

A RAINCOAST CRUISE

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Introduction and Acknowledgments

In June 2002, I joined my partner in the Quesnel Power Squadron's annual cruise. This year the cruise was to travel the inland waterways of southeastern Alaska. A total of nine boats and nineteen people took part in the trip, some from as far away as Wisconsin and Nevada. For me, it was a trip of a lifetime; I had grown up around boats, but the closest I'd come to a boating experience in the past twenty-seven years was to ride on the BC Ferries.

There are some people who inadvertently got left out of my journal and some who deserve special thanks. So to Eleanor on the *Sandpiper*, thanks for being so kind and gracious. To Florence and Mabel of *Costa Lotta*, I owe an apology; I wasn't really after green onions that day in Wrangell; I was sneaking off to have an illegal cigarette. To Sharon and Gary Inwood of *Chaos I*, and Jim White of *Storm "Eh?"* without whom, I'd still be in Petersburg, to Gary Miller who asked me to keep a journal and to Don Smith--why I thank him will become apparent as you read these pages--a very special thanks.

Saturday, June 22nd, 2002

6:30 am. We're off. On the road, on the way to Bella Coola and Alaska. The first thing I'll remember about this trip is lists, endless lists. Things to do. Things to take. List them, cross them off. Make a new one.

Don and I turn out of the drive, confident that we've got everything, into the dewy sunny morning. Billie, the border collie runs behind us, won't turn back until he realizes he can't keep up. Both of us are guilt-struck, but console ourselves that we've taken care of all his needs. Over the next five weeks, watching Billie in the rear view mirror running, running will remain with me.

We drive down to Williams Lake, fuel up the boat and truck, phone Roy and Shirley of *Ectra* and head off over the mountains for the Chilcotin and then over the Coast Range down into Bella Coola where the real adventure begins.

It's been almost thirty years since I've traveled the Chilcotin Highway and I recognize nothing but the place names--Alexis Creek, Kleena Kleene, Anaheim Lake. I don't remember Nimpo Lake or Tatla Lake. It's all new to me.

At Nimpo Lake, we meet up with Roy and Shirley. A couple of hours later at the beginning of Tweedsmuir Park, we stop, take pictures of each other's boat and then head out for the long hill down. And, my, it is every bit as steep as I remember, except, except,--there's traffic coming uphill and they're not cars and trucks; they're campers, motor-homes, pick-ups hauling boats. The road's a bit wider, but still, it's an awe inspiring hill. At one point, the road seesaws back and forth three times through the same talus slide. I try to be cool.

We're down and motoring through the graceful evergreens of the Bella Coola Valley. Such a beautiful place, warm, sunny, luxuriant growth. Firdale, Hagensberg and finally Bella Coola, roughly ten hours after we left Quesnel.

Jim of *Stormy Eh?* is already here--or his boat is, *Ectra* is right behind us. Bob and Lora throw me off by appearing, because I didn't think they were on the "trip," but here they were, launching their boat on a short fishing trip, with a coincidental launch time.

By ten in the evening, we're all moored, and ready to check our gear in the morning.

Sunday, June 23, 2002

Today is a day of checking everything out, buying needed, but overlooked, provisions. I buy Don a proper halibut rod. He buys me a crab trap, a fishing licence. Beer, water tanks are topped up. Jim's brother-in-law and first mate Gerry arrives. Sam the dog gets to daydreaming and falls in the drink. I wander the docks, looking at the fish boats. They're all so different from what I remember from my childhood in Pender Harbour. And what a cross section, everything from home-built old-clunkers to sleek, new modern aluminum craft, and everything in between. Some look like the next boat wake will sink them.

This boating neophyte has made a few observations: Boats have legs. I knew that horses and wine have legs, but boats? Also, rafting has gained a new meaning. As we drive back and forth from dock to store, to truck and trailer storage, I make another observation that is not totally welcomed: boaters seem to spend more time getting ready, fixing up their crafts than they actually do boating.

My third and final observation is heads are not designed with women in mind.

We're ready to go. I'm in high gear. Tomorrow's the day.

June 24

7:10 am And we're underway. *Stormy Eh*, *Ectra* and *Fun-Ology* motor off up North Bentinck Arm (as if we had a choice), up Labotcherie, along Dean Channel, through Gunboat Pass to Shearwater on Denny Island.

The names are so new and so many that I'm lost and confused. Everyone speaks knowledgeably about channels, inlets, passes, current and tides. The weather is the pits. Quesnel was in the middle of a heat wave when we left, the Chilcotin was dry and sunny. Once we were on the water, the sunshine disappeared. Today as we travel up, down and across the various channels, we can't see the mountain tops, although the seas remain calm. Rain increases and by Shearwater at 2:30 pm I conclude that it really isn't a very nice day. We made a small side trip

into Eucott Bay where Don showed we where to put down the crab trap “on the way back” since we don’t have enough time.

Gunboot Passage has me standing upright, questioning Don on what he’s doing. It’s cool. Suddenly there’s more to boating than just point and steer.

As we dock at Shearwater, both of us notice the unpleasant smell of boiling battery acid. In drizzling rain, Don pulls up the engine hatch to discover two fried batteries. However all is not lost, as Shearwater Marine, at up-country prices, has a replacement.

Me? I’m curled up in the cabin, reading, sucking on a beer and handing over tools as requested. Cheerfully uninvolved, I’m glad that I know nothing about engines and batteries and all that stuff.

We dine dockside on a fabulous pizza and treat ourselves to a shower.

So far, this camper is not impressed. Shore facilities suck. At Bella Coola, they amounted to port-a-potties at the ferry dock, next ramp over (By the time we came back, though, they had built a laundromat, washroom and shower, but they were poorly thought out--toilets and shower in the same room--and the washers were expensive at \$5.00/load.)

Shearwater showers are miserably small, but fairly cheap, three dollars. There is a laundromat, but we don’t need it. The store has some tired-looking vegetables at steep prices. Fuel isn’t cheap, but we are in no position to complain because the dock at Bella Bella has been closed down because of spills.

My story out of Shearwater occurs when I was standing in the entrance of the bar/restaurant, looking at the wall-sized map of BC when another boater comes up beside me. He marvels at the fact that there was a road to Bella Coola. I sort of looked at him strangely as that road in one god-awful form or another has been there for fifty-odd years. Then he starts enthusing over the fact that there’s a road to Prince Rupert. I think, “Dumb Yank,” and walk back to the table.

June 25.

Day Two of battery troubles, *Ectra* this time.

The plan is to end up anchoring at Idol Point, fishing during the day. *Stormy Eh* has already left. *Delta Girl II* with Bruce and Lillian of Williams Lake/Ocean Falls have joined us, but their boat needs a little work done here at Shearwater. Don and I were to head over to Bella Bella to stock up on things like beer and bread, but since he and Roy have their heads stuck in the bilge of *Ectra*, I’m not sure of what’s happening next. I am kind of considering hopping on the water taxi for \$5.00 and heading off to Bella Bella on my own. I would like to see the place; when I worked for the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, one of the prime movers and

shakers was the chief at Bella Bella. I've heard lots of good things about what the Band has done over the years, and I'd like to see for myself.

It rained overnight, and this morning looked promising, but no such luck. By noon, it's socked in. Talking to a fisherman on the dock at Shearwater, I learn that he grew up in Pender Harbour, but he's a good fifteen years younger than me, so I don't remember him. I remember the family, though, Christmas--who could forget a name like that?

I wander the dock, talk to Shirley and watch the eagles. I've not seen so many in one place before. Shirley tells me that they feed the eagles at one particular snag in the yard. *Ectra* is running again and we slip across the inlet to Bella Bella to shop. I walk around, it's a lively little community but we're running late and I haven't much time to explore.

At 2:46, we leave Bella Bella, headed for Idol Point. We anchor in Raitt Narrows after trolling in the rain for the illusive coho. It is not a happy day for me. I spent most of my time waiting to be told what was happening next--I've yet to learn that's a large part of boating. I'd tried steering the boat around, but didn't do as well as I expected; Don made it look so easy. I don't take instruction well at the best of times, and when I'm cranky, I'm a terrible student. At one point, I told Don to stuff his boat and turned to flounce off--but where can you flounce off to when you're on a twenty-four cruiser in the rain?

At 6:05, we anchor in the Narrows, a pretty place, even in the rain. Our anchor holds, but *Stormy Eh* and others have problems.

Mileage for the day: 17, with the last five spent in the pursuit of a salmon.

June 26

8:30 am and we're underway. It rained so much last night, the bilge pumps turned on--first time in the seven years Don's had the boat. We've decided no more fishing until we're out of this weather. I'm happy with this; ocean fishing seems as exciting to me as shoving quarters in a slot machine, just a lot quieter.

Raitt Narrows is a beautiful, protected anchorage. There are impromptu creeks running everywhere this morning.

We pass out into Milbank Sound, feeling the rollers of the open Pacific for the first time. They are even, rolling but not particularly scary. I've body-surfed rollers this size off the coasts of Costa Rica and Hawaii (they were warmer there), so no problems.

At 12:14 We clear Klemtu. As fuel sources become scarce after Klemtu, we fill up the main tank with 145 litres of gas, fill three 25-litre jerry cans as well as the

outboard tank. We're off for Khutze Inlet, thirty miles away. It's raining a fine, constant rain.

5:34 pm. We're rafted with *Delta Girl* and *Ectra*. *Stormy Eh* is looking for a spot closer to the shore so that Jim can row Sam into a grassy spot to pee. It's cold and rainy as usual. I'm so bored that I've begun the Power Squadron basic boating course.

June 27

8:15 am We are powered up and ready to take off. I slept well, although the anchorage was not the best--strong currents which tended to pull us off the mud bottom into really deep water.

A gorgeous waterfall with a huge white boulder beside it was the highlight of Khutze Inlet. The waterfall has one main channel with four offshoots hitting the sea. There seems to be several tributaries flowing into the river, but they are lost in the mists and low-lying clouds. The mountains are so high and steep that they block all GPS transmissions. It was dead calm in the Inlet, but there are small craft warnings for today. It is not raining this morning and there is a spot of light where the sun might be.

As we continue up Princess Royal Channel, Don and I marvel over what we can see of the passing land. Narrow scars of white granite show through the heavily treed mountains. We conclude that these are caused by winter snows which pack up, get weighted down by the early spring rains and then slide down the almost vertical sides of the mountain, pushing a mess of trees in front of them. Looking at the mixture of rock and trees leads Don to remark that growth here is a form of hydroponics, as there is no earth to sustain growth. Trees root themselves on sheer rock walls, in every little crack and use the abundant rainfall to sustain themselves and grow.

10:20 am We make a small detour into Butedale to see the abandoned community. It intrigues me, even more so when the caretaker calls us and invites us back to take a look around. I give what is becoming the standard answer to any interesting waysides; we're on a tight schedule, etc. etc. Maybe on the way back...

Back to the homework. Skip the chapter on sailboats--who has ever seen a sail boat under wind power?--is the motor cruiser's snide joke. Dolphins interrupt my studies. The weak sunshine has disappeared, but most things have dried.

1:01 pm Cleared Hartley Bay, forty miles from Khutze. Weather has improved again. I even think about hauling out my sunglasses and shorts, but decide that that's pushing it. For the first time, the mists and fog have lifted enough to see the tops of the surrounding mountains.

I liked Hartley Bay-- a clean little village with wide-planked board walks rather than muddy gravel roads joining the various buildings. They are in the process of building a new tribal building and sixties/seventies rock music pours out from one of the worker's ghetto-blasters. As I wander about, a couple of women ask me if I'm lost and if they can help.

2:50 pm We arrive in Nettle Basin, Lowe Inlet. It's a nice anchorage, larger than Raitt Narrows, larger too, I think, than Khutze Inlet. It's prettier, the bottom is better and there's a nice falls here too.

Miles from Hartley Bay: 22

Total miles for the day: 62

June 28

Woke to rain again. Everyone's a bit depressed by now.

Had a good row-about last night. Don rowed over to *Stormy Eh* where we cadged a drink. I decided to see if rowing was like bicycling--once learned, never forgotten--and rowed us over to *Delta Girl* and *Ectra*, which were rafted, and we cadged another glass of wine. Rowing, by the way, is like riding a bike, and like riding a bike, is not improved by a second glass of wine.

The destination for today is Baker Inlet, only 23 miles away, so we are all taking our time.

10:00 am Underway

10:30 am Don catches our first fish of the trip, a good-sized cod. The good fisher I am, I comment, "Don, one of the rods is behaving strangely!"

11:11 am Sun and blue skies!!!

