

2016-05

Pete Haggland (James Pete Haggland)

February 16, 2016

Series: Pioneer Park Aviation Museum lectures

Pete Haggland explained that the speaker for the night was not there so he would be speaking. He was born in St. Joseph's Hospital in Fairbanks, Alaska in 1942. He grew up a few blocks from Weeks Field. Sam White lived up the street as well as Noel Wien. Jess Bachner lived near Sam White on 9th Avenue. He had an early exposure to aviation. He talked about the North Star Bakery which was located near Weeks field and used by the early pilots. They would listen to the stories. Up the street on Gillam was the old Pacific Alaska Airways hangar which is now the Arctic Bowl building. All the Pacific Alaska planes and Pan Am planes would use the hangar. He remembers getting his first Labrador retriever. He said growing up in Fairbanks with the aviation community was fun. On the 9th Ave. side of the Pan Am hangar was a slough which would flood in the spring. Water would back up from the river. The kids were given instructions to stay off the slough, but they would go out on it anyway.

Haggland talked about his family's background. His parents and twin brothers, John and Paul, came up to Fairbanks in 1939. He has the tickets that his parents used when getting up to Alaska. His father was a doctor who was working at the Virginia Mason Hospital and Pete Mason told him the FE Company was looking for a doctor in Fairbanks.

General Gaffney had been in the Ladd Field during the war. Gaffney and others would come over to Haggland's house for poker parties. The kids would grab the cigars off the table and puff on them. He was fortunate to know some of the old time pilots in Fairbanks who were here during the war. Later on some of them went to work for Pan Am and other airways. Many of the Pacific Airways pilots ended up flying out of Seattle. Ralph Savory became the chief pilot for the western United States for Pan American Airways. Pacific Northern Airways was taken over by Western Airlines. Haggland worked for Pan American. Some of the older pilots had more faith flying 707s with visual approaches than with instrument approaches if the weather was marginal. He got to know a lot of the pilots such as Warren Meyer. He had flight instruction from Meyer. Jim McGinnis was a DC-6 captain. He told a story about one of Jim's flight students.

Haggland said his father took him to the airport when he was fourteen, probably to keep him out of trouble. The Wiens had a Cessna 180 which had a damaged wing when a vehicle hit it. The plane was repaired. The plane was tested and parked and it was hit again shortly after.

Interior Airways was also at the airport with Jim McGaufflin. Jim Hutchison was also there. He was a good hand. Haggland said Sam White's airplane, the L-5 Stinson is being refurbished at the museum. Haggland said he worked on it in the 1950s. White came in and accused them of stealing his spark plugs. Someone had stolen his expensive platinum spark plugs while it was in the float pond.

Haggland said Gayland King taught him and his brothers how to fly. Alice King was a bookkeeper for NC. She came into the museum and talked to Haggland about her first ride in an airplane with Sam White. It was the same plane that is now in the museum. Haggland said he learned to fly in a 1957 Super Cub. CAP raffled it off in 1957. They had flown it to Cowles Street and landed it. He said the old service station there had palm trees on it. Ed Westcott won the airplane and didn't want to fly it. Haggland's dad bought the plane. He talked the buildings that are now on the space that was once occupied by Week's Field such as Fairview Manor. He said the airport was a good place for the kids to hang out. Haggland said he learned a lot from the old timers. It was a good place to grow up. Everyone in town knew who they were so they couldn't get away with much. He remembered when they built Alaskaland which later was named Pioneer Park.

He talked about going by the Alaskaland when the 1967 flood took place. He was working for Pan American at the time.

Norman Lee whose dad ran the Nordway Hotel grew up a half a block apart. Norman and Ingrid Lee were twins. Their older sister was Jean. Norman talked Haggland into jumping off a rood with an umbrella so Haggland said Norman was his first flight instructor.

Tony Cook worked in the City Works department. He used to let the kids drive the city dump trucks.

Haggland said the airplane business got into his blood fairly early and he hasn't regretted anything that he has done. He has flown here for fifty-one years and 17,000 hours. He said he was fortunate and never had any major mishaps. He said you had to know which way the river was running when you flew it. He still believes you need to have basic flying skills to start with. He would get together with Holger Jorgenson and George. He would learn different points when he was flying with them. He said the pilots would take them under their wings and teach them. He talked about Jess Bachner.

Someone from the audience asked if he ever had a forced landing. Haggland said he was fortunate and never did. He did have an engine crater one time. It had a bent rod. His brother, John, was more of a mechanic. His brother, Paul, also flew. He talked about Gayland King's manner of instruction.

Haggland said they have the Pan American flag that flew over the maintenance shed.

Haggland talked about advice to young people. He said have a goal with anything you do. He said a lot of things can go wrong when you are flying so you have to do things right. He talked about his son who is now a pilot. Haggland said he always flew with a map on his lap when he was flying. He said you always wanted to keep track of where you were and you needed to plan ahead. He is still working at the museum and enjoying it.