

Subject: Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway.
Date: Wed, 11 Aug 1999 12:05:08

We made it. We drove the first kilometer and stopped to get the picture of "The" milepost and couldn't find it. There was a monument and a big marker saying "Mile 0" but no sign post. We finally found directions 1/2 block west and 1 block south to the mile post. This figures, the Alaska Highway milepost isn't on the Alaska Highway. Mile posts are interesting things on the Alaska highway. "The Milepost" is a book that accurately describes the approaches to the Alaska highway and tells you of every turnout, garbage can, service station and communities along the highway. It gives an interesting description of some of the problems with the physical mileposts over the years. Here is a little summary.



The original Mile 0 mile post

Mileposts were first used to give motorists some indication of where they were on the highway starting in the 40s. Communities, businesses, hotels all used and still use those original mileposts as mailing addresses and reference points. Problem is that with road improvements the original mileposts don't accurately reflect driving distances any more.

Then in the 70s Canada switched to metric and the mile posts got switched to kilometerposts. The posts are on the right hand side of the road when you are Alaska bound. There are stretches that when they straightened the road the posts were never replaced. In the 1990 the BC government decided to recalibrate the kilometer posts so that driving distances were more accurately reflected. At the press time of our book Yukon still had not updated their mileposts as a result at the Yukon/BC border you have BC saying you are at kilometer at 967.6 and the Yukon saying you are at kilometer 1009. Don't forget that tradition is something that is held strong, so that they also have a thing called "Historical Mile" (how long from mile 0 when the road was first built). The BC/Yukon border is "Historical mile 627". The Book solves this problem of conflicting mileage by using the ACCURATE distance (at press time) from mile 0 (in MILES) up to the AK/YK border, followed by the number on an kilometerpost you might see. The Alaska highway is still measured according to "Historical Miles" which because of road construction may have little to do with the distances traveled to get there. When we were at Mile 0 our odometer read 63167.7 but considering that we have gone off of the highway to get gas, and then we stopped at friends for a night, we have probably gone off the Alaska Highway by a few kilometers by now, we know that the "Real" mileage is of little value short of calculating the distance to a gas station. This situation is worse considering that we have about a 1% error in the speedometer. To quote Monte Peters, a Roman Catholic Priest and friend of ours, whenever I see a milepost, I just chant "I believe".

We stopped and had lunch at the The Alaska Cafe (Bison Burgers with Jackson Fries) then turned back, to the Zellers. One thing we forgot in our provisioning was batteries for the digital camera. It eats them. We had got the batteries at Zellers and it costs a bit more than Red Deer but not bad.

One thing I forgot to say about the Alaska Café/Dew Drop Inn. There was an explosion of the dynamite used in constructing the road. Approximately 6 tons went bang and leveled quite a bit of town. The Dew Drop Inn was the only beer hall in town for a while and people used to start fires out front to stay warm and queue up to go in for a beer. When the time came they would get inside to get warm and have a beer. After a single beer they would exit via the back door and queue again at the front of the building to get their next beer, allowing others to get their beer and warm up.

We stayed our first night not on the highway in Fort St. John BC with friends of Bonnie's, Jackie and Aubrey Petzold. They were great hosts and showed us around their place. Really nice place with lots of space for them, their horses, two kids, two dogs and a cat. We took a walk around the pastures to see the horses. Overlooking the valley we could see 3 beavers, and many ducks in the small creek below. Saskatoon berries were ready to be picked. This really was a pretty part of the world.

Jackie and Aubrey and their two girls visited us in 1995 when they rented an RV and traveled the Maritimes. The girls have certainly grown, Adrienne is going to Royal College this fall.

We should get moving.

BC is the only province where Sympatico does not allow roaming, so we probably won't get a chance to do email for longer than we expected.

Subject: Identification
Date: Thu, 12 Aug 1999 00:52:23

Brown - check
Hump - check
Flatter face than a black bear - check - GRIZZLY BEAR!

We saw our first Grizzly Bear today on the side of the road. He was big but not huge. It was nice to see one. We have seen some interesting signs about animals on the road. Moose and deer are the most popular, caribou, elk and in the middle of the country the odd turkey crossing sign, not to mention cows, horses, ducks, and people.

Before we left Fort St. John, Jackie Petzold took us to the local parking spot. The view was really pretty overlooking the Peace River. Jackie was telling us that the Peace River, while quite wide and swift here, it is not very deep. Most of the boats here are jet boats. As I look out our port window there is a good sized aluminum boat probably 18 feet and 7 feet wide two 45 gallon drums of fuel in front with a wheel and it is a jet boat.

Our second day of traveling got us to Fort Nelson. It was a long day with lots of hills but none of them were bad. Tomorrow is supposed to be a short day but the Milepost warns of hairpin turns and 10% grades for a big part of it. Tomorrow sounds like all up hill and windy roads until we get to Muncho Lake (where we plan to spend the night) about 220 kilometers from here. We passed Muskwa River "lowest point of Alaska Highway elevation 1000 feet". Four nights ago we were sleeping at the Athabasca Glacier at 7000 feet. The air between the two places is definitely different. The air at the glacier was fresh and clean but if you took a deep breath you never got that satisfied full feeling. The air here gives you that nice satisfied hit of oxygen but not the same freshness for some reason.

We have a Freightliner RV Tractor a couple of slots down from us. It looks like a miniature Tractor trailer. I'm not sure the fifth wheel it is pulling is much shorter but it does look awful comfortable. This is the first one we have seen and Bonnie thinks it is pretty neat.

We have seen a lot of campers with the rock guards on the front of the cab and a lot of ones without. So far we have not seen a lot of reason to use one. There is loose gravel but we tend to stay far enough back that we don't get hit by any. There is a definite predominance of people going south rather than north. We walked around the campground tonight and there were lots of rigs from BC quite a few from Ontario, a few from California, Montana, and Washington. No one else from the Atlantic Provinces. There are rigs from Illinois, New Mexico, South Carolina, and Louisiana, a good cross section of North America.

Subject: Liard River Hotsprings.

Date: Thu, 12 Aug 1999 23:25:47

Well today turned out to be an excellent day. The sun came out and it was warm. The roads were nowhere near as bad as the book warned us they would be. We are actually back into the Rocky Mountains and we had beautiful scenery all day. Aubrey was right, the scenery up to Fort Nelson was so so but from Fort Nelson to Muncho Lake and Liard River it is very very pretty. We stopped at a number of look offs just to take pictures and look around a bit. Folded Mountain is almost devoid of vegetation and you can see every bend in the sedimentary rock. There are places where it looks like it just has swirls and loops. With the sun shining brightly on the rock it was well worth stopping for a few minutes to just watch.

We saw lots of caribou today they were a lot darker than I thought. The antlers still had velvet on them. We had a great view of a few of them as they were close to the road on either side.

As it turned out the roads were a lot better than we expected and we made Muncho lake by noon. We stopped at a turnout and had lunch. The lake is a beautiful blue and is reputed to be 730 feet deep (although a survey has never found anything over 400). The cliffs nearly overhang the road and there are really and truly 40 kph corners. Cliff on one side, lake on the other. Since we have a day scheduled to be longer than we wanted we figured we would go as far as Liard River Hotsprings Provincial Park and that would let us get a jump on the next day. On our way through the 50 kilometers to the Park we were held up by a construction site.

You know you have reached a relaxed state when the delay of the construction site is enjoyable because it gives you a chance to catch up on your reading about the road ahead and a chance to look around at the scenery.

They do serious road construction with serious equipment here. Often you have to have a pilot car that guides you through the area and following the pilot car usually is a 10-15 minute drive. Today we had extra "entertainment" provided by one of the large earth movers. He tried to turn around on the road and didn't make it. He ended up getting hung up with his bucket dragging on the ground and one wheel on the pavement one wheel in the ditch and his belly hung up on the lip. Stuck. Down off the hill came a LARGE bulldozer to his rescue. They talked for a minute and the bulldozer turned around and backed onto the pavement and every time the track bit into the pavement that pavement became permanently disconnected from any other part of the pavement. A 3/4 ton arrived with a "Site Foreman" sign on the back. Off came the steel cable that served as the tow cable. A belch of smoke from the bulldozer and

the earth mover was moving once again.

