

Whitehorse - where 2/3 of the Yukon population live. - June 13 & 14



On the way to Whitehorse, we crossed the Continental Divide. This is the area where the 2 largest drainage systems in North America, the Yukon and McKenzie Rivers, divide. Water draining to the west of this point flows to the Pacific Ocean, and water draining to the east goes to the Arctic Ocean. For lunch we stopped at Mukluk Annie's to partake of our first salmon bake.

(A mukluk is a leather moccasin that comes up high on the leg like a boot). The salad bar and ribs were excellent, the salmon a little on the dry side. While eating, the Ricks were surprised by the appearance of Jim and Marlene Phipps, friends from NC. The Phipps were also headed to Whitehorse and joined us for a few days while we saw the sights.



Whitehorse got its name from the swift rapids on the Yukon River that resemble the flowing manes of charging white horses. In 1898, during the gold rush, stampedeers had to bypass these treacherous waters, which were located just south of the city. The river is much calmer now since the installation of the hydroelectric dam in 1958. Whitehorse has been the capital of the Yukon Territories since it was moved from Dawson City in 1953. Over 23,000 people, which is about two thirds of the Yukon population, live here today. During the construction of the Alaska Highway, Whitehorse was the headquarters for the western sector. It was one of the two largest construction camps on the highway.

Since we had toured the Alberta Legislative building, several of us decided to check out the Yukon Government building. The present building was completed in 1976 and, though not old and majestic like the Alberta building, it seemed very functional and had several spectacular pieces of artwork. Above the foyer was an acrylic resin mural consisting of 24 vivid panels. This artwork conveyed the historical evolution of the Yukon. The mural, which is 120' long, is the largest of its kind in the world. The large tapestry in the legislative assembly chamber, called "Fireweed", is an abstraction of the Yukon floral emblem. It is made from hand-spun wool that has been dyed to over 100 different shades of color and took one Canadian artist over 1400 hours to complete. These pieces were nice, but the most impressive art we saw was the five needlepoint wall hangings located in the Members' Lounge. These panels depict the role of Northern women in the development of the area, showing the 5 seasons of the North; spring, summer, fall, winter, and "survival", the cold gray days between winter and spring and between fall and winter. Each hanging measures 7' X 13' and is worked with heavy tapestry wool on needlepoint canvas measuring 5 stitches to the inch. Each panel was originally divided into 3 sections so they could be sent to different communities throughout the Yukon to be stitched. It is estimated that about half of the total population of the Yukon made at least a few stitches. These needlework pieces were hung for the official opening of the building in May 1976.



Legislative Chamber



Needlepoint wall hangings stitched by many.



One of 24 panels seen in foyer.

A visit to the SS Klondike was where we learned about stern-wheelers, a major supplier of transportation and supplies from 1866 to 1955. The typical vessel was about 170' X 35' and could carry up to 300 tons of cargo. The Klondike carried mail, general supplies, passengers and silver lead ore. It was run by boiler engines, which burned about 120 cords of wood on the 460-mile trip between Whitehorse and Dawson City. Wood camps along the river provided fuel for the stern-wheelers during their journey. Airplanes and better roads eventually ended the need for these boats.



Canadian National Historic Site



Wheelhouse - top floor!



First class passenger cabin.

At the MacBride Museum we saw historical galleries featuring gold rush exhibits, animals from the area and outdoor displays, which included the cabin of Sam McGee. McGee was the subject of the Robert Service poem called "The Cremation of Sam McGee".



Across from the museum was the North End Gallery. Here we saw works of art created by Canadians from the "North End" including birchbark baskets. Birchbark baskets, decorated with porcupine quills, have been made for centuries by women that live in the Northwest Territories of Canada. After the labor intensive harvesting of the bark, each basket is meticulously crafted and requires many hours to fold, shape and stitch together with spruce root and sinew. The quillwork is the most difficult and time-consuming part of making a basket. After the quills have been sorted, soaked and dyed, they are softened in warm water



and sewn into unique designs on the basket. A large basket generally takes about 20 hours to make. Traditionally these lightweight but sturdy baskets were used for cooking, picking berries, storing items and carrying water. Today these baskets are valued as art.

At a trip to "Folknits - North country Knitwear" (www.folknits.yukon.net) we learned about Qiviuq. Muskox have survived in the Canadian arctic for thousands of years. During the winters they are protected from the extreme cold by a long glossy coat of hair that sheds the snow, and a thick undercoat of downy soft hair that insulates the body. This insulation is called "qiviuq" (ki-vee-uk), which means "down" to the Inuit people. As the temperature rises in the spring, the muskox requires less insulation and the qiviuq begins to loosen. It works its way up through the guardhairs and is shed. The qiviuq can then be picked up from the ground or is harvested from animals killed by the Inuvialuit Indians for food. It is then spun into yarn that is knitted into incredibly soft and warm garments. We also noticed a book on knitting with dog hair, with some sample garments nearby.



