Winter 2017

Celebrating TAPS 40th Anniversary
Remembering Hercs, Helicopters, & Airfields

As our state celebrates 40 years of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS), it's a good time to reflect on the massive airlift and numerous airstrips built to support one of the world's greatest civil engineering projects.

Impacts to Alaska aviation started in 1970 long before the first pipe section was installed. There were numerous helicopter operations flying survey crews as they staked out the alignment of the pipeline and where pump stations would be built. Air carriers geared up for the expected construction startup in 1972. Unfortunately there were delays with permitting causing one of the larger cargo haulers to declare Chapter 11 bankruptcy. The project was finally permitted and construction of the Haul Road began in April 1974. It took 154 days to build the Haul Road from Prudhoe Bay to the Yukon River, a length of 348 miles. It was even built to DOT standards! This triggered the beginning of a massive airlift in "Herc" operations.

Construction workers laid the first pipe in March 1975,at Tonsina River. The peak pipeline construction workforce was 28,072 in October 1975. The number of passengers passing through the Fairbanks International Airport doubled from 342,000 in 1970 to 710,000 in 1976. Even Fort Wainwright saw action with charter flights operating from the military airfield.

It took 29 construction camps and 14 airfields to build the pipeline. The airfields located north of Fairbanks included: Livengood, 5 Mile, Old Man, Prospect, Coldfoot, Dietrich, Chandalar, Atigun, Galbraith, Toolik, Happy Valley, and Franklin Bluffs. South of Fairbanks airfields were built at Isabel and Tonsina Camps.

Many of the airfields built by TAPS are still used today. Galbraith and Prospect are owned by DOT&PF and managed by TAPS and used for crew changes. DOT&PF owns and operates the airports, and nearby highway maintenance camps, at Coldfoot, Chandalar Shelf, and Livengood. And DNR owns the Happy Valley airstrip.

Today the three busiest airports supporting pipeline operations on the North Slope are Deadhorse, Kuparuk, and Alpine. The State of Alaska owns and operates the Deadhorse Airport, while Alpine and Kuparuk are private strips operated by ConocoPhillips and BP.

5 Mile Camp Airstrip
The first TAPS airstrip was built north of the Yukon River at 5 Mile Camp. The runway was a widened section of the highway and Alyeska had manned gates to block traffic during aircraft operations. The airstrip was used into the 90s for crew changes at Pump Station 6.

The Herc

In the spring of 1965, there were seven different oil exploration groups prospecting on Alaska's North Slope and they had run into significant logistical difficulties bringing not just the equipment needed, but also basic supplies for the personnel.

Airlift was the only solution, but in 1965 there were no civilian aircraft that had the right combination of load carrying capacity, ability to take in outsize loads, the performance to get into and out of what would be very short gravel airstrips, not to mention an ability to keep working in the extreme Alaskan winters.

The answer came from Charlie Willis, who had been the head of Alaska Airlines since 1957.
Lockheed had developed the prototype L-100 Hercules, a civilian cargo version of the C-130 Hercules, and was eager for commercial sales of the L-100. Willis struck a deal with Lockheed to wet-lease the prototype in what became known as the "Thirty Day Miracle". During the four-week airlift to the North Slope, the lone L-100 prototype moved over 2 million pounds of out-sized cargo to improvised air strips all along the North Slope. Alaska Airlines became the first commercial carrier to fly the Lockheed Hercules, hauling drilling rigs to Alaska's oil-rich North Slope.

Alaska International Airlines (AIA) ordered the Lockheed L-100 Hercules after seeing it in action during the "Thirty Day Miracle". When construction of the pipeline began in 1974, AIA devoted six L-100s to airlift missions to support the pipeline construction. The six aircraft were moving 1 million pounds of cargo each day to improvised gravel air strips along the pipeline construction route. From heavy equipment, to fuel, to prefabricated housing for the workers, AIA's Hercs averaged 12 hours of flying each day, some aircraft flying as much as 21 hours in a day.

Today, Lynden Air Cargo is still flying the Hercs. They consider it the most reliable, versatile, and powerful aircraft for hauling oversized loads to and from remote areas. The Hercs and the airfields they operated from were indispensable to constructing TAPS.

