Requiem For a Wooden Boat

1993 (about)

By Edward C. Larson

BIOGRAPHY ---- Edward C. Larson

Requiem for a Wooden Boat was written by Edward Larson, but never published – this is just the rough draft.

Edward was born October 20, 1924 in Seattle to Edward Francis Garrett (1901 Palo Alto, TN died 1957) and Violet Myrtle Rehm (b 1903 Joliet, Montana, d. 1992 Santa Cruz, CA md 1923 Seattle, Divorced 1927-1928). In 1938, Edward and his mother left Seattle to join Oscar Larson, the author's stepfather, in Port Althorp, Alaska. Oscar was superintendent of a cannery operated by the Alaska Pacific Salmon Company. Port Althorp is on the north end of Alaska's Chichagof Island. His mother married 7 Sep 1938 in Juneau to Oscar Arthur Larson (b 1894 Hendrum, Minn d. 1976 San Bernadino, CA). The cannery was built in 1917 and 1918. It burned down at the end of the 1940 salmon season and was never rebuilt. Edward dropped the name Garrett, and took on his step father's name of LARSON.

Following high school graduation at age 17, he enlisted in the US Army Air Force. Following the conclusion of World War II, Ed worked for several years on cannery boats transporting salmon from Alaskan fishing banks to the canneries. His first book, "Spring Tides: Memories of Alaskan Towboats," is based on those experiences (available for $14. At Amazon.com). Edward shares many happier memories of his time in Alaska, especially the time spent on the ***Doris E***, one of the cannery tenders. Ed currently lives in Santa Cruz, California, where he enjoys his family and friends. In addition to his writing, he remains an active artist whose work is widely collected. Edward currently lives at 222 2nd Ave Santa Cruz, CA 95062 (831-462-2612) [email: skegbird24@yahoo.com].

IMPORTANT NOTE CONCERNING CONTENT OF THIS BOOK: After reading this book, Phil Hastin remarked, and Ed Larson agrees, that the foul language is excessive in this book, and not really an accurate portrayal of the characters in this book. Please look beyond the foul language, that it was a small part of the life on the boat, perhaps brought out a little bit much in this book, and remember the good hearted, tough men as they really were! {Transcribers note: I have known most of the characters in this book, am related to several, and they were very much loved by their families and neighbors!}

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Section 1 The Boat

As I grow older, the many rivers of my mind run through canyons of memories carrying me always toward the sea. Admittedly, some channels lead to shoaled places, shallow, fouled, and filled with the threat of heavy surf and breaking seas. Worse still, some of those dark places rare replete with a melancholy chorus of past disappointment and lingering regret. But thankfully, there are other journeys of remembrance like the one of which I now speak, voyages which make the heart soar and carry me to bays and inlets filled with all the passion, joy and exultation anyone has a right to expect. There lies the warm and gentle harbors, the sunlit places of the mind. Whenever peace and solitude prevail, I go there.

Given age and a quiet fire, one slips easily into yesterday. With little effort there is a wealth of satisfaction to be found in letting the oars of reminiscence sweep slowly along the shoreline of gone-by years, tasting the richness of other times, other people and other things, gone, loved, and remembered. In such times of cherished aloneness, my pilgrimage to things past most often leads me to a destination so vivid and unforgettably that the massage of sixty years of living has failed to dim its joys. I speak of my early teen summers in Alaska and the remembrance of the *Doris E,* a beloved vessel, even treasure friend, if you will. She will sail across my mind as long as I am here.

Lest my affection for this boat seem strange, decades of observation have assured me that there exists a marvelous harmony between people and the sea-borne craft upon which they work, play, live and die. This interdependence between humankind and the water craft of their time and place is pervasive and found on all the oceans of the world. I believe it true that those who fail to identify with their vessel, no matter its crudity, its faults or its state of dilapidation are the rare exception rather than the rule. It perhaps can also be said that the master who curses his or her craft tempts the fates, the winds, and the tide and suffers from a massive character fault akin to those who view the oceans of the world, not in terms of their horizons, but in terms of their chemical content.

Although this honest "love of vessel" crosses all class and ethnic lines, I've seen it displayed most often in "coarse" men who fish for a living, swear violently and drink beer before noon. As grainy and harsh as these men seem, they become transfigured mourners at the demise of an ancient trunk-cabin trolling boat so rotten and trashed it sinks at its

moorings. Perhaps in such a happenstance they see and fear the rising spector of their own mortality. The sensitivity of such men belies the rawness of their life style. I'm deeply gratified they are still to be found along the shores and amongst the dockyards my life has known.

I admit to being an "animist," believing that all objects have life and possess a soul. This psychological departure from the norm is a rather common affliction, usually affecting those who choose to walk the shoulder of the road of reality rather than its centerline. Mentally unwell from the life-long imprint of this disease, it should come as no surprised that I impart life to wooden boats, hear mortal heartbeats in ancient engines, and have bequeathed an eternal soul and being to the *M/V Doris E.* the one vessel which has served as the ark of my remembrance for over half a century. I take lasting refuge in the awareness that I am not alone in my bizarre behavior...wooden boat devotees are legion, living out their fantasies in the backwaters of every age and harbor of the world.

