



Holland America Cruise – Alaska's Inside Passage

June 13-19, 2002

Wednesday, June 12 – Denver/Vancouver

Today marks the beginning of our Holland America cruise along Alaska's Inside Passage. After a morning tour of Vancouver by bus tomorrow morning, we board our ship, the M.S. Ryndam, and sail for seven days (June 13-19) in the lap of luxury. After a day at sea, we make our first stop at Juneau, then head a bit farther northwest to Skagway before returning southeast through beautiful Glacier Bay. The next day we arrive in Ketchikan, then have a final day at sea before returning to Vancouver.



We have traveling companions to help us enjoy this trip – Mom and Dad Everbeck and Robin's sisters Winnie and Elaine. Elaine has cruised many times before and loves it, but this will be a first for the others, so it's a good thing we'll be in the Inside Passage where the waters tend to be calm and the sailing smooth.

Today was a travel day for all of us. Mom, Dad, and Winnie flew direct from Boston to Vancouver. For some reason, airport security picked on Mom and frisked her twice – and they confiscated a pair of scissors Dad had in his carry-on. Elaine flew direct from Phoenix. We flew on Alaska Air from Denver to Seattle, then took a puddle-jumper from Seattle to Vancouver. We got to see massive Mt. Rainier, covered in snow, from our plane's window. I spent most of the day reading a book that is so good I don't want to put it down, but I will because I want to be "in the moment" on this trip, not buried in a book the whole time.

We met up with the family at the Quality Inn Airport Vancouver around 5 pm and shared a pleasant dinner at the hotel restaurant. Robin spent some time going over cruise documents with the family after dinner, while I spent a quiet evening reading in my room and sipping a Coke. Ahhh, life is good – and quite soon it's going to get a whole lot better.



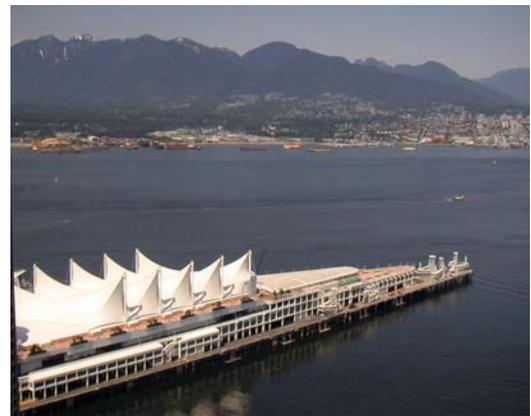
Thursday, June 13 – Vancouver

After a continental breakfast at the hotel, we boarded a bus for a "Deluxe City Highlights" tour of Vancouver. We spent longer than expected driving around Vancouver that morning picking up other passengers, but finally the "official" narrated tour began. It lasted



about four hours, starting and ending at the Canada Place cruise ship terminal. We drove through Stanley Park, making stops at the totem poles and Prospect Point, and also saw Robson Street and English Bay that morning. We stopped for lunch at one of our favorite spots in Vancouver, the Granville Island public market. There we wandered through a vast number of stalls buying the food of our choice. Robin and I opted for a simple but tasty lunch of strawberries, cherries, bread, and cream cheese. That afternoon we made a stop at Queen Elizabeth Park and had time to enjoy its panoramic views

of the city and its Sunken Gardens. We also drove by Shaughnessy Estates, beautiful old mansions in the middle of the city, as well as Gastown with its Steam Clock and Chinatown. Our penultimate stop was at “The Lookout,” a tower overlook that rose 550 feet high and offered 360 degree views of the city. Around 3 pm we were dropped off at the cruise ship terminal. By that time most of the other cruise passengers had checked in already, so we got checked through and onto the ship in no time.