Just after the road construction was Liard River Hot springs Provincial Park. Wow. The hot springs here are actually HOT. There are two pools: Alpha and Beta. Alpha is first and the shallow one. Alpha is split in half and has a little waterfall dividing the two area. There are benches that you can sit on on either side of the pool. On the lower half you can lean back into the waterfall and have it cascade over you. The water temperature there is just a little warmer than you probably have your bath water. About 40 degrees C. From the waterfall up to the source of the hot springs it just keeps getting HOTTER. The source which is very evident in it's own little basin is 53C (129F). It is about 3.5



Liard River Hot Springs Provincial Park's Alpha pool.

to 4 feet deep. If I swung my arms to mix the water from lower levels up to the top I could make forward progress in the pool if I stopped it was just plain TOO hot to stick around. I could make it about 30 feet from the source the second time I tried. The first time there was several people in the hot end and a Chinese gentleman showed Bonnie the trick about mixing the water. With all of us mixing water we got to within about 10 feet of the pool. Actually a number of the women actually made a little stone pyramid on the lip of the basin at the source. The Alpha pool is incredibly clear and a pretty blue. The water is rich with minerals and you float very easily in the water. In the lower pool there is a tree that has fallen over and is partly submerged. You can sit in the water and it is cool enough to be comfortable. Further along you can follow a cut into the side hill and there is a place around a couple of bends where the water feels very cold in comparison.

Bonnie and I walked over to the Beta pool where there was one other person. The beta pool is 42C and 3 meters deep. I went for a swim over to where the bubbles were surfacing and they smelled pretty strong so I got out of there. It was very cloudy water.

On the way back from the beta pool we saw a black bear. It was down off the edge of the path and we made it by without a hitch. We saw him earlier in the campground at the back of the campsite opposite ours. Probably 100 feet away. People were guessing he was probably 3 years old. They have lots of signs that talk about how to deal with the frequent visitors to the park, bears and moose. Lots of warnings about not feeding the bears "A fed bear is a dead bear". As long as the bears don't associate humans with food there is little problems, as soon as the bear starts making the connection between humans and food (usually by someone feeding them) the bear gets aggressive and has to be put down.

Speaking of which a ranger just walked through our campsite with a very large dart gun.

There is another interesting geological feature in the park, the Hanging Gardens. There is a spring high up on the hills that is bubbling water that is hot and full of minerals (Calcium sulphate), the water mixes with air and other chemicals to become "Tufa" (Calcium Carbonate). This "Tufa" creates a terraced effect trapping hot water and creating an interesting micro climate down the face of the hillside. Lots of different plants grow here that could not otherwise grow this far north. The hot springs provides a 2 degree C increase in the annual air temperature and higher humidity. Neat place.

We are at Historical Milepost 496 (kilometer 764.7). The park attendant just showed up to collect our fees. The black bear we saw earlier has made it's way into the circle that is making up the campsite and the rangers are worried about it. Hope it doesn't like the smell of curry. It wasn't that good a curry anyway. Loosing my touch.

Subject: Cinnamon buns and Rhubarb pie

Date: Fri, 13 Aug 1999 21:41:14

Cinnamon buns and Rhubarb pie seems to be the highlights advertised at all of the bakeries from here to Whitehorse. We are sitting in a little place called Walker's Continental Divide Campground, bakery and gas station. About 15-20 kilometers east of Swift Current, Yukon Territory for those who have a map going on us.

Today was a travel day and not much else. The roads were not that great in the scenery department even if they were pretty good in the repair end of things. We did have one long stretch of dirt but it was pretty smooth and we could maintain good speed on it.

We did stop to look at the Signpost forest in Watson Lake. The original was started by the boys building the highway and gave the name of a place and a distance to it from Watson Lake. There are now over 37000 signs from all over. We noticed some from Pictou county NS, Fredericton, Moncton, and Perth NB. We didn't leave one but if we return we may bring a sign with us next time.

I stopped to get a bulb for the turn signal and stop light. This is the second time it has burned out this trip. This time I got a couple of spares while I was there. I also got a small tube of sealant to see if I can stop the moisture from getting in and getting at the bulb.

The Campground where we is kind of a outpost in the wilderness. It has a number of things that look like portable classrooms with a "Motel" sign on it. It also has a Gas station with reasonably priced gas for the Alaska Highway 66.9 per liter regular unleaded. The worse we have seen (and purchased) was 75.9 per liter high test. It is expensive gas after Fort St. John up to about Fort Neilson, in the 70 cents per liter. From Fort Neilson on it has been in the mid 60 cents per liter. It also has a building with a generator in it. The generator runs constantly as there doesn't seem to be any power lines in evidence.



Our gas mileage is slipping as we are traveling a lot of ups and downs going through the foothills of the Rockies We actually crossed the Rocky Mountain Range today and we are now in the Cassiar Mountain Range. We don't seem to be spending a lot of time on the level we are either climbing or dropping. Most of the hills are handled by the cruise control but a few drag us down to the 60 kph range where we shift down a gear.

We drove through an area that was the second biggest fire in BC history over 400,000 hectares burned

in 1982. The woods recover slowly here. The woods seem to be in the same state as the Coles Island woods in the early 90s. The Coles Island woods took only 5-6 years to get to the same state as these woods have in 18 years. The trees here are mostly lodge pole pine. They are straight as an arrow with no limbs up 20-30 feet followed by a tuft of branches for the top 10-15 feet. There looks to be very little undergrowth as it looks black a short distance into the woods.

Subject: Mukluk Annie's to Whitehorse

Date: Mon, 16 Aug 1999 01:15:25

We left early the next morning after filling up and we headed toward Teslin actually to a little place 9 miles west of Teslin called Mukluk Annie's they have free RV parking and RV wash with a meal. Well we figured that we wanted to try a good feed of salmon and ribs so this was as good a place as any, We arrived so early that we had to wait for them to switch the grill over. It was an interesting place and the waitress was a girl who was leaving in a couple of hours to be a massage therapist for a hockey team in Saskatchewan. She was REALLY excited to be going to civilization.

We didn't seem to have much to hold us in Teslin so we decided to go for Whitehorse. We made it in to the campground about 3 pm and the primary reason we chose this campground was that it is modern friendly. The girl said it was a 1 800 number only since we arrived on a Saturday Northwest Tel was not giving customer support but the yellow pages listing gave a 1 800 number for Sympatico. I called and after being on hold for over 17 minutes the guy answered and when I said I wanted the local access number for Whitehorse in the Yukon, all I got was dump silence and a (you could almost hear the guy say "Where?") "Just a minute" on hold then a few minutes later a shocked voice rhymed off the number. It worked, as you probably know by now as I email bombed a half a dozen emails out yesterday.

After my excursion to do emails we drove down to the visitor center in Whitehorse. Apparently NorthWest Tel has a monopoly and no one's cell phone works but theirs. Ours shows service but when you call all you get is a busy signal. The phone card we have doesn't seem to work either. Maybe Alaska will be better.

We walked around town and found 3 or 4 pieces of art that were really something. We want to have something that will give us a mental reminder that we can have when we return from our travels. We bought a nice print in St. Marten and when ever I look at it I can practically feel the sand and water of the beach. It would be nice to have a piece of art that would do the same for our journey in the north. We will be stopping back in Whitehorse on the way to Skagway so if they are still here maybe we might get one of them.



Interesting blank wall

I don't know who started the mural craze that we have been enjoying since Bossevain, Manitoba but here is a pat on the back to the towns that are doing it. The murals are usually very pretty and give a glimpse into the history of the area that was important enough to make it to the side of a building.

Whitehorse has many interesting murals around the town.

One of the most humorous was the one on the Capitol Hotel. It read:

*Capitol Hotel In the tradition of 1898
with the following Distinctive Appertainances
CLEAN BEDS with springs
HOT BATHS with soap
LOWEST ROOM RATES
WHISKEY by the shot - bottle or in the glass
PAINTED LADIES inside
MUSIC live and 'Victrola'*

We made it to the Frantic Follies a local vaudeville theater troop that was very very funny. Bonnie even made it to the stage. We were sitting in the front row and both of us got to participate in the show. Bonnie was on stage for the gag where the guy ties a couple of scarves together and stuffs the knot down the front of Bonnie's top and Bonnie has to hold the ends of the two scarves. The guy then makes a red hanky disappear in his hand and then when he and Bonnie each pull an end and behold the red hanky and Bonnie's bra(not really) is tied between the two scarves. We both knew it was coming we had seen the gag before and we still have no clue how it was done.

The show was well worth going to and I would put it on our don't miss it list.

They also have a number of sculptures to Robert Service in town. He was working as a teller for the CIBC when he wrote "The Shooting of Dan McGrew and other famous "Sourdough Songs". We found a couple of other names that were interesting to us. One was "Big" Alex MacDonald on the monument to prospectors. "Big" Alex was a name that Bonnie had found in the Antigonish Museum on one of her visits last fall. The name above his on the memorial: Sam Magee. The other one we came across in the Transportation Museum was a guy with the last name of Vines from Petitcodiac NB (Where my mother is from) He died in a plane crash (Bush Pilot)

We toured the Transportation Museum and the Beringia interpretation center. The Transportation Museum had a number of interesting artifacts from the Bush Pilot days as well as the making of the Alaska highway and the narrow gauge railway called the White Pass and Yukon Railway which used to run as a train between Skagway and Whitehorse.

One of the things is the plane "Queen of the Yukon" she was the first commercial airplane in the Yukon. But it was another little fact I thought was cute. It was purchased from Ryan Aviation in San Diego. At the time it was being built, this guy called Lindbergh came in and talked to them a trans-atlantic flight. "The Queen" was fitted with extra tanks and became the "Spirit of Saint Louis". The Queen lasted only 7 months before it ran into a Ford automobile when landing in Whitehorse.

We walked up to Canyon City where many of the



people created a tent city on the Yukon River (fourth largest river in the world) just around the corner from Whitehorse Falls (the portage around the rapids eventually became Whitehorse) where they would build boats and rafts that would take them up river to Dawson City. One of the pilots for the rafts was a guy called Jack London.



We couldn't believe the color and the power of the Yukon river cutting through the gorge just a few miles upstream from Whitehorse. We drove down along the Miles Canyon road which skirts the Yukon River. This is a major bush pilot landing area. There were about a dozen float planes with one taking off as we watched. Really neat.

One thing that we wanted to see was not there when we went looking was supposedly the biggest windvane in the world. A DC3 that was refitted to become a windvane. Saw the post but no plane.

The Beringia interpretation center was another dinosaur place. For those with web access try <http://www.beringia.com> While they do have fossils they also have frozen specimens still frozen after thousands of years in the permafrost. The Beringia was the name of the land bridge between Siberia and North America in the last ice age. The ice age sucked up enough of the water from the oceans that it lowered the water

levels enough that the land bridge was able to form and people and animals flowed between Siberia and North America 24000 years ago. One of the neatest things I saw was the frozen specimen of an ancient horse leg thousands of years old with hair, hide, meat and hoof still visible. The DNA testing showed that this horse and the horses of today are a very close match.

Whitehorse is a neat place, well worth a visit and at least a couple of days to play.

We did our usual number and landed here on a Saturday which meant a lot of stuff was closed but we really lucked out this time and Monday is a holiday (Discovery Days). We also noticed that our rebate check for the Video camera was expiring on the 17 of Aug so we dropped the check into a Scotia Bank ATM and it is supposed to be \$30 US not \$30 Canadian if it works at all.

Tomorrow we are off toward Dawson City. It will probably take us a couple of days but we'll see. One of the campsites is modem friendly so I will have to see if I can get the phone number tonight. If it works we may have another update for you in a few days, otherwise it may be until mid september before we have email or phone service working again.

After Dawson City we are going to do the TOP OF THE WORLD Highway. A highway that follows the mountain tops from Dawson City to the Alaska border. Then the highway drops to the river valley until we rejoin the Alaska Highway around Tok. We then get to go toward Fairbanks to finish the Alaska Highway. From Fairbanks we head to Anchorage then back to Tok to Whitehorse and Down to Skagway where we will head out via ferry. Skagway is only 103.7 miles from Whitehorse. We are taking the 1800 mile route to get there, sounds like us.

We should be back here in a 20 days or so.

Subject: GOLD!

Date: Thu, 19 Aug 1999 03:55:20

Dawson City! What a place! All the streets are dirt and when it rains, they turn into a soup, fortunately we seem to have brought good weather with us. It has been sunny and clear. The clear nights tend also to be a bit cool it was 3C here this morning (~37F). We were talking to a girl in a shop today who said the Northern lights were really good (for this time of the year) last night so we will try to stay up and see them tonight. It was still light out when I went to bed last night (11:30 pm) and it was bright when I woke up (6ish). Apparently 12:30 was when she saw them.

The streets are dirt because of the permafrost. Apparently the frost pushes rocks up at regular intervals so rather than have the maintenance of asphalt, with frost heaves and rocks they leave it as dirt. It kind of fits in with the theme of the place to. The houses here are all up on blocks with skirting around. The idea is to keep the buildings up off of the permafrost and keep the permafrost frozen. There are a couple of examples where buildings were built on the ground and they are strange to look at. They are buckled in the most unusual ways. The two corners closest to the street are down until the buildings are almost touching at the roof line. Other places are up. Bad news for the houses.

We met a couple of kids today who had gone to UNB to school and were working here for the summer. They both have a couple of jobs each and are having a great summer. We met them on "The Dome" or Midnight Dome Mountain, not sure which. It is the mountain behind Dawson City. If you are ever in the area the view is worth the 7 km climb. We were down to 40 kph most of the way and the engine was warm by the time we got to the top, and on the way down the brakes were warm too, even if we spent a lot of the way down in 1st gear. The view is spectacular. From the top you have a 360 degree view of spectacular mountains, the Klondike river and the Yukon River. Well worth the trip. When we were there, there was a guy who was parachuting off the top of the mountain and took off over our heads and floated down to Dawson City several hundred feet below. Bonnie says it is 1861 feet from the Dome to Dawson City (vertical wise) according to the Milepost. Sure felt more than that.



Yukon River from the Dome

We went to the Robert Service presentation at the Cabin where he wrote many of his poems. The person doing the presentation this year is Charlie Davis, from Sussex. He just about choked when he heard our mailing address was Sussex Corner. His wife remembered meeting my mother at a Golden Ks meeting. We really enjoyed the presentation. Robert Service used to write his poems on the wallpaper in the cabin to make sure they "looked good" as well as sounded good. Most of the wallpaper has been destroyed by moisture before the cabin was considered as a possible landmark/tourist attraction. They do have a piece of wall paper about 1 foot by 4 feet that is still contains a note written by Robert Service. Perhaps good advice to any aspiring writer.

"Rebuffs are only rungs in the ladder of success."

Across the road from the cabin is Pierre Burton's boyhood home and just down the street a stones throw is the Jack London Cabin. They did a great search to find it and finally did in 1965. They took it apart and reassembled it here. It is much more "rustic" than the Robert Service Cabin.

The streets are mud and the sidewalks are boardwalks lifted up off the street a foot or so. We enjoyed walking around town it has a real unique feel to the place and it was truly an experience to be here. We stayed in the campground right in town and were able to walk to everything in town. There are unique shops on every street. Parks Canada is trying to restore a lot of the feel of the original place and it is doing a pretty good job. The Dawson Trading Post, Diamond Tooth Gertie's, The Grubstake, Klondike Kate's, Klondike Cache, Klondike Nugget & Ivory Store were just a few that we looked around or places we ate.

A lot of shops sell raw gold nuggets which were really neat. We were looking at a nugget with no intention of buying any and the girl was really nice and since there was hardly anyone around took great glee in showing and letting us hold the nuggets to get a idea of the weight to size. Another person walked up and said to let us try the big one. At \$48 per gram a \$13,000 nugget will fit comfortably in the palm of your hand and you can hold it nicely in your fist.

We got ourselves a gold pan and went panning. The Klondike Visitors Association (KVA) has staked a claim at the end of the Bonanza Creek Road where tourists are welcome to pan for gold and keep any they find. There is a sign that says this area has been worked both by human and mechanical dredges and your change of getting any gold is pretty slim. We found some neat rocks and added them to our pile of memory rocks. One is really neat, looking at it one way it looks like kind of white nondescript rock, turn it 90 degrees and it is solid silver shining bright. There is a LOT of mica in the area and that is probably what it is. The Klondike is a place we will have to visit again.

We actually lost money at Diamond Tooth Gerties, a casino run by the KVA and proceeds fund restoration and tourist development in the area. We lost all of \$3. The show was very good with four very energetic dancing girls, and a large lady played the part of Diamond Tooth Gertie. She did a great job. We stuck around for the first show at 8:30 but didn't stay for any others.

The other vaudeville style show in town is called The Gaslight Follies. It is a good show which we enjoyed a lot and had a great time. Afterward we went to Klondike Kate's for desert. The Gaslight Follies are staged at the Palace Grand Theater. It is quite the theater considering the time it was built. There was a Samboree in town and members got taken up on stage to perform. (A Samboree is a trip organized by the Good Sam Club that do road trips in RVs)

The Dempster Highway information booth is here as the Dempster Highway junction is just a few miles away. They have a listing of gas prices for the different gas stations along the Dempster average was about 82.5 cents per liter. And talking to people the two windshields and three tires are still the standard sacrifices to the gods of the Dempster. Some day I would like to do the Dempster but maybe not in an RV (or one owned by me).



Maybe we can convince another couple to go halves on renting an RV out of Whitehorse. Looks spectacular in the videos they have. We met a guy from Kenya who is living in Santa Barbara. He is really impressed with this part of the world. We had a long chat with him and he was quite an interesting character.

Before I forget on the road up we stopped at a place called the Braeburn Lodge. The ABSOLUTE BEST cinnamon buns we have ever had. We bought two and the girl looked at us like we had holes in our heads. Then we said we wanted one heated and we would take the other one in a bag, then it was ok. Bonnie and I finished one as lunch and by dinner we were still not hungry. One of these cinnamon buns is supposed to feed four and I believe it. We had the other bun for breakfast over the next two mornings, awesome. Picture a cinnamon bun 4-5 inches tall 9 inches around and covered with icing. Truly awesome!!! We are not sure they are worth the trip up from Whitehorse but by the time we get back there, it could happen. But it's only an hour or so drive up from Whitehorse, ya it could happen.

Subject: Alaska

Date: Mon, 23 Aug 1999 03:35:38

One of the things about Dawson City is they don't hide the different manners of mining good. Some (mostly men) dug in the ground and retrieved gold. Others, (mostly women) dug into the pockets (and other places) of the men and retrieved gold. There was a number of diversions for entertaining the cold and lonely miners. The Palace Grand Theater in Dawson is quite the theater and if you are in sometime look at the US flags there is something a little different about them. We really enjoyed our trip to the theater and its vaudeville show. Sam Steel, a famous Mountie, has a quote posted up in one of the windows that talked about the other form of gold mining.

"These girls seem to be in the eyes of the majority of the community a necessary evil. Apart from the fact that their calling is unlawful, they are orderly, sober, and in fact, much less detrimental ... than the large number of variety actresses..." May 1899

In fact Ruby's Brothel was active until 1961.

There are basically three ways out of town, the Dempster Highway to the NWT. (Recently split in two with one half being called Nunavit, there are currently two suggestions for a name change for the NWT, Someofit and Restofit. I kinda like rest-of-it. ;-)) Another way out of town is via the way we came in, the Klondike Highway to Whitehorse. The last way out of town is called the Top of the World Highway to Alaska. That was our way out of town.

The Top of the World Highway is just that. After you cross the Yukon River on a ferry you climb to the top of the mountain ridge and stay there (more or less). Spectacular scenery all the way to the Alaska border where it becomes the Taylor Highway. After you cross the border you immediately change from pavement and the mountain ridge to dirt roads and down hill to the valley where you stay. The dirt roads here were



not as bad as Mount Carleton but NO FUN. After slightly over an hour we made it to Chicken Alaska population 14. Two Gas Stations a bar and a café. We had averaged just over 20 miles an hour for the first 2.5 hours of the Taylor (goat path) Highway. There is over 80 miles of dirt road on the Taylor. I would do the Top of the world again, but never the Taylor goat path. The slow leak in one of the tires wasn't slow at all by the time we got to Tok. (Population 100 times that of Chicken). Time for a Grease Oil and Filter as well as a tire repair, looks like the slow leak was caused by a nail we had picked up somewhere.

The Top of the World highway is just as pretty as the Ice fields parkway (The road between Banff and Jasper) only no glaciers. From Tok we made our way towards Fairbanks stopping for the night at Rita's Road House, a state park that lets you stay in the parking lot overnight. We walked around and it struck us as odd that they have a lot of artifacts there that are really quite neat but they aren't being well cared for. They have a truck that is probably of the late 30s vintage at the place where they talk about the problems they had with the truckers and the scales were there. The truck is not protected at all and has grass and moss growing on top of the exposed pistons in the engine. The buildings and gift shops are in excellent repair and are having sales as we are passing through at the end of the season.

The road between Tok and Fairbanks has a number of spectacular views of the Alaska Mountain Range. And we had to stop and take a couple of pictures of them. The peaks we saw Hayes 13,800, Hess 11,900 and Deborah 12,300 feet are almost double of the Rockies and looked very snowy from where we were.

At Fairbanks there is another "official" Marker for the end of the Alaska Highway. We visited Alaskaland a collection of old buildings from the old part of Fairbanks and are currently a great collection of little boutiques and shops as well as a Saloon and Museum. The Espresso Chocolate Fudge is to die for! We went to the Late show at the Saloon and had a good time the Band put on a great show and it was really funny.



Alaskaland is a great circle distance of 3197 miles from the Douglas Harbour mooring. The funny part was that the shortest distance was 3197 miles but the direction was 045. North East (over the top is the quickest way home).

We took off to the Chena Hot Springs, east of Fairbanks about 50 miles and are now resting after our few hours of soaking in the hot tubs and swimming pools. We met a travel writer who had been through the Atlantic Provinces for the Lonely Planet books. He is doing a hiking trails in Alaska book.

We thought about making a run to the Arctic Circle we are about 90 miles away in Fairbanks (about 75 here at the hot springs) but the paved road runs out about 60 miles from the circle and I have no desire for another 120 miles of dirt road. We will see the Arctic Circle when we do the Dempster.

We stopped at the University of Alaska Museum rated one of the top 10 attractions in Alaska. They have a good display on the Northern Lights. Something that Fairbanks gets about 200 days a year. Last night we saw a great green sky on the northern horizon and we think it was them. Tonight looks a little too cloudy.

Maybe before we leave we will get a better show.

Subject: Denali National Park
Date: Tue, 24 Aug 1999 03:56:30

RV CENTRAL. Wow never seen so many RVs in one spot including in any of the places we looked at when we were shopping for them. The parking lot at the visitor center at Denali National Park was packed with them. Our second time of being unable to stay where we wanted on our first try. Just 3 miles up the road we found a private campground and are now booked into our campsite and bus trip tomorrow.

The Denali is a park that has a large wildlife refuge and little in the roads department. Just one. And you are allowed on the first 15 miles of it. After that you have to be in one of the park buses. We are going on the eight hour bus ride tomorrow. We could have got on the 11 hour ride but that was a bit much I think. The eight hour ride gets you to within 40 miles of Mount McKinley the highest mountain in North America, 20320 feet. The 11 hour ride gets you within 30 miles. According to the literature you have a 80% to 90% chance of seeing a bear and a 20% to 25% chance of seeing the mountain. Given at it is raining quite hard at the moment chances of seeing it are slim. The drive along the Parks highway has a lot of wonderful scenery and the grades aren't too bad once you get out of the initial climb out of Fairbanks.

Millie is behaving like a top and is maintaining her 9.0 miles per gallon. We have been running into gas prices around \$1.36 per US gallon. Lows to \$1.26 highs to \$1.46. This month will be bad on the fuel budget, not only are prices high but we are packing on the miles too.

We are slowly eating up our reserve days, we are down to ten days in reserve. We figure that if we arrive in Skagway a week before sailing we will be happy. There are a few trips we can make in Skagway to while away the week. We have heard from a number of people that Skagway is a neat place.

We are planning an extra day in Anchorage, Whitehorse, maybe the Kenai Peninsula. We'll see. It is 250 miles from the park to Anchorage so we might make that a two day trip. Hard to say.

We still have our two jerry cans of gas that we have not touched yet. It has been very comforting to have an extra 100 miles of fuel sitting on the bumper. We will use them up around Whitehorse and give them a few days to dry and vent out upside-down in Skagway before we board the ferry. They are quite paranoid about gas cans on the ferry and have strict limits on what you can bring aboard. I should be ok for the fuel for the generator but the jerry cans would not be allowed. Being a person who is quite paranoid about having gas on my sailboat I can understand why they are nervous. Gas fumes are heavier than air and are VERY explosive. A leaking five gallon Jerry can of gas could cause major problems in mid voyage. Before we board we will be well within spec for the ride.

