



DECISION LIGHT

The annual newsletter of the Cape Decision Lighthouse Society

2016 Edition, Volume 28

Editors: Andrew Washburn & Ariel Rolfe

KEEPING THE LIGHT...

FROM PRESIDENT CHRIS BROOKS

WHEN I FIRST VISITED CAPE DECISION nearly 20 years ago I knew it would become part of my life. The imagination of any visitor to southern Kuiu is gripped by the unspoiled beauty of nature, the solitude, the relentless power of the sea, and the beauty of the lighthouse. Undoubtedly, these are things worth saving. There is something else however, that draws me back year after year. I've found that it is not just the lighthouse nor the splendor of the natural world that we strive to preserve, but the camaraderie, cooperation and friendships that develop amongst people as they are challenged to be resourceful and ingenuitive while working hard for a common goal. There is great pride in walking in the footsteps of the men who dedicated years of their lives and overcame great challenges to build, maintain and operate Cape Decision - all for the 'public good'. They have a story to tell; it's about a commitment to service that built character, saved lives, strengthened communities and bolstered civic pride. We share this commitment to service at Cape Decision Lighthouse and believe it too is something worth saving.

"LIGHOUSES ARE ENDLESSLY SUGGESTIVE SIGNIFIERS OF HUMAN ISOLATION AND OUR ULTIMATE CONNECTEDNESS TO EACH OTHER."

- Virginia Woolf

The CDLS Board of Directors has been working diligently this year to 'keep the light lit' at Cape Decision Lighthouse. In October we met for a three day strategic planning session in Juneau. Whereas most of our board meetings are held via teleconference, the board retreat gave us an opportunity to work together, closely and in person, to re-evaluate our goals, priorities,

organizational structure and vision for the future of Cape Decision. It proved to be an extraordinarily productive weekend and we all walked away with a fresh outlook and renewed sense of purpose. Through collaboration and community outreach we will continue to strive to make the unique cultural and natural resources at Cape Decision accessible to the public. Our vision is not only to historically preserve Cape Decision Lighthouse as a living piece of maritime heritage, but to provide a world class platform for experiential education, backcountry recreation, scientific research and the arts.



President Chris Brooks and volunteer Dianne Wilson show off their beach treasures. Courtesy of Amanda Compton

We are very grateful to all the people who have helped make our 2016 season so productive and memorable. It takes all kinds of hands for us to succeed. The dedication, hard work and contributions from you, our supporters, are instrumental to our continued efforts at the lighthouse. We simply cannot do it without you. Thanks for sharing our vision for the preservation of Cape Decision Lighthouse. If you have been fortunate enough to visit Cape Decision you can attest to the treasure that lies there. If you haven't, we look forward to sharing it with you soon.

Warm Regards,
Chris Brooks
President

PASSING THE TORCH

BY KAREN LUCAS, FOUNDER, 1997-2015

DEAR MEMBERS OF CDLS,

After seventeen years of heading our nonprofit organization, I resigned my position as president last year, and handed over the reins to longstanding officer and board member, and amazing volunteer for many of those years, Chris Brooks. I believe our current president and his dedicated board will carry the Cape Decision lighthouse preservation vision and mission forward into the next decade.



Former President Karen Lucas with her children in front of Cape D. Courtesy of Karen Lucas

It was several years into the project that I realized it was an on-going and multi-generational task to preserve the former USCG lighthouse to make it available as a destination to the public. So much has been accomplished

there by the hands of many volunteers and generosity of members, donors and grantors, chief among them Michael McIntosh, who was our mainstay. Sean Cavlan, my right-hand man, was there beside me all those years, and without whom the work could not have been done. I would also acknowledge my children, Kjersti and



Former President Karen Lucas leaning against the cupola of the lighthouse. Courtesy of Karen Lucas

Lucas, who accompanied me to the lighthouse, and supported me at home during my 'learning curve,' as I founded, fund raised and administered the organization.

My energies are now focused on the Port Alexander Historical Society and Museum, my first nonprofit which was the original applicant to the USCG when they surplused the Cape Decision lighthouse in 1997. My time with CDLS has been an adventure with many fond memories, and some I'd rather forget! Cape Decision was a place of growth: it pushes you, and tries you, and makes you strong; at least it did for me. I look forward to watching the progress of the new leadership, and I hope to return to the lighthouse in the near future. I hauled an old oak rocking chair, and a deep claw-foot tub out there one year, in anticipation of the day I might be able to relax; here's to hoping that day will come!

Best wishes to the current board with thanks for carrying the torch forward!

