

ALASKA CRUISE ASSOCIATION | MONTHLY E-NEWS

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CLAA provides ‘back of house’ operations

Name: Bob Arts

Title: Vice President of Western Alaska

Business name: Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska (CLAA)

Briefly describe business: CLAA has operated in Alaska ever since the cruise ships started traveling to Alaska. CLAA is the “back of the house operation,” meaning we arrange for services while a vessel is in port. We coordinate and work with security, longshoremen and governmental agencies (Coast Guard, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Customs and Border Protection). CLAA has been in operation as a joint venture since the 1980s but the individual joint venture partners have been operating in Alaska since the 1950s.

When did you first become involved in visitor industry? Ever since I went to work in Valdez as a vessel agent in 1977.

How did you get your start with cruise industry? In Valdez we handled logistics with the cruise ships and I became the manager in 1986. I transferred to Anchorage in 1994 in the same position.

What’s the best part of your job? Every single day is a fresh new start with new challenges. No two days are alike. It is also exciting to work with a vibrant industry that has a crew of extremely dedicated individuals.

What’s your favorite cruise passenger story? When I was managing our office in Seward, the hotel manager of a vessel called and asked me to marry two passengers whose plans had gone awry. In very quick order, I had to change clothes, apply for a marriage certificate and read up on wedding vows. I then married the couple on-board the ship and it was a deeply touching ceremony.

What should Alaska do to better support/protect visitor/cruise industry? We, as a state, need to have a better understanding of how important the cruise industry is to the whole health of the tourism sector of our economy.