

Chapter 6

Here and There and Back to Oklahoma

It's December, nearing Christmas, it is snowing almost daily, ice fog on occasions, and time to return to Oklahoma. Letters of appreciation were being written to each of us who volunteered whatever abilities we might have had, by the Alaska District, Corps of Engineers. It seemed we should have been writing letters of appreciation to the Corps for allowing us to visit this state and meet some very nice people.

Let me leave this part of my book with just a few special items that are noteworthy and should be added to my chronicle.

The people around Anchorage — and all of Alaska where I had visited — were as if they were one big, courteous family. In Anchorage for instance, when you would drive up to a main thoroughfare on a side road, chances were that no more than three or four cars would pass, before someone on the main road would stop and allow you to enter the traffic lane. Don't try this in the lower 48, unless you want to get hit by oncoming traffic. This courtesy was prevalent the entire time I was in Alaska. I hope it still is — if not, Alaska, you have lost something!

Another thing I noted about the people — when someone would transfer up to Alaska from the lower 48, the people who were already in residence there would rent them a house and gather up enough furniture and utensils for the newcomers to get by with (sometimes including a car if someone had an extra) until their household goods arrived. They would

assure all their needs were met, would transport them around town to shop or to work if necessary, and generally get them acquainted with the area. At any time anyone needed help for some reason or another it would be forthcoming shortly.

What a difference our country could be if we would turn off the "Great Greed Machine" — industry, government, you *know* what I am talking about, and assume this attitude of helping people instead.

Let me get off my pedestal and finish the last part of my book.

On the way from our barracks to downtown Anchorage, we passed a "Curling Rink". How was a boy from Oklahoma supposed to know what this was? Each time I would pass it, I would wonder if this was — an Eskimo Beauty Shop? a new type of Hula Hoop? or just what? I didn't want to appear ignorant before my other friends from the south, (they probably didn't know either) so I kept hesitating to ask. Then it was time to head for home, and I still didn't know. This left nothing else to do but ask.

It seems someone decided they could play shuffle board on ice, by using a large heavy "puck" with a handle on the top of it. Lets see if I can explain this to any others who might still be living before ESPN. One player would slide the puck down the ice, while other players would sweep the ice with a broom — trying to convince the puck to go where they wanted it to. I was told it was quite fun to play, but since I never learned how to even stand on ice, let alone on skates, I decided this sport was best to be left alone by me. Now football. . .

In late fall, I started noticing houses, and especially the schools, had started building small earthen dams in their yards, usually either square or oblong, but maybe in any shape. These were the beautiful yards I have told you of, flowers of all descriptions, now dieing as they were covered by snow which was now falling almost every day. These dams were being filled with water which would freeze each night. Then winter was here, and thawing would probably not occur again until the next spring. Presto! Each house and school play yard had their own ice skating rink for the winter. You could see kids of all ages on their skates enjoying this

winter sport most everywhere you looked.

I must tell you that when I arrived in Anchorage in August, you could see how to play ball until 10 or 11:00 o'clock at night. This wasn't quite far enough north for the midnight sun, but close enough to produce a very light night. All windows in homes and apartments were equipped with black-out shades so you could get the rooms dark enough to sleep in at night.

One noteworthy item that was unusual about this was that while I was in Alaska on one of my trips, the U.S. Congress passed legislation mandating "Daylight Savings Time" be observed everywhere in the United States. At the time this legislation was passed, the local Drive-In Theaters could not begin their movies until about 11:30 at night, and it was still pretty light at that time. I believe some of them just "gave up" and closed their businesses down.

In contrast to this was the lack of sunlight (almost) in the winter. We would work the same hours as in the lower 48, but we went to work when it was still pitch black, and returned home the same way. Sunup would occur about 9:30 in the morning, and sunset about 2:30 in the afternoon. This created a safety problem for school children, as school would begin and end in darkness. There were lots of warnings on radio and TV stations to drive carefully, and drivers respected the school zones perhaps better than in the lower 48 states.

Winter sports were enjoyed and participated in by most residents, and many would tell you the winter time was the best part of the year.

Time to go.

As we go to the airport, we pass Lake Spenard. Two things about this lake we need to mention. I have already told you about the normal temperatures for this area in the summertime, and the fact that I wore a topcoat most of the time I was there — but those crazy people who call this area home, would actually go swimming in this lake in the summer. I shiver just to think about it.

The other item about this lake is that it is the parking area for hundreds of small pontoon

airplanes. I mentioned before that this area has some 10% of all pontoon planes in the world, and it seems they are all on this lake. You can at almost any time see several in takeoff or landing patterns. I later flew in several of these pontoon airplanes – quite an experience.

The trip back was almost uneventful. Anchorage, Seattle, Portland, Salt Lake City, Denver, then Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Salt Lake City was pretty although the Great Salt Lake was very low with lots of former lake area now dry ground around its edge. The Mormon Tabernacle was massive and beautiful set in the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains. I would have liked to spend some time in this City, but, the airplane had a schedule to keep.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Joel A. Sosebee
PARTICIPATED IN

LONG SHOOT

ON

AMCHITKA ISLAND

ALASKA

1964 - 1965

Donald I. Prickett
DONALD I. PRICKETT, COL, USAF
TEST MANAGER

W W Allaire
W. W. ALLAIRE
AEC DEPUTY TEST MANAGER

R. W. Duborg
R. W. DUBORG, CAPT, USN
ASST TEST MANAGER FOR SITE
OPERATIONS

Benjamin Grote
BENJAMIN GROTE, LT COL, USAF
DOD DEPUTY TEST MANAGER

Malcolm M. Jameson
MALCOLM M. JAMESON, COL. USA
ASST TEST MANAGER FOR PLANS
AND SUPPORT.

Byron F. MURPHEY
DR. BYRON F. MURPHEY
SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR