

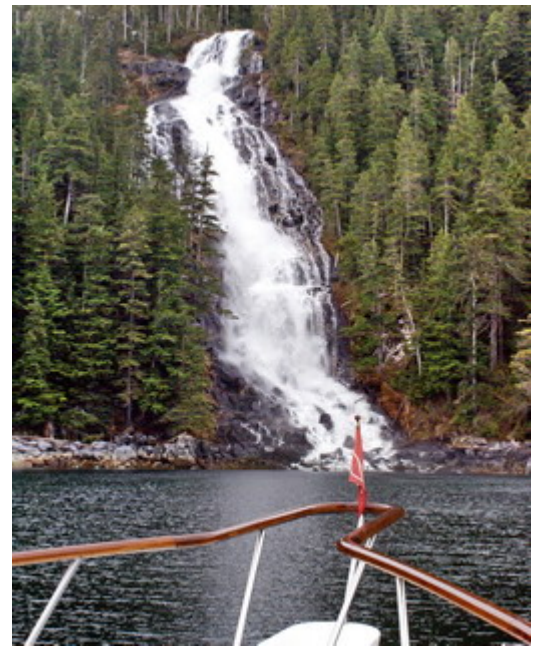
## 2007 Alaska Cruise Journal # 1



**The Cruise Begins** Several aspects of this year's voyage will be very different, one is that this will be the first time in our twenty-three annual cruises that we will spend no time in British Columbia. Last summer we spent over half our cruise in B. C., and our most northern destination was Petersburg, Alaska. This summer we will begin and end our cruise in Petersburg, famous for its Norwegian heritage and also known as the halibut capital of Alaska. Captain Lance, completing his 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> deliveries for us, is captaining the *Inside Passage* both to and from Mercer Island. This means two crossings of the Gulf of Alaska for us, another first. A week before departure, our 2007 plans took an unexpected twist when our crew for our first leg had to cancel because of a health emergency. It was too late to find replacements. Having made seven previous Gulf crossings, we were confident we would do fine.

**Our First Day** We settled in familiarizing ourselves with new equipment, remembering where we had stored all our gear and shopping for fresh provisions. This is the earliest we have cruised in Alaska, and we noted

that the greater amount of snow covering the mountain peaks only added to the area's natural beauty (see photo above). We also observed that very little fishing had begun and many of the larger commercial boats were still getting prepped for the season. There were only a few whales sighted in Frederick Sound, but we were excited to see several sea otters in these inside waters. They must be increasing in number as we have rarely seen these furry animals except on the outer coast. Another plus was observing many more Steller sea lions, especially since their population has been considered threatened in recent years. We anchored for dinner in front of the 350' high Kasnkyu Falls (see photo at right) along Chatham Strait, and then moved a short distance to a sheltered cove to anchor for the night.



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**Tenakee Springs** It had been fourteen years since we had visited Tenakee Springs, a quaint Alaskan village of approximately 200. Tenakee has only one main gravel road along the shore. The town was founded around a natural hot spring which is enclosed in a concrete building that serves as the community bath house. The bath house has regular but separate hours for men and women, but locals have told us (unofficially) that anything goes after 11 PM. The general store, Snyder's Mercantile (see photo), has been in



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operation since 1899. The proprietress told us that many improvements have been made in town since our last visit. She proudly told us that some homes now have wells instead of relying on creek water, and further



that there are only a few remaining out-houses which sit uniquely on stilts over the tide line (see photo). The residents clearly have their own views on many subjects, and we saw several signs with various political viewpoints (see photo below). After visiting the town, we hiked to the swinging bridge over the Indian River along a trail through a rainforest with many large Sitka spruce.

**Hanus Reef** In the morning we watched three river otters on the Tenakee breakwater feeding on

something unidentifiable. Enroute we made a short deviation to visit the Hanus Reef which sits alone in the middle of Icy Straits, a minimum of 3 1/2 miles from the nearest shoreline. On May 14<sup>th</sup> of this year, the 300' mini cruise ship *Empress of the North* with 250 passengers onboard ran aground on Hanus Reef around 1:00 AM in calm seas. Although at the time the reef was submerged, there is a large day beacon identifying the hazard (see photo below), which is on all the nautical charts and which our radar picked up over six miles away. It is the only target in that large open body of water and somehow the *Empress* managed to hit it. Once



completed, it will be interesting to read the Coast Guard report on the accident.



**Gustavus** On past voyages, we have always by-passed Gustavus, which has little appeal other than serving as the gateway and airport serving Glacier Bay National Park. We chose to visit this time since conditions on the Gulf of Alaska were unfriendly giving us extra time for exploring. The quarter-mile access pier (see photo on next page) gives way to a one mile flat road into 'town', which mostly consisted of several fishing lodges and one all purpose retail store. Near the end of the long pier, we encountered a mature bald eagle, who appeared to be eyeing some prey in the shallows below. He was reluctant to move which allowed us to approach for a close-up view (see photo on next page). These are magnificent birds and it is easy to understand why we Americans take such pride in our national bird. To our amazement, we passed a 9-hole golf course along the road that had its share of rough but was actually decent considering its location. We spent the night in Inian Cove, near the entrance to

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Cross Sound, our gateway to the Gulf of Alaska. Large tides and currents flow past this inlet, and there were numerous sea otters, eagles, sea lions, and sea birds feasting on the marine life.

### Lituya & on to Yakutat

The next morning was one of relaxation and preparation, as we could not depart until noon. Lituya Bay, our destination, has a bar at the entrance that can only be crossed at high slack tide. We hit it perfectly at 6:31 PM, ate dinner, watched a movie, and went to bed. In the morning we caught the next high slack at 6:22 AM, and were back out on the



Gulf for the ten hour run to Yakutat. Seas were calm (relatively speaking) and we worked on our Journal which we are sending out upon our arrival in Yakutat.