2:05 pm Just cleared Watts Narrows at the mouth of Baker Inlet. What a rush of adrenaline that was. Baker Inlet is a large body of water emptying out into Grenville Channel through narrow, twisty little Watts Narrows, and if you don't have the tide right, you are in for a good ride.

2:30 pm Anchored.

The winds caught up with us today, enough so that Don was able to complement my book learning with some practical observations and experience. While the winds were picking up all day, they did not become bothersome until we were in Baker Inlet, looking for decent anchorage which we found at the head of the inlet.

The only casualties of the Narrows were two wine glasses aboard *Delta Girl II*.

26.8 miles today.

June 29

4:40 am. Anchor up and we're away. We wanted to catch Watts Narrows at slack tide. Any later and we would be pushing against an in-coming tide. Fine, thin grey rain falling. It's early, so early that it's still mostly dark. Dawn is only beginning.

5:22 am We're through. A piece of cake at slack. I put the coffee on, pull out my books as we proceed toward Prince Rupert. Today should be a challenge; we hit fairly open water again, and there's a slight chop.

Once clear of Grenville Channel, winds are from the southeast at 20 to 25 knots. They gust to 30 once past Porcher Island, but they are on the stern, pushing us towards Prince Rupert. The seas are what I'll call greasy. The rollers pick up the stern of the boat and push it forward, with the stern coming around a bit.

At this point, I don't care, I just want to reach Prince Rupert. I'm tired of being the greenhorn, tired of sponge baths in lukewarm water. I just want the luxury of a hot shower and of being somewhere I've been before.

10:38 am Docked at Prince Rupert Yacht and Rowing Club in Cow Bay. I'm as excited as a five year-old on Christmas Eve. Much before they are needed, I've got the fenders down and the shore lines ready.

Poor *Stormy Eh* limps in behind us; *Ectra* and *Delta Girl II* are already tied up, and Roy from *Ectra* is on hand to tie us up--thank god because I still haven't mastered the fine art of knot-tying. Sam is obviously feeling the same way as I am; he leaps onto the dock, rushing for the shore, only to fall in.

The four Bella Coola boats--*Ectra*, *Delta Girl*, *Stormy Eh* and *Fun-Ology*--are moored at the Prince Rupert Yacht Club; *Costa Lotta* and *Sandpiper* are enjoying a "quiet retreat" across the way at Dodge Cove. After being confined to a 24-foot boat, tinned food in rainy weather for seven days, this cowgirl is ready to rock. No quiet retreat for me; I've bundled up the dirty clothes and soggy bedding and have my sights on The Breakers Pub at the top of the dock. I whip up a shopping list, plan my route around town before Don has even completed the paper work for our moorage.

I wait my turn at the shower and watch as Gerry comes out, with a grin on his face and a spring in his step. Moments later, I know why: the hot shower rejuvenates me more than a week at a fancy health spa. For this moment alone, it is worth the greasy, uneasy seas getting here. They were bad enough at the north end of Arthur Passage but the real bad stuff was at the entrance of Prince Rupert Harbour where the swells piled up with the tide and came at us from every which way. Plus there was plenty of traffic from small boats to ferries to freighters to

seiners, plus more rocks, mud banks and other navigational hazards than I'd seen in the previous week. All at once. And that is where *Stormy Eh* ran into problems. Her engine began overheating just as she reached the rough stuff, and Jim and Gerry had to bring her through the harbour entrance under kicker power. I didn't envy them, those seas were messy.

The crews from *Stormy Eh*, *Ectra*, *Delta Girl* and *Fun-Ology* dined at Smile's Restaurant. It's a Prince Rupert landmark, having been in business under that name since 1934 and many years before under various other names. On one side of the Yacht Club is the fuel dock; to the other side are some public wharves and the cruise ship dock with a humongous cruise ship tied up. (Or at least I thought it huge, but I hadn't seen anything yet.) Cow Bay is a beehive of activity with cruisers, yachts, cruise ships and fish boats coming and going.

June 30

Awake at 7:30 to, you guessed it, rain. It's a port day for minor repairs, shopping, sight seeing. Jim and Gerry have rented a car. *Chaos I* and *Capi's Craft* are due to arrive today. *Chaos I* is coming from Kitimat and *Capi's Craft* is being towed from Quesnel. We haven't heard from Bert and Lil and don't know if they're meeting the squadron here or in Ketchikan. Friends of Jim's son were to set out from Port Hardy in their very small 19-footer and meet up with us at Shearwater or here. We haven't seen hide nor hair of them and figure that the rough weather at the north end of Vancouver Island has forced them to turn back.

Don fixes the galley tap that has been my personal demon since leaving Bella Coola. Jim replaces the broken impeller on his seawater pump. On our way to the nearby marine store, we pass what Don believes to be Norm and Janet towing *Capi's Craft*. It was and they are docked at the public dock just a mile north of Cow Bay. All is set for heading north to Goose Bay on Dundas Island tomorrow morning where, joy of joys, we'll do a little fishing. (The littler the better in this would-be mariner's mind. I can't count the number of people I've met so far that said they like fishing but don't like to eat fish too much. Me, I'm the opposite.)

July 1 Happy birthday, Canada.

7:54 am We're fueled up and heading out. Still no word from *Chaos I* or from Bert and Lil on *Roshell*.

8:27 am We're waiting at the entrance to Venn Passage for *Costa Lotta* and *Sandpiper*. *Capi's Craft* is going to leave dock in an hour.

Raining lightly today. Misty.

9:45 am *Stormy's* heating problems are not going away, so *Capi's Craft* and *Fun-Ology* elect to wait it out with Jim and Gerry. *Costa Alota*, *Sandpiper* and *Ectra* carry onto Goose Bay on Dundas Island. *Delta Girl* had left for there at 8:00 am.

Some feeble sunshine appears while it is ascertained that *Stormy Eh's* fresh water pump shaft is broken and the nearest available one is in Vancouver. Since it is a holiday, it can't be shipped until tomorrow. Some doubts are cast on the reliability of Volvo diesels.

We repair for dinner to the Breakers, which Jim insists on paying for, as he does for the moorage for *Fun-Ology* and *Capi's Craft*.

July 2

Still at dock. The new pump arrives from Vancouver, but the mechanic from Prince Rupert doesn't. Everyone is antsy, wants to be off. At 4:30 pm, we resign ourselves to another night in Prince Rupert, regroup at the Breakers. Meandering the dock, I point to a small boat and say to Don, "Who in the hell would ever name their boat that?" *Zapjillski* is about the most unusual name I've ever run across. I have a quiet giggle over the odd names people give boats, and I think of the men who have named their boats after their sweethearts, only to break up down the road. But the boat is registered with the name of the now vanished love. Hee, hee.

