

Adventure Diving at Fifty Five Marsha Forest

What's a nice 55 year old Jewish kid from New York City doing on this scuba boat about to go off for nine days of cold water adventure scuba diving in Northern British Columbia? I must be nuts I thought to myself as I contemplated the 9 days ahead of me with only diving, eating and more diving to occupy my time. Yet I was excited. This was something I really wanted to do. I had received my Scuba training in Australia on the Great Barrier Reef near Cairns and had marveled at the new wondrous world I had discovered under the sea. It was a world of marvel, colour and wonder. And warm embracing water.

I had read and heard that the waters of British Columbia had some of the best cold water diving spots in the world. So here we were. I had never worn a dry suit in my life. I had never even worn a full wet suit. I naively asked the crew (when I spoke to them from Toronto) if one had to wear a wet suit on the trip. They patiently explained that the cold temperature (47-50 F range) made not wet suits but a dry suit the order of the day. They were patient and kind. They must have wondered what kind of fruit cake this was who didn't realize how cold the water would be.

I was later to realize that the staff at Exta Sea were truly pleased to take anyone interested in diving out into the water and that they indeed were patient and kind throughout the entire trip.

We booked this trip the night before my surgery for breast cancer. Suffice it to say I survived both the cancer and the cold water diving. The fear of the diving and the terror of wearing a dry suit got me through surgery as whenever I was scared to death of death, dying, illness, mortality etc. I decided to be scared-excited about life itself. I therefore focused on the diving adventure ahead. It was a great diversion. When I went into surgery I pretended I was going for a great dive. That imagery was an important part of my healing.

OK. The trip was booked. The dye was cast. The deposit was sent. On August 1997 Jack and I would board our boat the Sea Venturer with Exta Sea Charters. We stopped by the Exta Sea office in Nanaimo as they wanted to make sure our dry suit rentals would fit. There we met Chris and the now famous Captain Al Spilde, owner of the Company. At that point Al was still just Al, a mere mortal, not the man who would become my "Captain AL" scuba buddy and teacher extraordinaire. Now he is the famous Captain Al spoken about in our workshops around the globe. At this point he was just plain Al, still just a mortal man.

The Dry Suit Experience.

There it was, my dry suit. Ready to try on. "OK," I thought. If they think I can actually get into this I probably can. I must admit I had grave doubts. I bravely got my feet and legs in the suit. Now came the fun part. I got the body part on (sort of like getting into a tight girdle) and then came the neck and head part. A tiny neoprene tunnel appeared before me. Chris and Jack both helped as I attempted to get my head into the birth canal in front of me. "Why am I doing this?" I wondered as I was suddenly encased in black rubber and not breathing too well at all.

This is not easy. The neck piece was new and very tight. But we got it on. I say "we" as it took three of us. Choking slightly, I wondered if and how I would do this several times per day for 9 days. I smiled bravely. "Oh my God," I thought to myself "we are spending hard earned money for this." I kept smiling all the while. Jack knew. He could see the terror in my eyes.

That night I had nightmares of dying from asphyxiation and suffocating in my dry suit. Newspaper headlines appeared: "Educator dead in dry suit." It didn't help when another shop owner told me how he had to cut a woman out of her suit when she couldn't get it off. "Was this a huge mistake?" But the excitement kept winning out even though I was stopped frantically at every dive store to see if there was some magic trick to getting a dry suit over my head.

I spent \$12.95 for a useless thing called a "slip top" - the easy way to slip on your scuba hood. It is in my drawer in Toronto. I wasn't going to be a sissy. I would conquer the battle of the neck piece. I never did. I always needed at least one other body to help me out. But the truth is that's what this is all about. You can't do it alone. And I didn't.

The drive from Nanaimo to Port Hardy was lovely. We spent the evening in Port Hardy before boarding the Sea Venturer. Another fear we both harbored was the "other" passengers on the boat. This was also a risk. But we spend our lives teaching people about taking risks. "Feel the fear and do it anyway." One of our favorite quotes. But saying things and doing them are so different. We suddenly realized we'd be with strangers on a small boat for a nine days - we were risking our whole vacation.

There were to be 8 divers (including us) and three crew in a rather small space. The first two people we met were a good omen. Sitting at the dockside pub were Meredith (known hereafter as Aqua Babe) and Dan who was the amazing cook for the voyage. They were wonderful and both experienced divers. Meredith was indeed a scuba instructor (and High School science teacher) from Winnipeg, Manitoba. She even does ice diving.

