came back, I went to school a little bit and then I got a job there and I got married and then I ... the steel company I worked for transferred me to Rockford, Illinois, they opened a little plant there. Then I was transferred to Baltimore and ran the plant there and then I went to Cleveland and then San Francisco and Sacramento.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: All for the same company?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Which one was it?

Walter Andersen: A.M Castle and Company.

Janis Kozlowski: Is that a steel company that’s still in business?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. And where were you when you went into the Service?

Walter Andersen: I was in Chicago.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

Walter Andersen: No, I was drafted. First, what I did ... after I got out of high school.... By the way, I went to a high school, I think it was the biggest one in the country at the time. We had 9000 boys in this school.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow, that is big. What school was that?

Walter Andersen: It was Lane Tech. And then I went down to Southern Illinois Normal University. I spent the summer there and then some recruiters come into the school and they were looking for some technical students. So I went down to Evansville, Indiana and I worked for the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company there. We were building the LSTs on the Ohio River.

Janis Kozlowski: An LST is a Landing Craft?

Walter Andersen: Yes. It was a big one, for tanks.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. And was ... you were doing that for the war effort?

Walter Andersen: Yes, and then I took flying lessons there when I was in Evansville. I went back to Chicago, I tried to get into the Navy Air Corp, it was a V-5 program and they said it was filled up at that time and I should just wait until I was drafted, so I did that. I went back to school for another semester, then I was drafted.¹

Janis Kozlowski: But once you’re drafted do you have choices?

Walter Andersen: Not really! [both laughing] I had a choice to go into the Navy.

¹ The Navy V-5, Naval Aviation Preparatory Program, was established in January 1942. This program offered enlistment to college sophomores, juniors, and seniors for flight training in the Naval Reserve leading to an Ensign's commission. Candidates were able to complete their current college year at the time of enlistment before being called to active duty.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, as opposed to the Army?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. And what ... did you get to choose what profession you had in the Navy?

Walter Andersen: No. They take a lot of tests and then they just say, I was going to go to the aerographer’s school in Lakehurst, New Jersey. And I went there in ’43, early ’43, and I forget what class number I was in. But then after I went on ... I graduated from there I went down to ... I got transferred back to Kodiak.

[0:03:27] I’ll never forget that. I was a kid from the Midwest, I went down to the dock there in Seattle, it was the biggest ship I ever saw. [laughing] It was a World War II ... or World War I destroyer, the USS Fox.² We got out in a storm, I’ll never forget that, and that ship got smaller and smaller [both laughing].

Janis Kozlowski: I bet, out on the high seas!

Walter Andersen: Yes, and that was the first and only time I was ever seasick.

Janis Kozlowski: Were you seasick the whole trip?

Walter Andersen: Oh, definitely, everybody was.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember how long it took to get from Seattle to Kodiak?

Walter Andersen: It wasn’t very long, I think it was, maybe, four days, something like that.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, that might have seemed like a long time if you were sick though.

Walter Andersen: Yes. It sure did. That ship was so old and creaky. It smelled of oil, it was terrible.

Janis Kozlowski: What did you think when they told you that you were going to go to Alaska?

Walter Andersen: I was quite thrilled about it. I thought that’d be great. I was only 18 or 19 ... I guess I was 19 then, I don’t know, about 18 or 19 at the time. So it was an adventure. When we got to Kodiak and ... weather central was at Kodiak for the Aleutians. So then they wanted a fellow to go to Pt. Barrow – you know where that is?

Janis Kozlowski: Right.

² Built at Camden, New Jersey, she was placed in commission in May 1920. Soon after the United States entered World War II in December 1941 she began escorting shipping between Alaska to Southern California and, from May 1943 into March 1944 was stationed in Alaskan waters. *Fox* then began training, transport, and escort service out of San Diego. USS *Fox* was decommissioned at Norfolk, Virginia, in November 1945 and was sold for scrapping a year later.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Walter Andersen: And a fella for Attu. There was two of us, so, this other kid and I, we cut cards and he went to Pt. Barrow and I never heard from him. [both laughing] Then I went to Attu.



Photo 2: Massacre Bay, Attu Island, Alaska, 1944.

Janis Kozlowski: Which one did you want? Or did you know?

Walter Andersen: I didn't know what the difference was. But Point Barrow was pretty cold [laughing].

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, yeah! Maybe you got the better of the two but it's hard to say.

Walter Andersen: I think I did, I think I did, really.

