



Alaska Marine Highway ferry *Taku* crossing Taku Inlet

## Snettisham 2008 – 6: Balance July 4-6



Loading at low tide

Travis and I left the harbor around 10:00 am on the 4<sup>th</sup> for a long weekend at the homestead. We managed to load the boat right at the low end of a very low tide and the ramp down to the docks was like a ladder. I backed the truck as close as I could to the top of the ramp, then we carried everything down by hand and loaded it into carts at the bottom. We got many sympathetic looks.

It was mostly cloudy and mild and the seas were light all the way down. The day before I'd bought a new six gallon gas tank and fittings and installed it on the boat—it looked shiny and red and bright next to the older tank. We stopped just inside Port Snettisham to switch tanks and Travis drove from there to the homestead. No whales on the way down.

After we rested and had a snack we got to work finishing the paneling on the front wall, cutting the pieces outside and taking our time putting them up. We were finished by dinner and it looked wonderful. That evening we played Mastermind and watched the hummingbirds chase each other around the porch.

There were at least four and sometimes three would feed at once; they seemed to spend more time harassing each another than eating.

Saturday was a mix of work and relaxation. After a breakfast of sourdough pancakes we went for a walk at low tide. It was a -3.9' (almost as low as it gets) and the channel on the opposite side of the inlet was all white water. A hundred or more seals lay on a sandbar at the edge of it. We headed down to the dropoff and could almost walk out to

some of the pot buoys (we've determined that these are Dungeness crab pots). I found another dead smelt on the sand—now I'm wondering if they're capelin rather than eulachon? Lots of invertebrates squiggling under the rocks on the beach.

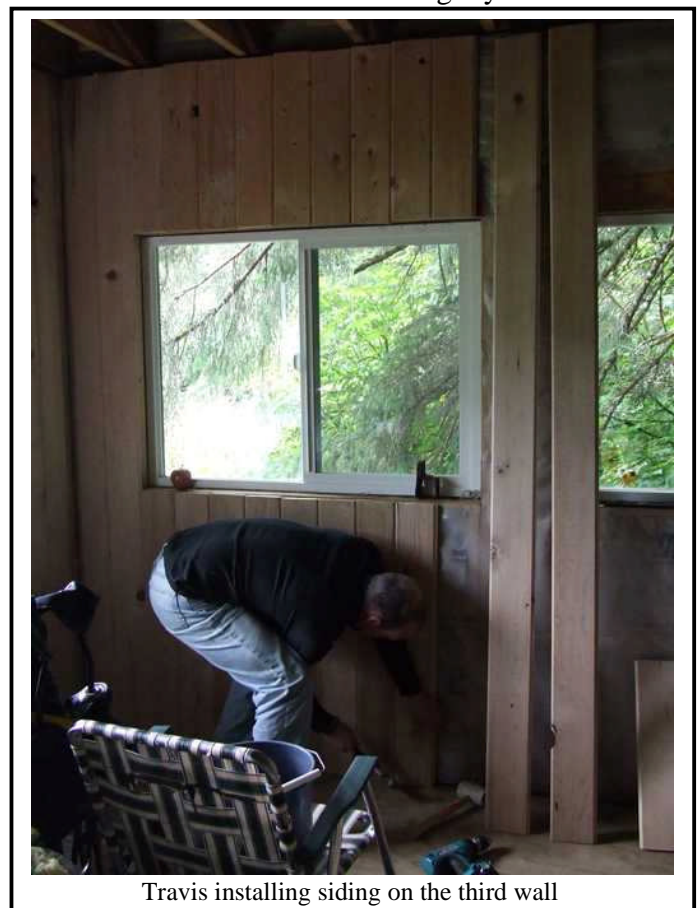
We had most of the windows open all day in the lodge to listen to the rain and the wind in the woods and to let the fresh air in while we worked. Nigel smelled a bear at one point and barked on and off, but we never saw anything. We cut the pieces for above and below the windows on the third wall and started installing them, taking turns working around the window since one of us had to be on the step ladder and the other one directly below. We worked together on the longer pieces, me on the ladder and Travis the floor. It was so much faster (and much more enjoyable) than working alone. This wall was a little tricky because the smoke stack goes through it. Initially we'd just cut a hole in the plywood a few inches wider than the stack and put metal flashing around it to protect the siding and studs from the heat. The flashing was a little damaged two winters ago when the snow tore off the stack but seems to have functioned adequately. I'd found out the week before that legally you need 18 inches of air space around an uninsulated stack (meaning no wood within 18 inches). I didn't want to mess with the expense or trouble of changing out the existing stack with insulated stack (metal asbestos), but I did buy a "wall thimble" to put the existing stack through. This is a telescoping insulated through-



