

Making Our Way



A McMAHON / CHEYNE PODCAST

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10/15/2025

**Alaska: 3 Ways From
Sandy**

Our Hosts

Janet Cheyne McMahon is a lover of family, dogs, nature, travel, books, and music. Born south of the Mason-Dixon line, she left after 9 months for parts north, landing eventually in Michigan, which will always be “where I’m from.”

Love of learning led Jan to a Bachelor of Arts (History, Political Science) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn (Go Blue), and a Master of Arts (Library and Information Science) at the University of South Florida. Amid all that, studied for a time with Rob at Colorado State University, a pivotal time in their lives.

Worked at the U of M-Dearborn Library, and then The Salvation Army Florida Divisional Headquarters, with the greatest reward being in serving as the Divisional Librarian. A librarian is who Jan is “in my soul.”

Jan and Rob have made our home in Florida since 1983, and live now in retirement with their dog, Skye, who makes it all the best adventure. They travel as much as possible, spending time in nature and in diverse places on this amazing planet. It has all been, and continues to be a fascinating journey, with hope of making a difference, in small ways, by being brave enough to speak and act on behalf of others.

Rob McMahon is a native Michigander, born in Saginaw and raised in the suburbs of Detroit. Rob attended Michigan State University, graduating in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He did graduate studies at the University of Michigan and the University of South Florida. Rob is retired, having spent 36 years in public education teaching both high school chemistry and biology and middle school science. He worked as a total quality management trainer for the Pinellas County School District and served four years as the president of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. Rob cofounded a non-profit total quality management training center, The Learning Co-op, for Teacher Unions interested in applying the W. Edwards Deming continuous improvement principles to their day-to-day operations. He worked with teacher unions in Colorado, Maryland, New Mexico, North Dakota, Texas and Michigan. He also worked in a similar capacity with Jim Shipley & Associates. In retirement Rob has written a series of science related children’s books, and enjoys traveling with his wife, Jan, and their Black Labrador Retriever, Skye.

Deanna Cheyne, born in St. John’s, Newfoundland, earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Toronto (1996), studying with such luminaries as Elmer Eisler, Doreen Rao, Greta Kraus, Lois Marshall, and Rosemarie Landry.

Dee taught music at Mississauga Christian Academy, served as music director for Meadowvale Bible Baptist Church (Mississauga, Ontario), served as Assistant Divisional Music Director for The Salvation Army in Florida, is a former member of Tampa’s Master Chorale, and, for the past 18 years, has been a public school teacher.

Dee has visit 36 of the 50 U.S. states, and 12 countries. Her favorite destinations include France, Prague, New Orleans, National Parks, & Hawaii.

Dee & Jim live in Florida with Brigus (Golden Retriever) and Pip (Teacup Yorkie).

James Cheyne, born in Galesburg, Illinois, earned a Bachelor of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from Michigan State University (1978); and a Master of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from the University of Illinois Urbana/Champaign (1981), studying with David Liptak, Salvatore Martirano, and Ben Johnston.

Jim has served as music director for The Salvation Army in Central Illinois & Eastern Iowa, Orlando Area Command, and the Florida Division, served as a pastor with The Salvation Army, and was a public school teacher for 17 years.

In travel so far, Jim has visited 50 states and 27 countries. His favorite travel destinations include National Parks, New Orleans, Newfoundland, Argentina, Prague, & France.

Jim continues to write music and support Dee’s musical endeavors, and cooks whenever absolutely necessary. Jim & Dee live in Florida with their dogs Brigus & Pip.



L-R: Brigus, Jim, Deanna, Skye, Jan, Rob.
Inset: Pip

Alaska: 3 Ways From Sandy

#67 - Season 3; Episode 6

10/15/2025

Hosts: Jan, Rob, Dee, & Jim. Guests: Sandy & Russ.

| All things Alaska, and how to get there, including Fat Bear Week, the Alcan Highway, Denali, cruises, reindeer, dog sleds, & humpback whales. Plus, halibut, just because.

[Music]

SANDY: The very first cruise we ever went on was Carnival. And it was a weekend cruise. So we left on a Friday and came home on a Monday, and d - don't - don't ever do that. I mean I just sat around with my mouth hanging watching people

DEE: Yeah.

SANDY: I'd never seen the actions of people picking up other people, you know, guys picking up women, women picking up guys, you know. And I can't tell you how many bare butts we saw with their little thong suit and everything and it's like - you're not gonna see that if you go on a week long or...

RUSS: The longer the cruise, the older the people.

[Music]

JAN: So Fat Bear Week is about the bears at Katmai National Park and they eat a lot of salmon to bulk up for the winter. In recent years there's been a contest and you could go online and vote for your favorite fat bears. There's a bracket with twelve bears. And so it's an instant elimination. You vote between two and one gets the most. My favorite all week was Chunk because he had a broken jaw. And he still was impressively massive.

ROB: Yeah, if you look at him in the spring and then after the salmon season, he bulked up. He did very well, even with a broken jaw.

JIM: So he was the sentimental favorite.

JAN: I campaigned for him. On the final battle of the last two bears, 96,000 people voted for Chunk, and 63,000 - almost 64,000 - voted for bear #856. And I think 856 was at a disadvantage because we are calling him by a number instead of a name, so you don't get that endearing quality. Well, and poor Chunk has no idea he won. I mean, let's think about this for a minute.

ROB: He doesn't get any prize.

JAN: He doesn't get a prize, but we see his picture all over social media with his broken jaw.

JIM: He survives.

ROB: We thought maybe they would tranquilize him and then fix his jaw, you know?

JAN: Actually somebody asked that question. The answer was in the National Park you do not intervene like that. That's the nature of the life. So -

SANDY: Well he seems to be doing all right if he, you know...

JAN: That's an introduction to, "Why go to Alaska?"

JIM: We have here today Russ and Sandy. You'll remember them from several episodes we did about Tanzania. And we have Jan and Rob and Dee, and we also have Skye, Brigus, and Pip. So that's the gathering today, some of whom we'll be talking about a recent trip you guys took to Alaska.

ROB: Several trips we've taken to Alaska.

SANDY: Yes, that is true.

JIM: Sandy, I understand you are the Founder of the Feast, the Captain of this Cruise.

SANDY: Well, I don't know if I'd put it like that. We were looking for a way to go to Alaska this time. I wouldn't go to Alaska without going to land. So I wanted to cruise with the land tour. So I know Rob and Jan aren't huge fans of big ship cruising, so I ran it by them first. They thought about it and they agreed that that would be a good idea. So very easy. I called my travel agent. Booked it. Basically, end of story.

ROB: It's a different way of going.

SANDY: But it was good that we did something different.

ROB: We've driven it. We took the inside passage up the Alaska Marine Highway, and then we've taken the cruise.

SANDY: So three very different experiences, all good experiences.

ROB: Yep.

JAN: You know, minus our very first trip. Sandy has been like the pivotal planner of the trip. And Rob takes some credit, but, really, he does a couple things and Sandy does everything else. And Russell does nothing, so he never knows what's going on.

ROB: And he hates that.

JAN: And he hates that. So that makes him a fun traveling companion.

RUSS: I could have done it all better.

JAN: Yeah, there you go.

[Laughter]

JAN: Um, I'm sorry. Our very first trip to Alaska was not with Sandy and Russ. It was right after we got married - a year and a half after we got married - and it was really Rob's dad's dream that the four of us go to Alaska. So, in 1980, when we had no money and big dreams, we were able to save to take this what was gonna be a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Alaska, and we drove. We drove up the Alcan Highway back when it wasn't paved, and there were oil tankers up and down the road. You had to carry extra tires. If you broke down, you're in the middle of nowhere. So it was a very different experience, but at Kloo-AH-nee, Kloo-AYN...

ROB: Kloo-AYN, Kloo-AHN, Kloo-AH-nee.

[Kluane. It's "KLOO-ayn."]

JAN: However Dave said it, because he said it wrong every time. They always said, "You'll want to come back. You will come back." And and we did.

ROB: And we did. The road was built by the Army Corps of Engineers and they took the path of least resistance, so it wound all over the place. Over the years they were able to iron out some of those curves and straighten it out, and pave it finally. It was all dirt when they first did it - gravel. So, we drove it twice, once from Florida. No, we were in Michigan. But the second time we came from Florida to and then we went with you guys. So -

JAN: It's a long drive.

ROB: Yeah, it is a long - 1500 miles once you get to Dawson Creek, British Columbia.

JAN: You know that in this last trip, we took people who had never been. Russ and Sandy, Rob and me, and then Andrew and Brian had both been to Alaska, too, in 2005. But their spouses and Andrew's kids had never been. So, the cruise was a great way to take a group of people that included children, and it gave them a pretty good taste of Alaska. But back when we went in 1980, we went to some what at the time - well maybe they still are - extravagant places. We went up to Barrow, which is the northernmost city in Alaska. It's no longer called Barrow, and I was going to try to say it. "you-kee-AH" - "you-KEE-ah-vik." *["Utqiagvik" pronounced "UUT-kee-AH-vik"]* It is a Inuit word for that area. And it's at the very tip. Well, there's Barrow Point, which is slightly north of that, but it's the northernmost populated place. We went there, and then Russ and Sandy went up there in '85...

ROB: Six.

JAN: Six.

RUSS: '86.

JAN: Was I wrong on that? Sorry. '86. They went up there in '86, too. When you go up there in the summer, the sun never sets. It dips down to the horizon and then goes back up. So you have daylight the whole time. And then we also, in '80, flew out to the Pribilof Islands, which are in the Bering Sea, and got to see seals and puffins and all manner of wildlife. We've never been back there.

ROB: No. We, uh, we're able to experience the native seal hunt, which was - it was hard to see, but, you know, it's part of their culture, and they - it's very regulated, and there were veterinarians on hand, and Department of Natural Resources people, and...

JAN: You should describe what happens.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: Maybe not.

ROB: They club them is what they do because they don't want to damage the pelt.

RUSS: They take them to bars?

[Laughter]

JAN: Yeah, they go clubbing.

RUSS: Oh.

ROB: Yeah. What was your experience in Barrow like?

RUSS: Well, we flew there and then we got on a bus. They took us to a restaurant. They gave us parkas. We walked around the town. It was very stark. We walked to the Arctic Ocean, stuck our hand in it so we could check that off our bucket list. Went back to the restaurant, had a bowl of reindeer stew or something like that, and got back on the plane and flew back. So we were only there for...

SANDY: Yeah, it's only for a day, but...

RUSS: ...half a day, yeah.

SANDY: It's pretty brutal life up there. Yeah, there's a lot of alcoholism and stuff like that up there. Which you can see why.

RUSS: I mean I - that was in 1986, so I'm sure it's changed.

JAN: It was like that in '80, too - '80, in 1980, also. It's on permafrost.

SANDY: Right. Everything's on stilts, because you can't...

JAN: You can't put it throw anything away. Well for one thing you don't throw anything away because you might need it. So, but it's left lying around. The part that Rob and I have talked about - we've had a few indigenous people experiences in our lives, mostly good, but in this case, it felt exploitive...

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: ...and we were very uncomfortable with the fact that people were brought together to give us a show of their traditions. It was quite in contrast to going out to the Pribilofs...

ROB: Right.

JAN: ...where we were with happy people who - we were just there to be with them. It didn't feel like a show.

ROB: Um in '86 we traveled with Russ and Sandy and me and Ethel. Jan and my mom flew up and met us. So we did some interesting things on the way up.

JAN: They were cruel things, is what they were.

SANDY: There was nothing cruel about it, Jan.

ROB: There's a place called Watson Lake Sign Village [Sign Post Forest]. It's this place on the side of the road and they put up these big poles and people have stacked up signs and memorabilia and license plates from all over the country that have been there. So Jan had a Michigan license plate on the front of the car...

JAN: University of.

ROB: Oh yeah, sorry, University of Michigan. And so we said, "That would be cool to leave that here." We took it off and Russ climbed up the ladder to the very top of one of the

poles and...

SANDY: We carved our initials in it.

JAN: They defaced it - they defaced it and left it, is what they did.

ROB: We left it there for all...

SANDY: It's on the top of the pole, Jan.

ROB: ...for all the world to see.

SANDY: A University of Michigan license plate. Come on.