Then we ... I flew out to Cold Bay and then I went to Adak and then – these are just stops on the way out to Attu. And then I got out to Attu and got hooked up with the weather station there --a great bunch of guys.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:06:03] So as an aerographer were you guys in a separate group or were you actually attached to a unit?

Walter Andersen: We were ... actually we were ... the Navy bombers were in Fleet Air Wing Four but we were US Naval Air Station Attu, the weathermen were.

Janis Kozlowski: And do you remember how many of you were there, aerographers?

Walter Andersen: It wasn't all that many. There was 15, maybe.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you each, I mean, did you all ... if there were 10 or 15 guys did you all work every day or did they need that many just to cover 24 hour shifts?



Photo 3: Back row: Name unknown, James Harvey Dew, Name unknown, Sandor “The Count” Podmanski, PeeWee Welch. Middle row: Name unknown, Bob Wyman. Bottom Row: Andy Andersen.

Walter Andersen: We worked there 24 hours.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh.

Walter Andersen: So it ... maybe 20. There wasn't many on a shift though, there was only about 3 or 4, there was maybe between 15 and 20.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you all stay there on Attu or did you go out on ships and planes and things like that?

Walter Andersen: We went out on planes, on the weather planes.

Janis Kozlowski: Were those voluntary assignments or did everybody have to do them?

Walter Andersen: No, those were voluntary.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you get more pay for doing that kind of thing?

Walter Andersen: Yes, we got 50% more.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so there was an incentive.

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: [0:7:33] How long did you end up staying in the Aleutians?

Walter Andersen: Oh, two, two and a half years. Let’s see, I went in there the last of ’43, then I got out ... about two years.

Janis Kozlowski: That’s a pretty long rotation.



Map 1: Location of Cape Wrangell on the island of Attu, Alaska.

Walter Andersen: Yes. Well, then I had it broken up too, because I was sent out to Cape Wrangell to the aerological station there.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so for part of the time you were at Cape Wrangell?

Walter Andersen: Yes, as I recall I was there for about 10 months, it was quite a long time. There was only 6 of us.

Janis Kozlowski: And what was your job at Cape Wrangell?

Walter Andersen: Weather, aerological.

Janis Kozlowski: The same thing that you did at Attu?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: So what was your typical day like for an aerographer? What were your duties?



Photo 4: Cape Wrangell, Attu Island, Alaska, 1944. Tex, name unknown, Hans Juhr, Maurice Huntley, “Heavy” Cornwell Junior, Andy Andersen.

Walter Andersen: Well, I had to send out a report every six hours, I think it was, 24 hours a day.

Janis Kozlowski: So did you take weather readings? Did you have a weather station there and that’s what you used to...?

Walter Andersen: Yes, in fact that one photo where I’m on top of the anemometer ...

Janis Kozlowski: The anemometer tower?

Walter Andersen: Yes, that was at Wrangell, that was on top of a little mountain there.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, ok. So did you lose those anemometers pretty frequently hanging up there in the wind?

Walter Andersen: No, the wind wasn’t the factor, it was freezing rain. It would just get ... end up with a great big chunk of ice at the top of the pole.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: So did you have to climb up there and free it?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Good thing you were young, huh?

Walter Andersen: Yes. [both laughing]



Photo 5: Andy Andersen, 1944, checking the weather! Aerological station at Cape Wrangell, Attu Island, Alaska.

[0:9:35] You asked me about the weather at Attu because many of the shots were just us running around in our shorts. It was very mild, really. It, maybe, got down in the 20s, but it snowed a lot.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: Did it really?

Walter Andersen: Yes, and it rained, we got freezing rain. A lot of fog, oh, a lot of fog.

Janis Kozlowski: I’ve heard that story before.



Photo 6: Left to Right: Tex, “Heavy” Cornwell Junior and Maurice “Moe” Huntley

Walter Andersen: Yes. And then ... actually, you know, in the spring time there would be flowers there.

Janis Kozlowski: You mean a lot of flowers?

Walter Andersen: Yes, in the fields there would be flowers growing there, if I recall right.

Janis Kozlowski: So, do you remember it as being a pretty place or?

Walter Andersen: It was pretty, there were no trees. There was nothing growing above ground, nothing growing up into the air. It was all tundra.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you get out and walk around much around the island?

Walter Andersen: Oh, sure.

Janis Kozlowski: What did you think of it?

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Walter Andersen: It was ... when you’re a kid it was like a big adventure, like a big camping trip.

Janis Kozlowski: Just some new place to check out.

