



Mike Dineen of The Times

#### COAST GUARD POSTCARD

Under sunny skies Saturday, the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Mellon took visitors aboard at the Port of Anchorage during an open house. Seaman E-3 Ezekiel Witherspoon is shown here chatting with Lori Smith. The Mellon,

which sails out of Seattle, left Anchorage today after a four-day visit and a two-day open house. The 378-foot vessel is under the command of Capt. M.H. Daniell.



Ludwig Loeb of The Times

Tom Blair, who works nearby, takes a photo of beached whale as it lies near Ship Creek this morning

## Officials face giant cleanup problem

by Carol Murkowski  
Times Writer

Officials at the Port of Anchorage and the National Marine Fisheries Service are keeping a close eye on a large, unexpected and unwelcome visitor to Anchorage.

The carcass of a 50-foot finback whale, dragged into the port Wednesday by a Sealand cargo ship, has not drifted away from Anchorage as officials had hoped.

"I can see it just down right off the York Steel property, south of the mouth of Ship Creek about 200 feet offshore," port spokesman Tyler Jones re-

ported this morning.

"It would be ideal if it would go up and beach itself in an isolated area where there's no population, because it does kind of smell when it decomposes," added Dan Stewart, enforcement agent for the fisheries service. "Hopefully it won't beach itself in an area where there's a lot of residential population."

Stewart said a volunteer has offered to try to tow the whale across Knik Arm today where it can be undisturbed. The volunteer was necessary, he said, "because we don't have the funds for it. This isn't something that happens very often."

The whale, which apparently has been dead for at least two to three days, was struck by the Sealand vessel about 5:30 a.m. Wednesday.

"The captain knew that something was not operating on the boat, and then found it lodged on the bow," Stewart said. "The pressure of the water against it just kept it hanging there."

As the ship began docking, the whale's body broke away from the hull and currents carried it out of the port area and north up Knik Arm.

Jones said port officials took a boatload of scientists out to

examine the dead whale, and determined it had been dead before the ship hit it.

The bloating of the whale carcass indicated internal decomposition, said Stewart, adding a whale of that size would take about two to three days to reach that stage. Scientists were unable to determine why the animal died, he added.

The finback whale is one of eight whales on the endangered species list, Stewart said. If it is beached, law prohibits anyone from taking any bones, baleen or other hard parts of the whale. The meat would be too spoiled for human consumption.

Saturday, June 12, 1982, The Anchorage Times,

## Small boat harbor

THE STATE'S \$500,000 grant to the municipality to study the possibility of a small boat harbor on 66 acres on the south side of Ship Creek at the Port of Anchorage has resulted in \$335,000 worth of data and proposals, but there's still no small boat harbor on the horizon.

The firm of Tetra Tech Inc. did a preliminary study in 1981 that maintained there is local demand for such a facility. Later, York Steel of Anchorage, which leases 66 acres of tidelands in the port area appropriate for such a project, came up with a proposal that would include 220 slips, a dry boat storage facility, a large floating dock and other things — to the tune of \$52 million.

THE ANCHORAGE Port Commission felt that was too much money. At a meeting on May 17, the commissioners voted to authorize no further work by York Steel and on June 7 voted to accept the report and to retain the municipality's 5-year option on the land.

The profitability of the \$52 million York project was based on a premise that it could be financed with an outright grant of that amount or a non-interest loan that would have a 20-year payback — both difficult options to obtain.

What had originally been conceived as a modest facility had grown into a rather large commercial and recreational network that could have handled ocean-going barges and would have included such facilities as storage areas, railroad spurs and warehouses.

There is \$165,000 left in the kitty for more studies and the port staff would like to use the data it has paid for so far to come up with a scaled-down version of the York proposal. That money also could be

used, with state approval, to dredge the existing port facility or for hiring another planner to come up with a different proposition, or for improving the existing boat ramp on Ship Creek.

Anchorage residents who look at smaller places like Seward, Valdez, Homer and Whittier, where such harbors play important roles in community life — and wish they had one too — must also know that Anchorage is different. Extremely high tides and heavy silt make recreational use of upper Cook Inlet dangerous and Anchorage does not have the fishing fleet the other towns have. Even though the survey showed there would be lots of users for a small boat harbor, dangers that lurk in the inlet would be significant deterrents to widespread utilization.

THE PROJECT 80s scheme of former Mayor George Sullivan is bringing a new sports arena, a civic and convention center and a performing arts center, among other things. It also included a small boat harbor. Whether or not there will be one depends now on whether the port commissioners are honestly convinced that it is appropriate and whether they can come up with a plan that costs considerably less than \$52 million.

The commissioners, in their considerations, should keep in mind that any type of small boat facility will have limited use. The people here who have access to boats, and their friends, are really a small percentage of the population. A huge expenditure for the benefit of so few makes the per-person cost unreasonable.

Maybe the boat ramp that is already there is good enough.

Newsletter for Municipal Employees

September 1982

# Avast yee bureaucrats!



Captain Bill McKinney strains to see what first-mate Chris "Pirate" Gates spies on the horizon. Navigator Jack Brown and Engineers Eva Sparavalo and Joan Moviis keep steady hands on the helm.

## New Port piles drydock city sloop

By Sean Hanlon

No wonder utility types are so cocky. They are flush with bucks. And can boast of being the only profit-making bureaucrats in the government. And... and...

They have their own navy! Tucked away in a dark corner of the warehouse at the Port of Anchorage are a Boston whaler and a workboat, the latter of which Port employees built with their own hands.

"It doesn't amount to much," said W. D. McKinney, Port Director.

Maybe so, maybe not. Some Port people are interested in establishing an independent Port Authority which will release that institution from the supervision of the Municipality. The possession of seapower could be useful during such a debate.

Will Anchorage soon be witness to a civil war, complete with gunboat shelling of the Department of Information Systems?

This is an unlikely prospect. McKinney, who describes himself as "a landlubber" insists that his navy will

only be used for peaceful purposes. "We discovered that there were no rescue operations available in the Municipality," McKinney said. "Cook Inlet is not the most pleasant place to boat. Sometimes you get drifting motorboats. It's not very bureaucratic. When someone needs help, you just go out."

The workboat and the whaler are manned by a crew from the Port's maintenance department. The designated seamen are Chris Knudsen, Mike Jimerson, Ron Cowitz and Ray Hoover.

The crew is cautioned to always wear life jackets and not to venture beyond Point Woronzof, where they might be swamped by the choppy water.

The workboat was designed by the Port people to be narrow enough to get through the piles and service the dock. Unfortunately, since the construction of the metal vessel, additional piles have been added which narrow the gaps.

"We can't get through the dock now, so (the workboat) sits here most of the time," McKinney said.