

Palmer and Valdez - July 12 to 17

After leaving Seward, we decided to make 2 brief stops, one at Whittier and the other at Alyeska. Whittier, named after the poet John Greenleaf Whittier, is nestled at the base of mountains. The US Army created it during World War II as a “secret port” that would be used to deliver petroleum to bases farther north. In 1943, a 2.5-mile railroad tunnel was constructed. This allowed Whittier to become the primary port for troops and cargo to get into Alaska. The Army left Whittier in the 1960’s, and in 1969 it was incorporated. In 1973, the city purchased the town site from the federal government. Today it is a small community of only 290 residents.



The Monaco group went through the mountain to Whittier by way of the Anton Tunnel. And there was light at the other end!

The only way to reach Whittier is by boat or through the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel. In June 2000 the railroad tunnel was transformed into the longest vehicle tunnel in North America. This single lane tunnel uses a computerized traffic-control system that regulates both railroad and vehicle traffic. Motorists bound for Whittier usually travel through the tunnel on the half-hour while vehicles leave Whittier on



On one side of the tunnel the weather was beautiful, on the other it was rainy and dreary.

the hour. And, of course, there are occasional delays when trains are passing through. The speed limit in the tunnel is 25 mph and it typically takes 6.5 minutes to traverse it. As we entered the tunnel, the sky was clear and the sun shining. We were amazed to find a dramatic change in the weather when we reached the opposite end. In Whittier it was dreary, drizzling and foggy. We only stayed an hour and were pleasantly surprised to find sunshine back on the other side.

Our next stop was Alyeska, which is Alaska's largest ski area. There we took the Ariel Tram up to the 2,300 ft level of Mt. Alyeska. After checking out the view, we ate lunch at the Glacier Express cafeteria. On the trip down we watched hang gliders soaring down from the mountain.



We "soared" up Mt. Alyeska to have lunch. And what a view we had. No wonder skiers love it and hang gliders too.

Friday night we stayed at Fox Run RV Campground in Palmer, AK. That campground was probably picked because we all know how much the Ricks' like foxes. Unfortunately, no foxes were spotted except the murals on their coach! Palmer is only a few miles from Wasilla, the location of the Iditarod Headquarters and Museum, so several of us went over to check things out. There we saw a movie on the history of the race and went through the museum seeing pictures and even famous Iditarod lead dogs that had been preserved through taxidermy.

We learned that the sport called Mushing is an important hobby in Alaska. The Iditarod takes place every year during the month of March. In 2002 there were 55 teams from around the world that participated. It costs 10 to 15 thousand dollars to finance an entry. The Iditarod Committee takes



great pride in its role of providing excellence in dog care, including pre-race veterinary screening, check point examinations, plus other welfare concerns.

The Alaska natives created a network of trails in interior Alaska in the early 1800's. Segments of these trails later became the Iditarod Trail. The trail got its name from a 19th century Athabascan Indian Village. Dog teams and sleds were the most popular mode of travel. Six to twenty dogs, depending on the weight of the load, were harnessed to pull a freight-laden sled. The Russians introduced the harnessing of the dog teams in-line for better control. During the winter, lakes were covered with snow and ice making the Iditarod Trail the favored winter route by those traveling to mining districts. In 1908, the Alaska Road Commission formally surveyed, cleared, and marked the trail. Roadhouses sprung up. Dog mushing mailmen, gold shipments, and scheduled freight service made the Iditarod the link between many communities in Western Alaska for nearly two decades.

In 1924 bush pilots began flying the mail, freight and passengers in and out of mining camps and villages along the Iditarod Trail. Air service eventually eliminated the need for the trail. Alaskans continued to use dog teams for trapping and local travel until snowmobiles came into prominence. By the 1950's dog teams began to disappear. The Iditarod was almost forgotten for more than 40 years, then in 1973 a dog race was introduced between Anchorage and Nome. Today the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race is internationally known as "the last great race". Winter recreational opportunities on the Iditarod Trail include snowmobiling, dog sledding and cross country skiing. In the summer, sections of this 1,150-mile trail are used for hiking and running marathons.



Bridle Veil Falls

On Saturday we drove to Valdez and what a beautiful site this was. We went over mountains and wound through valleys. We saw snow-capped mountains, another glacier, streams, rivers and breathtaking waterfalls. We even went through Thompson Pass where records indicate that:

1. 974 inches of snow fell during the winter of 1952-3,
2. 298 inches fell in February of 1953, and
3. 62 inches fell in a 24-hour period in December 1955.

Guess there is no wonder that there are glaciers in the area with that kind of snowfall!

Valdez was established in 1897 as a port of entry for prospectors bound for the Klondike goldfields. Until 1964, the town was located about 4 miles east of its present location. The Good Friday



You don't want to be at Thompson Pass in the winter.

earthquake virtually destroyed Valdez. Centered in Prince William Sound, the quake measured 9.2 on the Richter scale. Waves, caused by massive underwater landslides, swept over and engulfed the Valdez wharf, taking 33 people with it. Seismic action shook the whole town with overwhelming power causing much damage, however only the waterfront was completely destroyed. After the earthquake, the Army Corps of Engineers determined the town was unsafe and suggested relocation. By 1968, the last resident was moved to the new Valdez.

Valdez has always been an important gateway to the interior of Alaska, since it is the most northerly ice-free port in the Western Hemisphere. In 1974, construction began on the trans-Alaska pipeline. The 800 mile long pipeline begins at Prudhoe Bay on the Arctic Ocean and ends at Valdez. The first tanker load of oil shipped out of Valdez on Aug 1, 1977. On Good Friday in March 1989, again national attention was focused on Valdez when the oil tanker Exxon Valdez ran aground on Bligh Reef (only 30 miles from Valdez) spilling over 11 million gallons of oil. Today Valdez appears to be a quaint town and we suspect its survival is due to the friendly people.



The Boomtown Show was infested with mosquitos . . . as you can see here.

Upon our arrival to town the Rishell's treated us to a delicious dinner. After dinner we went to the Valdez production "Boom Town Show", a musical comedy from the gold rush era. On entering the show each person was given a "Skeeter" (kazoo - whistle type item that you hum into). During the show when mosquitoes (did you know that mosquitoes live an average of 2 weeks during the summer, although some may live to the ripe old age of 1 month?) were talked about, we were all to hum into the "Skeeter". This audience participation was good for a few more laughs. The show basically gave us a lighthearted look at the historical trials and tribulations of living in Valdez. At the end, we were encouraged to take our "Skeeters" with us since "recycled kazoos are not very popular!"

The next morning a few of us attended church on the 75-foot cruise ship, the Lu Lu Belle. First Baptist Church sponsors this service. We motored into Prince William Sound, then drifted for 45 minutes for hymns and worship. This beautiful boat of teak, mahogany and oriental rugs was certainly not your average place to



The LuLu Belle and its skipper.

hold a church service. That afternoon one couple took a narrated tour of Prince William Sound in the Lu Lu Belle. The rest of us investigated the salmon spawning creeks but found we were between spawning runs.

We also learned that tours of the pipeline terminal have been discontinued since 9/11. It has been interesting to note the numerous locations along our travels where we have had sight of the pipeline. The 25-year-old trans-Alaska pipeline stretches from Prudhoe Bay, on Alaska's North Slope, to Valdez, 800 miles to the south. It is one of the largest pipeline systems in the world, and crosses some of the harshest terrain in the world, including three mountain ranges. Although oil was discovered in Prudhoe Bay in 1968, it took nine years to get approval from Congress and then to accomplish the design and construction. Employing almost 70,000 workers and costing \$8 billion, it was the largest privately funded project in the world at that time.

Here are some other "pipeline facts":

- The pipe is 48" in diameter and made of high-tensile carbon steel, ½" thick.
- Maximum operating pressure is almost 1200 psi.
- Where the pipeline is above ground, it is elevated at least 5 feet to allow wildlife migration.
- There are 554 designed animal crossings.
- Almost half of the pipeline is buried.
- It is designed to withstand earthquakes up to 8.5 on the Richter scale.
- More than 800 rivers and streams are crossed.
- There are 7 pumping stations in use, each with a crew of 20 - 25.
- Approximately 1 million barrels of oil per day flow through the pipe.
- It takes 8.6 days for the oil to make the complete trip, at about 4 mph.
- The oil leaves Prudhoe Bay at about 116 degrees, and arrives at Valdez at about 65 degrees.
- About 40 tankers are loaded at Valdez each month.
- Five barges and 350 fishing vessels are on contract to provide oil spill response assistance.



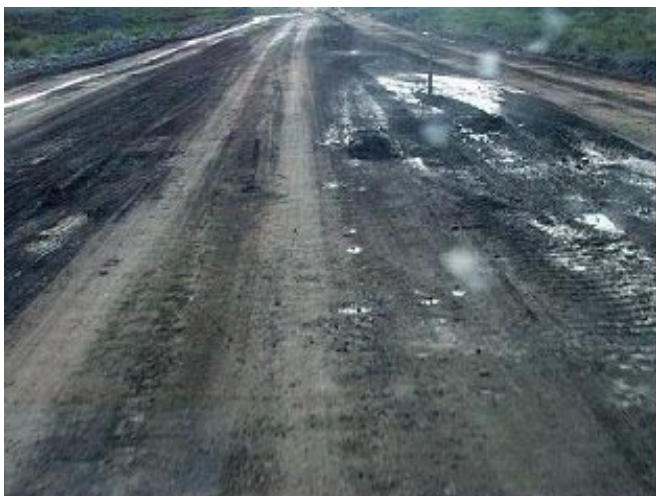
The 25 year old trans-Alaska pipeline stretches 800 miles from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez and is one of the largest in the world.

During our stay in Valdez, we celebrated Marti's birthday with a potluck at the Moore's coach followed by a game of Spinner (similar to Dominos), which appropriately, Marti won. Our fisherman extraordinaire, Bill Rishell landed a fresh salmon, which was poached and enjoyed together at an impromptu picnic.



Bill finally kept one and Billy's going to poach him and Gene's going to eat him.

