
Log of Baidarka - Log 2001

Part II-New Alaska anchor sites and the West Coast of Graham Island

by Don Douglass &
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Douglass



Refuge Island, entrance pillar.

Our Alaska Air flight touched down in Sitka July 18. Three weeks had passed since we “parked” *Baidarka* in New Thomsen Harbor and returned home to tend to business. Jean and Geneviève, our French friends, returned to France after a brief visit to Anacortes.

The highlight of our trip from Glacier Bay to Sitka with Jean and Geneviève in June occurred as we glided through Ogden Passage in neutral, letting the current carry us quietly forward so we could watch more than 50 sea otters — the most we saw in one place the entire summer. Dozens of mother otters with a babies on their stomachs floated lazily, their heads turned toward us studying our every move, ready to dive at the slightest provocation.

Jean and Geneviève hung over the rail on the Portuguese bridge, chattering excitedly as they changed lenses on their still cameras and tried to protect their video camera from the light rain. Captivated by these marvelous little creatures, we finally had to proceed as the rain took over in earnest.

We allowed two days in Sitka on our return to provision and stow, do laundry and spend time with friends. We had dinner at Van Winkles with Sunny and Bob from *S/V Raven*, whom we’d met earlier in the season and, and over a nightcap on *Baidarka*,

we poured over the charts for the west coast of Baranof Island — both boats planned to take the outside route. The next night, as dinner guests aboard *Hawkeye II* we met Leo Nigg of *S/V Moonlight* currently on his way down the coast of Mexico to continue his solo round-the-world cruise. Leo spent 16 years of weekends building his steel-hulled sailboat and set out five years ago, rounding Cape Horn — in winter, no less! — exactly two years to the day we were all enjoying a salmon barbecue. As if Cape Horn were not enough of a challenge, Leo sailed from Hawaii to Kodiak and Prince



Sitka Harbor.

William Sound before arriving in Sitka. “Unassuming, gentle and intelligent!” I wrote in my journal, and we had the honor of his visit in Anacortes once we returned in September.

July 20: *We planned to leave at 0500 this morning, but Don forgot to pick up our laundry last night, so while he readied Baidarka, I walked uphill to the laundromat and waited till it opened at 0700. A gale was forecast for tonight so we decided not to stop at Goddard Hot Springs this time. Instead, we headed out through Windy Passage and continued down the outside of Baranof Island*

to reach a safe anchorage.

“The south wind has already begun,” Don commented as we reached open waters.

“You are micro-observant about nature.” I told him. Ripples were just beginning to appear on the sea. “How can you tell?” His almost innate talent and trained eye annoy me because I have never mastered the ability to determine these minute details. (When the wind picks up to 5 or 10 knots, sure, but rarely the initial signs — my downfall when I first learned to sail.)

Don laughed, shrugged his shoulders and tried to show me what signs to look for.

I tried several times, but for the life of me I just couldn’t pass the test.

It was rough all day. We deployed the stabilizers but the boat still rocked quite a bit. I don’t have my sea legs yet and was nauseated all day. Conditions were deteriorating and Don stood watch for me for six hours. We decided to head to Réanne’s Terror instead of continuing six more hours to Coronation Island.

Two wind- and wave-swept islets, scrubbed clean of vegetation to a height of 60 feet or more, guard the entrance that caused Réanne’s initial fright on our first visit to Réanne’s Terror years before. When swells are running, the seas heap up and break, creating white spume that covers the two narrow entrances.

Inside the islets, however, the waters are calm and there is complete protection. The northern and innermost of this unnamed harbor that Don calls Réanne's Relief is just that! Surrounded by the mountains of Baranof Island, the shores are lined to the water's edge with spruce and cedar that show no sign of stress. That night we shared the ample anchorage with another vessel — a fishing troller with just its skipper aboard. This was the first time we'd encountered another boat here.

We weighed anchor the next morning at 0500 as the gale played out and continued south along the west coast of Baranof in fog — conditions guaranteed to lead to *mal de mer* for anyone who's so inclined. (Réanne still didn't have her sea legs!) We passed Cape Ommaney by 0750, then down the west coast of Coronation Island where we explored Windy Bay. Although its entrance is tricky, by favoring the far south shore, we had protection and a spectacular view behind the huge breaking reefs, where we anchored for a few hours of R & R.

Coronation Island, due south of Cape Decision, and Warren Island directly east of Coronation, both lie within designated wilderness.

