

# adventure

# ALASKA

September 2005

Volume 11 Number 1

## Survived Another!

...Yes, another summer season comes to a close, with bodies and spirits intact. We managed not to lose, at least not that we know of, anyone in a crevasse, gift shop, or outhouse. All in all, it was a characteristically frenetic, but quite satisfying year. The motion has all been forward, though there are moments when it just feels like motion . . .

The last few years for the travel industry have been a bit of an uphill climb, but for the moment at least, it feels like we're back at what could be considered a "redefined", normal. Amid constant reminders of just how precarious is anyone's lot, the changing rhythms of the world, politics, and Life, sometimes seem increasingly difficult to fathom. Alaska at least, has always felt a bit removed (maybe that's why we're here?!?), and large carnivores notwithstanding, will most likely be increasingly sought as safe and reasonably sane travel refuge. The winters, (and maybe fuel prices!) will always help keep it so, and that we're banking on. So on we march undaunted, contemplating our 16th season!

This is an enterprise that includes many moments of reward, from the individual epiphanies of guests during a trip, to the thoughtful words of past clients long after their visit. The summer season is so full of all the little memories that make up that heightened sense of living that is the best of travel. It's that, "I can't believe we've only been here a week" observation that makes it all worthwhile. While it may be home for some of us, it's the visitor's enthusiasm that keeps it new and wonderful for all of us. For those of you that have joined us this season or in the past, we thank you for choosing our small company. We feel privileged to do what we do.



Way up North, Nunivut

## Old News New News

The new itinerary the "National Park Adventure" was an encouraging success, and so was the revamped, "Dayhiker Adventure". Both spend two nights in a row camping at our special spots, and we're delighted with the feedback appreciating the "rhythms" that now allows.

Next year the "Arctic Explorer" *The Matanuska Glacier* gets a tweaking too, limiting the group size to four, so that the extensive flying segments can be accomplished by an aircraft of our own bidding --ours. The air transport business is an increasingly tough one, and it's been awfully hard to schedule, when players evaporate with no notice.

And, as all is not trips, we've been continuing our incremental expansion of facilities, so that our guests can linger a little longer in some of the spots we think the most special. Given that the tour season is only a few months, sometimes it feels as if we're more in the construction business, building in support of that oh-so-short summer.

This spring, the Jack River (Cantwell) camp was improved with a gravel pad and shipping container to store goodies, a temporary dining shelter, and most importantly, an outhouse with a view of Mt. McKinley. Now if only the clouds would go too.

The biggest and most daunting project by far, is further developing our delightful parcel in the heart of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, just outside of McCarthy. If folks might recall, it's situated on an island with the Kennicott River on one side and McCarthy Creek on the other --a truly grand spot. The camping there's been a great hit, and the goal with cabins, is to be able to share that nook with those that prefer a roof. When complete, we hope to offer a few new itineraries that spend several days there, as there's so much to offer. This summer, last fall's cabin was finished (almost--always, almost), as was a shed and new driveways. A typically Alaskan threeway handshake deal of trading a bulldozer (in Washington), cash and miscellany, yielded enough logs for the next several years', six cabin project. Some assembly required though.



All in all, 85 tons of logs and lumber needed to find their way from Tok to the end of the road, a speedy 13 hour trip. In anticipation of the great log migration, Todd put together a uniquely hybrid flatbed/dump/box truck this winter and drove it up from the Lower 48. Uncounted (intentionally) hours this summer were spent enjoying the relaxing ride of a big diesel, particularly on that smoothest of surfaces, the McCarthy Road. Now, alas, may the spine mend.

Plans are next summer, dependent on finances and aging musculature, to put in a well, septic system, and build a bath house. Then next, five more cabins, a generator and hopefully, a small hydro-electric plant. At ten hours from home, every moment counts, and planning becomes a bit of an obsessive/compulsive exercise. Stay tuned.



*Jeremy Bartz swims in the Arctic Ocean - yes, that's ice behind*

## Staff Updates

The roster this year at Adventure Alaska sported exactly the same crew in its employ. Masochists they must be, and we're hoping that will continue . . .

**Jeannine** continues to avoid total retirement. She and Marvin made their annual fall visit, and were drug around on the fall "shutdown" tour. She did get to install her hand-crafted curtains in the almost finished McCarthy cabin --with more to come . . . **Sheri** Bluestein returned to guiding for us with a vengeance, while husband Michiel was a wonderful asset here in Hope, fielding babysitting, cleaning and anything else with aplomb. They both just received confirmation of employment in Antarctica this winter (Sheri's 2nd stint) and vow to return next summer, with as many extremities as remain unfrozen/unamputated. **Barbra** and **Todd** are still attempting to direct matters, wearing whatever the hat of the hour demands while trying to chase Master Liam in a semi-sane fashion. While Barbra ran herd on Hope, Dad ferried logs and "constructed". In between, Liam accompanied him on several multi-day trips (by air!) to Eagle,

Dawson and McCarthy. He's becoming an experienced construction hand by osmosis. The family was finally able to spend time enough together to recognize each other this September, and will be heading out for a grandparent filled trip for Liam, celebrating two 80th birthdays, with an October trip to Quebec. **Patrick**, believe it or not, returned for season twelve. An odd constant for someone who spends the rest of the year seeking sun and warmth! He is delightfully unplanned for his winter's destinations, and will most likely wander the U.S. in his trusty Trooper (*after acquiring one to specifically reside here in the Northland*). We're never sure where he is until a random update arrives from



*Liam and Jack discuss steering, and, who's in charge*

some remote cyber cafe. **Joe**, delightfully, was back at it this summer, guiding canoeing and hiking itineraries, with his few days off spent moving his household (4 at last count) to a new abode. Ah, the leisure life. His position with the school district suits him well, and with two young ones, he and Erin are almost outnumbered. Young Jack also got some fatherly glacier travel instruction, in preparation for his future guiding duties. **Kathleen** and **Chris Jones** are back shepherding young minds in the Wasilla school district. They sold their house this summer (due to atrocious neighbors) and are enjoying the carefree process of having a new one built . . . "Aunt Kathleen" to Liam, she continues to spoil him rotten, standing in and more than making up for any and all distant relatives, known or otherwise. We're thinking of changing his birthday to avoid getting more presents in the mail. **Mark Bass** and his wife Emily spend evermore of their time in McCarthy, adjusting to and reveling in, their expedited entry into parenthood by adoption. It's all final, and three and half year old Ross is a great little fellow and a lucky guy. 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!