"No man ever steps in the same river twice." Heraclitus of [**Ephesus**](https://www.ancient.eu/ephesus/) (c. 500 BC) Heraclitus was known for using riddles to provoke his listeners into thinking for themselves. Plato later explained " you cannot step twice into the same stream . . . everything changes and nothing remains still ..."

Ketchikan is changing. When was it not? Fishing, ever important, has had its ups and downs. Timber, the pulp mill, oil, the shipyard, the ferry system . . .

The cruise ships started out small in small numbers. Now they are big, getting bigger and coming in greater numbers. At first the ships were greeted. Now, not so much.

Through it all Ketchikan has prospered. It enjoys services and amenities far beyond other towns our size. For a time oil paid the bill. Now what? We did not pay for all these things in cash. There is a mortgage with payments due for years to come.

Fishermen cannot bear this burden alone. It is a debt which must be borne by those who are still working. Who will employ them? Where will the money come from?

Ketchikan is now more dependent on the ships than it wants or should be. Bemoan and deny it at your peril. The ships did not create all this debt but some demand they must pay for it nonetheless. Must they? It’s not their house. They live in a motor home and find work traveling from place to place. As long as the pay is good they will stay. When it’s not they will move on and maybe build a home or two of their own somewhere else. Then what? Back to timber, oil, or maybe a big mine at Quartz Hill or Bokan Mountain? Will it be enough?

Don’t buy it? OK I don’t either, not entirely. But before you put your head in the sand read up on the happenings in Nassua and Freeport in the Bahamas, San Juan, Puerto Rico, Antigua and elsewhere throughout the Caribbean.

It’s never good to take too much for granted. Just when it gets good, things can go haywire. And then, if you don’t step back, it sometimes gets worse. Nostalgia becomes a refuge, or envy.

Ketchikan – be careful. Think for yourself. Don’t put your future in the hands of others. Take responsibility. Do your homework. Be proud. Remain independent. Offer a better product at a better price and you will never run out of customers.

And remember ole’ Heraclitus from time to time. Yes, he was a misanthrope but he did say one thing which will always be true.

Mike Holman