



## Merry Christmas for 2007 and a Happy 2008 From Land Passages in Homer, Alaska

*In 2007 we returned to land after 14 years of circling the globe on a sailboat. Crossing the USA we visited childhood haunts, seeing America, and looking for a place to settle. Most unexpectedly, we chose Alaska after accounting for Global Warming and its effects on the Lower 48. Grab some eggnog and read on!*

### Sale of *Long Passages*

January and February were consumed with cleaning, polishing, advertising, and fixing up our trusty yacht. We varnished her until she shined, installed a holding tank, and used Google AdWords to get the word out. By the first of March she had a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Shannon owner who promptly took her to sea for the short trip to North Carolina – we wish her new owners well.

### Florida

Following the pattern established in Oz and Europe we bought a motor-home – a 30' Itasca - with the intention of seeing the US and looking for a new home. We visited Dave and Nancy, friends who sailed out of Annapolis with us back in 1992, recalled old times with a high school friend of Bob's, and spent some quality time with Denis. A short visit to **Key West** convinced us that Jimmy Buffet is pretty smart – it would be easy to spend all winter there! One of the medical tests for Bob turned up another tumor, which was excised with skill in Tallahassee. Temperatures in Florida are delightful in January and February, but by April we were reminded of what was due in the summer so we headed north, stopping at state parks as we went.



### Childhood Haunts

We followed the Appalachians north through Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia to Maryland, visiting parks and friends along the way. While in Tennessee we followed an internet lead and found **Faizel**, a 3-4 year old Dandie Dinmont - Lhasa Apso mixture who has livened and complicated our life but who brings much joy and exercise. In Annapolis we visited with friends and the marina we left behind so many years ago, and Judi was able to visit her childhood home in Shady Side, still unchanged after all these years – she was amazed at how small it looks now – a reminder that childhood happiness is not related to the size of your parents' house! On a brief diversion to Connecticut we caught up with friends not seen since the 70's and then turned west to Pennsylvania. We stopped in Williamsport, Altoona, and Martinsburg, childhood homes for Bob, and found all houses still standing and mostly



unchanged in the intervening 57 years – it was good time for reminiscing.

### The Midwest

Speeding through western Pennsylvania and Ohio, we were reminded why the Midwest had never held any real attraction for us - no water, lots of flat land and no interesting geography. But then our opinions changed dramatically. In Wisconsin we visited **Door County**, on Lake Michigan and found it delightful with picturesque farms, pretty coastline, and lots of artsy shops. Further north **Bayfield** is a beautiful village with homes with great views of Lake Superior. But wait, Minnesota offered even more as we visited **Ely** in the Boundary Waters region, where lakes out-number roads and canoes number in the thousands. At the International Wolf Center we learned all about wolves - it made us understand Faizel a little better also. We could easily see ourselves living in Ely, canoeing all summer and ... but wait, we are only 100 miles from International Falls, the coldest spot in the US lower 48 maybe this is not such a good idea after all! July 4<sup>th</sup> in Duluth provided a look into Heartland America from its vantage point at the end of Lake Superior. All in all, we really liked Wisconsin and Minnesota for their beauty, attention to the environment and commitment to recycling.

### Badlands

Going from the lush Lakeland of northern Minnesota to the dry deserts of South Dakota was a real shock. The eroded Badlands reminded us of similar terrain in Australia and Morocco. At **Mount Rushmore** we listened as Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt were praised as honest and foresighted leaders – a far cry from those we see in Washington DC these days. A short visit to **Wounded Knee** reminded us of this tragic example of our treatment of the Native Americans. Herds of bison have returned to the plains of South Dakota, but prairie dogs were more common. But the baddest of the bad were circling, and becoming more numerous every day – the **HOGS**. Every year thousands of Harley bikers congregate in Sturgis, South Dakota to party, show off their bikes, and share stories. On opening day we could not believe the crowd of leather jackets, thundering bikes, and aging bikers – it looked like a lot of fun!

