

NEA-Alaska/Retired

Summer 2020 • Volume XXXII No. 3

Adventures in the Great Land

You have probably heard the joke about how to eat an elephant... one bite at a time. Since there is so much of the Great Land to explore, my wife, Barb, and I are trying to experience as much of it as possible, one trip at a time. We have floated the Gulkana River, camped in Denali, road tripped the Dalton Highway, and had many other adventures throughout Alaska.

Last summer we decided to do something completely out of the norm for us – we took a cruise! BUT it wasn't with 2,000 of our "good" friends on a giant cruise boat. It was on a 165-foot ship with the Un-cruise Company and 59 guests that we got to know during the seven days we spent exploring the Glacier Bay area.

We started with a three-day stay in Juneau. Barb had never spent any time in Juneau except at the ferry terminal, so we stayed at a nice B&B "up the hill" from the capital. We sure got our exercise hiking around town! There was an incredible Ray Troll exhibit at the Alaska State Museum, an active microbrewery so we could sample several styles of beer, and of course we had to take the tram through the clouds up Mount Roberts. It was a bit rainy for hiking that day, but Alaskans come prepared.

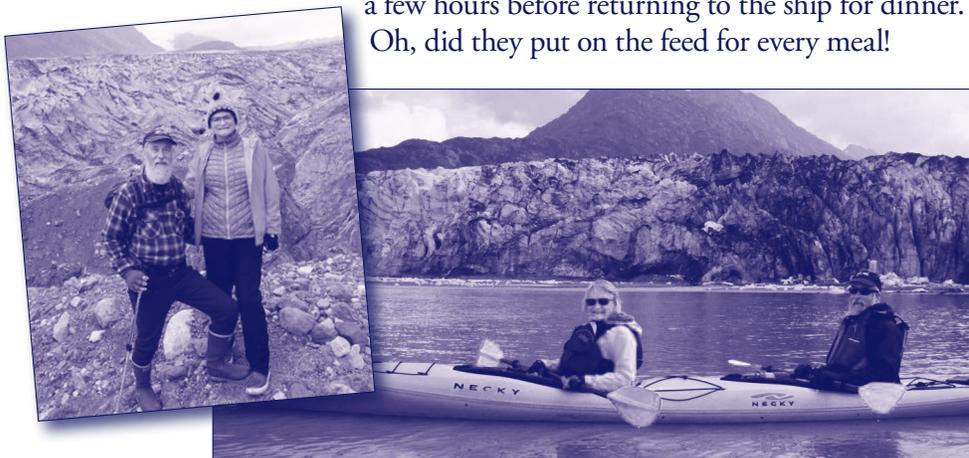
When we arrived at our ship, the Adventurer, the first afternoon, we met the 23 crew members and quickly realized that we were the only Alaskan residents on board! During the Happy Hour we met people from all over the United States and several foreign countries. Many of them were taking this adventure along with a continued trip to Denali.

Our overnight travel through Icy Strait was smooth and we arrived in Glacier Bay to a beautiful morning with warm sun and blue skies. As we traveled further into Glacier Bay, multiple tidewater glaciers off the Brady Icefield came into view. We stopped at Lamplugh Glacier for our first "off vessel" excursion. Each day there were options of hiking, small boat motoring, and kayaking. Barb and I chose to kayak with several other couples and paddled through mini-bergs for a few hours before returning to the ship for dinner. Oh, did they put on the feed for every meal!

There was always more than enough to eat and drink, with a fine variety of vegetarian, seafood, and meat entrees at every dinner. Barb's only complaint was that there wasn't enough chocolate at dessert!

Each evening, the activity director reviewed the daily highlights and gave a preview of what was available for the following day. Then she encouraged people to sign up for at least one activity. The forward lounge became the center of activity in the evening. The bartender made a special theme oriented drink and there were Alaska videos playing in the background. The Dick Proenneke video, *One Man's Wilderness*, was everyone's favorite. In case you haven't seen it, it shows how he built a cabin at Twin Lakes in Lake Clark National Park and lived there alone for several decades. In fact, we spent four days there in 1995 and met Dick! Another special evening occurrence was when Tom, Steve, and Barb entertained the well-lubricated audience with music.

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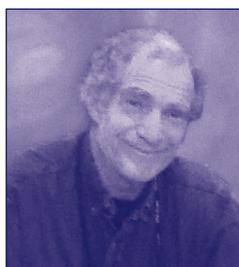
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President's Message



aka Kronberg's Corner

In the aftermath of George Floyd's death at the hands of four Minneapolis police officers, the protests against such racist murders have swept the country. It is still way too early to tell whether or not there will be changes made on state and local levels that will provide a measure of equality in the way people of different races and/or different ethnic backgrounds are treated by law enforcement officers.

I would like to turn the rest of this column over to Frederick Douglas, perhaps the second greatest American of the 19th century...with the honor of the greatest 19th century American unquestionably going to President Abraham Lincoln. These words are all part of a speech Douglas gave on August 3, 1857. I hope you will all find them relevant to the struggles of today.

Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reform. The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. In the light of these ideas, Negroes will be hunted at the North and held and flogged at the South so long as they submit to those devilish outrages and make no resistance, either moral or physical. Men may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get. If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others.

– Rich Kronberg

I hope that everyone is staying safe and following current guidelines during this trying time. The last AlaskaCare Town Hall meeting answered many questions regarding COVID-19. These meetings are happening every month and provide a great opportunity to have your concerns addressed.

You should have received your Teledoc card with accompanying information. Please be sure to access AlaskaCare information on the Division of Retirement and Benefits website. Stay safe!

