

The Alaskan Adventure

of *Sponge Buzz Wetpants* and *Sidekick Ballast*



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Treated to a wonderful Christmas present by their loved ones,
Sponge Buzz Wetpants and his sidekick *Ballast*, spent 8 days fishing waters around

Sitka, Alaska in August 2008. *The Alaskan Adventure* is a collection of stories, and already we have one. Buzz spilled some water on the leather seats of the boat and, much to the horror of hostess Arlene, mopped it up with the seat of his pants. Brother Jack, a big man at 6'4" and 200+, had to be positioned carefully when all were on the bridge to keep the boat level. Hence *Sponge Buzz Wetpants* and *Ballast* forever after!



Approaching Juneau (just a little north of Sitka), this was the last time we would see the sun for a few days.



Our very animated stewardess...we were the only passengers in this section during the Juneau - Sitka leg.



Approaching Sitka from Juneau...we would be sailing past these islands within the hour as we headed north to Kalinin Bay.



The mother boat was the "R&R", shown here later in the voyage...a 33-foot Bayliner.



David and Arlene Webb shared skipper duties on the R&R.



Sponge Buzz was a little concerned when David told him this was the fishing gear he'd be using!



We towed the fishing boat, *Maranatha*, when under way...seen here through the plastic curtain on the bridge of the *R&R*.



Maranatha - "Our Lord comes"



The REAL skipper was *Sweetie*!



Arlene was primary skipper of the *Maranatha*, consistently putting us right on top of the fish!



Arlene was also the chef, working miracles in the cramped galley. *Sponge Buzz* was allowed to assist with dishwashing...or was it punishment for using his thumb on the reel spool...



The fast-ferry catamaran *Fairweather*, latest addition to the Alaska Marine Highway System.



Leaving the *R&R* behind in Kalinin Bay, headed for first fishing.



Minutes later, the first silver. This was gonna be easy!!



Snatching up a morsel we left behind.



The first king (Chinook) salmon, thought at first to be a silver. Because we couldn't keep kings, this one was released with no harm to the fish.



Back to Kalinin Bay for the night. This boat didn't appear to be manned. It lost its anchorage the second night, a stormy one that caused us to stand anchor watch all night long.



Morning of second day, second and last king.



Second day's salmon catch - 5 silvers, 3 humpbacks...



...and a few *brown bombers*...good eating!!



Our neighbors for night #2 in Kalinin Bay...probably the CEO of an oil company...definitely not a fishing boat!

Breakfast for Day 3...an *ugly*
fish and a *stupid fish*.



The morning of the third day, David took us out early to
"catch breakfast"...two *ugly fish*! Good eating!



Bottom fish were so easy to catch that Jack later caught this *stupid fish* and *ugly fish* on a single bait! Both good eating!



Photo by Jack

Arlene and Jack took the first batch of salmon to Sitka for processing and shipment to Tacoma. On the way back to Kalinin bay, they saw this ferry, the *Matanuska*. We would see it again on Day-8.



Usually the smoothest leg of the journey, *Peril Straits* was anything but calm! 4 to 5 foot seas in places!



Didn't need radar for Peril Straits because visibility wasn't bad, but we did need it later in heavy fog.



Used GPS everywhere we went...both boats. In this mode, it gave speed, bearing, water depth, and location in lat/long.



Safely inside Appleton Cove, I considered the rainbow to be a divine protective "gate" from the 5-foot seas on the other side of the rainbow.



Keeping mostly dry while catching bait for the crab traps.



The reward the next morning...all Dungeness crabs, with several "keepers" already on the deck of the boat.



Appleton Cove...very calm on second day. There was a Forest Service cabin on shore, barely visible through the trees.



The *R&R* and *Maranatha* safely at anchor while *Sponge Buzz & Ballast* check the cabin.



Looked like a castle to me...five beds, table, stove, wood, and an outhouse...

7-30-08 to 8-6-08

Mike, Mark, Guy, & Tracy here for a week of R.R., alpine deer hunting, trout fishing, salmon trolling, halibut fishing.

We got some of everything, and had a good time. Rained the 1st 3 days and then got nice. Not many salmon in the streams, did good on dollies, OK on cutthroats, caught the Kings, cohos & 2 sockeye. Did well on halibut, got to the alpine twice & that turned out well also.

