

Alaska State Library  
Historical Collections

**Guide to Collection**

**Renshaw, Ray**

**Ray Renshaw Aerial Photograph Collection, ca. 1962-1989**

**PCA 528**

3 Boxes  
40 2"x4" boxes of b&w and color slides  
3 small note pads  
19 folders b&w photographic prints

Processed by: Anastasia Tarmann,  
December 2009  
Revised by: Jacki Swearingen,  
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**ACQUISITION:** Rita Shannon donated the photographic prints (Accession # 2002-41). The slides were donated by Malcolm A. Menzies in 2009 (Accession #2009-53).

**ACCESS:** The collection is available for viewing.

**COPYRIGHT:** Request for permission to publish or reproduce photographs from the collection should be discussed with the Librarian.

**PROCESSING:** The slides arrived in Kodak slide boxes with place names written on them.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ray Renshaw was one of the finest pilots ever to fly the Alaska skies. He was a shy, retiring individual who never “tooted” his own horn, so was never given much press coverage. Those who flew with him always noted his safety record and flying abilities.

In the early days, Renshaw flew wood and fabric airplanes, such as the Fairchild, Eastman Flying boat, Waco, Stinson, Bellanca and Lockheed Vega. For navigation aids he had a compass and a wrist watch. In later years, Ray would fly the modern Grumman Goose and the Consolidated PBV Catalina for Alaska Coastal Airlines which had proper navigational aids and good radios. He survived winds and weather, engine cowlings and doors flying off, and losing friends in crashes. He is one of the famed frontier bush pilots who made Alaska aviation history.

Renshaw was born in 1909, where he grew up on Beacon Hill in Seattle watching planes fly at nearby Boeing Field. After graduation from Franklin High School in Seattle, Ray worked in a picture-frame shop, a specialty coffee store, a machine shop and dry battery company, but found his calling when he took flying lessons and ground school from Ansel Eckmann and Bob Ellis at the Northwest Flying Club in 1928.

By 1929, Ray had his commercial pilot’s license and airplane and engine (A&E) mechanics license; by 1930 he had his own airplane, an OX5 Commandair which he used for barnstorming around Washington. He built and sold gliders in his spare time.

Unable to make ends meet during the throes of the Depression, Renshaw traded his airplane for a Ford Model T and took a job with Gorst Air Transport, flying air ferry schedules and charters. During his four years with Gorst, Renshaw learned bush flying.

In 1935, Ray Renshaw and Herb Munter started Aircraft Charter Services in Ketchikan. Living in an apartment at the hangar, Ray repaired planes at night and flew during the day. He flew fish-trap patrols for the Alaska Game Commission and for the Bureau of Fisheries from August 1940 to January 1942. He also made the rounds to thirteen canneries until decimated salmon runs forced most of them to close.

During one of his trips, Renshaw flew the Bureau of Pure Foods inspector to a cannery at Rose Inlet. When they got there, the cannery was closed, but they spotted a woman running down the trail, waving a towel, shouting, “There’s a man dying here. I’ve been praying somebody would come.” Renshaw taxied the plane over and followed her to a cabin where a bed-ridden man had bloody foam coming out of his mouth. Leaving the inspector at the camp, Renshaw radioed Ketchikan for a doctor, handled another emergency on his way, flew in and picked up the doctor. After he made the cannery rounds, Renshaw flew the cannery inspector, doctor and patient to town, where the sick man was put on an Alaskan steamer to Seattle for further treatment.

Ray was not allowed to enlist in the military because the U.S. Coast Guard needed his flying services. Renshaw flew numerous patrol missions throughout Alaska, including the Aleutian Islands for the military from January 1942 until 1944, hunting for enemy submarines. Then in

May 1944, Ray went to work as a pilot for Ellis Airlines until 1945, at which time he was invited by Shell Simmons of Alaska Coastal Airlines to come to Juneau and fly for him.

While flying for Ellis Airlines, Ray met his future wife, Jeanne Ellis, whom he married on February 14, 1944. She passed away from cancer in 1973. While in Seattle, he met Vivian Erwin from Juneau who was also visiting her terminally ill husband. Six years after both had lost their loved ones, they were married. They found they were born just days apart, had attended the same high school in Seattle and had moved to Alaska six months apart.

Ray stayed with Simmons from 1945 until 1969. After moving to Juneau in 1945, Renshaw became chief pilot for Alaska Coastal, a job he retained until Alaska Coastal-Ellis Airlines merged with Alaska Airlines in 1968. That's when the rule that a pilot must retire at 60 affected him. After two years with Alaska Airlines, Renshaw flew a "Super Goose" for Champion International and was chief pilot for Southeast Skyways in Juneau until 1979.

From the time that Ray Renshaw came to Alaska in 1935, he knew this was to be his new home. Ray said, "This is where you stay young." Ray passed away at the age of 90 in 2000 in his own home in Juneau with his loved ones. *[Biography written by Jim Ruotsala]*

## SCOPE AND CONTENTS NOTE

Aerial photographic slides of Northwest Coastal areas of Washington, British Columbia and Alaska. Photographic prints of aerial views of photos taken for the U.S. Forest Service: Sumdum, Sitka, Taku River, and Juneau.

## INVENTORY

### Box 1

9 folders: b&w aerial photographic prints

- Sitka A-1
- Taku A5 S ½ Plot 51
- Taku River A-6 SW ¼
- Taku River A-6 NW ¼
- Taku River A-6 SE ¼
- Sumdum B-3
- Sumdum A-5
- Sumdum C-5
- Juneau A-2 N ½

### Box 2

10 folders: b&w aerial photographic prints

- Sitka B-1
- Sit B1
- Sitka C2, C1

Sitka A-2  
 Sitka A-1 SE [folder empty]  
 Sitka A-2 S ½  
 Sitka B-2 EKW  
 Sitka C-2  
 Sitka C-3  
 Sitka D-3

### Box 3

40 2"x 4" slide boxes of b&w and color slides

**Slide box handwritten labels:**

Juneau Mendenhall G.L. Alice  
 Whittier to Sitka; Costume Party  
 Sitka  
 Fairbanks Pipeline; McKinley Park; N6  
 Inland Passage; Wrangell  
 Canal; Skagway; Road to Whitehorse; Road to Fairbanks; P7  
 Skagway; Road to Whitehorse; N4  
 Mt. McKinley; Anchorage; P10  
 Ketchikan; Bight Park; P4  
 Glacier Bay  
 Alyeska Chair Lift; Portage Glacier; Iceberg Lake; P11  
 Ketchikan; P5  
 Vancouver; Ship; P3  
 Valdez Tour & Misc.  
 Columbia Glacier; Night Before  
 Ketchikan; Victoria; Alice & [?]  
 Sitka; 89  
 Vancouver; Copies; Title  
 Fairbanks; P9  
 Plane [Aerial views]; N1  
 Gardens; Victoria; N2  
 Gardens; Victoria; P2  
 Vancouver; Victoria; 89  
 Ketchikan; 89  
 Glacier Bay; 89  
 Seattle; Victoria; P1  
 Flight Sailing Alice  
 Inland Passage; 89  
 Juneau; 89  
 Juneau; 89  
 Lynn Canal; Glacier Bay  
 Inland Passage; Juneau; Alice  
 Mt. McKinley; Anchorage; N7  
 Anchorage From Air; Seattle; Salt Lake; P12

Ship; Ketchikan; Juneau; Mendenhall; N3  
Skagway; Carcross and Back  
Juneau; Mendenhall; P6  
Whitehorse to Alas/Kon Lodge; Pipeline Over Tanana; Huskie Farm; P8  
Whitehorse to Fairbanks; Eskimo Museum; N5  
[Blue plastic container]

3 small note pads describing trip up Northwest Coastal areas, from Seattle through British Columbia to Alaska