

Chapter 24

Unalakeet

I left Nome on what I thought would be a direct flight to Anchorage, but I had been in Alaska long enough now to understand that you never knew where you would wind up when flying from one point to another.

This flight only made about 150 miles across Norton Sound to another Eskimo village named Unalakeet. All of these Eskimo names have meanings but I did well just to remember them (I have to check maps, etc. to get their spelling correct), and what part of Alaska they were in.

Unalakeet was only some 50 miles or so from the Yukon River where it enters into delta country before emptying into the Bering Sea. This area has numerous natural lakes, and multiple forks of rivers and streams.

This was not a scheduled stop on our flight to Anchorage, and I don't know the exact reason that we stopped there. Only two items made it noteworthy enough to include in this chronicle. First, when we landed — we were flying on a Boeing 727 jet — the pilot got off the plane, went into the very small terminal, and came back out with a stepladder. He set it up just outside the window of the plane where I was sitting and directly in front of the jet engine to the airplane, and proceeded to literally climb into the engine as far as the fan jet blades would allow. I couldn't see what he was doing, but you always wonder — a few bolts missing? or maybe a bird trying to take up occupancy. He never told us what the problem was

and I didn't ask.

The other item we should note about this area is that from Unalakleet to the west and south is one of the few remaining areas in the world where musk ox live in the wild. They were much sought after for their hides. I didn't see any, but have no desire to go into *their* area — I'll just let them live in peace.

The airplane flew on take off, so we proceeded on to Anchorage.