Walter Andersen: Yes, it was. Cape Wrangell was probably the most interesting. We did some fishing there. We had a big garbage pit outside our unit there. We had a family of fox that lived with us there in that little area. They’d eat ... go into that garbage pit and eat and they got friendly. They’d come into the Quonset hut and you had to be careful. If you frightened them they’d start to urinate and that smelled up the whole place.

Janis Kozlowski: Yes.

Walter Andersen: That one family there we had one pure white fox, it must have been an albino and the rest were what they call blue fox.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so that was part of your recreation there. Those were like your pets?

Walter Andersen: Yes. [laughing] They’d come up and almost eat out of your hand really. They were just very tame.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you see much other wildlife on the island? Either at Wrangell or at Attu?

Walter Andersen: No, we saw ... there were ptarmigan, that’s a bird, you know, it ... during the summer it’s brown and when there’s snow on the ground they turn white.

Janis Kozlowski: Uh-hnn.

Walter Andersen: Then there was the fox.

Janis Kozlowski: Now, did you say you did some fishing when you were in Alaska?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: How did you do that, was it in the streams or out in the ocean?

Walter Andersen: We went out in the bay there. In fact, there was one picture showing a couple – I think it was Bob Wyman and maybe myself, and there was an officer – just showing the small boat that we were in.

Janis Kozlowski: Were those Navy provided boats?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: What kind of catch did you get there? What’d you catch?

Walter Andersen: You know, I don’t really recall. We ate it though.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: Did you fish because ... just for something fun to do or....

Walter Andersen: Yes. Just for some sport.



Photo 7: Casco Cove, 1945.

Janis Kozlowski: Was your food pretty good?

Walter Andersen: Oh, yes. Really good.

Janis Kozlowski: So you weren't fishing for that purpose, you were fed pretty well?

Walter Andersen: No. Just sport, yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. How about hunting, did you do any hunting?

Walter Andersen: We did some ... they had some geese up there, but we never shot the geese. I don't know ... we didn't have any shotguns. We just had rifles.

Walter "Andy" Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, ok.

Walter Andersen: [0:14:04] Then out at Wrangell there about once a month a small boat would come out, a PC or patrol craft boat, would come out and bring the groceries to us. And they'd send out an LCI, that's a landing craft, infantry. But they'd have it loaded with drums of diesel because we ran a big diesel generator 24 hours a day for our lights and power.

Janis Kozlowski: That was at Wrangell?

Walter Andersen: Yes. And Wrangell's spelled with a W.

Janis Kozlowski: Right, I think I know which place you're talking about.

Walter Andersen: Ok. You know we were the most western military installation. I don't know if in all of the Pacific War. I know it was, in the Aleutians we were the most western.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh yeah, I bet.

Walter Andersen: Wrangell was on the western end of Attu.

Janis Kozlowski: So why did they have you over there rather than in the main area where everybody else was?

Walter Andersen: Well, there was a lot of fog and we could ... if it started getting fog at Wrangell it was going to get fog over at Attu pretty quick.

Janis Kozlowski: So that was kind of like an early warning?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. Did you see a lot of aircraft coming and going out of Attu?

Walter Andersen: No.

Janis Kozlowski: Never did, not from Wrangell certainly, right, because there was no airfield there?

Walter Andersen: No, we didn't see any ships or anything like that.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, how did you relay your weather reports over to the main base?

Walter Andersen: Well at Wrangell there we had a radio tech to keep all the radio equipment going and then we had two radio men. And we had a cook and a corpsman and me.

Janis Kozlowski: So there was maybe about 8 or 10 of you there?

Walter Andersen: No, it was just 6, I think it was.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, just 6.

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, ok. And then did you have to work a 24 hour shift there, because you were the only aerographer?

Walter Andersen: Yes, I’d have to get up every 6 hours and make a report.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok.

Walter Andersen: And then the radio men, they had to be at the radio all the time for the incoming messages.

Janis Kozlowski: So did you have more than one of those guys?

Walter Andersen: Yes, we had two of those.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. [0:16:37] So, where did you stay at Wrangell? What kind of accommodations did you have?

Walter Andersen: We had two Quonset huts. One Quonset hut was for our living quarters where we slept and then we had a shower in there and a stove that ran on diesel oil. And then in the other Quonset hut we had a galley and an eating area. And then we had a storage area for food and then we had the last 10 feet of it was for our radio equipment.

Janis Kozlowski: And was that all set up when you arrived?

Walter Andersen: Yes, it was.