We unpacked, attended the obligatory lifeboat drill, and watched the ship pull out of port and glide underneath the Lion’s Gate Bridge. After a bit of exploring on board, we went to our first dinner at 5:45. Imagine our surprise when the maitre’d led us to a table with a perfect window view at the very aft of the ship. Enormous picture windows with stunning views of Alaska gliding by as we ate! You’d think we paid off the maitre d’ for a view like that but we didn’t. We dined on sumptuous cuisine – shrimp cocktail, black bean soup sprinkled with bacon bits and chopped onions, steamed crab legs with drawn butter, and decadent chocolate desserts – as we watched the wake of the ship fan out behind us. Our Indonesian waiters, Encep and R.V., were attentive and gracious and catered to our every need.



Most of the family went to the first show, a “Welcome Aboard Showtime” that started at 8:15 pm. I opted to enjoy the sunset views from the Crow’s Nest Lounge instead. I didn’t regret it. The Crow’s Nest is on the top deck (Deck 12) of the ship and offers spectacular views through its extra-large slanted picture windows. It was empty at that hour because most people were at the show or the second-seating dinner. I became quick friends with Fiesta, a member of the bar staff from the Phillipines, and he brought me a tasty drink. I sat back in my cushy chair and sipped my sippy drink and just enjoyed the peaceful views of Alaska gliding by until the sun set. This is what cruising is all about!



Friday, June 14 – Day at Sea

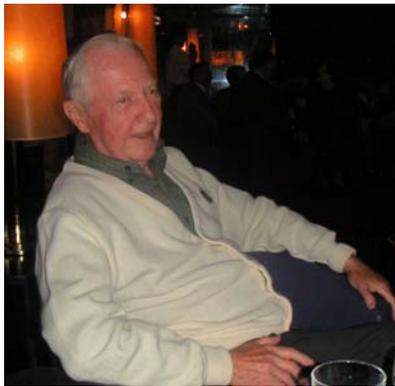
I always enjoy days at sea because they’re so relaxing and unstructured. You do what you want and have plenty of time for doing nothing at all except enjoying your surroundings. And what surroundings! We’re sailing through a spectacular combination of mountains and ocean, always with the prospect of seeing whales, porpoises, eagles, and other wildlife. The farther northeast we go, the more dramatic and snow-covered the mountains get. Near at hand are the tree-covered humps of



islands and rounded hillsides, along with a smattering of rocky shorelines that remind me of Maine, while in the distance are the craggier, snow-covered peaks, the ones the glaciers never touched.

Most of the family got up for breakfast this morning but I worked out in the gym instead before attending the last half of a lecture titled an “Introduction to Alaska,” given by a naturalist on board. Afterwards, Robin and I went to a complimentary gaming lesson where we learned about blackjack, Fun 21, roulette, and Caribbean poker. Others attended what sounded like an interesting kitchen tour. At 11:15 I went to the volleyball court but was the only one there other than Steve, a crew member from Vancouver who I chatted with for awhile. I walked the decks until lunch in the formal dining area. This was almost like a dinner in itself, with multiple courses.

The afternoon was relaxing and enjoyable, with great weather and fine views. Winnie and I attended a lecture on whales, while Robin and Elaine went to the Royal Dutch high tea. By 5 pm we were all gussied up in our formal attire. We attended a welcome aboard reception, got our picture taken with the captain, and then dined on sumptuous fare during our first formal night. That evening we watched Barry Manilow’s “Copacabana,” a surprisingly good show for a Holland America cruise, with talented singers and dancers. Later that evening mom and dad and Robin and I had a fun time playing (and winning – we have the mugs to prove it!) “Name That Tune” at the piano bar.



We also spent time today just walking along the Lower Promenade deck. Our cabin, number 300, is located at the very fore of the ship on the Lower Promenade and offers easy access to the wooden decking that circles the ship. It makes it very easy for us to step outside and enjoy the views. Winnie and Elaine are conveniently located in the cabin next to ours, and Mom and Dad are only a few cabins down, in number 318. Our cabin even boasts a window – with a completely obstructed view, mind you – but at least the light filters in when it’s day-time.



