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Bethel's Boat Harbor Gets Heavy Criticism

Thursday, January 8, 1970 Anchorage Daily Times 3

Approval of a small boat harbor project for Bethel by the U. S. Congress has brought some severe criticism of the move from Anchorage Port Commission members.

The \$664,200 project — including some half million dollars of federal involvement — was approved Dec. 30 by Congress and was announced Monday by the Washington office of Sen. Ted Stevens.

Anchorage Port Commission member Bob Logan said the federal government was "not being realistic about the vital projects for the good of the state," and said that shipping hazards in Cook Inlet should deserve priority over a small boat harbor in Bethel, a fishing community with a population of around 1,300.

Logan said Bethel would be able to use its harbor "a maximum of five months a year," while he noted that Anchorage is "a 12-month port for ocean-going vessels."

The Port Commission had recommended a study of a shoal in Cook Inlet near the Anchorage port that has scraped the bottoms out of five or six ships and caused, he estimated, some \$4 million damage. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers had been granted some \$20,000 for a study of the shoal in December.

Port Director Erwin Davis also expressed disappointment at the Congressional approval. "The Port Commission is disappointed to see a sizeable amount of money going someplace else," he said. "We feel we have a greater need, and we haven't been successful in getting the hazards taken care of."

Commissioner Wallace Martens agreed that the shipping hazards were more important, in his opinion, than work in the Bethel area, and Commissioner Albert Kowalski said he feared approval of the project could delay money for the Cook Inlet study.

"The rock (Cook Inlet shoal) keeps getting worse and worse," Kowalski said. "The commission isn't going to hold still and let this thing (the shoal) go. We've got to eliminate it one way or another. It would take up to seven years to get it through."

The shoal problem all started after the 1964 earthquake. Soon after the quake, a ship coming through the inlet hit a rock submerged about 12 feet under the surface. Four or five other ships have since reported hitting a rock in the same area. The Port of Anchorage in 1964 attempted to get funds for a study prior to removal of the hazard.

The port had been granted funds in 1969, but a federal spending cutback eliminated them. Then in December, Congress announced the \$20,000 grant to the Corps of Engineers for a preliminary study. It was half of the requested figure.

The Bethel project had been requested so that Native residents of the town would be able to moor their fishing boats nearer to an Alaska State Housing Authority subdivision built there.

Although no grant of funds has yet been made for the Bethel project, Senator Stevens' office reported he expects funds to become available for the project by summer of next year. The federal government would supply some \$500,000 of the total needed for the project, and the rest would come out of Bethel's municipal funds.

Commissioner Logan suggested that "if we are going to put money around the country this way, and not pay any attention to ports vital to

the welfare of Alaska as a whole, there's something very wrong in the system of priority project allocations."

"We were told that public money was very tight in Washington, and we could not expect any immediate funds for removal of the (Cook Inlet) shoal," Logan continued. "We have been given \$20,000 to investigate the shoal, but that is not enough to even get started."

"This is a darn good indication of the thinking back there," he said. "They (Congress) are not being realistic about the vital projects for the good of the state."

Port Director Davis said that depth of the inlet near the shoal area is getting shallower. "I'm sure the Corps has only a

certain amount of money to be spent in Alaska, and to that extent funding of other projects in the state would be detrimental to the Inlet study."

Commissioner Logan said the project was "shocking," and that "the Port of Anchorage — with ocean going traffic year around — should have a priority. Bethel has five months a year maximum use of its port."

Commissioner Kowalski said the Bethel project was "a convenience-type thing. If it is their livelihood (the port), it would be something else, of course."

"I am real unhappy about it (the project approval). I'm more interested in getting the rock out of here," he said.

Davis new Anchorage Port head



E. Erwin Davis has been named to the post of Port Director at the Port of Anchorage, Alaska. Davis joined the Port Staff as Operations Manager in 1966 and was named Assistant Port Director in April 1967. The new Port Director is a 1956 graduate of Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.

Davis has been continuously employed in the transportation industry since leaving school, having served in a management capacity for several surface carriers.

Alaska construction & oil report / February, 1970

PORT COMMISSION DEFEATS LEASE BID

The third time wasn't the charm last night. Just the opposite.

The third time the Hightide Marine Lease Amendment came before the Anchorage Port Commission for action, it was defeated. The previous two times it had received no action from the commission.

The lessee had asked for an amendment to his lease to allow Hightide Marine to operate a dock taking only "odd-sized" cargo from Northland Marine and Dravo companies.

Commission member Bob Logan opposed approval of the amendment, saying that "everything is odd-sized now, except containers." He said the city had poured out money to support the Port of Anchorage facilities, and said approval of the request would put on "an unfavorable light with the taxpayer," and that "at this particular time I don't think it is acceptable."

However, Hightide attorney Marv Frankel said the dock would "perform a service. We're not looking for competition" with the city.

The dock would be set up, Frankel said, to handle cargo not convenient for the city dock's facilities. It would return 20 cents per ton unloaded to the city. "We aren't asking for handouts of any kind,"

Commission member Wallace Martens said approval of the amendment "will get some revenue" for the city, and said the Hightide dock would serve ships that otherwise "quite obviously won't be coming into the Port of Anchorage."