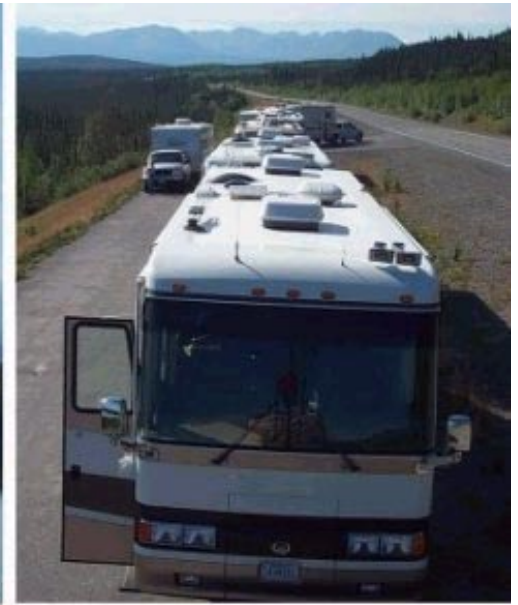
Our trip from Valdez to Haines took us back to Tok and briefly through the Yukon Territory, with an overnight at Destruction Bay. This village is located on the shore of Kluane Lake and is one of several towns that grew out of the building of the Alaska Highway. It earned its name when a storm destroyed buildings and materials in Destruction Bay. We thought it was appropriately named because of the destruction and construction of the roads in this area! While at Destruction Bay we saw lots of black spruce burl wood. Bill Moore bought two burl posts, which he had trimmed to 96 inches so they would fit in the basement of the coach. He's not sure if he bought these on an urge or as an investment.



The "road" from Tok to Haines Junction was VERY rough and dusty. "At least they cut the trees" remarked one of our drivers.

Haines,
Juneau
and
Skagway

July
18 to 23



Sometimes you have to go to extremes to get the very best pictures.

As we traveled down the Haines Highway, we were rewarded with panoramic vistas. Occasionally there would be an admiring remark between coaches, on our Motorola “Talkabouts” radios. In the Chilkat Valley, where the inside passage meets the northern mainland, is the town of Haines. There one finds an uncommon mix of saltwater fjords (a narrow inlet of water bordered by steep cliffs), dry alpine meadows, sunshine, and sea life.

We have been really looking forward to seeing Haines because it is known as the “Valley of the Eagles”. It was planned that Haines be at the end of the trip because, at the end of summer, over 74,000 chum salmon return to this area to spawn and then die, creating a banquet time for eagles. There are typically about 400 eagles that live in Haines year round; however, in the fall, that number swells to over 3500 due to the free chum chow. The town’s population of 1,811 also swells as camera-toting eagle-watchers converge on the town, hoping to capture that perfect shot.

Haines straddles a narrow peninsula between the Chilkoot and the Chilkat rivers and is literally at the end of the road, where the Haines Highway meets the sea. Picturesque Haines is drier than many of the southeastern communities and boasts only 60 inches of precipitation during a year. There are a number of things to do in Haines. At Fort William Seward National Historic Landmark, one can explore the cemetery and many



There’s snow on those mountains all year long.

historical buildings. Haines is a favorite area for fishermen - after all, 3500 eagles can't be wrong! Haines is also an artist's haven. There is a veritable smorgasbord of handmade items from which to choose. Lolly and Mary Catherine bought an interesting pair of earrings, made from walrus whiskers.

And then there was the American Bald Eagle Foundation, where we saw lots of "stuffed" Alaskan wildlife and learned about eagle migration and habitat. Eagles are known as raptors or birds of prey. But eagles aren't bald. The old Welsh word "bald" meant "streaked or marked with white". These very big birds weigh from 10 to 13 pounds and have a wingspan of 6 to 8 feet. The females are larger than the males and both have the white heads and tail feathers. They typically fly at 30 mph, but increase that speed to 100 mph when they dive for prey. Their strong eyesight allows them to see fish up to two miles away. This powerful vision is 20 to 25 times better than our own vision. It is thought that eagles mate for life, which may last up to 30 years. Their nests are about 5 feet



The moose family, oh yea & the Nelsons.

wide and 3 feet deep and have been known to last for up to 50 years. An eagle can build a new nest in 4 days, and in southeast Alaska it is estimated that there is an active nest for every mile of shoreline. Less than 10% of the eaglets survive to become adults. Most die of starvation or are attacked and devoured by their siblings. Eagles must be five years old before they develop the white head and tail feathers. Alaska boasts a total eagle population of 40,000 to 50,000, depending on the salmon runs. (World wide, the population totals between 80,000 and 100,000.) Several evenings we drove along the Chilkoot River and we were delighted to see eagles high in the spruce trees.

The Nelsons and the Moores flew to Juneau for the day. We climbed aboard a six seat Cherokee and 35 minutes later we were landing. After selecting a taxi/tour guide, we were off to see the Capital of Alaska. The population of Juneau is 30,711, making it the third largest city in Alaska. Juneau is located on the Gastineau Channel in the inside passage and is only accessible by boat or plane. It is 600 miles south of Anchorage. Juneau was named for Joe Juneau who, with his friend Dick Harris, found gold in the creek that runs through town. That led to the discovery of one of the largest lodes of gold in the world.

Juneau is a beautiful city. In 1995 the Los Angeles Times listed Juneau among the top ten cruise destinations in the world because of its scenic beauty and shopping opportunities. The Juneau Municipal Airport and Alaska State Ferry system provide transportation services to the city. The longest road in Juneau begins downtown and runs 40 miles north to a place called Echo Cove. There is no road to the outside world, and the terrain forbids building one, since the city pushes up against the Juneau Icefield.