Saturday, June 15 – Juneau

A fabulous day in Juneau. In a place known for its fickle weather, we really lucked out. Seventy degrees and sunny all day long. I made the most of it. After sharing breakfast and lunch with the family and watching the ship pull into port around 1 pm (we saw some Dall porpoises at the bow of the boat), I headed out for a long hike. I disembarked and found myself in a maelstrom of tour buses and vendor booths and passengers. After an obligatory picture with a person dressed up as a polar

bear, I headed next door to purchase a ticket for the Mount Roberts aerial tramway. This ultra-steep ride took me very quickly to the top, saving me about 2000 feet of uphill slogging. Outside was a nature trail, an alpine loop, and – the thing I was most interested in – a hiking trail to the top of Mount Gastineau and Mount Roberts. I learned from a ranger that Mt. Roberts probably wouldn’t be accessible due to snow, and this turned out to be the case. But the trail to Mt. Gastineau was 2.1 miles long one way from the Nature Center, with 1900 feet of elevation gain, and offered some stunning scenery. I learned later that all the rest of the family went up the aerial tramway too, so they all saw some of the great views from this height.





I hiked up through alder thickets, past Father Brown's wooden cross on a hillside. Already the views were spectacular looking back down on Juneau and the long finger of ocean on which it is situated. I was hot in my jeans and soon shed my shirt. It felt good to be out and moving about and working off some of that excess poundage. I hiked hard and made fast progress through a steep section of dwarf spruce switchbacks. Soon I was above treeline, into alpine country, and things really started to get interesting. The views looking back down on Juneau just kept getting better. You could see more mountains at the head of the channel, and the open ocean at the far end (even though Juneau's "finger" of water is a dead-end). I snapped a ton of pictures with my new digital camera, enough that I eventually wore out my first battery.

Soon I was surrounded by 360 degrees of mountain views. It was early enough in the season that the higher mountains were striated with snow, making them





very dramatic to look at. I crossed several snow fields as I worked my way higher. Eventually I reached the Gold Ridge turnoff. I actually started down this trail in error, thinking it was the trail to Mt. Gastineau, but soon learned from a fellow hiker that the trail to Mt. Gastineau was that



completely snow-covered route that climbed steeply uphill in the near distance. I decided, though, to stick with the Gold Ridge route for awhile, because this was the essence of perfect hiking – up and down gentle hillsides and occasional flat stretches, with green hillsides and flower-strewn patches and imposing snow-covered mountains at every turn.



The hiking was easy and enjoyable. A very steep dropoff to my right kept me paying attention, though. I ambled along, enjoying the perfect day and feeling like I had stepped into “The Hills Are Alive” type scenery. I met a local couple from Juneau and enthused to them about the incredible scenery. They appreciated my enthusiasm and took the time to point out the Glory Hole Mine, located far, far below down that steep gully to my right – I have no idea how they got in or out of there. They also pointed out a distant mountain that they said was 150 miles away. That’s how clear the day was, although by that time (3:30 pm) it had become slightly hazy and the mountain was

only barely visible. On my way back along Gold Ridge, I surprised a marmot as I ambled along.

I decided to give Mt. Gastineau a try, even though it was getting late and I was due back for dinner at 5:45. Along the way, I met an Italian guy who worked on the Carnival ship also docked in port, and we both set out for Mt. Gastineau around the same time, keeping each other occasional company. I hiked hard uphill through knife-edged snowfields and stretches of clear, steep granite “steps.” The top of Mt. Gastineau wasn’t that far off, actually, and a single hard push with occasional rest stops was all it took to get there. By then it was something like 4:15 and I decided that was far enough. My Italian friend decided to push on and try to reach Mt. Roberts, but I was happy enough to have reached Mt. Gastineau.