We had ... there was a radar navigational device there on top of that mountain too at Wrangell. So, planes coming in they could focus on that, on that -“racon”, I think they called it.

Janis Kozlowski: So, did you hear them coming over sometimes?

Walter Andersen: No.

Janis Kozlowski: Didn’t hear them from where you were?

Walter Andersen: No, never heard them.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:17:50] So did you spend a whole 10 months in that...?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow.

Walter Andersen: We had six guys there and there was never a harsh word spoken.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

There was never any hard feelings, it was just a great bunch of guys. We all got along well.

Janis Kozlowski: That’s pretty incredible, don’t you think? A bunch of young guys, sort of isolated like that?

Walter Andersen: Yes. In fact, they told us that the Coast Guard when they have isolated duty like that they don’t keep you more than six months. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Yes, that’s a long time to throw a bunch of people together.

Walter Andersen: Yes, especially a small group like that. But we got along just fine.

Janis Kozlowski: Were you all about the same age?

Walter Andersen: Yes. 19 to 20s, 21 maybe, I think, the radio tech was 21 maybe.

Janis Kozlowski: He was the old man, huh? [both laughing] So, what did you guys do to pass the time when you weren’t working?

Walter Andersen: Oh, we did a lot of nutty things. [laughing]

One time, a piece of plywood came in on the beach, there was snow on the ground then, and we thought we could make a toboggan out of that thing. So we ... that night the moon was ... it was clear and the moon came out and the mountain was beautiful. So we ... there was three of us went up there and we started down. We got the toboggan – this piece of plywood – up on the side of the mountain and we started going down, we jumped on this thing and started going down. We were going 100 miles an hour. [both laughing] The thing tipped over and we knocked this one guy ... we just punched him into the snow and we went further and we tipped over and fell. And we looked back, we couldn’t see this other guy – I can’t remember his name.

But anyway, the corpsman was with us, it was myself and that other guy. We went back up there and he says, “I think my leg’s broken.” This other corpsman looks at him and he says, “Your legs not broken. We’re gonna tie you to the plywood board and get you down the mountain.” We tied him on [laughing] and we got down.

Right in back of the huts was a cliff like going up. So we had to get him over the cliff, that 50 foot drop. We got a piece of rope and hung it up there. We started letting him over the side [laughing] and the knot came untied [laughing]. You could hear this guy screaming going down [both laughing]. He was tied to the board, he couldn’t get off.

Janis Kozlowski: So if he wasn’t hurt before then he probably was after that drop, eh?

Walter Andersen: [laughing] He was so angry. We were afraid to untie him. [both laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Until he cooled off!

Walter Andersen: Yes, it was all crazy things like that.

Janis Kozlowski: Just young guy stuff, huh?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

[0:21:12] The one kid, he was from Oregon so he's ... his Dad was a lumber man and they used dynamite to blow up stuff. So this kid knew how to use dynamite. So one night he goes out, way down at the end of the beach and he runs a wire out there and he puts a stick of dynamite out and he comes back. None of us know what this kid is doing.

So we were eating dinner and it's dark and all of a sudden. Oh, and he left a flashlight down there. He says, "I see something out on the beach, down at the end of the beach. What is that?" I don't know, let's go take a look. And then he had the wire come from the dynamite coming back into the hut and it was to a radio receiver, the one you crank, you know? And he cranked that thing and that dynamite went off. [laughing] We didn't know what to do. Oh, that was so funny!

Janis Kozlowski: I guess there was nobody around to hear it so you didn't get in trouble?

Walter Andersen: No, no. [laughing]

[0:22:29] Then another time in a snow storm ... the radio man on duty in the middle of the night, he makes a ... encodes a message and he calls and he says, "Hey, I've got an urgent message coming in we better decode it." So the guy in charge, he says, Ok. It says, "Enemy attack or abandon your base immediately, enemy attack imminent." [both laughing] And it's snowing like you can't believe. We got all our gear in our backpacks and we started out the door and we hadn't gone more than 25 yards and this guy started to laugh. He thought it was pretty funny.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, I bet he did seeing you guys scrambling to get going.

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Now if that had been true, how would you have gotten out of there anyway?

Walter Andersen: Oh, the only thing we could have done was to go back up over the top of the mountain.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, just hike over?

Walter Andersen: Yes, to the other side.

Janis Kozlowski: Is that how you got over there in the first place?

Walter Andersen: No, no. Cape Wrangell was about, maybe, 100 yards of beach. The beach went back, maybe, 50 yards and then there was a cliff going up. And the Quonset huts were right at the bottom of the cliff. Then we had a big, great big generator that we had to keep going all the time. As I say, it was an adventure.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: So, how did you get your fuel oil and food and supplies and stuff in. Did they bring a boat around?

Walter Andersen: Yes, they brought a patrol boat. We have to go out and meet the boat with ... we had a like a 16 foot dory with an engine on it – a motor on it. We’d go out and load the boat with groceries and bring it back, make a couple trips.

Janis Kozlowski: And how often did they come and bring you supplies and stuff?

Walter Andersen: About once a month. We ate a lot of canned goods! [both laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: It sounds like it.

Walter Andersen: And then when they brought the oil in, if I remember right, they’d just dump the oil into the water off this LCI and floated the oil drums in. But that was a job too because when we got it up to the beach we had to roll them through the sand. That was really a lot of work. And we probably got, I don’t know, 40 drums, I’m guessing now. We had a big quantity of them.

Janis Kozlowski: 40 drums a month?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow, that’s a lot.

Walter Andersen: Maybe they come out every two months.

Janis Kozlowski: Either way that’s a lot of drums to move.

Walter Andersen: Oh, yes.

Janis Kozlowski: So that’s ... if they came in once a month or whatever that’s how often you got mail coming in and out?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:25:45] So you probably felt pretty isolated there?

Walter Andersen: Yes. But we played ... there was always something to do. As I say, and everybody got along really well and we played cards or do things like that.

Janis Kozlowski: So you didn’t mind your assignment there?

Walter Andersen: Oh, no! No, not at all. It was the greatest bunch of guys I ever met really. They were just super.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember many of their names?

Walter Andersen: I’m embarrassed to say I only know about ... one, two, three, four, about four of the five or six guys that were there with me. I’m embarrassed, I can’t remember that anymore.

Janis Kozlowski: Yes, I’m not good at names either, so I’m with you on that one.

Walter Andersen: [0:26:38] And then after the war the ... it wasn’t after the war, it was before the war ended that the Coast Guard came out to take over Cape Wrangell and I remember they brought a crew in but they didn’t have a weather man because he was sick in the hospital. He had the flu or something back in Kodiak so I had to stay on with the Coast Guard for maybe a month. They were all nice guys too.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you say that was after the war was over or is that...?

Walter Andersen: No, it was not. Because I can remember I was in Attu on V-J Day. So, I don’t think the war was over then because I had gone back to celebrate. I’ve got that one picture of we’re all drinking beer there.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah. How did you find out that the war was over?

Walter Andersen: I don’t know. I don’t know how we got word.

But anyway, that was a big day. We had ... they had beer – truckloads of beer – so we went back in a little gully and we had a picnic back there.

Janis Kozlowski: Were you still at Wrangell then or over on the other side?

Walter Andersen: No, I was at Attu. The officers got the beer for us. We had really good officers too. They were just super.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you normally have beer or was this a special thing?

Walter Andersen: I think it was ... I think before we had it ... you had to have a ticket for it or coupon or something you know. You couldn’t drink all the beer you want, but on that day they



just left the beer there for us and we just drank the beer.

Janis Kozlowski:
[0:28:28] How long did you end up staying there after V-J day?

Walter Andersen:
Oh, that was in September. [formal surrender ceremony was September 2,

Photo 8: V-J Day picnic on Attu with free beer

Walter "Andy" Andersen, January 28, 2009

1945] I went home at Christmas time.

Janis Kozlowski: So it took them a little while before they got you guys home?

Walter Andersen: Yes, oh yes.

Janis Kozlowski: And how did you get back to the States?

Walter Andersen: I flew back. And then ... I flew back and then I had 30 day leave and I had to go back to Seattle. Then I was with Fleet Air Wing Four and they transferred me to San Diego and I was at San Diego there for awhile and then I was transferred to China Lake out in the Mojave Desert. There was a Naval Ordnance Test Station there where they were firing rockets from planes to the ground and we had to take upper air soundings for them.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, so you were still an aerographer your duties just changed.

Walter Andersen: Yes, but I worked out on the rocket range. It was interesting work there too. And then they, I forget, I think we had to get so many number, so many numbers, like 30 or 40 numbers to get out of the Navy. Then when I got enough to get out they wanted me to stay in [maybe I should have] because then I'd be civil service there.

Janis Kozlowski: Yes, so how many years total did you put in with the Navy between the Aleutians and China Lake?

Walter Andersen: Oh, I went in early '43 and I got out in early '46.

Janis Kozlowski: So if you had enough points you didn't have to stay four years?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. And you decided to leave?

Walter Andersen: Yes, right.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:30:16] And then what did you do?

Walter Andersen: Then I went to work with the steel company.

Janis Kozlowski: Which one?

Walter Andersen: A.M. Castle.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, ok.

Walter Andersen: Then I got married in '47.

Janis Kozlowski: Where did you meet your wife?

Walter Andersen: At Great Lakes Training Station, Naval Training Station.

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Janis Kozlowski: That’s in Chicago, right?

Walter Andersen: It’s near Chicago, yes.

Her cousin ... she had two cousins and they were in my Company there at Great Lakes [chuckling]. One guy, he was always in trouble and the other guy was really a smart guy and he ended up being Company Clerk. But Danny, he was always in trouble [laughing]. They were funny guys. But then my wife went out to meet them one Sunday and they brought me along and I met her. She lived back in Chicago.

Janis Kozlowski: So, then, did you end up staying there and raising your family in Chicago after you got married?

Walter Andersen: Yes, for a couple of years and then the company transferred me to Rockford, Illinois and then I went from Rockford to Baltimore, then Cleveland, then San Francisco, then Sacramento.

Janis Kozlowski: So you moved around quite a bit.

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: So, did you use any of your aerographer skills after you got out of the service?

Walter Andersen: No.

Janis Kozlowski: So that was it, you just kind of ... were you interested in weather after that or was it just...?

Walter Andersen: Every once in awhile I’d read a book on it or something like that but.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:31:49] Let me ask you something. You mentioned once that you ... that they took some photos of you guys at Attu for a magazine. Can you tell me about what that was all about?

Walter Andersen: I don’t know.

Janis Kozlowski: Was it Look or Life magazine or one of those?

Walter Andersen: I, truthfully, I can’t tell you. I remember the fellow had us sign some papers and I think he gave us a dollar.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow. [laughing] Big payoff, huh?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: I wanted to ask you about a few of the pictures that you sent.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

You know, in a couple of the photos I see there are dogs or puppies in them. Where did they come from?

Walter Andersen: [laughing] I think they came from a ship that came in. And I think some guy on the ship sold the dogs -one dog -to us and then we think the other dog came from some Army guys that were being transferred back and they left the dog with us.

Janis Kozlowski: So they were just kind of like everybody’s dog?

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have one over at Wrangell too?

Walter Andersen: No. We had the fox there.

Janis Kozlowski: They didn’t mind if you had dogs?

Walter Andersen: No.

Janis Kozlowski: It was probably good company for people.

Walter Andersen: Yes, it is. I don’t think they even knew we had a dog [both laughing]. We had some good officers, really good officers.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember any of their names?



Photo 9: Walter “Andy” Andersen and Bob Wyman.

Walter Andersen: Yes, Hoffman, Lilic, oh ... my memory is failing me.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you say one name was Lilic.

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok.

Walter Andersen: And Hoffman.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. So they were pretty good guys?



Photo 10: Bob Wyman and Jim McNaughton with puppy “Ryp” (Russian Weather Schedule)

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Were they young guys?

Walter Andersen: Uh, maybe they were [laughing]. They were ... I would think they were in their 30s maybe.

Walter “Andy” Andersen, January 28, 2009

Janis Kozlowski: If they were 40 you would have said, “Nah, they were old men.”

Walter Andersen: Yes. [both laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: I don’t know if you have these photos...

Walter Andersen: Yes, I have them right in front of me.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. Number 10 looks ... there’s a bunch of guys doing something. I can’t quite figure out what they’re doing. Do you remember?

Walter Andersen: Well, let me look. Oh, this is V-J Day.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, it is.

Walter Andersen: Yes, this is a beer party.

Janis Kozlowski: Did they have you set up pretty well for winter gear when you were in Alaska?

Walter Andersen: Oh, yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have that right from the start, right when you got on the boat?

Walter Andersen: Yes. No, we had to get to Attu before they gave us the gear.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, ok. [0:34:22] And now, how about photo number 25. It looks to me like in that photo that you got quite a bit of snow.

Walter Andersen: Yes, we did.

Janis Kozlowski: But was that on the Attu side or was that at Wrangell?

Walter Andersen: No that’s Attu.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember where that hole was leading?

Walter Andersen: Yes, that was ... it went in the Quonset hut.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, ok.

Walter Andersen: I mean, it really snowed that time.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have those Quonset huts kind of dug into the hillside anyway?

