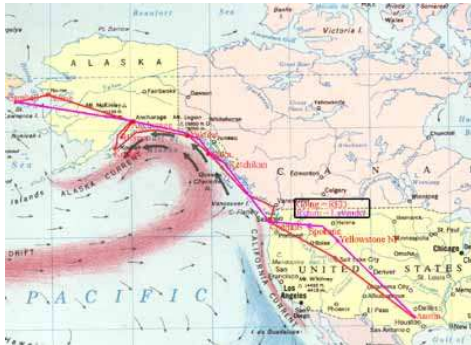


A Flight to Alaska

During June of 1999, my wife Joanne and I flew from Austin, Texas to Alaska and back in our Mooney



Executive 21 aircraft, a trip of over 9000 miles of scenic flying. On the way, we passed near Mt. St Helens in Washington State, scene of the violent eruption of some years ago. We enjoyed the pacific oyster which is incredibly large. Continuing into the Alaska panhandle, we encountered incessant rainy weather, so instrument flight plans were necessary. After stops in Sitka and Yakutat, we continued on to Kodiak, the home of the largest of the Big Brown Bears (males weigh up to 1800 pounds).

In Anchorage, we rented a car and drove the Denali highway, where we had breathtaking views of Mt. McKinley, and a multitude of wildlife, including a young reindeer trying to outrun the car. We continued on to the picturesque fishing town of Homer. Here, shops line the 5-mile long spit which extends out into Kachemak Bay. Returning to Anchorage, we had the opportunity to camp along the Russian River, one of the best fishing spots in Alaska.

Next, we flew from Anchorage to the old gold mining town of Nome, finishing point for the Iditarod sled dog race. On main street, the Nugget Inn provided signs to orient the traveler: Moscow 4400 miles,

Dallas 4600 miles. Continuing west,



we crossed 100 miles of the Bering Sea to land in Gambell on St. Lawrence Island -- only 48 miles

from the closest point in Russia. The Eskimo community of Gambell

has a "subsistence lifestyle" which is heavily dependent on hunting. We stayed here several days during which we did some birding and met



the local inhabitants who were Yupik Eskimos. One was a retired schoolteacher named Anders Passingok who transported us around the area in his all-terrain vehicle.

On the trip from Gambell back to Anchorage, we saw Mt. McKinley clearly on the horizon. Then, we again made our way south through the Alaska panhandle and the



old Russian capital of Sitka. The harbor area of Sitka provides a picturesque backdrop to this quaint town.



As a bonus, after visiting friends and relatives in the northwest, we stopped in Yellowstone National Park. Here we renewed our memories of geysers and wildlife, including the grand canyon of the Yellowstone, Mammoth Hot Springs, Old Faithful, and the Grand Tetons.