We spent some time driving Dan to do his shopping and then went back to the boat loaded with gear and a great deal of great food.

The rest of the group appeared. Phil and Dixie, a well traveled scuba couple from British Columbia; Scott another mad scuba diver (and computer wiz) from California, Jeff our youngest diver (and another high school teacher) from Seattle complete with all his camera gear, and Rebecca (a law professor) from Detroit. They were all very experienced divers who avidly shared stories from their diving travels around the globe. Neither Jack nor I ever had been in cold water, had ever worn a dry suit. Jack usually a talented conversationalist was quiet. I was just plain scared silent. I kept smiling.

The boat was comfortable but small for 13 people. Jack now admits that when he saw our cabin he panicked. This is rare for Jack. He questioned the whole idea. Jack is 6'2; our cabin was six by four and a half. It was in a word - cozy. But we grew to love our little room. It even had a tiny window. But a few moments, Jack too thought this was a gigantic mistake. We both unpacked quietly. But we both know each other well. We knew what we were thinking.

And once we got going, there was no turning back.

Trust me, this trip is for close couples. If you are having any personal problems, stay away. If you are a close family that gets along, it is just fine. I loved it as my idea of heaven is to be as close to Jack as possible at all times. There was no getting away from each other on this boat.

The Sea Venturer

The Sea Venturer is a 53 foot motor vessel which Captain Al Spilde and his family have owned for the last ten years. There are two staterooms which are private and have double berths (forward double has a double lower and single upper berth and the stern double has only a lower double but is the largest berth on the boat.) The balance of the berths are all singles. There are two washrooms (heads) and one marine shower. Diving usually consists of three day dives and one or two night dives each week. There is also plenty of opportunity for whale watching, sea kayaking, beachcombing, fishing, etc. All diving can be as shallow or as deep as you want. Typical dives are (10-25 meters; 30-80 feet).

What we were about to experience was the beauty of the Pacific Northwest at its finest. The Northeast Coast of Vancouver Island is an area of rugged beauty, deep green forests, and clusters of islands. It reminds me of the green of New Zealand, with the misty particular beauty found in British Columbia. It is intensely quiet. It has not been overly dived or traveled as the weather is often wet and cold. But it is worth every minute for the sheer majesty and solitude it offers to the adventurer who risks getting on the open sea.

Al hoped but never promised that we'd see dolphins and pods of whales. The brochures from Exta Sea promised unbelievable diving "with the many current swept passages creating walls that are absolute gardens of life, the pinnacles jutting up from the depths flourish in these nutrient rich waters. The popular and quite well known wolf eels that eagerly greet you at the bottom of the anchor chain, the valley of gorgonian corral that entices you closer, and of course the octopus. Puget Sound king crab, and hooded nudibranchs all await your discovery."

"Sure," I thought. If I can only get into my wet suit I might like to see a fish or two, but no wolf eels? whales? and nudibranchs? Is this for real?

Actually it was better than the Exta Sea brochure described, but more on that later.

At the start of the trip, conversation on the boat was lively - except for me. I was too terrified to talk. I was excited but terrified. And now here's where the mere mortal Al Spilde turns into Captain Marvel.

I managed to quietly sneak up to the steering house while everyone else was in the main cabin area telling their marvelous adventures in the Galapagos, in Indonesia, under ice flows. "Oi Vey!" I thought, "these people are going to hate me. I've never worn a dry suit. I don't want to ruin my trip or theirs." Visions of all the articles I had read about the need to take training in a dry suit loomed in my head. Even Jack was quieter than his usual conversational self.

I talked to Captain Al privately. "Al," I said, "I've had a really rough year. Cancer. Surgery. It has been intense. I really want to have a great time on this trip, but to tell you the truth I am so scared."

In his quiet, gentle, strong manner this ex-policeman from Calgary, Alberta soothed me in a few minutes and convinced me that I would be fine. He would help Jack and I with the dry suits and we'd love diving. He loved diving. He kept saying, "This is the best place in the world to be. You'll love it." His love for diving, for his boat and his ethic of service imbued me with confidence. I was still scared, but I was ready to go. And he was right, I did love it.

Al was not pushy. He was just plain confident. And his love of the water, diving and the beauty below the surface was gentle, strong and uncompromising. I was ready to be his student.