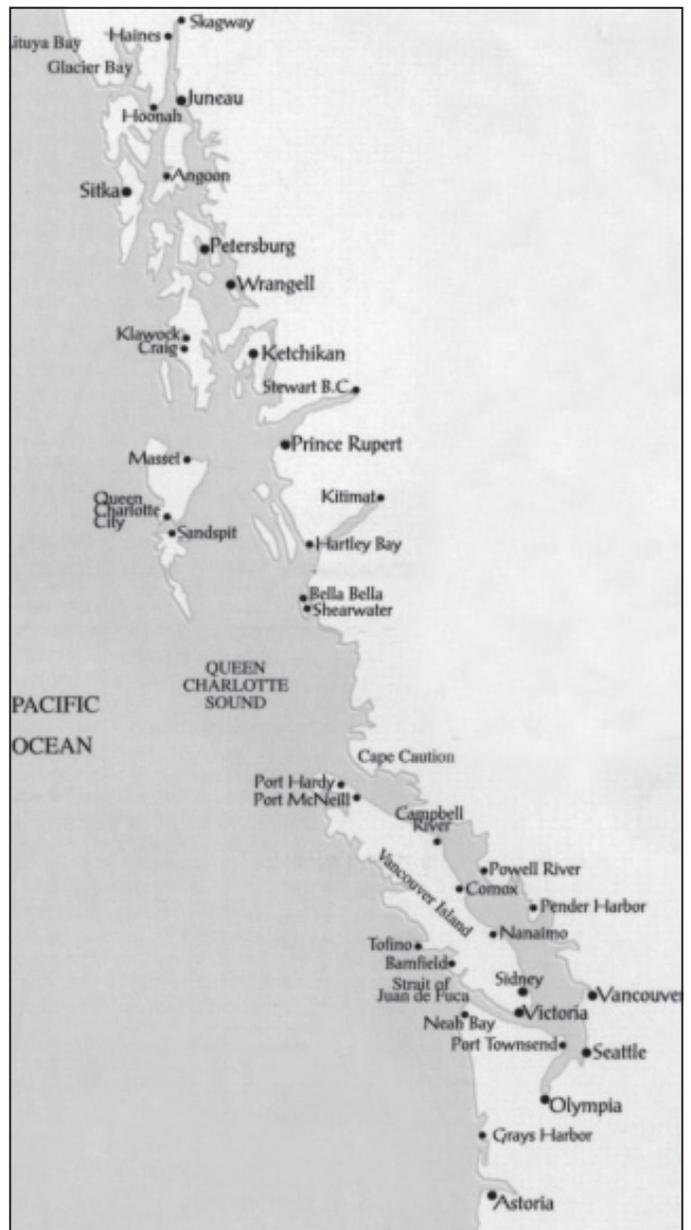
(George Vancouver named the island in honor of the anniversary of King George III's coronation — the very king against whom America fought the Revolutionary war.) While fishermen have long sought shelter along Coronation, pleasure craft are just beginning to discover its beauties — a white sand beach (in Egg Harbor), pointed peaks, primitive forest untouched by chain saws and sea caves. Animal life abounds here, both on shore and in the surrounding waters — deer and mountain goats, orcas and humpback whales. In fact, sea otters kept peeking at us from kelp beds the entire time we were anchored in Windy Bay.

After our hour or so of respite in Windy Bay, the fog rolled in, heavier than before, and we had to navigate under radar for the next five hours. At 2010, we dropped anchor inside Ulitka Bay on Noyes Island where we shared the anchorage with three commercial fishing boats whose crew had already hit the sack in preparation for the next day's opening.

Our destination for the next two nights was Craig, on Prince of Wales Island, where we would provision and rest before continuing down Dall



New Thomsen Harbor, Sitka.



Island's west coast. We took a half-day's layover before weighing anchor to let the heavy fog dissipate, but managed to pull into Craig by 1610 where we tied up with the aid of harbormaster, Mike Kampnich. (Mike is pleased to see the increase in cruising boats that has taken up some of the slack in commercial fishing.) We were fortunate that a Krogen Rendezvous had left Craig the day before, otherwise we wouldn't have found space at the dock. Joyce and Bob Brown of the *Joyce B* were there, along with other friends on *Qayak* and *Sandpiper*.

A visiting Haida fisherman, just in from Juneau passed by an hour after we tied up. "There's a potlatch up at the Haida Community Center," he said. "You oughta come." So we did, and had a memorable evening at a memorial service for one of the town's beloved women. A table, 25 feet long held a feast: potato

salad, coleslaw, Chinese slaw, seaweed slaw, roasted chicken, beef and ham; fresh shrimp, prawns and scallops — all local and fresh; potatoes and rice balls; salmonberry and blueberry punch with pears, and desserts of all kinds.

Dinner was followed by entrance songs and songs of death or happiness sung by men, then by women; Haida flute songs, then dances and presentations of hand-made traditional Haida blankets and sea otter skins (legal for the Natives) to the elders and friends and family. We received potlatch gifts of jam, candies, seaweed (good in soup!) and postcards all neatly arranged in a basket.