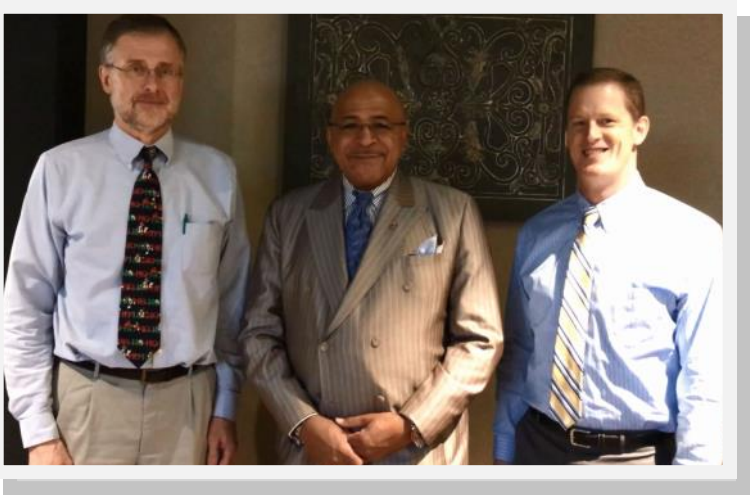
Source: *Herk: Hero of the Skies* by Joseph Earl Dabney
Copple House Books, 1979, pp 231-249.
Photos: Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Archives
Alyeska Collection from Anchorage Museum

Alaska Airlines leased the first L-100 and it was christened the "City of Fairbanks" upon its arrival in its new, home.

AIA delivering freight to Tonsina Camp January 22, 1975.

AIA was estimated to have hauled more than one million pounds of air cargo per day during construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline in the 1970s.

Message from DC Binder:



L-R John Johansen, Anchorage Airport, Byron K. Huffman, and DC Binder at Byron's retirement

I hope you enjoy the stories about the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and the impact it had on aviation back in the beginning days of construction, and still does today. As the largest project in our state it touched the lives of many Alaskan families, including my own, as my father drove the haul road for more than 30 years! The Dalton Highway is used mostly by truckers carrying supplies to oilfield workers in Deadhorse, and it's a tough drive - steep and slick in many places and muddy in others. Winter temperatures have been recorded as low as –82 degrees. DOT&PF assumed the maintenance and operations of the Haul Road on October 15, 1978. I encourage you to check out additional stories about the last 40 years of TAPS at this Link.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Byron Huffman, Director of the FAA's Airport Division, on his retirement and express my sincere appreciation for his tremendous contributions to the state's aviation system for the past 16½ years. Byron has been a friend and ardent supporter of aviation in Alaska, and will be missed. Under his guidance, Byron's office directs the Airport Improvement Program in Alaska, having appropriated $3.5 billion dollars and 903 grants to the state's airports during his tenure. Enjoy retirement Byron, and Go Tar Heels!

As we head into the holidays, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for the New Year.

Fly Safe,
John Binder

James Dalton Highway - "The Haul Road"

Merrill Field - MRI

Anchorage has one of the busiest General Aviation airports in the nation - Merrill Field (MRI). It ranks in the top 100 nationally and supports over 130,000 operations annually. Airport Manager, Paul Bowers, AAE, has been managing Merrill Field since 2013. During his tenure, he has brought new life to the airport by encouraging private business, promoting economic development, and being a good neighbor within the community.

Multiple new Merrill Field tenants since 2013, include over 20 hangars including the recently opened Chaz Aero paint hangar that is a state-of-art DEC/EPA approved paint hangar capable of accommodating medium size aircraft; and the award winning SkyTrek Alaska Flight Training. Bowers noted multiple additional hangars are also in the works.

Construction projects include airport-wide improved security fencing, cameras, gate operators, dynamic compaction stabilization of taxiway and apron areas (that are built atop the now closed municipal landfill that underlays some 40% of MRI), and improvements to the RWY 5-23 gravel/ski strip runway with MIRLS, REILS, lighted wind sock, LED apron lights, and even numeral painted runway pads at each runway end!

Year round open access via taxiway from Merrill Field, facilitates fast and convenient entry to the Alaska Regional Hospital - the only non-military hospital in Alaska where fixed wing aircraft can taxi to the door. According to Bowers there are up to 25 medevacs weekly in aircraft such as a King Air and Conquest, “having Taxiway Q lead directly to the hospital saves precious time for patients.”