An eagle's wingspan can be 7.5 feet.



Transportation to Juneau



The fish ladder at the hatchery. Good thing there's a designated driver to get them home!



During the trip to Juneau, we visited the Macaulay Salmon Hatchery operated by Douglas Island Pink and Chum, Inc., a major producer of salmon for southeast Alaska. Every summer, salmon make their way home: into Cross Sound, through Icy and Chalkam Straits, down Lynn Canal and into Gastineau Channel, all the way to the Macaulay Salmon Hatchery. They are accompanied by other salmon, all heading to their streams of origin, intent on reproducing, after which they die. It's the natural process. Not all the fish make it back to the hatcheries; predators consume 96%, 2% are caught by commercial fishermen, and 2% (which is over 2 million) return to the hatchery.

There are five different species of salmon. Your fingers provide a simple way of remembering each of them:

1 Pink (pinky finger) are the smallest Pacific salmon and typically weigh in at 3 to 4 pounds. This fish is perfect for dips and spreads because of its softer texture and mild flavor.

2 Silver (for the ring finger) are also known as coho and average 8-12 pounds. They leap and dance when hooked. Silver salmon has a mild flavor and typically the best price.

3 King (the biggest) can weigh up to 126 pounds, but are usually caught when they are 20-40 pounds. King has a strong flavor and thick fillets, making it the best choice for barbequing.

4 Sockeye (it's #1) average 4-8 pounds and are sleek as polished silver in the ocean, but turn scarlet to brick red when they spawn. Sockeye is the premium salmon because of its rich flavor and firm red meat.

5 Chum (which rhymes with thumb) typically weighs 7-18 pounds. It is the prime dinner for Alaska sled dogs, and is great smoked. These fish are the most abundant and mild of the Pacific salmon.

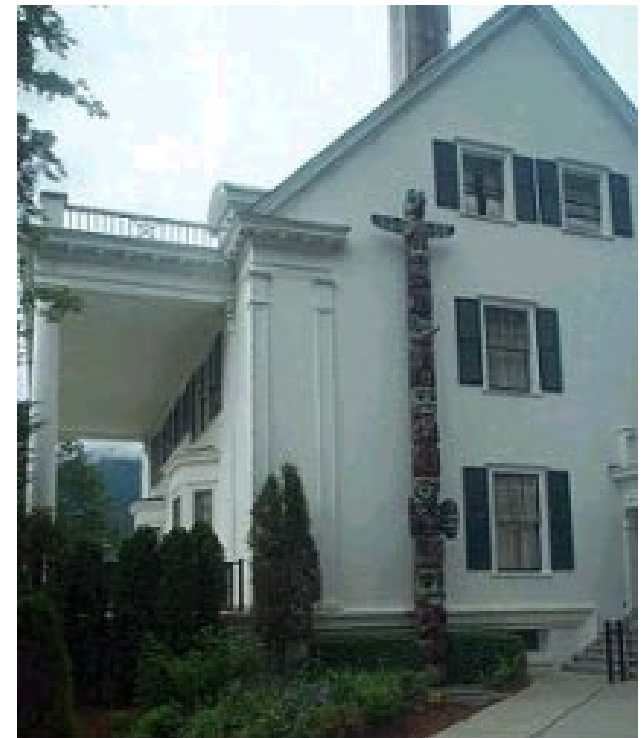


Macaulay Salmon Hatchery is a non-profit organization. It was extremely interesting to watch the salmon returning to the site of their birth. When hatched they identify with the water they are in, which enables them to return there to spawn. When they arrive back at the hatchery, they climb the fish ladder and into holding tanks, where they are held until the hatchery is ready for them. Then they are moved along to an egg taking process. From here the eggs are placed in a container, fertilized, and carefully supplied with oxygen and fresh water. Several months later the eggs hatch, and emerge as fry, or tiny salmon. When the fry are less than one inch long, they are moved to net pens and fed dry fish food. Six months after fertilization, pink and chum salmon fry are ready to enter the salt water. It takes king and silver fry an additional year of freshwater rearing before they can adapt to saltwater. After the fish are released, they are on their own until the day they instinctively know it's time to return, in 3 to 5 years. It is truly miraculous.



Whales spout after bubblenetting.

The Ricks and the Rishells took the fjord boat trip to Juneau. On the trip we saw seals, porpoise, and eagles, and we saw whales “bubblenetting”. This is when a group of ten to twelve whales, led by a dominate female, start at the bottom of the water swimming in a circle. This action causes fish to be trapped in the column of air bubbles. Then the whales begin swimming to the top with their mouths open, to capture all this food. When they reach the top, all of the whales will surface almost simultaneously. What a remarkable sight, and almost impossible to catch on camera!



Alaskan Govenor's Mansion

On arriving in Juneau, we boarded a tour bus to see the sights. We traveled by the Governor's House, a colonial style home built in 1912. Outside the house was the Governor's Totem Pole, which tells the Tlingit (native Alaskans) story of the origin of the mosquito. We visited downtown Juneau, once a home to thirty bars and several bordellos, now full of inviting gift shops, restaurants and art galleries. Within a seven-block radius there are sixty buildings built before 1904, and 143 buildings built before 1914. At the Alaska State Museum we saw Native Alaskan artifacts and learned about Alaska's Russian and American history. The tour ended with a trip to the mighty Mendenhall glacier. Mendenhall is a slow moving river of ice that is presently 13.5 miles long and 1.5 miles wide. Juneau's ice-age monolith still dominates the valley it once covered. Snow that fell over 200 years ago is just now reaching sea level.