At Denali we are 3253 miles from the Douglas Harbour mooring. And according to our longitude we are just over 1/6 of the way around the world.

Subject: Bears, Bears and More BEARS!!

Date: Fri, 27 Aug 1999 02:38:07

What a day we had! The tundra is in its full fall colors and incredibly pretty. All of the colors of our eastern fall foliage but just less than a few feet off the ground. We did see bears, actually we saw six. The first couple were across the valley but they were definitely grizzly and big. We figured that we were lucky that we saw them, but we lucked out and saw a couple VERY close. One rubbed his back on the "Soft Shoulder" sign across the road from us. The back of the bus was practically beside the bear. I got a few really good pictures but I screwed up on one with the bear facing us and rubbing his back on the sign. Sigh. The bear was really neat to see and if you are ever in Denali you should do a bus ride in. Seeing those majestic animals up close is really an opportunity that you shouldn't miss. It was a great time better than eight hours on a school bus could possibly sound. It didn't seem that long either.



We saw caribou, grizzly, willow and rock ptarmigan, northern harrier and a Golden Eagle. Other places in Alaska we have seen moose, foxes, snowshoe hares, Arctic Squirrels. Quite the trip just in terms of wildlife.

We sampled the soapberry that the grizzlies are munching on in abundance. They have a sweet start but an instant bang of bitter just like you bit into a bar of soap. We had enough of that berry and it is off our checklist in life.

Denali has 1.9 million acres of protected space. Where they consider it to be an intact ecosystem. There has been no hunting within the grounds for over 40 years.

The road from Denali to Anchorage is a pretty stretch of road. We were pretty soaked in most of the

day with a low ceiling and rain. The top of even the short mountains were pretty much obscured by the clouds. Mt. McKinley was not visible. We struck out both days we were in the area. We have to leave something to see on a return trip. Besides it's growing and we might as well wait until it gets a little bigger. The Pacific Plate is sliding under the North American Plate and Mt. McKinley is one of the byproducts of the tectonic action and is growing at the rate of about 3/4 of an inch a year. Just any day now California could come for a visit, well not any day I'll see, guess we still have to go to California.

The Alaska War Memorial is located out in the middle of nowhere on the Parks Highway. It is a really nice memorial and has a monument to the ATG (Alaska Territorial Guard). Mostly aboriginals from the area. It has a few mountains and a pretty view.

Between Denali and Anchorage you have to go through a mountain pass called the Broad Pass. We are here in the fall and the tundra is in full fall colors. The Broad Pass is exactly that, very broad. And considering it is a mountain pass it is pretty gentle in the hill department. There mountains on both sides that go up out of sight into the clouds. The expanse in the middle is dotted with scrub spruce, lakes, and tundra. The highway rolls though the middle on almost a perfect southerly course.

We passed by the Big Susitna River that our guide book announced as one of the few that offer a rare delicacy in early spring, the fiddlehead fern. The more we go the more we stay the same.

We are now sitting in an RV park in Anchorage. Anchorage is a good sized city of about 260,000 people. Complete with traffic and one way streets. We have gone from days of rarely seeing another vehicle ahead or behind us to having real traffic in a matter of a few hours. My traffic skills are rusty. We walk tomorrow. We are debating going down the Kenai Peninsula about 90 miles to the place where Portage was. Portage was a small town that dropped eight feet in an earthquake in 1964 the sea surge did the rest of the job. There isn't much there now from what I understand.

Our schedule has six travel days between Anchorage and Skagway. We still have nine free days. We could eat a couple here or in Whitehorse and still have a week in Skagway for playing tourist. Millie is running like a top, but Bonnie and I are showing a little wear. Bonnie tossed her back out yesterday before getting on to the eight hour bus ride. I have the sniffles and a bit of a sore throat. (We all know I'm allergic to cold weather and this almost counts.) Bonnie is on the mend with a little TLC. We drove about 250 miles almost all south and it actually feels warmer here on the Pacific coast. I haven't seen the Pacific yet but it is within walking distance and that is tomorrow's job.

Well after Anchorage we are starting to head back. We are now 3354 miles from the mooring in Douglas Harbour. (3487 to Antigonish NS) It seems just as strange that we are 3463 miles from Tokyo Japan.

Distances are funny things. We traveled 3487 miles (as the crow flies) over 18,000 kilometers (~12000 miles) on the odometer in about 115 days. Seen over 2000 things worth taking a picture of, three CDs full of time lapse movies taken as we drive across the country one frame every six or seven seconds. We have at least touched eight provinces missing only PEI and NFLD, which we have seen before. We missed the NWT and Nunivut, but was enthralled with the Yukon. Yes, we will be back there soon and a little later again someday. Alaska is an amazingly BIG place. Mountains, animals and large fields of grains and canola (just like the prairies). We ticked off quite a few states too in our travels: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Dakota, Alaska, Ohio, Wisconsin, and New Jersey We have gone deep underground, stood on mountain ridges, and on a glacier over 10 stories thick. We have slept in our RV at 38 feet and over 6000 feet elevation.

We have sent over 50 pages out over email. There are lots of ways of measuring distance.

Time doesn't seem to be a good measure as I can't figure out what day it is most of the time and have gotten to the point where the day is the little print on my watch that seems to be getting harder and harder to read as we travel. Not because my eyesight is any worse it just that the words have less and less meaning and I have a harder and harder time to remember what it is and why I care. Retirement makes days a funny thing. Time is strange for me always has been. I seem to have today, yesterday (somewhere between one and three days ago), last week (between three days and a month or so) and a while ago (more than last week).

Strange musings out loud, but as we travel along I seem to be measuring distance not it time or miles but in change. The change from Whitehorse to Dawson City was striking not as much in landscape as in attitudes and origins. Fairbanks was a working town and Anchorage seems more of a tourist town. Change is good.

The picture included is one of the bear photos taken in Denali National Park. Take a moment to look at the colors in the tundra. This bear stood against a sign and later the driver stood against it, we figure the bear must have stood a little over six feet tall. We are also above the tree line at this point a number of places the snow was evident and seemed to be coming down to meet us as we rose up in elevation.



Subject: Anchorage

Date: Fri, 27 Aug 1999 03:25:04

Anchorage seems to be a real tourist town. There are tons of little tourist trap places all up and down the streets. You could shop as long as you could possibly want here. The place where we had lunch was a micro-brew pub and on the lunch menu it said welcome to the passengers of ... about eight different cruise ships. Only place we saw more cruise ships listed on a menu was in Sint Maarten. There were no ships in today :-). They proudly exclaim that they have the second highest tides in the world! We saw a number of really neat things in the different shops.

We went to the Earthquake Experience, and the Alaska video. On Good Friday in 1964 they had a 9.2 earthquake and if it had not been for the two military bases in town would have been much worse a disaster than it was. Sections of the business district (and where we are in the campground) sunk 30 feet. The cargo ship, the Chena, stuck ground three times during the quake. It was tied to the wharf and when the rift in the ocean floor opened up it grounded out, the sea surge took it and the wharf it was tied to crashing into town and when the second time it grounded it was well inland among the buildings of Anchorage. The crew frantically tried to free the ship from its mooring lines as it was still tied to the dock (even if the dock was moved inland with the ship). When the sea surge swept back out to sea the Chena went with it and was able to escape back out to sea.

There was a subdivision that was built on land that liquefied during the five minutes of the quake and flowed toward the ocean some of the homes moved up to 1200 feet. The average around 500 feet. The area is now called Earthquake Park. The devastation was incredible. The Federal funding which poured in to rebuild Alaska lasted until the oil was discovered and started generating large revenues for the state. The Alaska Pipeline has an exhibit that talks about how the pipeline was built to allow for a shift of 5 feet vertical and 20 feet horizontally in any earthquakes that may happen. The state collects revenues from the oil and there are no state income tax or sales tax. They have been investing 25% of the revenues and the dividends from those investments gives each Alaskan up to \$1500 dollars. Alaska provides about 1/3 of the domestic US oil needs.

A prominent figure in Anchorage's past is Capt. Cook. The bay in front of Anchorage is Cook Inlet. He was here looking for the Northwest passage and never found it. There are several monuments to him or his ships. One of the other things that inhabit Cook Inlet is Beluga whales and we saw a pod of four today in the harbour. Awesome.

The Iditarod race starts here and runs to Nome 1049 miles away. A woman has won it 4 times. The little café we stopped at to have a coffee before we headed back to the RV seemed to be a shrine to the race and had lots of memorabilia about the race. The Café was at the starting line at 4th Avenue and C Street.

