

Sea

VOICE OF PACIFIC COAST BOATING SINCE 1908

NEW BOATS

Leopard 43

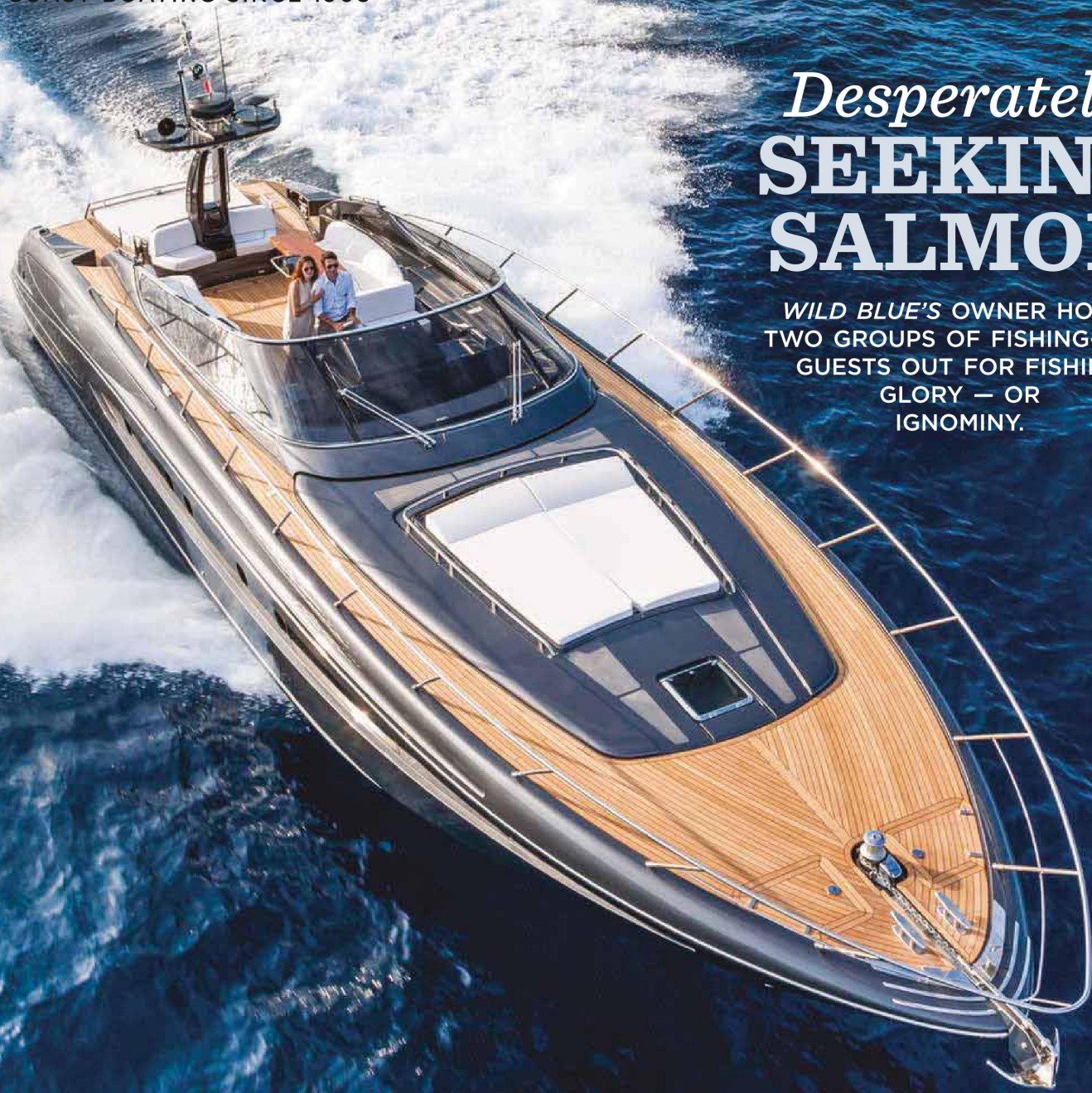
📌 Riva 63 Virtus

Bavaria R40 Coupe

Aston Martin AM 37

Desperately **SEEKING SALMON**

*WILD BLUE'S OWNER HOSTS
TWO GROUPS OF FISHING-MAD
GUESTS OUT FOR FISHING
GLORY — OR
IGNOMINY.*



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BY ALEX BENSON

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Whether on the *real* Riviera or the West Coast Riviera, one can't help but notice the 63 Virtus. BY ZUZANA PROCHAZKA

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The German builder packs more features than one might expect into a 41-footer.

