

# *adventure*

# ALASKA

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## The Big 2 triple 0, Best Season yet!

Well, the trepidation of the millenial changeover fortunately proved for naught, as this was the best summer ever for those of us at Adventure Alaska. Even though we had the privilege of coming to know more guests than any previous year, somehow the wee moments of dilemma were even fewer than memories of seasons past. A dead van here, a few offerings to the tire gods there, but all in all a smooth, relatively nail-biting free summer of just the expected level of frenzy. Even the weather was better than most could recall, though that might be due in part to the sunny nature of most of the folks who joined us! For those that suffered the scattered moments of inclemency --thanks for not skewing the meteorological balance sheet too far. We can only hope that we haven't exhausted our good karma account for future seasons, because you know what they say about paybacks . . .

On the note of good times and good folks, we've also come to an organizational milestone. Given that for many of us at Adventure Alaska, this is as much a lifestyle as it is an avocation, we've concluded that the current level of chaos is just about right. In other words, we've decided that as a company, we do not wish to grow any larger. At this point it is and still feels like a family, and we're still able to connect with each of our guests. It is that atmosphere that we very intentionally wish to retain. Demand seems to grow each year, and in the past we've always tried to meet it. While it may not be textbook business strategy to turn down willing customers, we've decided to limit the number of trips to the current level. We consider ourselves exceed-



"Patrick and Family" on the way to McCarthy



*Iditarod '00 - Mary Williams and friends*

ingly fortunate to have the caliber of staff and type of clientele to even contemplate such a notion. We'd like to think that enjoying what you do is the greatest definition of success.

We've talked with many of you about the detriments to Alaska by large-scale tourism, and are trying to do our part not to be a part of it. With ever larger boats, buses and hotels, the drive to increase the number of visitors to the state is incredible, with the end result being a travel experience homogenized and indistinguishable from anywhere else. Bigger is not always better and we hope that your travel plans to other destinations might include that consideration. It's more often the smaller businesses that have the most benefit to the local community, in that that's where the bulk of their revenues remain. We don't mean to preach but it is an issue of increasing relevance in more places than Alaska. End of sermon, thanks for listening.

## Old News New News

Those of us here in Hope enjoyed the uneventful passing of the 1st of the year and the much ballyhooed Y2K threat, only to have it materialize a few weeks later. A series of delightful winter storms left Hope without power for ten days and cut off by road for five. Not that it's easy to overlook winter here, but it was a reassuring reminder why we probably won't be having any condo developments in the neighborhood anytime soon.

During the summer season we worked a bit at improving the wonderful bluff property on the Copper River.

Overlooking Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, it has quickly become a favorite of the groups camping there, presided over by the snowcapped volcano of Mt. Drum.

Another visible project was the completion of the "Longest Fence in Hope", separating Discovery Cabins from our most "friendly" neighbor. Sometimes in Life there are those for whom you can only marvel at what passes for thoughts .On a more visually pleasing note, we did at last banish the construction zone motif of the last several years by finishing a lawn, highlighted by copious flowers that flourished under Barb's and the Sun's care. I'm not sure how we're going to greet our arriving guests, no longer being able to apologize for the scorched earth look.

All in all, no big news, just the satisfying lack of any overwhelming.



*Left:* Gail Abend "at the border" of the Yukon and Northwest Territories

*Right:* The new, "improved" Yukon Queen. Note the size compared to the canoes underneath! (--Patrick) *For information on the controversial new boat see, "Rankled on the River" feature article in the Anchorage Daily News Sepember 25. (available at adnsearch.com)*

many of the 7-Day trips with great aplomb and lusts after a few camping itineraries next summer when she returns for indentured servitude. In the interim she's going to keep her blood from thinning by "summering" as a field worker at McMurdo Station in Antarctica. Photos of anything green will be appreciated. **Barbra** and **Todd** remain the principal company jesters, holding down the office world, construction projects and occasionally impersonating guides. Their post-season sanity restoration activities include flying a small plane around the country, buzzing cows and camping under the wing along the way. Upcoming plans include a marketing (strictly, no play involved of course) trip to Thailand. **Patrick** once again received the Most Masochistic Award, returning for his 7th season. After a stint in



Baja, his off-season intentions are to visit family in France and then explore the nether regions of Australia. Updates come sporadically from remote grass hut cyber cafes. **Chris** and **Kathleen** are back in their "real" jobs, teaching in the Wasilla school district. They both sound psyched for the school year and some day we look forward to seeing them other than when guiding! This past year **Lorraine** continued her fly-in dog sledding program on a glacier near Seward, with apparently encouraging success. **Joe** returned to our sordid team this summer and was king of the Dayhiker Adventure. Repeated bouts between his vans and obstacles both stationary and mobile, earned him the moniker, Windshield Joe. He's teaching in the Anchorage School District and looking out the window hoping for skiing snow. Other updates include the indispensable **Mark Bass**, who selfishly concentrated on building a cabin in McCarthy this summer and fall, instead of being available 24 hours a day to help with our picayune requests. **Hiedi** now resides in Seward on a sail boat she bought and manages the cafe/bakery her parents opened. And that's all from us.

## !!! Repeat Offender Program !!!

*ANNOUNCING JUSTIFICATION FOR THOSE GLUTTONOUS ENOUGH TO THINK OF RETURNING FOR A TRIP WITH US* —If you've survived one before, you get a 10% discount on the next one. If you've already stumbled back before this offer, apply it to the NEXT trip. We'd love to see a few of our friends again!

## Staff Updates

The roster this year at Adventure Alaska sported the same wonderfully twisted crew in its employ, with a fine new addition. Masochists they must be, and we're hoping that will continue . . . And now for a bit of their news:

**Jeannine** continues to avoid total retirement by handling, "special projects". She's back to fielding all of the initial brochure requests and mailings for a bit this fall after a social visit here in September. She led an expedition up the Alcan highway yet again this last spring to deliver a van, with the mother of past guide Sherry Ward, a sister-in-law and multiple past client, Olive Langlois. They've all reenlisted for a reenactment this spring, joined possibly by Barb's and Patrick's mother. There's already a waitlist and no men are allowed . . . Speaking of **Sherry**, she jumped ship this past winter for the world of real estate, moving to Anchorage and doing quite well at it. We were quite lucky to find another, though this one is spelled **Sheri**. Miss Bluestein was a wonderful addition, hailing from a corporate past recently sprinkled with guiding. She handled