

TOM OLSON and MARVIN JONES
Fairbanks, Feb. 27, 1974

NOTE: This was recorded from a radio interview program on radio station KFRB. Marvin and Tom were on the radio to plug their new airline name with Stu Rothman (their paid PR man), but they did more reminiscing about old days than anything else. Hence, this tape in the historical files. Mike Dalton.

Interviewer is Larry Carpenter. His wife Sunny enters into the conversation occasionally as she passes on questions from listeners.

Tom Olson took flying lessons in 1946 at the former Weeks Field. He recalls the Dodson and Gillam flying operations out of Weeks Field, both having hangars south of the runway. Gillam's hangar now houses a pizza parlor and Gillam's son Harold is currently mayor of Fairbanks. The runway was about 13th Street, Olson recalls. About where Denali School is now (ending over by Barnett School (generally). Arctic Bowl Building was the old Pan American Airways hangar, he says. The flying tower was closer toward town. Fairbanks Air Service had a quonset hut near the Pan Am hangar. Ole Gunnell ran the Alaska Flight School. The runway was grass and grave. Olson is married to Winnie Monroe and is the father of five children.

Talk about the OX5 Club - had to fly or work on an OX5 prior to 1942 to be eligible.

Marvin Jones originally from Portland, Ore. area. Came to Fairbaks in June, 1944. Took training in aircraft and engineering school. In Fairbaks he first worked for Jim Dodson airways. During the war he was a flight engineer and flew between Edmonton, Alberta to Fairbaks. Is married and has three children. Later he worked with Northern Consolidated Airlines. Learned to fly and worked into an air taxi business in summer months and worked with Bachners Aircraft in winter months (and summers when not flying). He joined Tom Olson in Fort Yukon Air Service in 1969 (January).

Olson talks about night time flying...using the lights on the old Talk of the Town nightclub as a guide to the end of the field.

Fort Yukon Air Service has now changed its name to Air North. Operates out of Metro Field, south of Fairbanks and developed and owned by GHEMM Co. Air North oprrates the runway. Paved it in 1973. Now has lights for night work.

(more)

Olson recalls when Hawley Evans and Jess Bachner built Phillips Field (in railroad industrial area). They were forced to go elsewhere since Weeks Field closed.

Olson worked for himself until 1957 and then went to work for Hawley Evans.

In the fall of 1967 Olson and Cliff Fairchild of Fort Yukon Air Service joined forces.

Now Olson has 23 full time people and five part time employes. Ten pilots now with two more coming to work in couple weeks. Operates out of Fort Yukon with good cargo and passenger facility. Planning to build new terminal facility in Fairbanks this summer. Have 13 aircraft operating now.

Toughest flight? Bringing in a crashed Avion from the Minto area. No windshield or cockpit roof. Would not climb. Had another tough piece of luck on Thanksgiving day when he (Olson) hit a power line coming into Phillips Field. The line was in the College area. Olson was not injured, but the people in College were plenty mad when the electricity went off and scores of dinners were late.

Marvin's toughest flight...Cessna 180 that had been flipped (by another pilot), and Marvin flew it back to Fairbanks after temporary repairs. Got spruce poles and put into the wings to reinforce them so the wings would not fall off. Slow trip but made it okay.

Olson came to Fairbanks in 1942. At that time the town went to 10th Street. Cushman paved to Fourth or Fifth Avenue. Used to know everybody in town. Recalls the campus in 1942. Predicts that Fairbaks will be the biggest town in Alaska one day soon.

Olson: best pilot he knows is Hawley Evans. Best mechanic is Jim Hutchison, ERnie Hubbard, Eldred Kaum.