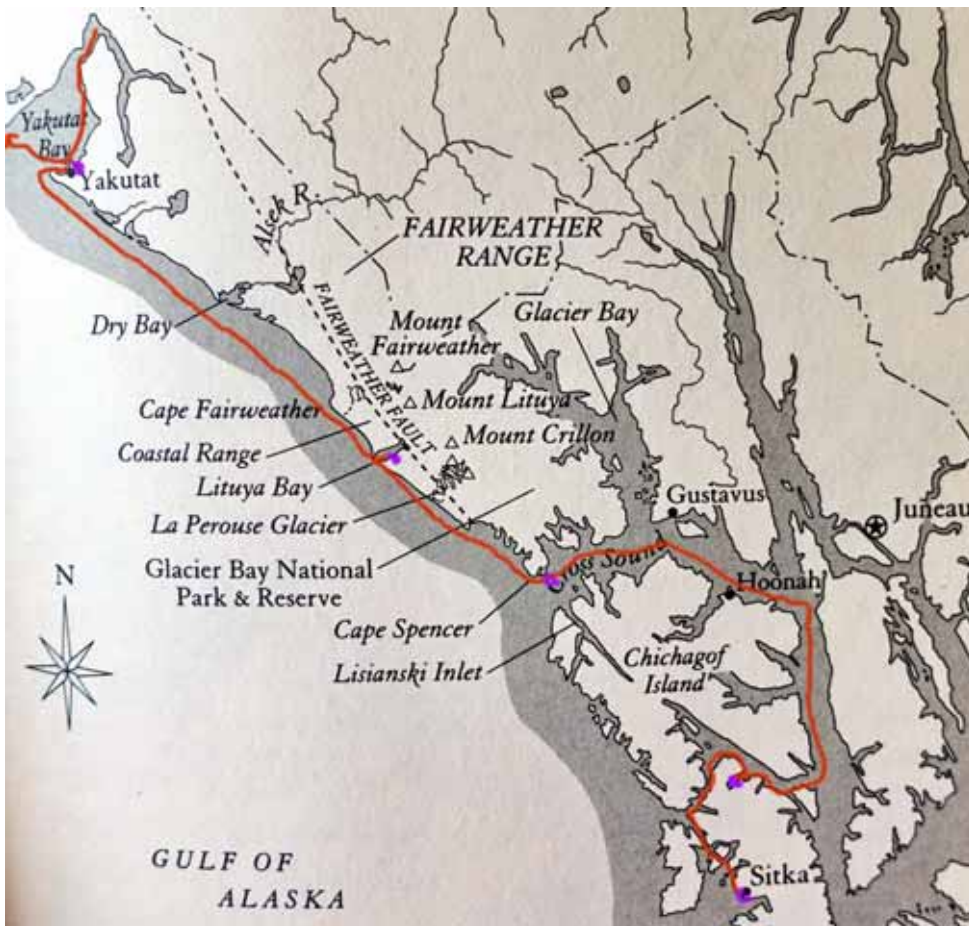


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**On Our Way** We met up with the *Inside Passage* in Sitka, Alaska on June 28<sup>th</sup> and began our 34<sup>th</sup> consecutive annual Alaska cruise. Joann's sister Loretta Schafer, joined us for her 17<sup>th</sup> Alaskan cruise on the *Inside Passage*, but one that follows a 10-year absence.

Weather forecasts are an essential tool especially when we are preparing to head out into the Gulf of Alaska, and they foretold that we had arrived just in advance of a storm front.

Instead of immediately heading out and cruising north up the outer coast of Chichagof Island (see map), we chose the longer, but more protected inside route. This gave us a couple of days to let the storm pass and the seas subside before we departed the

protected inside waters of Southeast Alaska. Along the way, we passed sea otters, Stellar sea lions, and many eagles.

**A Foggy Start** Lituya Bay, a unique inlet along an otherwise mostly un-indented coastline, was the first of our three Gulf of Alaska anchorages. The Fairweather Fault (map) runs along across the head of this inlet and has been the scene of repeated earthquakes and tsunamis.

The most recent in 1958 resulted in one of the highest tsunamis in the earth's recorded history. On that occasion, a massive 1,740-foot wave wiped clean the side of a nearby mountain, and created a deadly wave that cleared all vegetation in the bay to a height of 200'. Today, almost 60 years after the most recent tsunami, the growth of the replacement trees are still clearly distinguishable from the original forests.

**Lituya's La Chaussee Spit** This strip of terminal moraine marks the furthest advance of the most recent glaciations 3-4 hundred years ago. Its French translation, "the Chopper", was given by French explorer La Perouse in 1787. Perouse lost 21 of his men to drowning when their boat overturned in the tidal currents at the entrance to the bay.



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We went ashore to explore the multicolored rocky shoreline, filled with many varieties of wildflowers including the yellow paintbrush (photo on previous page).

There was considerable evidence of bears digging up the roots of cow parsnips, a nutritional vegetable consumed by animals and historically also by the native population.

### 4th of July in Yakutat

Enroute to Yakutat, we had mild sea conditions with light swells. Unfortunately,

all of the picturesque coastal mountains and glaciers were obscured in clouds. Upon our arrival after a long 10-hour run, the city harbor was surprisingly empty for this especially popular holiday in Alaska. Yakutat is a very scattered town of around 900 with very few major buildings concentrated in the traditional way.

After obtaining a copy of the schedule for the 4<sup>th</sup>, we decided that the tug of war and mud beach volleyball were not for us. We also knew that we would likely not be awake for the twilight fireworks display at 11:00 PM. The community parade was scheduled for noon which seemed perfect. There were a total of about 150 parade watchers, and the parade consisted primarily of city vehicles. Almost the entirety of the parade is shown behind Joann & Loretta (photo). Along with a tee shirt cannon fired from the platform on top of the airport rescue vehicle, candy was thrown from the windows of each vehicle. That was the extent of the festivities.

### Unusual Adventurers

That evening, we saw two Yamaha Wave Runner jet skis enter the harbor. Each was loaded with more than ten extra fuel containers.

The drivers were well outfitted to challenge the frigid northwest waters (photo).

We later saw a large fuel truck



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arrive to replenish their supply as Yakutat has no fuel dock (**photo**). It was an unusual sight, one so unique that Carl went over to ‘chat them up’.

He returned with a report that Todd and Jackie, from Anchorage, were on a trip from Whittier in Prince William Sound to Seattle.

Since they are heavily dependent on relatively calm seas, they had an open ended schedule to complete their journey. As there are no restaurant facilities near the harbor, we invited them onboard for dinner and heard about their exploits. Beneath their heavy gear which gave them an alien appearance, we found real people (**photo below**).

They plan their daily runs so that they can spend each night in the comfort of a tourist lodge. They became obsessed with jet skis several years ago, and have a personal goal to use them monthly, even during the cold Alaskan winters.

With quality gear and speeds up to 50 MPH, they can move five times faster than the *Inside Passage*, but they reported that their

bodies take quite a beating in the process. Todd and Jackie had fascinating sea level encounters with rafts of sea otters, and of being surrounded by a large pod of whales. We exchanged tips on northwest cruising, and wished them good luck on their challenging adventure.

With the first portion of the first leg of our journey restricted by poor photographic conditions, we are pleased to report that our next journal will feature our visit to the Hubbard Glacier on a glorious sunny day.

It was one that was exclusively ours other than that we shared it with the thousands of guests onboard the cruise ships *Celebrity Infiniti* and the *Oosterdam*.