Norm and Janet wander back from their boat, carrying fresh crab, dungeness and red rock. It is the freshest crab I've ever eaten, from the ocean into the pot and onto my plate in less than an hour. It also is darn good. We wash it down with Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon. Jim and Gerry haul out what Gerry refers to as the 'good' deck chairs. People wander by, stop to talk, comment and laugh. I begin to think that boating has its better moments.

And, oh yes. It's stopped raining. Prince Rupert comes alive when it stops raining. It's like a tidal pool after that first refreshing wave hits. Don's comment, as we were eating another fabulous meal was "We'd better get out of Prince Rupert while we can still get on and off the boat." Great seafood here.

But don't ask about telephone/internet service. Don and I had spent the better part of the day and most of yesterday, trying to find a place to plug in our laptops to download e-mail and send a few. No one knew anything and didn't seem very interested in finding out. I'd have given up in disgust, but Don is a persistent fellow and did manage to get us sorted out. I coin a phrase to describe Prince Rupert's City Telephone Company: nonchalant inefficiency.

July 3

7:10 am We're up and at 'em. Coffee's perking. The plan is to motor all the way to Ketchikan today to catch up with the rest of the fleet. It's going to be a long

hike--some eighty miles, some open waters and some concerns about the fuel range of the *Fun-Ology*--but we're all raring to go.

8:00 am The mechanic arrives.

11:15 am We finally clear dock and we're on our way to Alaska. For this run there are three of us, *Stormy Eh*, *Capi's Craft* and *Fun-Ology*.

This leg of the trip began with Venn Passage, a complicated passage which requires changing direction four different times, leaving little room for error because both sides of the passage are shallow, and there is plenty of traffic, including the local hot rodders who fly by perilously close to the markers, sending back their wake to slap against your boat. Never mind that there is a posted 8 knot speed limit. It's fun. I enjoy the passages which require attention and chart reading. Don uses his GPS and computer charts; I follow along using the old-fashioned paper charts. I get confused, though, as suddenly, we change from "leaving harbour" to "going north on the Pacific Coast." Red moves to starboard, green to port.

After we clear the passage, we pass Tugwell Island into Chatham Sound. The water is smooth as glass and there is bright sun and no wind. While it seems pretty open water to me, we're actually pretty protected until we clear the north end of Dundas. Here the chop picks up. Don stops the boat to clean the distributor again. The engine keeps dropping back from 4200 rpm to 3900, even 3800, and back up again. He finds no water and on we carry, on plane, across Dixon Entrance, headed for Revillagigado Channel. Out in Dixon, we pick up the ocean rollers with the chop on top. It's a bumpy ride, uncomfortable. Don decides to keep the speed up, as it won't be any more comfortable at a lower speed, just longer. It takes an hour to clear the Entrance and then it takes no time before we're flying into Ketchikan Harbour.

5:00 pm, BC time Moored at Ketchikan's Centre Harbour. Came in on gas fumes.

We're rafted to Ron & Eleanor on *Sandpiper*.

Miles today: 83

Miles in total: 364

Ketchikan strikes me as a weird place, cruise ship stop, streets filled with curio shops, bars and tourists off the big boats--and I mean big as in gigantic. *Infinity* and *Summit* are in dock. I count fourteen decks above the water line. Their passenger capacity is the population of Vanderhoof, plus a few. Another smaller cruise ship is anchored further up the Harbour.

We march off to customs, getting lost only once. It's the easiest customs clearance I've ever experienced. No formalities, no proof of ID. Norm asks the officer if he wants ID only to hear in reply: "Why? You know who you are, don't you?" He chides us gently for coming ashore, thus depriving him of a walk down to the wharf. He hands Don and Norm a single sheet to fill out, saying, "Follow the instructions on the back, check in with customs when stopping in places with customs offices--they are listed on the back--and give yourselves fudge room on the exit date in case you run into problems. And, oh, mail this form back once you leave Alaska so that we know you've left safely."

Welcome to Alaska.

The harbour is crowded to overflowing--it's the eve of the Fourth of July, and Ketchikan is ready to party. Firecrackers are going off all around, and rowdies abound. We're not on the same wave length. It's good to finally meet up with the rest of the squadron. Gary and Sharon on *Chaos I* are here, as are their friends Terry and Janice on *Janna B*. Still no word from Bert and Lil, so we assume they're not coming, deterred by aging parent problems in Saskatchewan. *Delta Girl* has remained behind at Dundas Island to fish some more and then head back to Ocean Falls. So the fleet is now eight boats strong: *Chaos I*, *Sandpiper*, *Costa Lotta*, *Janna B*, *Ectra*, *Capi's Craft*, *Stormy Eh* and *Fun-Ology*.

July 4

10:31 BC time We are fueled up and taking off for Santa Anna Inlet, 42 miles away across the entrance of Behm Canal, up Clarence Strait and then along Ernest Sound.

It is the wettest morning so far. I am not a happy camper. Coming back from dockside visiting last night, I slipped while boarding *Fun-Ology* from the swim-grid of *Sandpiper*, nearly landing in the drink, recovering, but wrenching my left shoulder, also leaving a big beautiful purple bruise on my shin. Plus I never did find a shower last night. Dinner at Annabelle's was very good, but very, very pricey.

It was good to catch up and talk to Roy and Shirley--I felt like it had been a week between visits rather than a day and a half. Funny thing about boating, you make fast friends real fast.

1:36 pm Still in Clarence Strait and fog has reduced visibility to two miles, and we have nine miles to run through a blind spot, one not covered by our charts. Two minutes later, we clear the fog, but I'm still feeling sorry for myself and not noticing much of anything, except for an aching shoulder and throbbing shin. I believe in suffering in silence, but I think my silence is deafening to Don. Too bad, if I really thought long and hard enough, I could find some way to blame him for my fall.....

4:20 pm BC time We are anchored in Santa Anna Inlet. *Chaos I* and *Janna B* have remained behind in Ketchikan because Sharon was running a high fever, and

they wanted to be near medical help if her temperature t didn't drop within a day. Heaven knows, there's isn't any help in Santa Anna Inlet.

