

Marilyn, the "Leekpot" and the Gibson's Ferry

by Gordon Laird

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"Isn't that the ferry coming?" A look of horror appeared on Marilyn's face.

We were around the dining table in the livingroom of Jim and Gertrude Herd's cottage on Keats Island, near Gibson's B. C. Marilyn and I had announced our engagement while I was working for the summer with Al Herd and Glenn Startup at Andy's Bay, Gambier Island. In honour of our announcement, Gertrude thought it would be wonderful if Marilyn could join us for a weekend at their summer home on Keats Island.

Al, Glenn and I were joint investors in a 15 foot open, wooden boat (the "Leekpot"), equipped with a Briggs and Stratton engine fitted with a "Bell-reverse" clutch. Coming into a dock we could throw a lever, which reverse the blade on the propellor allowing us to slow down the "Leekpot", before we hit the dock! From Andy's Bay, where we were "Boommen" breaking down Davis log rafts into flat booms, it was an hour's trip (at 5 miles an hour) in the "Leekpot" to Keats Island. We looked forward to a terrific weekend, showing Marilyn what the "Sunshine Coast" had to offer.

But Marilyn, born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, was a "Prairie Girl". Anything to do with boats was unknown and provoked a lot of fear. She was sure anything on top of the water would soon sink. The Gibson's Ferry was a bit suspect to Marilyn. The "Leekpot" was beyond her worst nightmares.

We had christened it "Leekpot" because it leaked at a pre-determined rate. We had to bail every trip, but we had become familiar with its pattern. It would not leak any faster (or slower), so as long as someone bailed each trip, all was well. We took turns bailing.

We retrieved Marilyn from the Gibson's Ferry. (In 1951 it docked in the Gibson's dock, in the centre of town. Now it docks at Langdale, a 5 minute drive from Gibson's. If any readers have watched the TV Program "Beachcombers" with Bruno Gerussi, this is the same dock, down from "Mollie's Reach", where "Relic" is

shown tying up his boat.)

Accepting her greeting from Jim and Gertrude Herd, her hosts, Marilyn's first question was: "When does the Ferry leave?" (She was already planning her escape!)

Included in the festivities was a dance up on the hilltop in Gibson's. Al and Glenn, without partners, were enjoying the dance, while Marilyn and I, having danced enough, waited at the dock for them. We were waiting in the dark of the night on the dock and covered ourselves with flattened cardboard boxes against the cold.

After the 10 minute voyage to Keats Island, we made our ways over the trails, in the pitch dark, to our accommodation. Marilyn slept in an upstairs bedroom with Lois, Al's sister. Al and I slept in bunks under the porch, where we had lived a previous summer. I don't remember where Glenn slept.

When day dawned, Marilyn must have been happy that this was the last day of an eventful and scary weekend. This was the day she got to go home!

Marilyn's final meal was a wonderful roast beef dinner on the Sunday afternoon. We sat down to eat at about 2 p.m.

Marilyn: "When does the Ferry leave?"

The Herds explained that it was scheduled to leave Gibson's at 2 p.m. but, not to worry! It was always about 2 hours late! In fact, it was explained, we didn't need to leave Keats for Gibson's until we saw the ferry appearing in sight. Then there would be plenty of time to get over to the dock at Gibson's, to get her aboard.

We were enjoying our roast beef dinner when someone looked out the window and saw a shape appear from the east.

"Isn't that the ferry coming?" A look of horror appeared on Marilyn's face. Sure enough, the Ferry was looming into sight from the east, bound for the Gibson's dock.

We retrieved Marilyn's luggage and headed through the woods for the dock. We

untied the "Leekpot" and were on our way across to Gibson's.

I need to explain a modification we had made to the Leekpot. The exhaust from the Briggs and Stratton engine had emptied right into the side of the boat, and therefore anyone behind the engine was forced to inhale the fumes. We had decided that if we could extend a pipe between the manifold and the muffler, we could get the fumes over the side. Using the aluminum tube of a broken pike pole, threaded in the shop at Andy's Bay, we had successfully grafted the extension onto the exhaust and solved our problem.

Now as we were rushing (at 5 miles per hour) for the dock at Gibson's, to get Marilyn aboard the Ferry, we heard a splash and a terrific roar. The exhaust pipe had fallen into the bilge water at the bottom of the boat and lay sizzling there, and the roar was the unmuffled exhaust booming out directly from the manifold. We quickly decided that we could not stop. We had to get to the dock!

The loud sound of exhaust from the manifold did not affect the performance of the Leekpot, but certainly unsettled us all. As for Marilyn, it was confirming her worst nightmares!

We continued across, pulled up at the dock. The Ferry had loaded and was about to leave, but as Marilyn struggled her way up the dock they waited for her, and she was the last person (or vehicle) aboard. The Gibson's Ferry pulled away.

The Miracle of this story is: After her "Boating Weekend from Hell", Marilyn married me anyway!