The port staff had recommended denial of the request, Port Director Erwin Davis said.

The motion was defeated "with the right for reconsideration at a later date" added on by Martens. Hightide would also have the option of going directly to the City Council for approval of the amendment, although the port commission's recommendation for denial must also be sent to the council.

In other action Monday, the commission:

— Approved a 90-day extension of preliminary plans for Hightide Marine;

— Voted to retain its consulting engineer, following expiration of an agreement between the city and the firm;

— Voted to increase inside storage rates at the Port of Anchorage to 25 cents per foot

per month, and outside storage rates to five cents per foot per month;

— Heard an explanation of approval of a proposal by the City Council of insurance coverage for the port;

— And approved construction of two 50,000-barrel and one 30,000-barrel tanks to be built at the port.

Sea Land, Union Will Hold Talks

Sea Land Service has received a copy of a longshoremen's proposal to operate a second container crane at the Port of Anchorage which has been idle since its arrival.

"But," Sea Land's Ernie Webb said, "everything else remains the same." The crane, operable since Nov. 23, has not been in use because longshoremen have refused to operate it.

Webb said longshoremen and Sea Land representatives will get together on the proposal in hopes of ironing out differences. Webb said he was confident the matter would not go to court or to the National Labor Relations Board.

"It's a matter of whether we (Sea Land) can afford the price," he said. He added he doesn't feel the longshoremen want to resort to a court settlement of the dispute.

Longshoreman Business Agent Francis Grant was not available for comment.

Webb declined to give details of the proposal submitted by the longshoremen. He said he felt disclosure of details in the document might hamper settlement proceedings.

The second container crane, an \$850,000 piece of machinery, has been licensed by the state of Alaska and approved by Sea Land Service.

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E. Erwin Davis has been named director for the Port of Anchorage.

He succeeds Russell Painter. Davis joined the port staff in 1966 as operations manager and was named assistant director a year later. He is a 1956

graduate of Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash. Davis, an Alaska resident since 1962, has been in the transportation industry since graduating from college. He has served in a management capacity for several surface carriers.

Monday, February 16, 1970 Anchorage Daily Times 11

It's Long Way To Top Of New Crane

By JIM CAR Times Staff Writer

What do you do when the boss tells you to go up on top of a 120-foot crane when you're afraid of heights?

A. Ignore it and hope he forgets about it. (He didn't.) B. Tell him that you couldn't get permission. (Unfortunately, the Port of Anchorage, Sea Land Service and the longshoremen were more than willing to let me.)

C. Tell him you have a wife and kids to support. (I don't.) So on a cloudy, dreary — emotionally and physically — day this past week, I climbed up what no other reporter at the newspaper would: the long ladder to the top of the new container crane at the port.

Sure, looking at it from the ground it isn't all that formidable. Looking at it from the second-story windows at the office, which is where the boss sits when he looks at it, it looks tiny.

But from the top of the 120-foot-high crane looking down, it's formidable. It dwarfs ships that brave the Pacific Ocean. And it scared me.

But once I finally grabbed the bottom rung of the ladder, I couldn't turn back. And to make it worse, I had a guide who must have been half mountain goat, the way he practically ran up the ladders and didn't seem to worry that the boss would be steaming if I collected on that insurance policy he's just given me.

Mel Barry is his name. He works for the city's Municipal Light and Power Department but maintains and did the electrical work in the cranes when they were built.

The construction cost was about \$1.9 million for the two of them.

As he went springing up the ladder on the first leg of my nightmare, he warned me not to look down.

I did.

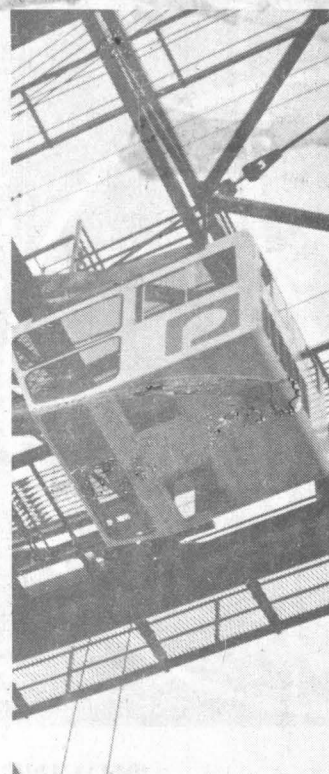
And I shouldn't have. When you're looking down at a ship that conquers oceans, you feel somewhat dwarfed. What's worse, you're scared.

We got into the write shack on the crane that houses the machinery for it, and at least from there you couldn't see the ground. But it didn't ease my mind much to know I'd probably get pinched in the masses of cable that were coiling all over, or get electrocuted by touching the wrong wire.

I didn't — somehow.

So the crane power plant — the massive engine that runs two generators that move it — started up, and we moved over to the white "cab" that hangs underneath the boom.