The trip was 13 miles longer than originally estimated with some rollers, some chop. Weather was so-so. It was kind of boring. Until Deer Island, the shoreline was pretty distant--not much to see other than walls of sombre green trees, anyhow. Lots of fish jumping, though.

Miles today: 55.3

Friday, July 5

Oops, for the first time I can remember, I've forgotten to phone my brother Don to wish him happy birthday. He and the USA share the same birthday.

Nice anchorage, Santa Anna Inlet. We rowed around collecting opinions from the various boats. Then we had an excellent steak dinner. Afterwards Norm & Janet rowed over and we played crib. It was so damp that the pretzels drooped, and the cards had to be wiped down before each hand.

Janet and I won, of course.

Today we're off to Madan Bay in the Eastern Passage on the way to Wrangell, the more scenic passage of the two routes to Wrangell, according to our guide book. On the return trip we take the other passage, Zimovia Strait. We've all decided not to spend the night at Wrangell, but to arrive there on the morning of the 6th, do our business and then carry on to St. John Harbour where we will wait for the tides in Wrangell Narrows. The tides will be right in the morning, so we'll spend the day travelling up the Narrows, a slow but not tricky passage. We'll anchor at Papkes Landing just 13 miles south of Petersburg and then on to Petersburg on the 8th?? The dates are getting away from me. For most of today, I thought it was the 7th.

Chaos I must still be in Ketchikan or headed straight for Wrangell. No one has heard from them. Nor from Bert and Lil on *Roshell*.

9:57 BC time We're underway. No rain now, but it rained over night and we had a 110% humidity for our card game. This morning Don dried the cards individually in front of the propane-fired catalytic heater.

12:45 pm BC time We've reached Madan Bay. *Capi's Craft* has gone on to Wrangell. The rest of us have rafted, enjoying banter back and forth--and thanking Ron for the choice chunks of the 26-pound king salmon he had caught.

Stormy Eh has pulled out for Wrangell, but the rest of us--*Ectra*, *Fun-Ology*, *Costa Lotta* and *Sandpiper*--have elected to stay the night

July 6

8:02 am BC time Underway, headed for Wrangell. *Ectra* just ahead of us. *Stormy Eh* & *Capi's Craft* already in Wrangell. *Sandpiper* and *Costa Lotta* still at rest.

Sunny this morning.

10:15 am BC time. At the fuel dock in Wrangell.

Caught up with the rest of the fleet: *Janna B*, *Chaos I*, *Stormy Eh* and *Capi's Craft*.

Engine has been running rough, so Don bought some spark plugs, and replaced the ones in the boat. Two were badly fouled, cylinders 1 and 7.

July 7

The weather is gorgeous. The second sunny day, definitely shorts and sandals weather.

We all stayed over at Wrangell last night--good moods, good weather, good company. After finishing our chores--washing clothes, having showers, buying stuff, etc.--we gathered around on the dock, feeding Sam beer. A great time.

I remembered to phone brother Don who was excited to hear I was in Wrangell. Typical of my family, he knew more about the place I was in than I did. Apparently it played a large part in the turn-of-the-century gold rush with the Stikine River nearby. You can definitely see the influence of the Stikine on these huge waterways. We have been motoring through muddy waters for miles. Fishing around here is supposed to be great, as is crabbing, pawning.

Brother Don asked me what Wrangell was like and I replied, "Like Pender Harbour forty years ago, but with laptops." He laughed.

The only bad note was that some local hothead rafted us after ramming into the side of *Fun-Ology*. Both Don and I were off the boat at the time. We plotted ways to get even, but good nature and good moods won out. Roy, Gerry, and Bill just pulled him around and tied him up in our spot this morning.

9:00 am BC time. Cleared Harbour, but engine is running very rough. Number 1 cylinder is dead. The plan was to be towed to Petersburg by *Stormy Eh*, closely attended by *Capi's Craft*. But after some work on the engine, Don elects to proceed under our own power.

9:59 am Underway . All cylinders firing, but the engine is smoking pretty bad. I had all sorts of good things to say, but this engine trouble has chased them out of my head.

One little near disaster last night when I tried to cook dinner --Wrangell prawns-- and nearly burnt the boat down instead. Curses on alcohol stoves. Cooking on it is no longer a challenge, it's a sentence. No permanent damage, except for a darker patch on the teak spice rack. After the excitement, we retired to the aft deck to enjoy a huge meal of Wrangell prawns, every bit as good as advertised.

We motor slowly at 7 knots all the way to Petersburg.

It's a lovely day, calm seas, beautiful sunshine. The Narrows don't look very narrow at all, though they are shallow, most of the main passageway is only 20-25 feet deep. The surrounding countryside is beautiful and more settled than elsewhere we've been on this trip--other than the towns, of course. Plus the Narrows are full of navigational aids, 61 in all, I believe. I really like this part of boating; reading charts and then plotting and steering our way through and around hazards. It's fun. We had a tug with a full load pass us at the beginning of the Narrows and then a cruise ship passed us, going south. I wonder how it made out in the shallow parts.

3:00 pm BC time I should really adjust to local time, but I can't quite make the effort

Moored at the North Harbour in Petersburg.

Don says the engine is toast.

July 9

6:36 pm I'm sitting in the bar of the *Kennicut*, lead ship of the Alaska Marine Highway, headed for Sitka. Don is in our stateroom, having a nap. The rest of the boats are headed for Tracy Arm and Juneau. *Fun-Ology* is moored in North Harbour, Petersburg.

The engine wasn't quite toast, just Cylinder #1 was blown, a hole through the piston. The local marine shop refused to replace it, saying it would leave them open to court cases through their liabilities, etc. Great piles of dog turd. All they wanted to do is replace the engine at a cost of \$5500US, plus labour, shipping, and a week's worth of wait.

Don insisted that they reassemble the engine to the same condition as before. Even that task took until nine last night, and they'd pulled the boat at 8:30 that morning. It was a day of waiting, planning and then changing plans--a thoroughly disconcerting day.

I choked and nearly cried as I watched Don watch his boat being pulled out of the water. Ever since I met him last fall, he has been talking about this trip, "A trip of a lifetime," he said.

Taking his boat through the waters of southeast Alaska, visiting, and fishing with a group of other boats with people he knew. Then the weather was the pits. Jim's boat broke down. Gary, cruise master, couldn't make it. Sharon got sick. I proved to be less than the greatest travelling companion. And now this: his boat breaks down.