The sons and daughters of the memorial family had come from areas as far away as the Queen Charlottes and Anchorage; other friends had come from Ketchikan's large community of Haida. We enjoyed

the company of a Haida couple from Ketchikan whose parents were born in the Queen Charlottes.

As I downloaded the digital photos, my computer kept crashing and I didn't make it to Thompson's market until 1500. After having dropped off the laundry I ordered pizza for pick up at 1800 and, when I got back to the dock with our pizza in hand, three other couples were headed to Baidarka with boxes of pizza in their arms. "Uh, we hope you don't mind; your husband invited us over to your boat for a pizza party." By that time, my humor had improved and I didn't mind in the least. We were the lucky recipients of pizza that had been delivered an hour and half too early to one of the other boats. The dismayed pizza delivery crew were happy to take half-price for three pizzas they would've had to chuck. The crew of Sagitta, Jazz, Gairloch and SeaWeb II crammed into our salon and we had a riotous party — a great prelude to our next day's departure.

July 22: Up and away by 0600 to the west coast of Dall Island where sea and weather conditions were considerably better than the summer of 2000. At that time Réanne took one look at the seas and said "No way!" We explored Bob's Bay for about an hour, couldn't get our test anchor to hold, then motored down to Sea Otter Harbor and the northern arm of Hook Arm where there wasn't a ripple on the water. Hook Arm is full of islands and shoreline reefs with gray sand beaches — a great place to explore by kayak or canoe. It

was only 1230 but we decided to spend the night in Hook since we had so much work to do.

After anchoring we spent an hour taking the tracks and marks off the Ocean PC so we'd have a fresh start for our crossing of Dixon Entrance and the beginning of our Charlottes' trip. I worked all afternoon on four chapters of the North Coast book. We were able to make our first contact by cell phone since Sitka. We also heard from Qayak by VHF. They're on the east side of Dall and have decided not to go to the Charlottes. We're disappointed.

Don's still fascinated by the Aleutians and has been reading about them this p.m. "Listen to this," he said: "Adak is the most southerly of Alaska's towns."

"They call Adak a town?" I said. "It can't have many amenities — it's 1,300 miles from Anchorage and 1,000 from Kamchatka Peninsula — and it's still largely just a windswept island."

July 25: Underway from Hook Arm at 0630; explored Fisherman Cove, passed up Sakie Bay because of tide rips, no soundings on the chart, and too much exposure for useful shelter.

We passed up Camp Cove, also. It's full of rocks, but it does look like a good place for kayaks. As we entered Welcome Cove to do an anchor test — its name should indicate safety — Réanne hollered, "Get out of here! It's too shallow!"

We had lunch in Waterfall Bay, a NW-SE trending inlet and not a good site in stormy weather, but it's beautiful

and worth a temporary stop in stable weather; one lovely waterfall along the northern granite wall, then a second at its head, nearly hidden from sight until you're practically on it.

A little bight mentioned in Coast Pilot is too small for anything except one boat of less than 32 feet. We did an anchor test off the south side in 12 fathoms then continued to Gooseneck Harbor where we had planned to spend the night.

Entering Gooseneck was a harrowing experience; the harbor is full of rocks and islands topped with tufts of shrubs and small trees.

We couldn't get the anchor to set and depths showing on our echo sounder didn't match those of the chart — we found 3.2 fathoms where the chart is marked 7.

We weighed anchor and brought up a 200 lb. rock that was wedged inside the flukes of the Bruce. It took us more than 30 minutes to extricate it then we dropped anchor a second time. Again no hold.

"I don't like this!" I told Don. "Let's go on to Port Bazan." By this time the prevailing wind had come up and was blowing us toward the rocks. We studied the chart and saw that Bazan was only about 3 miles to the southeast, so we continued to Bazan and found a calm anchor site behind an unnamed islet. The only disadvantage about this site are the clearcuts on its southeast hill-sides.

We anchored at 1608 after 10 hours of work; amazing how much mental energy we expend in a day like this. To bed at 2100. No VHF or weather channel reception from either Prince Rupert or Ketchikan.

July 26: The site where we anchored is marked STKY (sticky) on the chart, and not only was it sticky, it was STKY for stinky! As I was laying the anchor chain, doubled over at the waist with my torso hanging half-way inside the locker, I was suddenly overwhelmed by a stench. Black, organic matter splattered my face and arms. "Stop, damn it. Stop!" I screamed to Don. "Pull the last 25 feet of chain up and wash it off again!" The chain needed a scrubbing with bleach, but he had his hands too full to worry about it. But I needed a good scrubbing when we were finished! As Don took us out of Port Bazan, I hopped into the shower.

