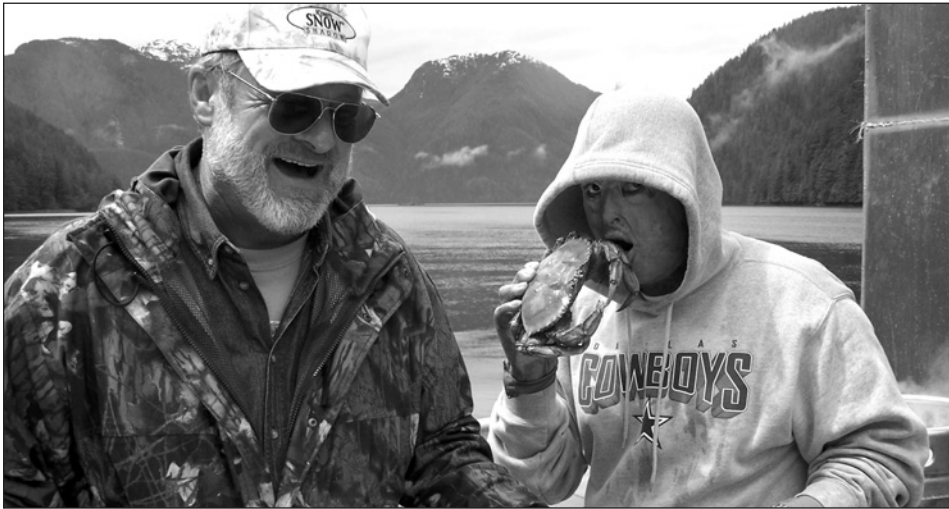


LOCAL NEWS



Phil Huston photo

BRYAN REID AND ONE of the American veteran visitors were clowning around with the freshly caught and cooked crabs. This Bella Coola fishing trip was one of the highlights of these special visitors' adventure in British Columbia and everyone had a fantastic time.

Locals support injured American personnel

By Cheryl Engemoen

Operation Comfort is bringing some very special tourists into the Cariboo, Chilcotin and Coastal areas. This group has been serving injured military personnel at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas since 2004.

Their mission is to provide support to any service member convalescing at this center, as well as their families.

The people they serve come from all branches of the American military and who've been seriously injured in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom campaigns.

Phil Huston owns Charly's Guest Ranch at Chilco Lake and is hosting three groups of these veterans this summer. Bryan Reid is one of the principals of Pioneer Family Land Partnership, and Pioneer Log Homes. He conducts log construction business in America, as well as supporting a number of worthy causes on both sides of the border. Operation Comfort is one of those endeavours.

The founder of Operation Comfort is Janis Roznowski, an American Airlines flight attendant. In the spring of 2003 she began flying service personnel into the Middle East, and returning those recently injured. In August of that year, and feeling a deep responsibility towards the wounded, she began visiting them in Germany where they received their initial medical treatments.

Once Stateside, she continued these visits at the Brooke Army Medical Center, with some of these wounded warriors staying in the hospital for up to two years. Janis Roznowski's Operation Comfort began addressing the specialised needs of these injured service people, and the scope of these services has continued to expand.

"Our goal is for our wounded military, who have given so much for our country and the world, to see in tangible ways that we appreciate their sacrifices and that we want to help them recover as quickly and com-

pletely as possible," is boldly printed on their literature. "Welcome to Operation Comfort, where the wounded military always comes first!"

This latest group was comprised of seven people on the mend, three family members, a therapist, and Janice the founder of Operation Comfort. The following group will have eleven veterans and support people, as well as other helpful services provided by Phil Huston.

"These people receive the finest in medical care," added Bryan. "But Phil and I feel they need to experience the great outdoors, friends, and the warmth of the people of British Columbia."

Bryan took the first group out for a day of crab fishing in Bella Coola, with Archie Tallio, a commercial fisherman, being the captain of the boat. Very happy with their welcome, Bryan and Phil stated that Jim Newkirk, who owns the Tallheo Cannery, a Bella Coola Bed and Breakfast, was very obliging and warmly greeted the visitors. As well, the folks at the Kopas Store in Bella Coola opened their doors after-hours so these visitors could shop for some local souvenirs.

"These soldiers were injured fighting the war against terror," added Bryan. "We are trying to raise public awareness as to what these brave service personnel have done for all of us."

The first tour of the Cariboo, Chilcotin and Coast wrapped up last week, with another group taking their place. The third group will be through Williams Lake July 1st, at the height of Stampede time! Let's hope they have the time to take in some of the western hospitality that made our area famous.

"These guys are the best, and have fought along side many Canadians - borders or politics does not enter into it," concluded Bryan. "I am very proud to play a small part in showing them this most beautiful place on Earth."



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