

2007 Alaska Cruise Journal # 6

**Tonsina Bay** (*Lat: 59°18'383 N; Lon: 150°56.661' W*) Because of the weather and the presence of so many bears on the Alaska Peninsula, we had only been onshore once in the past week since leaving Kodiak. We tried to



lower the shore boat to explore the sand and gravel beach just inside Gore Point but the swells were too large. With the jet boat swinging hard with the roll of each wave, we concluded we might not be able to lower the shore boat safely. As an alternative, we anchored a few miles away in Tonsina Bay and explored the beach outside the bay (**photo**). Tonsina Bay is landlocked by snow

capped peaks on three sides and protected by an island on the fourth. We were aware that a sizable storm front was approaching and realized that we would be lying over for at least two nights in Tonsina Bay. The next day, between wind gusts over 40 mph that wrapped around the island and rocked the boat, we were approached by two kayaks from a small vessel also waiting out the storm. Coy, a local commercial fisherman from Anchorage and his ten-year-old son Gus, came to visit. They asked if we had the latest weather report. We enjoyed a nice conversation together and learned a lot more about commercial fishing from an expert. He and his brother fish the Gulf of Alaska setting 1200 hooks along the bottom on a line at depths over 2000'. Their family, which also included wife, daughter and dog, was headed to Homer for a family vacation. Visits of this type are very interesting and informative on the life of Alaska residents the ten months of the year when we are elsewhere.



**12 Foot Swells** The sea conditions improved marginally but enough for us to continue our route along the Kenai Peninsula. We cruised

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through McCarthy Fjord and out McArthur Pass into the Gulf where we encountered some swells we judged to be in excess of 12'. These were the largest waves we have encountered in some time. The *Inside Passage*, as well as her crew, easily handled the conditions and all stomachs survived intact. We eventually anchored in scenic Thunder Bay. The high mountains surrounding this lovely bay have numerous waterfalls that reverberate the sounds of the falling water. The special treat at the back of the inlet was a thick snow/ice field (photo on previous page) with an ice cave that we could reach by foot. It was fun to touch the hard icy surface and see the scalloped patterns created by the rain and wind.



**Refuel in Seward** Our original plan was to head on into Valdez but with the seas remaining lumpier than we wanted, we turned into Resurrection Bay and traveled instead to Seward. Helene and Alan walked into town; this was their first chance to see a real town in a week. Cars...people...stores. The adjustment took at least sixty seconds! The following morning we refueled. We are now set until we end our summer's cruise in Petersburg. Not only does this facility have a fast flowing fuel pump and nozzle, they also offer free popcorn to their customers. Popcorn for breakfast anyone?



**Back to PWS** At 60 degrees north latitude, Prince William Sound is described as America's most northerly protected cruising grounds. Sheltered from the often stormy Gulf of Alaska by barrier islands and enclosed by high mountains and glaciers, the varied habitats support diverse populations of birds, marine and land mammals and fish (eagle photo). Our first anchorage was an indentation just off fast flowing Bainbridge Passage. Our current crew typically grabbed their fishing rods at each anchorage. What follows is the description of the after dinner entertainment.

**Helene's Report** "We were anchored for the evening and Alan thought he would try to catch some salmon. I decided to bottom fish for halibut (photo), so I added some left over barbeque

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chicken coated with herring oil to my lure. I dropped my line and after about ten minutes I felt a slight tug. My rod started to bend more and more and I knew I had something big. Alan and Carl thought I was snagged because nothing had happened for a few minutes but then the monster surfaced. We harpooned, landed, and measured it at 52 ½ inches weighing in at 70 pounds. This is a new boat record in the women’s division and is overall the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest fish in the history of the *Inside Passage*. Joann showed me how to clean my catch and prepare it for dinner and the freezer. A 70 lb. halibut produces 52 lbs. of finished halibut steaks. The crew now calls me Helene the Halibut Hooker. I am now hooked on fishing.”

**Chenega Glacier** (Lat: 60°21.4'N; Lon: 147°53.4'W)

The next morning mirror-like water filled our anchorage at our little inlet off Bainbridge Passage. The contrasts of both sea and weather conditions from day to day never ceases to amaze us. We benefited from a favorable tidal current which gave us three extra knots of speed as we motored through this narrow passage into the much larger western region of Prince William Sound. Our destination was the Chenega Glacier. The Chenega is a tidewater glacier which is just a small portion of the giant Sargent Icefield that covers the eastern side of the Kenai Peninsula. Carl had no trouble easing near to the face of this

sizable glacier. Hundreds of harbor seals were dotted on the icebergs floating in front of the glacier. From a distance, they appeared to be just miniature black specks, but as we approached we realized there were hundreds (**photos above and below**). If we approached too close to the seals, they slid off their slabs of ice and disappeared under the icy water. After eating lunch in this magnificent setting, the sun broke through and enhanced the dark blue sections of the glacier. The oldest and most compressed ice of the glacier may be hundreds of years old. We hovered in front of the glacier long enough to witness a few major calvings, the process by which masses of ice as large as office buildings break away from the face of the glacier and splash into the salt water.



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**Meeting Lauren** The highlight of our return to Cordova was meeting Lauren Padawer. The Spetner's know Lauren's father in St. Louis, and he suggested they look up his daughter who has found a home for herself in Alaska. Lauren is 29, a trained biologist, and currently supports herself mending gill fishing nets and running the Alaska Glacial Mud Co. Her company, which converts the extremely fine glacial powder from the banks of the Copper River into a facial masque. Check out her website at [www.alaskaglacialmud.com](http://www.alaskaglacialmud.com). Lauren, and her well behaved dog Bear, drove us the fifty miles out to the Childs Glacier which calves its ice into the fast flowing Copper River. On a warm sunny day, we ate lunch on the shore as we watched from across the river as a very active glacier dumped tons of ice into the river (**photo**). Our return trip included a full tour of town including the "mud room" (in the lower garage level of her home) where her product receives its initial processing. Afterwards, we all gathered for a salmon dinner on the upper deck of the *Inside Passage*. After dinner, we traded Lauren several pounds of fresh frozen halibut for an equivalent amount of king salmon. Now we have a friend to visit the next time we return to Cordova.