The young brown bear came around 3 times this week, chewed up a jerry jug (empty) & almost got the inflatable twice—once he came within 40' while 2 of us were packing the inflatable.

Saw 8 different brown bears while trout fishing on 7-31. Mosquitoes are bad.

Left plenty of kindling & firewood split for the next campers, stove oil tank is full, donated an axe.

Lots of whales at the mouth of Rodman—bubble net feeding. Saw many dogs on the beach. More sailboats than powerboats anchored up in Appleton almost every night.

Good salmon berry & blueberry year

Ciara, Chasen & Leica
were here ☺
8/13/08

...and a log left by previous visitors. Note the entry about the "young brown bear". That same bear had ruined the inflatable boat of visitors 3 weeks earlier. They had to swim back to their fishing boat! Brrr....



5th and 6th nights...Warm Springs Bay. A dozen or so summer residences, some quite elaborate...plus a beautiful waterfall, and a **bath house!**



David and Jack with the catch of the day...look carefully to see it. That and other fish "parts" became bait for shrimp pots set out the next day.



The *Red Bluffs*...iron ore, probably hematite. Note calm waters in Chatham Straits...our first in open water!



First glimpse of the sun in five days!!



Red Bluff's Bay...very calm, beautiful...site of a former fish processing plant that was destroyed rather than risking it falling into the hands of the Japanese during WW-II.



Red Bluffs Bay was full of beautiful waterfalls. This would Probably be a national park in the lower 48!



It's also full of jumbo shrimp (prawns). We set out four traps.



Back to Warm Springs for a second night.



On our way back to Warm Springs, we fished for halibut. Jack and I each caught a nice one like this 40-pounder, and several smaller ones.



Photo by Jack

Sponge Buzz wondering if there is one more halibut in the halibut hole!



Photo by Jack

Japanese wooden tub, filled with steaming hot mineral springs water.



Evening of 2d night at Warm Springs. Several commercial boats overnighted.



Walkway to mineral springs and Baranof Lake above waterfall.



Lake outlet, going down to falls.



Baranof Lake above the falls...the evening sky reflected beautifully.



Baranof Lake reminded Jack and me of Panhandle Lake, one of the many lakes around Mt. St. Helens we hiked into in before she blew her top.

