

Hi Guys,

Wrangell, Alaska
7/10/91

Thanks for the picture of those big red wood trees that Louisiana-Pacific Corp. would love to chop down around Trinidad Head! Ha.

We received your card on July 2nd along with wayward Christmas cards from Australia and the windward side of Beef Island that's how we know it must be close to Fourth of July in Alaska last of the Christmas cards.

We also, had a serious look at the Trinidad Ca area. It certainly is a beautiful spot. In fact, I think we called you from Crescent City last winter when we were looking over that area.

Heres some things we took into consideration when we looked over that area:

1) It's a long way to the big smoke, (San Francisco or Portland Oregon.

2) We could not see ourselves living in a timber country community. I like to look at trees, not converse continually about them. We had the local radio station on and it was all tree, lumber mill, and that political environmental heavy stuff.

3) The Samoa paper mill, (Louisiana-Pacific), can produce a very undesirable smell when a low pressure system is working its way up the coast. The smell kind of imbeds itself into carpets and lawn furniture. It's hard to get away from.

But then you can say, where is the perfect place? We have never found it.

And besides, that's just my two frigging cents . . . what the hell do I know?

Please keep us posted to your movements. I will try to call you at the end of August, just on the chance things look like a inside passage for us back down to Bellingham Wa. We have talked the boss into keeping the boat in the San Juan Islands this winter. No Mexico. We hope to get some time around Port Townsend. It sure would be great if you could join us in the fall while the boat is in the yard?

It's been very busy on our boat this spring. The boss was aboard 14 days in June. Had Chucky (Yeager) aboard a lot and Lucy did a buffet for 35 people including the Portland TRAIL BLAZER basket ball team. Then at the last moment, the boss couldn't,t make it for the Fourth of July . . . yea a real bummer. So, we enjoyed are first Fourth of July - out of harness - in three years. It was great. Had time to feed my "word processor"

So, let me tell you about our Fourth of July and a little about this area....

Twa's the forth of July week end up here in Wrangell Alaska. And very few creatures were stirring because of the fireworks display that began at 12 O'clock midnight. Even 12 O'clock wasn't dark enough to really appreciate a hour long fire works display. But to wait any longer for total darkness would have been rather dumb too, because the next total darkness isn't scheduled until sometime in early September! So, the partying and hell raising, Alaska style, just keeps going on and on and on

And every time ten or more creatures are awake, a game of chance is revived and the whole town is in the celebration mood again. It always begins with a alcohol consumption contest, then once everybody is well primed they begin such sports as rolling pin tossing, log rolling or ax throwing contests. These contests can begin any time of the day - and for the next two months, it's always day. This spree will last until the "over primed mark" is reached on the tolerance level of 50% of the participants and crowd ... and that is usually about the time Alaska begins to have dark nights again

We like the little town of Wrangell. It has been our base port in Alaska for the past three years, mainly because of its central location in relation to salmon fishing. Our primary task is to know where the best salmon fishing is as they place themselves to migrate up the rivers. When the owner calls and says he wants to go fishing, we have about two days notice to get the vessel on the spot. Sometimes that spot is over 200 miles away. Wrangell is in the center of this salmon infested area. Sometimes it's only necessary to leave the dock and start trolling for the best salmon fishing in the world.

Unless you are a avid reader of Jack London, or the Klondike gold rush era of the late 1800's, you probably never heard of the mighty Stikine River. (I love the history of this area. It's very fasinating). The Stikine was one of the access routes from the Pacific west coast to the Yukon territory and the Klondike River gold fields. It was the little wild west settlements of Skagway and Wrangell who locked themselves into murderous competition to lure the unsuspecting green horn gold rushers into there towns to "outfit" before the almost impossible 3 month trek to the gold fields. The Canadian Mounted Police were born during the gold rush invasion of the Yukon Territory. Their first job was to patrol the high altitude, frozen and God forbidding high mountain river passes to make sure every prospector entering the territory had a years supply of food and supplies.

This was a back breaking load of 1200 lbs of food staples, camping gear and mining tools that every prospector had to pack in to the high mountain lakes. In the spring when the ice melted they built makeshift boats to continue another 600 miles across the stream connected lakes. It was a man and boat destroying voyage over rapids and bone crushing ice jams to the head waters of the Yukon river. Even then, they were 400 miles from the Klondike River and the gold fields. Only about 7000 of the 20000 that made it to the Alaska river delta towns ever reached the gold fields.

Only 40 men became wealthy and famous from the Klondike gold. The rest arrived too late for the rich claims already staked and found themselves compelled to work for the few lucky and early prospectors. For a year the little camp town of Dawson became the richest town in north America. It was located in the heart of the gold fields where the Klondike and Yukon rivers met. A sizable measure of the gold changed hands in the little river towns. Instead of the prospector returning home with his hard earned booty, it was the Saloon owners and dance hall girls that returned wealthy and famous to the cities of Seattle and San Francisco after the gold rush.

While sourdoughs, card sharks, saloon keepers and dance hall girls got first grabs at the prospector's gold, it began to filter down out of the frozen Yukon to the sea port towns of Skagway and Wrangell. If the unsuspecting - lucky until now - gold rich prospector could make it that far, he had the chance to buy a ticket on the next ship back to Seattle and home. Dawson, Skagway and Wrangell were the only retreat routes from the gold fields.

Dawson was really a "gold dust exchange depot". The dust came down out of the hills in one mans "dust pouch" but found itself leaving town in anothers.

