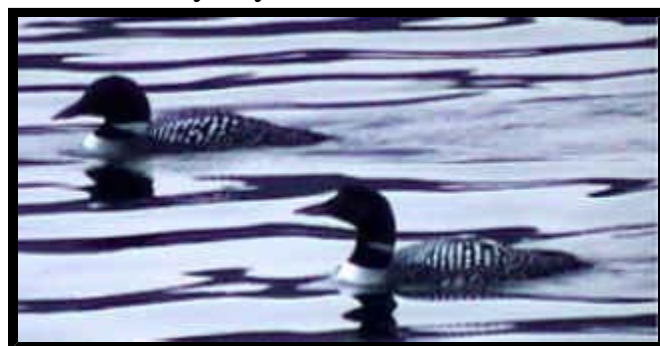


---

**From:** "Carl A. Bianco" <CABianco@BiancoProperties.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 21, 2004 9:01 PM  
**Subject:** 2004 Inside Passage Journal #4

**Skagway** We arrived in Skagway after a pleasant cruise up Lynn Canal, a beautiful 60 mile long fiord. The most northern of the Southeast Alaska towns, Skagway was a boomtown at the end of the 19th Century and the main gateway to the Klondike gold rush. Skagway has always been a delightful destination for us. We looked forward to reconnecting with Dennis and Nancy Corrington who have business interests in Skagway, and would be accompanying us for the remaining week of our trip. We arranged to meet them for dinner, and introduce them to Lynn and Jorge. It had been twelve years since the Corringtons had cruised with us on the *Inside Passage* and coincidentally, Lynn's sister Sheila was a crew member on that earlier trip. The next day



we joined the many visitors from the five cruise ships for a look around town, and Lynn and Jorge took a long hike up to Lower Dewey Lake in the surrounding mountains.

**Lynn Canal** Because of major forest fires inland to the north, our departure from Skagway was on the smoggiest day we have

experienced in Alaska. The natural beauty of Lynn Canal was greatly reduced because the glacier ringed mountain peaks were barely visible. The first day on this leg of the trip was one of catching up, both on sleep and on what has been happening in our lives. We observed a pod of eight Orcas meandering up the Lynn Canal (**see photo**). Tied to the small dock that evening in Swanson Harbor, we were able to monitor two Common Loons close to the boat (**see photo**). They were unconcerned by our presence, and we watched one swallow a fish.

**Hoonah** Primarily a Tlingit village which has been occupied since prehistory, Hoonah had changed for the better in the fifteen years since our last visit. We took a short walk around the town and ate halibut pizza for lunch in a small diner. Norwegian



Cruise Lines had recently established a port of call at a refurbished previously abandoned cannery two miles from the town. The facility, formerly the Hoonah Cannery, is now called Icy Strait Point and is a museum and shopping mall for cruise ship passengers. We visited with some of the local youngsters who were dressed in native ceremonial regalia to perform for the tourists (**see photo**). We all took numerous photos of the town and



eagles waiting to feed off of the scraps from the fish processing plant (**see photo**). Traveling about 20 miles further for the evening, we shared the harbor with numerous commercial fishing vessels and several cavorting eagles.

**Marble Caves** Our intermediate stop the next day was Basket Bay in Chatham Strait. Carl had read that this anchorage had interesting marble caves. Entering the bay, we could not see any caves along the shore, and almost decided to proceed on. The final decision was to go ashore and look around, and it was fortunate we did, as an exciting surprise awaited us. As we turned the corner of the stream feeding the bay, a large grotto extended all the way across the stream. Passing through it we found beautiful stone formations that opened to an idyllic wilderness setting (**see photo**). The water seemed to come from an

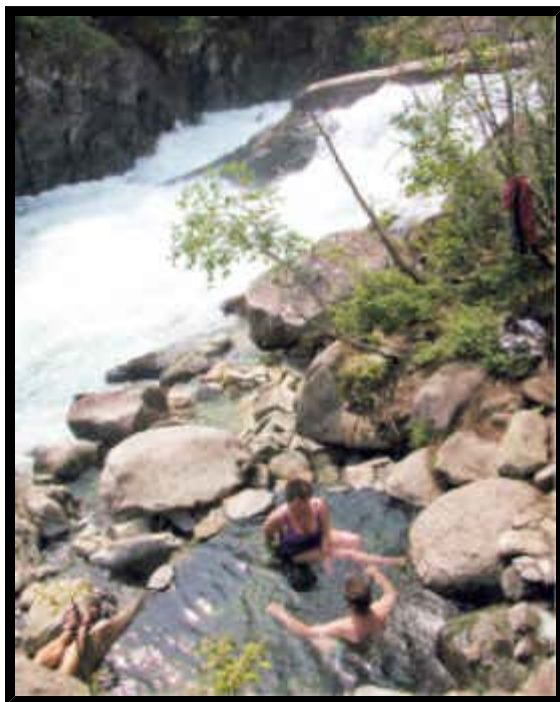
underground spring. Overnight we stayed in Ell Cove, a small bay with steep mountains almost fully enclosing the intimate anchorage. The shrieking calls of bald eagles in the nearby trees were our entertainment at dinner on the upper deck. Later, Dennis and Carl explored the immediate area including the nearby fish hatchery and several waterfalls while the rest of the group settled in to watch a DVD.

