

**JACQUE BUNTING**

**ON**

**AVIATION**

**AND**

**FLYING IN KODIAK**

**BY**

**JOHN SPENCER SCHAEFFER**

**FOR**

**PROFESSOR GARY STEVENS**  
**History of Alaska**  
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The following interview was held on December 4, 1994 with Jacque Bunting, ex-pilot, pilot examiner for the FAA, ground school instructor, and guardian of the Kodiak State Airport runways. The interview was conducted in Jacque's truck in the middle of a snow and windstorm at the state airport next to a runway we could barely see. The interviewer is John Spencer Schaeffer of the Kodiak Community College Oral History Project.

**Would you tell me a little about where you were born and grew up and a little bit about your parents?**

Well I was born and raised in a little town in Easton Pennsylvania in 1932. My father was a mill worker and my mother was a housewife. My mother died when I was seven from tuberculosis and I grew up mostly with my dad and my brother and two sisters. After that I joined the Navy in 1950. My dad died in 1957.

**Why did you join the Navy?**

I think I joined the Navy because my brother was in the Navy during WWII and he felt that it would be a good career for me so I did join and served twenty-two years got out as a senior chief in 1972 and my brother on the other hand did about fourteen years and then he got out because he decided he didn't want to stay in the Navy. He passed on in 1988 I believe but after I had been in the Navy and was pretty well successful. I enjoyed the Navy, I thought it was a good career and I learned a lot and went to a lot of places, met a lot of good people and that's probably one of the reasons I'm here in Kodiak.

**Were you interested in aviation and flying before you joined the Navy?**

Yes, I took my first flight in a little cub back in 1948 with an instructor at the Braydon Field in Pennsylvania and I really liked even the first flight but the problem back then was money, nobody had the money to take lessons unless you worked around an airport and you couldn't work around the airport and go to school to. So when I did get in the Navy I volunteered for, I should say, signed up for the Should which was the Navy cadet program leading to flight training. And that went well for about a year and I thought everything was going well and I would go to Pensacola Florida and become a pilot and all that and then an untimely accident with an instructor, we folded the gear on landing, sort of ended that so I never flew again until the 1960's until I was able to get to a place that had a flying club and I was able to fly in it and get all of my certificates.

**Weren't you one of the flying chiefs?**

No, I wasn't. I was a chief when I was flying the small aircraft, but I wasn't a "flying chief." People like Lou Drumm got into that flying program back in the 1940's when they took a lot of the enlisted people and trained them to be pilots, and became AP's as they called them. Aviation pilots, they wore wings except they weren't a commissioned officer, they were enlisted.

**How did you come to be in Kodiak, had you been here before or did you request Kodiak or did you just get shipped here?**

Well I came here from Vietnam to the Admiral's staff. My tour with the Seabee's was slowly coming to an end, we were in-country at the time and I fell into the transfer slot and they offered me Kodiak and I thought, "I didn't know where it was, but I decided it

was a good place to be and it would be a place I could bring my family." So we came here in 1966 and stayed until 1969, I got transferred to the submarine school in New London (Connecticut) I went there, I had made senior chief by then and I retired out of New London in 1972. And then we came back to Kodiak because we really liked the small town community type living, people were friendly, just a million things going here, we didn't have a big drug problem at the time, we didn't have any other problems, as a result it turned out to be a good place for the children to be raised.

How have you been involved in the aviation field since you've been here, I know you were involved in the flying club on the base and I think you started the ground school at the Kodiak Community College didn't you?

Well yes I did, after I came back here I got some more of my ratings and became a flight instructor and all that and I did the ground school at the college because Paul Buker was gone by that time and he had volunteered to do it and they had nobody to do it and they called me and said would you teach the ground school and I said well yes I could and I did that for about ten or twelve years. I was with the flying club (on base) and did some instructing for them, before that I was with Kodiak Western Airlines and I flew for them for a number of years. Generally my last years since I retired has been all aviation. I became a pilot examiner for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I became a written test examiner for the FAA and all this worked well until I had that thing called a heart attack and heart surgery and as a result I don't fly anymore but I still stay active in the aviation

community as far as ground instructing and with the flying club helping them out. I just don't fly anymore because of physical limitations.

So when you worked for Kodiak Western were you what they call a bushpilot?

Well they call them that and sometimes you really believe that's the truth because I flew out of mostly King Salmon and Dillingham and that area and it's the bush, strictly. Little airstrips in the middle of nowhere, little villages in the middle of nowhere, but overall real friendly people. If you had a problem everybody in the village would help you. I think that is why I enjoyed flying out there. Everybody stuck together, it just seemed that if you did have a problem everybody in the village would come out and help. And by the same token we might take little letters to town for the village people that say, needed a stamp or they needed a money order or something, and there was no charge for that, they gave us the money, we did it for them and if they had two cents left we put it in an envelope and took it back to them the next week. And they were real happy with that. And as a result it was a nice community. I remember trying to get off one night when it was spring break-up and the mud just kept coating the wings and every time I made the run I couldn't get off and I'd get back and these people all came down and they were taking their shirts off and wiping the mud off and off the wings and everything and finally about three hours into this I got airborne. But I learned from then on you should of had a cup of coffee and waited for the night breeze to come in their and harden everything up

again. But that's the kind of people and that's why I enjoyed flying in that area, it was really rewarding.

**What changes or progress has there been in the area of flying in Kodiak since you've been here?**

Well I think it has improved. We have some major air carriers in here now, certainly the equipment has improved. You know we have an FAA tower and qualified people up there. We have more scheduled air service out of Kodiak because it's really a transient town and I think overall we've done real well. I don't think the, aviation like anything else, there's a certain amount of safety problems or accidents that occur and we had ours. I don't think it has really put us backwards in the deal, if anything we've learned something out of it , the only sad thing is we've lost some good people, but the one's who are left are going to have to continue and it's tough comparing aviation in Kodiak to say the lower forty-eight. The weather here is not conducive to flying everyday, that's for sure. As you notice we are sitting here today with snow blowing and the wind howling and still people are flying. But I think we have done well in Kodiak as a flying community and our airport improvements, you know, safety-wise.

**Does this airport have the capabilities of just flying in on instruments or do you have to fly in visually?**

No, we have instruments. We have the ILS system which is the Instrument Landing System on the main runway here and we have the VOR which is the Omni Range, and we have what we call the NDV which is, there's not to many of them left, but we have one of them and it's another type of approach but we have three to four different approaches that we can make into here. And today is a good

example, with all this snow blowing and wind howling they are still getting in on minimum on these approaches and every flight today has gotten in.

Do you see any particular direction or any major changes as far as the aviation field is concerned either in Kodiak or throughout the state of Alaska?

Well I think all over it's going to change. A couple of recent accidents we've had with some new type aircraft have really sort of gotten the aviation community to wake up a little bit. You know we're still fighting, you get a brand new airplane and you say this airplane is flawless, and then you get a spoiler in a wing that slows, disturbs the airflow, inadvertently comes out on one side and the airplane rolls over, we haven't solved that problem yet, we've got so much technology and we don't have the problem solved. The recent accidents we had proves that. You know at one time we said no electronic devices in any aircraft for the flight. Now we have laptop computers all over the aircraft, people working on their business, and we're still having accidents. And I'm sort of getting curious as whether these low-wattage computers are still causing us problems. I would personally like to ban them. That's my own opinion. Another thing in an aircraft, when you have an accident, there's so much junk inside the airplane, you know we're carrying on baggage, as you've probably seen at the airports, a suitcase at a time, and if I had my way we would go back to the one piece of luggage and it would have to fit in a certain size container under the seat, so all that contributes to accidents. If you survive the accident you might get killed by a suitcase. That's really what it comes down to. And I'd like to clean that

up, I'd like to make the inside of that airplane clean and get rid of all these electronic devices which I suspiciously think are causing some problems because they have an electrical path and an electrical current is what these particular items on the aircraft depend on, so who's to say that a computer here doesn't kick off a sensor in a spoiler, that's my personal opinion. Nobody's really looked into it yet, they are sort of avoiding it, but that's my opinion about it. I think we have to clean the airplane up and we have to maybe get some other systems that aren't so much electrical, current and little motors and stuff, something that if we had to we could manually do it if we had to. We can't do wing spoilers that way but at least have a double check before you start to deploy one that it's actually working and the other one is working, the same on each side so the aircraft remains in level flight. The last American Eagle rolled over and that was all she wrote and now they suspect that it was an engine reverser went bad. And all this is electronics and more electrical devices that contribute to an overall pattern of they all have to work and if one of them doesn't work then your in trouble if you roll over at that altitude and can't correct the roll and go towards earth at three hundred miles an hour straight down. It doesn't wake anybody up yet.