We didn't waste much time getting started. The engine roared at 6 AM and by 9 AM we were preparing for our first dives.

After Al got all the experienced divers in the water, he took Jack and me (in our drysuits) for a swim lesson in the freezing cold water. "This is fun," I thought as I floated in my dry suit feeling like the Pillsbury dough girl. After all, I made real progress. I had the suit on. It took three of us to get the neck piece on, but as Dixie told me, "Marsha, Al is like a mother. He will dress you and make sure you are fine."

Dixie, Phil, Meredith and Jeff had all been on the boat before and had loved it. Dixie was absolutely right. Captain Al was like a good mother. OK. Step #1 was complete. We were in the water, our dry suits were dry. At least mine was. Jack's neck seal was not as tight as mine, so he was wetter and colder the entire trip. I couldn't breath, but I was dry. We both did well under the tutelage of Capt. Al. Now we were now ready to rock and roll under the water.

It is my humble philosophy that to maintain a successful marriage one should enjoy ones mate on adventure trips without getting in each others way. I therefore decided that Jack should enjoy this experience without worrying about me. Capt. Al should be my teacher and scuba buddy. It worked!

Al actually enjoyed being with me. I might have been the most inexperienced diver, but I was voted the most enthusiastic. After all I had survived cancer and had gone through surgery, chemo, radiation etc. that past year. Though I do not like to dwell on this it is also a fact. I was truly in need of a vacation. I will be eternally grateful to Capt. Al for many things last summer:

- 1) Encouraging me to get in the water.
- 2) Encouraging me that I could dive and enjoy it.
- 3) Restoring my confidence in myself after a hellish year.
- 4) Giving me back something I had lost - a sense of pure pleasure and seeing truly some of the most magnificent sights above and below the water.

Al never made me feel inferior to the rest of the group. He never pushed too hard. He took me to my own limits. Mostly he realized who and what I was as a person and as a diver. He never let go of my hand until I was ready. (This was not very often). I enjoyed going hand in hand with Al. I was so confident in him that I could focus on my breathing, the amazing feeling of weightlessness, and also truly enjoy the wonders around me. It was amazing!

Highlights of the Dives

It became a daily habit that I would check with Capt. Al as to what my dive schedule would be each day. Everyone else usually did all the dives. Al would choose which ones he thought I'd enjoy the most. Others took rest breaks as well, just to enjoy the marvelous sights above the sea.

I'd always get ready a half hour before everyone else so as not to rush and not to keep anyone waiting. This became a ritual. I was teased nicely. I would be sitting in the dive boat and waiting as the rest of the gang got dressed. On this boat everyone respected each others' way of being.

Actually it was a great group. Until the last two days, no one really knew what anyone else did in the 'real' world. Everyone avoided serious worldly conversation and stuck to talks

of octopus, travels, and sea tales. It was great. The last thing Jack and I wanted was to talk about work. I learned a whole new vocabulary - sculpin, nudibranch, gorgonian.

I usually read voraciously - anywhere and everywhere. I couldn't keep my eyes open to read a book. All of us would dive, eat and then fall asleep. Games of hearts and scrabble occupied our non dive time, as well as the miracles of whale watching and scenery gazing.

Ah, but the dives. At 11 AM on August 16, 1997 I, Marsha Forest, of sound mind and body did a thirty one minute 71 foot wall dive with scuba buddies Jack Pearpoint and Capt. Al. I was, as I noted in my diary "scared sh...less". The abundance of life on Hussar Point was staggering. It was more than I had hoped for. Snowpuffs of pure white anemones were everywhere. We saw our first nudibranch and many rockfish. Jack was a bit overweighted and tilty. We both had some trouble getting buoyant but we managed to handle our drysuit experience and had a taste of future dives. Seals welcomed us as we emerged from this first venture into another dimension.

At 2:30 PM we did another open water dive at a location called Seven Tree. The weather was great. This is unusual for British Columbia and wonderful for our first dives. The sea was calm. The sun was bright and warm. It was beautiful. The colours were intense. One whole wall was bright pink. We saw huge Puget Sound Crabs, Red Irish Lords, a decorated warbonnet and a big school of silver herring.

Even Jack was exhausted after two dives. After a delicious dinner of barbecued chicken, broccoli, rice and the best apple crisp in the world, we fell into deep-dive like sleep.