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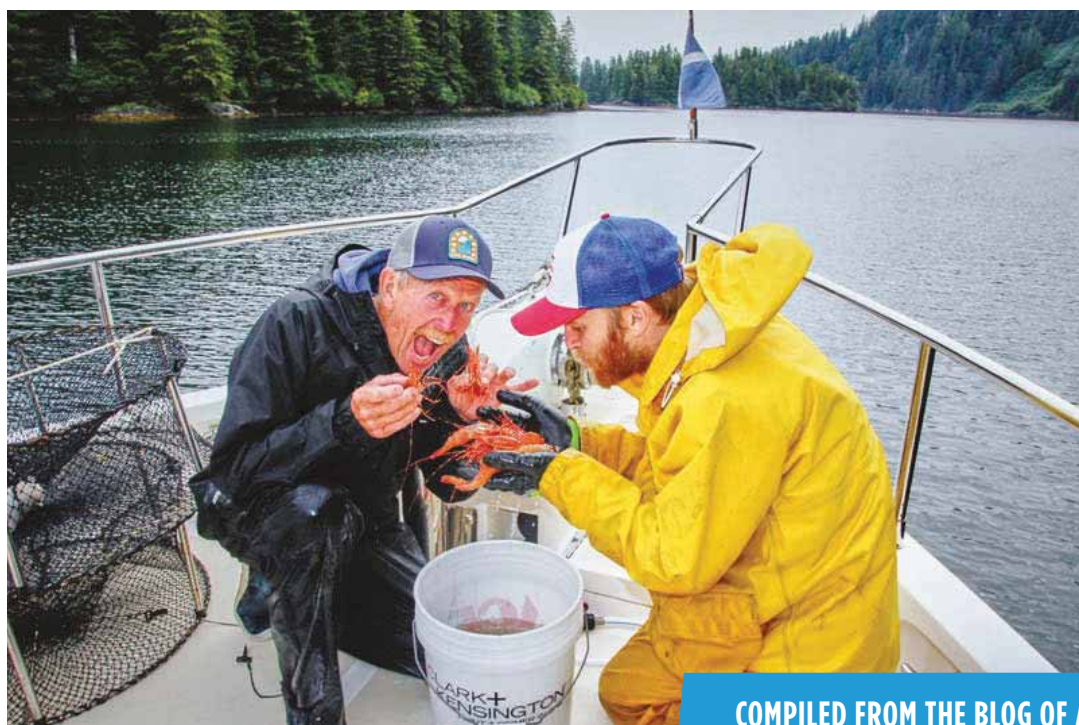




Whether the author was fishing with college chums (below) or old friends (left and bottom left), *Wild Blue* was always full of activity — and seafood feasts.



ONE FISH,



COMPILED FROM THE BLOG OF ALEX BENSON (MVWILDBLUE.BLOGSPOT.COM)



Hans Tanner photo

PART I

College Chums Fish Sitka Yet Again

Sunday, June 26, 2016:

The Boys From Cal Poly, aka The Fish Boys

Half a century can be a lifetime. Today it's difficult to remember much from five decades ago. Yet 50 years ago, we high school kids met in San Luis Obispo at Cal Poly to get an "education." That we did, and we're still around today, all of us trying to relive our past, one story at a time, while fishing in Alaska.

Willie, Joe, Mike, Brian and Alex met in 1966 and 1967 and are now The Fish Boys. We grew up to become a turkey farmer, a chicken rancher, a Certified Public Accountant, a pharmacist and a real estate developer, each of us in his own independent business. Hanging out with these guys is just like the old days, but the stories have changed. Now it's Medicare, medicines, hearing aids, retirement, taxes and Viagra — all hot topics in our conversations.