**So do you think technology is actually going past the capabilities of the human pilot?**

I don't think they're going past them, I think they are getting to rely on them to much. I would like to see a little more checks and safety checks on all these systems they're using. And



what I'm saying is that if you punch a button on the dash and it says this will do this, and it only does it on one side, then we don't have a safety measure built in there. In other words, if we're going to punch a button and one spoiler comes out and the other one doesn't, we haven't done anything to make the safety one hundred percent, all we've done is add another link that is going to fail. So we have to do something else. Maybe at a certain speed they should deploy at or something else that would be a little easier than all these mass of buttons. I don't know if you've been a big airplane lately but it's like science fiction in there. I can sit there and understand what they're doing, but the average person looks in there and it's just a bunch of lights and they don't really understand it and I think it's hurting us because we become complacent in what is going to happen. We say okay if I put this instrument bug here for my airspeed, that will remind me never to exceed that, but we do. It's clearly marked when we do an approach, oops I'm going to fast. We have another button that says, at this point punch button D, and if we don't see what button D does or how it occurs then it's no good. We have to get something that's a little bit more, how should we say it, mind testing of the pilot along with an easier approach too. To get down to where we're supposed to get down to. I just think we're getting to complicated with electronics and it gives us too many more little avenues for error. I think we have to clean that outfit up a little bit. That's my personal opinion. I think it's becoming too complex with the other duties the pilot has, even though you have a pilot and a co-pilot. The co-pilot is only

sitting there because he wants to be a captain. He says, " so you fly this leg of the flight," and that's his job, to fly that leg of the flight. The captain sits there and watches. But I think it has to be a joint effort between the two of them at all times. Not only for the beginning checklist but for the ending checklist. Where they can sit there and communicate. And if the co-pilot sees something, don't be afraid of the sternness of the captain for saying, " don't bother me son I know what I'm doing," what we want to do is get that guy to put his finger over there and point and say, "I think we're exceeding captain." And the captain says, "yes we are," and corrects for it. It shouldn't be a case of sit over there and be quiet. I don't think so, I think it should be a joint effort. And for a lot of airlines it is, and for a lot it isn't.

**What do you think is the leading cause of plane accidents in Kodiak?**

Well here we're talking weather. We're talking mechanical failures at times, but we're talking weather. The accidents we've had over the years, I'm going to go back a ways, Paul Buker when he went down although the weather was a little marginal we felt in his case the problem became physical, he had a physical problem. Because of the way the plane went in. In the case of the plane that went down in Monashka Bay, the Grumman, that was a case of weather. And I think weather is one of the biggest factors. Because you don't generally have a crew member pass out or this or that, it's usually a weather problem. Glassy water, fog down and water calm. It doesn't tell you where the horizon is or much less tell you where the clouds are. But weather related seems to be, in

my mind, still to be the biggest problem, there's an old thing that people are invincible that they can go on in this weather. Just like looking out here all we are seeing is snowing and blowing. Now if I didn't know where the tower was I would be in a sad state but I can look right over here and say yes there is a tower because I know where it is. But a pilot out there in the weather, if your in a place your not familiar with, doesn't know where anything is. And when he sits down on that water still thinking it's one hundred feet below him and it happens to be a foot when he cuts the power, that's where the accidents start. So I don't think your going to find a lot of medical problems with people killing themselves, it's going to be weather related and then I guess next would be equipment failure. As far as the engine quitting. As you know the worst time for an engine to quit is right after takeoff when your right at gross weight and taking off and everything is running and say your in a float plane and you just break the surface of the water and the weather is just a little bad and the engine quits. And you virtually have no escape except to try to set it back down if your not fighting the same problem of what is ahead of you, a hill, have I cleared the hill.

