

# adventure

# ALASKA

September 2015

Volume 21 Number 1

## Enjoyed

Hard to sum up a year in a word, but this one has been characterized by that above. And to clarify, that's in the present perfect tense, as it's still being enjoyed. The summer weather has been superlative, to the point of setting records, and the cast of characters that we sometimes call clients, has been delightful. The adventures personal, professional and sometimes even planned, were precious. Barbra's event early last summer of bending a knee in directions beyond design parameters, was fully field-tested this season with kudos to the surgeon, installed hardware and determination. As a result local ridgetops are once again under assault, and the Discovery Cabins flowers benefiting from care far better than that of grumbling battlefield-promoted family.

Each season of course new friends are made, and we always delight in getting a glimpse of the disparate lives of those that have chosen to travel with us. Sometimes too, entirely new ground is pioneered by events and people, like "someone" (yes, some know who) taking an unplanned dip in the Kenai River. Another memory was an 11 hour road closure on the critical, last-day-of-trip-before-evening-flights-home, necessitating an air evacuation from Hope International to Anchorage.

A few faces from the past graced us too, including a since-birth friend of Todd from far off Ohio, Phil and Caren Starr, as well as the inveterate glutton Don Gouge joining us in the Big Bend for some great paddling, hiking, and hydrating. A particularly fond memory of such, was dashing across the Rio Grande for the night, minutes before a hail storm broke out windows in the wee Mexican pueblito on the other side. The welts have since healed.



Enduring the Security Checkpoint on the "Escape from Hope"



*The Starrs, at home on seas similar to those of Ohio*

Another notable visit this August was that of President Obama, here highlighting some of the undeniable effects of global warming so evident in the arctic regions. (Yes, it is a fact.) We certainly weren't trusted anywhere near, but he, and an amusingly baffled entourage enjoyed postcard weather, all while wreaking havoc with airspace closures. While summer set records, so too did winter this year in the way of high temperatures (61 degrees in Seward in January!) with a resultant record low snow. The Iditarod Sled Dog Race was moved hundreds of miles north, and we consequently cancelled our trip based on it. Did enjoy the hail in Texas though.

## New News

For those of you that have followed the last several of these annual bloviations, you might recall mention here of an intentional attempt at a lessening of chaos in our operation, so that selfishly, we might do some of the summer things that we came here to do, lo these many years ago. To that end some itineraries were grudgingly shelved, and with a steadily declining interest in trips that include camping, those were among the first. Some of you may recall camping by the Jack River, next to an airstrip on a delightful bluff near Denali that we had owned for years. It's still delightful, but the property is now titled to a fine young fellow that is working on his pilot's license and plans to offer guided trips from there. The shipping container there that long served as kitchen, shelter and Happy Hour Central, is alas on its way to live out its days at our compound in McCarthy.

With a successfully lightened schedule and consequent newfound sanity (ha!) there has been every intention on making good the threat and playing more. Intentions were high for such last summer, but the ability to bear weight is

high on the list of desirables for many outdoor activities, and since Barbra could not, nascent plans for hijinks were thus re-stamped, "2015". We did our best this year to make up for it, with some fantastic hikes, paddles and some longer forays to music festivals. We're not calling it retirement, but definitely practice.

As not to lead you to believe that there's some groundswell of sanity afoot, do remember that we've ensured keeping life nutty by opening that wee operation in the nearby state of Texas. It's been a thoroughly enjoyable venture with just the proper smattering of clients, all veterans of the North. A couple of unanticipated avenues have proven fun too, such as repeatedly hosting a hiking group that uses The Compound as a base, as well as some charter flying by Todd for a local resort. It's a fantastically wild neighborhood, and even if you don't visit, take a peek at the website [www.adventurealaskatours.com/bigbend](http://www.adventurealaskatours.com/bigbend) and get an idea of why we think it's pretty special. C'mon down!



*Never too far from a bar . . .*

Speaking of websites, we did just redo ours this summer, to make it less reminiscent of a bad 80's haircut, as well as to add a now mandatory, "mobile friendly" capability. Never thought of booking a trip on a phone, which might possibly indicate an expired membership in, The Younger Generation. We did in recent years also join the age of social media. Yes, we're still Neanderthals but we do have a Facebook page. If so inclined, become a "fan" and receive periodic updates. No, no twittering. Also, if you'd be inclined, trip reviews on TripAdvisor.com are very much appreciated. Thanks.

## Staff Updates

As for staffing, we've slowly pared that down through attrition, in keeping with the stated glide path of less. Still, and hopefully forever in the saddle, is of course **Patrick** (his 22nd year with us!). He shoulders much of the guiding, and as many of you can attest, he's consummate at it. Exciting news from his front, is that he completed his very first tours in France last fall. After more than two decades of pondering it (and fending off many requests), last year he led northern guests of ours on a custom experience in Brittany, and will this year feature Provence. If you've ever thought of a truly

personal experience in that fine country . . . **Sheri** and **Michiel** continue to manage their long absences apart, by making the most of when they're not. She worked on South Georgia Island last winter assisting visitors to that remote locale, and has just finished extensive training in the operation of inflatable Zodiac boats, in order to safely guide her charges on outings off of a small "experience oriented" cruise vessel. Itineraries may even include Alaska! Michiel will again be returning to Antarctica, to the small outpost of Palmer Station. The less exotic portion of the year for them is now based out of a delightful abode in the south of France. We're very much looking forward to visiting there next year, and maybe even all playing tourist with Patrick as guide! For those of you who remember guide **Heidi** from the '90's, she (and her husband and two daughters) bought land in our wee community of Hope last fall, and now have a foundation in and the beginnings of walls up, as we speak. **Joe** and his family (also with a cabin in Hope!) returned to the Yukon of guiding memory this summer, for a great family river trip on that familiar stretch from Dawson City to Eagle. Liam and Todd were in Eagle to assist, just like a "real" trip. See, it really is a family.



*Would you travel with these obvious pirates???*

Speaking of another one, **Barb, Todd and Liam** did successfully get in a nearly inordinate amount of play. A truck/camper was purchased Outside last fall to aid in that burdensome endeavor. It served admirably for backcountry adventures in northern California, and again this spring in the wilds of Washington, before being lazily piloted back by "the boys", to aid in further explorations of the North. A fall trip is planned to fete the 90th birthdays of both of Liam's grandfathers, and another later to accompany a grandmother through the Panama Canal. In between, Todd will head to the Big Bend and most likely back across the border a bit for a language school, while Barbra makes sure that Liam regularly makes the 100 yard stroll to his. Then there's France . . .

## !!! 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. Maybe try a new itinerary or another season --The Iditarod! Or, the Big Bend! We'd love to see you again.