We exited Port Bazan through the south side, east of Dolgoi Island, finding a minimum depth of 5 fathoms in the fairway. High fog above the mountains promised a clear day that never materialized; we had fog with one-mile visibility for much of the morning.

From Point Cornwallis south, vertical rock formations which really do resemble giant white molars, and polished rocky knobs with stunted small trees and grass, reminded us of the channels of Chilean Patagonia where the granite has been sand-blasted by storms; the southern coastline of Dall Island has by far the most dramatic scenery of the entire island. It's worth a visit!

As we rounded Cape Muzon, at the southern tip of Dall Island, and headed into McLeod Bay planning to anchor for the night, the wind began to howl.

Although used by fishermen, we found the bay unattractive and too open to the wind for comfort. We tucked in north of the Daykoo Islands and anchored behind a line of small islets.

Low swells from Kaigani Strait entered the site, rocking us gently and comfortably.

Another exhausting day. We both napped over an hour, then got up, stowed the Alaska charts and data, got out all the B.C. charts and info and readied for an early morning crossing of Dixon Entrance. The anchorage is teeming with auklets - cute little birds with white mustaches that dive for about 30 seconds, then pop up again suddenly.

Friday, July 27: Up and underway at 0530 for the 35-mile crossing of Dixon Entrance. The barometer was steady at 1012 and the wind just northwest at Force 3, ideal conditions for our crossing. On our previous visits to the Queen Charlottes, we had crossed Hecate Strait via the conventional route from Larsen Harbor at the northern tip of Banks Island. But this time we were able to shorten our mileage by over 100



Langara Light Station-on the stormbound west coast.

miles. A recently appointed seasonal Customs agent in Masset prevented our having to cross East Dixon Entrance to check in at Prince Rupert and then back across Hecate Strait. We deployed the stabilizers and set off southward from Cape Muzon to our destination in Refuge Cove (known locally as 7-Mile Cove for its distance from Masset) at the north end of Graham Island.

It took us just six hours to make the 35-mile-crossing to reach 7-Mile Cove, a small L-shaped inlet behind Refuge Island, east of Wiah Point. Entering Masset Sound requires careful timing, particularly when strong winds oppose the current, so boats often take refuge here while waiting for the proper tide.

About 3 miles off Refuge Cove, Don said, "How 'bout you take us in."

I studied the inset for Wiah Point on Chart 3892: depths are shown in meters and the only number printed inside the cove is 2.1 — just 7 feet! Symbols show a small reef with a flashing light immediately east of the narrow entrance and a flashing sector light inside the cove; reefs covered by kelp, and awash at high tide, extend from shore for 1/4 mile. And — as if that wasn't enough — the entrance to the cove (measured on the chart) is less than 1/8 inch wide. There's no room to pass another boat!

I scanned with the binoculars. All I could see was a concrete, storm-damaged pillar against which surf was crashing and breaking. I couldn't see an entrance.

"No way. I'm not taking us in there!"

"Yes, you'll be fine, just follow the sector light and slow down. I'll take in the stabilizers."

I slowed to 800 rpm, then into neutral. Kelp covered the entire entrance. Don finally had the poles up. The depth alarm went off: 3.1 fathoms; 2.8; 2.1. "Switch it to feet," I shouted at Don testily. "You take over. Please, you take over!" I pleaded.

"No, you're doing just fine. Calm down."

With dry mouth, I kept my eyes peeled on the sector light. Finally we passed the concrete pillar and floated gently through the kelp in neutral. More panic as the echo sounder read 1.2 fathoms.

Then, as I turned left behind Refuge Island, depths increased a tad. I did a 360° to bring us alongside the L-shaped float, Don hopped off the stern and snubbed us down.

I collapsed on the salon settee and complained, "I've just expended more energy in the past 45 minutes than I do in one day at the office. Now that I've done it, I could do it again, but what a nerve-wracking experience that was!"

Don smiled and said, "You did great."

The float was vacant until several sportfishing boats began pulling in



Giant "molars" on Dall Island.

from the fishing grounds off Langara Island.

We watched as they cleaned their clients' sockeyes. "Fishing's really good this season," one of the charter

skippers told us.

At 1630, after a restful 5-hour wait, we untied our lines and headed for Masset Harbor where we moored at the public dock in Delkatla Harbor

an hour and a half later. After numerous calls to the number we'd been given for the local Customs, we gave up and called Victoria. We learned that the local officer was "on vacation" and that Victoria would clear us.

July 28: Francis (Frank) Caldwell moved aboard early in the morning to join us for our data-gathering trip around Graham Island.

Frank has spent more than 40 years fishing commercially from the Fairweather Banks off Lituya Bay to the northern waters of California. He is the author of *Land of the Ocean Mists* (the classic book about Lituya Bay) and *Pacific Troller*, as well as others books and numerous magazine articles; he's also a top-notch photographer.

