

VACATIONS – CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ALASKA

May 17-27, 2008

Bill, Isabel, Beth, Jim, Barb and Bill

United Airlines 737 - 11am Philly to O Hare Airport, Chicago 12:22-757 depart 3 pm to Anchorage - arrival at 6:55 pm (10:55 pm Phila.)
Barb & Bill leaving Boston to meet us in Chicago



This was an Alaskan Cruise on the Coral Princess

Saturday, May, 17, 2008

Jim and Beth picked us up at our home in Richland at 6:25 am., a very early start of a very long day.

Driving on to Bev's in Wallingford, she then went with us to the Philadelphia Airport, dropped us off and took my car back to her home 'til the 27th. We left at 11:00 am, flying to O Hare Airport where we soon met Barb and Bill who had flown in from Boston. Now, the six of us boarded at 3:00 pm for our flight to Anchorage. Arriving at 6:55 pm, (10:55 pm) it meant that we had been up more than sixteen hours and still hadn't arrived at our hotel.

Because it was still light, we did a little walking around after arriving at the Comfort Inn.



Bill, Barb, Jim, Isabel, Beth, Bill



Bill, Isabel, Beth, Jim, Barb, Bill

Sunday, May 18, 2008

After a room-service breakfast, courtesy of Beth, the six of us took the motel van to a nearby street fair for a couple of hours. Later we went to the Captain Cook Monument and then to the “Snow Goose” restaurant for supper and an early turn-in for Isabel and me. Prior to our trip I had been ill for almost two months and it was questionable as to whether I was even going. But the Doctor felt that I was recovering steadily and that the trip would help speed-up the recovery. It did!

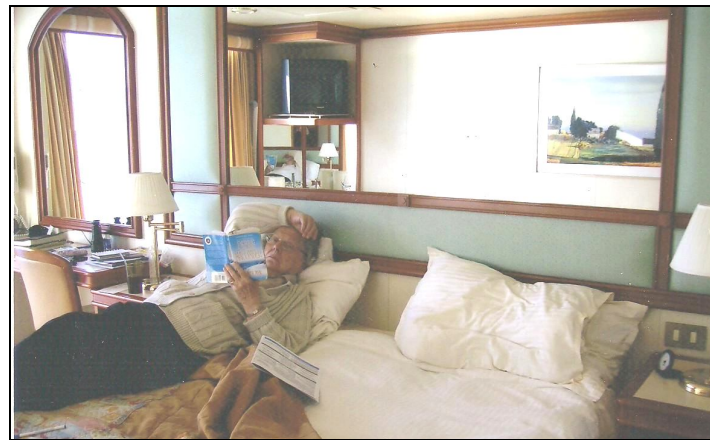
Monday, May 19, 2008

Following another in-room breakfast, courtesy of Beth and Barb, we took the Alaska Railroad to Whittier where we were to board our cruise ship “The Coral Princess.” The train ride was wonderful, fast, smooth and picturesque – through mountainous areas and along the bay waters.

Because of the large number of people on a cruise ship, boarding takes several hours and is very casual. So, just before boarding, we went on a small tour boat “the Emerald Sea.” for an afternoon scenic cruise. The boat was docked right next to the cruise ship and was there for that purpose. The boat was similar to a very small river tour boat on the Rhine, with an enclosed lower deck with tables and chairs and a food bar, and then an open upper deck. It accommodated about 50 or 60 tourists. We enjoyed the “all you can eat” luncheon as we viewed snow-capped mountains and approached several glaciers. We even saw a sea otter and a seal as well as a variety of birds on the mountain ledges.

Boarding the “Coral Princess” a huge ship – pictured at the top - with 2,000 passengers and a crew of 900, we were taken to our small stateroom,

clean and stylish with a queen-size bed, two chairs, two bed-side tables, a desk, closet, bath and shower. Everything compact. Two sliding doors, the width of the stateroom opened onto a private covered outside balcony. I spent many hours there.



The ship was built in 2002, weighs 91,627 tons, is 964' long and 105 broad. It cruises at 21.5 knots, has six levels for staterooms, and ours is on the 2nd level from top with 4 levels below. There are 16 levels altogether with levels 4-16 above water. We are level 11, meaning 7 above water level and just 4 levels from the top. That makes nice smooth sailing.