JAN: This - this Sign Post Forest began in 1942. People who were doing the highway, the Alcan Highway, one gentleman was homesick, so he had posted his license plate. And now when you go there's like fields of - it's a very wide area of people's license plate. So you can walk along and kind of imagine the stories of all the people who have passed by and nailed their license plate to these polls.

ROB: So if you go in there, look for a Michigan, University of Michigan, license plate. Up there on top.

JAN: I was not there to protect my belongings. You know, that trip was one of those moments where I just had so much respect for my mom, because we did the whitewater rafting. And there's a way when you're a certain age as a woman where people talk to you like you're incompetent. There was a - this whitewater rafting we did was broken into two parts. There was the sort of fun easy part, and then there was the whitewater part. As I recall this, I don't remember the specifics, but it was presented that mom could get out halfway through and not take the rest of the white - and she had none of that. She was in Alaska for her only time. She's doing that whole white water thing. And she did. And it was just like, "Oh mom, I'm so proud of you."

SANDY: Yeah.

JAN: So. The Alcan Highway is very interesting because you're driving in wilderness. There is nothing on either side of you. I mean it's just the most remote thing you could do.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: And that was part - back in 1980 - part of the attraction of going to Alaska was the remoteness. That's a feeling you really don't get in the way we did it this year.

SANDY: Right.

JAN: It's a different experience. So we didn't have that - we had a great experience, but it lacked that remote feeling of wilderness that I that is my memory of both '80 and '86.

ROB: Yeah.

SANDY: Rob, a question. When you guys went in 1980, did dad go fishing with his pocket fisherman?

ROB: Yes, he did.

SANDY: Okay. I thought I remembered that story.

ROB: In fact, I have a picture of him holding up a - it was a grayling. That's what we were fishing for in, uh, it's little tiny thing.

SANDY: Little tiny fish.

ROB: He had his pocket fisherman and he's holding up the fish. I took a picture of him.

SANDY: I was thinking that - about that, to thinking, "Am I remembering...?"

ROB: That was in Denali.

JAN: That was when we we tent camped in Denali and burned a hole in the side of our tent.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: How'd you burn it?

ROB: It got wet and so we had one of those little round catalytic heaters with the white gas and, um, we set that inside to dry it out while we were off...

JAN: We left it burning inside our tent.

SANDY: Not the brightest.

ROB: And the wind blew it over and it burned a big, nice, plate-size hole right in the side of the nylon. Fixed it with duct tape.

JAN: The Dave McMahon approach.

SANDY: Of course.

JAN: You can learn a lot by not doing the way we did it. That's - is serious.

SANDY: Right. Yes.

ROB: You live and you learn.

SANDY: On the Alaskan Highway in '86, you had to pay to take a shower.

ROB: Oh, I forgot about that.

SANDY: Jan and I would go into the showers with...

ROB: It's a quarter...

SANDY: ...five bucks worth of quarter - a quarter for two minutes or something. You're on the Alaskan Highway. You're dirty, you're nasty, you want a long shower, so you take in five bucks, you know. These two losers could do two showers for seventy-five cents.

JAN: They had a process.

SANDY: Yes.

ROB: We did.

SANDY: So uh yeah.

ROB: One quarter to to get wet. We took turns running in and getting wet. And then we each took a quarter and we went in another shower and two minutes. We were done.

RUSS: Soap up.

JAN: The thought of you guys running in and out of each other's showers is more than I need.

JIM: You're wearing swimming trunks.

ROB: Yes, of course.

JIM: Okay, thank you.

[Laughter]

SANDY: Oh, ha! Do not believe that, Jim.

RUSS: I don't think that was right.

JAN: No, they weren't. They're butt naked.

[Laughter]

JAN: Because we've gone to Alaska different ways, how do most people go? So 51% of the people who go to Alaska, do it by cruise. And that because it's easy to do and you can just you know go - And then 45% of the people fly up.

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

JAN: So it's down to only a total of 4% that either go by car, RV, ferry, or rail. That's a very small group of people. In truth, that was the only way we knew to go until, well, I shouldn't say, "we knew to go," but the only way we'd experienced it until this year. So this year added another layer to our understanding of how you could travel in Alaska.

RUSS: But yeah, the first time if you took the cruise, you get a little overview.

