

Author's Note: I apologize for not writing for so long. I actually started the episode below a month ago but only just finished it.....and it still leaves us a month behind! I must admit that I've just been lazy and we have been having way too much fun. I will try to get us up to date.....one of these days.

May 27, 2010

Following our narrow escape from the winds and icebergs in Tracy Arm there hasn't been too much excitement in our Three Clowns and a Midget cruise lately except of course the nightly parties. Traveling with three other boats seems to give rise to a party just about every night. For me these are learning experiences as I continue to learn to speak Australian and the Queen's English. I now find myself saying stuff like "Righto", "That's jolly good!" and "Bugger" . This is frightening to me.

The other night the crazy Australian, Peter, gave me a lesson about, and a shot of, Lephroaig Scotch. This was my first experience with this "peaty, oaky" intoxicating fluid that is so highly prized by Englishmen, Scotsmen and apparently many other peoples of the wayward colonies of the commonwealth. To me it tasted like someone walked through a peat bog and then filtered the stuff through their shoes and socks. Yucck! I'll stick with Jack D single barrel. Thank God for the USA.

After Tracy Arm we all stayed a night in Taku Harbor before heading up to Juneau. After a couple days restocking supplies getting haircuts, etc in Juneau the Three Clowns and a Midget Feet have split up for now. Skie stayed in Juneau, Serendipity headed for Hoonah (probably to recover from all associations with this group) and CrossRoads and Cloudy Bay decided to make the long slog up Lynn Canal to Skagway and Haines. Lynn Canal is known for it's terribly strong winds, it is also one of the most incredibly scenic areas I have ever seen. On both sides of this mile wide channel and for almost it's entire 75 nm length, there are huge mountains rising directly out of the sea to snow covered peaks and glacier covered valleys. The current is almost always against you when heading north in Lynn Canal (due to the huge amount of snowmelt flowing into it) so we had a slow, windy ride up to arrive in the Disneyland like atmosphere of Skagway with it's 10,000 a day cruise ship passengers crowding into a town that has a real population of about 300. When the ships leave in the evening the whole town closes up except for a saloon or two.

In Skagway we learned of the towns colorful history and characters such as "Soapy" Smith and Frank Reid among others. We took the Whitepass Railway for a 3 hr trip that paralleled the 1897-98 gold rush trails to the Klondike. This is a fantastic trip and I would recommend that anyone who gets up here to Skagway to take it. Its amazing the hardships that people endured in the quest for gold with few having much to show for their efforts and incredible risks. The four of us (Diane and I and Henry & Janice from Cloudy Bay) had an entire railroad car to ourselves but we still managed to meet an attractive, interesting young lady in a shocking pink jacket with a matching cast on her leg and matching painted toenails. Being the nosy, curious type I inquired as to what misfortune had befallen her. "A gator bit me", she said. "Ahhh what bit you???" I asked straining to hear over the clackity clack of the narrow gauge railroad. "An alligator", she replied. "OK, yeah sure that's what I thought you said. Tired of telling people you tripped on a banana, huh? That's the real story isn't it?", I inquired. "No it was a gator attack", she insisted. As I was questioning her to see if there were any "teeth" in her claim, her mother and sister came over and confirmed the whole reptilian story. Sure enough someone had even drawn a set of alligator teeth on the cast marking where the gator hd sunk his teeth in. Still curious, I asked, "So why didn't the gator finish his meal?" . "I kicked him in the face with my other foot until he let go." Gator Girl replied nonchalantly. I must say that I was left dumfounded and speechless (a rare occurrence) while Gator Girl's mother beamed with pride. I have learned from this encounter that even Alaskan tourists can be quite colorful.

Well we've had enough of Skagway, so we'll be off to the quiet little town of Haines and their beer festival tomorrow.

Over and out!

Stan & Diane Heirshberg

CrossRoads N50-01