

*'Wager with the Wind' Tells the Story—*

# Extraordinary Flyer -- Don Sheldon

FAIRBANKS — For years Alaskans have read in their newspapers of the aerial exploits of Talkeetna bush pilot Don Sheldon, but such items taken together form no more than a fragmentary account of the life of the extraordinary flier. And of necessity they dealt primarily with events rather than the human side of a rugged, compassionate individual with an enormous zest for living.

Now the Sheldon story has been told at length in a new book, "Wager with the Wind,"

by James Greiner, curator of exhibits at the University of Alaska Museum at Fairbanks and a close friend of Sheldon.

A limited number of copies of the 235-page book have been air-freighted to Fairbanks and Anchorage by the publisher, Rand McNally. The main shipment is due in the state at the end of October, and about that time several autograph parties will be scheduled with both Greiner and Sheldon present.

The foreward to the book and a number of photos contained in

it were provided by Dr. Bradford Washburn, director of the Boston Museum of Science. A long-time friend of Sheldon, Washburn has led numerous Alaskan mountaineering and scientific expeditions and three times has climbed to the summit of Mt. McKinley.

Greiner's book essentially is an account of Sheldon's career in high-risk flying — of his transporting mountaineering expeditions to lofty glaciers, resupplying them, and coming to their rescue when in trouble. Mt. Mc-

Kinley drew many of these expeditions and Sheldon's special relationship with this highest of North American peaks is central to the story.

During his 34 years of flying in Alaska, Sheldon has made almost a science of mountainside glacier landings. He is married to the daughter of famed "Glacier Pilot" Bob Reeve who as an early-day Alaska flier pioneered such landings.

There is a more mundane side to Sheldon's life: he regularly flies supplies and mail to

homesteaders, prospectors and other bush residents and puts hunters and fishermen down in prime locations.

Author Greiner's friendship with Sheldon began when he chartered him for a fishing trip some 10 years ago. Since then they've hunted and fished together. As a private pilot working toward a commercial license, Greiner has learned much from Sheldon.

Once he began work on the book, Greiner saw the flier of-

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# Don Sheldon . . .

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ten. He spent 30 or 40 weekends at Talkeetna and Sheldon flew to Fairbanks a number of times and stayed with Greiner and his wife Ida in their log home on Chena Ridge.

Greiner first came to Alaska in the summer of 1959 to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Bristol Bay. The following summer, after his graduation from Michigan State University with a degree in game management, he took a job in the same area with the then new Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

For a time he was a naturalist with the Michigan Department of Conservation and curator of biology at the Rochester (New York) Museum of Arts and Sciences. On the strength of this experience, he applied for and got a position with the University of Alaska Museum.

Greiner is a versatile man with many interests. He is currently working on an M.A. in creative writing at the university. He writes articles on Alaska subjects for magazines, paints in oils professionally, and is a guide as well as a pilot. He built his own home with the help of his family and raises Labrador retrievers.

In addition to Ida, the rest of the Greiner family is comprised of sons Dan, 19, a student at the university, and Jake, 5, and daughters, Cindy, 16, and Carol, 12.