Before we set sail, there was an emergency training session for all passengers demonstrating the use of life-jackets and telling us of procedures to follow, if necessary.

Our first meal was a sit-down dinner at 8:30 pm – roast beef, rock fish, shrimp and so much more. Fantastic!

The ship started sailing at about 9:15 pm. Barb and Bill are just two staterooms away on the same level, and Beth and Jim are on the other side.



Elegance



Tuesday, May 20, 2008

After a fabulous buffet breakfast, we relaxed on our private balcony which has a four-foot high glass wind-break in the front, which allows for a clear view of the beauty of the waters and the surrounding mountains. I did not realize before this trip, that the “inside passage” means that there is land on both sides of the ship in the northern waters off Alaska. We are in College Fjord. So different than sailing on the open ocean waters with nothing to see but water. We must do this again. Continued sailing, eating and resting!



WHAT A LIFE

Wednesday, May 21, 2008

Today we arrived at Glacier Bay, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and numerous glaciers. The captain sailed the ship quite close to one of the glaciers so that we could see the “calving” – the break-off – of large chunks of ice into the bay.

After another magnificent supper, Jim and I attended a stage show with seven musicians performing in one of the large theaters. Barb and Bill played miniature golf on board the ship. Beth and Barb played shuffleboard.



Thursday, May 22, 2008

When we woke up this morning at 6:30 am, we were docked in Skagway Harbor. We had ordered room service for breakfast and then at 7:30 boarded a train that was waiting for us on the other side of the dock, just a few feet from the gangplank. We traveled up the mountain on the “White Pass Railroad” following the trail of the Gold Rush of the 1890’s to the Yukon. Wonderful experience. Reaching the top, the engine moved onto a siding to the back of the train, and down the mountain we went.



Barb Beth, Bill M, Bill Z, Isabel



Upon returning to the dock, I – still not feeling up to par – went to our stateroom while the others walked and shopped in Skagway.

The weather thus far has been wonderful, no rain yet, blue sky, puffy clouds, 45 degrees. Ship moved out at 7:30 pm.

Friday, May 23, 2008

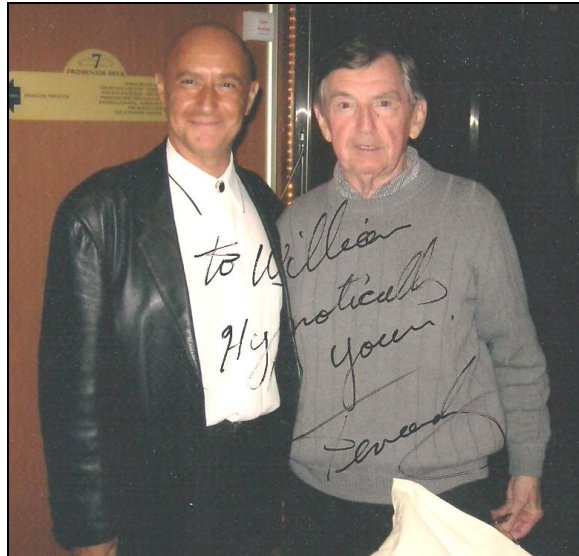
Time is passing swiftly here on our seventh day. Waking up, we found that ship docked at Juneau.

After more eating – surely, I am regaining the ten pounds I had lost – we disembarked and took the Mount Roberts tramway to the top of the adjoining mountain and attended a small theater-movie and lecture on the Thinglit Indians of Alaska. The over-look was magnificent, looking down upon the ship and city.



Jim and I went to one of the on-board theaters and saw a fantastic hypnotist - Fernandez - perform. We talked with him afterwards and found him to be a very friendly, cordial individual. Upon returning home to

Richland, I sent him a photo that Jim had taken of me standing with him, and Fernandez autographed it and returned it to me in the mail.



Saturday, May 24, 2008

Waking up at 7:00, the ship was making its final approach to Ketchikan. It was interesting to watch from our balcony as it docked. Once again, I stayed on board as the family all went ashore. It is obvious that life in these Alaskan towns is dependent upon the tourist trade.

Sitting on the balcony overlooking the Bay, there is another cruise ship in the harbor and several small boats. Also, there are seven seaplanes nearby.