He went off to the shop with *Fun-Ology*. I headed back to dock aboard *Stormy Eh*. Back at North Harbour, we cooled our heels, drank too much beer and generally made fools of ourselves, or I did. While we were generally misbehaving, Don was trying to get some sense out of the marine shop.

He told me later that he could not speak when he first arrived back at North Harbour, because he was afraid he would burst into tears. He, who is so careful and respectful of everything, watched as they pulled his engine apart, unmindful of the mess they were creating. The ten-year-old son of the shop's owner scrambled all over, yanking at wires. Don said what bothered him the most was the change in attitude. When *Fun-Ology* was in the water, the message he got was the shop would be able to help him, but once the boat was out of water and pulled apart, the message he got was new engine, period. In Don's words, "They bugged about, searching for a reason to do nothing."

Meanwhile, back at base, I seemed to be always running about, just trying to keep all the boats informed. Finally the bad news arrives. *Fun-Ology* is going no farther. Well, what to do. Gary on *Chaos I* wants to leave the following morning for Tracy Arm and Juneau. The others, in direct relationship to the amount of time they've spent travelling with *Fun-Ology* are of a more ambivalent mood. Don and I are upset that we are putting a damper on the others' plans. They all work so hard at trying to accommodate us. Sharon and Gary offer us passage aboard *Chaos I* for the Tracy Arm/Juneau leg. Jim and Gerry offer to turn back with us.

No one seems interested in Sitka any more. It's obvious that time is running out. Sitka is a long ways away with some pretty rough water to cross. Every one else wants to see glaciers. I want to see Sitka. There were two places that really interested me on this trip--New Metlakatla and Sitka. New Metlakatla is definitely out, and now it looks like Sitka is too. Don says that as far as he is concerned, his trip is over. I'm not a very good house guest at the best of time--I firmly believe in Dr. Samuel Johnson's dictum that fish and house guests begin to go off after three days--plus I don't have any thing resembling a house coat or sleep wear. Even my T-shirts are too short.

The solution comes in one of those zany exchanges where every one is just throwing out stupid ideas. We were sitting in Harbour Bar in Petersburg, discussing options. I say, "Maybe I'll fly to Sitka."

Don says, "Why not take the Alaska ferry?"

And so here we are, going to Sitka, albeit not in the way we planned nor in a manner to make Don's heart leap with joy.

There's a couple of sidebars to our Petersburg experience, though. One, the first night there while we were drowning our sorrows in the Harbour Bar, we met Paul, the city councilor and acting mayor of Petersburg. He acted as our tourist information centre, recommending where to eat, where to stay (as it looked like *Fun-Ology* was going to be on dry land for a day or two), and where to get the boat fixed. As it turned out, most of his advice was better taken with the proverbial grain of salt.

The second story is far more interesting. Don is walking down the dock and he happens to run into this couple, and they start talking in the way that boaters do, and lo and behold, if they aren't the friends of Jim's son who put out at Port Hardy in their 19-footer, called *Zapjillski*, the boat I had remarked on in Prince Rupert. It turns out they have been in the same ports from Shearwater on at the same time as the rest of us. I apparently even said "Good morning" to them in Wrangell.

Monday, July 15

Petersburg - Wrangell: 40.8 miles.

Well, that was Sitka and the less said about it the better. Wet and expensive. The town's main industries are fishing and tourism. Anything with even a rag of history about it is tarted up, polished and a price tag put on it--or if possible, filled with tourist gee-gaws. The much-touted Russian influence pretty well ended when Russia signed the treaty selling Alaska to the US in October 1867. Other than the Russian Orthodox priests who were busy converting the local inhabitants, the rest of the settlers high-tailed it back home to Russia. The so-called Russian influence was reborn with the advent of the cruise ship.

I have nothing but praise for the Alaska Marine Highway. We were on the *Kennicut* and *Taku* with staterooms both going to and returning from Sitka. It cost \$195US for the both of us for the return trip. The only problem was the three days between trips, stranded in Sitka.

On the morning of the 13th, we were coming back to Petersburg aboard the *Taku*, when Don looked out in the centre of Frederick Sound and said, "Isn't that *Capi's Craft?*" Borrowing a pair of binoculars from a fellow passenger, he said, "Yup, that's Norm and Janet."

We arrived back in town, sodden wet. We walked from the ferry dock. There were no taxis to town. No buses and Alaskans have a strange thing about pay phones. If they see one unoccupied, they immediately hook themselves up to it and proceed to talk for the next half hour, even if there is a line up of people waiting. Most of these calls--I've listened in while waiting--are completely meaningless, with

someone they just left ten minutes ago or are going to see in five minutes. They then proceed to hold the most prosaic conversation you can imagine--"How's the dog? kids? Auntie Matilda? Yup, I'm just about to get a ride into town, see you in five." Then they get into discussing more far reaching activities--what they are going to do that afternoon, cousin Sue's wedding, high school graduation three weeks ago. Heavens knows what they have left to talk about once they're face to face. The ability to share trivia also extends to their use of the radio on boats. I had the doubtful pleasure of listening to two fishermen exchange utterly mundane information on the ship to ship channel for forty-five minutes, until Don got disgusted and suggested to everyone that we switch channels to 71, the pleasure boat channel.

Jill and Zap had gone on with the rest of the group to Tracy Arm and Juneau and then were headed to Glacier Bay and eventually Skagway. Adventuresome or fool-hardy? Take your pick; the rest of us just shook our heads, thinking that 22-footers and 24-footers are pretty small craft for these long distance travels, let alone a 19-footer travelling alone.

It was good to meet up with the rest of the crew and exchange war stories. Apparently Juneau was not much better than Sitka. With a few exceptions, the people were unfriendly and just about everything was over-priced. They enjoyed going up Tracy Arm though, watched a glacier calve and saw plenty of marine life, including humpback whales. We had seen quite a few from the ferry, but I think they would be far more awe-inspiring from the deck of a small boat.

After a day of laundry, we set off for Wrangell on a tow rope behind *Chaos I*. *Janna B* was already there, having set off yesterday. *Capi's Craft* had already gone. Later we found out that they had taken off in the wee hours of the morning and gone through the Narrows while it was still dark. Still a pretty impressive trip, Norm said. Going through Wrangell Narrows on the way up was one of my favourite parts of the trip; but on the end of the tow line, with nothing to do soon bored me, so I went back to bed and slept through the beautiful Narrows.

