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The Seward Coal Terminal, (1985)

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The Seward Coal Transfer Facility or ^TTerminal was completed in late 1984 at a total construction cost of \$16.5 million. The facility, which occupies some 34 acres on Resurrection Bay, southeast coast of Kenai Peninsula (fig. 1), is Alaska's first deep-water coal port. Although slated to eventually handle 800,000 metric tons of coal per year from the Usibelli Coal Mine at Healy, the facility will only handle about 560,000 metric tons in 1985. It is currently filling one ship per month.

The Seward Coal Terminal is owned and operated by Suneel Alaska Corporation, a subsidiary of Sun Eel Shipping Co., Ltd. On a visit to the facility in late September, I was able to meet with several officials of the corporations including Tae-Il Kim, President; William C. Noll, Vice President; and P.W. Yoon, Director. They were all very helpful to me in gaining access to the facility and in learning as much as I could about it in a short visit.

At Seward, the coal is ^ounloaded to a 60,000 ton ship (fig. 2) of Hyundai Merchant Marine for ocean transport to Samchonpo, Korea. There it is unloaded and transported by barge to Honam. The coal is used in Korea Electric Power Corporation's ^aHongm Power Plant, a 1,000-megawatt plant located on the southern tip of South Korea (Usibelli Coal Mine, 1984).

The major components of the terminal facility at Seward include: 1) a new railroad spur; 2) a receiving hopper system; 3) an extensive belt

conveyor system; 4) junction towers; 5) rail shakers; 6) a stacker/reclaimer referred to as the "Big Dipper" (fig. 3); 7) a dust collection system; 8) stockpile water sprayer/fire fighting system; 9) operations control building; 10) 1,800 ft of dock trestle system; 11) a dock to support an elevated shiploader; and 12) various marine breasting and mooring dolphins (Suneel Alaska Corporation, 1985).

The port can accommodate vessels to 120,000 dwt and with a maximum draft of 58 ft. The facility is capable of loading 1,000 metric tons of coal per hour, or a 60,000 ton ship in three days. Its annual capacity is rated at 3 million metric tons. The coal stockpile maintained onsite has a capacity of 120,000 metric tons. The "Big Dipper" has a stacking capacity of 3,000 metric tons per hour and a reclaiming capacity of 1,000 metric tons per hour.

The advantages of the port facility for Alaska and its future role in Pacific Rim energy trade has not yet been fully realized. In addition to further exports of Alaska coal, the facility may eventually be used for the export of other Alaskan products such as grain. Probably the chief advantage of the port is its strategic location on the north Pacific Rim and its relative proximity to Far East markets. A round trip between Alaska and South Korea requires a total time of 36 days (26 days cruising) versus 45 days between Australia and South Korea. However, because ocean freight rates are very competitive today (\$6/ton versus \$27/ton in 1980), this advantage may not be as significant as it might first appear. Australia has recently dropped the price of its coal to about one-third of the Usibelli Coal Mine cost f.o.b. (free on board, that is, loaded onto a ship with all prior

charges paid; personal communication, Suneel Alaska Corporation). This illustrates how difficult it will be to make new inroads into Far East markets and to maintain them once negotiated. Although the challenges are great and the stakes are high, the ultimate rewards to Alaska's long-term economy are sufficient to justify the diligent pursuit of these elusive markets.

References

- Suneel Alaska Corporation, 1985, Seward Coal Terminal: Seward, Alaska, company brochure, 6 p.
- Usibelli Coal Mine, Inc., 1984, Usibelli Coal Miner: Usibelli, Alaska, company newspaper, v. 4, 16 p.

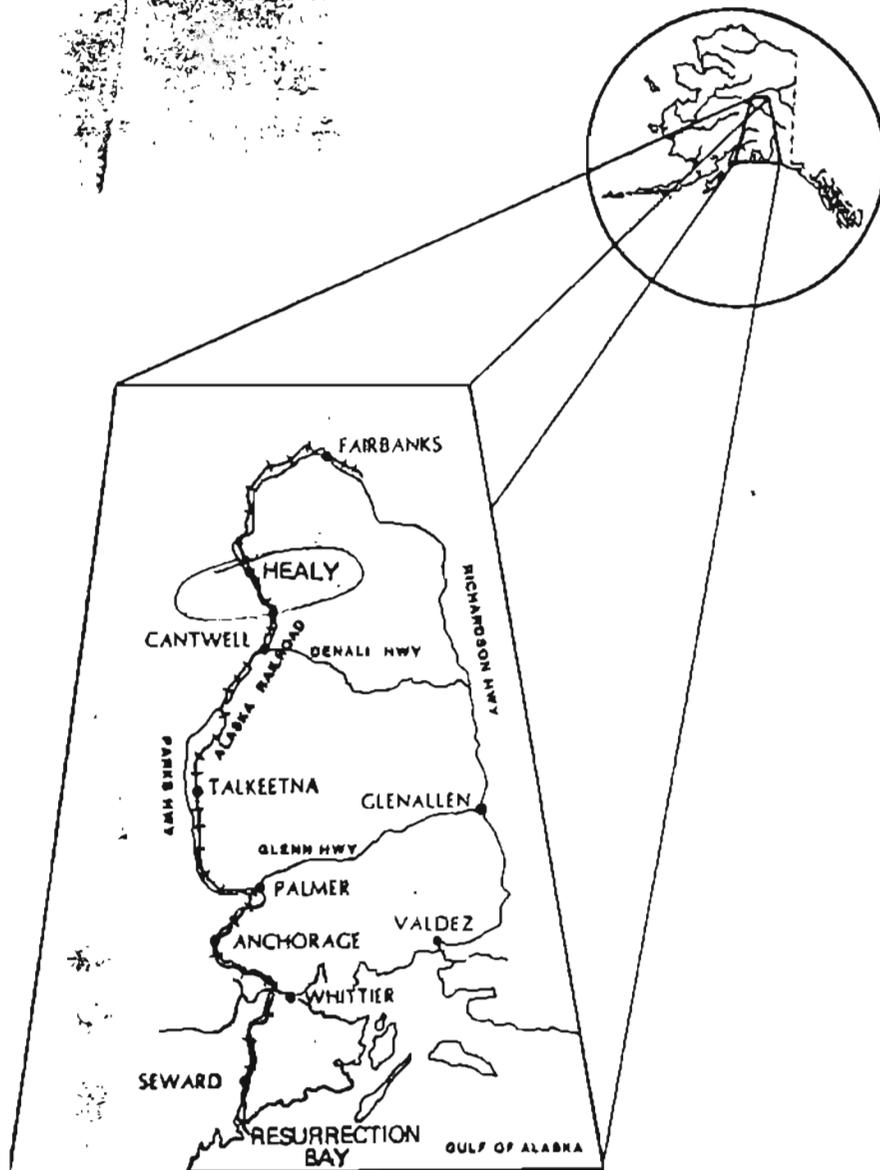


Figure 1. Generalized map of Alaska rail belt region showing the locations of Seward, Resurrection Bay, and Healy.



Figure 2. The loading of the collier Vigan at the Seward Coal Terminal, September 1985.



Figure 3. The "Big Dipper" stacker/reclaimer at the Seward Coal Terminal.

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Seward quadrangle

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