At 8:30 AM the next morning, I, Marsha Forest of Queens New York City, was in the water again - with Capt. Al and Jack for our third dive. It was a foggy morning. This time our bottom time was 36 minutes at a depth of 63 feet. Wow! Amazing little string worms danced around the Browning Wall. Candy striped shrimp, as well as orange and lace nudibranchs dazzled me. Al (now mother Al) had to redress me under water as I was over weighted. We removed my ankle weights. I did much better. Jack had mastered his dry suit - "He's got it, by Jove he's got it!"

Al showed me how to climb up the Browning wall crawling hand over hand by holding onto the rocks. This was really fun. I'm not only diving, I'm rock climbing under water.

Another beautiful day. I rested until my second dive which was at "Snowball." My bottom time was 37 minutes. Snowball was a fantastic dive. We swam through a silver sea of tiny herrings. Al sat me on a ledge to watch orange lace nudibranchs and Irish Lords. Coming up through my first kelp forest was awesome. I was in a sea of white powder puffs and kelp. Scallops were dancing in the sea.

Jack and I took the Kayak out for a short trip. Jack did the 5 PM dive which I skipped. I had one of the best hot showers on the earth, followed by another great dinner before passing out with visions of silver herring dancing around my head.

I skipped the 6:30 AM dive on Aug. 17th to save my energy for my fifth dive at Hunt Rock. Depth was 65 feet and we had heavy fog. This was the weight belt adventure dive for me. One minute I was perfectly buoyant, Capt. Al just a few feet away, then poof I was rocketting to the surface. No matter what I did, I kept flying. I sort of enjoyed it. I shot to the surface and I shouted to Dan, "Am I OK?" He explained I hadn't been deep enough to get the 'bends'. What happened? My weight belt must have got caught on something. That's what happens without a weight belt." We all had a good laugh. Al found my lost weight belt.

This was also the dive where at the end of the anchor chain a wonderful friendly wolf eel greeted us for his play time. I had a marvelous first wolf eel encounter before I went flying to the surface.

By 5 PM I was ready to dive again although my confidence was a bit shaken by my sudden ascent due to the lost weight belt. But with Capt. Al by my side convincing me it was a one time event, I was ready again. The weather was fabulous again. At 5 PM dove at a location called Stubbs Island. I was quite buoyant and enjoyed seeing a melody of amazing sights including beautiful basket stars and grunt sculpins (a rare sight). This was nudibranch heaven. We were on the bottom for 37 minutes at a depth of 65 feet and I was pooped when we got out of the water.

After a terrific shishkabob, rice and Greek salad dinner, I fell asleep amazed that I was actually diving.

August 19th I decided to do one dive and enjoyed sightseeing at Alert Bay and seeing the Totems. This was also a day of miraculous whale watching. Capt. Al expertly followed a pod of orcas. Everyone was on deck with cameras clicking. We were mesmerized and humbled by this family of orcas who graced us with their presence. The sound of their breathing is still in my ears.

There was a long wait. Our orcs seemed to have gone. Al told us all to keep our eyes peeled. Suddenly the big male whale breached i.e. jumped out of the water right beside us. We had seen this on film, but seeing it live takes the breath away. Eight of us stood rigid. No one even clicked a camera. It was one of those moments that can't be captured. It must be felt. Everyone stayed quiet and respectful of the moment. Then we all laughed. Cameras clicked again as our family of Orcas revisited us. We thanked them.

With great weather again I decided to dive at 5:30 PM at Stephenson's Rock. My bottom time was 34 minutes at 64 feet. The beauty of this dive for me was coming up through a forest of kelp with the 6 PM Pacific sun glinting through the water. The sun streaming through the kelp is a moment of pure beauty. I was in tears as I got out of the water from the sheer beauty.

The group was wonderful. No one put pressure on anyone to dive more than they wanted. We encouraged each other, but no one was pushy. My neck was VERY sore from getting in and out of my wonderful friend the dry suit. I enjoyed scenery watching on this cloudy day of Aug. 20th. I did the 5:40 PM dive at Fantasy Island. My bottom time was 30 minutes at 72 feet. What a great dive it was. Today I met, hugged and petted the wolf eel called Tatoo. He's a one eyed sweet friendly cute-ugly critter who loves divers. His head looks like a cabbage patch doll with the body of a moray eel.

Al fed him delicious sea urchins for ten minutes. What fun! Al also found an octopus which he carried around on his shoulder. They call the wolf eel and the octopus, dogs and cats of the sea.