On the way back down I hit a state of near-euphoria. It just felt so good to be out and hiking! I literally ran down the snowfields, jogging in big, loping steps through the snow. An eagle flew directly overhead. I either saw a dozen eagles today or the same eagle a dozen times, cruising back and forth over Juneau’s channel. I made very fast progress downhill. Eventually I started to feel hot again – higher up I had actually been glad for my jeans and had re-donned my shirt, but now that I was back among the spruce and alders it felt more like seventies weather again. I reached the aerial tram with little time to spare. It was close to 5:30 by the

time I got there. And who should get on next to me but my beautiful wife! She and Winnie had been strolling along the Nature Center Loop Trail and had been waiting further back in line for the same tram. We hugged happily and shared our day’s adventures with each other.

Back down at sea level, I raced back to the ship, showered, changed, and got to dinner in record time, only a few minutes late. That evening I ate a lot of food and felt justified doing it. All that hiking had made me hungry. I feasted on two appetizers – watermelon balls and duck quesadillas – followed by a salad, prime rib, baked potato with lots of sour cream, and two desserts – a cheesecake trio and a fabulous cappuccino chocolate torte. Wow.

After dinner, Robin and I took the aerial tram back to the top and did a quick loop hike. It quickly became apparent to me that I was more tired than I realized, and I was relieved that the loop was only a half mile. We watched an interesting film on the Tlinget peoples who originally inhabited the area, then returned on the tram. We took a pleasant stroll on Juneau’s boardwalk along the seashore, where we saw a statue of a dog who used to greet all the cruise passengers back in the 1940s; he seemed to always know when the cruise ships were arriving even though he was totally deaf, and would even know what berth they were docking in. We returned back along the main street in Juneau, stopping for a beer at the Red Dog Saloon. The floor was covered in



sawdust and there were all sorts of amusing relics on the walls. The entryway was plastered with business cards, and if you looked closely, you noticed that a row of antlered animals happened to include a beaver.

Robin was tired enough that she called it a night shortly thereafter. I stayed up and watched the late show, a juggling act, then wandered around as the ship pulled out of port at 11 pm. I found my favorite viewing spot aft on the Lower Promenade, where I was treated to an outstanding view of Juneau, all alight, receding slowly into the distance, with just enough light left in the sky to see the dark waters of the channel, and, off to the right, the moon rising behind jagged mountains. Wow. I was mesmerized and watched for an hour, getting to bed around midnight. What a great day!

Sunday, June 16 – Skagway

Sitting poolside just now on the Lido deck, wearing my swimsuit and getting sunburned in, of all places, Skagway, Alaska. Feels more like the Caribbean with the kind of weather we've been having. Another day in the seventies with completely sunny skies. I just cooled off with a nice dip in the pool. From my lounge chair I can see the bare granite of snow-capped mountains towering above the opened-up pool roof. Lower down, the sides of the mountains are steeply sloped and covered with the solid green of Sitka spruce. Closer at hand, the pool on board has a statue of five dolphins frolicking at one end. I'm drinking an ice water, listening to the kids play in the pool, and hearing the sound of ping pong balls getting batted back and forth behind me. Every once in awhile a helicopter thwack-thwacks overhead. A whirlpool tub beckons just a few feet away.

Before coming up to the enclosed pool area, I sat at the open-air pool on the Navigation Deck. The view there was even more outstanding – the kind of mountains you usually have to hike to see. Enjoying them poolside felt decadent, and I needed a bit of decadence after my busy hiking day yesterday.



Earlier today I did disembark and see a bit of Skagway, and I plan to go out again later this afternoon. Skagway is essentially a one-street town. It's quaint and historic feeling. Lots of preserved buildings, lots of false store fronts, and best of all, a boardwalk that extends down both sides of the street serving as a sidewalk. The town is awash in gold mining lore, having once been the gateway to the great Klondike gold rush in the late 1890s.