**So is it a problem then when you have a condition like glassy water and fog wouldn't the pilot rely on instruments then to find out his altitude rather than visual?**

Yes. We fly a lot of float planes here and the problems with the instruments is, what it tells you is how fast your going down if that's what your doing, and what your airspeed is, but we're not carrying radar. And unless you remember there's not a hill in front of you there could be one. But the biggest problem with

glassy water is, and it usually occurs when your engine fails, is your coming down at a certain glide ratio and you have to maintain that, if you don't your going to hit the water too hard, and that's where the problem starts. So if you take off and one hundred feet into the air the engine quits you have to transition to a glide with a minimum descent rate to get back on that water. And if you don't your going to go into it pretty hard. So you compound that problem by say, having a larger aircraft like a Beaver on floats, and when you do that what happens. You have a heavier airplane, your at gross weight, and you have everything against you. And you have to do the same thing with that. You have to transition back to that glide, you get a glide ratio, a certain descent rate, so you don't split the bottom of the aircraft. Plus the people. So it's sort of a sad transition. And I don't want it to sound bad, that aviation is all cases of crashing and dying, what I'm saying is, that when something happens, it happens when you least expect it to happen so you have to have a lot of training. And I emphasize training at all times. The guy who just got his private ticket is probably the most proficient pilot right then. Six months later when he takes his girlfriend and best buddies for a ride, he's not very proficient anymore. Because he's not out practicing, so he takes his buddy and they go for a ride and he comes back and he bounces the landing and the guy says, "gee you bounced and the guy says oh yeah I do that all the time." He's not going to admit that's not the way you do it, but he's slowly losing his edge as a proficient pilot. And what he should be doing is going back to the instructor or practicing what he was taught so he

becomes a better pilot. Somewhere along they get lackadaisical and say that's good enough, I got it down. And then he goes to be a commercial pilot and he gets retrained. And the day he gets out of that commercial pilot school with his new certificate in his pocket he is the most proficient pilot going. And unless he fulfills that proficiency by flying regular, and he probably will if he's an airline pilot, but how much does he get to fly if he is in the co-pilot seat, he doesn't get that much time. All he has to do is pass his little checks every so often. And he passes them within the tolerance of who ever the examiner is. So his proficiency goes downhill a little bit. So you have to stay after it all the time. There's people I know that have been flying for a lot of years. One of my instructors, a fellow in Connecticut who had flown during the war and on my last trip back east a year ago I ran into him and he's retired from flying now, he's seventy-seven, he had over 40,000 hours of flight time. And he still talks aviation today, that's his life. And I'm sure if you went up with him tomorrow he wouldn't be as proficient as anybody else either. But it wouldn't take him long to get back to it, see. Pilots have to continue training. And if they don't they might as well get their own little plane and fly around for the pleasure of it, and get out of the airline business.

**How many plane crashes have we had in Kodiak in say the last ten years?**

Oh boy that's a tough one. You say in Kodiak, there's a list a mile long of people who aren't here anymore. Hal Derrick was my friend and he went down, that was weather related. Another area

where there is a lot of accidents is fish spotting. You know you lost Greg Curley in that. And other ones who weren't from this area but crashed here. I think one of the Cannon's went down here to I believe. Paul Buker was strictly an air taxi pilot when he went in. Robbie Hall, we never found him or the airplane. We found some of the people that were in it, and that was weather related. Dark, night, low ceilings, coming back on a scheduled air charter run. I think your going to find out that weather is still the most prominent thing. But we've lost an awful lot of people. You can back up and say why did we lose them and we can tell you why we lost them, but how can we get around it, it's just education and training again. And it's people who in their own mind have to say this is not the weather I should be out carrying passengers in for a living, I should stay home. And if the boss fires me then I'll look for another job. But most people went because most people went because there was pressure from the management. And said well we have to get those people out of there, we have to get the airplane back tonight. And that's what hurt us.

**Do you think herring spotters should have any extra or special training before they are able to go out on that kind of work?**

I think personally the FAA should develop a course for defensive flying for herring spotters and fish spotters. And I think the other rule which they agreed to a long time ago which was just in writing and all the pilots agreed was too carry an observer. And the problem we've got is now their not carrying observers anymore. And the few that are we find out that the observer is looking for fish just like the pilot is. And we have

to break them of that habit and say, " hey your job is to watch out for other airplanes, my job is to do this." Or the pilot says, you watch for fish and I'll watch for other people. But we've lost a lot of people doing that. And next year we'll say, "okay we're going to get an agreement together, the FAA is coming down, we're all going to agree that we're going to fly the patterns this way and we're all going to carry an observer and the observer's job is to watch out for other aircraft." And we're still going to have accidents because the guy that goes down is only going to have one person in the plane, and it happens every year. Some years we've been lucky and haven't lost anybody. But nine out of ten we're going to lose somebody. And it's all because if you take an observer you guarantee him a percentage of the fish, the fish spotting revenues. If you don't take an observer, that one or two percent or whatever you were thinking about goes into your pocket and people become greedy like anything else. Why should I ask him to help carry the apples when I can carry the whole basket myself and have them all. And that's what they're doing. There are still some people who fly with an observer, and they're still here.