Shedding muskox



Qiviuq garments, softer and warmer than wool.



Save your dogs hair to make mittens!

On the night of the 13th, many of us visited the Frantic Follies. The Follies began in 1970 and on opening night the cast outnumbered the audience. Word spread about their music, magic, comedy, dancing and costumes and today they boast of a combined audience of over 1 million. The Frantic Follies has the biggest, most versatile and longest serving cast of any show in the north. The cast plays over 60 instruments and double as door staff and ushers. All of our funny bones were tickled during the show, but we all agreed that the skit of "The Cremation of Sam McGee" was worth the price of the ticket!

On the 14th we traveled a few miles out of town and visited with Frank Turner and his dog sled crew. He has 85 adorable "Dukes mixtures" as he calls them. For about an hour we learned about Frank, his dogs and mushing. Mushing is one of the oldest official sports in Canada. Races occur all across Canada; however, the Yukon Quest is the longest race and Frank has participated in all 19 Quests and won in 1995. The Quest runs over 1,000 miles from Whitehorse, Yukon in Canada to Fairbanks, Alaska. They travel 100 to 200 miles between checkpoints with no support enroute. They are totally self-sufficient throughout the race. For example, they cannot replace a dog or sled during the race. Because of this and the extreme northern winters, the Yukon Quest is known as the "toughest race on earth". It was a real treat getting to meet Frank and his friendly canines.



"The Cremation of Sam McGee"



Frank shows off his winning sled.



Bill's new buddy!



Vet's Choice Award for excellent dog care.

With a hankering for more animals, we located the Yukon Wildlife Preserve. Here we had an opportunity to view and photograph wild-life in a natural setting. Our guide took us “up close and personal” to muskox (very big and very mean critters), Dall, stone and bighorn sheep, moose (mom and baby), bison, caribou and elk.



Bison



Female elk and their young.



Caribou

Our stay in Whitehorse drew to a close with a meal and game of Spinner at the Furst's. Marti furnished a wonderful Tortilla soup and Connie a super salad. We all felt the recipes were worth sharing.

TORTILLA SOUP - Serves 8 to 10.

Soup may be made 1 day ahead and gently reheated before serving.

- 3 Tbsp corn oil
- 4 corn tortillas, coarsely chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh epazote (or 1 Tbsp chopped fresh cilantro)
- 1 cup fresh onion puree
- 2 cups fresh tomato puree
- 1 Tbsp cumin powder
- 2 teasp chili powder
- 2 bay leaves
- 4 Tbsp canned tomato puree
- 2 qts chicken stock
- Salt to taste



Cayenne pepper to taste
 1 cooked chicken breast, cut into strips
 1 avocado, peeled, seeded, and cubed
 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
 3 corn tortillas, cut into thin strips and fried crisp
 Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat.
 Sauté tortillas with garlic and epazote over medium heat until tortillas are soft. Add onion and fresh tomato puree and bring to a boil. Add cumin, chili powder, bay leaves, canned tomato puree and chicken stock. Bring to a boil again, then reduce heat to simmer. Add salt and cayenne pepper to taste and cook, stirring frequently, for 30 minutes. Skim fat from surface, if necessary. Strain and pour into warm soup bowls. Garnish each bowl with an equal portion of chicken breast, avocado, shredded cheese, and crisp tortilla strips. Serve immediately.



FRESH GREENS SALAD

3 Romaine Hearts
 1 Head Iceburg lettuce
 1 can tiny whole red beets, quartered

1 can mandarin oranges
 2 med. size tomatoes, sliced
 Carrots and onion for color and taste

1/2 16 oz bottle Low calorie Creamy
 Caesar Dressing

Minto, a time to
 rest and catch up
 on housekeeping -
 June 15



Equal opportunity work.



Rest for the weary!

Half way between Dawson City and Whitehorse is Minto, which was once a steamboat landing and trading post. Today it is called an RV Resort and since there is no town here now we found it to be a great place to do some fishing, housekeeping and resting. Traveling in a motorhome requires that we complete some rituals. This is especially true when we move frequently from one campground to another. So far on our trip we seem to have found more than our share of windshield bugs and road dust. This adds to the number of jobs that must (or should) be completed before hitting the highway for our next destination. However, we have found that none of this routine significantly detracts from our adventure. Shown below are some of these rituals.



Checking tire pressure.

