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**From:** "Inside Passage via satellite" <CABianco@stratosnet.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 01, 2003 5:15 AM  
**Subject:** 2003 Inside Passage Journal #1

**Initial Departure** Welcome to the 2003 edition of the Alaska Cruise Journal of Carl & Joann Bianco. June 10<sup>th</sup> was the scheduled day of departure for our 19<sup>th</sup> summer cruise to Alaska. We awoke to news that Carl's mother, Ann Bianco, had returned to the hospital in Florida. She had been in a rehab facility recovering from surgery a month prior, and a complication had developed. We quickly phoned the first four guests of the thirteen scheduled for the summer, and put them on hold. After assessing the situation and hearing that everything was under control, we started out just a few hours late. Nevertheless, we were tense and ill at ease. Our traveling companions for this portion were our dear friends from Seattle, Eddie and Marguerite Hasson and Herb and Lucy Pruzan.

With our late departure time, we could only make it to Oak Harbor on the east side Whidbey Island for our overnight moorage. Oak Harbor is the support town for the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station, and there were yellow ribbons and signs throughout the village welcoming sailors home from duty in the Persian Gulf. We walked into town, and as we peeked through the window of Zorba's Greek restaurant, some locals indicated that the food was good. They were correct.

**Vancouver, B.C.** The next day, we transited Deception Pass at slack tide and headed north into Canada. We had a very comfortable run through the San Juan Islands and straight up the Strait of Georgia. We were blessed with a gorgeous sunny day and a some of the crew even put on bathing suits.



Crossword puzzles and books were unpacked and enjoyed during the day's journey. We kept in constant contact with Ann. One call she was feeling fine and next she wasn't. We spent the night as guests of the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club at their facility in Stanley Park, which offers both close proximity to, and beautiful views of, downtown Vancouver. We ventured into the recently gentrified industrial area just north of False Creek called Yaletown. It is located near the site of the Expo '86. We wandered around the many

shops and chose the Blue Water Cafe to have dinner.

**Decision Time.** After our phone conversation the next morning, it was clear that Ann needed us to be with her. She had experienced a troubling and degrading encounter with a couple of the low level night shift hospital attendants, and was exhausted and feeling very alone. We made the decision to head back to Seattle and catch an airplane flight to Florida. Although we were all disappointed, our guests were great in encouraging us to do what was necessary. We left Vancouver and spent the night anchored at Sucia Island. Eddie spotted a pod of Orcas along the way.

The tidal currents were in our favor on one of the biggest tides of the year, and we made excellent time traveling south. We arrived home Friday afternoon and flew out early the next morning. Once in Florida, we were finally able to convince Ann that she needed some additional professional daycare to get her through her recovery. Through a service, we were fortunate to secure the services of a lovely lady, a retired nurse, to assist with her needs. Even though she was much improved and returned home before we left Florida, it was a relief that she will have someone to give her a hand until she fully regains her strength.

**Restructuring the Cruise.** After considering many options, we decided that we would try to keep the remaining nine scheduled guests for the summer at their same time periods, but adjust their departure and return locations. Everyone was most cooperative and rescheduled their Alaska Airline flights to reflect the changes in destinations. The night before our second departure, the Hassons and Pruzans came to our home for a dinner party in honor of Carl's birthday (photo). Marguerite brought the cake she had baked for us to share in Petersburg, Alaska, and we ate it on Mercer Island. Delicious! It was a nice way to end what would have been the first portion of our trip. We look forward to having them as "boating buddies" again next year.

**Let's Try This Again.** Instead of meeting us in Petersburg, Alaska, Mary Ann and Jim Frain from St. Louis, Missouri came to Seattle on June 25<sup>th</sup>. They broke the record for the amount of luggage carried onboard the *Inside Passage* by two individuals (photo). Mary Ann has been a flight attendant for the past thirty-five years, so this was her opportunity to follow the example of many of her passengers over the years. The Frains will not run out of clean clothes!



The next morning, we had an early start and topped off our fuel tanks before going through the smaller of the two Corps of Engineer's boat locks. The beautiful weather we enjoyed going through the Ship Canal disappeared into pea soup fog that poured in when the gates opened on the locks (photo). Our radar was put to good use heading up Puget Sound. We learned that gale winds were predicted for the Strait of Juan de Fuca, so our plans to go to Victoria were delayed. We settled on the more protected route to La Conner for the night. We toured the town and had a wonderful gourmet dinner at Kerstin's.

**Victoria, B.C.** The next day, we backtracked through the Swinomish Slough and out through Deception Pass once again. The fog continued thick for the entire route to Victoria. Thus far, the Frains had seen very little of the beautiful Pacific Northwest. Enroute, tidal rips caused significant waves, so a few ReliefBands were put into action. ReliefBands are a high tech method of preventing seasickness.

Entering the Inner Harbor at Victoria is always a thrill. The activity level in this harbor keeps increasing with float planes landing and taking off, and numerous tour vessels passing along side. The cruise ship, *The World*, was in port. It is actually a floating condominium, one of the first we have seen. Mary Ann and Jim explored the town, visited the B. C. Provincial Museum, and stopped for martinis at the Empress Hotel. We went to our favorite haunts to see what was new. By the time we finished our evening meal and walked over to the Quay to watch the street entertainers, there were four cruise ships in port. After their active day of touring, we enticed Mary Ann and Jim to relax in the hot tub.



**Nanaimo, B.C.** Perfectly calm and hot sunny conditions brought us back up onto the fly bridge for the passage to Nanaimo. The Frains were instructed on all of the safety equipment and practiced donning the survival suits. We calculated that over the years we have given safety instructions to passengers about 35,000 fewer times than Mary Ann!

The *Inside Passage* hasn't visited Nanaimo since 1992 and the town and waterfront have grown substantially. We tied up to large floating pier in front of a couple of mega yachts (photo). The Bastion, a fortress built in 1849 by the Hudson Bay Company, is the primary

historical attraction. At the head of the marina, there is now a casino, a shopping mall, a performing arts theatre, a museum, and a beautiful condominium development with the tallest building on Vancouver Island. There is also a lovely walking path along the shoreline, which we enjoyed while visiting with a local couple, Cathy and Hans. They described their hometown with the enthusiasm we would have expected from a paid representative of a the Chamber of Commerce. We now know everything anyone would want to know about Nanaimo. For dinner, Jim grilled some salmon with his favorite sauce, and we dined on the top deck in the warm sun. The temperature reached into the 90's that day, which is not the norm for this northerly latitude.

We are only three days out of Seattle, but a week's worth of our summer cruise has passed. Our Journals have begun later than normal, but with continued good reports from our daily calls to Carl's mom, we are encouraged that we will be able to continue them weekly over the summer. If is not convenient to receive these Journals, please send an e-mail with the word "unsubscribe" to [Boat@BiancoProperties.com](mailto:Boat@BiancoProperties.com), and we will remove your name from our list.