**I heard a story shortly after I got to Kodiak about, I think it was Kodiak Airways, flying back from someplace with an anesthetized bear in the back that woke up. Can you talk about that a little bit?**

I remember the story, I'm not sure what happened with the bear. I know they had a bear that fish and game was involved in, they had tranquilized this bear and were coming back with a Grumman Goose somewhere over around Geographic Harbor and the bear started to sort of come back to life and because of this it was decided to

land the aircraft. Well it was pretty stormy that day and when they landed the plane flipped. They all made it out of the airplane and got ashore because they weren't far from the beach. Their survival gear was in the tail end of the Goose and the tail of the plane came within about fifty feet of the beach but nobody wanted to go out and grab this big canister which had a tent and fire-starting equipment and space blankets and you name it because they were afraid this bear was going to swim out of this airplane. So they got ashore and cut the filler tubes off their life jackets to blow a steady stream of air onto this fire they were trying to build but never quite got started. Once everybody realized this plane was missing they sent out a search party and found them. Luckily because one of the Fish and Game biologists was pretty well into hypothermia and he wouldn't have survived another day. But after it was all done they went out to salvage the aircraft and the bear was still inside but it had drowned at that point. But it sort of makes you wonder what the theory was, if you had the bear in there and he was tied down with a cargo net, and he's strong enough to break the cargo net, and you have these fish and game people there who are qualified to give these drugs to these animals you would have thought maybe there was a way to give this bear another shot of some kind and continued on home. But who is ever going to doubt the fact that the bear was waking up. That's the story I was told and I wasn't there so who are you going to believe. I remember another one right after that they brought into Kodiak that was going to be displaced from some other part of the island to another part. They came into Kodiak for fuel and the



bear was in the back part of the airplane. A big brown bear all tranquilized laying there and the pilot that pulled up to the gas pumps told this one kid he wanted to top off because they were going someplace to get rid of this bear. The pilots dog came out and saw his master and he hopped up into the Grumman and is probably the only dog anybody ever saw that turned around in mid air and came back out. Once he saw that bear he wanted nothing to do with the airplane. But they were moved that way for years, tranquilize them, put them into the airplane and take them some place else.

**It seems like it would be a lot of hard work just getting the bear in and out of the airplane?**

It's terrible because they're so heavy, you always hope it's a younger bear so it's not so heavy, but once in a while your stuck and have to get that big one in there. With the doors, the way they work, if your right next to the beach it's not to bad if you have enough people to slip them in there. It's not been one of my ideas to carry around tranquilized bears in any airplane. I'm not always sure that drug is going to last or if your flying by yourself and if something taps you on the shoulder it could be pretty scary.

**Does the FAA require a certain amount of survival gear to be in to be in a bush plane? And if they don't require it, should they?**

Well they do, it's actually a law, it's part of the Alaska Supplement, which is a supplement to all of the flying laws. And in there it lists the minimum survival equipment that you will carry. For two periods, during the fall and winter and in the spring and summer. They're just a little bit different because you

don't need the big wool blankets in the summer that you would need in the winter. And you wouldn't need the snowshoes. But it's a pretty comprehensive list, the FAA does require it. All the air carriers have to have it. But there are exceptions. A Boeing 737 couldn't carry enough equipment to take care of a hundred people. They are always in range of another airport and the chances of them having a failure is pretty slight. But the smaller planes, like the flying club on the base, we have to carry the survival equipment because it's the law. We carry everything except what a person has to carry, for instance a pistol, snowshoes, blankets, they're responsible for them, but we're responsible for the rest. There is certainly enough training in it, the air taxi's have to have it and it certainly has saved people by having it aboard. I think it could be improved, but on a day like today I don't care how much survival gear you have, if your going to take off in this mess legally you might as well stay on the ground. It's foolish to take off in this. If I was a big 737 out here and I could see the runway and knowing an hour from now I would be in Anchorage, and the possibility of the 737 losing both engines is so slight I probably wouldn't have a real qualm about it. But the average air taxi shouldn't be taking off today. It is foolish.