We hadn't known him very well before the trip up to these parts, but he proved to be a valuable crew-member and he regaled us non-stop with his stories of fishing in stormy Alaskan winters.

Réanne picked up a few provisions at the well-stocked Haida co-op which is within easy walking of the public docks. Masset is taking tourism seriously these days; residents are friendly and helpful and several B&Bs have recently opened in town.

We had a good visit on *Baidarka* with the owner of Gerry's Bed & Breakfast, and Art Lou, who's involved in the development of the new Dixon Entrance Maritime Museum that emphasizes the historical boat building industry of East Dixon Entrance.

We left Delkatla Harbor just be-

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fore noon and rounded Cape Edenshaw, entering Naden Harbor, a wide bay inside Virago Sound. Although the views of its flat shoreline are relatively unattractive, several nice-looking sportfishing lodges are located here. If you can get a set in the Jello-like bottom, there are also several good anchor sites, but we opted to use a public mooring buoy for the night.

On our way to Langara Island the next morning, we tested Bruin Bay and a bight inside Marchand Reef — both fair-weather, temporary anchorages. Beal and Henslung coves at the south end of Langara are the “headquarters” of the region’s sportfishing paradise. Both float planes and high-speed Boston Whalers shuttling back and forth between Masset and the resorts make this a noisy area. In the early mornings hours we counted more than 100 small boats bouncing around with obviously keen fishermen (and women!) bundled up in yellow foul weather gear waiting for a big bite that would be dressed, frozen and packaged for the home flight.

Langara Island’s south and west coasts have interesting sandstone and conglomerate rock formations, some of which look as though they’d

been extruded through a pastry tube. The 95-foot-high Pillar Rock, and Testalints Rock whose shape resembles that of a gigantic flowerpot, are two well-known attractions.

Passing Langara Light Station on our circumnavigation of the island, we had a conversation via VHF with the Schwers family who have manned this station for over a decade. They invited us to come ashore for a visit, but the little “landing” cove northeast of the lighthouse looked like too tight a squeeze for *Baidarka* so we continued around to the east side of the island and anchored in Egeria Bay for the night.

We are now anchored in Egeria Bay on the east coast of Langara, facing west where the wind howls across a low spot. The wind rings in the rigging. Astern, we can see Rose Spit stretching far northeast from the tip of Graham Island. Neil Carey’s description of Rose Spit is apt: “. . . an extensive finger of tidal sand where the changeable waters of Dixon Entrance and Hecate Strait meet in jumbled torrent along Overfall Shoal.” I’m glad we didn’t have to round it — it’s a sailor’s nightmare. [Neil Carey, A Guide to the Queen Charlottes, 12th Edition]

July 29: We traveled through nar-



Rick and Elke headed to Baidarka for popcorn and wine, Armentieres Channel.

row Parry Passage and out into the Pacific past Cape Knox. Once past the cape, we used the latest CHS charts that date back 70 years as well as old hand-drawn charts attributed to British Admiralty surveys. We began to feel like we’d reached the frontier. No one lives along the 175-mile-length of the Charlottes’ west coast; there is no place to provision, and drinking water can be found at just three locations flowing from old hoses installed long ago by fishermen. Gone were the float planes and sportfishing boats. We were starting our survey along the most extensive stretch of unsounded coast between Alaska and Baja.

The horizontal datum of several of the charts we were using is unknown and the chart notes warn that coastline positions can be off by 0.2 mile. (Later, along Moresby’s west coast, we would measure errors of up to 450 feet!) Numerous rocks, reefs and unsurveyed shoals where seas heap up unexpectedly, extend a mile or two offshore along the entire west coast of the Charlottes. The Canadian Hydrographic Service, Pacific Region, was interested in our findings, so we carefully recorded *Baidarka*’s track for our entire west coast itinerary.

Between Cape Knox and Tingley Bay — deep in Port Louis 30 miles to the south — there are no all-weather anchorages; Lepas Bay, Sialun Bay and Beresford Bay lie open to the full force of the Pacific swells. But lured by the brilliant white sands of Lepas Bay’s crescent-shaped beach, we poked our bow into a tiny cove on its northwest side — a temporary weather stop in fair weather — and watched from relative safety as swells rolled, curved and broke high on shore. Although a kayak could land in several spots we decided not to give it a try. Besides, the beach lies within the Haida Rediscovery Camp, and visitors are not encouraged un-

less they have made prior arrangements in Masset.

We made our first rest stop in Peril Bay in the lee of Frederick Island — a nesting place for Cassin’s auklets — where we expected to find a DFO buoy. What we found, instead, was a rolling anchor site with no buoy and a rocky bottom with poor holding. However, behind Beehive Hill, and protected from northwesterlies by a large kelp bed, we found a site that can serve as a good lunch stop.

July 30: The first protection from northwest winds south of Cape Knox is Tian where we enjoyed poking our nose into the head of Blue Creek. Frank and Don spotted a huge red fender high on the rocky shore and hopped in the dinghy to claim what is the perfect west coast “defensive equipment” for a fiberglass boat.

Sailing Directions gives such slight mention to Otard Bay that we had planned just to reconnoiter and take notes before moving on to Port Louis for the night. However, it looked too good to pass up. We anchored in 5 fathoms inside a small bight south of the outlet to Otard Creek and spent most of the next day exploring the beach, the creek and the moss-carpeted forest. Like so many beaches on the Charlottes’ west coast, this one is littered with fenders, plastic bottles, and Nikes from a Japanese freighter that lost its cargo a few years ago.

A midden, long buried by sod, along the upper banks of the half-mile-long beach, and another discovery made by Frank, revealed that the area had once been inhabited. Frank pointed to a huge cedar whose bark had been cut in long strips for use in making rope, clothes or baskets. In the latest jargon this was a CMT (Culturally Modified Tree). The narrow, vertical cut marks, we could tell, were years old.



Culturally Modified Tree (CMT) in Otard Bay.

As the tide rose, the three of us motored up Otard Creek, tied the dinghy to a log and walked along the mossy shore. The forest of Sitka spruce, red alder and hemlock — some as tall as 200 feet — showed no evidence of logging. The canopy of trees was so dense that when rain began to fall we barely felt a drop. We were captivated by a silence broken only by the sound of the rushing creek.

Frank, whose knowledge of mosses and fungi would fill a book, pointed out ten different species of moss with enchanting common names like pine gauze, palm moss, witches hair and, among the fungi, we spotted a huge white mushroom that resembled a crocheted doily. Along the sandy wet shore, we observed river otter and deer prints — no bear tracks.

July 31: We weighed anchor reluctantly at 1600 hours, after a wonderful day of exploring Otard, and motored out of the bay into lumpy seas and southeasterly winds. "Shall we lower the stabilizer poles?" Don asked me. With just five miles to go to Port Louis, I didn't think it was worth the effort. We are now tucked deep into Tingley Cove at the southeast corner of Port Louis — the most well-protected anchorage between Cape Knox and Rennell Sound. As we ate dinner, a resident loon swam back and forth, his tremulous call echoing across the head of the cove. The setting sun cast a golden shadow on 1660-foot Mt. Louis due east of us, but it has just started to pour rain as we head for bed. I love the sound of the rain on the deck when we're well anchored and cozy inside the boat!



Testalinks Rock, Langara—a big "flower pot."

The guys spent three hours exploring the area east of our anchor site where Coates Creek flows into Port Louis; a mile upstream, a fish ladder allows salmon to reach their spawning grounds over "stairs" of black basalt. After dinner, we had our first quiet time together and Frank interviewed us for several magazines from which he has assignments; he conducted each interview from a different perspective with contrasting questions for Don and for me.

August 1: From Louis Point to Hippa Island, the coast for one to three miles offshore is uncharted and unsounded. Where possible, we intended to stay within a 1/4 mile of shore so we could take useful soundings for cruising boats and use our binoculars more effectively to observe the shore. Momentary panic occurred more than once when Baidarka's depth sounder indicated

underwater seamounts on our track. Don was adept at avoiding disaster: quick and powerful thrusts of reverse gear became second nature. Port Chanal, 6 miles south of Port Louis, is an Ecological Reserve with several anchor sites, and although we tested each site there was only one we would trust. We first checked out what we called "Cave Cove," behind uncharted Barry Island and off a gigantic cave — the first of many between here and Cape St. James. This site proved similar to formations on shore: rocky and of marginal shelter.

Goose Cove, 1.5 miles south of Cave Cove, is also uncharted and its entrance tricky. Although it's mentioned in *Sailing Directions*, we didn't like it! Readings on our echo sounder indicated uncharted underwater rocks all over the place, and three

old DFO public buoys were tied together in one mass — an occurrence we'd already seen more than once in the Charlottes. DFO is no longer servicing the buoys, so we always pulled-tested any we used.

We came all the way to the head of Port Chanal and found what we call "Mace Creek Cove." Surrounded by mist-covered peaks and nearly land-locked, it has a grassy meadow along the outlet to the creek. We're anchored in 6 fathoms now and the sun is casting golden shadows on the mountain. Today was long and hard; much data to record. I slapped together a stew of cabbage, red potatoes, carrots, onions, red wine, and paprika (no meat) and the guys thought it was fantastic.

August 2: Up and out of Port Chanal in partial sun. The shores are bright with golden rockweed. Once in a while we see a small sandy beach at the outlet of a creek.