The almost-70-year-old college boys arrived on Sunday. To calm everyone, several beers were rapidly consumed. As usual, Willie arrived with a large wheeled cooler filled with duck breasts, prawns, bay shrimp, clams, Pappy's, Gilberts, and cranberry juice (for the gout). Then

everyone invaded the liquor store for bourbon, various whiskey, Tito's, beer and triple-stuffed Oreos. We also filled up with too many more provisions, including three large Best Foods mayonnaise jars, as though our arteries aren't already hardened enough.

Monday–Thursday, June 27–30, 2016: Whale Bay

By 4 a.m. Monday, Alex had the boat away from the dock headed for Whale Bay, a favorite salmon trolling area. It was a pleasant ride even though we went the outside ocean route, and by 8:30 a.m. we were trolling the northern side of Whale Bay, without a whale around. That's not a good sign.

We fished all day Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and for a while Thursday morning, racking up nearly 30 hours. For all that effort, we had just eight kings and four cohos, with two 31-inch keeper lingcod. On the Thursday trip back to town, we fished

TWO FISH...



Hans Tanner photo

FISHING AND FRIENDSHIP HARKEN BACK TO THE SUMMER OF LOVE (AND SALMON).



Gerard Ages, a man more comfortable in a wetsuit than a business suit, shows off his 40-pound halibut.

Biorka for four hours and landed two cohos. Yuk! But we did see an Alaska Air land at SIT.

Back in town we turned our small batch of fish into the processor and read the weather report. Friday would need to be a weather day, as the ocean was forecast to be miserable. We decided to be tourists in Sitka.

Friday, July 1, 2016: Accidental Tourists

First, we toured the Fortress of the Bear, a safe haven for orphaned bears. Bears become orphaned typically when their parents become a danger. The dangerous bear is put down by the authorities and the cubs are orphaned. Enter Fortress of the Bear to take over raising these orphans.

After the bears, we had the taxi drop us at the Sitka Sound Science Center. There we met Kristina, our tour guide — a fellow Californian, graduate of UCSB and new resident of Sitka. Having arrived from Santa Barbara in the frosty chill of last winter, she's come to enjoy living here and plans to stay. Kristina was very kind to this older bunch, restating what we couldn't hear, smiling (sometimes even laughing) at our weak humor and conducting a fine tour of the Center and Hatchery. We wish her the best.

By now our group was thirsty, so it was over to the Mean Queen, a new and rather fine establishment patterned after the very successful Village Pizza in Anacortes. You guessed it: a complete bar, excellent pizza and lots of locals filling the seats. For its odd location — on a back street, high up a long flight of stairs — it gets a lot of play.

At the Queen, the boys imitated our college days — noisy drinking — but remained quite gentlemanly. Unusual! Then it was off to the Pioneer Bar. We finished the day on *Wild Blue* under the spell of another Williebird Epicurean feast.

Saturday and Sunday, July 2 and 3, 2016: Salisbury Sound

With just three days of fishing left, we chose to go north three hours to the Kalinin Bay area. There we could fish salmon and bottomfish. We caught one king on Saturday and then anchored up for bottomfishing. Brian landed a nice



Hans Tanner photo

34-inch Lingcod keeper. Then the Alaska State Troopers boarded.