DEE: Yeah.

RUSS: Yeah, and then if you took the the cruise and the land then you get a better overview, but you know, the only way you're really gonna see it is to actually stay there a while.

JAN: There's a great advantage, I would say, depending on your skill level in travel or your willingness to be adventurous, to cruise lines. And I think as you get older too, there's a great advantage to going on a cruise. Because somebody takes care of everything. In a way, that's how our river cruises work. It's a little different, but somewhat like that. You don't have to worry about being in a country that doesn't speak the language. You don't have to worry about the same kind of things. It's not the same approach as when you plan it yourself.

ROB: Right.

JAN: For Sandy and Russ, they both have plenty of experience planning trips themselves, but they also enjoy cruising, so they do the best of both when they can. Rob and I are the most reticent to cruise, but it's a great way to go if you're with a group of people, with family, because you can be together, or not be together, and do the things you want to do. There's a lot of advantages to that.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: You fly into Fairbanks, you have a number of land things that you do...

ROB: Right.

JIM: ...then you get on board the ship. And where does the ship go?

ROB: Hubbard Glacier, Glacier Bay, Skagway, Juneau, and Ketchikan.

JIM: And where did it end?

ROB: Ended up in Vancouver.

JIM: Vancouver?

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: Okay.

RUSS: So we started on the land in Fairbanks.

JIM: And that was still through Holland?

SANDY: Yes.

RUSS: Yup, well, yeah. We got there a day early and we did our own thing. In fact, we had to rent two pickup trucks because there was ten of us. So then we did this reindeer sled dog tour, and then we joined the rest of the group. We did some group activities with them, then they took us on a bus down to Denali. We spent two nights there, and so one of the days was a free day, and that's when we went whitewater rafting. And then they took us by train to Anchorage, and then we spent - one night?

ROB: Just one night.

RUSS: One night there. So we had free time there, and we just basically walked around town. And then They took us down to...

ROB: Kenai Peninsula. Seward.

RUSS: ...Seward, and we spent two nights there. And then they took us through this cool tunnel to get to Whittier...

ROB: Whittier.

RUSS: And then we got on the boat. And then the boat stopped at several places along the way, and then we were just kind of handled.

JIM: That's a one-way tunnel, right?

SANDY: Yeah.

RUSS: Yup.

JIM: And it was around Whittier, and you have to wait until everything comes through.

SANDY: Yeah. You have an appointment to go through, yeah.

RUSS: Right. It's either north- or south-bound, or train north- or south-bound.

JIM: Okay. So that...

SANDY: So we had 7 days on land and then 7 days on the ship.

JIM: It's a pre-cruise excursion.

ROB: Right.

RUSS: And Rob was crying the whole time about the land part because there's no food included.

ROB: That's true.

RUSS: We had like...

ROB: No - no meals.

RUSS: There's like maybe one meal.

ROB: One meal, yeah, at the...

SANDY: And it's expensive to eat in Alaska.

ROB: ...at the - where we had the gold - where we had the gold panning. How do you book excursions? Do you always use the cruise ship?

SANDY: Not always.

RUSS: No.

SANDY: But more often than not. We always we use a app called Get Your Guide, but there's lots of, like, Viator and stuff like that. Lots of people who do.

RUSS: They're about half of what the cruise ship company costs, but the cruise ship company then, you know, warns you if, you know...

SANDY: Right. If something were to happen and...

RUSS: They're gonna leave you.

SANDY: ...you didn't make it back in time, you know, they're gonna leave you and stuff like that. So we always want to make sure that we're well within the time range that we have and that they've worked with the ships.

DEE: Yeah.

SANDY: These tour places know what they're doing.

RUSS: And it's nice too to support the locals.

SANDY: Right.

JAN: Sometimes you don't realize that you have options when you get on a cruise ship, and that there are other ways to go and see things in.

SANDY: Right.

JAN: Sandy and Russ has a lot of experience with finding these alternatives that I would say I think they were the best excursions that we had. They were targeted to our group.

SANDY: Yeah.