Today we are headed down Zimovia Strait to anchor/moor at Meyer's Chuck just south of the junction of Clarence and Ernest Straits. Weather yesterday and today has been fair--cloudy with sunny periods. Yesterday the seas were calm This morning we have a bit of a breeze, choppy waters and we're running against the current--at least for now. Don says the wind is 15/20 knots directly on the bow.

Zimovia Strait, at least so far, is more populated than the Eastern Passage, but not half so pretty.

10:05 am Rain has started.

11:31 am Cleared Narrows, lengthened tow line.

2:00 pm Anchored in Meyer's Chuck.

50.7 miles from Wrangell.

July 16

Meyer's Chuck is a delightful little cove, full of counter-culture types. There's a little gallery selling handicrafts and art, some outrageously priced, others more reasonable. I think someone from every boat bought something. I bought several jars of jam, including salal berry. I came back to the boat with a handful of fresh, new salal leaves to put into our evening salad, but Don said he'd rather I didn't. Pity.

It's a very good dock and the weather is OK. No rain, just 110% humidity at times. We throw another impromptu dock party. Sam, as usual, begs for beer. Jim is still limping from his fall down the Petersburg ramp. Norm, Janet, Gerry and I end the night with a spirited game of Chinese checkers. I think I'm regressing. Here I am in country like that I grew up in, playing a game I haven't played in forty-plus years. Although I don't remember Chinese checkers as being such a game of strategy as Norm and Gerry make it out to be. It doesn't help them, though. Janet wins.

Meyer's Chuck reminds me of the descriptions and photos in *Cougar Annie's Garden*. Huge old evergreen with rotting logs covered with needles beneath them -- rusty old pieces of logging and farming (yes, tractors and the like) gradually subsiding into leafy green salal, devil's club, ferns. There is the occasional house, some as decrepit as the machinery in the yard, others obviously summer homes being maintained and improved upon. A former lodge, now closed, has a passel of noisy children spilling down the ramp and onto the dock.

Don and I follow the pathways winding through the settlement, some of which lead through yards, cutting between the back door and sheds. Old boots, wash tubs and bits and pieces of domestic life are filled with seedlings and herbs--some thriving and others barely surviving.

We are told that there is a post office--the smallest one in the US--a school, and a store (open only three hours a week), but we never found them. The trail we think they were down petered out into a jumble of eight-foot devil club and thimble berries, so we decided to turn around.

One of the sailboats tied up at Meyer's Chuck turns out to be captained by somebody out of my past, a professor who taught a publishing course I took eight or so years ago. Small world, this boating.

It's now 8:45 am and we're under tow, bound for Ketchikan, thirty-five miles away. Visibility is about two miles. Seas are not exactly smooth. It's fairly open water here in Clarence Strait with big rolling swells with the wakes from passing boats. No wind, but waves are coming from two directions off starboard bow and off starboard quarter.

9:23 am It's gone to chop on starboard bow. Visibility is down to 3/4 of a mile.

9:37 am Rounding Ship Island. Winds are up, blowing from the southeast. Visibility clearing to 5 miles. Seas are a steady chop with lots of spray, much of it coming over the starboard quarter. Our late-leaver, *Capi's Craft*, whom we've not been able to raise on the radio, appears over our stern, coming up fast.

10:30 am Open water, big rollers on starboard bow, almost broadside. We're in Clarence Strait, open to the Pacific. I wonder whether or not I secured those fenders up on the bridge tightly enough. Don looks at the inflatable tied to our stern and wonders if it shouldn't be set free. It's a bumpy, uncomfortable ride.

10:53 am *Capi's Craft* has developed prop vibrations, five miles south of Ship Island. They can't go forward.

We listen to two other boats on the radio, one of whom is whining because the rough seas have made a mess of his cabin, "with charts all over the floor!" *Fun-Ology* is powerless to help *Capi*, but we are the only boat which can maintain radio contact with all the boats. The boats in front can't hear what's going on with *Capi*, who can hear every one but can't respond. *Chaos I* offers to go back, but *Stormy Eh* is quicker and unencumbered. Matter of fact, they are on their way before Don has finished his call to them.

11:16 am *Capi* and *Stormy* have met. The seas are so rough that there is no thought of tossing a line. Somebody gets the bright idea of tying the line to a scotty, which *Stormy Eh* can then grab and haul in. Gerry gets his hand caught painfully in trying to secure the line. Another boat comes on the radio to warn them of four to five foot waves ahead.

11:41 am They're hooked and motoring slowly along. The expression of the day is the "deep holes." Gerry's sense of humour comes across the radio loud and clear -- sometimes with more pithiness than is expected on public airwaves. It's a tense time for all of us, but none more so than that for Norm and Janet on *Capi's Craft* and for Jim and Gerry on *Stormy Eh*. New meaning is given to the phrase "calmness under pressure." Monitoring the radio exchanges, you'd think that these people were discussing nothing more pressing than the night's mooring--definitely not a powerless boat in five-foot seas, being blown toward the rocks off Caamano Point. Janet in a calm, clear voice gives *Capi's* exact position in longitude and latitude. Nothing in her voice gives away the fact that she's contemplating how best to get off the boat once it slams into the rocky cliffs and that she is weighing her chances of survival in 54-degree water.

It's tiring truism; the seas can build up so fast; but you have to be there to actually understand just how fast. *Ectra*, *Sandpiper* and *Costa Lotta* had cleared the passage in fairly calm waters and were discussing fishing, comparing hook sizes at north end of Tongass Narrows when the three middle boats--*Janna B*, *Chaos I* and *Fun-Ology*--first encountered rough seas which had blown up in the minutes after the first three passed. And just scant moments after we were in the open seas, the seas behind us had increased to four/five-foot waves.

In Tongass Narrows, the winds are still strong--25/30 knots, but fortunately they're coming right at us.

6:56 pm Finally we're all in Ketchikan. A hairy ride for *Capi's Craft* and *Stormy Eh*. *Capi* was dead in the water and being pushed toward the rocks when *Stormy Eh* arrived. They were calculating their survival chances. After a couple of passes, some near collisions, *Stormy* got them tied on and proceeded to tow them through five-foot white caps and 30 knot winds. The problem appears to be a bent shaft, but we'll know tomorrow. Janice of *Janna B* is refusing to go out in any more winds. Janet of *Capi's Craft* has nicknamed their boat "No Go," as in "I No Go!"