### Canada

We made two forays into Canada, one brief and expensive and the other much more pleasant. On the first 3-day trip from northern Minnesota the Canadian Border Services spotted us as the hardened criminals that we are, shook down the motor-home, and found a couple of pepper-spray containers that we had accidentally brought from the boat when we sold **Long Passages**. Making the punishment fit the crime they fined us \$2000 so we shortened our visit to one day!



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We decided to visit Alaska and had to drive the width of Canada from Montana to the Alaska crossing leading to Tok – a beautiful 2000 mile trip. On this trip, older and wiser, we avoided bringing any contraband and, despite the lengthy search, we were sent on our way after only 2 hours – maybe they don't like Americans? The 11-day trip could have easily been extended to 2 months as each day was prettier than the last. Great prairies of grain one day, high snow-capped mountains the next, followed by moose or caribou along the road – it was a really nice drive. We tarried in Whitehorse for a couple of days, taking a trip on the Yukon, as the Gold Rush pioneers did in the 1800's

**Alaska**

Our detour to Alaska allowed Judi to see some of the beautiful scenery that Bob and Denis had seen in the '70's. In the first week we visited with Al, a college roommate and his wonderful wife Meg. We shared old times, hiked and tried to keep up with these almost-natives who have made Alaska their home for the last 30+ years. After a visit to Anchorage we passed **Portage Glacier** - Bob was able to view it from the car in the '70's, but now it cannot even be seen from the visitor center that was built in '86 – another symptom of Global warming. In Seward we viewed glaciers up close from a cruise boat and then headed south to the real **End of the Road** – Homer. Bob and Denis slept on the beach here in '77 at the end of their month-long backpacking trip through Alaska. As we crested a hill and started down the long hill into **Homer** Judi started to have heart palpitations as she exclaimed how beautiful it was with snow-capped mountains and glaciers across the sheltered waters of Kachemak Bay – all of this in August. Within 2 weeks we were signing contracts and transferring funds to purchase a house on a hill looking at the same bay, mountains, and glaciers. Besides the beauty we were taken by the local attitudes which seemed to include a high level of commitment to protection of the environment and



involvement in local government. While waiting for the paperwork to run its course we took a trip to nearby Katmai National Park and spent a day viewing and photographing **grizzly bears**,

some as close as 50'.

**Settling into a new Home**

By October we had closed on our home, parked the RV in the side yard, and resumed landlubbers life. Fortunately we bought the house with all of its furniture, satellite dish, and accessories so we could move in and get settled quickly. Within a couple of weeks we had arranged to have our scant belongings and plentiful souvenirs shipped in from Oregon and

Florida – thus relieving our long-suffering relatives from minding our stuff! The stats on the house?

- 2100 square feet
- 3 bedrooms, 3 baths
- 2 acres of wooded property

Besides the great views we are treated to daily flights of the many Bald eagles that live nearby, we see moose tracks many days in our yard (but have not yet seen one in the flesh), and are told that bears and wolves live in the nearby hills, so we will have to careful when we walk Faizel in the Spring



**Life in Homer**

The longer we stay in Homer the more interesting we find the town. Many of the long-term residents are free-thinking spirits, some drop outs from the '60's or '70's, or others seeking freedom of action and many with an artistic bent. For a population of only 5000 (plus another 7000 in the area) it has an amazing array of things going on, from a local production of The Nutcracker Suite that would make any city proud, coastal walks to clean the beaches, a documentary movie festival with some of the best films around, a strong Impeach Bush movement, and a **Global Warming** task force that has recommended strong measures for the future of the town. We have become involved in some activities already to counteract the short daylight hours to some extent.

**Plans**

We plan to become more engaged in town activities and find a niche for ourselves here. We have space for visitors and hope that any friends looking for an interesting place to visit give us a call and stop by for a spell in our soon-to-be remodeled guest quarters.

We wish all a **Merry Christmas** and a healthy and prosperous **New Year 2008** and all who are interested can keep up with us on our NEW AND IMPROVED website at [www.landpassages.com](http://www.landpassages.com).

Cheers and hugs,



**Bob & Judi**

**New Address: 54326 East End Road  
Homer, Alaska 99603  
(907) 235 1238**



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