

UNTITLED ALASKAN BUSH PILOT SHOW

Logline:

In the frigid Alaskan town of Unalakleet, the Tweto's and their family run airline battle the arctic elements to transport supplies and passengers into some of the most inaccessible areas on the planet.

Summary:

Alaska is the largest and most undeveloped state in the nation by far. In terms of geography, it is nearly 3 times bigger than Texas, yet has a road system less than one-fifth the size. In a region known as the Far North, where tiny villages begin along the icy coastline of the Bearing Sea and continue on passed the Arctic Circle, there is no freeway system to speak of.

In the summer and fall, these areas can be supplied by container ships coming up the coast, or from barges traveling along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. But for the remaining nine months of the year, when the rivers turn to giant sheets of ice and the ocean freezes out past the horizon, both the economies and the populations of these remote towns live and die at the hands of the Alaskan Bush Pilot.

In 1980, pilot Jim Tweto began his business in Unalakleet Alaska with just 1 small plane and a service area of a few hundred miles. Today, *Era Alaska* has expanded to include nearly 75 planes and destinations as far south as Kodiak and as far north as Barrow (the northernmost city in the U.S.).

His pilots are among the best in the world -- they have to be. Braving big storms in small planes is not for the inexperienced – especially with such precious cargo. On any given day they'll be air-lifting champion snow dogs bound for the Iditarod, medicine and clean water for sick children in Shishmaref, or convicted felons bound for Kotzebue in a tiny Alaskan version of Con-Air.

Despite his company's phenomenal success, Jim Tweto refuses to relax for even an instant. Historically, numerous Alaskan bush airlines have reached the size of *Era Alaska*, only to fail soon after. Jim will tell you it's because their city dwelling owners became out of touch when they moved out of the bush – a mistake he refuses to repeat.

Year round, he and his fiercely determined wife (appropriately named Ferno by her Inupiat parents) put in long hours at the Era Alaska terminal in Unalakleet – but their motivation is more than just financial. For better or worse, the lives and livelihoods of thousands depend on their airline everyday.

In the high winds and high stakes world of Alaskan bush pilots, the Twetos, and the brave pilots that work for them, are the last lifeline to America's last frontier.