**Warm Springs Bay** After a late start, we headed south on Chatham Strait a short distance to Baranof Hot Springs in Warm Springs Bay. The springs were originally developed around 1910 as a health resort but had been out of commercial use for many years. Baranof's scenic feature is the huge waterfall that was used to power a sawmill in the early 1900s. We hiked up to the freshwater lake and picked numerous blueberries along the way. In the tiny store that now has a computer with an Internet connection, we learned that Baranof currently has only four permanent residents, the young clerk being one. We enjoyed a soak in the natural hot springs with the waterfall





roaring by our side (**see photo**). The temperatures in the various pools ranged from over 118 degrees to 50 degrees near the waterfall where the turquoise colored snow melt mixed with water from the hot spring. Heading out from Warm Springs Bay, we encountered steep head-on waves piling up against a strong incoming tide in Chatham Strait. After a short time in this undesirable combination of wind and tide, we returned to a cove in Warm Springs Bay for the night.



**Sea Lion Rescue** Chatham Strait was like glass the next day during the fifty mile journey south to Big Port Walter. On the rocky shoreline at the entrance, we spotted a massive lone Stellar sea lion bull with a fishing flasher hanging out of his mouth (**see photo**). The 8" silver metal flasher is typically used by fisherman above their hooks to attract salmon, but unfortunately, sea lions often steal the freshly caught fish, hook-line-and flasher. Carl and Dennis concocted a rescue effort for their own version of *Free Willy*, but calmer heads prevailed. The two adventurers were convinced by the rest of the crew to check with the local authorities before making any attempt. We contacted the nearby NOAA fish research station, and the researchers suggested that we should not worry, commenting that this was a common occurrence, and that the flasher would eventually

break off.

**Big Port Walter** With the potential rescue effort abandoned, we motored back through a picturesque inlet to the head of Big Port Walter. Besides the 500' high waterfall, there are the rusted massive remains of the last herring reduction plant in SE Alaska. It closed down in 1965 and burned numerous years later (**see photo**). We spent the sunny evening kayaking amongst the ruins with thousands of sea nettle jelly fish floating around us.

**Redfish Bay** The water remained calm for us as we came around Cape Ommaney on the southern tip of Baranof Island and out into the Pacific Ocean. We observed over twenty humpback whales around us, and they seemed to be primarily focused on feeding. Sea Lion Rocks sitting off of the coast were true to the name and full of numerous resting sea lions who sat high above the incoming swells. It was a short travel day for us as we were not that far



from Sitka, our final destination. We kayaked just outside the ocean swells in Ten Fathom Anchorage of Redfish Bay. The bonus to this anchorage was seeing colorful sea stars along the shore at the low tide. As we departed the following morning, a small bear was sighted on a large rocky outcropping. Having promised Jorge that he would see a bear, Dennis had placed a small stuffed bear on the rock the prior afternoon when we were kayaking. He had been planning this event for almost a week. Our final night out, there was another bear sighting, but this ferocious bear, powered by two “C” batteries, was walking across the pilothouse carpet. Well, maybe next time...



**In Conclusion** Thus, we completed our 20th summer cruise to Alaska during the same year we completed cruising 72,000 miles, or three circumnavigations of the earth, all without leaving the waters of the Pacific Northwest. As we finish this journal looking out the pilothouse window in our final anchorage at the wispy low-lying clouds drifting through the hemlock and Sitka spruce forests that cover the mountainside, we know that in several months we will begin planning our next voyage.

**Postscript - We May Be Published** Don Douglas helped us tie up to the dock in Sitka. Don, with his wife Reanne, publish the cruising guidebooks that assist us in finding good anchorages throughout the Pacific Northwest. We had never met them, but had heard that they were working on a volume for the Prince William Sound

to Kodiak area that we have cruised five times. We asked the status of the project since we hope to return to this area again. In the course of the discussion, they asked if we had any photos they might use. We showed them our photo albums which include printouts of previous journals. They borrowed the albums for the evening, and the next day asked if they could use excerpts from our journals plus many of our photos in their new guidebook. It will be interesting to see how much actually gets published.