

The Barbers of Andy's Bay

by Gordon Laird

Wednesday, December 27, 2000 7:35 AM

"Al, here you take the scissors and clippers and put your hand to it!"

It was in the early evening hours, outside the bunkhouse in the booming camp at Andy's Bay, Gambier Island.

Al, my friend for many years and a fellow university student, and I were, in the failing evening light, administering a haircut to Jack, The Cook.

In a logging camp you must be very careful with The Cook. With no other recreation around eating was the only recreation. It was an hour's costly speedboat trip to civilization or 3 hours by our boat, "The Leekpot". How ever did we ever agree to The Cook's request for a haircut?

Al had already cut my hair, and I had cut his. We had borrowed the hair cutting set from The Cook (therein lay the seeds of the problem). But it had been early evening, the sun was still bright offering good light for the task. We were not worn out and tired from cutting hair.

It was just then that The Cook inspected our two haircuts, judged them acceptable, and then requested payment for the use of his barbering equipment: "How about giving me a haircut?"

We should have known. We really should have known. But how could we say no to The Cook?

Many things contributed to the disaster which followed.

The light was failing. The Cook's hair was not like ours - ours showed the lushness of youth - his was sparse, even on the back of his head. Ours was like a B. C. coastal rain forest - trees cheek to jowl. His was like an interior plateau tree lot: one tree here and one there, with lots of space between.

It began to go wrong with the first swath I cleared with the clippers. There was nothing gradual and smooth as I had experiences on Al's collar area. On the The Cook's collar area there were Clear-cuts developing. This was awful, and I knew it! But I couldn't let on. Al, watching intently, kept his laughter under control. We were dealing with our "Bread and Butter": The Cook!

I said to Al, "How does this look? Would you like to take a turn?" Al avowed that it was progressing nicely, and yes, somewhat reluctantly, he took a turn.

He tried to attack the "Clear-cuts", to smooth out the whiteness and grade them into the darkness of the areas around it. But it wasn't dark, remember? It was Interior Plateau timber, not lush coastal rain forest. Al was not improving the haircut. He was making it worse.

Now we were both chuckling, but to each other, and not in front of The Cook.

At a certain point we realized there was nothing more that we could do to improved it. We agreed that we had finished and told The Cook it looked "just fine".

Al and I exploded into the bunkhouse into howls of laughter, which engaged all our bunk-mates. Then we tried to swear them to secrecy.

The next morning at breakfast The Cook noticed a suppressed rumbling of laughter. He wondered suspiciously what kind of a secret was being shared that he was not party to. Then one of our "bunkhouse friends" blurted out, "Hey, Jack, what happened to your hair?"

The Cook looked in a mirror and stomped out. He consulted Mrs. Cook, and came back with a white cook's hat pulled down around his ears.

Mealtime was very tense for a number of weeks. There was no living with The Cook and Al and I were responsible for it.

Al is now a research Doctor living in Houston, Texas. I am a retired Minister living in Vancouver. The only thing good about the whole event, is the story we have to tell on those occasions we are able to get together and remember the times of our youth!