That morning, Robin had breakfast with her family while I slept in late. We took a brief stroll up and down the streets of Skagway. We stopped at the Visitor's Center, saw a funky building called the Arctic Brotherhood Hall that was covered in driftwood, and saw the outside of the Red Onion Saloon. After that, we decided to take a walk up to Lower Dewey Lake. This was a relatively short hike with 500 feet of elevation gain and a distance of half a mile. After a fairly

steep climb, we leveled out and walked through sun-dappled stretches of Sitka spruce. The ground was covered with pine needles. While the lake itself was a bit disappointing, surrounded as it was by trees and sprinkled with algae, the forest itself was peaceful, and a side trail took us to a beautiful stream running through the forest. It ran fast and was glacially cold, with many networks of water joining together.



We came back down just in time to join the family for lunch at 11:30. This was our first lunch in the buffet up on the Lido deck. I opted for a cheeseburger and fries and three desserts (that's right, three). We did the buffet because everyone but me was slated for a steam-engine train ride up to White Pass starting at 12:30. That's where they all are now as I sit here soaking up the sun and writing. More later. Now it's time to enjoy a dip in that whirlpool that's been calling to me.



Late in the afternoon I headed back out to Skagway. It was just after 4 pm and the train had returned, so I kept an eye out for Robin and company and ended up meeting them on the street. Robin and I strolled up to the far end of the main street of Skagway, then she rejoined Winnie for some window shopping while I went to the Visitor's Center for the 5 pm showing of a gold rush documentary. It talked about gold fever (even the mayor of Seattle resigned to seek his fortune) and the hard route over the Chilkoot Pass or White Pass to get to the Yukon. I suspect that if I had been

alive at that time I might have been one of them. Scary thought!

Dinner at 5:45 as usual. We skipped the show (a ventriloquist) and enjoyed the fine views instead. That evening in the Crow's Nest, mom and dad danced while we sipped drinks and watched the beautiful mountains pass by. At 11 pm we went to the Indonesian show. I stayed for awhile (the place was completely packed and we couldn't even find seats), then wandered around the ship. I quickly lost \$20 at blackjack and decided to call it a night shortly thereafter.

Monday, June 17 – Glacier Bay

A fabulous day for whale sightings. This was our day in Glacier Bay and it was a doozie. Robin and I awoke very early, at 6 am, and stumbled out of bed for our showers. We made our way up to the Crow's Nest, determined to get good seats right near one of the big picture windows facing forward for this important day. We took turns having breakfast on the Lido deck, then were both in place for the show. Not much of a show to begin with – outstanding views, but no wildlife. We were both so sleepy that I actually nodded off a couple times through those early hours. But around 8:30 we were rewarded for our patience. Off in the distance ahead of the ship we saw two whales breaching! They were humpbacks, and they were arcing out of the water and



crashing back down. They did this maybe a dozen times before our ship pulled even with them and they fell out of our view. They passed to port – and we later learned that the rest of the family saw them breach close up as they breakfasted in the dining room. So we all got to enjoy this spectacular show.

We stayed in our perfect seats until 10:30, at which time we arrived at Marjorie Glacier at the far end of Glacier Bay. This is a classic whitish-blue glacier that towers over 200 feet high and terminates right in the ocean. We

went outside to the Lower Promenade deck to see – and hear – the show. It was a misty day but the clouds were just starting to break as the ship stopped within a quarter mile of the glacier. “Bergy bits” and “growlers” dotted the water in all directions. We saw no seals because they were giving birth to their pups near Johns Hopkins Glacier (off limits as a result), but we did see a bald eagle on a rock nearby with four immature adults (brownish gray) standing next to her. But the big show was the glacier itself. As



we stood there, we saw it calve a dozen times in a big way, with large chunks falling off into the ocean. All the passengers on our deck applauded! This was much more activity than I saw on our last cruise to Alaska.