We're all drying bedding, putting things back in place and generally thanking our lucky stars. Janet & Norm are luxuriating in a hotel, complete with hot tub. They deserve it. At 6:30 pm, all seventeen of us are headed to the New York Cafe for dinner.

I think that's enough for today. I'm staggeringly tired, sipping a glass of wine while Don watches the bedding dry.

36.1 miles today.

July 19

It's shortly after 5 am BC time. Raining. Calm. visibility 2 miles. We're underway from Ketchikan to take advantage of the early morning window on crossing Dixon Entrance.

I don't think there's anyone who isn't glad to say good-bye to Alaska. For most of us, today is the end of the line. *Janna B* heads back to Stewart, leaving us after Foggy Bay. *Costa Lotta*, *Sandpiper* and *Ectra* are staying at Dundas Island to do a little more fishing. *Capi's Craft* is pulling out at Prince Rupert, our destination for today. *Chaos I*, *Stormy Eh* and us carry on to Hartley Bay where *Chaos I* drops our line and heads off for Kitimat. *Stormy Eh* then pulls *Fun-Ology* the rest of the way to Bella Coola.

3:15 pm *Chaos I* dropped the tow line in Duncan Bay. *Fun-Ology* is coming through Venn Channel and into Prince Rupert Harbour under its own power

Miles today: 82.2 Total miles so far: 720.5

July 20

Under tow to Hartley Bay. We left the Prince Rupert Yacht Club at 9.00 am. Seas calm. No wind. Cloudy, but no rain! We can actually see the tops of the mountains. What a difference the sun makes. I can remember remarking to Don on the way up that any one who saw the world in black and white should spend a day in Grenville Channel where it was a study in greys-- blue-grey, white-grey,

green-grey and even black-green--and probably some greys I never thought of. Today it's all pretty--sparkling blue water, bright green trees, pale yellow sandy beaches. The only grey left is the granite rocks.

6:42 pm Motoring into Hartley Bay under our own power. Mooring here for the night.

July 21

8:04 am Motoring out of Hartley Bay. Seas calm, no wind. Brilliant sunshine. It seems a shame the best weather happens after the fleet has broken up, as we are towed on the final leg of the trip home.

66.1 miles today.

July 22

Beautiful, beautiful weather yesterday.

7:00 am Left Klemtu under our own power. Just before 8:00 am, *Stormy Eh* hooks us up and we are headed for Bella Bella to fuel up and then on to Codville Lagoon to catch the elusive prawn and to overnight.

The weather has been beautiful ever since just south of Prince Rupert. The day before yesterday we moored at Hartley Bay, a pretty little community with a good dock, water and fuels. Don and I walked around the town--all new boardwalks and with a new subdivision in behind. Houses in the subdivision are built up on pilings or stilts to keep them off the boggy land. We walked up past the fish hatchery toward the lake but were told it was a good half-hour walk and that there were bears around. Good enough reasons to return to the shore and boat.

We stopped at Butedale, got out, stomped around. A grizzled guy in his fifties, his wife and his son spend the summers there. He has repaired three of the houses to livable condition and he is making other improvements around the place. He took us on a tour through the place, including through the cookhouse where they live and the power plant on the nearby river. He is fixing up a water wheel to utilize the power from the falls. Gerry and I wandered through the overgrown yard/lawn behind the old hotel. We found a horse-shoe pitch. Gerry had found it first and threw the three horse shoes he could find. I wanted to go down to the point beyond the hotel and store, but the trail was so over-grown that I chickened out.

At one time Butedale was a pretty elaborate little place, with a store (now collapsing onto the beach), a hotel, a well-designed power plant (left to rust, much to Don's horror), four houses, a huge cookhouse. Apparently it has been a logging camp, a fish rendering plant as well as a cannery.

Yesterday we moored at Klemtu, Being Sunday, nothing was open but there were showers!!! Expensive at \$5.00 per shower, but as Don put it, we had been saving

up for this shower. A peaceable evening, some tale-telling on the dock, a late dinner and early to bed.

Today continues beautiful, although there are storm warnings for Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound. *Ectra*, *Sandpiper* and *Costa Lotta* could be affected.

5:33 pm Setting prawn traps in the outer part of Codville Lagoon. We have anchored behind the island along with thirteen other boats.

July 23

It rained during the night and this morning is foggy, but it burns off in half an hour, leaving a beautiful sunny day.

We head for Ocean Falls today, stopping to fish at the mouth of Cousins Inlet where Don catches a nice coho. He's disappointed with the size, about five pounds. I think it's perfect; what are you going to do with any more fish? "Smoke it," he says. He also hooked a cod, but it got away. Just as we're rounding the corner into Ocean Falls, the winds pick up and shortly after we're docked, another boat comes in, having problems trying to dock in the wind. We're glad we stopped over when we did.

I walk around Ocean Falls, looking at how the bush takes back what was a well-established town. Eerily, the apartment block, or 'bird house,' as it is now known, looms over the landscape. Most of the people who still live here, or have moved in since, live down the bay at Martin Valley. It's a long walk and none of us go down there. There are showers, but the hotel is full with logging company personnel and the restaurant is closed to the public.

We had planned on stopping the next day at Eucott Bay, but we decide against it. I've had enough. Gerry's had enough. So tomorrow we head for Bella Coola.

July 24

5:49 am Leave dock, headed for Bella Coola.

It's a beautiful trip down to Bella Coola, sunny, almost calm seas. No wind. The water is a glacier-fed green. Both Jim and Don remark that they've never seen it so calm at Mesachie Nose.

1:04 pm Dock at Bella Coola

Miles today: 49.5

Miles round trip: 1001.8

August 10

And so ended my cruise to Alaska. For me, it was more of a journey than a trip because I learned a great deal, about boating, about people and about myself. Would I do it again? Not that particular trip, but other ones for sure. I had just begun to learn the fundamentals of charting and plotting courses, and I enjoyed that. I had begun to get the hang of steering. And I have mastered the art of putting down the fenders, getting the lines ready for docking pretty good, even though I would occasionally put them down on the wrong side. My expertise with knot tying still needs work. Ropes have a nasty habit of turning into a great pile of slithering snakes when I try to work with them.

But there's something really exciting about piloting a boat through channels and passages which require that you have done your homework and that you be alert about what you're doing. Next week, we leave for another trip, a much easier one this time through waters we both know. Me, because I grew up in Pender Harbour. Don because he has made many trips out of Duncan Cove in Pender Harbour. I can't wait.