The two towns of Skagway and Wrangell differed significantly from Dawson. They were hundreds of miles south of the gold fields. They were the "sea lane" rail heads where the prospectors had been outfitted before trekking north. Being situated at the river deltas and ocean, they provided the only reliable source of transportation going out. If a successful prospector, saloon keeper or Dance hall girl made it out of the Yukon with gold dust, it was a sure bet that every means legal, and not, would be applied to relieve them of any "loose diggings" before they boarded the ship that would carry them and their gold to Seattle - almost a thousand miles south.

Skagway leaned toward the inclination of down and out thievery and murder to relieve its unwary citizens of their "dust". The ill famous Soapy Smith and his band of political rouses ruled the town and made every effort to make sure little gold dust passed beyond his town boundaries once it found its way there from the gold fields. He may well have been the first to palm the phrase, "the buck stops here".

The town of Wrangell at the head waters of the Stikine river on the other hand, found a more genteel way of producing the same effect on the unwary gold rushers. Any card shark, saloonkeeper or dance hall lady freshly arriving from Dawson via the Skagway route could easily see the unhealthy atmosphere that reigned from the Soapy Smith's kingdom.

He had his own well established dens of inequity. The life of a professional intruder was worth about the time it took to catch the first boat south.

Wrangell, on the other hand, welcomed all game sharks, saloon and dance hall professionals. The town at that time was called "Tent City". The ship's from Seattle always put into Wrangell before carrying on to Skagway 250 miles to the north. If it filled its passenger accommodations in Wrangell, it turned around and sailed south again.

Skagway was becoming so notoriously dangerous that many of the returning Yukon gold seekers would continue on south via one of the many small boats to Wrangell and wait out the return of the ship from Seattle in relative safety.

Game parlors, saloons and especially dance hall girls flourished in Wrangell. It seemed that after the long winter in the Yukon the few lucky prospectors and sourdoughs that made it out preferred the dance hall girls to card sharks and Kentucky Bourbon.

The town quickly became known for its rickidy tent structures and dance halls stocked with the most beautiful and successful girls from Dawson and the gold fields. They were soon dubbed "The shady ladies of Wrangell".

The luck for ~~many~~ returning gold rushers, once again, ran out.

Little is remembered of these wild gold rush times today. Wrangell is a quiet little town at the delta of the Stikine River which now is the largest non-damed river in north America. The name Wrangell was already famous before the gold rush. When the U.S.A. bought Alaska from Russia. It was the Russian, Baron Von Wrangell, of Sitka who signed over the territory to the U.S. Congress.

Today in Wrangell when you step off the Airplane or arrive along side the dock aboard the Alaska ferry system or one of the luxury cruise ships that port-of-call, you will be met and welcomed by any number of beautifully attired ladies in 19th century satin gowns and wide brimmed bonnets. The great, great, great granddaughters of the original "Shady Ladies" now donate their spare time to the chamber of commerce and have quite a reputation through out the state of Alaska for promoting tourism - once again - for the town of Wrangell.

Gold? And, what happened to all the gold? The klondike gold rush pulled the world out of a cold and hungry depression at the end of the 19th century, (the U.S. was still recuperating from a civil war). It fired the world into the already escalating industrial revolution. It is estimated that 250 tons of gold found its way down the trails and out through the rivers of the far north. But only a hand full of risky prospectors and sourdoughs became rich or lived out the rest of their lives in comfort. Gold was worth \$27 dollars an ounce at the time it came out of the frozen ground in 1884.

The Klondike gold rush lasted just over one year.

As I look out from the bridge deck in Wrangell harbor, a very large modern hover-craft comes along side the dock twice a day seven days a week. It makes the 80 mile passage up the Stikine river to a mining camp called "Telegraph Creek". Twice a day it brings down the gold from the Canadian mines that are periodically opened when the price of gold inflats above \$315 dollars an ounce. The Hover-craft makes the run that took the old Sourdough's three days of hard river navigating to accomplish. It makes the round trip voyage twice a day!

I'm sorry I rambled on. Hopefully you didn't know - and may be interested about the wild days of this area? Surprisingly enough, if it had not been for an ex-San Francisco oyster pirate (Jack London) and a poor English born vagabond who left a migrant job in a Fresno steam laundry to seek gold in the Yukon, (Robert Service), we would have know little of what happened in the "land of the last great gold rush".

Well ... tomorrow is Monday. Most of the "creatures" have survived the only public holiday in Alaska that can be celebrated in shirt sleeves. The men and women will go back to their shops and fishing boats - the bears will go back to the hill just above the city dump to sleep in the high sun and eat in the low sun.

Tomorrow we get underway for a 6 hour passage to a beautiful little secluded indentation in the side of a 12,000 ft. snow covered mountain with a glacier cutting its way through the valley at the head of what is named Berg Bay. We will clean up the boat and the next day around noon our helicopter will deliver 4 guests aboard. They will step aboard from the helo-pad and their eyes will be full of excitement. We will cruise the fiords for the next three days. We will salmon fish, observe the black bears and there new cubs fishing the glacial streams. We will set our crab pots for the Alaska King and Dungeness crabs. The guests will have a super time... and hopefully we will be here next summer to do it all again.

At this point we do not know what the schedule is going to be for the rest of the summer, however, a good guess would be that mid August, we will be cruising south to the Queen Charlotte Islands in B.C. Canada and fish in that area until about the first of September???

Almost forgot - we bought a bear skin in Sitka Alaska and had one of those "fire place bear rug" made out of it. Its great! Its got teeth claws and a nasty look on its face. Great for lying on the floor and watching T.V.

Let us know where you're going to be the first of September? You can send us a fax cheap after 1800 hrs? Fax 011-872-9-1502460.

We miss ya a whole lot,

Love Dave and Lucy

Dave & Lucy