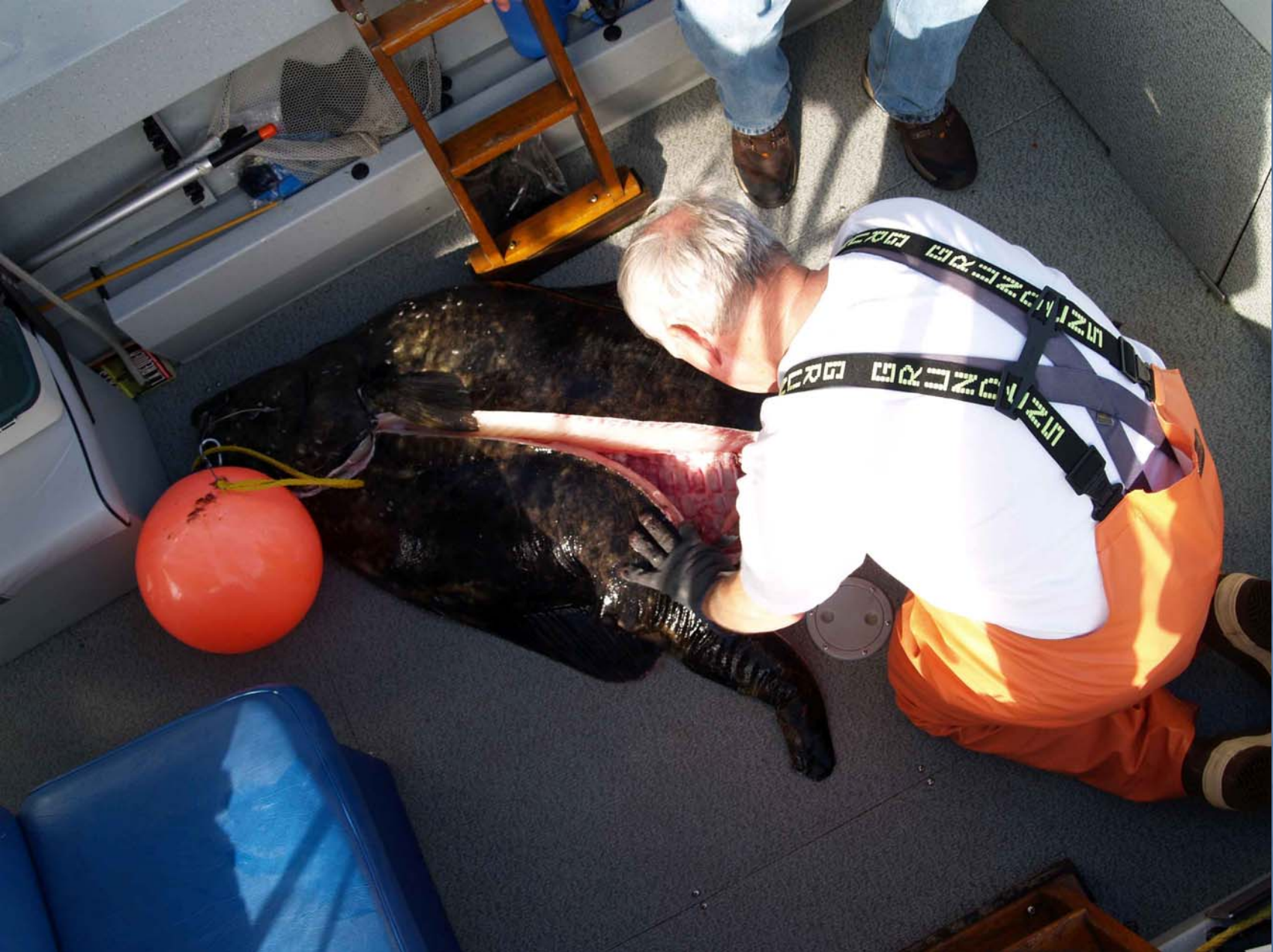


Photo by Jack

Note the snow on the far side...definitely chilly!



Jack's big halibut the next day came close to being a *barn door*, a 250-pounder or more. This one was 240!! His arms were permanently frozen in this position after fighting the monster!



Cleaning the almost-*Barn Door*. Quite a job!



Eight filets this size!! Plus the cheeks, a real delicacy!



The under side.



Had to "borrow" ice from this commercial fisher. Jack and I were amazed the skipper of the commercial boat would just *give* ice to us. David assured us it is a way of life in Alaska!



The 7th night was spent in Chapin Bay, home of snow crabs. We set out pots and got two keepers.



Calm, misty morning on Chapin Bay. The other boat had been there for several days and just happened to be from Port Townsend, WA.



Underway from Chapin Bay to Petersburg, on Frederick Sound. Many small icebergs.



The harbor in Petersburg, our intended departure place for returning to Tacoma by air. That's the fishing boat *Katahdin*, 67', built in 1899 and used in several movies.



Petersburg was settled by Scandinavians. This is the Sons of Norway Hall, site of many celebrations.



Scandia House, THE hotel in Petersburg.



Native Alaskan totem poles in Petersburg.



In Petersburg harbor, pretty much fogged in. We were still hoping for clear weather so we could fly out that evening.



Sitka blacktail deer wandering around on the kelp in Petersburg harbor.



Bald eagles right in the middle of town.



Petersburg International...still hoping to get out. The Boeing 737 swept down out of the clouds, and roared back up without touching the ground. We wouldn't be able to fly out for two more days! So...



...off we went to catch the ferry to Ketchikan. This is the purser's desk on *MV Matanuska*, one of several ferries serving from Bellingham to the tip of the Aleutians, and the same ferry Jack and Arlene had seen on Day-3.



Our last glimpse of fogged-in Petersburg.



Finally escaping from Petersburg aboard *MS Matanuska*.



Our spartan, but very inviting, home for a very *short* night.



The *Maranuska* as we disembarked in Ketchikan at 3:30 a.m.



Waiting for the 5:30 a.m. ferry across Ketchikan Harbor to the airport. A staged photo, but very clearly showing *Ballast* (l.) and *Sponge Buzz* (r.) are plum tuckered out!

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Better than it was!!