BURNING MAN AT CAPE DECISION

BY VOLUNTEER SCOTT CARRLEE

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AS PART of a Cape Decision Lighthouse work party? Well it is equal parts summer camp, remote expedition, and barn raising with a little Burning Man thrown in. The first thing you should know is that Cape Decision is not an easy place to get to. That is the "remote expedition" part of the equation. CDL is a 4 hour boat ride through (sometimes) rough waters. Therefore, you should have everything packed up for easy transport. Some sort of large backpack is a must (roller bags are discouraged) and you should ensure that everything in it stays dry. Ziploc bags and large trash bags will be your friends. Even though you can bring the comforts of home with you, packing light is still a consideration. There is a not-so-remote possibility that you might have to huff your entire load (along with several loads

of communal gear) over a semi-maintained mile-long trail to reach the lighthouse. This is because the preferred access point near the lighthouse itself, is a landing that is not accessible in all weather conditions. Keep in mind they don't usually build lighthouses where the seas are calm and the weather is mild. Once you get to the light house, the accommodations are nice but you should be thinking summer camp and not Hilton. Some people choose to stay in one of the dorm rooms of the lighthouse itself and some people choose to sleep in tents in what became affectionately known at "Tent City." The rooms are nice but with multiple occupancy per room and the close proximity to the galley, they can be noisy. If you like your privacy and enjoy camping, Tent City might be the better option. One of the priorities for future work parties is to build more tent platforms in Tent City. Currently there is one, but there is room for two or three more. This would also allow more wall tents to be erected in Tent City and thereby increase its capacity and comfort.

So what's the work like? Well that is really the best part. You can choose any kind of work that suites your ability and liking. There are so many things that need to get done there is really



2016 Work party planning the new spot for the hoist. *Courtesy of Joe Wilson*

unlimited variety. Some of it is just maintenance and keeping the place going while other tasks are moving things forward on the grand vision. Do you

like to paint? There are endless opportunities to paint. There is even a dedicated "paint room" for all the painting that is going on. Other jobs range from small fixit jobs for one person to construction projects that require many helping hands. Some of the timbers that are available for repairing the deck and creating the

walkways are so large they require coordinated effort to move and place them (think barn raising). There is also trail maintenance galore for anyone handy with a chainsaw or industrial weed wacker. The work is tracked on a white board in the dining room so you can see what is getting done and what needs to get done.



2016 work party visiting with the U.S. Coast Guard. *Courtesy of Joe Wilson*

What does any of this have to do with Burning Man?

Well not a lot really. But there is the same spirit of self-reliance and anything goes (within the margins of safety of course). Plus you can make these awesome beach fires with all the driftwood that is hanging around. "Decision Man" anyone?

THE PERFECT WAY TO MEET A LIGHTHOUSE

BY VOLUNTEER CAROLYN PRITCHETT

IT WAS JULY OF 1983 AND MY HUSBAND Jay and I were in the early years of exploring Alaska by kayak. We had moved from Washington state to Petersburg five years before to teach at the high school, and it was the easy access to adventures like this that had been one of the strongest reasons for making Petersburg home.

Over the years Jay and I had always prided ourselves on being somewhere in the wild on the Fourth of July. But poor weather and last minute packing had delayed us until the 5th, leaving us more than anxious to get away from noise and



Volunteer Carolyn Pritchett restoring windows. *Courtesy of Ariel Rolfe*

civilization. In our heavily loaded Kleppers, we worked our way south through Wrangell Narrows and west around the southern shore of Kupreanof Island. When we reached Kupreanof's southwest point, we could have headed directly south toward our ultimate goal of Cape Decision and Coronation Island. Instead we decided to put into practice the old adage, "The shortest distance between two points isn't the point", and we turned north into Rocky Pass. It was day three of our month long trip.

We enjoyed the comfort of the forest service cabin at Devil's Elbow before continuing through Keku Strait and curving west into the long narrow bay of Port Camden on Kuiu Island. With our loads we were averaging only 2 1/2 - 3 mph and were constantly reminded that time was dictated by the tide, current and the wind, not by one's watch. We might be launching at 4am or having dinner at midnight; with the long days of Alaska's summer it just didn't matter.

When we reached the end of Port Camden we faced the challenge of finding our way across the narrow neck of land that would take us to Bay of Pillars on Kuiu's outer coast. A contour map isn't a lot of help if you're at sea level with limited view of what lies ahead. We started carrying things along a logging road for a short distance. Our best guess of where to cut west took us immediately into a bog (by which

time we were having serious second thoughts about our choice of routes). Eventually the bog led to a series of beaver dams, something that ended up being a surprising highlight. We



Courtesy of Carolyn Pritchett

found we could lift the boats fully loaded over the dam and then paddle the deep, silent pools of water behind each one. We even found a patch of land dry enough to camp on; and though we didn't see our beaver neighbors, we could hear them slapping their tails that night. From there we wound our way through the forest with nothing but more best guesses and a little scouting. Loads of food and gear gathered in Duluth packs went first, then we'd return to carry each boat on our shoulders to avoid catching them on logs, bushes or low branches. Kleppers are most definitely not land creatures! Reaching Bay of Pillars three days after starting this monumental portage was a most welcome return to the water.