**What do you think about the space center they are building in Pasagshak at Narrow Cape?**

You mean the rocket launch facility? **Yes.** I don't think it's a bad idea. My only heartbreak with it is, we're talking rockets and rocket fuel, what I'm worried about is the debris that could come from rocket launching, you know there is a certain amount of

debris, stages that fall off and this and that. You know there is a liquid propellant that is involved in this stuff to. I would be more interested in the proper storage of it and the proper burn stage of it, how much is left of it when it gets to where it's going, and how much garbage is going to fall off of that rocket before it gets to where it's going. And who is going to clean it up. You know for years we've thrown everything in the dump and nobody cared and now we're sort of interested in why the dumps are full. And then I guess I'm sort of worried about the animals and the environment and everything else. Is that going to be fatal to them, this liquid propellant? That's what I'm worried about. You know it's not a bad venture to do all this tracking and take all these pictures and do all this other stuff. But I'd like to make sure we're going to be able to keep the environment good and the whole deal. And I'm not so sure Kodiak is the place but it's so barren out there I'm not too much against that. The Coast Guard communication station is out there. They were going to put it in Chiniak and make it down range from Cape Greville where I had a cabin out there. And that would be alright but that would sure stir up the woods, there's a lot of animals in there and I worry about all the junk that falls off and all the propellants they use. What does that eventually do to the ecosystem of the world? You know we're still taking rusted tanks and underground tanks and old barrels and everything else from WWII out of there, and quonset huts and barrels that have just laid there for fifty years. I'd like to see it cleaned up and let it go back to what it should be. Nice and green instead of just a mess of something else we have to

clean up. And the government should be responsible for it but I don't know what they'll do with this deal. I'm not sure we need it. If it boosts the economy that's one thing but if they bring in thirty technicians from the outside it doesn't boost our economy. It might put a few dollars in town at the motels and grocery stores, but that's about it. It's not going to benefit the people of Kodiak. If we want to benefit the people of Kodiak then put something there we can all work at. I think the prison system was the best deal. They were going to put a prison out there in Chiniak where the tracking station was, and then they were going to hire thirty or forty guards locally and dining room people and stuff like that. And that would have boosted the economy, but this thing is not going to help, just a couple of people. I don't believe it's going to help us at all, except put our name on the map someplace. And everybody knows where Kodiak is by now. They even know where Old Harbor is now. That's right and every other village.

**Is there anything else you would like to mention or add that you've thought about, about how aviation here in Kodiak or Alaska might be changing.**

Well I think it's changing some but I think it's changing for the good. I think as each generation of pilots come you get maybe people who are a little more interested in aviation that are willing to study more and become more proficient. Kodiak is still flying, I shouldn't say behind the times, but we're still flying with old equipment, the Grumman's and that. And of course they have been very dependable all these years. But I think Kodiak overall has a good selection of pilots right now and I think

they're interested. We had a safety seminar the other night at the community college and a couple of people from Anchorage came down. Tom Wardley who is with the Alaska Safety Foundation And Ted Marsenick I'm going to say his name is from Northern Avionics talking about this new Global Positioning System (GPS), this little radio in your airplane. And it was quite interesting and I think it's all a movement, and the amazing thing about it was that as much education as the pilots in this area have, we had pilots from every outfit on Kodiak that attended the safety seminar. I mean even the air-taxi boys. And the place was packed, so there is interest in it and I think we have a better breed of pilots now. They're interested in what is new and safety-wise, what can we do to improve it. We've been real lucky here that for a long time we haven't had any accidents, nothing major. A few fender-benders here and there but that's about it. So I think we're improving, I just hope it continues.

**The pilots certainly seem to be getting younger or as we get older they look younger.**

Right, right. I know the other year when I went to the lake to go moose hunting I looked at that pilot and thought, boy is this guy old enough to have a certificate, but I guess he was. Yeah, you sort of wonder because you're getting older and they seem to be just starting. But if a pilot came on and he had his cane I would probably be a little more nervous than if he was young. We have a pretty good group right now, seems like a real safe bunch. And I've been real happy with them.