My Night Dive

That night I did the impossible. At Staples Cut at 9:30 PM in the pitch black of night, I fell backwards into the Pacific Ocean and truly had an experience of a lifetime. I was of course with Capt. Al. Jack was nearby. We stayed down 20 minutes at a depth of 36 feet. It was another universe. It literally took my breath away with the sheer intensity of the beauty of the night and the colors under the sea. I saw luminescent orange pens, dancing

nudibranchs, sailfish silver sculpins, huge Puget Sound Crabs. We turned off our lights and observed the natural phosphorescence of the night. It was breath taking. I literally danced out of the water and saw a night sky full of dancing stars.

That moment was worth the whole trip. I thanked Capt. Al. I thanked everyone and everything. I was alive! What a privilege to see all this.

When we got back to the boat, Jack and Al began their hearts card tournament. This truly is an amazing trip. Life on land has ceased to exist. I am a learner in a new dimension of time and space. I feel like an astronaut who has seen the earth from afar and can never quite be the same. Between the life under the water, the whales, the great food, I am feeling alive in a way that makes me feel like a miracle. I am grateful!

The next day Aug. 21, I had another first. My first wreck dive. This was really fun. Visions of Titanic danced in my brain as hand in hand I floated with Al seeing nothing at first and then through the mist there it was. We were exploring the wreck for 35 minutes at a depth of 77 feet. This was also the place where Al did the dancing anemone and leather starfish show. Wow. He placed the starfish near the anemone, which then loosened its grip and sent the anemone into a dance of sensuous proportions. All we needed was the sound of Bolero to make this into a true floor show. Nature has it all. What a beautiful dance!

Sunlight was streaming through the wreck as we came up into the afternoon sunlight. Back at the boat Jack, our intrepid fisherman, caught a big ling cod which Dan cooked up for dinner. Aside from a very sore neck, I am now a scuba diver. But still I won't go without Al and that is fine for all of us. Meredith, a scuba instructor, keeps telling me that knowing my own limits is excellent and that dangerous divers are people who go beyond their limits and then get everyone else in trouble trying to rescue them.

For me the name of the game is enjoying the solitude, quiet and beauty of the sea. Being with Al gave me the respite I needed to enjoy the natural surroundings without the anxiety. I have enough anxiety in my life. I needed the hand to hand assistance to enjoy the trip and I was smart enough to know and see a great teacher when he appeared.

Since my own professional life is teaching others, it was a humbling and a powerful learning experience for me to be a student for a week. I was reflecting and learning a great deal about nature, the earth, the sea, myself and the nature of a great learning experience.

At one point I asked myself if this was work or fun. I was learning so much. Why doesn't this count as a great learning experience? Like university. But no! Unless we are sitting in stuffy classrooms with a teacher preaching, we don't consider anything real learning. Well, I am a student learning in the University of the Pacific Ocean and I am realizing a great deal about my outside and my inside world.

On August 22 I did a 40 minute dive at 78 feet at Lou's Hole. This was a box dive in a hole and I enjoyed it immensely. We saw tons of basket stars, blood red stars, those tiny candy striped shrimp, hermit crabs and Al saved a fish with a fish hook in its body. The weather was gorgeous on top.

That afternoon Jack, our only intrepid fisherman, caught another Ling Cod which was added to menu. Poor Jeff tried to fish and kept getting rock fish which he threw back.

At 6 PM we did another dive in cloudy weather at Belize Inlet. Called Devil's Face this was a bit scary for me. It was quite dark and along a wall. It was also fun as I was pretending to be in deep space. We saw bright red star fish along the walls and found many cloud

sponges. I went to my lowest depth of 91 feet which Al told me I did after I emerged from the water.

Dinner was scrumptious with marinated barbecue pork chops, scalloped potatoes, salad and cherries jubilee for dessert.

A word about desserts. Captain Al's teenage daughter Kelly was the assistant crew member. She also made all the fabulous desserts. She was a big help overall and a lovely person to have on the boat. Dan managed to delight us daily with great food of high quality and inventiveness. Dan's friendliness and encouragement to me also made me feel confident and welcome.

It is not surprising that so many people do repeat trips with this company. We will.