We stopped to explore the old cannery in Bay of Pillars; then it was on to Tebenkof Bay where we spent several days. We enjoyed rockfish for dinner and appreciated walking without heavy loads under the huge ancient spruce trees that we called the enchanted forest. We felt the presence of people who had spent time there long ago.

On a remarkable morning with stable weather conditions and a strong current flow with only a bit of swell, we headed south down the



Courtesy of Carolyn Pritchett

outer coast of Kuiu. We were charmed by the dramatic, weatherbeaten shore of black rock and rugged trees. Progress was steady, a day to make miles in the company of sea lions and breaching humpback whales – and the occasional troller. Each time we set a geographic goal we got to it before the time expected, and we opted to continue, taking advantage of conditions this favorable. 11 hours and 35-40 miles from Tebenkof Bay, with the wind building and rain moving in, we finally turned in to Table Bay, quickly finding a camp high above the tide. We declared the next day to be a holiday – with a beach fire and fishing - and lots of eating.

The paddle to Howard Cove, the most southerly bay on the west side of Kuiu, was slow, but beautiful. The kelp at the cove's entrance made it feel more like an inland lake than an exposed coastal bay. That kelp was home to a colony of always-entertaining sea otters which we enjoyed from a distance. We camped on one of the islands that ringed the bay and spent the next day beachcombing. The whole time we were there, we were constantly assaulted by the ever-present sound of the Cape Decision lighthouse foghorn. For a couple of noise-sensitive people, we did our best to tolerate the blare, though we did come up with a host of creative ideas of how to disable it on good weather days like the ones we were experiencing.

Finally it was time to continue to Cape Decision, an essential reference point for our crossing to the Spanish Islands and then on to Coronation Island to the south. Of course, with a touch of Mother Nature's humor, the next morning when we woke there was dense fog. Unwilling to just sit and wait for it to burn off, and thus to miss the mirror-calm conditions of the morning, we packed the boats and set off – navigating by the sound of the much maligned foghorn. My log of that summer described the experience: "As we left our protected inlet, we encountered broad ocean swells, but still glassy water.

The kelp growth was so wide and incredibly dense, it forced us farther south than we'd intended in order to be able to skirt it. After days of laughing about the foghorn, we found its sound our only directional guide, as no land was visible at all from outside the kelp beds. 1½ hours out, we knew we were close to Cape Decision Lighthouse by the sound of the horn. It was strange to know right where it was, but not to be able to see it. Finally it emerged directly above us as an almost-present ghostly silhouette, and we moved in through the kelp to get a closer look. It had been a great morning's paddle in the fog – and a perfect way to discover the lighthouse."

This was the first of several visits Jay and I would make to Cape Decision on our way to Coronation Island, which became one of our favorite places to spend time on this ragged edge of the Alaskan coast. The foghorn no longer fills the air around Cape Decision, and the light is now LED and solar powered; but being part of the week one work party this summer gave me many opportunities to climb the tower and from the cupola look north toward Howard Cove and south to Coronation Island, and to remember the thrill of looking up through the fog at that first meeting of Cape Decision lighthouse.

WANT TO VISIT THE LIGHTHOUSE?

In 2017 we will be at the lighthouse for all of June. Contact us today to start planning a week of fun, sweat, and toiling!

CAPEDECISIONLIGHT@GMAIL.COM

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

CDLS is an Alaska based, 501(c)3 non profit organization, all donations are tax deductible.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- ENTHUSIAST..... \$30
NEWSLETTER, INVITATIONS TO EVENTS
- FRIEND OF THE LIGHT..... \$50
FREE GIFT! + ENTHUSIAST BENEFITS
- BUSINESS \$100
FREE GIFT! SPECIAL RECOGNITION AT EVENTS AND ON WEBSITE,
+ ENTHUSIAST BENEFITS
- BEACON \$500
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+ ENTHUSIAST BENEFITS
- LIGHTKEEPER..... \$1000
FREE GIFT! DONOR NAMEPLATE AT THE LIGHTHOUSE,
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SEND PAYMENT BY CHECK

Cape Decision Lighthouse Historical Society
PO Box 32575
Juneau, AK 99803

OR BUY MEMBERSHIP ONLINE

www.capedecisionlight.org

COMING SOON...

PARTIES, WEBSITE, WORK PARTIES

Cape D is planning some fun parties for the next year! Look for updates on our Facebook page or sign up for our email list by writing us at capedecisionlight@gmail.com.

