

Hoffman's TAPS exhibit a star at state's new museum

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Four-and-a-quarter tons. Dozens of parts. Hundreds of miles. Two years of planning and effort.



Alyeska Pipeline Advisor Philip Hoffman stands in front of the just-revealed pipeline exhibit at Juneau's State Library Archives and Museum.

By every measurement, the task was huge. But Alyeska's Philip Hoffman was up for the challenge.

Hoffman was brought into the fold early when Juneau's Andrew P. Kashevaroff State Library, Archives and Museum, affectionately known as the SLAM, asked Alyeska officials if they could, by chance, acquire a piece of the pipeline for an exhibit.

The museum didn't simply want a single-ring cutout showing diameter, or a steel pipeline cutout showing thickness; they were asking for what Hoffman calls "a typical intermediate bent." That means a length of 48-inch diameter classic TAPS pipe, two vertical support members, one hefty crossbeam, a pipeline shoe, two pipe clamps, and four heat pipes – not to mention the fiberglass module that wraps the pipe.

"If it wasn't for Phil, this never would have happened," said Michelle Egan, Director

of Corporate Communications, one of the first to hear of the request. "It was a huge job for him. It was identifying the pipe, identifying the VSMs, consulting on the installation and mapping out the assembly."

This particular Juneau establishment is designed to house the state archives and library alongside extensive art, Native and historical collections. Supporters say the 18,000-square-foot facility that was years in the making will be a community cornerstone of culture, sure to educate and enthrall crowds of locals and tourists alike.

Being in Southeast Alaska, many of those folks have little or no familiarity with TAPS. Both Egan and Hoffman, a pipeline advisor based in Fairbanks, saw the tremendous potential in supporting such a display.



Gov. Bill Walker was one of 10 speakers who welcomed people to the new museum and remarked on the significance of the day.

“I didn't see it as too big of challenge,” said Hoffman, who started working on the project midway through 2014, when he oversaw the aboveground pipeline monitoring and maintenance program.

“I thought, ‘I'll go find the pieces,’” he said.

It didn't take long for Hoffman, a 19-year TAPS employee, to realize just

how unusual this request was. Alyeska had never gifted an entire “intermediate bent” to an outside entity before.

That meant a lot of time researching exactly what parts they would need to ship south – from the pipe itself, to clamp bolts, to washers and Teflon slide plates, to VSM caps and a fiberglass module.



People check out the towering TAPS display at Juneau's newest museum.

In all, the list contained 30 separate items combining for some 148 parts. Total weight: 8,500 pounds.

“I had to go through every nut and bolt to make sure a complete kit was collected and shipped,” Hoffman said.

Lynden Transport, Inc., helped with the monstrous task of shipping. Hoffman made sure the crew that would assemble the pipeline kit – a group likely without a pipeliner among them – had instructions that were useful to follow.

“It was a challenge to prepare the assembly instructions to provide to someone who didn't know anything about it,” he said. “It would have been ridiculous to have sent the half dozen or more construction drawings. It seemed

like just giving them a typical sketch should have been sufficient, and they seemed to have pulled it off.”

Ultimately, museum staff had to add additional beam support in the floor beneath the towering TAPS exhibit to protect the parking garage below. They welded the VSMs to the steel beams in the flooring, then built the floor around it.

Translation: This is one section of TAPS that isn't going anywhere for a very long time.

At SLAM's unveiling in Juneau this month, Hoffman made his way immediately to the TAPS exhibit. The piece of pipe stretches high above the other exhibits, among showcases highlighting industries like the railroad and mining.

Hoffman snapped photographs as others paused to gape up at the impressive structure and read the information placards. He used his iPhone flashlight to get a closer look at the assemblage, and then stepped back and examined it again.

How did it all look? He had just one word to sum it up: “Awesome,” he said.



Dancers from a Juneau elementary school performed before leading the crowd into the stunning new SLAM building in downtown Juneau.