Merrill Field Management and the FAA Air Traffic Control Tower, along with Fairview and Airport Heights neighborhoods, work together with the MRI aviation community to “Fly Friendly”.. In 2013 increased efforts to coordinate helicopter operations to minimize noise impacts on adjoining neighborhoods. The airport has also established quiet hours and limits late night touch and go (T&G) operations and is now using Bryant Army Airfield for motorcraft T&G. Airport Manager Bowers is working hard to have MRI be a good neighbor!

Congratulations to Jamie Patterson-Simes and SkyTrek Alaska Flight Training !

AOPA presented the National Best Flight School for 2017 to SkyTrek Alaska Flight Training.

“I wanted to create a flight school where people felt welcome and they can train and they wouldn’t feel they were condescended to or where they couldn’t do it,” Patterson-Simes said on receiving the award, adding, “The people who have the most difficult time are the ones I have the strongest connection with. “

Customers of the school who responded to the Flight Training Experience Survey “raved” about the owner, Jamie Patterson-Simes, who they said “promotes the aviation community with lots of events, is organized with the training and overall provides a great educational experience.” Customers are "impressed with the aircraft and the attention to safety in all operations. An overall well-run and friendly atmosphere keeps their customers happy,” said Moser.

Based in Anchorage at Merrill Field, Patterson-Simes started the business in June 2014. SkyTrek Alaska was selected Top Ten in the Nation in 2016, and #1 for 2017.

Upcoming Events

JANUARY 24th, Aviation Advisory Board - will meet in Juneau at DOT&PF Headquarters, 3132 Channel Drive., Conference Room #140 , 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

JANUARY 20th, FEBRUARY 17th and MARCH 17TH - Aviation Adventures at the Alaska Aviation Museum, Free Family Fun from 12:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

MARCH 24 Alaska Aviation Museum's **Alaska Hall of Fame Gala,** call 248-5325 for tickets and info.

MAY 2nd & 3rd - Alaska Air Carriers Association **Annual Convention & Tradeshow**

MAY 5th & 6th - Alaska Airmen's **Great Alaska Aviation Gathering,** FedEx Hangar, Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport.

Another First For Alaska Airlines!

Alaska Airlines has just converted the world's first 737-700 freighter. It's a one-of a-kind aircraft that will be operating in Alaska supporting the needs of their cargo customers.

Nunam Iqua Airport

The village of Nunam Iqua has officially changed the name of their airport to the Nunam Iqua Airport. City, Tribal officials ,and DOT&PF celebrated the placement of the new sign in October.

Pilot Station has a New Airport!

Pilot Station's new airport project completed in October, includes a new runway, taxiway and apron as well as a Snow Removal Equipment Building. A new 3 mile access road with an overhead power line was built to access the new location.

The New Boeing 737 Max 9 Conducts Crosswind Landing Checks in Cold Bay

The Boeing 737 Max 9, conducted crosswind landing checks in Cold Bay on October 5, 2017. The Cold Bay Airport has the unique features necessary to test the aircraft in extreme winds. "Very high crosswinds in particular are hard to find, since airports tend to build runways lined up into the prevailing wind direction," said Mike Bryan, Boeing test pilot. "In Cold Bay, while the other aircraft were landing on Runway 26, we used Runway 15, with a direct crosswind of about 35 knots and gusts of more than 50 knots. As a test pilot, these are wind conditions that are hard to find, and I really enjoy the challenges of such a unique environment." The 737 Max 9 made its inaugural flight on April 13, 2017 after taking off from Renton Field and landing at Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington. The larger aircraft can accommodate 220 passengers, offers increased fuel economy and a range of more than 4,000 miles, compared to about 3,400 miles for its predecessor.

Bryan said the landing checks in Cold Bay on Oct. 5, 2017 went very well. Because the test aircraft is heavily instrumented, they were able to obtain a wealth of data from their takeoffs and landings. "The winds came as predicted, and we performed a mix of manual landings, autoland approaches and takeoffs with very high crosswinds," he said. "We are already actively reviewing the data and applying what we learned from the Cold Bay conditions," he said. This data will then be included in our final submission to the FAA for their approval of this new variant of the 737 Max for in service operations with numerous airlines around the world."
Bryan said the tower operator in Cold Bay was very helpful in coordinating their approaches and taxi requirements to get the test conditions done. "We really appreciated the local support," he said.