We are almost ready to launch our new

website as well. We're working on accepting online payments for membership and schwag purchases so supporting Cape D will be easier than ever. We apologize for any hiccups in the transition but it will be worth it!

We have no shortage of work to be done when we head over in June. We will be working on more trail maintenance, facility improvements, and preparations for large capital projects. We're going to need all the help we can get - so if you're looking for a trip of a lifetime and a chance to be a part of preserving Cape Decision, email us today!

RE-ENVISIONING CAPE DECISION

A NEW MISSION, VISION

We are excited to announce a new mission and vision for Cape Decision Lighthouse Historical Society:

CAPE DECISION LIGHTHOUSE SOCIETY IS DEDICATED TO PRESERVATION OF THE LIGHTHOUSE AND STEWARDSHIP OF LIGHT STATION LANDS FOR EDUCATION, RECREATION, AND PUBLIC BENEFIT.

Cape Decision Lighthouse Society is a volunteer non-profit organization focused on the preservation of the Light Station as a living piece of maritime heritage. Our goal is to maintain the Light Station as an accessible platform for experiential education, backcountry recreation, scientific research and the arts. Through collaboration and outreach we encourage the public to experience this unique cultural and natural resource.

GIFT IDEAS FOR YOUR FAVORITE PEOPLE

email us at capedecisionlight@gmail.com to purchase any of these unique products!



Rebecca Poulson
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\$100



sweatshirt \$30
beige, red

t-shirt \$15
beige, red, gray,
yellow

fitted t-shirt \$15
beige, red, gray,
yellow



Keith Greba
lithograph
\$50

tank top \$15
blue, purple

hat \$10
green, blue, red,
beige

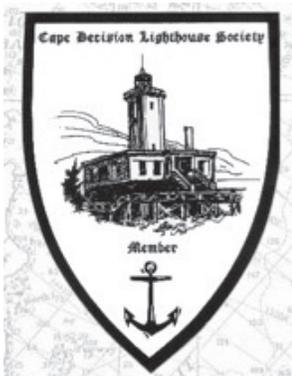


mug \$10



Left: Board members Andrew Washburn and Ariel Rolfe installing restored windows at Cape D. *Courtesy of Amanda Compton*

Below: Window restoration in process on the front yard at the lighthouse. *Courtesy of Ariel Rolfe*



decal \$1

CHECK US OUT ON
FACEBOOK AND OUR WEBSITE
WWW.CAPEDECISIONLIGHT.ORG



Left: Volunteer Alex Bittman working in the engine room. *Courtesy of Joe Wilson*

Below: Volunteers Carolyn Pritchett and Kathleen Sabo bid farewell! *Courtesy of Amanda Compton*



Above: Volunteer Ben Slaughter and board member Andrew Washburn up in the muskeg meadows. *Courtesy of Andrew Washburn*

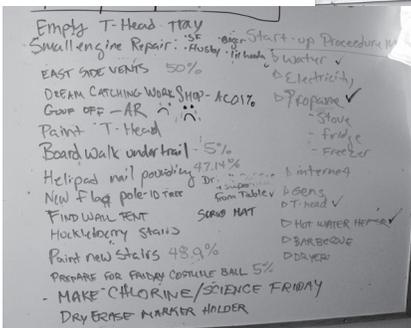
Right: Wrangell Hostel hostess took our crew in. *Courtesy of Amanda Compton*



Above: We watched humpback whales breach over and over again! *Courtesy of Andrew Washburn*

Left: Volunteer Angela Anegon explored the Kuiu coast via kayak. *Courtesy of Andrew Washburn*

Below: The beginning of the small schlepp. *Courtesy of Amanda Compton*



Above: The white board is one of our most valued yet feared tool. *Courtesy of Carolyn Pritchett*

Right: Scott and Rhonda Higgins organize supplies in the galley. *Courtesy of Amanda Compton*



THANK YOU!

FOR HELPING TO KEEP THE LIGHT...

McIntosh Foundation
Boat Company
Marine Exchange of Alaska
Tyler Rental
Breakaway Adventures
Wrangell Hostel

Amanda
Compton
Angela Anegon
Barbara Rolfe
Brooks Einstein
Joe Wilson

Scott Carrlee
Ben Slaughter
Carolyn Pritchett
Dianne Wilson
Kathleen Sabo



Above: Volunteers for week one.
Courtesy of Scott Higgins.

Right: Our hero, Captain Eric, on our
journey home. *Courtesy of Barbara Rolfe*



Left: Super sisters duo #1,
Carolyn Pritchett and Kathleen
Sabo, prepping the hallway
for painting. *Courtesy of
Amanda Compton*

Below: Super sisters duo #2,
Dianne Wilson and Barbara
Rolfe scraping windows.
Courtesy of Amanda Compton