The hills along the south side of Port Chanal have been stripped of trees. I wonder whether the area was clear-cut at one time or if these conditions are due to storms or paucity of the soil.

The head of Nesto Inlet offers good protection, but a seasonal sportfishing camp was moored here, so we moved south to a small fair-weather bight we called "Hippa Passage Cove," a mile and a half north of Hippa Point. This is a good base camp from which to explore the unusual geologic formations at Skelu Point and the remains of *Clarksdale Victory* that sit on a reef off the west side of Hippa Island. In the days before all military ships had radar,

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the U.S. Army transport ship was swept way off course one stormy November day in 1947 on its way south from the Gulf of Alaska. All but four of 53 crew lost their lives.

South of Skelu Bay the coast becomes steeper and more dramatic, the volcanic rock more convoluted and the seamounts more numerous. Seal Inlet is the last of the untouched inlets along Graham's west coast where trees still cover the precipitous slopes. We tested a site behind Lauder Island, then moved to the head of Seal Inlet where we anchored in 9 fathoms inside a complex of small islands and spent a quiet night.

August 3: Underway by 0730, we turned east and entered Tartu Inlet on the north side of Rennell Sound. Here we began to see signs of man — Rennell is a busy logging area. A steep gravel pick-up road crosses the ridge from the Yakoun River Valley to Shields Bay in the southeast corner of Rennell, giving access to campers and trailerable boats. On a previous trip, we rented a car in Queen Charlotte City to drive this route and, as we reached the launching ramp in Shields Bay, we had a flat and had to return on what we call a "Tinker Toy" spare — almost as exciting as navigating unsounded areas!

Fortunately, quiet anchorage can be found in Clapp Basin deep in Rennell's far southern corner where logging activity isn't evident. Tree limbs stretch far out over the water and high snowy peaks add to the scenic qualities of this well-protected basin. We were captivated by the sight of a tree that grew diagonally over the water, oblivious to williwaws that spill out from the U-shaped valley at the basin's head. Northeast of the two main Clapp Islands, we found a tiny, entirely landlocked cove resembling a lagoon that we call "Annie's Cove" where we spent several hours watching river otters and harbor seals.

We then moved on to Givenchy Anchorage in Kano Inlet and, as we pulled in to fill up on water, we discovered the Oak Bay Marine's ship *Salmon Seeker* tied to the sole DFO mooring buoy and using the water hose. (*Salmon Seeker* is a former Scandinavian icebreaker now used as an upscale fishing resort whose clients arrive by float plane.) They kindly allowed us to tie up to their float and fill our tanks.

The hose in Givenchy is the first of the three sources along the Charlottes west coast — Douglas Inlet, in Englefield Bay, and Louscoone Inlet, at the south end of Moresby Island are the two others. Like all the public hoses installed years ago by commercial fishermen, you never



Don taking sounds in the dinghy - photo by Francis Caldwell

know in what condition you'll find the "system;" intermittent breakdowns are not uncommon. The water from all these sources is unfiltered and we recommend treating it.

August 4: Gale warnings have been issued for late this afternoon and tomorrow. We're heading for Armentières Channel to ride out the storm and will have a layover day. Whoopee!

Marble Island, seven miles south of Kano Inlet, is the leading landmark for Skidegate Channel's west entrance. It's also a bird sanctuary, a



Buoys lashed together in Goose Cove.

favorite feeding ground of migrating whales and a sportfisherman's delight. Small boats leave Sandspit Marina early in the morning, troll these waters all day, then roar back

to Sandspit to deliver their clients. The charter skippers clean their clients' fish on the dock, pack it immediately in ice, then fill up on fuel ready for the next day's departure.

This afternoon we cut the engine and stood off Marble Island to watch a pair of whales as they spouted, surfaced, did a ballet, then sounded and disappeared. Suddenly a little red DFO inflatable with a minuscule cabin zoomed over and pulled alongside Baidarka. "Are you okay?" one of the two officers asked. "We saw you just bobbing around here and wondered if you were having engine trouble." We assured them we were just fascinated by the whales.

"I'm Gord Usher, a friend of Kevin Monahan," one of them said. "Is he aboard?"

Word had travelled! We told them we were expecting Kevin to join us at Sandspit at the end of the week for our circumnavigation of Moresby. We chatted for over twenty minutes and when they pulled away we imagined the sportfishing boats figured we were in violation of something.

From Marble Island we headed southeast to enter Skidegate, passing by Ells Point at the southwest side of Tana Bay to examine Pipe Organ Rock, a spectacular formation of basaltic columns. Northeast of Tana Bay, snowcapped Mt. La Pérouse towers majestically above; at 3400 feet it is Graham Island's highest peak.

