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Stan Zielinski

Fairbanks, Alaska

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Series: Pioneer Park Aviation Museum lectures

Pete Haggland introduced Stan Zielinski.

Stan Zielinski invited people to ask questions throughout his lecture. He talked about the Norseman 5555. He jumped from that aircraft. He had a house fire about four years ago and everything got lost including his log books. He had people sign his flight book during A67. He lost all of those records.

He talked about the A67 celebration (centennial of the purchase of Alaska). During the celebrations Bill Berry came to Fairbanks. He was a parachutist. He describes a story about Bill Berry and why he was on the cover of Life magazine. Bill brought his balloon to Fairbanks. The A67 group decided to buy a balloon. The balloon was brought to town and they had to decide who was going to fly it. Stan said he was involved with a parachuting league at one time. He had skydiving experience. Stan was taking courses during that summer. His son came with him.

He was trained by Bill. He had to have twenty hours of flying the balloon before he took anyone up. They had to inflate three times a day. The balloons attracted a lot of attention. It wasn't common to see hot air balloons. He said there were a number of interesting flights that summer. He talked about taking off from the base of the Space Needle in Seattle. He said they were always in the landing mode when they take off. Someone offered him money for the flight. He said now it is a very busy place and he wouldn't want to fly there now. The first flight in Anchorage is described. They had a reporter on board. He said you have no control over the wind. You can fly faster than the wind. You can also go slower than the wind with drag lines. He talked about carrying a bottle of wine to appease people who have had damage from the balloon.

Fixed wing pilots are not too aware of the micro weather situations that exist. Glenn Simpson was a teacher at the university. He was on the ground line. They were landing on Farmer's Loop. Glenn had hold of a line when an updraft happened. He let go of the line and the ropes wrapped around a power line. Sometimes you get into whirlwinds at ground level.

Stan talked about a publication done in 1975 at the university which included some of these stories.

He talked about predictable winds in Fairbanks. There is an almost complete 180 degree change of winds as the sun goes down. On occasion he did not have enough fuel and had to just set the balloon down. He said you need a little bit of fuel for landing. He discussed retrieving the balloon. Jack Kline had a balloon that took eight or nine people. He ran out of fuel in Goldstream Valley.

Stan talked about flying in A67. There was a hippy clown that sat in a chair and rocked. The clown was also a trapeze artist. They set up a trapeze under the balloon. They also set up the rocking chair under the balloon. They flew over the ball park and the FAA people were at the ball park. They got a visit the next day from the FAA. There were no regulations about what they did. They promised not to do it again.

The Will Rogers memorial was rededicated in the city of Barrow. Everyone was there. Alaska Airlines flew the hot air balloon with Stan and Merritt Helfferich. The winds were marginal in Barrow. They decided to go ahead and fly the balloon. They took off and decided to cross a road and put down. The winds dragged them for quite a ways. They made the furthest north hot air balloon ride. Since then people have flown at the North Pole.

Stan said sometimes you run out of air space or landing spaces. On two occasions he crossed the Tanana. That limits the chase crew. He landed on an island on the Tanana. A helicopter showed up to "rescue" him. The second time it was in the daytime. He landed and a riverboat came over and took him to the original landing site. The highest altitude he achieved was 17,000 feet. He set down where dredge 8 is located now.

Unidentified person in the audience asks a question. Stan said he had 1100 kids on a tether line flight that summer of 1967. He guesses that he had over 100 passengers that summer, too. He didn't carry more than two passengers. He helped Jack Kline with flights, too. Another question from the person in the audience. Stan said there were five or six balloons in Fairbanks. Anchorage had even more and had trouble with air space. Stan said Jack's balloon took eight or nine people. He said he got 100 dollars a flight every time he went up. Person in the audience makes comments about his personal experience. Stan said Dr. Wood invited him on campus several times. There is now a regulation about not landing on the university. Person in the audience continues to talk about his experience. Stan said he took Ralph Seekins on a flight. They took off and got over the base (Wainwright). They had to land on the base. They were taken to the marshal's office, but eventually were allowed to leave.

He took a couple up who were winners on the dating game. The lady wanted down as soon as they went up. They landed on the area where the Big Dipper is now located. He talked about Hubert Humphrey's visit during A67.

He talked about an incident. He had taken off from Alaskaland. The wind changed later in the day and he nicked the side of the balloon. He had to have the balloon repaired. He points at the deflated balloon in the museum.

Sam Rosini and Jack Kline were serious about making a living offering balloon rides. Stan said he ordered his balloon from Idaho. It was a type certified balloon. Another balloon he lost in the fire. It was a two man balloon. He taught a few people to fly. Several of them had their own systems and he gained flight time by training them.

Someone from the audience asked how many holes could be put in the balloon and still fly. Stan said you could pretty much repair anything. There's an annual inspection that you have to have. Jim

Anderson would inspect balloons. Stan said Pete's brother also inspected the balloon. He also said he and Pete's brother did a parachute jump from a balloon. They run a porosity and strength test on the balloons. He talked about other checks on the balloon and landing techniques for the balloon. Another question from the audience member. Stan said there are ways of correcting the landing with jet effects.

Stan said he has had had 565 jumps. He said there are opportunities for water landings.

There was a question from a member of the audience asking about the material of the balloon. Stan said it is a very tightly woven nylon. It is designed for that purpose. The museum balloon was made by the Raven Company in South Dakota. He said a lot of trans-Atlantic flights take off from a place like that. It is a relatively less expensive way to fly. It isn't predictable. In A67 they always took off from the same spot. They did a complete 360 trip. They took short trips to the river. He has been up to Chena Hot Springs Road. He said there are a lot of moose between there and Fairbanks. It is a good way to see wildlife. Comment from a member of the audience about being able to talk to ground people while you are in a balloon.

Question from Leslie McCartney about the size of the fuel tanks. Stan said they vary. Some are twenty-five gallons. He used propane. Flying in the winter is difficult. The propane is not volatile. There is a frost build up on the inside of the balloon. It is difficult to dry out in the winter. During the flood of 1967 his balloon was saturated. He was able to inflate his balloon after that. The inflating procedure uses a ground fan and it is gradually inflated before they ignite the fire. Balloons can be inflated without a fan. He talked about trapeze artists using balloons. He was encouraged by people to jump out of balloons. He did his jump with Murphy's balloon.