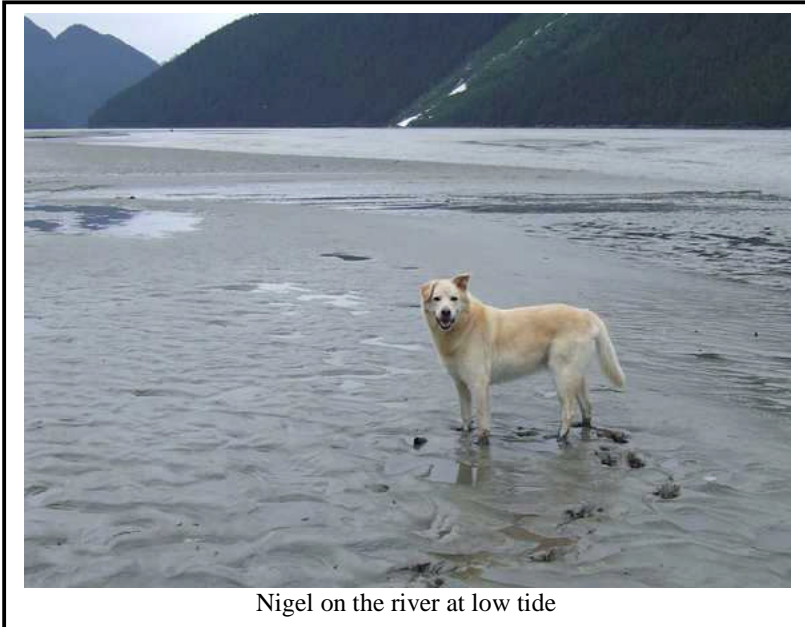
Travis carrying Nigel to shore



Front wall complete around the picture window



Travis installing siding on the third wall



Nigel on the river at low tide

wall fitting designed for a metal asbestos stack.

Travis dismantled the stove pipe and enlarged the hole through the wall with the jigsaw. The thimble is meant for thicker walls, so we had to add some 2"x2"s to the outside of the building to get it to fit flush against the wall on the inside. We screwed the outside of the thimble in, then went back to siding on the inside, cutting pieces to go above and below the thimble. Once the siding was in place we installed the inside half of

the thimble flush against it and put the stove pipe through, filling the gap with additional insulation. The black thimble against the pale siding looks great! I'd vapor barriered the rest of the wall that morning and we finished siding it in the afternoon in time for me to do some mad satisfying reorganization of the lodge. I moved the remaining lumber to the wall and rotated the couch 90 degrees so it faces straight out the window. Everything else got moved around a few times until suddenly there was a floor and wide open spaces. It looks really great, especially with the siding.

Before dinner we decided to try a new fishing technique I'd learned about from a friend—personal use halibut long line. Travis set up two halibut hooks on a sinking line with a small anchor and attached the system to an enormous buoy that my dad gave me. I hastily wrote my contact info on the buoy with a sharpie and we tossed it over somewhat beyond the dropoff past the crab pots. You have to be in sight of the buoy to be legal and we were pleased at how easy it was to see from the lodge. We had halibut cheeks, fondu and



Debbie installing siding over the back door



The stove and wall thimble

wine for dinner while we let the line soak. Unfortunately, we'd forgotten the bait in the freezer in Juneau and were forced to use halibut cheeks for bait, which probably didn't hold onto the hooks very well. When we pulled the hooks up the bait was gone, no fish, but it's a system I'm looking forward to trying again. We consoled ourselves with peach crumble and vanilla pudding for dessert.

That night we went mouse hunting. These deer mice are totally adorable, but I'm really getting weary of the mouse dirt. Travis discovered them coming in through the hole in the wall for the propane lines and stapled hardware cloth around the outside to keep them out. I added a little extra hardware cloth to the corner soffits and jammed it in with a crowbar to make sure there was no entrance there. It looks like the mice have been hanging out in the back of the propane range and Travis spotted three or four in there at once. He set

up a series of barricades and placed a black pipe on the floor (plugged at one end) near the stove. I almost caught a couple with my bare hands as Travis harassed them from one side of the stove and I crouched on the floor in the back. Eventually we scared one out and it went right up the black pipe and we carried it outside. We didn't have much luck with the others and none were in the bucket trap the next morning.

On Sunday we managed to do no serious work all day. We lit a fire, opened the windows, and relaxed. In the afternoon we cleaned and packed and headed out, leaving the two large buoys down there for future halibut endeavors. The



Reorganized and paneled lodge

hummingbirds had drained the feeder, so I filled it for them to last for another day or two. The wind was kicking up as we crossed Gilbert Bay and was pretty choppy in Stephen's Passage—white caps and seas to three feet. Thankfully it was on our stern, so although it slowed us down it wasn't terribly uncomfortable. The worst spot was crossing from Grave Point to Grand Island. The *Mist Cove* passed us (the small cruise ship that anchored in front of the homestead on July 6 last year) and someone came out of the wheel house to wave—maybe out of sympathy for our small boat in all that chop! The gillnetters were out, clustered around Limestone Inlet, and we had to avoid the nets. According to Travis's GPS we traveled at 13-23 mph depending on the seas and Travis drove from Grand Island north. Back in the channel the water finally calmed down and we gave it full throttle—33 mph! The tide was high when we got back and loading our gear up the ramp was much easier.



Travis hauling the kayak and buoys to the lodge