There was one “hole” in the glacier’s face, in particular, that was active. Snow and ice poured out of the hole almost like sand, and then all of a sudden an entire piece of the glacier would pull away. Farther to the left was another “hot spot,” with a lot of calving activity. I love



the “white thunder” sound – like a whip or a gunshot – as pieces of glacier calve away. Kittiwakes fed near the bottom of the glacier, especially near a brown, roiling gush of water that poured out from beneath the glacier. This, I learned, was meltoff from the glacier, not from the heat of the sun, but from the pressure of the glacier itself. This runoff occurs day and night all year round but isn’t always at the surface of the water where it can be seen.

To the right of Marjorie Glacier was another significant glacier, called the Grand Pacific Glacier, but by comparison to Marjorie it wasn’t much to look at – more like the Kennecott Glacier with its black, sooty face – and it wasn’t calving nearly as much. We got quite a show, though, from Marjorie.

We went down for lunch at noon and got ourselves a table right at the aft window. We could see Marjorie Glacier receding behind us as we ate. The views of Glacier Bay were outstanding. I should note that at one point during our lunch, our ship ground to a very quick halt and then started to back up. At first we thought a big iceberg might be in its path, but later we guessed that it might have veered slightly off-course and come close to running aground in shallow water. We’ll never know since I’m quite sure they’ll never tell us – but it made for a good lunch discussion!

After lunch Robin and I took a spin around the deck. The clouds had parted by now and it was a beautiful blue day. We could see rugged snowcapped peaks behind the glaciers now, and the combination of sparkling sun and forbidding





Glacier Bay, Land of Bergy Bits and Growlers (and Whales!)





glacier bits in the ocean was dramatic. Eventually we returned to our Crow’s Nest spot to look for whales. Over the course of the rest of that day I saw one otter very close to the ship laying on his back, a humpback whale right next to the ship but only for a second or two, and also Dall porpoises. Towards dinnertime, I saw three humpback whales off in the distance in shallow-looking water near land.

Then came a magical period when we passed right through an entire pod of humpback whales. This happened right around 5 pm, and we must have seen a dozen humpbacks right near the ship. None of them were breaching, but they were all feeding near the surface. We would see them blow out air and then see their shining backs as they dove back down. Seagulls and even some eagles hovered near the whales to partake of the fish that they churned up. People were running back and forth from one side of the ship to the other to see the spectacle. We spotted one after another from the Crow’s Nest. Then we passed through the area and there were no more to be seen. But what a sight while it lasted.

We had a formal dinner that night – escargot, Caesar salad, lobster tails, baked Alaska – and enjoyed looking out at the sun-sparkling wake behind us as we cruised forward at high speed. We took a pleasant stroll around the Lower Promenade deck, then went to a very good show called the “Romance of Broadway.”





The singing was surprisingly top-rate. We took one more stroll around the deck as the sun was setting, then turned into bed around 9:30 pm. We were both very ready for sleep after a very long day, and slept all the way until 8 am the next morning.

Tuesday, June 18 – Ketchikan

I missed breakfast with the family, so I had a croissant with butter and strawberry jam and honeydew melon up on Lido deck. We disembarked to Ketchikan around 10:15. Robin and I spent the day together. First we walked along

Creek Street. This picturesque maze of stilted boardwalks is built right above the beautiful rushing creek that runs through town. “Sporting houses” or bordellos used to be located here, but now it’s gift shops. We stopped for a hot cocoa and some popcorn and sat on the boardwalk enjoying the view. Afterwards, we walked through a pleasant city park with lots of tiny streams and oases built into it for the children (and adults) to enjoy. This was right next to the salmon hatchery and a small totem park that we visited with my parents on our last trip to Alaska.

We reboarded the ship for what was meant to be a light lunch at the taco bar (ha!), then headed off for another walking tour of the western part of Ketchikan. Ketchikan is a steep city – there are intimidatingly steep wooden stairways built throughout the town to get to the houses and streets built on the hillsides. We climbed some of these.