Nakwakto Rapids Day

On Aug. 23 everyone was scared. This was the day for the big dive at Nakwakto Rapids. This is a spectacular current dive near Tremble Island. Yes, its called Tremble island because at high tide it literally shakes. This is the place of the fastest navigable current in the world. The current is equivalent to 25 miles an hour (20 knots). The tide is about 20 feet. The day before we watched the high tide rushing by and I thought "Ha, they must be kidding." Al explained that the window of opportunity to dive was short. Everyone must be in and out of the water in 10 minutes. 20 minutes total from in to out.

Why do this? Of course its exciting but it also is the place of the highest density of gooseneck barnacles in the world. "Risk my life for gooseneck barnacles," I thought. "Oh well. Why not."

I was confident that Capt. Al wanted to continue his diving business and would not want to risk bankruptcy and ruin by having eight lost divers on his record. So for once I was the most confident diver and the rest of the gang were scared. The timing had to be right. The potential danger was to be swept downstream or to be dragged under the current in the whirl pools. Almost everyone decided to stay close to Capt. Al. I of course had hand-holding privileges and hand-hold I did (for dear life).

This dive was of a military nature. We were up at 6 AM and in the boat at 7:10 sharp. Everyone had to be ready, set and go at the same time. When we got to the rapids everyone was deadly silent. The rapids slowing from the "boil". Al was waiting for slack. At 7:45 AM we all did it (even me!) We were a great troop. In the water at 7:45 AM in the rainy mist. We were all back in the boat at 8:15 AM. Our depth was 61 feet. Everyone survived to have a special eggs benedict breakfast. Yum. We even all saw a grey whale wave his tail at us. What a day! And it was only just started.

At 2 PM a smaller group (including Jack) went back to Hunt Rock for another dive. I skipped this one. The sea was a bit choppy and as Meredith coined it, this was not a "Marsha Dive". This was done respectfully and with fun. I knew when to dive and when not to. This is a good lesson in life which is to stay out of what you should stay out of so as to not ruin things for others. "Know thyself".

As we so often do in our workshops, the SCUBA RULES have become part of our life. When in trouble or making a decision, STOP, BREATHE (in and out) THINK and finally ACT. Also, the wonderful lesson of always diving with a buddy is a lesson we think should apply above the water as well as below.

So off the gang went. They were ecstatic upon return. At the end of the dive as the group was taking off their tanks, Capt. Al started hollering "Dolphins! Dive!" So they dived and swam with the wild dolphins. I was really pleased and happy for Jack and Meredith that they had this experience. Meredith kept saying I would have been miserable. Even though the Dolphins were wonderful, the rest of the dive had not been easy. The current was quite strong and it was hard getting down. I wasn't the least bit jealous. I had done Nakwakto Rapids and seen a whale. I wasn't about to get greedy.

At 6 PM I decided to do the last dive of the day in the clouds at Browning Islet. We spent 35 minutes at 70 feet and had a good dive with excellent visibility. Al and I saw two octopus and I particularly enjoyed a huge wall full of white snowball anemones. It was "a stunning wall dive."

We then enjoyed a simply stunning dinner of succulent Roast Beef and Yorkshire pudding with all the trimmings. Dan outdid himself as we celebrated the day we survived Nakwakto Rapids (and some of the group swam with the dolphins.)

The weather that had been beautiful at the beginning of the trip was now what we were more used to for British Columbia. Cold, damp, rainy, gray but also still very beautiful. I must admit I loved the sunshine but we had great weather and as we were ending the trip Aug. 24th we had no reason to complain.

My finale dive was back on Browning Wall which I had done as my 3rd dive. This was a great last dive with wonderful visibility. We were down for 31 minutes at 71 feet. A red Irish Lord swam right into my mask to say hello. Al and I had a good underwater laugh. What a way to end the trip. Laughing underwater with the rain playing on the water overhead.

We returned to Port Hardy that afternoon in the pouring rain after a wonderful home made pizza lunch.

The Next Trip

On Nov. 24th we faxed in our reservations for another Exta Sea adventure for July 20-28, 1998. We will board the Sea Venturer in Port Alberni on July 19th at 8 PM and head for the Barkely Sound.

We won't have all the right equipment and I will still be as scared as ever (maybe a bit less this year) but we will be as excited and for sure be ready to see the wonders that await us. Both above and below is the beauty of this earth, a precious treasure not to be tampered with in any way.

As Ursula Franklin a noted Canadian scholar puts so well,
"People Matter, Nature Matters, Nothing Else Matters."

We thank Capt. Al Spilde and Dan Ferris (cook magnifico). We also thank Kelly Spilde and everyone associated with Exta Sea Charters.

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