– Barbara Stek

Editor: Barbara Stek

This newsletter is the official publication of NEA-Alaska/Retired, printed three times a year: October, February, and July. Retired members are encouraged to submit articles, as well as voice comments and concerns. Articles should be sent in Word via email to bwstekak@yahoo.com no later than the 1st of the publication month.

“Adventures in the Greatland” Cont.

One of the unique aspects of the Adventurer is that as a “small” cruise ship, it can travel into areas that the larger monster ships cannot. One example of this was when we were able to travel about 65 miles into the park to get very close to John Hopkins Glacier, a huge tidewater glacier where we watched it calving for a few hours before dinner. It was also quite amusing seeing the harbor seals bobbing on their icebergs every time a wave rolled by.

On day three we spent several hours doing a rock scramble at Reid Glacier. It was a bit overcast and breezy, but after a few minutes of hiking, we warmed right up. There was discussion about the succession zones we hiked through and we tried to identify the plants and animal tracks. As we cruised out of the national park, we stopped at the visitor center in Bartlett Cove. A special presentation was given for us at the Huna Tlingit Tribal House. A local Tlingit park service employee told us about the natural history of the area and how the Tlingit were forced out of the Glacier Bay area about 250 years ago by a rapidly advancing glacier.

We spent the next three days kayaking, hiking, bird watching, and viewing humpback and orca whales sometimes very close to the ship. One fellow even did some scuba diving! The weather was extremely cooperative; we even got to a few places that the captain hadn’t been to all summer long due to high winds. One tradition they have is to encourage adventurous guests to take the Polar Plunge, a leap off the ship into the waters of Glacier Bay. Yes, I did jump and swim around for about 60 seconds!

Our last day of the cruise was a trip to Haines. Barb and I took a nice hike in the morning and a float on the Chilkat River in the afternoon. The weather held and it was actually HOT, for Alaskans. As we traveled down Lynn Canal at dinner time, we all shared a highlight from the trip...have you ever kissed a banana slug?!

We hope that our next bite of Alaska this fall will be seeing polar bears at Kaktovik!

– Henry Anderson

****Delegate Assembly 2021 Nominations**

To be nominated for Delegate Assembly, **January 14-16, 2021**, please complete this form and include a brief biography. Delegates must attend each caucus meeting to include the Thursday afternoon meeting and all sessions to receive **up to \$50 per diem for each of the three days with \$8.00 deducted for each of the two breakfasts provided by NEA-Alaska**. NEA-Alaska/Retired reimburses delegates **up to half the cost of a hotel room for a maximum of three nights not to exceed the negotiated NEA-Alaska room rate**. NEA-Alaska will reimburse airfare costs (up to \$500 for out-of-state transportation) based on bargain/value airfare.

An on-line election will be held. You will be notified of the results as early as possible. Nominations for elected office as well as nominations for two-year appointments to the NEA-Alaska PACE Committee will be made during the caucus at DA.

To submit your nomination by email, send it to makana.bender@neaalaska.org. Be sure to include DA 2021 Retired Nomination in the subject line, along with the information asked for on the form. Emailed nominations must be received **no later than September 4, 2020**. Makana will send a confirmation upon receipt of your email. If you mail the form, it must be received in the Anchorage office (at the address below) postmarked no later than September 1, 2020.

**Return form to: NEA-Alaska/Retired
4100 Spenard Road
Anchorage, AK 99517**

****The COVID pandemic does not seem to be slowing down; however, at this point in time, NEA-Alaska is preparing to have an in-person Delegate Assembly. Final decisions on this matter will be made in the fall – perhaps early October. We will do our best to**

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY NOMINATION FORM

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY: (Limit: 25 words)



keep all nominees up to date. We believe you should submit your name if you so choose and be prepared for the possibility of a virtual DA. Issues involving stipends will be determined when we have more concrete information.



4100 Spenard Road
Anchorage, AK 99517

www.neaalaska.org or
email: info@neaalaska.org

Look for the Delegate Assembly Nomination Form for 2021 inside!

Alaska Retirement Management Board – Spring/Summer 2020



The staff at the Department of Revenue and the Division of Retirement and Benefits began working from home during the month of March and will continue to do so into the summer.

The meetings of the Alaska Retirement Management Board on May 1 and June 18 and 19 were held via teleconference

using Microsoft Teams. Committee meetings were held the day before using the same media. Four committee meetings were scheduled on April 30 and again on June 17. Board and staff were joined by consultants, presenters, and the Investment Advisory Committee's three members.

The FY'19 valuation, which was adopted by the Board, indicates a funding ratio of 77.8% for PERS and 85.2% for TRS. The number of retirees and beneficiaries for ending the 3rd quarter for FY'20 shows PERS at 35,998 and TRS at 13,110 in the Defined Benefit plans. DRB had an estimated 250 – 300 retirements a month this past year. Turnover with the Defined Contribution actives continues to be high and for FY'20, those leaving the system are taking an estimated 6.2 million dollars a month in disbursements.

Despite the market volatility this past spring, the total assets in the 14 plans managed by the ARM Board remained at almost \$33 billion with 40% of the assets now managed internally.

During his CIO report, Bob Mitchell announced he will be leaving his position September 11. It is a great loss to our members and the system. Mr. Mitchell has developed a strong investment team and encouraged the team members to present and participate in meetings. He has worked to reduce the number of managers from 75 to 34, and as mentioned above we now manage 40% of those assets internally resulting in a huge annual savings in management fees. He is a thoughtful, patient, and professional CIO who will be greatly missed.

In other business the Board was presented the annual fiduciary training, adopted a new asset allocation for FY'21 which considers the need for liquidity and a strong risk adjusted return, and adopted new guidelines for the Opportunistic and Real Assets investment classes.

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for September in Juneau, subject to change depending on the COVID situation.

– *Gayle Harbo*