

Seagate and Wild Blue Alaska Cruise – Tuesday, June 24, 2008

“Wild Blue this is Seagate calling. We’re ready to go on Seagate!” boomed the VHF radio at 5AM this morning. Don’t those guys ever sleep-in overthere? The boats pulled anchor in light rain, overcast skies and calm winds of the mid-Rocky Pass anchorage. All crew were up and awake as 21 more navigation marks through 15 more miles of narrow strait needed to be correctly piloted to free the boats into open sea. The driver really does need extra eyes for these conditions. All crew participated and by 7AM the boats were in the open water crossing Sumner



Strait on the way to El Capitan Passage.

We arrived at the passage entrance at 10AM and dropped anchor to wait for the next rising tide, predicted just after noon.

(← *Seagate at anchor at entrance to El Capitan Passage.*)

The boys on Wild Blue decided to fish again and dropped a line in 14 feet of water. 14-feet seemed somewhat ridiculous but it was easy to lock the rod in the holder and set the clicker for noise mode. Then we adjourned to the salon for early lunch and CNN Headline news on satellite TV.



(← *Vince holds tip up and reels. This halibut is officially in the box.*)

As most of us men grow older our hearing degrades, but somehow this doesn’t seem to affect the women. Listening to the TV news we hear this new, LOUD, WHIZZING sound. Is that sound coming from the TV? Finally Pat yells, “Well what are you guys going to do, just sit there?” Ah ha! The reel is WHIZZING LOUDLY. Vince jumps up, runs outside, grabs the poll and looks down to see just a little bit a line left on the reel



(← Vince and Alex struggle to hoist the 56-inch, 87-pound halibut.)

spindle. He begins to reel in,tip up,reel in,then WHIZZ goes the reel as our fish is determined to show he is boss. After about 10 minutes we see color of the fish, and the size.....a big halibut! “Get the gaff!” yells Vince. “Where is it?” asks Alex. He finds it and as Vince holds the head at the swim-step, Alex gaffs the fish in the gill and pulls like heck. Chuck holds Alex’s belt and Pat gets the net ready. Once the fish is on the swim-step, he is netted as well, then pulled all

the way into the cockpit. Oh what a bloody mess! As is typical of halibut, this fish didn’t want to succumb. So Chuck, not having stayed in a Holiday Inn Express but having a surgeon for a father, removed the fish’s head, which ended his struggle, and then removed the fillets.

(← Chuck removes head then the four big fillets.)



56 inches is a new record for the trip, beating Willie’s halibut by 8 inches. Although we don’t have a scale, a 56-inch halibut equates to 87 pounds, per the Jay Field length/weight table, or more than 34 pounds heavier than Willie’s fish! What a morning!

At around noon we pulled anchor and headed into El Capitan Passage on the rising tide. Once again all crew eyes were focused on navigation marks, depth gauge and GPS chart plotter. This passage has 28 navigation marks, but generally gives little trouble to cruising boats.



(Wild Blue in El Capitan Passage.)



(El Capitan Passage is fairly well identified. Just remember: green to starboard, red to port.)

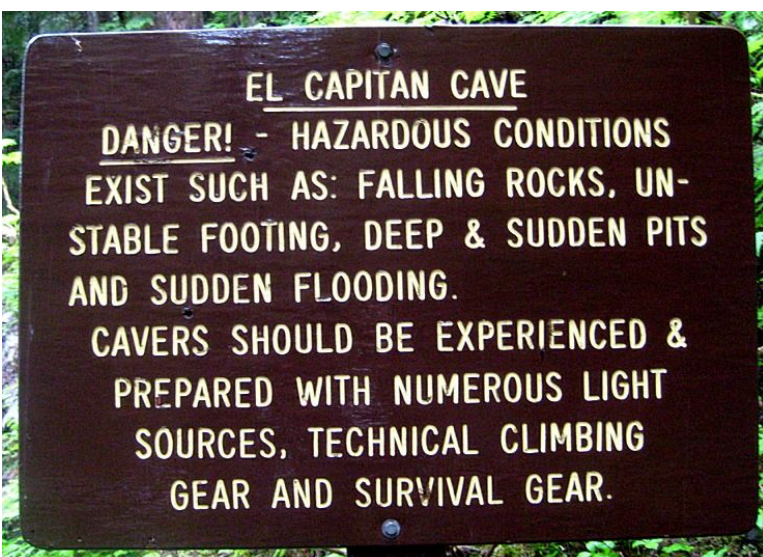


(← Is that a red mark on the left side of this channel? We sure hope so! It's OK as Wild Blue will hit bottom first.)

After about 40 minutes of slow cruising into the Passage, we came to Dry Pass and anchored for the night. Seagate launched their tender and 3 crew from each boat volunteered to explore El Capitan Cave. All rode the tender to the Cave dock, tied up and walked up to the US Forest Service office. El Capitan Cave is believed to be the deepest cave in the United States. It

(← Oh boy, we can't wait to get inside.)

was recently discovered in the mid-1990s, covers thousands of square feet and experts have mapped over 2 miles of the cave. The USFS conducts three guided tours per day and hard-hats are required. There are 370 wooden stair steps from the office to the Cave entrance. Unable to find the forest ranger at his office, we decided



to go up all 370 steps to the entrance. After our stair climber exercise, there was no sign of the ranger. Alex and Craig entered and began exploring but came to a locked gate about 100 feet inside, however they did get a photo to share on the Blog. We never did make contact with the ranger and since we need to push on tomorrow are unable to book the tour. Maybe next year?



(← Cave people brave 3-mile tender ride, hungry sea otters, 370 wooden stair steps and driving rain for a single cave photo. L to R: Alex, Margie, Craig, Marianne and Dick. Vince is behind the camera.)

(Now that we're up here, it's still a long, long way back down. →)



(The inside of the cave looks shiny and sparkles in our lights. This photo is looking upward to one of the many openings above.)



So after a long and busy day, the crews fade fast. Tomorrow we continue on and out of El Capitan Passage, then down the west side of Prince of Wales Island to the seldom-visited (by cruising boats) fishing village of Craig, Alaska.

(Boats at anchor in narrow Dry Pass, El Capitan Passage. →)