The trolley tour we went on was a given by a guy who talked about the cost of red brick. His wife wanted a red brick house but they cost about \$5 a brick here. Then we got to the FBI building a nice BIG red brick building!

Subject: The Prettiest Highway in Alaska.
Date: Sat, 28 Aug 1999 01:15:08



The Glenn Highway, Route 1, has my vote as the prettiest highway in Alaska. Glaciers (though not as prominent as on Ice fields Parkway) are white and bright. At one time the Matansuta Glacier stretched as far as Palmer about 80 miles from it's current position (we are just a few miles away now at the state campground). There are a number of places where you can look and see the glacial riverbed and tailings now marking the valley. A couple of the look offs are bluffs that drop hundreds of feet. What a view you get of the valley.

The Glenn is a winding road that in places are blasted out of the edge of the rock face and with no shoulders (or guard rails) provide very striking beauty (for the passenger). The posted speed limit is 55 most places but we were rarely able to get much above about 50 before the next 30 mph series of 'S' curves greeted us. The road is actually very good and is being improved as we speak. Construction seems to be a constant in all parts of the world.

The snow covered mountain peaks give way to multicolored sheets of rock leading down the

mountain. Slides are common here in the steep mountains. The great reddish brown vertical cliffs of basalt stand proudly with rivers of rock that have slipped down the mountain leaving a dark gray fan of to reach down into the green of the forests climbing up the base of the mountains. With the sun shining on the mountains they are truly a wonder to behold.

We started our day going down to Portage on the Kenai Peninsula. It wasn't as far as we thought and it ended up being only about 45-50 miles. There is nothing much left of the original Portage town now. A few busted up buildings next to the mud flats are all that remain of the town that existed before the earthquake. The only thing there now is a restaurant and the loading station for the train. You can put your vehicle on the train to take it to Whittier to get on the Marine Highway. The town itself moved inland rather than rebuild on the original site. The road to Portage is the Seward Highway named after they guy who convinced Congress to buy Alaska from Russia. The cost \$7.2 million or 5 cents an acre. Pretty good deal if you ask me.

The Seward Highway is another very pretty stretch of road that follows Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet. It was named Turnagain Arm by Cook who after discovering the long inlet of the arm had to turn again and try somewhere else for the Northwest passage. The tide was out and the mud flats were waiting for the inrush of the Tidal Bore. They have a tide of 33 feet. Sounds a lot like Moncton, but this is a lot prettier. Surrounded by mountains and even a few glaciers. The only problem is the traffic. It is by far the busiest piece of road we have been on in a long time. They have lots of warnings about driving with your lights on, speed limit signs and the fact that it is unlawful to delay five vehicles. If you have more than five vehicles behind you have to pull over. Given that the speed limit was 65 I maintained speed until I could pull over and dump the traffic. At that speed Millie gets about six miles a gallon.

One of the many things that choke up the roads are buses. Gray Line, Princess, and Holland America are common buses running the roads in the area. Tourists are a driving force in Alaska, and I can understand why. We have run into a number of Alaskans working in shops who are very sympathetic toward some of their elderly tourists. They feel pretty bad at the way they are herded about with hardly time to eat, shop, or just sit. I'm not sure I would like the pace that the tour companies set in their schedule. It's another cycle. Cost verses time and in the mix is "stuff ya just have to see". We ask for our own misery. We will be in Alaska nearly a month from beginning to end. We will have driven all or most of the Taylor, Parks, Seward, Glenn, Alaska, and the Richardson Highways. We could easily spend another month or two here and maybe someday we will.

We backtracked out of the Seward to Anchorage and got back onto the Glenn Highway heading west again. We were running in and out of showers all day and with sunshine most of the time. The mountains were spectacular.

Bonnie's back is pretty well mended and my sniffles seem to be better too. It has been warmer the last couple of days which always improves my disposition. ATT has moved into Alaska and are advertising the heck out of their Digital One Rate plan and our phone has been working quite well since Fairbanks. Even here 80 miles up the Glenn highway we have digital service and a pretty good



Matansuta Glacier and the colorful mountains on the Glenn Highway

signal. I talked to mother and she is happier now that she knows we are safe and sound. She worries a lot when we travel and this will be a hard year for her. When our phone stopped working in the Yukon, she got a little stressed about it. So I called her today to tell her we were heading back into the Yukon and we may not have phone service until we get back into BC again. And maybe not until we get to Vancouver Island in the middle of September. With any luck Skagway and Prince Rupert will have coverage and we will call home again.

Subject: Loran C

Date: Sun, 29 Aug 1999 00:15:38

Something neat for our sailor types. One of the navigation systems used on a lot of boats is called Loran C. It is a system that uses a set of towers that are precisely synchronized to generate a signal that ships can use to determine a position. We drove about ten miles looking straight at one of the Loran C towers for the Pacific Northwest located here at Tok, Alaska. They are real tall and the road looks right at them and is straight as an arrow for a long way.

This closes our loop of 1400 kilometers around Alaska. We were in Tok two weeks ago after traveling the Taylor goat path from Dawson. The nickname for the Bureau of Public Roadways is the Bureau of Parallel Ruts. Seriously, the only Highway that we traveled on that was the least but of a problem was the Taylor. The rest were pretty modern and very well maintained for the most part. Like anywhere there is the odd unexpected frost heave and dipsy doodles but the roads here are not worthy of the terror a lot of people make them out to be. The Taylor being the exception.

We finished with the Glenn by turning off onto the Tok Cutoff and made Tok by late afternoon. We are still living on our provisions from Red Deer and Calgary. The only thing that we really have had to buy is bread. We are using up our supply of long life milk and probably have enough to last until Skagway. Our eggs are running low but that isn't a real big problem, the crisis at the moment: COFFEE! We have to get coffee tomorrow, we have just one day's supply before we have to break into the instant. Life's tough here on the northern front. We did pickup some meat along the way not because we had to but because we wanted to try out the buffalo and reindeer. The reindeer has a much stronger wild taste to it than beef or buffalo. The buffalo is incredibly lean and has a nice flavor.

We have used up five of our fourteen free days. We would like to arrive in Skagway with about a week to spare. We have already decided we wanted to do a walk-on ferry trip to Haines for a day and do a trip on the scenic railroad. Those will both suck up a day and with a day to do RV cleanup and a few days for Skagway we will be ready for the ferry. We traveled a lot harder than we expected and a little relaxation time at the end will be good. We have two or three days in Prince Rupert before we catch the ferry to Vancouver Island so I would like to see if we can get a tour of the Queen Charlotte Islands before we leave the area. Would be nice to see them.

We have had a pretty good trip so far and Millie seems to be running like a top so we don't expect to have many problems in the next week. It is a two day trip to Whitehorse and then a day to Skagway. We figure we can kill a couple of days in Whitehorse. There is a campground at a hot springs about 20 miles out of town on the Klondike (and REALLY good cinnamon buns just up the road from that) then a night at the campground with modem access to do the email drop. The email drop will also allow us to send instructions to the mail forwarding service for our next snail mail pickup in Canada. We should be able to have a good couple of days in Whitehorse.

We still haven't thought about the art, it's the kind of thing that should just hit you. It would be nice to have something to remember the north by, it is a special place in the world. If we can find a piece of art like our Phillipsburg print. Whenever I look at that print I see the green roof of Bobby's Marina with the palm trees in the background, the old wharf, the green water of the bay, and the old boat sitting on the beach. I can look at that print in the middle of winter and feel the warm wind on my legs, the cold beer in my hand, the smell of the hills and water, and hear the tinkle of halyards slapping in the wind. If we could only find something that would do the same for our northern adventure.

Subject: Whitehorse and Skagway

Date: Thu, 02 Sep 1999 01:09:20

Well we have been shopping around the Whitehorse art galleries looking for a memento and still haven't found the right one. There were a couple that were ok but they didn't reach out and grab us so we left them behind. There was a print that would do the job if we can't find the right one somewhere else. There was another egg tempura painting that was really good but not quite right either.

We did however strike it rich, fully bodied, and aromatic COFFEE!! We found a great place that roasts it's own beans. The Midnight Sun Coffee Roaster. They had great pastries to go with the great coffee. We managed to stop by a couple of times between trips to Canadian Tire (we never seem to get all of the stuff we need the first time!) and the art galleries. The Alpine Bakery is run by a guy we met at the Takhini Hotsprings Campground. We were soaking in the pool when he arrived with four of his kids in tow. We got talking about NB and the Yukon. Anyway he invited us by the bakery and we stopped by and picked up a couple of loaves of absolutely delicious bread. There was a peanut butter shortbread that we tried, loved it!