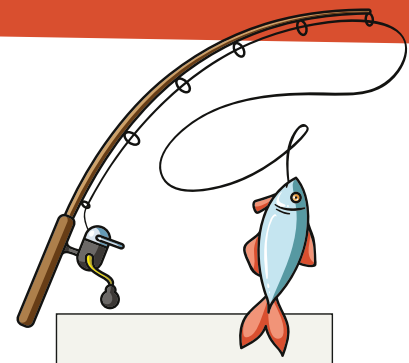
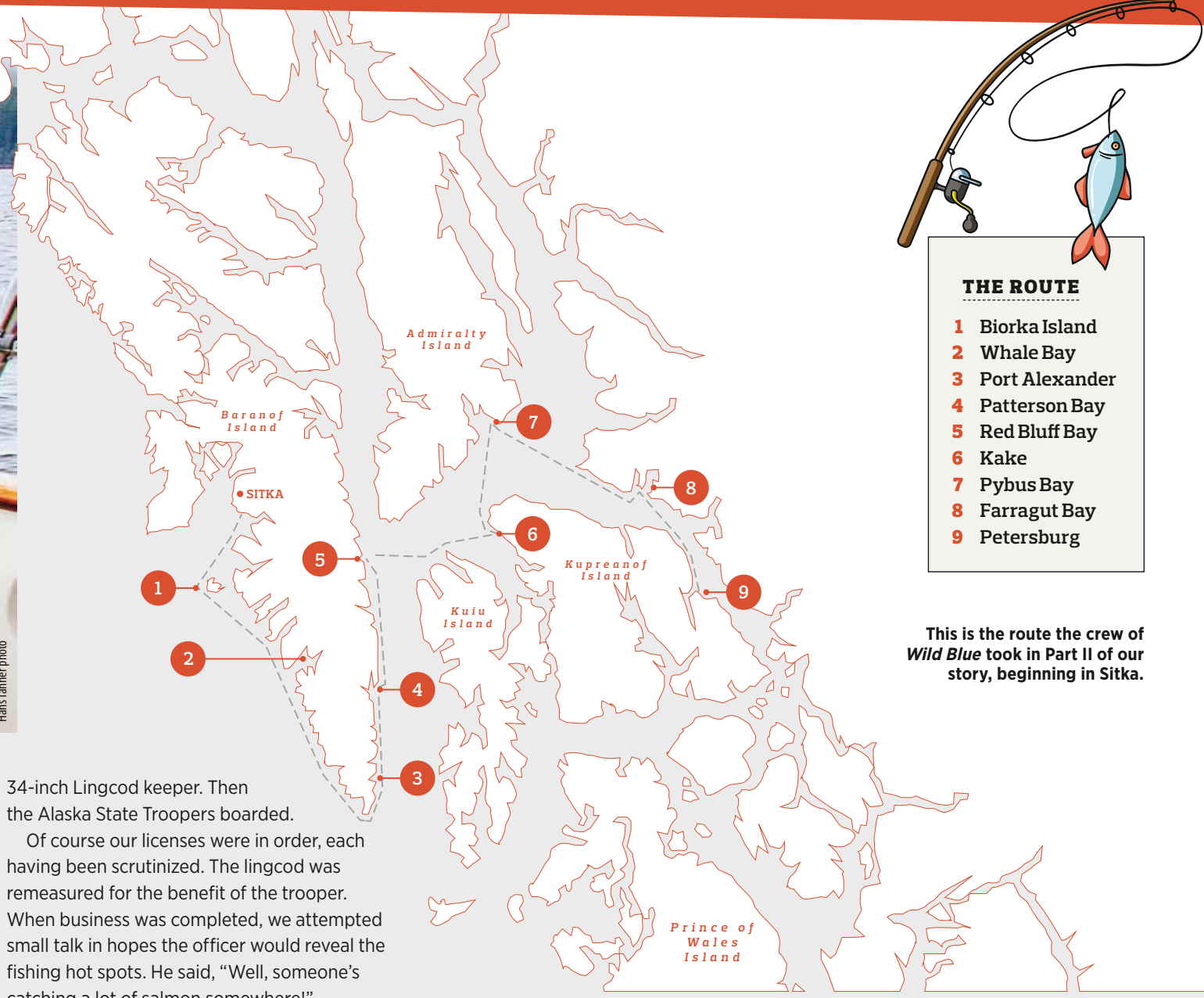
Of course our licenses were in order, each having been scrutinized. The lingcod was remeasured for the benefit of the trooper. When business was completed, we attempted small talk in hopes the officer would reveal the fishing hot spots. He said, "Well, someone's catching a lot of salmon somewhere!"

By Sunday afternoon, we had boated just one more king, so we headed back to town, hoping for a big day on Monday at Biorka Island. We enjoyed a great dinner for July 4, and some of us nodded off before the fireworks started.

Monday, July 4, 2016: Fishing on Independence Day

Today we fished at Biorka Island. Fishing sucked but it was great being with college buddies. Last year this group landed 68 fish, including 24 king salmon, the annual maximum. This year we landed just 18 fish total, with 12 kings. Interestingly, last year resulted in two cohos per king. This year we got one coho per two kings. Oh well, that's fishing!

As always it's a great time to be fishing with old friends and we already look forward to next year.



- THE ROUTE**
- 1 Biorka Island
 - 2 Whale Bay
 - 3 Port Alexander
 - 4 Patterson Bay
 - 5 Red Bluff Bay
 - 6 Kake
 - 7 Pybus Bay
 - 8 Farragut Bay
 - 9 Petersburg

This is the route the crew of *Wild Blue* took in Part II of our story, beginning in Sitka.

PART II

The Ocean People Invade

Friday, July 8, 2016: Los Osos Crew Arrives

Recently we've cruised with The Boat People and the Fishy College Boys. Today a new crew arrives from the central coast of California. It's the Ages family of Los Osos. Gerard, Peggy and Hans are the Ocean People (OP) who swim, kayak, kiteboard, paddleboard, sail, surf, camp and fish regularly. Gerard probably spends way more time in his wetsuit than any suit of clothes. Except for Hans, all have cruised with us many times before.

In real life, Gerard is a successful contractor who has completed many projects throughout the central coast area, including several residential, office and commercial projects for us. Peggy is your friendly Trader Joe's representative. Hans is a professional photography, music and video technical specialist (hanstanner.com) based in New York. He travels the world producing photos, videos, commercials and short films for business, including some major corporations.

**Saturday, July 9, 2016:
Biorka then Whale Bay**

After provisioning, fishing at Murray's Marine and touring Sitka by bicycle, the crew was ready to go. We departed Sitka for the summer, thanking our hosts at the Harbor Department, and headed toward Biorka Island for a day of fishing. The ocean was a bit bouncy but quickly abated once we were in the lee of Biorka. We fished for a couple of hours without seeing much bait or enjoying a bite, so we decided to move to Whale Bay.

By 5:30 p.m. we were fishing at high slack along the entrance's north side. After three hours we moved to the Krishka Island corner. By the end of the evening, we had landed two kings and Hans' first salmon. We anchored and processed fish for the evening's dinner.