JAN: So, because we're all together with kids, they were very good dealing with what we were interested in. So it - there are alternatives when you go on a cruise like this to just doing what the cruise ship offers. I'm not gonna say the best part of Alaska, but I will say a high point for us as it is wherever we go for all four of us, is the wildlife that we get to see in a place like that. And Alaska has the ability to see things easily that you don't see other places. Humpback whales would be one of the most amazing things we've experienced every time we've been in Alaska.

DEE: We did a whale excursion on our - that was the only excursion I think we did, wasn't it?

JIM: The boat would have held maybe thirty people. We come across a group of humpback whales. Now while we're watching them, a mob - a gang - of killer whales is approaching. For me, I'm hearing West Side's story, you know, the sharks and the jets. Here come the orcas. And they kind of minded their own business. So my camera is pointed at the humpbacks when an orca jumps out of the water. And everyone was really excited about that. So, "Can you do it again?" No. "Where's the trainer when you need them?" The crew were wondering, "Oh, what's gonna happen here?" And when that happens, you think, "Okay, this is not Disney anymore, is it?"

RUSS: Rob's got a lot of video of water where whales used to be.

[Laughter]

ROB: It was sooo - I was so frustrated because this one whale was...

SANDY: Breaching. One after the other.

ROB: ...breaching over and over, and I could not keep up with it. I couldn't see it in the viewfinder in my video camera for one thing. And the only thing that let me know that it was happening was Jeannie screaming. Every time it happened she would she would scream And so finally I just gave up.

DEE: Wouldn't it help people to know, like , if you're gonna cruise, like look at this type of cruise line?

RUSS: Well, I think, um, Royal Caribbean, Princess, and Holland America are the three big ones that go there. And I know Princess and Holland America have the lodges.

ROB: Yes.

SANDY: Yes.

RUSS: We were right next door to one another.

SANDY: When I talked to my travel agent, I said, "What's the best cruise line?" He said, "Holland America or Princess." Holland America, I think, was the first cruise line to go to Alaska.

RUSS: I think they were, yup.

DEE: I know, we went with Norwegian. The thing that attracted us to it was it said, "Cruise your own way," and that was our second cruise because the first time we went on a cruise

was Royal Caribbean, and you only had the choice of dining either with four people or with a large group.

SANDY: Oh, okay.

JIM: At a set time.

DEE: And that's not our style.

SANDY: Yeah, right. Ours neither.

DEE: And so when when we did Norwegian, they said, "Cruise your own way," and then we got free upgrades or something, and one of them was the meal package.

SANDY: Mm-Hmm.

DEE: And so we could choose, like, different restaurants. Which we really like doing that. We could go anytime we want and make reservations.

JIM: The cruise ship buffets, it's kind of like Golden Corral plus motion sickness. *[Laughter]* And so we wanted to get into some restaurants.

ROB: Russell calls that heaven, by the way. *[Laughter]* We got a new national park this last time. Kenai Fjords. Well he had two. Hubbard Glacier is in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. We were just off the coast, but we probably were in National Park waters. So we counted it. That's the biggest.

JAN: But that the other park we got...

ROB: The Kenai Fjords, and that was awesome.

SANDY: Yeah, that was an awesome...

ROB: That's where we saw the humpback whales bubble net fishing.

DEE: Oh, that's neat.

ROB: That was so cool. I can probably send you a sound clip, Jim, that you could include. She put a hydrophone in and so we could hear the the whale sound as they were doing it. And they do this very high pitched thing, and then all of a sudden it gets louder, and it changes, and she says, "Now they're starting up." That was like the sign for, "Okay, now we're gonna go - now we're going up." And then they all come up through the surface of the water with their mouths wide open. The birds are...

SANDY: Everywhere.

ROB: ...all over the place trying to pick off the ones that they miss. It's just so fascinating.

DEE: It's amazing how they figured out to do that. I mean, the intelligence involved.

JIM: Is the sound also a sonic barrier or is it just like a "ready-set hike" signal for everyone?

ROB: Sounds to me like it could be a - some kind of sonic barrier, because it's a very high-pitched, and it's almost constant. But it could be...

JIM: It could stun the fish. It could disorient them.

ROB: Yeah, disorient them.

JIM: I didn't know if it was just a signal among the whales of, "Okay, you you go out deep, you come over here, you block this guy."