Otter Falls, the picture on the back of the old \$5 bill

We are planning on leaving here tomorrow and heading to Skagway Alaska. It is a about 180km away so it will be a short run tomorrow. We are going to be there about eight days ahead so we should have lots of time to do some running around. We are planning on day trips to Haynes, the scenic ride on the White Pass and Yukon Railway. A narrow gauge railway that was set up to run people to Whitehorse. The railroad was built during the gold rush but it was said that all the good land was claimed long before the first passenger made the ride on the railway. The railroad saw another burst of activity when the Alaska Highway was being built and another when lead, silver, and zinc mining started to boom. The last while it has been mining tourist dollars.

There is a round trip jet ferry to Haynes and since we missed Haynes in our travels we decided we should take the ferry over and spend the day. We also bought a bottle of fiberglass finish restorer so I will have lots to do shining up Millie for her trip to BC. We have a few days in Prince Rupert before we board the ferry and are trying to figure out if we can get to the Queen Charlotte Islands for a day. We should be arriving in BC the evening of the 16th of Sept.

Subject: Skagway, cruise ships, saloons, and brothel tours!

Date: Thu, 09 Sep 1999 16:44:13

Well our first day in Skagway we more or less just walked around and looked at some of the sights. We are staying in a campground that is a five minutes walk from downtown. The White Pass and Yukon Railroad narrow gauge track is 30 feet from our front bumper. It was kind of strange to be awakened by the puff-puff-puff of a turn of the century steam engine. A lot of downtown has been designated a historic district and maintains the historical charm of the late 1890s early 1900s.



There were six cruise ships in town Thursday, two Friday. Shopping is a major activity here. We even have Little Switzerland and

Colombian Emeralds stores here. Haven't seen them since the Caribbean. TONS of jewelry and artsy shops here, saloon's too.



One of the saloons that has Alaskan micro-brews and pretty good food is a place called the Red Onion Saloon. It has another claim to fame as a brothel during the gold rush. There were ten girls working upstairs in rooms called cribs. They had simple board partitions toenailed flour and ceiling between the rooms and the girls hung linen sheets up and pasted wallpaper to it in order to dress up the rooms a little. There was little to no sound absorbing properties between the rooms. The bartender kept track of who was busy by ten dolls kept behind the bar. There was system of pipes that connected holes in the crib floor to the cash. When the girl was busy the doll was laid on her back, when the cash came down the chute to the

bartender the doll was stood up again indicating the girl was available for the next customer. The going rate at the time was \$5, of which the madam got \$2.50, the bartender got \$1.25, and the girl got \$1.25. The working wage for a man at the time was \$1/day. The tour guide was a hoot and they have a number of artifacts from the brothel days. Including Klondike Kate's silver dress. The ornate french design dress of real silver beads. Klondike Kate and many other girls moved on to Dawson City to get closer to the miners with the gold.

Under the floorboards they found an ivory bottle that was probably the opium that sustained the madam. The women were expected to entertain up to 20 men a night. I could see where a little pick-me-up might be required.

Klondike Kate was one of the more famous "dance hall girls" and was said to have left the Yukon with over \$150,000. She married three times the last time to a man named Pantages who with Kate's money opened a string of theaters. Once her money was gone, so was he, he married another woman. She lived until her early 80s in the Washington/Oregon area.

Skagway has gone from boom to bust many times over its history. The main section of town used to be 4th, 5th, and 6th streets. Between 1907-1911 many of the main buildings were moved to be on Broadway as a way of concentrating shops and attracting tourists. (The first strip mall?)

Skagway is in an interesting area geologically. It is rising an inch to an inch and a half each year due to glacial rebound. Since the 1897 gold rush it has actually risen over 8 feet. You can see it when you look at old photographs. The town was much further inland than it is now. The old photographs of ships show great mud flats that cover the bottom end of town. Now the buildings are going a lot further down toward the shore. The ships were deep enough that many had to launch their stuff to shore. Skagway is also at the end of the longest fjord in North America over 200 miles long.



Klondike Kate's silver dress

One of the characters that ruled Skagway in the early days was a guy called Jefferson "Soapy" Smith. He was one of the last great outlaws of the west. After being kicked out of Denver he made his way to Skagway. He was able to operate for quite a while by making sure that none of his men stole from a local. He was also said to contribute more to the church than anyone else. If a working girl decided to give up the life and return home to a more respectable life he would often give the girl passage out of town. He also gave presents to all of the children at Christmas. But finally he wore out his welcome and a group of 101 vigilantes met on the wharf to decide what to do about him. He grabbed a Winchester and headed toward the wharf. The 101 had left a man called Frank Reid to stand guard at the end of the dock. When shots were exchanged Smith lay dead. The rest of the band were arrested and shipped out of town. Frank Reid died a 12 days later. There is a large headstone marking his grave in the Gold Rush Cemetery.

The route to the Klondike was to cross the mountains and end up at Bennett Lake (the headwaters of the Yukon River) and then build boats to travel on the lakes floating down the Yukon River through Miles Canyon and the Whitehorse rapids until they got to Dawson City. There were two ways to cross the mountains, via Skagway then the White Pass route(45 miles); or via Dyea and up the Chilkoot Trail(33 miles). The more popular was Dyea. The White Pass was also known as the Dead Horse Trail, over 3000 horses died on the difficult trail. Over 97% of the people that rushed to the Klondike never found gold, very few of the remaining 3% made it rich.

The figures quoted a lot are 1,000,000 people planned to come, 100,000 tried, 40,000 made it to Dawson, 20,000 of them never tried to pan for gold, less than 3% of those that made it to Dawson found enough gold to make a profit, very few were made it rich. Those that made it rich, were the people who were there before the gold rush started.

The story goes that there were a few men staying at the St. James Hotel after returning from the riding

the White Pass route. They were quite convinced that it would be impossible to build a railroad through the route. They bumped into a man that night, a Canadian railway contractor that had just got back from the White Pass convinced that it could be built. Fortunately that they ran into each other the first lot had financing for the railway from British backers. The Canadian needed the money to do the job. With the railway, Skagway flourished and Dyea is a ghost town. Rumor has it that a small retail space occupied by a jewelry outfit rents for \$125,000 per season (\$25,000 a month). The National Park Service are putting on the finishing touches to a couple of storefronts. They have signs saying that they are taking proposals for usage of the space. They expect the shops to present a family oriented (not bar or brothel) shop and are expecting a year lease of \$126,492. The second floor of the buildings will be retained by park for offices. The park guide said that of all of the lease backs that the park service does, it makes the most money in Skagway.

There was apparently a lot of controversy over the name. The Tlingit name has been spelled Ccuque, Schkagua, Shkagway, Sch-Kawai and Skagwa. The name has many definitions "home of the north wind", "end of the salt water", "cruel wind", "rough water". Local natives offer two others "lady relieving herself on a rock" and another says it is "sound a sled runner makes when it breaks free from the snow and ice". There are actually two spellings used on signs around town Skaguay and Skagway. The gold miners tended to use Skagua as it was closest to the Tlingit. It did get a "y" added to become Skaguay and this became the accepted name for the place until the post office showed up. They filled the paperwork as Skagway and insisted on the spelling change. Captain William Moore who lived here before the stampede, predicted ten years prior to the rush that there would be a gold rush to the Yukon and this area would be the major route to the north, thought Mooseville was appropriate.

The weather has been clearing and warming since our arrival. The drive over the pass was great fun. Visibility about 30 feet (Bonnie says there were times she couldn't see the tail end of Millie in the mirror.) At what point does cloud become fog anyway? We were high enough to be in both. We just couldn't see anything. Eventually we got below the cloud and the scenery was great.

It was improving steadily and Sunday we decided we had better go on the railway while the going was good. The scenery is spectacular, it was a great trip and we really enjoyed it. There were places where you could see the original "Trail of 98" up the White Pass. It was pretty narrow. The railroad takes you all the way up to the summit and the Canadian border. There were a number of places where you could take pictures of the engine or the tail of the train from inside the train the corners were so tight.

