

## 2012 Alaska Cruise Journal # 5



**An Unusual Ending** Reviewing our travel logs, we were surprised to find that 2012 is the first summer in 21 years that we will be ending our summer cruise by personally returning the *Inside Passage* to Mercer Island.

After the initial years the southbound trip had become a psychological drag on our spirits resulting in a pattern where we had others return the boat. Attitudes can and do change with time and this year we were looking forward to the voyage home which would include a three day weekend in Vancouver, B.C.

**New Crew Arrives** We used our shore boat to cross the channel to the Ketchikan airport to pick up our final crewmates of the summer. Bill Faia from both Maui and Montana and his friend Joan Prime of Mill Valley, California joined us for the last leg of this summer's cruise (photo).

**The Same Yet Changed** Bullhead Cove ( [55.03.282 N, 130.59.088 W](#) ) is a nearby destination and an easy half-day travel from Ketchikan. With the delay needed to replenish the diesel fuel consumed since our arrival this summer, it made a good anchorage for our first night.

One of our favorites for its convenient location, it also offers an interesting island to explore. Loaded with varied rock formations and fascinating forms of inter-tidal marine life, a circumnavigation by foot of the small island has always been worthwhile.

The one constant in Alaska is change, and if it hadn't been for a low tide, we would not have been able to complete the walk. A massive winter storm had blown down almost the entire center section of the island.

We soon found that many of the large trees in the center of the island had been uprooted by what must have been a huge storm. The fallen trees extending out over the shoreline made it a challenge to pass over, under, and around. Joan and Joann, who couldn't resist some of the unusual findings, collected a few special shells and rocks as souvenirs (photo).



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**Paddle Boarding** We usually mix our anchorages varying from untried locations to favorites we have visited periodically over the years. One of those favorites is Lowe Inlet ([53 33.579 N, 129 34.131 W](#)) which is off Grenville Channel. Gale force winds had been predicted by the Canadian meteorological services but it was calm at our arrival.

Under bright and sunny skies, we launched the paddle board to check out the falls that appear to rise and fall with the change in tides.

The water in front of the falls was teeming with pink salmon waiting for the extreme high tides of the month when they climb the falls in one mass group and continue on to their spawning grounds.

The circumstances were perfect for Carl and Bill to do some paddle-boarding with the magnificent waterfall as a backdrop (**photos**).

The guys are regular paddle-board surfers at Launiopoko on Maui. The ladies nervously watched as they ventured around the bay wondering what would happen if they fell into the 55 degree water. They both looked like experienced pros and had a great time using their Maui paddle surfing skills in Alaska.

The predicted winds arrived with gusts to up to 35 knots which ended the day's paddling activities.



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**A Very Cold Shower**

Further south in Graham Reach, a fjord along the east side of Princess Royal Island; we visited a waterfall that Carl has named and marked on our electronic charts as “Boat Wash Falls” (53 13.246 N; 128 48.1 W).

This is a setting where a wide and often intense waterfall is easily approached because the water is over 300 feet deep along the shoreline. When told about our many experiences at this spot, Bill volunteered to stand on the bow sprit and experience the frigid falls first hand.

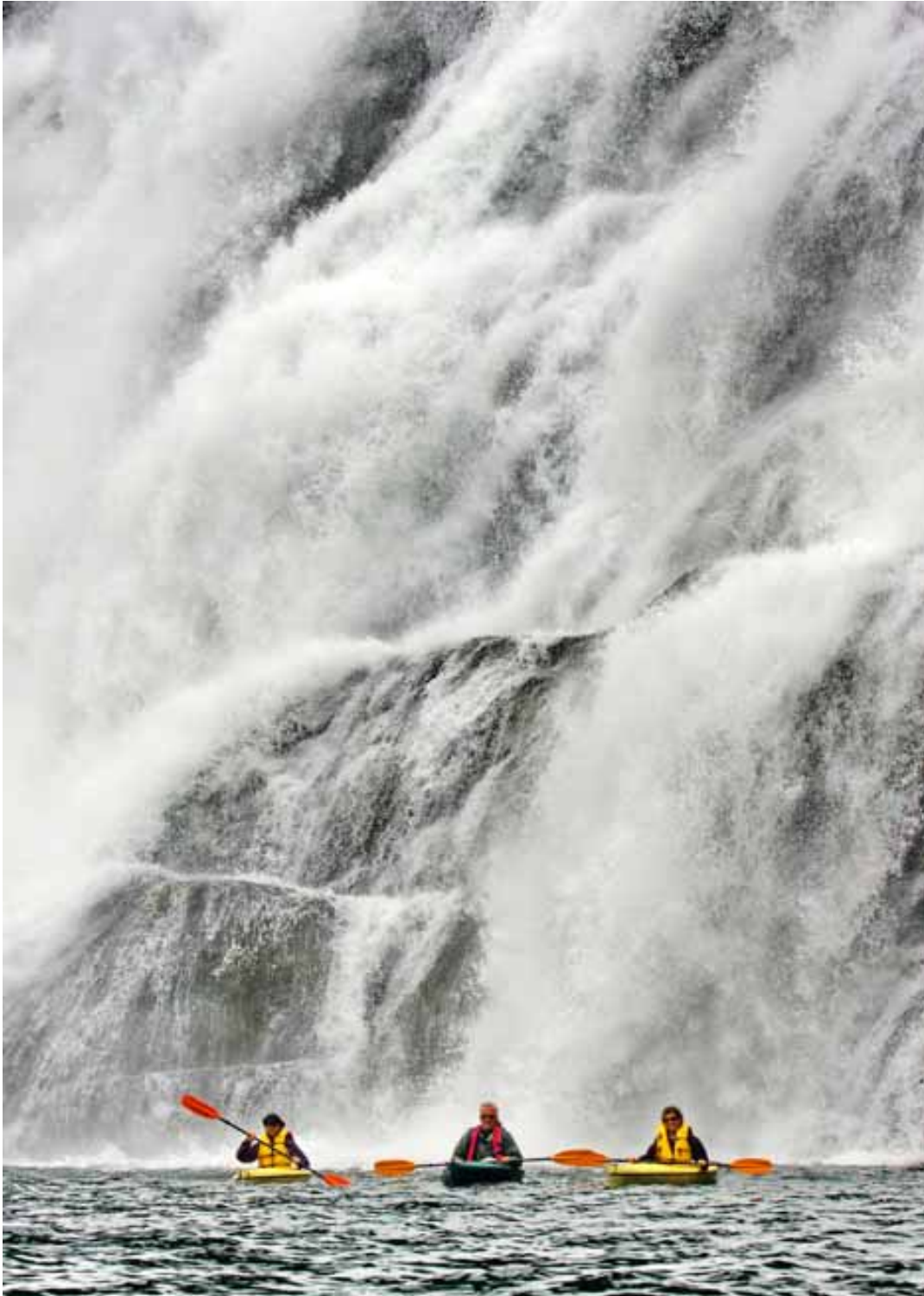
The water flows directly from a glacier-fed lake with a powerful cascade spilling off a cliff. With the benefit of a nice warm day and a dry towel at the ready, Bill hung on to the rails with every bit of possible strength so as not to be washed away. We consider the photo to be our version of Edvard Munch’s “The Scream”, and to us worth every bit as much as the recent \$120,000,000 sale price at auction (**photo**).

**A Salmon Feast** We continued our southerly course to Khutze Inlet ( 53 05.334 N, 128 25.964 W ). There were several snowfields near the waterline, the aftermath of avalanches that occurred during an extremely wet winter. These were a major contrast to the summer weather conditions which held another day with the temperature reaching 75 degrees.

From our anchorage near the mouth of the Khutze River, we watched numerous harbor seals surface and splash with mouths full of freshly caught salmon. The next morning at low tide, the same 100+ seals gorged with their catch laid peacefully on the mud flats (**photo**). Some were nursing newborn pups.



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More Waterfalls

Veering off the cruise ship route, we headed inland in search of one more British Columbia scenic fjord.

We entered Sheep Passage going deeper into Mussel Inlet, the western boundary of Fiordland Recreational Area.

Coming around a bend, Bill spotted a massive waterfall where water originating from Lizette Lake cascades into Oatswish Bay ([52 55.051 N; 128 08.185 W](#)).

We have seen some impressive waterfalls on this leg of the trip but to us, this was the “mother of all waterfalls”.

The kayaks were promptly lowered soon after we set our anchor so we could paddle over to this colossal cascade. The photo does not catch the full height and width of this marvelous wonder (photo).