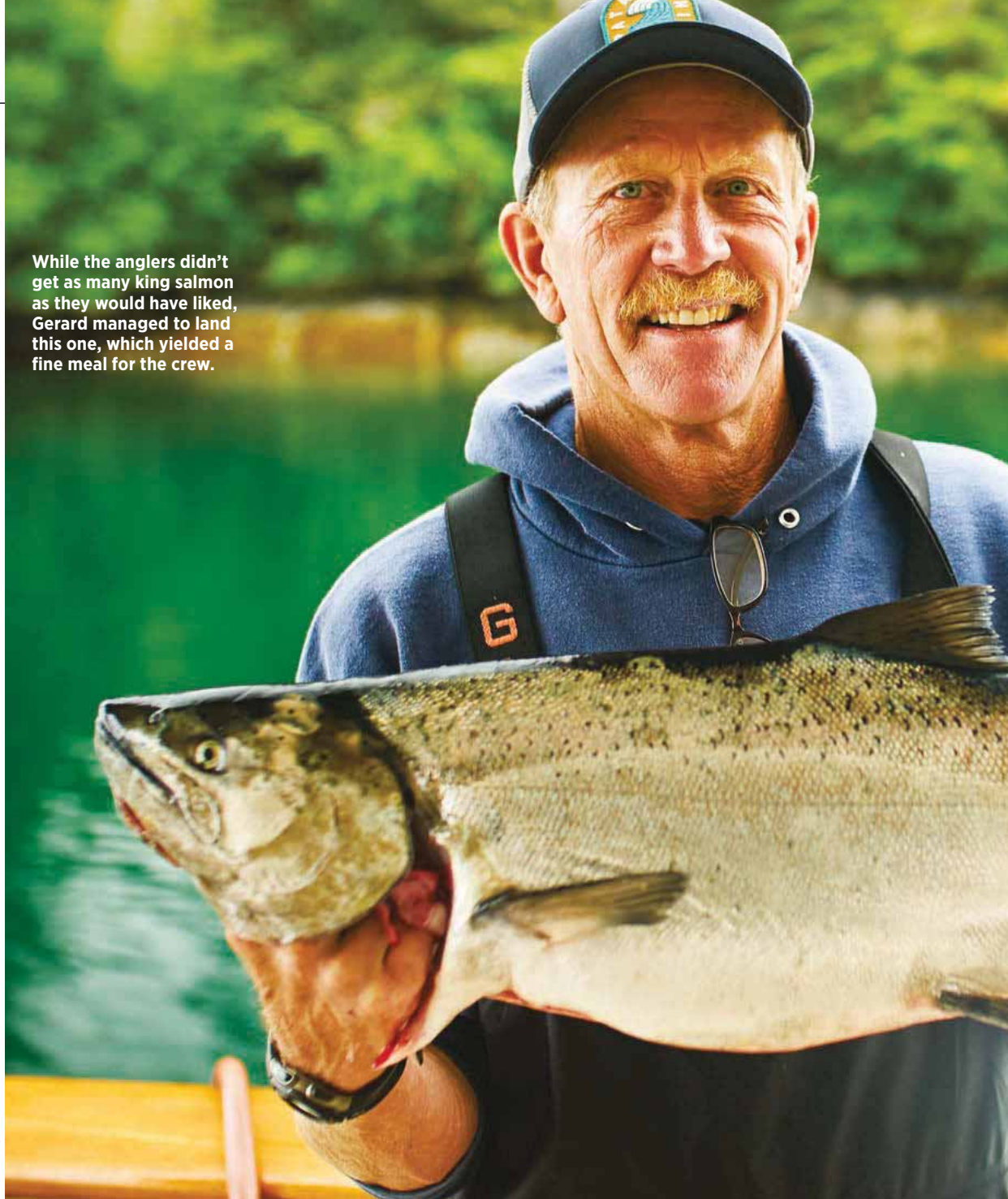
**Sunday, July 10, 2016:
Whale Bay**

We got fishing again by 10 a.m. at the Krishka Island corner. The sun shone over us while we landed two more kings and a couple of cohos. By dinner time we had anchored in Port Banks near the outflow from the low falls and river. It took us a bit to finally set the hook, because the anchor chain had fouled while it stacked in the locker, so it exited in a knot. It was nice to have a contractor aboard who diagnosed the problem, disassembled the locker cover and untangled the chain. Gerard and Hans set off exploring the falls up close.

**Monday, July 11, 2016:
Snipe, Bryon, Redfish,
Dorothy and Puffin Bay**

We started out today hoping to

While the anglers didn't get as many king salmon as they would have liked, Gerard managed to land this one, which yielded a fine meal for the crew.



Hans Tanner photo

pick up a few fish in Whale Bay. After lackluster results we turned south toward other fish grounds and left Whale Bay behind. The bay had not yielded as many fish as last year, but it still outperformed any other coastal bay we fished.

By 1 p.m. we started trolling the entrance to Snipe Bay, then Bryon Bay and then Redfish Bay before anchoring in Discovery Cove. There we dropped baited hooks for halibut. The king bite was off but we still landed a few cohos.

About 25 commercial trollers worked outside a couple miles and seemed to be doing OK. By evening we moved to Puffins Bay and finally hooked to the bottom for the night in Little Puffin Bay.

Tuesday, July 12, 2016: Cape Ommaney, Port Alexander, Mist Cove and Patterson Bay

After a restful night with windy weather on the outside, we got underway by 8 a.m. We wanted to get around Cape Ommaney before

the afternoon winds build along the west coast. The forecast for Southern Chatham Strait is fair with a light breeze. We had a fine rounding and then rolled into Port Alexander for ice.