Walter Andersen: Yes, they were kind of half way, maybe a third of the way into the ground.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. But it still looks like that snow was pretty deep there.

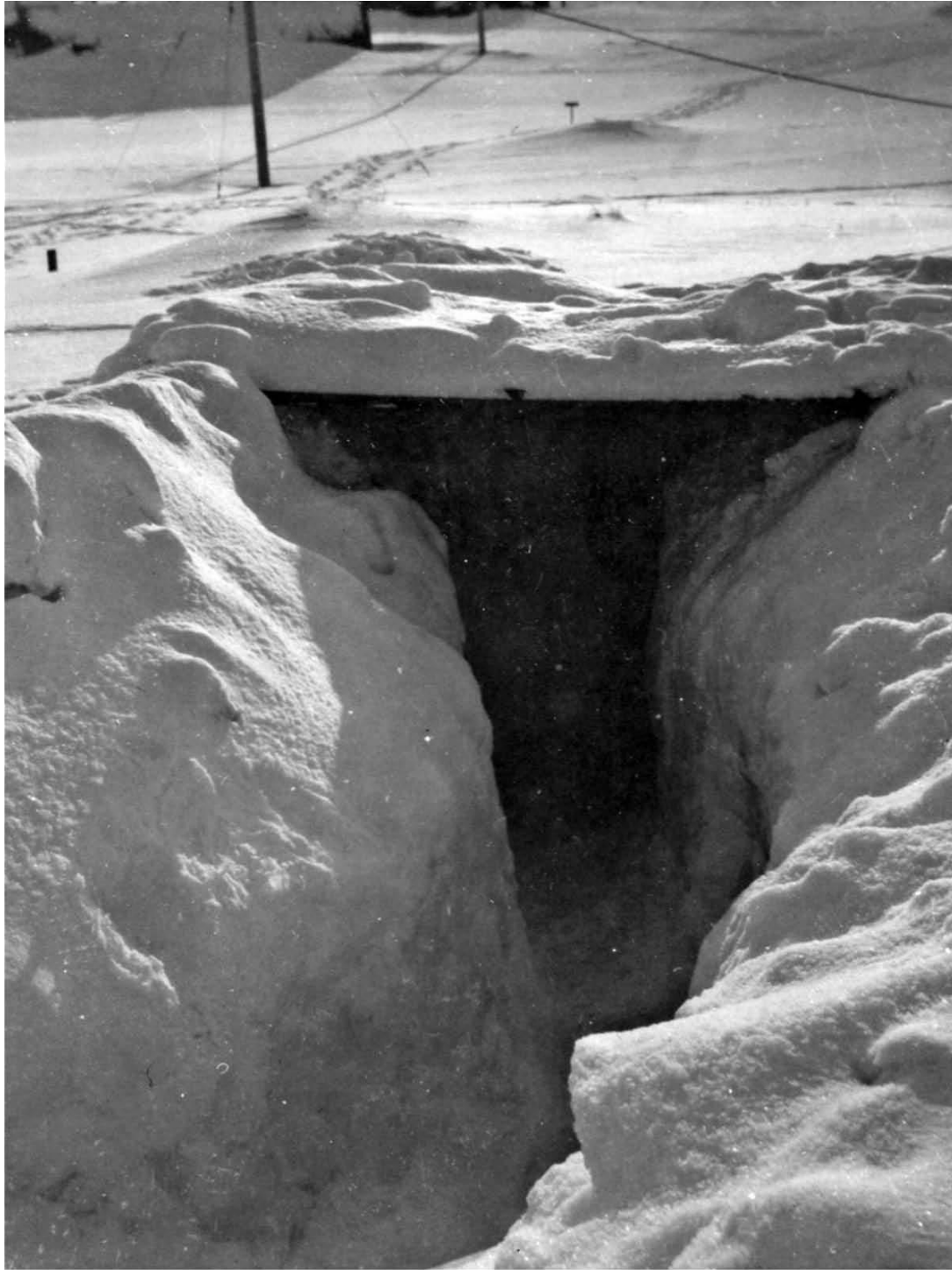


Photo 11: Hut 32 covered in snow. Attu Island, Alaska. (referred to in text as photo 25)

Walter Andersen: Yes, in fact, I think I remember that night where we were waiting for the watch, the second watch to come in to relieve us and they never showed up [laughing] so we decided those guys.... We sent one guy back to the hut and they were snowed in. We had to get them out of there.



Photo 12: Hut 32, Attu Island, Alaska. PeeWee Welch and Andy Andersen (referred to in text as photo 26).