"We were also happy to provide the ARFF (Aircraft Rescue & Fire Fighting) support, in case it's needed," said Harold "Hap" Kremer, Cold Bay Airport Manager. "We look forward to having the opportunity to see the up-and-coming lineup of aircrafts – a sneak preview, if you will. We're hoping to see more of these test flights here." Bryan is no stranger to Cold Bay. This was the test pilot's fourth trip to the community. "Each trip has been a unique experience," he said. "My first trip was in October 2006 when we flew a modified 777 to check out our new 787 Dreamliner flight control laws. We had very similar high crosswinds from the southwest." Bryan said at that time, several local residents turned up to check out the new aircraft and take a group photo with the Boeing team. "We are all fellow aviation enthusiasts here," said Kremer. "A large majority of our community existence is because of this airfield."

(Article reprinted from In The Loop published by Aleutians East Borough)

Airport Satisfaction Rankings

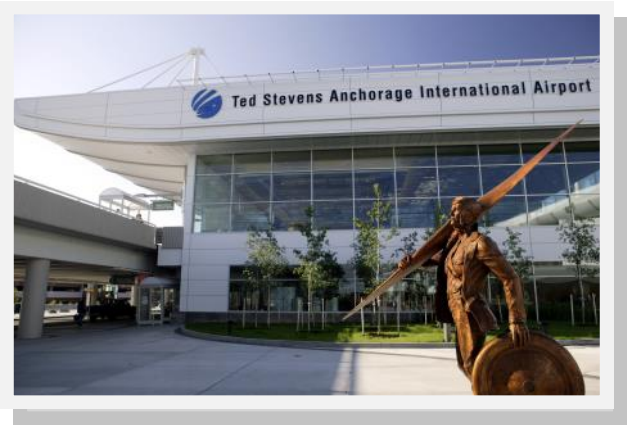
Airline passengers appear to be getting a lot more satisfaction out of flying these days. In fact, overall passenger satisfaction with North American airports is at an all-time high, according to the J.D. Power 2017 North America Airport Satisfaction Study.

Medium Hub Airports:
#1 Sacramento International Airport ranks highest among medium airports, with a score of 810.
#2 Indianapolis International Airport (807) ranks second
#3 Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (806) ranks third.

The 2017 North America Airport Satisfaction Study measures overall traveler satisfaction with mega, large, and medium North American airports by examining six factors (in order of importance): terminal facilities; airport accessibility; security check; baggage claim; check-in/baggage check; food, beverage and retail.

Now in its 12th year, the study is based on responses from 34,695 North American travelers who traveled through at least one domestic airport with both departure and arrival experiences (including connecting airports) during the past three months. Travelers evaluated either a departing or arriving airport from their round-trip experience. The study was fielded from January through August 2017.

For more information about the North America Airport Satisfaction Study, visit www.jdpower.com/resource/north-america-airport-satisfaction-study



AOPA's Airport Watch

Soon after the 9/11 attacks, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) partnered with the Transportation Security Administration to deploy a nationwide Airport Watch Program similar to the successful neighborhood watch anti-crime programs. Local pilots and people at the airport are often the eyes and ears to detect suspicious activity. If you don't have an Airport Watch program at your Airport here are ways AOPA can help:

AOPA has volunteers that are pilots and aircraft owners who are members of AOPA and have expressed an interest to serve as part of an **Airport Support Network** (ASN) Program. If there is an ASN volunteer at your airport, he or she may be able to help set organize a user meeting, reach out to local pilots, and invite them to participate in an Airport Watch training session.

Some airports have local support groups comprised of pilots and members of the airport community that have organized to have a voice at their home field. If your airport has a local user group, they could be a ready-made resource to help set up Airport Watch locally.

AOPA also has a Regional Manager Program, with seven individuals covering different parts of the country. The Regional Manager can help you find local ASN volunteer, airport groups, or bring other AOPA communication assets into play to help establish an Airport Watch Program.

To create an Airport Watch Program, contact the AOPA Regional Manager listed below. He will help find local resources to help get a program started at your airport.
Contact Information:

Tom George, AOPA Alaska Regional Manager
Phone: 301-695-2092 email: tom.george@aopa.org
For more information check out:
http://www.aopa.org/airportwatch

Our mission is to:

***"Keep Alaska Moving* through service and infrastructure."**

To learn more visit our website: **dot.alaska.gov**

To receive Plane Talk sign up here: Subscribe to Receive News&Updates

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Division of Statewide Aviation
4111 Aviation Ave.
Anchorage, Alaska 99502

Return Service Requested

TO: