

REEL TWO

Reel two begins with Cross telling story of a Russian in an open cockpit plane. He was in rear seat and raised up to look at the scenery. His rip cord caught on seat and caused the parachute to open, yanking the man out of the plane. Miraculously he and his chute missed the tail. He floated down and landed on the ice of Norton Sound. The pilot did not know he had lost his passenger until he landed and found an empty seat. The lost passenger was found soon after by an air search. He had spread his colored chute out on ice so he was easily spotted.

Cross went to Barrow in 1947 for a couple weeks to relieve Sig Wien, and he stayed 2 years. Returned to Kotzebue in early 1950's. At one time, he interjected, he had his own flying outfit called "Northern Cross, Inc." based in Dering. That was about 1937.

Col. Bill Lenze (reserve, Air Force, is writing a history of Cross. Lenze is working on pipeline 1974).

Back to Kotzebue in 50's and flew bush. Retired in 1964. Managed Wien Station in 1958 but got out of that as soon as Wien could find a competent replacement.

Children: HARRY. Adopted by Cross. Was wife Bess's son by previous marriage. Harry's in Air Force stationed (1974) in North Dakota. Has private pilot's license

MILTON. Served his time in Viet Nam and flew helicopters there. In 1974 Milton is in charge of flying for the Nome squadron of the Alaska Air National Guard. Flies fixed wing and helicopters.

EDWIN. Lives in K-tzebue (also flies) and manages the Kotzebue fishing cooperative enterprise.

MARY ELIZABETH ANDERSON. Married to Allen Anderson, a Wien Alaska jet pilot.

Cross describes kind of aircraft flying in 1936 and 1935 and 1934 when he first came north. Cordova Air Service had a Curtis Robin on floats and skis. Also the Bellanca as well as an open cockpit Bird. The Bellanca was the most reliable, Cross said.

Cross flew Noel Wien's first Cessna into Fairbanks for Wien. The plane was shipped to Cordova but a strike at Cordova had the dock closed so the plane was off-loaded at Valdez. Owen Meals helped assemble the plane.

"Mudhole" Smith flew for Cordova Air Service. Cross tells how he got his name "Mudhole" (stepped out of plane after landing on sand spit and went into a mudhole, naturally).

Discusses Gillam and Gillam's operations out of Cordova. Also talks about Gillam's final landing...he lived through it and died of exposure and injureis after walking out to tide water (near Ketchikan). Put plane down on snow covered ridge.

(more)

Did Cross ever get lost? He was object of search only once in all his Alaskan flying years. He was on his way back from Kiana where he had returned some fire fighters. Engine trouble sounded as though gas was running out or gas line clogged. Full tanks or nearly full. Engin finally quit. Flying a float plane and when engine quit Cross was cutting across land in a big bend of the river. Usually stayed over water but this one time he was trying to save a few minutes and several flying miles. Put plane down on the tundra with out injury. Binged up one pontoon when it caught on a niggerhead. Radioed to over-flying aircraft and his position was spotted. Just happened the National Guard a was having exercises and some big, big Army helicopters were in Kotzebue. One came over and picked up Cross' plane and took it to the water where he took off and flew it home. Trouble? Mosquitoes has somehow gotten into fuel, went into the sediment bowl, filled it and blocked the gas flow. Unknown how bugs got into fuel since the intake was screened. Anyway, Downed by Mosquitoes!

Talsk about ARchie Ferguson and the Ferguson family. Word was that Ferguson's parents brought Archie and Warren Ferguson to Kotzebue so they could avoid the draft during World War I. Elder Fergusons started store and mining operation in Kobuk.

Warren's children werr Frank, Ray, Don and Babe. ARchie and wife adopted them.