ROB: The Ranger, or whoever she was on board, the naturalist, she said, "This is - we don't get to see this very often, but, so."

[Whale song]

JIM: I want to ask you guys about repositionin g cruises. What is that?

RUSS: Well, in the winter, the most of the cruise ships are in the Caribbean, but then in the spring they take them over to the Mediterranean. So they're repositioning the boat for Europe for the high season.

SKYE: Rrmmp.

RUSS: We we took one in '22 to Barcelona, and we spent five days there. Then the next year we went to Rome, and we spent five days there. And the next year we went to Amsterdam and we took four or five days there. Then this year I wanted to go to London, but we didn't go to London. We stayed on the boat and took - say - a back-to-back cruise, and we saw Lisbon and Morocco and the Canary Islands and stuff like that. So next year we're going to take another one back to Amsterdam, but we're going to stay on the boat and go up to Norway.

JIM: Does a repositioning cruise offer all the same amenities and everything?

RUSS: Yup. Yup.

SANDY: It's usually less expensive than most cruises.

RUSS: Way, way less expensive.

SANDY: Yeah. You're paying - but you also are on the - you know, you don't see land for eight - seven, eight days, you know, usually in a row.

RUSS: Most of them are 14 days...

SANDY: Which is - some people would hate that. We totally enjoy it.

DEE: Yeah.

RUSS: It was 14 days and 8 days are at sea. So they do stop at six ports along the way.

JIM: For tourism or for...

RUSS: Oh, yeah, yeah, sure.

JIM: ...supplies or what?

RUSS: Tourism. Okay, so it's part of - it's an excursion.

RUSS: Like the first one we did, we stopped at Bermuda, we stopped at the Azores. And we stopped in - I don't know.

JIM: What port was that out?

RUSS: And then we got to Barcelona.

JIM: Was that out of Florida?

RUSS: Yeah. They're all out of Florida.

JIM: Okay.

RUSS: Yeah.

ROB: It's like less than \$100 a day.

RUSS: Oh yeah. It's like maybe \$1,400.

JIM: Really?

RUSS: Yeah, for for fourteen, fifteen nights. Now of course you have to fly back, but I sort of like that too 'cause now I only have to fly once.

ROB: Yeah. Right.

JAN: The months though that you can do that, what is the time of year?

RUSS: We do it in the spring.

SANDY: They do do them in the fall, too.

RUSS: Right...

SANDY: In October...

RUSS: ...and we've never done...

SANDY: ...bringing the boats back.

RUSS: We've never done an October one because I'm sort of leery of hurricane season. And you get there in the spring, most of the tourists aren't there yet.

JIM: So you are seasoned cruisers.

ROB: Oh, they are.

RUSS: Yeah, I was just looking. We've been on 31 cruises. Carnival, Royal Caribbean, Princess, Celebrity, Norwegian, and Holland America. So...

SANDY: We have no loyalties.

RUSS: Whoever is going where we want to go...

SANDY: - going where we want to go and it's the right price. That's who we end up...

RUSS: We've been on Carnival the most.

SANDY: Yeah.

RUSS: Ten - ten times.

DEE: I've heard *[unintelligible]* uses Carnival?

JIM: By location or by amenities or what what is it about Carnival?

RUSS: Mostly price. And we also found...

SANDY: The very first cruise we ever went on was Carnival. And it was a weekend cruise. So we left on a Friday and came home on a Monday, and d - don't - don't ever do that. I mean I just sat around with my mouth hanging watching people

DEE: Yeah.

SANDY: I'd never seen the actions of people picking up other people, you know, guys picking up women, women picking up guys, you know. And I can't tell you how many bare butts we saw with their little thong suit and everything and it's like - you're not gonna see that if you go on a week long or...

RUSS: The longer the cruise, the older the people.

[Laughter]

DEE: Yeah, okay, got it.

JAN: The uglier the butts.

SANDY: Right. Right. The less kids they're on the longer cruise, you know, and stuff.

RUSS: That was the only time we ever did that.

SANDY: Yeah. We had a nice time on the cruise, but it was stunning. No, we've had really excellent cruises on Carnival.