**Guys clean outside,
gals clean inside!**

**Hooking up the
toad or is that
towed?**



Dawson City - A GIANT step back in time. - June 16 - 18

Our next stop was Dawson City. To get there we took the road known as the Klondike Loop, a 323 mile stretch of highway which begins north of Whitehorse, goes through Carmacks and Dawson City, crosses into Alaska at Boundary, swings by Chicken, and returns to the Alaska Highway south of Tok.

We found the Klondike loop sprinkled with inviting lodges offering sweets, gifts and unusual ways to entice visitors to stop and check out their hospitality. One of the most interesting phenomena that we are seeing is trees that have huge knots on them. Some of the lodges have had these deformed trees made into the shape of north woods animals. The funniest one we have seen so far is "Alaska's state bird", better know as the mosquito, seen here with Judy! And speaking of sweets, during our travels north we have stopped at several places that sell cinnamon buns, but none have been as large as those we purchased at the Braeburn Lodge.



Bill thinks she's going to share!

These tremendous goodies are easily big enough to feed four people; however, each couple bought one!

We did not stop at Carmacks, population less than 500. However, it is interesting to know where it got its name. George Carmacks established a trading post there in the 1890's. He had come north hoping to strike it rich but, after many unsuccessful years prospecting, found himself bankrupt. So in 1896, he moved his family to Fortymile, where he could cut and sell timber. That summer he continued to prospect and began to find gold. During the next winter, he extracted more than a ton of gold from a tiny tributary of the Klondike River that he called Bonanza Creek. Carmacks' discovery led to one of the greatest human sagas the world has ever seen - the Klondike gold rush of 1898.

Continuing along the loop we came to an overlook of the Five Finger Rapids. These rapids got their name because of the 5 channels formed by rock pillars in the river. The rapids were very hazardous and the safest route for the stern-wheelers was through the east passage. Several of us hiked the path to get a better look, including the 268 steps that covered the steepest grades.



Judy's safe. He's tied down!



Five Finger Rapids - Bill R on the point.



Huff, huff, puff, puff, only 155 more to go.

When one enters Dawson City, it looks as though the calendar has been rolled back many years. The streets are still dirt and the buildings look like the wild, wild west. Here we found a great opportunity to turn back the pages of time and experience living history. For a short while at the end of the 19th century, Dawson City was a large city boasting a population of over 30,000. (Today, the population is only a little over 2000.) It became the first capital of the Yukon and remained so until 1953 when the federal government moved the capital to Whitehorse. In the early 1960's Dawson City was declared a national historic site and Parks Canada is currently involved with many of the properties there, restoring and reconstructing the buildings.

Our first night in Dawson City (the word "night" does not mean "dark" here) we dined on scrumptious meals at Klondike Kate's and then drove up to Dome Mountain. On June 21st, if you are on Dome Mountain all night, you will see the sun barely dip behind the 6000 foot Ogilvie Mountains before it rises again in a short while. At 9:30 that night, it seemed like the middle of the afternoon. Very strange, indeed.

The morning of the 17th we all took the 1½ hour guided walking tour which highlighted the history and some of the notable characters



Dawson City and the Yukon River from the dome.



Touring the town . . . by foot!



Getting our mail "hand-cancelled" by the postmistress.



Visiting the Robert Service cabin.

that lived here. After lunch, we learned about the authors Jack London and Robert Service. Jack London briefly resided in the area and prospected a claim during the gold rush. It was his stay here that inspired him to write "The Call of the Wild" and "White Fang". Robert Service, a poet, came to the area when he was in his early 20's. He answered a San Diego, CA ad run by a hotel in Dawson City. They needed a person to recite poetry and strum a guitar. He took a bank job to supplement his income. In 1907, with his bank Christmas bonus of \$100, he published a collection of his own poems. He called this book "Songs of a Sourdough". By 1966 over 3.5 million copies of this book had been sold. His two best known poems are "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and "The Cremation of Sam McGee".

A hundred years ago, U.S. and Canadian currency was measured against the gold dollar - the more gold a country had, the better off it was. But gold production had been slowing for a time, and the Federal reserve at Fort Knox dwindled to the point that many investors feared the United States could no longer back its dollar. A panic erupted, the stock market crashed, and everyone began suffering from the shortage. Only gold could fix the problem. Then suddenly, miraculously, in the summer of 1897, two rusty old steamboats arrived from Alaska, both loaded with tons of gold. It was more than just good news; it was a way out of the depression. Word spread quickly, and the Klondike gold rush was on. An estimated 100,000 people ventured north to the edge of the civilized world, searching for prosperity.

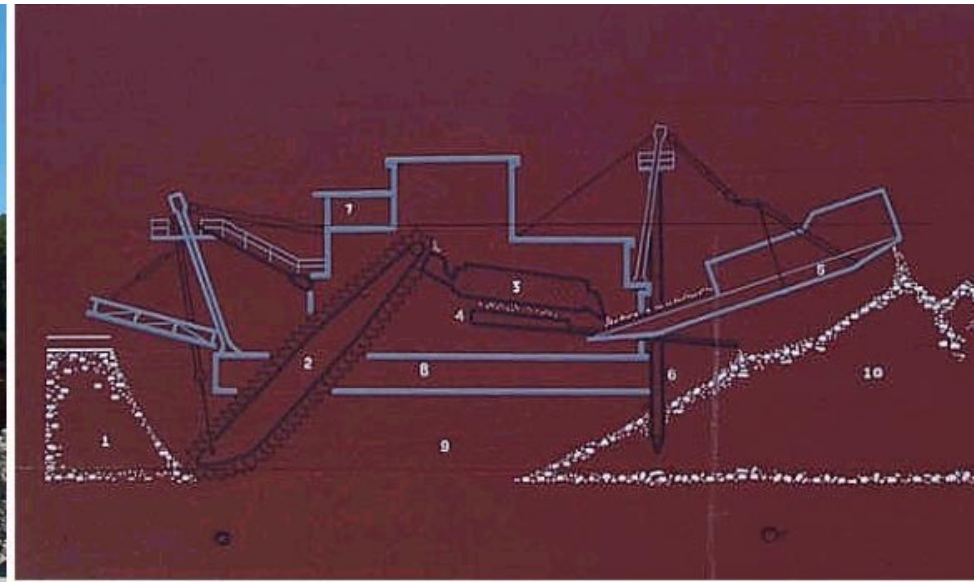
Initially, individuals, or small teams, working with shovels, picks, and the familiar gold pans, dug the gold out of the ground. But soon thereafter, huge machines were brought in to speed the operation. On the 18th, our group set out to find out more about gold mining in the area. Our first stop was at Claim 33 on Bonanza Creek where several of us were slightly successful at panning for gold. We also toured the Gold Dredge #4, which is the largest wooden hull dredge in North America.

Dredge #4 is 2/3 the size of a football field and 8 stories high. It could dig 48 feet below water level and 17 feet above. A hydro plant located 30 miles away, connected by electric cables laid on top of the ground, provided 920 continuous horsepower. The dredge moved along on a pond of its own making, digging gold bearing gravel from in front, recovering the gold through a revolving screen washing plant, then depositing the gravel out the stacker at the rear. It was a very efficient means of mining for gold.

Only four men were required to operate the enormous dredge - one in front to keep an eye on the digging buckets, one in back to keep check on the stacker, one to continually grease the multitude of huge chains and gears, and the captain to operate a series of levers to control the whole operation. But while only four men worked on the dredge, over a hundred more were required on shore to support it. The land had to be cleared of trees and undergrowth, the earth had to be thawed (no small task in the area of permafrost), and the soil had to be drilled and tested to determine the most promising place to dig.



Anybody have a magnifying glass?



GOLD DREDGE

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Gold bearing gravel | 3. Revolving screen | 5. Tailings stacker | 7. Master control room | 9. Self-dug dredge pond |
| 2. Bucket excavator | 4. Gold saving sluice | 6. Dredge pivot point | 8. Floating barge | 10. Tailings (washed gravel) |

Dredge #4 operated from 1913 until 1959, producing as much as 800 ounces a day. Today, it is a National Historic Site, and is being refurbished to its original condition.



At Diamond Tooth Gerties you win a little . . .



and . . . lose a little. (All losses go to town projects!)

During our stay in Dawson City, we took in two theatrical productions. The first was at Diamond Tooth Gertie's Casino. There we saw cancan girls and the "star" of the show who did a pretty good rendition of Mae West. After a little unserious gambling, we called it a day. The second show was the "Gaslight Follies" held at the Palace Theatre. This was a lighthearted skit about the early days of Dawson City and the folk that came here during the gold rush.

To continue on the Klondike Loop, a ferry must be taken across the Yukon River. Since there is typically a l...o...n...g line in the mornings (up to a 3 hour wait), we decided to cross over after the show. So about 10:00pm the Nelsons pulled onto the ferry. Thirty minutes and 3 trips later, the last coach made the five minute trip across. We drove about 10 miles to the beginning of the Top of the World Highway and spent the night (remember no darkness) in a rest area.



We sent the biggest first!



FREE 5 minute ride.



**Think it's the middle of the day?
Wrong! It's 10:30 pm.**