

75-01

Ransom Tony Schultz

February 20-21, 1975

Bob Wright, interviewer.

Ransom Tony Schultz introduces himself. He came to Alaska in April 1938. He has flown around Alaska for many years on different assignments. He flew for Alaska Airlines, Star Airlines and put in twelve years for 12 years for Wien Airlines. He retired from Wien Airlines in 1966.

He said he would be talking about the time prior to the August 1967 flood. Following the two weeks of steady rain on the weekend of 11-13 he tried to fly Randy Voight to a sheep camp. He could not fly his Super Cub through the heavy rain. He did not have any visibility and he returned to Fairbanks. He was at the headwaters of the Chena River. After he returned to Fairbanks he flew on Sunday to McKinley Park with tourists. The railroad had shut down because a bridge had been washed out between Nenana and the park. He observed near Suntrana that the water coming off the mountains in such torrents that it would hit the lower level and splash into the air. He knew that there had been a high volume of water or downpour. The water was streaming down. The airplane he was using had more navigational equipment. He had another trip to McKinley and could see the river above the normal bank full line on Sunday afternoon. On Monday morning he had a call to deliver mail to Big Delta. It was still raining heavily. The road had been washed out at Salcha so he had several passengers when he returned to Fairbanks. He called Morry Smith at KFAR at 10:30 that morning and gave him the conditions. He estimated that the water was three feet deep in the trees ten miles from the Tanana River. He said there was no way this water was going to go by Fairbanks without flood conditions. He estimated that it would take ten days to move the water through the Tanana system. His report was never broadcast and the civil defense kept reporting that the water had reached its crest.

In 1948 he flew Troy Payway and two other men from the university to look at the gold mining camps. One of the men said they saw evidence of a flood higher than any that white men have never seen in the valley. He was conditioned to see and accept the magnitude of the flood while it was in the making in 1967. He was flying Payway to the head of Fairbanks Creek. He flew them around to other areas like Galena and McGrath. They were looking at the possibility of building another airport. Mr. Payway is a prominent geologist.

Interviewer asked when he was flying over the upper Tanana and upper Chena drainage and there was a tremendous amount of water coming down was he quite a distance from the river. Tony said it seemed like the whole area was moving. Moose were standing on high spots. He could barely see the tops of fence posts on some fields. On Monday morning Fairbanks was not preparing for high water. It had stopped raining for a few hours on Monday then it continued raining for a few days.

The interviewer asked why they didn't say more about his report. Tony said they refused to accept his statements because it was hard to believe there was this much water was accumulating. They hadn't seen a flood at this magnitude before. There were roads, dikes, and bridges that restricted the flow of the water and funneled it into other areas. The interviewer asked if he was here during the 48 or 49 flood. Tony said he was confident that he was on higher ground and didn't get any water damage. He wasn't flooded either time. Down the street there was flooding. Tony said this is Bob Wright [interviewer?] Tony said there were cars washed off the roads and the water was three and a half feet deep running down the middle of Airport Road. The airport had only about five or six inches of freeboard. If the water came up another five or six inches it would have been on the runway. He flew immediately after the flood started. He flew the National Guard to Nenana to protect property. Only about eighteen inches of the schoolhouse was visible above the water in Nenana. The freight cars on the tracks by the dock only had about three feet visible above the water.

The interviewer asked how active he was in the different operations after the flood. Tony said there were many things to do. People needed to be evacuated. The Nenana flood came down late Sunday night and early Monday morning. Interior Airways flew in 173 people to Fairbanks on Monday afternoon. They flew all these people to Clear after Fairbanks flooded.

The interviewer asked what kind of planes he flew. Tony said BLM hired him because he was familiar with the country and conditions. He could fly an amphibious aircraft which can get in and out of places that are difficult. He has worked for Star Airlines, Alaska Star, and Alaska Airlines. He knows the country pretty well from Cordova/Valdez and into the Aleutians. He said for seven years, by request, he flew for Standard Oil on their geological survey work. He would spend at least three months during the summer in the Arctic. He flew up to Prudhoe Bay before it had a name. Atlantic Richfield requested him to fly in a crew in November 1967. They didn't have navigational aids at their station. He couldn't find the site because of the ice fog and haze. When they were returning it was getting dark. He knew the main hills and could correct the course. He told the man beside him if they didn't see the lights of the runway over the next hill then the next stop is Barter Island.

February 21, 1975. Ransom Tony Schultz said he would be talking about sightings of Japanese balloons during WWII. He was employed as a bush pilot by Star and Alaska Airlines. In the winter of 1943-44 he was flying the mail to the lower Yukon. Tony Gomez was another pilot. Tony Gomez and James Hutchison were flying down the river to repair an aircraft and were flying in restricted visibility. Tony and James saw four unusual objects floating along in the air at the same height of the airplane. Tony Gomez asked James to assemble the shotgun that was on board. They flew around to return to the balloons and they were no longer visible. No one believed the report of the balloons. Tony said five days later he was flying down the river under similar weather conditions. As he rounded the Devil's Elbow he noticed two dark objects floating along about a half a mile away. He landed on Fortuna Ledge. He didn't report his sightings. When he returned to Fortuna Ledge a couple of days later he saw a high speed airplane sitting on the ice and one of the balloons. One of the sergeants on the Alaska National Guard had picked it up. The sergeant's report was not believed even though Muktuk Marston believed his sergeant. He asked the military personnel what they were going to do with it. He said they had a DC4 waiting in Anchorage and they were going to take the balloon to Washington, D.C. They were concerned

that it was germ warfare. Tony described the balloon. It had a bamboo hook about a yard in diameter. All of the ropes that went over the top of the balloon were attached to the bamboo hook. In addition there were holes drilled in the bamboo and each of the holes had a cartridge in it. There was an aneroid device that was sensitive to barometric changes which would fire the cartridges which would kick off a sack of sand. The bag portion of the balloon was a very tough wax paper. When he returned to Fairbanks he called up Stanley Baskin from the FBI and mentioned the piece of material that he procured from the balloon. Stanley Baskin picked up the material. There was a write up of the balloons in Reader's Digest. There was a group of children killed in Oregon because of the balloon. It was considered the best kept secret of the war. Tony talked about the balloons that were shot at in the Aleutians. Muktuk Marston wrote about the balloons in his book about the Alaska National Guard. Tony talked about the location of Mountain Village. Tony mentioned other places where they found balloons like Wiseman. He said Don Hulshizer was chartered at one time to pick up one of the balloons.

Tony said on September 14, 1962 he was flying out of Kotzebue. He was flying between Kotzebue and Cape Thompson. He generally stayed overnight at Cape Thompson. He said the clouds were at 2500 feet and he decided to climb up to 6500 feet where it was clear. About half way to Pt. Thompson he saw a strange shaped cloud rising far above the other clouds south-southwest of his position. He mentioned this to the radio man in the evening. He was told that the Russians had just set off another nuclear blast. His information was put into the Nome newspaper and he was ridiculed by most of the people. On September 22 he left Cape Thompson and was just west of Noatak when he thought he saw an aircraft flying into the ocean. The area was lit up by a cloud of fire. He looked at the clock and it was 5:59 p.m. While he was watching all of this he noticed a sphere descended from the cloud of fire. He couldn't tell how far away it was. He noticed that there was a rosy glow to the ball of fire. After two minutes the air had expanded and he could see two white parallel lines. He saw ash between the cloud and the ground. After the cloud had disappeared he could still see a rosy glow just over the horizon. The newspapers reported this to be 1200 miles northwest of East Cape in Siberia. He thought this was set off about 100 miles to the west of East Cape. He said Senator Bartlett was called into President Kennedy's office. President Kennedy asked Senator Bartlett if they could rely on Tony's report. Kennedy had a U2 go over the area and landed at Kotzebue. A man from the atomic energy came up to measure fallout and radiation. Tony flew him. Bartlett insisted that the Hanford Atomic Energy Project check the horns of the caribou and the baby's teeth. Bob and Tony talked about the height of the explosion. Tony said the explosion he reported on was later confirmed by seismic readings. He talked about his reaction to the explosion. Bob asked him about the U2. Tony said he never saw the U2. The Kotzebue field was closed to regular activity when the U2 was there.

Tony talked about working on the Cape Thompson project. Tony said he knew Pruitt. There was a bear clawing through the Jamesway hut and Pruitt didn't want him to shoot the bear through the head because he wanted to save the head. While he was working on the project he got to know Lauren Donaldson, an ichthyologist. Tony flew him into Kotzebue for an emergency.

Tony was born in 1909 in South Dakota. His father had been in Nome until 1906 and returned to South Dakota. Tony said his father bought the first automobile [in the area?] Tony told a story about his father

driving the car through the back wall of the garage. Tony said our machinery has changed so much in one life time.

Tony talked about not wanting to write a book about Sheldon. He was concerned that it would be an inducement for young pilots to attempt things since Sheldon could do it. He is concerned about increasing the accident rate. He would like to emphasize the progress that has been made in aviation and how people have accepted. He talked about flying into McGrath during 1942. There was an elderly couple living out on a creek. They were approximately 15 miles out of town. The lady was from Finland. They didn't get a lot of mail. She couldn't read magazines or newspapers except a publication from Finland. She was relatively isolated. She didn't come into town for over three years. Tony was there the day she came into town. Another woman introduced Tony as the pilot who drops the mail to her. The lady told Tony that he was too young to be flying.