Right then we were eight



'Charger It Wasn't

stories in the air, looking down on pavement and a couple of miniscule semis.

The "cab" is a fiberglass and glass structure, about big enough to handle two men, although only one can sit down at a time. It's equipped with a small, and almost — understandable control board, a fire extinguisher, a two-way radio, and emergency shutoff switches that can shut down the crane. The entire front portion is glass — just plain glass, it looked like to me none of this Al Capone glass that won't break even if hit with a bazooka. This is the kind of stuff, I thought to myself, that cracks when you hit a pebble. It didn't make me feel very secure.

But plates of glass on the floor are strong enough to support the weight of a man, Barry said. "Jump on it," he suggested.

"I'll pass on that," I said. I'm sure I trusted him, but...

The "cab" through a mass of cables lifts a trailer-sized platform that hooks to the back ends of trucks. The trucks are sent — just the trailer portion, without the wheels or cab, on the ship and locked in with steel connections that lock together and make chaining the cargo down unnecessary.

The platform hooks into small holes in the four top corners of the trailers, locks, then lifts them to the chasis of the truck waiting on the dock. There, the platform disengages when the trailer and chasis are lined up, and longshoremen on the dock lock the trailer to the chasis with simple locks. One man could lock down an entire

trailer without too much strain.

The operator of the crane can control the height and speed of both the cab and the platform, and, said Barry, "when they get used to it," he said, "operators can move the platform up and the cab back at the same time. It really becomes efficient."

So I tried my hand at operating \$900,000 worth of machinery, weighing over 300 tons, and able to lift tall buildings (if they weigh less than 50,000 pounds) in a single bound.

I must admit, a Charger with a four-speed transmission it wasn't. But it was an exciting ride, especially when you take the cab to the end of the boom and all you can see through the glass under your feet is floating ice and above a threatening black sky.

But it's equipped with an automatic governor, which slows it down and stops it within a certain amount of distance from either end of the boom.

It's totally safe, unless, like me, you have palpitations when you go on a ferris wheel.

Except, Barry said, that the cab isn't supposed to be able to run into the platform. The platform, which is raised through controls in the cab, can be raised to a height equal with the cab. "If you start the cab suddenly forward," he said, "you can run into the platform."

"When the other crane came, they told me it was impossible. So I got up there, started the cab forward, and ran right into the platform. Broke the glass in front."

I had the proof I needed. I didn't ask him to show me how the cab could run into a platform.

To get out of the cab, you have to line it up with the three big bolts next to the seam on the left as you face the water. Somehow I managed. Then you can crawl up a ladder, across a walkway, under a couple of cables, and end up at the tip of the boom, right over the water.

The walkway is made out of wires that are welded together to form a type of diamond shape. They are totally safe, but springy underfoot. I thought it was giving way, and grabbed for dear life for the handrails.

"It's totally safe," Barry said. "This kind of walkway just is a little springy." I relaxed, and took my almost paralyzed hands off the handrails.

"The only trouble with this kind of walkway," he continued, "is that you can't tell when it's giving out. The solid type gets springy." I grabbed the handrails again.

I never should have said it, but when he asked if I wanted to run up to the top, the very top where the red lights and the cables are connected, I said I might as well. I've been asking myself since why I said that.

But he meant it. He did run up to the top. That's another 40 up from the cab, which was eight stories from the ground. There wasn't much more to see from up there except the same old dizzying blur in my eyes. I did notice, though, that the ship had gotten even smaller.

Then we started the climb down, the most rewarding thing of the day.

I got down, and looked up at the crane. "That doesn't look so high up," I thought to myself. "It would probably be exciting to climb up there..."



FAST WORK AT CITY PORT

Working together, the two container cranes unload containers from the ship almost as fast as trucks on the dock can receive them. Above, the mass of a container starts down to hook onto the back of a waiting truck. Below, the newer crane's

platform moves into position for another load. Working together, the two cranes can unload a ship in about 18 hours. And from the ground, they really don't look that high up.

Friday, February 20, 1970 Anchorage Daily Times 17

CITY DOCK PROJECT INCLUDES 2nd ROAD

Phase 2 of the Port of Anchorage's Terminal 2 will begin this spring, and completion of the project is scheduled before the end of September.

The additional work will give the port a second access road, and will give another 600 feet for berthing ships.

For the project, totaling some \$2.2 million, is to go to the City Council Feb. 24.

The project calls for extension of the existing dock and causeway, widening of the dock, and addition of a stevedore shed on the terminal.

The extension of the dock, Port Director Erwin Davis said, would allow two ships of the size berthing here now to be unloaded simultaneously.

"It will provide a berth for — hopefully — new clientele," he said.

Sea Land Service, Inc., which uses the port's facility now, is to increase its ship arrivals to two a week next month, but would still be able to handle its cargo in the 600 feet of berth space it now uses.

Davis said he expects the new extension to receive "immediate" use at its completion at the end of the summer season, possibly, he suggested, by ships hauling equipment for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System.

Davis said the extension should help the port show an increase over the 1,592,742 tons of cargo handled through the port in 1969.