We were up high at one point, with a view down to the town and the channel, when we noticed a large number of bald eagles flying overhead towards the water. They were all headed to a particular spot on the water, where they appeared to be feeding on fish. In a short time there was literally a *flock* of bald eagles! Twenty, then thirty or more – we counted them. I’ve never seen anything like it. I asked a local what it was all about, and he said the local cannery dumped its waste fish parts into the ocean at that spot and the eagles congregated each day to enjoy the feast. Well, that explained the mystery, but it was still amazing to watch. We headed down the stairway and managed to get much



closer to the action on a nearby pier. We watched as they swooped in, caught a fish part in their talons, then bent their mouths down and their talons up and ate in mid-air before swooping in again for more. On our way back to the ship, we also looked down into the water and saw several crabs scuttling along, as well as a sea urchin and four or five large starfish.



We took a nap, then got ready for dinner. Robin wore a beautiful black dress with a draped neckline. This was Norwegian night, with the funny hats and caps. I had a spicy Indonesian dish for my entrée and, as usual, ate way too much. We skipped the magic show that evening. Robin and I played some blackjack together and nearly doubled our money. We even won at roulette. Then we sat in the Crow's Nest and enjoyed the sunset.



We enjoyed the “chocolate extravaganza” on the Lido Deck around 10:30 – not what I needed at that point in the cruise, but hey, what the heck – then went back up to the Crow's Nest for the 50's sock hop. We had to set our clocks ahead an hour this night, so it was already getting late. We danced for awhile, then called it a night. We didn't get to bed until 2 am after the time change.



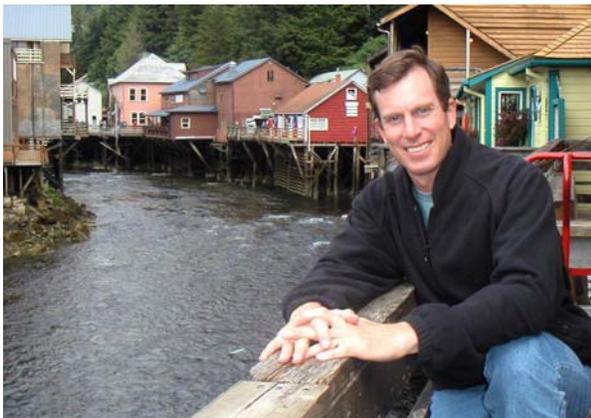
Wednesday, June 19 – Day at Sea

Robin's birthday! We celebrated by sleeping in until 10 am. A very relaxing morning, a very relaxing day. After a brief workout, I laid out in the sunshine poolside and enjoyed the slow pace of life on board. Other than eating and lounging, not much to report. Robin and I played some ping pong. We discovered a dessert "bar" up on the Lido deck and I binged again – good thing I didn't find out about this earlier in the cruise. These cruises are amazing when it comes to food. Besides formal dining, there's the Lido buffet, the taco bar, the hamburger grill, the salad bar, the ice cream bar...the list goes on. On one memorable occasion we discovered some absolutely delicious warm bread pudding just calling out to be eaten – so of course we ate it.

We kept putting off packing, but finally we made a stab at it just before dinner. The last day of a cruise is always tinged with sadness because you know the end is in sight and there's nothing you can do about it. It's like a Sunday evening before the Monday work week begins. Still, we enjoyed our dinner, including cake for Robin's birthday (followed by more desserts, of course) and went to another good show called "Sentimental Journey." That evening we walked the decks, revisiting our favorite hangouts, and finished up our packing. A bit more dancing and lounging in the Crow's Nest, then it was time for bed.

Thursday, June 20 (Vancouver/Denver)

Alas, all good things must come to an end. We disembarked, said our fond farewells, and went through a whole host of customs checks before getting on the plane. At least Mom and Dad made it through security without setting off too many alarms this time! Robin and I got home late that evening, greeted Chaucer, and felt really, really glad that we had the foresight to take Friday off.



*Love to all
of you and
thanks for
a wonder-
ful, won-
derful trip!*

*Bob "The
Scribe"*

Farewell, Alaska, until next time!