RUSS: And and then Jeff Smith told us a few years ago, if you're a Carnival shareholder - so if you have a hundred shares, and so we bought a hundred shares, it was like eight or nine dollars a share. Every cruise you go on, they'll give you, like, a hundred dollar room credit.

SANDY: Depending on the length of it.

RUSS: And not only that, but Carnival owns Carnival, Princess, Holland America...

DEE: So you get it for all of them.

RUSS: ...and Costa, I think.

SANDY: Yeah.

DEE: Okay.

RUSS: I can't tell you how many cruises we've on. We've got at least a hundred dollar room credit.

SANDY: I think if it's a two-week cruise you get two hundred and fifty

RUSS: We've more than paid for the stock. Plus then we bought the stock in the middle of COVID...

DEE: Oh, okay.

RUSS: ...and so it was like ten dollars a share. I think it's like over thirty dollars a share now.

ROB: I didn't know Carnival owned all those other.

SANDY: Yeah, I know Carnival has a big umbrella.

RUSS: But yeah, we've heard stories about people who have actually, like, retired and just live on the boat.

DEE: Yeah, I've heard that.

JIM: I've seen that from time to time.

RUSS: Even, say, you did it for \$100 a day, that - what's that? \$3,000 a month...

JIM: Right.

RUSS: ...to live? And that's all of your utilities...

DEE: Your food.

RUSS: ...all your food, your maid, cleaning your room, cleaning your - washing your sheets. I mean you have to wash your clothes.

DEE: Yeah.

RUSS: And your entertainment and your travel and you can't really beat that.

JAN: People asked us, would we ever sell our house and just motorhome. I don't know how I knew it, but I knew I didn't want to ever do that. I needed that home base. There's a connection to that place. I like to know that it's there.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: One of the things that we got to do each time we were in Alaska was see Denali. That's kind of incredible because most people don't who go. But we saw it on some level every time. When we went in '86, we actually stayed at a lodge that was kind of right at the base of Denali. So we all got up - we could get up every morning, get there early and see the mountain.

ROB: No, that was 2005.

SANDY: That was 2005.

JAN: That's what I meant.

SANDY: Where did we stay in '86?

ROB: '86 we stayed in Riley Creek Campground.

SANDY: Okay.

ROB: Inside the park.

SANDY: Yeah.

JAN: We have too many trips. Now we can't keep 'em straight.

ROB: I know. It was good. Also we we had friends that lived in Alaska. Bev and Kent. Bev was Jan's roommate in college. In '86, Kent, took Russell and I out halibut fishing.

RUSS: Just for the halibut.

[Laughter]

ROB: He's been he's been holding on to that one. Okay, you tell the story, Russ.

RUSS: So I caught the first fish, and then I hooked the second fish. Well, Rob hadn't caught a fish, so I gave him the pole. He started fighting the fish and then he got seasick. So then he took a timeout to say hello to his friend Ralph. Then I brought the fish in and then...

ROB: No, you didn't bring the fish in.

RUSS: And...

ROB: You gave the pole back to me and you were upset, because, "How can you do that? How can you be sick and then come right back and then do that?"

RUSS: And then...

ROB: I brought the fish in.

RUSS: ...and then they gave me a gun...

ROB: Oh, that was scary.

RUSS: ...to shoot the fish because...

ROB: It was a big one.

RUSS: ...it was a big one. It was like...

JAN: These are as tall as we are - the fish.

RUSS: ...it was like fifty pounds. And uh the fish kept getting close to the boat and then swimming away, and so I felt a little uncomfortable.

ROB: Kent gives him a gun.

RUSS: So, we put the gun away and pulled the fish in and beat the tar out of it with a stick.

[Laughter]

JAN: I'm sorry, but...

RUSS: This fish was so big it would knock you out of the boat.

[Music begins]

ROB: Yeah. Yeah.

RUSS: He also had some crab pots...

ROB: Yeah.

RUSS: ...where he baited from previous fish. And uh we grabbed the crabs and the halibut and then took it to the beach and cooked it on the shore. It was very tasty.

JAN: It was amazing.

ROB: It was delicious. It was really good.

JAN: If you were gonna have a conversation about the most memorable meals you've ever had, that's really high on that list. Fresh halibut and Dungeness crab.

JAN: So the last frontier, Alaska.

[Music ends]