



### **Snettisham 2007-7: Crab Fettuccini July 13-15**

My lack of building progress was beginning to wear on me by early July so I was anxious to continue meaningful construction. I'd planned a hike with my little sister on Sunday the 15th, but decided to go down to the homestead Friday night anyway, work all day Saturday, and come back early Sunday morning. My roommate Sarah joined me and we headed down Friday evening; Dru was planning to come down the following day so I grabbed two of his crab pots on the way to the harbor and got quick instructions on how to bait and drop them. I've long suspected Gilbert Bay of being rich in Dungeness crab and overcame my vegetarian reservations to find out. Sarah and I rounded Sentinel Point and entered the bay at about 9:30 pm, immediately entering a thick fog bank. From there we were forced to slow down as I could see only 20 feet ahead of me and the mountains were obscured from view. I don't know Gilbert Bay beyond the river inlet very well, so I was overly cautious. The first time we took a sounding there was 350 feet of water, then 250. Finally we broke out of the eerie, creepy fog bank so I could see Sweetheart Creek's gorge and had a better idea where we were. Soon we hit the end of Gilbert Bay and found ourselves in the middle of dozens of crab pot buoys. I put a couple of herring in both of Dru's pots and carefully dropped them overboard, then hugged the foggy shoreline back to the river. Leaving the last point of land and crossing the river inlet was a little scary in the fading light and thick fog. I was relieved when I could pick out the creek gorge and knew I wasn't too far upriver. I dropped Sarah off on the beach, unloaded the gear, then grabbed a kayak and headed downriver for deeper water. The tilt on my engine was still broken, so I couldn't let the skiff go dry; plus, I wanted to leave Sunday morning at precisely low tide. Thankfully, I could anchor close enough to shore to see the familiar logs through the fog and find the right spot. The lodge was obscured from view.

I had grand plans for my one day of labor, beginning with erecting the walls of the outhouse. I still needed to put the exterior coat of paint on them, however, and it promised to rain, so I decided to light a fire and paint the plywood inside the lodge. I figured it would dry in the warmth overnight and I could put it up with help the next day. By the time I got back from anchoring the boat it was pretty much dark so we lit the oil lamp and five candles (all bunched together in one holder). I hauled in the three 4'x8' pieces of T-111 plywood siding and arranged them on chairs and other supports around the lodge. Sarah and I drank wine and painted by candlelight and flashlight from 11:00 pm until midnight when we finally headed to bed. I should have taken a picture of the plywood inside! By the way, painting by candlelight is not something I would recommend. I lit the couch on fire once.

Despite our efforts, the paint had failed to dry by the next morning; it was just too humid, even inside the warm cabin. I kept a fire going most of the day but the paint remained tacky until late in the afternoon. Nevertheless, I managed to keep busy. First I reconstructed all the fittings for the valve and filters of the water system, wrapping Teflon tape around the threads to prevent leaks and adding a tee coupling to the end so I could bring water to the other cabins. I'd shut off the water supply at the creek at the end of the last trip and was excited to show off the system to Sarah. We hiked up to the creek and discovered that the olive barrel had shifted, probably due to high water. I put it back in place, opened the valve and headed back down to the lodge. Much to my surprise and disappointment, no water came out. I put on my rain pants and hiked back up along the whole length of pipe looking for catastrophic breaks where bears had chewed through the hose, but found nothing. Nor was there anything at the creek that would seem to affect water pressure. I repositioned the olive barrel several times to ensure that the hose always had a continuous downward angle; this eventually began water flowing to the lodge, but the pressure was pathetic compared to what it had been. I was baffled.

But at least there was a little water. I took a break from water system work and started on the outhouse. All the pieces for the outhouse were pre-cut (three years ago) except for the 10" pieces of siding on either side of the door. I hate cutting plywood, but at least I had Sarah there to hold the siding while I cut. I also enlarged the seat cut in the rafters to accommodate the siding (they had been cut to fit over the top plates but I'd failed to take into account the added width of the plywood—or so I thought). Then we nailed in the braces that support the outhouse seat and attached the plywood seat and the foot board beneath (see photos).



Nigel and Sarah helping nail in the seat supports



Seat and foot board plywood secured

In the early afternoon, Dru and his roommate Kurtis showed up, having passed through significant fog themselves in Stephen's Passage. They'd failed to find Dru's crab pots among all the others in Gilbert Bay, so after unloading their gear we took off. Thankfully, I'd noticed that Dru's buoys were distinct from the others and I had a pretty good idea where they were. The first pot came up empty, the second had a large male Dungeness crab in a cranky mood.

Back at the lodge the others set about settling in and making dinner while I continued to work on the outhouse. First I nailed up the plywood siding on the front (unpainted), then added small 2x4 pieces to the inside of the wall so there was something solid to screw the hinges to. Dru and Kurtis helped with the siding, then held the door temporarily until I put rocks underneath to keep it in place while I drilled holes and screwed in the hinges. By then it was after six and I was frustrated and tired, though proud to have a swinging door on my outhouse, if no walls. I made a few irritating mistakes, but probably no one will notice.

In the meantime, Dru, Sarah and Kurtis (who is a chef) had prepared dinner. We had sun dried tomato alfredo Dungeness crab fettuccini with zucchini, peppers, onions and garlic. S'mores in the wood stove for dessert. In the evening, Dru, Kurtis and I played a rigorous game of scrabble (I won).

The next morning I got up early and packed. The river was extremely low (it was a -3.8' tide, or about as low as it gets) and there were only a few narrow channels of fast water between the sandbars in front. Thankfully, we had little to carry. I let Sarah take the food tote and had her walk down the beach to deep water. I took the

kayak with the dry bag and satellite phone and made my way out to the first channel. The water was fast and choppy and very exciting to ride. In a few places the waves were standing a good 8-10" high where the water shallowed; twice the bow of the kayak went aground while the current continued to push from behind, turning me sideways in the channel and threatening to overturn me. I can see how real rapids would be exciting and tricky to ride. A little downriver the channel cut into a bank of silt, created a foot high cliff of mud that sloughed off in alarmingly large chunks that I assiduously avoided. The roughest point was at the mouth of the channel where the water was shallowest just before the drop off; the currents



Scrabble



Nigel watching the game

appeared to be erratic and strong and I was grateful when I finally glided up to the Ronquil sitting at anchor 20 feet from the sandbars. Poor Nigel had followed me all the way down the channel, adding to my stress as he threatened to dare the rapids to catch up. He finally turned away and met up with Sarah waiting for me at the edge of the beach.

I threw off my flannel, jacket, and borrowed float coat when I got on board, sweating in the morning sunshine. The motor started up just fine, but I found myself powerless to pull the anchor up. I struggled with it, pulling the boat directly over the anchor but no effort would release it. I tied the line tight, then backed away on the engine. Thankfully the anchor pulled loose and came up caked with silt; I slowly made my way to shore where I picked up Sarah and Nigel and dragged the kayak high onto the rocks, tying it to a log for Dru to use later. Dru had a far more difficult time pulling his anchor later and nearly had to leave it; we figure the silt and sand carried by the river's current had buried our anchors, beings that wea were both located right at the mouth of the channels. Leaving at 8:30 am, Sarah and I made it back to town on a light chop by 10:30, plenty early for a hike out to Blue Mussel Cabin with my little sister's family (if a little disappointed at my lack of productivity).



Looking from deep water into the rushing channel