

WRIGHT BROTHERS MASTER PILOT AWARD

**Fairbanks Flight Standards District
Office Honoree 2004**

RANDY ACORD



ACORD, RANDY. Randy Acord has an extensive collection of Alaska aviation history, most of which he has participated in. During the winter of 1943, he was project officer for testing a set of retractable skis attached to the P38J-LO, "Lightning." They put the Lightning through many hours of cold weather testing. During this time they never changed an engine on the P-38. Another gentleman attempted this same feat in northern Minnesota but ended up damaging the aircraft.

In 1947, he was the owner of a Beechcraft Bonanza aircraft in Fairbanks. From 1949 to 1963 Randy was the KFAR flying checkpoint for the North American Sled Dog Race. He carried a rather large transmitter strapped into the backseat of his Bonanza and a KFAR radio announcer. The flight covered the race from 200 feet and monitored the first five dog teams. Randy did the first five races for free after that KFAR bought the gas for the event. Married in 1952, he and his wife, Marion, have made over 30 round trips to the Lower 48 in his Bonanza. His wife and flying companion is one of his biggest supporters. In fact, when he was five minutes over due from his flight plan Marion would get on the phone to Flight

In April 1947 Randy was paid \$5 an hour to move 133 thousand pounds of dynamite in a DC-3, 5,400 pounds per trip to various locations all over the north slope for a seismograph team. He and his crew had help loading it, however at the other end it was him, his co-pilot, Noel Wein, and Lewie Beconovich, unloading all 5,400 pounds of dynamite.

Many of you may not know that in the late 1940's the Fairbanks Airport Planning committee was looking at putting the airport in various locations. Potentially, they were looking at what is currently Mission Road in North Pole and on top of Chena Ridge. Both of these locations had potentials and flaws. Mission Road area had potential because there was a generous portion of land in which the airport could grow; however, it was also located at the end of Ladd Air Field, currently FT WW. Had the airport been located on top of Chena Ridge there would hopefully never be a threat of flood and get the airport out of the ice fog; however, there would also be no room for expansion as Fairbanks grew. After taking aerial photographs of Fairbanks during the 1948 flood, Randy photographed and submitted some of photos of what is now the Fairbanks International Airport to the Fairbanks Airport Planning committee.

In June 1987, an Air France crew was attempting a re-enactment of Howard Hughes 1938 flight. At that time, Russia would not give them permission to fly over their airspace so they decided to fly from Fairbanks, Alaska to Burbank, California, since that is where the Lockheed Loadstar 14 was built. However, Burbank did not have a port of entry and they were unable to land. Randy got on the phone to AOPA and told them the story. AOPA called Washington DC Customs Headquarters, who called Randy back and told him to have the flight crew call when they were

departing for Burbank and they would have someone there to meet the aircraft for customs. Talk about persuasive. Needless to say Randy has been an AOPA member since 1946.

During the summers of 1948 and 1949 the FE Company, MK, and various individuals hired Randy to spray for mosquitoes in the Interior of Alaska in his Luscombe 8A. Each family paid \$2 per spray to fund the Fairbanks and Harding Lake area spraying.

One of Randy's most memorable events in aviation was when he participated in an air show in Fargo, North Dakota. They were promoting war bonds and he was amazed that during this event he sold \$10,000 of war bonds for modest mid American farmers.

Randy is the founder of the Interior and Arctic Alaska Aeronautical Foundation (IAAAF). This organization is dedicated to preserving the aviation history of the interior of Alaska and educating the public to the past, present, and future of aviation in the Last Frontier.