

ALASKAN HISTORY

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID WEISE

BY

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DW At first it was like "oh, Alaska", but when I got up here I liked it. I like to hunt and fish, being from Montana originally, so there wasn't really a big change for me.

TM David, the day of the plane crash, how did that day start out?

DW I got up about six o'clock in the morning, went to the galley and had some breakfast, went out to the plane to get it ready to go. We were just going to take mail and a few things over to Attu and then come back to Shemya and pick up a USO² group that we had, had out there, and we just left them there at the airport with all their instruments and baggage and stuff up on a pallet, so that we could just come back, load up and go with that. We had one woman that was going to go over to Attu and stay and do a college course on Alaska. We got ready to go and the weather was marginal and foggy and drizzly.

TM A typical day down the chain³.

2. Uniformed Services Organization
3. Refers to the Aleutian Chain

us crash or heard anything at the station. We were probably only four miles away, that's all.

TM And they didn't see anything?

DW No, then they picked up the ELT¹¹ over at Shemya and they called over to Attu to see if we had landed over there. They said no, but that they had gone over head and that they had heard them, but we never saw them again. They figured we crash landed in the water. The Mellon¹² was right in between Shemya and Attu and they had a 52¹³ on the back of it. So the 52 took off and they started to doing a sweep back and forth over the water up to Attu and didn't find anything. Then they got to Attu there they started stair stepping up the hills. All of a sudden they saw the wreckage and flames and everything through the fog. They landed there, got everybody together, the most critically injured to begin with and put them in litters¹⁴ and then put them in the 52. They had the Navigator¹⁵, Radioman¹⁶, the Dropmaster, Mr. Shearer and myself in the helicopter on the first trip out. The

11. Emergency Locator Transmitter.

12. A Coast Guard ship 378 feet in length.

13. A single engine Coast Guard helicopter (HH-52A).

14. A device used for carrying patients.

15. A crewmember aboard a Coast Guard airplane who Navigates.

16. A crewmember aboard a Coast Guard airplane who keeps track of communications with other aircraft or surface vessels.

The only crewmember on the helicopter was the pilot, everyone else stayed behind with the rest of the people. The 52 had been flying for so long looking for us, because it took a little over six hours from when we crashed to when they picked us up, they had to stop back at the ship and refuel, then head us over to Shemya.

TM So did they take you via ship or helicopter over to Shemya?

DW They stopped on the boat, just fueled the helicopter real quick and it took us to Shemya. They had already told Shemya that they had found us and that we had crashed and that they needed all the emergency equipment. There was a Medical KC-135¹⁷ out of Fairbanks enroute to Shemya. They also brought a Coast Guard C-130 out of Kodiak out to Shemya with DR. Nimeroff¹⁸ on it. The crew was comprised with people who knew people on the airplane, so they could tell if they are really out of it or how bad they are doing. Somebody to talk to that they know. Dave Osborn is the one I knew. He was talking with me in the OPS¹⁹ Center there in Shemya where they had us until the KC-135 got there. Then they loaded us into that and flew us to Anchorage. The Navigator was burned pretty good

17. A military refueling aircraft. Military version of a Boeing 707

18. A Coast Guard Doctor also specializing in Hypothermia.

19. Operations Center.

This file is part of the Kodiak History Project.

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