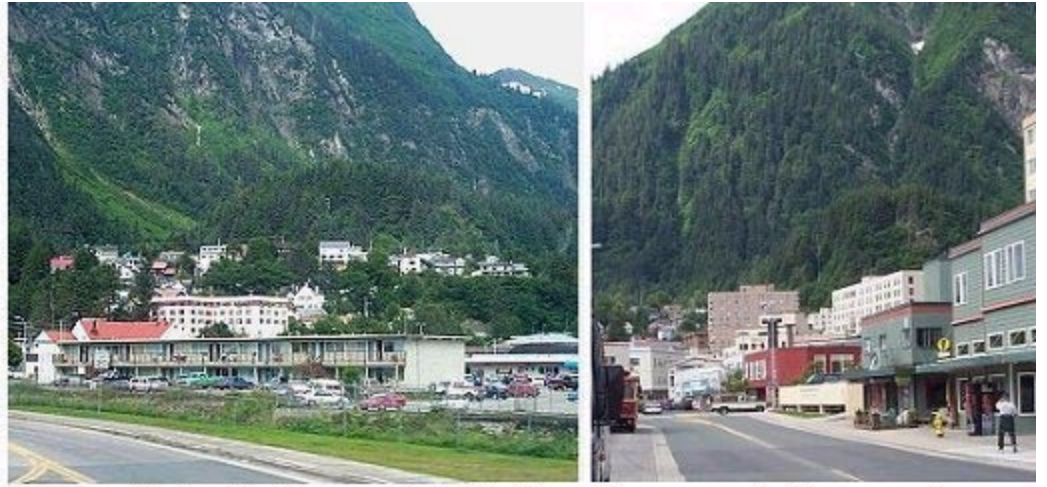
The other way to Juneau is by boat.

Everyone that saw Juneau agreed that more than one day was needed to really appreciate all that it has to offer.

Skagway is Alaska's northernmost stop on the Alaska Marine Highway's inside passage, so we thought it was in order to go there by boat. By land, the distance between Skagway and Haines is 359 miles, but by water it is only 13 miles. The Alaska Marine Highway System is the longest ferry route in the world. Operating since 1963, the nine-vessel fleet provides regularly scheduled passenger and vehicle service to 33 Alaskan communities. Fortunately for us, any vehicle that



Skagway is ready for tourists with LOTS of shopping and tours.



It is the third largest city in Alaska and is surrounded by mountains.



The Monaco Five weight down the Alaska Ferry traveling from Haines to Skagway.



Leaving Haines on a new adventure.



Tight fit for some of the "big guys".



Arriving in Skagway after traveling some great "highway".

is legal on the road system can be shipped on an Alaskan state ferry.

The planked boardwalks, the horse drawn carriages, and the folks in 1890's attire that we saw on arrival to Skagway, all gave us the feeling of taking a giant step back in history. In its heyday, Skagway was the boomtown gateway to the 1898 trail to the Klondike gold fields. The current year round population is about 800, a far cry from the 20,000 that inhabited the town during the gold rush craze. At that time, the notorious "Soapy" Smith ran Skagway.

We learned more about "Soapy", and his demise, at a very enjoyable play called "The Days of '98", that has been running since 1927. It seems that Smith and his motley crew had a thriving con going, fleecing unsuspecting prospectors. On July 8, 1898 this ended abruptly when Frank Reid, the town surveyor, put a bullet in Smith's heart. Reid was also mortally wounded in the shootout, and died 12 days later. The burial sites of both men can be seen at the Skagway cemetery located about 1.5 miles from downtown.



In Skagway, "Soapy" befriended Miss Belle Davenport and her "soiled doves".



Just don't expect the wives to do this!

What's a trip to Alaska without visiting a historic saloon? The Red Onion of Skagway, built in 1897, was also a bordello. The brothel consisted of ten tiny rooms called cribs, each 10 by 10 feet. Each room had three exits, one into the hallway and one into each adjoining room. Each room also had a hole in the floor, which connected to the cash register in the bar by means of a copper tube. In order to keep track of which girls were busy, the bartender kept ten dolls on the back bar, one for each of the rooms. When a girl was with a customer, her doll was laid on its back. When she sent her money down the tube, the doll was returned to the upright position letting the bartender know that her customer had left. By late 1899, the business was suffering because most of the women had moved to Dawson to be closer to the gold fields. During World War II the building was used as an army barracks and in the following years housed a laundry, baker, union hall, television station and gift shop. In 1980 it was returned to its original status of being a saloon.



A great way to travel if it's not raining.



The Red Onion Saloon was Skagway's most exclusive bordello. Alcohol was served on the first floor and more personal needs on the upper floors.