**Well, I've always felt the pilots wanted to get home in one piece just as much as I did.**

Yes, and most of them will not push the weather. Now when I go with them even down to the lake (Mother Goose Lake on the Alaska Peninsula), and I don't care whether it's a well experienced pilot or a younger pilot. Being in Kodiak for as long as I have, they know who I am and I think in a way it stops them from taking any chances. They think, "Jeez if I go over that pass that's partially fogged in I wonder what this guy is going to say." And they think, "he is one of those accident prevention counselors, he's this and he's that, and the best way to go would be here. So I better go that way." So it helps, and if I get unhappy with what I see, I usually ask the pilot, "why are we going this way, is it shorter?" And it helps because a lot of times they'll say, "well I was thinking of doing this." And you can get a conversation out that leads to a safe flight all the way back. I'm not there because I'm smarter than they are, my only job as a counselor is to say, "are we doing the right thing." What would happen if a pilot said, "I don't care what you say, I'm going this way?" Well, I don't know, I've never had that experience. I don't know if it would go to a fistfight or not at point.

**Why don't the pilots in Kodiak just fly over all the mountains, I didn't think they were that high?**

Well the problem is, with the weather, a lot of times the clouds are at the mountain tops. So you go through the valleys, which is perfectly legal because they only have to maintain a certain distance from everything. I agree, on what we call a bluebird day, it's great to fly over the top and see all the land you've missed for a month. But it's not required, they have rules

about how much height and clearance they have to have from everything. Which is a little bit less than say the average pilot has. But it doesn't seem to hurt us. We haven't had any accidents because of it. It's just different rules, they are allowed lower minimums than other people are. And actually to be honest with you they aren't taking many chances they don't feel they couldn't come out of. I watched this local one here, and I don't know, except for the wind there are days when I would have said, "I'm not leaving." But they seem to fly well and their accident record is, you might as well say, perfect (Dash-8). They aren't having any accidents and they all seem to be good conscientious pilots. So, I fly with them, I don't have much problem with these guys here. Maybe because it's near home but you know the people here personally where if you go to say Anchorage and flew out to the bush to caribou hunt or something, you wouldn't know that pilot personally. You would probably be real skeptical of what that pilot is doing. But here, we know the area and we know where we're going so we're a lot happier with them. So the most that can happen is a mechanical problem, and that can happen to anybody. It's like driving down the street and the engine quits, you don't know why, but the only difference is your still in the street. But I think aviation is coming along. I'd like to see some of these big programs, as I said before, all these electrical and these monster systems a little more simplified because I think if you simplify them you'll have less problems with them. And I don't think we would have had some of these big scary accidents that we've had over the last six months, where you dump a hundred and

some people because of some little item that went wrong. It doesn't make much sense to me anyway.

Yea, I've always thought the 737 was the safest and most comfortable planes I've ever been in, and yet it seems like all of a sudden they're beginning to fall out of the sky.

Yea they are safe but it's just these little things, things that normally would not happen. But suddenly they are and now the question is why. We are running 737-400's into Kodiak now and they seem to have a good record. But the old 737-200 probably had the best record of any of them, and now suddenly they are having problems. So you don't know, technology.

I wonder if aircraft manufacturers are as technologically as advanced as they think they are.

Well, system-wise they are and system-wise they have to be approved by the Feds. And the feds. are approving them and they're testing them and saying these are going to work and these will work within the limits we set. And then you get up there in that freak snowstorm or electrical storm and something triggers a system that shouldn't have been triggered. Maybe it's an outside influence that did it, certainly not an inside influence, but maybe an electrical current is being generated by the storm that kicks off one of these little sensors. We don't know and the problem starts and you can't correct the problem. So know all you can do is go back and correct the problem as far as, if this happens we don't want the plane to roll over and do this. We want the plane to have some safe-guard that senses that is what might happen and stops. Every plane should be one-hundred percent safe, and they aren't. Sometimes it's technology and other times it is human, so



you don't really know. I wish I knew. Next month they'll probably say, "well this is what happened, and the reason it happened is this." And then we'll have a bunch of rules to stop that. But I'd like to see it get to the point that all these problems they have can't go into system that becomes so critical that it causes the airplane to crash. Something should ring a bell that says, discontinue using this system. And there is all kind of safeguards, but when something deploys that shouldn't then you have a problem. If one side of a wing flap deploys and the other side doesn't then the plane is going to roll and that's all there is to it. And you have something that goes bang, and stops that. Things happen so fast. I don't know, I wish I could come up with an answer. I don't think we're becoming unsafe but technical problems we need to solve that become unsafe, we need to get rid of the unsafe part of it. So that if a certain problem occurs we can get rid of that system so we're back to a safe flight. That is what we have to do, and I don't know when that's going to be. Maybe this year, maybe the year 2000 for all I know.

Well Jacque, that is all the questions I have for you, lets turn on some heat.

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