We were so enamored with Port Alexander that we hung out there until late afternoon, gathering ice, swimming, eating lunch, strolling and meeting the very nice locals and visitors. Finally, at 4 p.m. we set off on a northerly course trolling at various inlets along Baranof's east coast. We landed

THE BEARS PROBABLY
HAVE A GOOD IDEA
WHAT YEARS HAVE THE
BETTER SALMON RUNS.



Hans Tanner photo



about four more cohos before we rolled into Mist Cove to see the pretty falls. Last, we entered Patterson Bay and fished the 180-foot flat spots for halibut — without success. We anchored in a tiny bay on the east side near the head of the bay with a stern tie to shore. Of course Gerard promptly lowered the gear and just as promptly hooked a 60-pound flattie. Patterson Bay is one of the prettiest and most secluded spots around!

Wednesday, July 13, 2016: Red Bluff Bay

Today after a short three-hour cruise farther north, we anchored in pretty Red Bluff Bay and set two prawn traps near the entrance to soak overnight. The river and falls were flowing, but we caught no sight of the brown bears. Others have said the bears haven't been in Red Bluff

for a couple of years now. I guess the bears probably have a good idea what years have the better salmon runs.

Thursday, July 14, 2016: Kake for Night Crew Delivery

Our two traps yielded enough fresh prawns for a large pasta dinner. Of course the OPs wanted to try prawn sushi. Next it will be fresh king salmon roe!

Today we head to Kake, a small Native American village on the west side of Kupreanof Island. Our mission is to retrieve crewmember Pat, who will be arriving on the Alaska Ferry *Matuska* at the witching hour of 1:15 a.m., tomorrow morning.

After a three-hour motor, we tied up at the Kake fuel dock and scouted for propane, ice and supplies. A local



Hans Tanner photo

Gerard (top) fights hard for a fish. Whale Bay is home to this pretty little island (middle) and, for a while anyway, *Wild Blue* (bottom) and its crew.

construction company supplied the propane and the SOS market reprovisioned the boat. At the local liquor store at the northwest end of town, across from the sea-plane dock, we found ice to fill our large cooler. Afterward we anchored just west of Grave

Island, and toward the ferry terminal. At Kake's terminal, there is no float for picking up passengers by boat, so Alex tied up the tender alongside the floating road ramp, which is lowered to unload vehicles. The ferry arrived and Pat offloaded. Since the Kake stop

THIS BAY LOOKED FISHY, SO WE SET LEADS WITH BAITED HOOKS ON THE BOTTOM.

Island, less than a mile from the ferry dock. We could see the grave markers along the eastern edge of Grave Island.

At the spooky hour, half-past midnight, Alex guided the tender in the darkness, past ghostly

would last almost an hour, Alex asked for and received permission from the ferry's loadmaster to exit. Then Pat and Alex were headed through the blackness toward Grave Island, and the brightly lit *Wild Blue*. Whew!

Friday, July 15, 2016: Pybus Bay

At noon, after crossing Frederick Sound from Kake, we began to troll Long Island in Pybus Bay. Baitfish were showing up, but no salmon were biting. The whale activity kept increasing, so after a while about eight humpbacks were doing bubble circles nearby. Now in close quarters, we shut down the engine and drifted quietly as the noisy whales fed on herring.