Skagway is currently the 17th most visited port in the world. During the 3 days that we were there, we saw as many as four cruise ships at the docks. The town was bustling with tourists from both the ships and the full RV parks. We met some of these folks on the White Pass train trip that our whole group took. This was a 40 mile, 3.5 hour, narrated summit excursion. An engineering feat, the White Pass and Yukon Route is one of the steepest narrow-gauge railways in the world. Completed in 1900, it climbs 2,865 feet with 4% grades around cliff-hanging turns for 20 miles. In vintage parlor cars, this trip gave us unsurpassed panoramic views of waterfalls, gorges, and Alaska's breathtaking wilderness. It was a real eye-opener to see this incredibly rugged terrain that the stampedeurs had to traverse to get to the gold fields. It is also interesting to note that of the 100,000 people who headed for the



As we traveled the rails, we could almost see the ghost from the past.



We went around the mountain . . . through the mountain . . . beside the mountain . . . and over the bridge.

Klondike, only 40,000 made it to Dawson City. Of those, 4000 found gold, with only a few actually striking it rich. And of those few, only a handful had enough left to pass it on to their children.

Stewart, Canada and Hyder, Alaska

and getting there! - July 24 to 28



During the next part of our trip we made three border crossings and retraced the section of highway between Whitehorse and Watson Lake in the Yukon.



It's a good idea to stop at the border. They don't take kindly to those who don't.

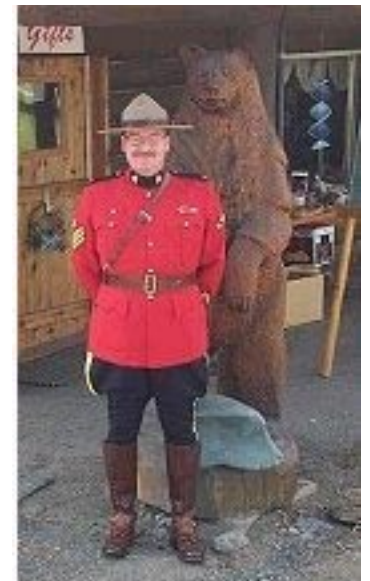


Our return trip to "Mukluk Annie's" for food also netted us a trip around the lake with "Mr. Mukluk" who has quite a following of seagulls.

On our return trip we selected different campgrounds in which to stay, however our meal at Mukluk Annie's was so good we decided to return there one night for dinner. After the meal we were invited to cruise the lake on their houseboat. We were rewarded with beautiful scenery and interesting stories about the owner and the area.

On July 25th we began the 188-mile trip down the Cassiar Highway (Route 37) bound for our last Alaskan destination of Hyder. Road reports we had received earlier in our journey caused us some real concern but, in reality, the roads were not all that bad. There were many sections that were under repair, or had been repaired and topped with gravel, but as we slowed to reasonable speeds, they were entirely satisfactory. In fact, we found ourselves driving slowly anyway because of the wildlife and the beautiful scenery in this area.

This day was to be our best bear-sighting day. The first bear was a large black bear that crossed the road in front of our group and ambled up the mountainside before crossing an old logging road and no, we didn't get his picture. Later on, we had four separate sightings of small black bears, each one along the side of the road and usually within camera range. We suspect each was a young cub recently turned out on it's own by mama to fend for itself. They were probably not wise to the dangers presented by humans and roadways and seemed to be feeding on vegetation along the highway.



Beary good photo.

On the 26th we continued on the Cassiar, stopping at Jade City, BC and spending the night at Iskut, BC. Jade City, with the tiny population of 24, is the jade capital of the world. There we saw huge chunks of jade that were cut from the Princess Jade Mine, which is one of the largest jade claims in the world. This mine, found in the Cassiar Mountain Range, furnishes about 75% of the world's jade supply. Here jade can be purchased by the pound or made into items such as jewelry and sculptures. Our stay in Iskut was memorable for two reasons: mosquitoes and a Canadian Mountie. Occasionally he stops by the campground to give campers a chance to shoot him, with their camera, of course.



Jade City - jade capital of the world.



It takes a long time to cut through jade.



Called the friendliest ghost town in Alaska.

As earlier mentioned, our destination was Hyder, together with the adjoining town of Stewart, BC. These two towns, separated by only two miles, are located at the head of the Portland Canal on the AK/BC border at the southeastern tip of Alaska. Hyder has about 100 residents and Stewart has approximately 650. This is an area that has glaciers, bears, eagles and salmon in profusion. Summers are cool and rainy and winters are fairly moderate but with heavy snowfall. These two towns are surrounded by soaring mountain peaks that still retain snow in protected areas and higher elevations. The steep mountainsides are covered with cascading waters from snowmelt and glaciers. Since the fog and clouds obscured many of the peaks when we arrived, it appeared that the waterfalls were originating from the base of the clouds. The surrounding lowlands are very lush, very green.

Canada's most northerly ice free port. The native Indians gave the head of the canal a name meaning "safe place". They used the surrounding area to hunt birds and pick berries.

The Portland Canal is a narrow salt-water fjord about 90 miles long, which defines the boundary between southernmost Alaska and Canada. Stewart's deep harbor is

With the coming of the white man, gold and silver mining dominated the early economy. Rich silver veins were discovered near Hyder in the upper Salmon River basin. The town became an access and supply center for the mines while Stewart served as the center for Canadian mining activity. By 1956, mining activity ceased with the exception of the Granduc copper mine, which operated until 1984. Today's economy is based upon forestry and tourism.

Fond memories of Bitter Creek Cafe.