Entering Armentières Channel, we sighted a sailboat at the very spot

suggested on our anchor diagram in *Exploring the North Coast of B.C.* We slowed and went alongside *Mithrandir*.

Rick and Elke Cunningham popped out of their companionway and introduced themselves. They were holding up a copy of our North Coast book.

"Hope you don't mind if we share the channel with you," Don told them. "Yours is only the second cruising vessel we've seen since leaving Masset."

"Well, as a matter of fact, when we first saw a boat approaching we groaned. But then we saw it was *Baidarka*. Will you autograph your book for us?"

We invited them to row over for popcorn and wine after we'd anchored. Popcorn and wine turned into "dinner" as we shared cruising stories late into the evening. Earlier in the summer they'd had an alarming encounter with a large tree in Ire Inlet (Principe Channel) that caused damage to their boat and required them to have repairs made in Prince Rupert. (Read Rick and Elke's sidebar in the Second Edition of our North Coast book for an account of their experience. They are currently on a round-the-world voyage and we were fortunate to have one more visit with them in Anacortes before they headed south.)

August 6, 1400 hours: *It's a good thing we anchored here last night. There's a full gale blowing right now — 37 knots reported just now from Kindakun Rock*



Baidarka moored in Sandspit Marina.

north of here and Langara Light Station — and the wind is supposed to increase. From time to time a strong gust blows through the channel, kicking up white caps and blowing us from side to side. What a great day for a layover! I love it! Neil told us about locals who have dragged anchor here, but our 110 lb. Bruce anchor hasn't budged.

August 7: We radioed "farewell" to Mithrandir and prepared to transit the most challenging "rapids" in all B.C.: Skidegate Channel. At its west end, large tides vary a maximum of 14 feet; at its Hecate Strait end they vary up to 26 feet! (Groundings have been common on the channel's shallow and curving path.) Somewhere near Trounce Inlet at East Narrows the tides meet, making calculations for slack water difficult and largely unpredictable. On the several transits we've made in both Baidarkas we

approached before local high water and waited until the current moderated. This time we did the same, waiting until the current had diminished to about 2 knots, which made maneuvering more manageable. The strongest currents are near the west end of East Narrows and because the channel is so narrow and ill-defined, we don't recommend attempting the passage if the current at East Narrows is running more than 2 knots. Small sportfishing boats that have a wider time-margin often transit at near zero tide when the channel fairway carries just 2 to 3 feet. Some day, we hope that good current tables will be available for Skidegate Channel, substantially improving boating safety.

While "running the rapids" is exciting, trying to follow the marginally useful ranges is exasperating. But, in the past year CHS installed

several new steel pilings with daymarks — a major improvement! With Frank stationed on the bow, Réanne calling out the depths, and Don at the helm we successfully navigated the turbulent waters.

It had taken us about two hours to transit the narrows and cross into Skidegate Inlet. We were happy to dock that evening at Sandspit Marina — we'd had enough excitement for the day.

The facilities at the marina — the newest and most complete on the north coast — include slips for 80 recreational and commercial boats (up to 100 feet); wide concrete floats; water; fuel; pump-out station; showers; pay telephone at the head of the dock. It's about a two-mile walk to Sandspit, which can be a bit of an inconvenience if you're in a hurry, but taxi service is available and if you thumb it, locals will usually give you a ride.

In three days Kevin Monahan — our Canadian Coast Guard friend and author — would arrive and we'd begin the second half of our journey circumnavigating the Charlottes. On this next leg we would document for the first time more than a dozen harbors and inlets along Moresby's "ironbound" west coast — the most satisfying and exciting part of our explorations to date! NWY

Next time: Log of Baidarka 2001, Part III-The West Coast of Moresby Island: the Mysterious Mosquito Totem and an Oriental Shipwreck.

Detailed documentation of the results of Baidarka's voyage to the Charlottes west coast can be found in 75

pages of the new 2nd Edition of Exploring the North Coast of British Columbia. In addition the Douglasses have published four other highly respected guidebooks covering essentially all the places to tie up or anchor a boat from Puget Sound to Glacier Bay.

Their newest book, Exploring the Pacific Coast: San Diego to Seattle will be released this summer. Réanne Hemingway-Douglass' Cape Horn: One Man's Dream, One Woman's Nightmare, is classic reading in survival literature, and has been published in France and Italy; an expanded Second Edition of her popular book is expected this summer.

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Specifications

LOA: 46'0" LWL: 37'0"
Beam: 11'6" Draft: 5'6"
Net tonnage: 13
Designer: Bill Garden
Builder: Vic Franck Boat Company
Hull material: Alaska Yellow Cedar
Paint system: Pettit
Power: 105-hp Perkins 6-354M
Speed: 8 knots @ 1850 rpm
Fuel: 225 U.S. gal.
Water: 175 U.S. gal.
Year: 1963

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