

2012 Alaska Cruise Journal # 4



Another Memorable 4th

Even though we relished our time in the more remote areas, we chose to return to the big city for the 4th of July. With typically the best holiday weather of the year, the 4th is Alaska's most anticipated holiday of the year and the time when former residents return for visits.

In Ketchikan (55 20.614 N, 131 39.136 W), like most Alaskan towns, this summer festival includes a parade, games for the children, food booths and fireworks.

Ketchikan had two parades, the first for smaller costumed

children (**photo**) and then later the longer official one with fire trucks, colorful characters, and large groups marching or riding on flatbed trucks. Floats included the Ketchikan High School reunions of the classes of 1962, 1982, 1992, and 2002 plus one for the class of 2013 (**photo**).

There was an impressively large contingent of native residents ranging in age from young to old dressed in their tribal regalia beating their drums and dancing (**additional photos on last page**). Our boat was moored at City Dock downtown. We had front row seats from our upper deck for the fireworks show originating from a barge in the middle of the channel. At 11:00 PM but with overcast conditions, the sky was dark enough for a great fireworks display and the temperature was a pleasant 60 degrees. The length and quality



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of the fireworks show rivaled what we have seen in major metropolitan communities.

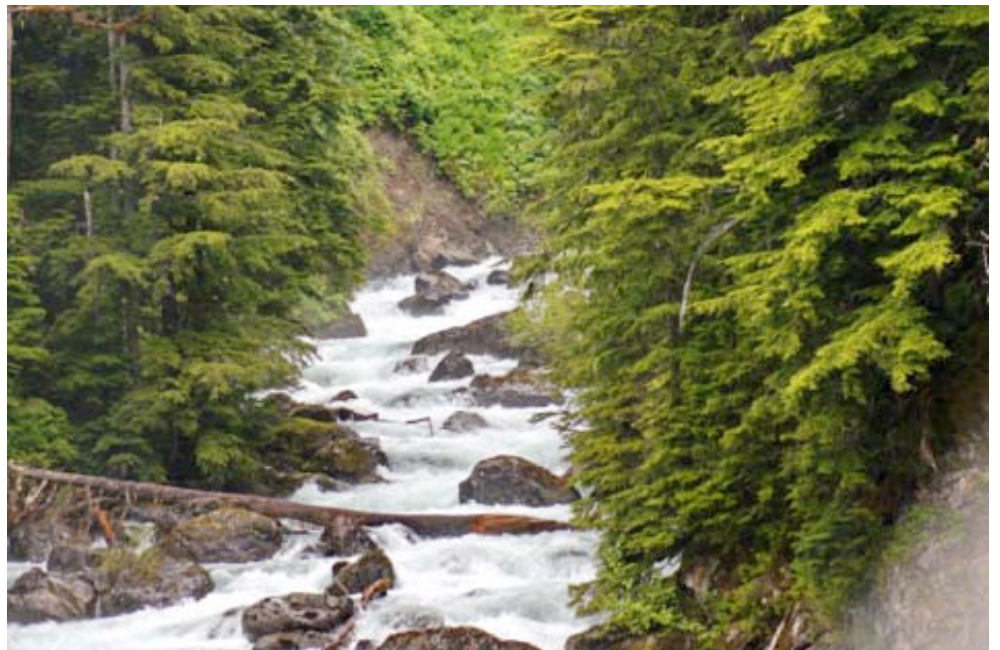
Cruising Along The Border The Pearse and Portland Canals separate Canada and the U.S. for 90 miles as the deep water fjord runs far back into the mountainous interior. For a day and a half we traveled with the U. S. on one side and Canada on the other. Because of the distance and the lack of shallow water anchorages enroute, very few cruising boats make this passage.

An Unusual Destination The two towns of Stewart, B. C. and Hyder, USA are at the head of the inlet. As a destination, Hyder is a rarity in that it has an open border with no U.S. customs officials. In contrast, Stewart maintains a 24 hour border crossing. This unusual situation exists because Hyder, with its population of around 40, serves primarily as a tax free source of goods, primarily liquor, for Canadians.

We moored at the substandard Stewart public dock (**photo**) among a very eclectic mixture of vessels (55 55.215 N, 130 00.506 W). Carl called Canadian Customs to clear our vessel. The agent in Victoria had not even heard of Stewart. After some research, he ultimately assured us that we were still in the U.S. although our maps showed otherwise.

We suspect that since we did not present a great risk to Canada and because they get so few foreign boats at Stewart, the agent did not want to get involved with the bureaucratic process that would be required.

For our own comfort, we walked over to Hyder to see mostly ghost town remains



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and then walked back into Stewart passing through Canadian customs. We only had to show our passports; no questions were asked.

An Old Mining Town The larger town of Stewart, British Columbia sits just two miles from Hyder and boasts a population of around 1,000. A significant contributor to their survival through the years has been that both of these small communities are connected by road to the interior of Canada.

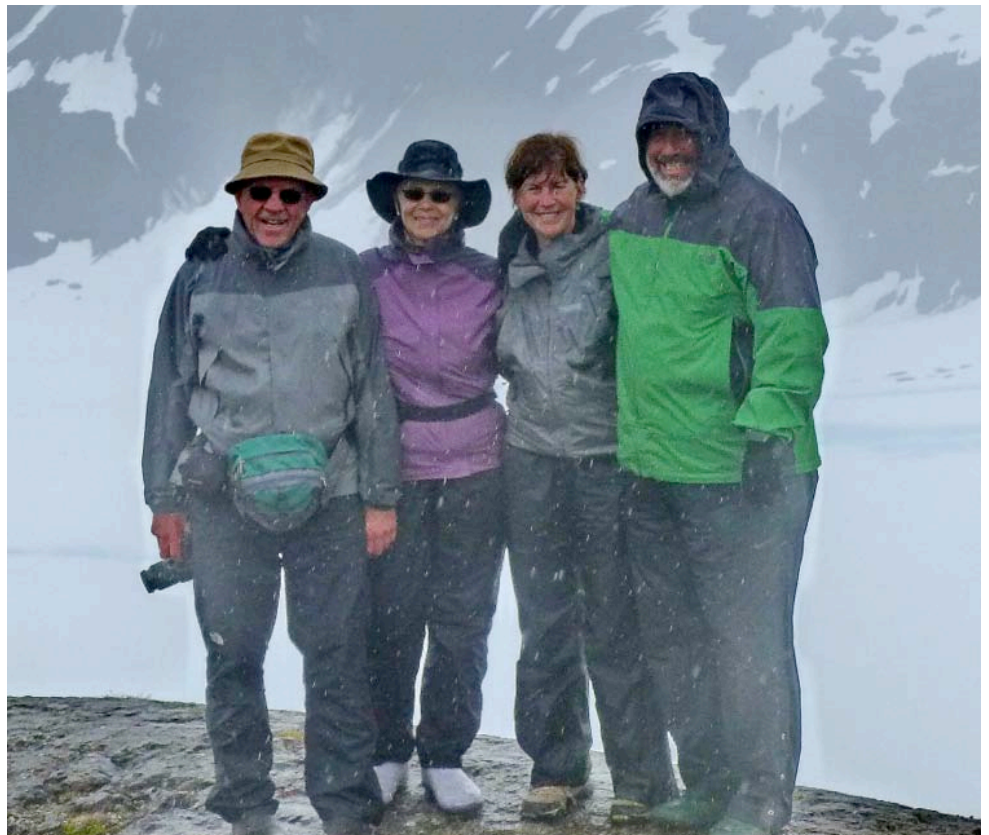
Founded in 1898, Stewart was once was a major shipping port for gold and silver mines. By 1910, there were close to 10,000 residents. Since then it

has been mostly downhill. Stewart calls itself the “Movie Capital of the North” because it has been the location for six motion pictures. One of the most recent was 2002’s *Insomnia* with Robin Williams and Al Pacino.

The morning after our arrival, we walked into town and found a combination video store, snack shop, billiard parlor, children's clothing retailer, Sear's catalog store, and Hertz car rental.

In a remote location like Stewart, you scramble to earn a living anyway you can and running numerous businesses under one roof is one way of doing it.

Salmon Glacier In our Hertz rental, we headed back through Hyder. About fifteen miles up an old mining road there is a reactivated gold mine, a hydroelectric power project under construction, and numerous beautiful cascades (photo on previous page).



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The Salmon Glacier (**photo on previous page**) is one of the few glaciers accessible by road in the region and the fifth largest in Canada. The elevation gain on this route took us up into the ever changing cloud cover which intermittently obscured our view (**photo on previous page**).

The summit was still snow covered with miniature alpine trees and numerous waterfalls. A lone marmot sitting on the edge of the mountain (**photo**) and a weasel with a mouse in its mouth were the only creatures we saw.

Hidden Inlet On our return trip down Portland and Pearse Canals with Canada now on our port side and the U.S. to starboard, we caught good tidal conditions for a visit into Hidden Inlet (55 01.124 N, 130 18.936 W). The entrance is a narrow but short and straight channel whose width of 150' is only a little over twice the length of the *Inside Passage*. The currents with swirling eddies alongside propelled us into

the inlet at almost 17 knots, almost twice our normal cruising speed.

Because of the remote location and the tidal forces, very few boats visit this peaceful anchorage which is located on the back side of Misty Fjords National Monument. As with the more frequently visited sections facing Behm Canal, it has towering massive granite walls and cliffs with many waterfalls of various sizes.

Under calm conditions with only the sounds of cascading water and the occasional screech of an eagle, we paddled kayaks through the marsh grasses at high tide. We had numerous sightings of black bears wandering the shoreline (**photo**), which for Barry and Suzanne was their closest ever encounter with these beautiful beasts in their natural setting.



Additional 4th of July Photos