We set out to explore the towns upon arrival in mid-afternoon. The women visited the shops and made reservations for dinner. Others washed vehicles or visited the Fish Creek Wildlife bear viewing area that is so popular. No bears were visible in the afternoon but we all planned to return following dinner. Our dinner that evening at the Bitter Creek Cafe in Stewart, prepared by chef Debbie Kremzar, was by unanimous agreement "the best we've had on the entire trip," and we immediately made reservations for the next evening.

Following dinner, we returned to the bear viewing area in the late evening and were rewarded by seeing a female grizzly and several eagles as each searched the creek for spawning salmon or carcass remains from other successful hunters. The grizzly prowled the bank not more than 40 yards below our perch on the walkway above the creek as we snapped photos and took videos of her and several eagles. This whole episode lasted for about half an hour and was a thrilling experience for all of us. The salmon in the creek continued their spawning ritual, only fleeing when the bear approached. We had arrived during a chum salmon run and the stream was full of spawning adult chums, some approaching 3 feet in length and 20 plus pounds. A delightful evening!



Bears at last!



Truly no pictures can adequately show these majestic birds.

The next morning, several of us returned to see another grizzly and many eagles repeat the ritual observed the previous evening. After a wonderful breakfast at the Wildflour Cafe in Hyder, we all headed up the Salmon River to its headwaters at the base of the Salmon Glacier. Just 23 miles from Hyder at sea level, we peered down from 4000 feet elevation at the fifth largest glacier in Canada. It is truly a river of ice, slowly grinding and shaping the land as it moves toward its terminus at the river. The fog and clouds would come and go but we had ample opportunity for many pictures.



Arriving at the Salmon Glacier viewing point we saw only fog. Fortunately we were warned to be patient. Wow! What an awesome sight!



As we drove through Hyder on several occasions, Ginger, a local horse roaming free on the dirt streets, welcomed us. Alaska observes free range for animals, except in cities, so Ginger was free to greet anyone who stopped. The accompanying photo attests to her friendliness. We dubbed her “an employee of the local chamber of commerce”.



Frank is an architect by trade and a toaster collector by hobby.

Following another fine “dinner by Debbie”, Frank, Debbie’s husband, gave us a tour of his toaster museum. He proudly showed some of his 800 antique toasters and answered questions we posed. This was a fitting climax to an enjoyable day.

On to Prince George, Canada where the Monaco 5 become the Monaco 3 - July 29 to 31

We left Hyder the morning of the 29th, thinking that our return to Canada would be a piece of cake. After all we had crossed the borders many times, with no problems, and there’s really no place a motorhome can go in Hyder except back into Canada. Boy were we surprised when the Fursts were detained and asked to leave their coach while it was



Pity the car trying to pass all these guys.

thoroughly searched. Of course, no contraband was found, and this was the only unpleasant reminder on our whole trip of how our lives have been changed since the terrorist attack.

We were told that, by this time of year in Alaska and Canada, there would be lots of recreational vehicles and we found this to be the case. On one stretch of highway we counted five RV’s in front of us and 27 behind. Wow, what a caravan!



**Hope thinks
real is better
than fake!**

In Houston, BC, we came across the world's largest fly fishing rod. Since Bill Rishell is an avid fly fisherman, we just had to stop and get his picture. This 60 foot long anodized aluminum rod was designed by a local fisherman and built by local volunteers. It has a 21-inch fly, which is a fluorescent "Skykomish Sunrise". At our request, Bill has furnished us with the following information.

The basic tools of the fly fisherman are a rod and reel, on which is wound a line and leader, to which is attached the fly. Rods come in various lengths, usually from 7 to 9 feet, and weights ranging from very light to heavier rods with more muscle for handling larger, heavier fish. Thus, a 5 weight-eight and one half foot rod is a suitable trout rod - a 2 weight rod of the same length would handle panfish and a 10 weight-9 foot rod would be suitable for larger and heavier Alaskan salmon. Today's rods are made of high tech boron or graphite.

Just like the rod, fly lines come in various weights. They may be made to float or sink, depending on the objective of the fisherman. An 8-weight line would be used with an 8-weight rod and wound on a reel of sufficient size to hold about 100 yards of line. A leader is attached to the end of the line and transfers the energy of the line to cast the fly. The leader is a tapered monofilament (heavier at the butt end where it is attached to the line) and finer at the end to which the fly is tied.

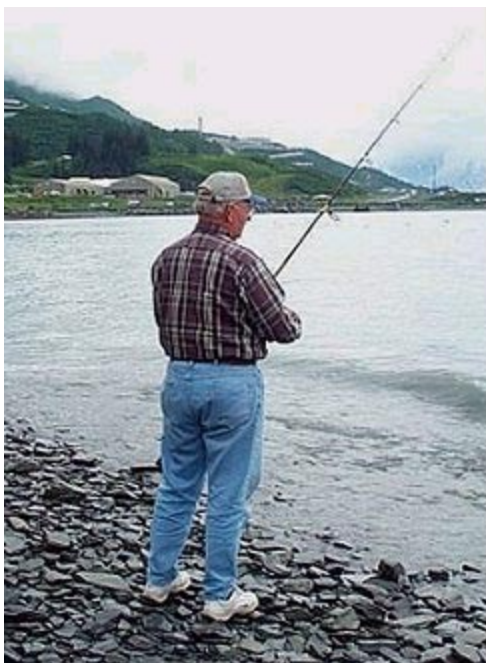
To make a cast, line is stripped from the reel; the rod is lifted overhead and moved smartly forward and backward as the line shoots outward. Timing of this movement is critical to obtaining a desirable

cast, but an accomplished fisherman can deliver the fly 50 or so yards and drop it within a desirable area.