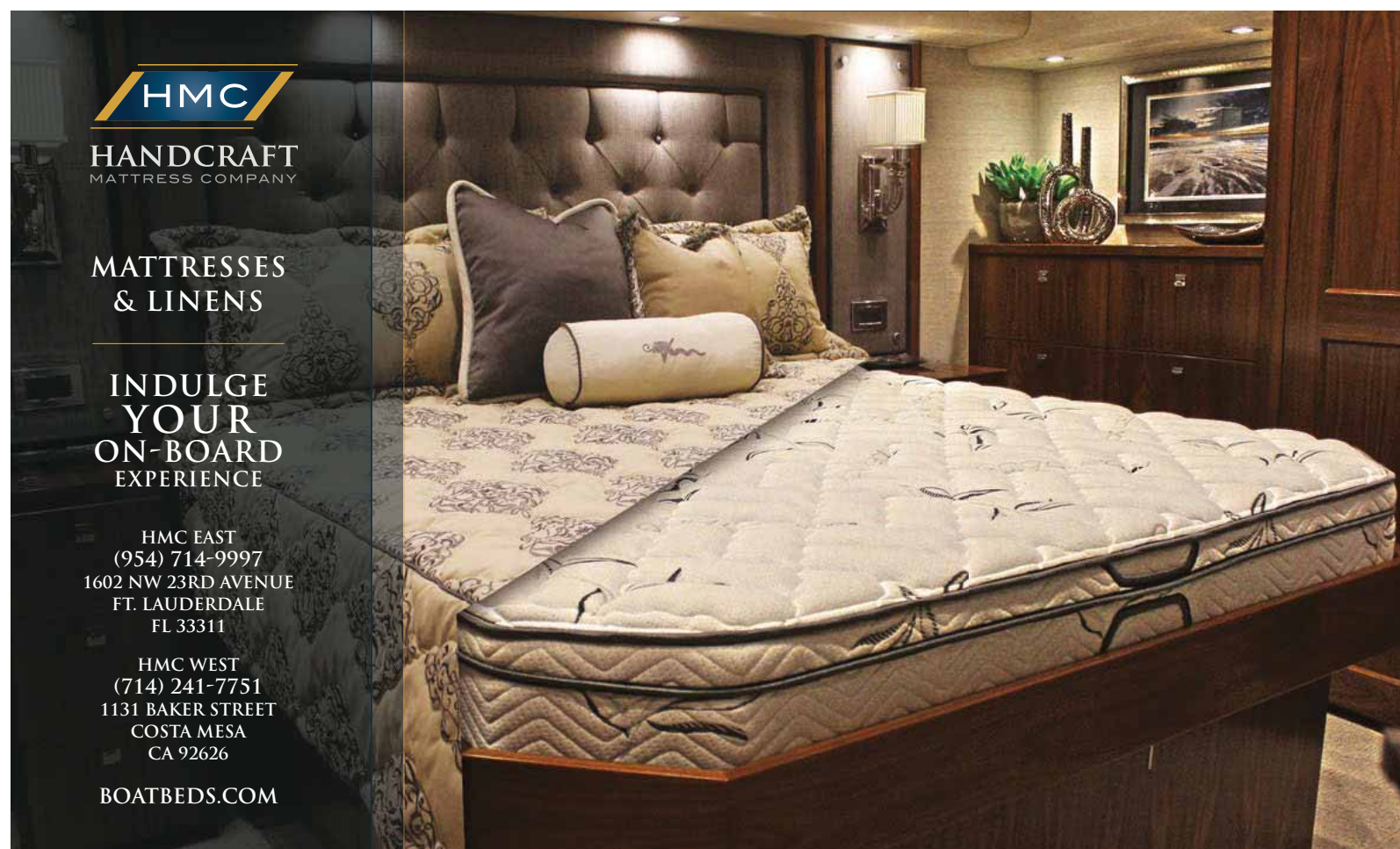
After the whaling activities, we settled at anchor in the bay formed by the San Juan Islands of Pybus Bay. This bay looked fishy, so we set leads with baited hooks on the bottom and left the reels in free-spool with the clickers on. Three halibut later, Gerard and Hans decide to explore in kayaks, leaving the fishing to Peggy, Pat and Alex, who was able to land the

fourth halibut but needed Peggy to reel in the fifth. It was too big to land, but Peggy managed to keep it close while Alex harpooned it with a secure line tied to the boat.

Sunday, July 17, 2016: Petersburg

We made it to town again after an uneventful two-and-a-half-hour run from Farragut Bay. The harbor master accommodated our boat in the North Harbor. We offloaded fish for freezing, ate lunch out, bicycled around and prepped for our guests' departure.

Loaded into four 50-pound insulated boxes, the fish was ready to travel. These Ocean People were an active group, and we had a bunch of fun with Peggy, Gerard and Hans. 🐟



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