

North Slope ice road construction finished without a glitch

Peak Oilfield Service Company has just completed construction of two ice road projects on the North Slope.

"There wasn't any bad weather so the project went well," said Archie Fitzgerald, foreman of the Colville Ice Road, a stretch of road extending from the Kuparuk side of the Slope to drilling rig sites on the tundra. The other road, the Badami, was built on the Prudhoe side of the Slope, and like the Colville was well within its time schedule.

Ice roads are constructed during the winter so that oil exploration can be done in locations not accessible when the tundra and water are thawed. Teams of skilled heavy equipment operators, truck drivers and laborers work around the clock applying layers of snow, ice chips and water in a kind of sandwich.

"The road must be at least six inches off the tundra," said Fitzgerald, "and in some places it's about seven feet thick."

Six inches above the surface of the tundra has been tested as non-damaging to the delicate balance of the Arctic ecosystem, and it's also just about the right height for a smooth driving surface. Ice bridges account for some of the seven foot deep sections of the road. Water and ice chips are sandwiched over and over, creating a huge block of ice which is forced down until it is thick and strong enough to hold more than 350,000 pounds; the weight of the drilling rigs that will be moved over the bridge.

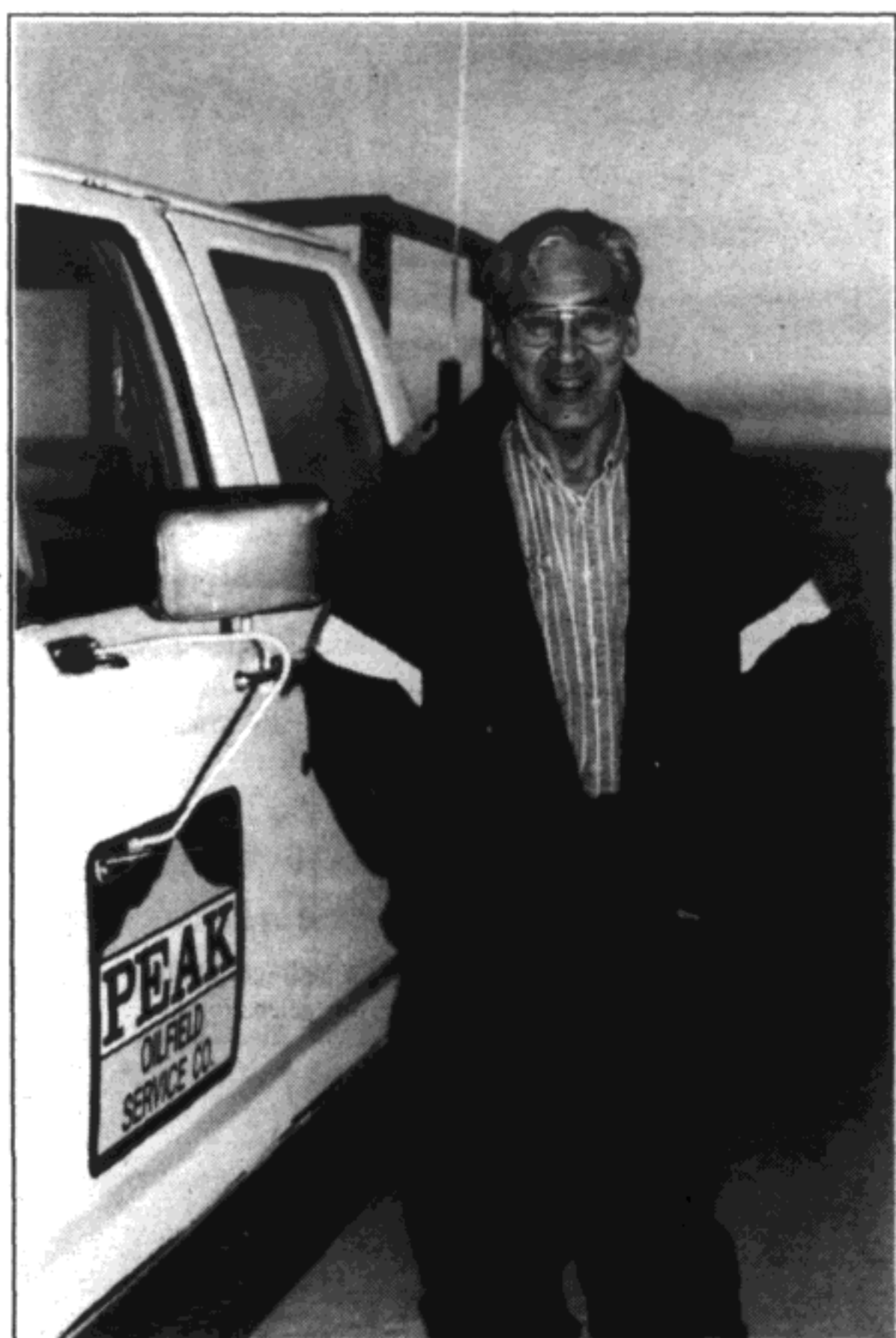
Work on the ice roads must be done quickly, so that support crews can bring in a rig, the drillers and engineers can do the exploration work, and support can move the rig out again before the ground and ice begin to thaw in May. Fitzgerald said that the Colville project took approximately 30 days to complete, and a skeleton crew will now maintain the road until the rigs are moved out in the spring.

The Colville Ice Road travels across land owned by Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. Peak worked extensively with ASRC, and specifically, the Kuupik Corporation in the village of Nuiqsut to hire several skilled North Slope Borough residents as drivers and laborers on the job. Debbie Akpik of ASRC's Barrow office and Sandra Ahtuantaruak of the Kuupik Corporation provided Peak with a thorough information packet on each candidate, and made every effort to help contact people when they were needed on short notice.

Kathy Murphy-Childs is an employment and training program assistant with Peak Alaska Ventures, Inc. She is also a Doyon, Limited shareholder living in Anchorage.



Jerry Sovalik (ASRC) works on the Colville Ice Road Project on the North Slope.



Lewis Aiken is an Expeditor on Colville Ice Road Project on the North Slope near the village of Nuiqsut.



Bering Straits shareholder Ed Gagnon is operating a loader on the Colville Ice Road Project near Nuiqsut.

*Photos by Kathy Murphy-Childs
Doyon Shareholder
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