Janis Kozlowski: You had to dig them out before they could show up for work. [both laughing] Yes, I think a lot of people don't believe that the islands get a lot of snow but by these pictures it sure looks like it.

Walter Andersen: Oh yes. As I say, it doesn't get bitter cold -when I say bitter cold, like zero, not 10 or 15.

Janis Kozlowski: But probably with the wind sometimes it might feel pretty chilly.

Walter Andersen: Oh, yes, the wind was very strong, they call them williwaws.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that a common occurrence?

Walter Andersen: Yes, it happened frequently. The wind would come down ... you could see it come down the mountain, blowing snow.

Janis Kozlowski: And that was not going to be a good day to volunteer to take a flight, right?

Walter Andersen: [laughing] No.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:36:02] Well, you had quite a few pictures of you guys sun bathing. How often did that kind of thing happen?

Walter Andersen: Oh, all the time, I mean, if it was warm out. We dressed warm.



Photo 13: “Heavy” Cornwell Junior and Hans Juhr, Cape Wrangell, Attu Island, Alaska, 1944.

Janis Kozlowski: But you couldn’t do any swimming or other summer time activities.

Walter Andersen: No.

Janis Kozlowski: Just try to get yourself a little tan.

Walter Andersen: Yes.

No, we lived ... we slept on the right side of that door, that was the sleeping quarters and a shower. And to the left of that door was the galley for cooking and eating and the storage area and then the radio shack was on the end.

Janis Kozlowski: So you didn’t have to walk too far to get to places?

Walter Andersen: No.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you talk to these guys much after you left the Aleutians or did everybody kind of go their separate ways?

Walter Andersen: Everybody went their separate ways, I guess. Some ... I guess it was the three guys I talk to all the time now and myself, I think we all came back at the same time. In fact, I know we did, we came back through Seattle and then after that we spread out.



Photo 14: Walter “Andy” Andersen, Cape Wrangell, Attu Island, Alaska.

Janis Kozlowski: So you didn’t fly missions all the way over to the Kurile Islands in the PV-2 did you?

Walter Andersen: Yes, well, we didn’t go all the way over, we went ... I forget how close we went. If we could report that everything was ... the weather was ok then the squadron would take out after us.



Photo 15: Andy Andersen and Paul Carrigan, Attu Island, 1943.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, I see. [0:37:34] Do you remember anything ... I was thinking just ... that there was on March 25, 1944 those four or five airplanes, PV-1s, took off from Attu and then one of them ended up in the bay, and one of them turned back, and then one of them was lost until about five years ago, that Bomber 31. Were you around when that happened, do you remember anything about that?

Walter Andersen: Yes, I remember vaguely because they were ... Jack [Parlier] was the only guy we ever lost.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, really.

Walter Andersen: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: So you didn't see a lot of airplane crashes and that kind of thing?

Walter Andersen: No, oh, yes. The Army used the same airstrip we did and they'd come back shot up and skid down the runway.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you guys have much interaction with the Army guys or did you keep separate?

Walter Andersen: I think they had better breakfasts than we did [both laughing]. And we all dressed the same, I mean, we'd go over there for breakfast.

Janis Kozlowski: Is that right, you could do that and nobody said anything?

Walter Andersen: [0:38:45] No, see, my Mom wrote and told me that one of the neighbor’s boys was up there in Attu in the Army and she gave me his outfit’s name I went to look for him. He was in the battle of Attu. We used to call the army guys “dog faces.” I found Joe up there and he looked like a dog face. [both laughing] He lived, these guys lived in a cave. They were with the mountain group. I remember I went up there and the Army guys had a lot of souvenirs, you know, like swords and things like that.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, from the Japanese?

Walter Andersen: Yes, so I talked to Joe and he said he had some things. So I went down and talked to one of our officers, he said he’d swap him for whiskey. So they went up there [laughing] and he gave the neighbor kid the whiskey and he gave him some ... whatever they had – parts of uniforms or something.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:39:52] Well is there anything about the ... your days staying there in the Aleutians and during the war that stuck with you that was a big learning experience or a very memorable thing?



Photo 16: Sandor “The Count” Podmanski and Bob Wyman, 1944.

Walter Andersen: Well, you know, the nicest thing that’s happened to me about that is the three guys I talk to every month. You know, that’s a friendship that’s gone on for 60 years, 65 years. I was the youngest of the group. And one, Bob Wyman, he bought a \$100 bottle of scotch and the last guy gets it.

The last guy alive gets it.