

**2010 Alaska Cruise Journal # 6**



**A Very Full Load**

Cruising north on Chatham Strait, we passed a tugboat towing a heavily loaded barge stacked six stories high with shipping containers and building materials that were then topped with fuel trucks and fishing vessels (photo).

Carl suspected that this load might be intended for a village in the high Arctic where the ice only clears for once a year

deliveries in August. He hailed the tug over our VHF radio and asked where they were headed. Barrow, Alaska was the response. Life requires a little more planning when a once a year delivery schedule replaces the periodic trip to Costco or Home Depot.

**Hot and Cold** Warm Springs Bay, further north on Baranof Island, is often crowded with both commercial fishing vessels and pleasure boats, but we arrived to find available moorage of just barely sufficient size. Shortly after squeezing into position and tying up, the vessels in front of and behind the *Inside Passage* departed and we were left tied to a mostly empty dock.

The bay has a massive one-hundred foot high waterfall that once provided hydro-power for the residents of the community of Baranof, now with less than ten homes which are occupied primarily by weekend and summer residents. Equally impressive is the natural hot springs, an easy half-mile walk from the public float. We walked up the new boardwalk to take advantage of the three hot pools of varying temperatures and Fred and Carla posed with the cold water of the roaring river in the background (photo).





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**Skagway** Lynn Canal extends from the junction of Chatham Strait and Icy Straits 84 miles north to Skagway. It was a very blustery and cool visit to Skagway with only one small 500 passenger cruise ship at port.

It is not uncommon for Skagway to have four large ships and as many as 10,000 visitors in a day in this town where only slightly more than 400 residents spend the winter.

On both nights of our visit, we had dinner

with our long-time friends, Dennis and Nancy Corrington. This year they have four tourist oriented stores in operation, the latest being the only Sarah Palin store in Alaska. Among the items for sale is an almost authentic-looking 'hockey mom' trophy. There is actually a real connection between Skagway and the Palin family who were residents for five of her early years. Dennis knows Palin's father from the days when her father was the school principal in Skagway, and Dennis was the school principal in Nome, Alaska.

The rhubarb patch in the garden on the side of Corrington's Alaskan Ivory Store and Museum enticed some of our group to consider baking a rhubarb and strawberry pie. With permission given, Herb harvested the essential crop (**photo above**).

**Lower Reid Falls** A short forest trail behind the Gold Rush Cemetery leads to Lower Reid Falls, named for Frank Reid the local town hero who was killed by notorious con man Soapy Smith. Carl and Fred climbed up to get a closer look and feel the cool breeze the falls created (**photo at right**). The cemetery dates





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from 1898 when Skagway had a population of over 20,000 for a few short years during the great gold rush to the Yukon.

**Chilkoot Trail** We took the Dyea Road to explore the Taiya River valley where the alternative gold rush town site of Dyea was once located. At the time it was even more populated than Skagway but presently almost no visible signs remain, only faded photographs in museums and history books.

The Chilkoot Trail is the 33 mile long hike that follows the route that thousands of prospectors traversed during the Klondike Gold Rush. Our hardy hikers ventured up the steep trail for a mile or two so they could say they hiked the Chilkoot Trail (**photo**). The only crew member who has actually completed the hike is Carla, completing the trek many years ago during a summer break from college.

point of the summer's cruise, we retraced our route down the picturesque fjord, but the experience was under totally opposite conditions than a few days prior. The sun was blazing, the seas were mild, and the glaciers and mountain peaks glistened above. The Alaskan state ferry *Columbia* passed us on her way north to Skagway (**photo**). The crew spent most of three successive days on the fly bridge enjoying the weather, some even donning shorts, tee shirts, or swim suits.

**Harbor Island** Leaving Lynn Canal, we traveled south in Stephens Passage anchoring near Harbor Island in Holkam Bay. This special spot is located at the joint entrance of the popular glacier bound inlets Tracy Arm

**Lynn Canal** From the most northern





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and Endicott Arm fjords. It is common to see large icebergs anchored aground nearby with the Sumdum Glacier visible on the mainland mountainside and all are a part of the Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness Area.

There were at least ten seals sighted spying us nearby as we paddled our kayaks around in the active currents discharging from the fjords and flowing through this nutrient rich area. All preparations for dinner were quickly suspended when a pod of orcas passed right by the *Inside Passage* **(photo)**. The meal that night on the upper deck was accompanied by a freshly baked rhubarb and strawberry pie prepared by pastry chef Fred with assistance from Lucy.

We asked our crew to help prepare the final paragraph and this is Fred's composition: "*And so the Inside Passage has completed its annual northern journey. After spawning thousands of new images and memories it returns to its fresh water base, awaiting the call for next season's migration northward.*"