Beth, Jim, Barb, and Bill took an hour-long flight landing not only on a river nearby, but also on top of one of the glaciers. After shopping in town, everyone took a cycle-taxi back to the ship.



Beth, Isabel and Barb

Isabel came back on board and we went to an ice-cream bar on the 14th level and sat at the edge of the outdoor open top swimming pool and hot tub. After supper the six of us went to another theater on board to hear big-band music by six musicians.

Sunday, May 25, 2008

Waking up at 7:00 am we are on the open sea en-route to Vancouver but will not arrive until 6 or 7 am Monday morning. Beautiful, sunny, 60 degrees, blue sky. Very casual day, and after lunch around the pool, I actually went swimming. This pool is covered but the glass top roof can be slid open. Another pool is on the top deck and is uncovered all the time.



Bill in pool



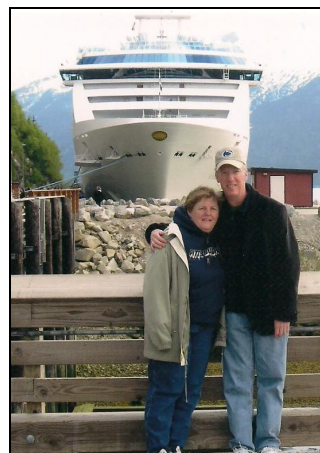
On this last evening, the six of us went to the Bordeaux Restaurant on board to celebrate our wedding anniversaries – Barb and Bill, eight; Beth and Jim, thirty; Isabel and me, fifty-eight. The women all dressed up for the occasion. Isabel and I topped off the day by sitting on the aft-deck watching the sun go down, closing a most wonderful cruise, our first ever.



Monday, May 26, 2008



Barb & Bill



Beth & Jim

This is Memorial Day back home, but here we are in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, as the ship moves slowly to its final berth. The harbor is beautiful, overlooking high-rise buildings in the city.

After breakfast, we were instructed to gather in groups located in several places throughout the ship waiting for instructions to disembark and gather our baggage.

We spent the day at the Blue Horizon Hotel in the center of Vancouver, a first-class hotel. We are on the 12th floor with a tiny balcony for two chairs overlooking the busy down-town activities. Isabel and I took a very brief walk and went back to the room while the others toured about.



Snow plow on train

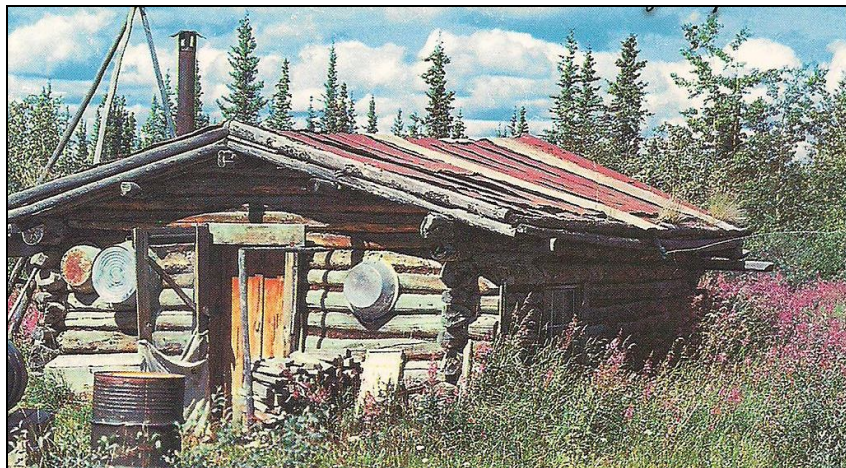
Tuesday, May 27, 2008

We had to get up at 4:15 am to get the limousine to the Vancouver Airport at 5:00 am for our 7:15 am flight to Denver then Philadelphia. Barb and Bill were flying directly to Chicago then Boston. With a delay in taking off from Vancouver, we almost missed our flight to Philly, and had to run through the terminal to catch it.

Arriving in Philly, Bev met us, took us to her home. We dropped her off in Wallingford and drove on to Richland – without our luggage - which was delivered here on the next day.



This vacation was one of the best. Because of my prior illness, the trip was recuperative as well as being so interesting in traveling in a different way – a cruise – and seeing Alaska as well.



OUR RETIREMENT HOME IN ALASKA

END OF CHAPTER EIGHTEEN