The fly contains the hook, which is tied to imitate insects, baitfish, shrimp, larvae or other forms of food. Some flies are tied merely to give flash or color which stimulates



World's largest fly rod.



**And after a
challenging
day with the
fish
Zzzzzzzzzzz**



the fish to strike. A great diversity of materials is used to construct the fly. These materials include thread, feathers, furs, hair and all manner of synthetic materials. There are literally thousands of “recipes” for the many flies that are in use today.

The ultimate thrill for the fly fisherman is to fool the fish into striking the fly he tied and then enjoying the fight that follows. When the rod and line are matched to the size of the fish, even a small fish can provide a thrill to the fisherman. In many cases, when the fish is brought to hand, it is carefully released to provide a thrill to another fisherman. The joy for most fishermen is in the pursuit and ensuing struggle, and not for putting meat on the table.

The Monaco Five arrived at Prince George, British Columbia in the late afternoon and prepared for our last gathering, as the Monaco Five, with a progressive dinner. We began with cheese fondue at the Moores, and moved to marinate grilled chicken breasts with fancy trimmings at the Rishells, and topped it off with individual Igloo desserts at the Ricks.

COCONUT IGLOOS

- 1 stick of margarine
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 ¼ lb can drained pineapple
- 1 cup currants
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 box (8 oz) butter cookies
- 1 large Cool Whip
- 1 package frozen coconut (thawed)
- Maraschino cherries



Coconut Igloos, the final dessert enjoyed by the Monaco Five as a group.

Blend margarine and sugar. Add pineapple, currants and pecans. Spread mixture between cookies three cookies deep. Let set 8 hours at room temperature. Frost each igloo with the Cool Whip and cover with coconut. Place in refrigerator until ready to serve.



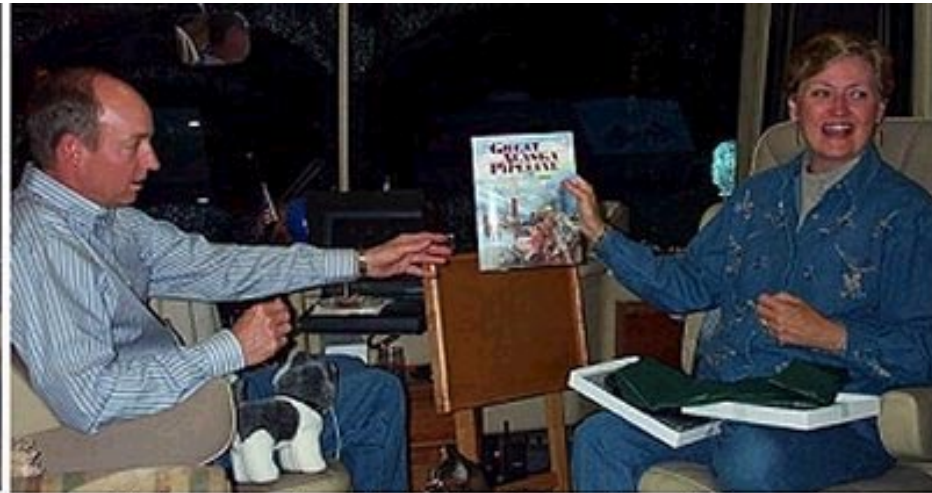
Ok Gene, hold 'um up! We want you to remember this trip for a loooooong time.



Gene was acknowledged and presented with a token of our thanks for initiating the Alaska trip and choosing the Monaco Five. Benevolence and accolades were given to Mary Catherine and Graham - our tour directors, web site designers and chief electrician. Since all of the guys had acquired a “playmate” during the trip except Graham, he was presented with “Diesel Dog” to remind him of all the diesel fuel the guys handled while repairing his fuel tank. Much reminiscing and picture taking was done and departing good-byes were said.



Introducing Diesel Dog.



Much appreciated gifts for the leaders of the pack.



A fox she didn't find!

After a very early morning departure of the Fursts and Rishells, the now Monaco Three set out to see Prince George. This city of 80,000, with an elevation of 1868, is at the confluence of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers, near the geographical center of British Columbia. In 1906, survey parties for the transcontinental Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad (later the Canadian National Railroad) passed through the area, and with the building of the railroad a great boom took place in this area. Prince George is a fast growing city and is a focal point for financial and professional services, equipment and wholesale firms, machine shops, and businesses related to the timber industry. Speaking of timber, the campground here has a local chainsaw artist that "cuts out" sculptures while you watch. It's very noisy and dusty but he certainly creates some nice things.

We visited the Prince George Railway and Forestry Museum. This museum features a dozen original railway buildings, including 2 stations. Among the 50 pieces of rolling stock are 5 locomotives, a couple of snow plows, a 100-ton steam wrecking crane and a 90-foot turntable.

The museum was an interesting industrial heritage attraction in a spacious park-like setting, where we were free to enjoy a "hands on - climb aboard" experience.



One of several locomotives to explore.



Deluxe passenger car.



Snow remover.