In the morning we walked up to the gold rush cemetery and Reid Falls. There are three graves of particular interest, Jefferson "Soapy" Smith, Frank Reid, and Unknown. Unknown was bank robber who walked into the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce with Dynamite in one hand and a revolver in the other. He was surprised by the town's lawyer and turned quickly accidentally firing his revolver hitting the dynamite. Which exploded and blew the lawyer across the street, caused major damage inside the bank, and removed the man's hand and most of his face. There are stories about the man's head rolling across the street after the explosion. The Park guide did say that they know he died an hour and a half after the explosion. They also know that the marker is unlikely to mark the man's grave. As story goes, the manager of the bank wanted the man's head to display as a deterrent to future robbers. It is said that the manager dug up the body and took it home, when his mother found out what he did she put a stop to the plan. The head now, separated from the body, was given to someone and it has since disappeared.

The bank anticipating the worst since the bomb had gone off with the vault open containing bags of gold DUST asked the fire department to hose down everything and then collected all of the mud and

got a local jeweler to sift out the gold. When all is said and done they opened for business the next day with more gold than they originally had before the robbery. Go Figure! The run on the bank petered out and when the people came back to deposit their gold the manager told them to go away. If they didn't have faith in him yesterday then he didn't want them for customers today. He closed up shop and moved out of town.

We walked out of town and out on the Yakutania Point. A rock outcropping where you can look down the Taiya Inlet. Great place. Wonderful view.

On Labor Day there was a pile of people in town and everything was packed. It was also raining. I worked on a few things around the engine and got Millie ready to travel. We weren't going anywhere but it had been a few days since she had been started so we fired her up and everything seems fine by noontime we walked down town and had lunch at the Red Onion. I had the Madam Jan pizza (sausage, jalapeno peppers, onions and pineapple), Bonnie had the Madam Dolly pizza (Salmon, capers, onions and cream cheese). I liked mine better she liked hers better.

We got tickets to the "Days of '98 Show". It was a really fun show and gave a little history of the town mixed in with singers and dancers. They auction Miss Molly Fewclothes' garter at the beginning of the show. The money goes to the Eagles Scholarship fund which gives a scholarship to someone from the local high school, and no one seemed to be bidding, when someone finally bid \$5 I figured if I bid \$10 then it would at least start up the bidding. I got the garter. Such is life. The crowd was dead.



Taiya Inlet from Yakutania Point

Subject: Haynes

Date: Thu, 09 Sep 1999 16:46:11

For my birthday we did a day trip to Haynes. There are a couple of ferries that travel between Haynes and Skagway. The fast ferry advertises a 35 minute run, the water taxi advertises "Allow an hour for sightseeing and whale watching". The water taxi is a family business. The husband was captain that day, the wife first mate and their 3 year old was playing and sleeping on the top of the life jacket locker. They had another crew member that helped with lines and the free coffee. They would slow down for waterfalls and bald eagles (we saw about six or seven). We didn't see any whales but they did on the trip between our going and our return. They have humpback whales here.

We had a great time touring around Haynes on the optional bus tour by the captain's older and better looking brother. At least that's what we voted ten miles out of town. The tour goes out to the Rainbow Glacier and the Chilkoot Valley. The Chilkoot River is heated by enough geothermal action that it is open for a chum salmon run in November. This attracts up to 4000 bald eagles. If you have ever seen a postcard with 25 or so bald eagles in a dead tree, this is where it was taken. The tour was really funny and quite informative too.

On the return trip we had an all female crew. School was out so the crew from the morning had her six year old daughter on to entertain the passengers. A few granddads were having a great time, the little girl was a definite hit. The captain saw a spout of the whales were on the prior trip but we couldn't find the whale.

There were quite a few people sport fishing on the way back to Skagway. Fishing halibut I think.

Our trip was successful in the sense the bakery was open. The cinnamon buns here were second only to the ones from Braeburn Lodge. The bread was just coming out of the oven and hadn't finished cooling. Normally they froze the bread but she supposed we could have it fresh!

Bread and water for birthday dinner well at least I didn't have to cook!



Cruise ships leaving Skagway

Subject: Little Dippers, a MURDER, and the Ferry to Prince Rupert

Date: Wed, 15 Sep 1999 02:54:36

My favorite saloon in Skagway, The Red Onion Saloon, was having a benefit for the local non-profit daycare. It was organized by one of the brothel tour guides "Madam Spitfire". A really good tapas bar, wine tasting of Spanish wines, a fashion show from Miss Kitty's Buttonhole, and a silent auction for a pile of stuff. Great stuff. The fashion show was definitely a hit. There was some gorgeous outfits. Most of it was turn of the century fashions and was really quite striking. Bonnie liked a lot of the stuff and so did I.

The next night we figured we weren't going to sleep very well anyway so we might as well enjoy it. We went to the dinner theater at the Golden North hotel. There is a acting troop that works on a riverboat in Atlin BC. They do a Murder Mystery theater show. One of the local business guys in Skagway invited them up to do a two night run at the Golden North hotel. We could only make it one night and that was the night before we left. The guy invites them up to visit and what do they do, make him Sheriff and then kill him off, first scene too! Well we spent the rest of the night consuming a good meal, and watching them solve the crime. We had a great time and I won't spoil it by telling you who did the murder.

We left the lovely town of Skagway EARLY (WAY too early) in the morning of the 12th of September. The first thing after parking the RV was to check in with the purser for our room. He looked at our reservation and said "Would you like to upgrade to a real room? You get triple the space, sheets and towels!" We did. The showers were the best we had seen in quite a while. We ran into a bunch of people, a girl from Quebec who had spent the summer as a tour guide in Dawson City. A bunch of girls from Australia and a couple from Ontario.

The ferry run starts from Skagway and runs down the Lynn Canal stopping in Haynes, actually 5 miles out of town, Juneau, actually 12 miles out of town, Petersburg at midnight it looked like downtown,

hard to say LOTS of lights (including the northern lights, why else would you be awake at midnight), Ketchikan a few miles from town, and Prince Rupert. Ketchikan has six 24 hour periods a year with no measurable rain. With our luck it was sunny when we were there and we watched run after run of seaplanes ferrying cruise ship passengers around the area. We didn't get off the boat as the stop was around an hour and unless a taxi was sitting on the wharf there wasn't much chance of seeing anything.

We saw quite a few blows from humpback whales, the splash of one breach, and quite a few tails after we left Juneau. The inside passage was flat as a pancake, hardly a ripple. The wind was cold, definitely time to head south. Skagway was going to be closing down soon, everybody we talked to was heading out of town at the end of September.

We loved Alaska and will definitely go back some day. When we do our trip will be a bit different. Slower next time. An extra few days in Denali, maybe another in Seward, a couple in Chena. More time in the Yukon.



Prince Rupert is a neat little town of about 20,000.

Inner passage down the coast of BC.

Lots of boats (almost all power), seaplanes and is the 3rd largest natural deep water, ice free harbour in the water. The founder and promoter of Prince Rupert was a guy called Charles M. Hayes who went down on the Titanic. It has lots of boat toy stores and we inspected a few. Bonnie found a kindred spirit in one of the clerks in one of the art places. She likes beach glass too. They talked for quite a while and the woman brought out lots of little pieces, blue, pink, green, and pottery too. She and Bonnie had a great time. The shop was in a place called Cow Bay. Cow Bay reminded us of Seal Cove on Grand Manan. Quaint little place with Artsy shops, fisherman supply places, and lots of fishing boats, whale watching boats and that the local "Yatch Club"(Honest it's spelled this way in one of the brochures.) Cow Bay has really gone funky with the cow theme, garbage cans are painted black and white in the holsten pattern, so are light standards, dumpsters and a few other things. We are going to check out the Cowpuccino Café tomorrow. It looked good from the outside and it had two RCMP cars out front, considering they have a Tim Hortons in town that is a good recommendation! The local court house first foundation was dug in the wrong spot so rather than fill it in they just made a sunken garden in it. It really is very pretty. We loaded up some groceries and then bought some gas for the first time since the first of September. Whitehorse and Prince Rupert gas prices are not much different. Food is cheaper!

We will spend the day in Prince Rupert tomorrow, the Queen Charlotte Islands are a six hour ferry ride away and with schedules it would be taxing and expensive for us to make it this trip. If we were doing it again I would probably plan a week here to allow for a trip to the Queen Charlottes. We will get on the ferry to Port Hardy the day after that and the next day to Port Alberni or Campbell River, the day after that to the Pacific Rim National Park on the Pacific coast and then to visit with a friend in Victoria for a few days.