

# **The "Leekpot" at Midnight**

**by Gordon Laird**

**January 16, 2001**

Glenn maneuvered the "Leekpot" among the logs with only the help of a flashlight. It was midnight and he was still wearing his sunglasses.

Andy's Bay was a booming ground on the west side of Gambier Island in Howe Sound. During the summer of 1951 it was a great place to have a summer job, to make a little money for university or college fees. We needed a boat and Al Herd had purchased the "Leekpot" for us with the idea that three of us would pool our resources for the purchase and the upkeep.

The "Leekpot" was well and carefully named, because we noticed immediately that the boat leaked at a predetermined rate, neither faster no slower. Someone had to be assigned to bail wherever we went in the Leekpot.

Al Herd and I had a job at Andy's Bay. We were "Second Boommen", which was a title which garnered a little extra in the paycheck. I remember that we received about \$1.10 per hour, which was a lot for the times. Room and Board were taken care of, so the \$1.10 was money for spending and saving.

We had encouraged Glenn Startup to apply to join us at Andy's Bay and Glenn had succeeded with the interview and got the job. However the job did not start for another few days, so Glenn could not have a bunk in camp until he was fully installed in his job.

A further complication was that Glenn had noticed what he thought was a serious problem with his eyes, and had just that day been seen by his eye-doctor. The eye-drops had dilated his pupils and the effects had not yet worn off. So Glenn came to camp wearing heavy sun-glasses and as the effects continued he still wore the glasses at midnight.

The "Leekpot" was a challenge to manage in the day time. For Glenn, a new part-owner, to master it for the first time at midnight - a very dark midnight - was

nigh to impossible. The fact that Al and I, Glenn's best "friends", felt alright about sending him out in a strange boat, without any running lights, into the middle of Howe Sound, can only be explained by the undue confidence we must have felt at 20 years of age. We never thought for a minute of what might go wrong!

Glenn maneuvered the boat out from beside the long tethered logs which served as a dock, and past the tied up log booms into open water. Al and I thought nothing of it. We serenely went off to our bunks!

Glenn related the rest of his trip to us days later when he arrived at camp for work. We repeated the story for years to come. This is the first time the story has been written!

Glenn was very familiar with the coastline which stretches from Port Mellon to Langdale (where the ferry to the Sunshine coast now lands) and around to Grantham's Landing and Gibson's Landing. Glenn's destination was Grantham's Landing where his family had enjoyed a camp for years.

The problems were compounded by the fact that the night was very dark and things look altogether different in the dark. And Glenn still was wearing sunglasses!

Using navigational skills and local knowledge, Glenn set course for Grantham's using the prominent light at the YMCA Camp Elphinstone as his beacon. He felt that when he came close to Elphinstone he would be in very familiar territory. So, as long as the bow of the Leekpot was pointed at that distant light, all would be well.

Suddenly Glenn and the Leekpot were bathed in the light from a floodlight! Over a loudspeaker a voice came, from a tugboat to the port side, and their floodlight lit up a boom of logs which were right in front of Glenn and the Leekpot! Glenn activated the Leekpot's "Bell-reverse" and quickly decelerated, so that when he hit the outside log-boom it was not tragic. It was then he noticed that his "beacon light from Elphinstone", had not been that at all. It had been a little coal oil lamp, perhaps a foot in height, which was placed on the rear of the log-boom to warn passing boat traffic!

After this close call, Glenn resumed his trip along the pitch-black coast, in which

the distinction between water and the overhanging firs and cedars was non-existent.

He traveled for many minutes, which must have seemed like hours until he realized that he had no idea where he was. He decided to cut the motor, intending to drag the Leekpot up on the beach and to finish the journey by foot. As soon as he cut the engine he noticed a boat on his right, then one on his left. He was in the midst of a number of anchored private boats, and gradually it dawned on him that he was in the harbour of Grantham's Landing, his desired destination!

The story was worth telling because it came out alright. It could have been a very different story.

I discussed with Bev, the question of how we could have been so thoughtless of the dangers for Glenn. She understood completely. "You felt you were Invincible!"

Perhaps an analogy will help. In our local mountains there are signs posted to warn you against skiing "out of bounds". For some of the young people these signs appear to be challenges and show them exactly where they do want to ski. When they get in trouble, and sometimes need the help of North Shore Rescue, complete with helicopter, to bring them to safety, I, along with many people of my age, think to myself: Charge them for the cost of the rescue!

But they thought they were Invincible!

When I think back on Glenn and the Leekpot at Midnight, I should understand how they feel!