

How ALASKA CHANGED My Life

— LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #242 —

Growing up a country kid in Missouri, I could never have possibly imagined the hunting and fishing experiences that awaited me in Alaska – later in life. How does someone imagine the midnight sun; or being across a small creek from a grizzly sow and two cubs, with a Smith & Wesson 44 magnum strapped on your chest – hoping you won't need it? These experiences, plus weather, weather delays and many, many other things helped Alaska change my life.

There were a couple of early opportunities to visit Alaska; the first was a potential assignment to Elmendorf AFB while I was in the Air Force, in the early 1970's. The second was an invitation from an Air Force buddy, Mike McGill, to come up for a moose hunt during the early years of "the Midway business". Neither worked out and my first visit was a salmon fishing trip with

the family to Kodiak Island, in 2000. For me, it was impossible not to go back; fortunately, there have been many more opportunities.

The sheer beauty and variety of the Alaska wilderness, as observed from bush planes, boats or horseback, is certainly one of its most compelling features. It seems that everyone who's been there talks about it. Personally, I've always been a student of nature, and Alaska is nature beyond my wildest expectations!

Hunting and fishing have been my only reasons for visiting. Both put me into the remote areas of the state. Bear, moose, sheep and goats are the only animals I've pulled the trigger on; bear hunting was the most intense, as they



One of the many things that keeps me going back to Alaska is salmon fishing. Here Brenda and I are displaying King Salmon from a recent trip. Photo credit to Lori Rhodes

can be dangerous. Sheep and goats were the hardest work, as you have to climb up and down the mountains. Moose was mostly just an enjoyable horseback ride in the mountains with a little shooting at the end of the hunt. (Note: for the guides, Moose hunting is probably the hardest work, because of the sheer size of the animal.) Fishing, for me, has always been as enjoyable as hunting, just different.

"...it was
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Rainbow trout, dolly varden and salmon, near the time of the summer solstices, is what pulls me back to the land of the midnight sun nearly every year.

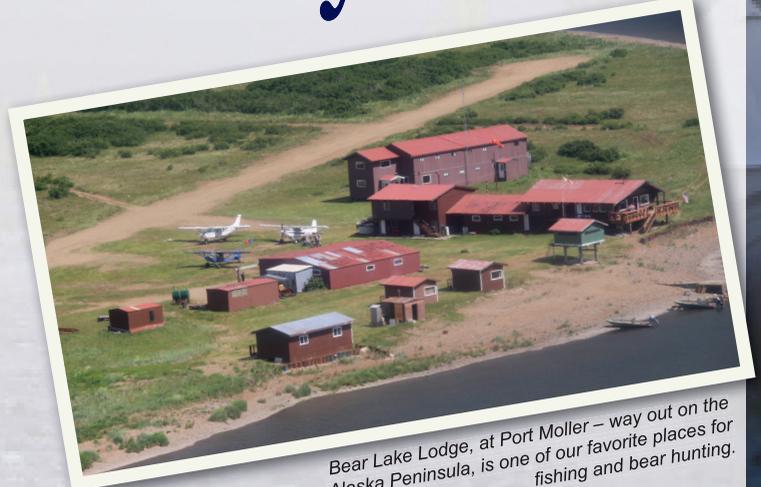
Alaska helped me learn to think bigger, be more patient, more tolerant, more energized, more thoughtful, more sharing (well, let's not go overboard here). Any way you look at it, Alaska changed my life!



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From My Office in MidwayUSA
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Whether they have wheels or floats, bush planes are almost always the way you get to the remote hunting and fishing camps of Alaska.



Bear Lake Lodge, at Port Moller – way out on the Alaska Peninsula, is one of our favorite places for fishing and bear hunting.