With the eyes of a child, I first saw the *Doris E.* in Althorn Bay on the northern edge of Chichagof Island, Alaska, in 1938. Tied to a fish dock, she was symbolically wreathed by a rare band of sunshine in a land of everlasting rain. Between us, it was love at first sight. Broad, stocky and unassailable, she rode a slight swell with the élan of belonging to and being a part of this fabled place. In full view of the white enormity of the Fairweather Range, Althorn Bay is a glorious evergreen amphitheater, filled with salmons, halibut, eagles, brown bear and adventure. To the north lie great glaciers which have abraded the continent since the beginning of the ice age. To the east lie straits and sheltered waters of transcending beauty and peace. But, lest one become complacent, lurking a handful of miles to the west lie Cape Spencer and Cape Bingham guarding the entranced to the Gulf of Alaska, an evil and boundless sea which rages without surcease and serves as the cradle of western storms. A host of souls have found its dreadful strength beyond their expectations and far beyond their powers to endure.

Located on the western shore of the tranquil bay we called home was the Port Althorn Cannery of the Alaska Pacific Salmon Company. It was a cluster of forest green and chalk white buildings set at the base of a huge dished mountain about ten miles south and west of the tiny fishing village of Elfin Cove. Not intrusive in the immensity of the setting, the cannery, like the *Doris E,* seemed to belong there. Through a random set of circumstances that have graced my life, my mother married Oscar Larson, who was Superintendent of the Port Althorp Cannery. He became my stepfather, my friend and my

mentor. For three years that passed too quickly Port Althorp became a place of magic and my summer home.

Oscar Andrew Larson cast as fine a shadow as any man I've known. The pride with which I remember him sets him apart from others in my life. He was an imposing figure, a fisherman, a gentleman, a fine athlete and a man of integrity. In every way he gifted me with his presence and width precious times. It was an easy and graceful thing to become his son. Though a patient taskmaster, he was not given to letting any kid sit around squandering the remnant of an Alaskan summer. To assess my capability to relate to others and determine the slim possibility of my growing into something of worthy he put me to work for a short while as a deckhand on the *Doris E.*

The tide was very low on the morning I first stepped aboard and forged a lifelong connection with the *Doris E.* She moved gently fore and aft, side-tied to the dock twenty feet below me. Climbing down the wooden ladder and stepping on deck, I felt through my boot soles for the first time, the strength and spirit which set this boat apart. In a space of minutes, after a round of introductions, I found myself dead center in the ring of her six man crew who, alerted by my stepfather, welcomed me board and advised me to, "Bust my ass and do what I was told!" For the ensuing two summers I worked on the *Doris* growing and earning. In a lifetime well-lived, those times represent a treasure trove of hours and days, springs and summers which were filled with the rapture and excitement of simply being alive, being a kid, and being a part of her crew. This is a story of that boat and her indelibly short and unforgettable years.

The *Doris E.* and *Sally S.,* her sister ship, were two classic salmon cannery tenders built to assist with the construction of salmon traps and to transport the catch from the traps to the cannery. They were built concurrently in 1927, at the Johnson Brothers shipyard In Port Blakely, Washington. Statistically, both craft were identical. Each had a keel length of 69' 6" with a length on deck of 85 feet. Both were rated at 74 gross tons with a 50 net tonnage rating, and each boasted a 17' 6" beam and a draft of 8' 7." But their beauty cannot be told in terms of their dimensions. With mast and boom stepped forward, no fish hold, and a high wheelhouse, these craft smacked more of handsome, working tugboats than cannery tenders. Because of their lack of a fish hold, common in most cannery tenders, either ever suffered the desperate indignity of having their decks abash with thrashing salmon, jelly fish and kelp. When it was absolutely essential for either vessel to empty fish traps, they always brailed the salmon into a barge towed alongside, thus remaining neat and clean as a

proper towboat should be.

Beside the *Doris* and the *Sally,* there were five other working cannery tenders at the Port Althorn cannery, each with a distinctive personality and each with its own idiosyncratic behavior. They were ever so much like the ladies one might meet in a whorehouse; that is to say, they performed a common, essential, service but with differing levels of involvement and satisfactions. The *Phoenix* was well intentioned but lazy and shiftless, *the Hero* wore too much make-up, the *Service* was without courage or class, and the *Lloyd C* was born and lived the life of a stumbling street-walker, always running into docks and piling. Only the little *Eagle,* the oldest and smallest of the lot, was redeemed by saving a bit of the jaded heroine about her. Skippered by Phil Hastin, one of the great watermen I have known, the tattered *Eagle* worked hard outride in the worst of weather. Old and battered, she ways made strong not by her hull or her tow bit, but by the skills of the man on her bridge. Phil had served as mate on the *Doris* most of the time I was aboard her untie my stepfather promoted him to assume command of the *Eagle.* Our friendship has aged into a very fine wine in the sixty years we have known each other. At the age of eighty four, he can still run a very tight ship and, were he at the wheel, I would sail with him into high winds and heavy seas at a moment's bidding.

If there was life in the *Doris,* and I stand convinced there was, it began on the ways of the Johnson Brothers Yard where she was conceived and delivered. On one dark night, in the sawdust, the shavings and the rain and mud of her conception, an eternal soul crept into some small crevice between her massive keel and her garboard strakes. This spirituals presence was to remain there and guide her on her way through time, as much a part of her being as the timbers and through-bolts which bound her together. As a child I felt her spirit, knowing then, as I know now, that she was different from the others, not just a wooden boat, but an entity filled with breath, life and a personal destiny.

And what of the men that built the *Doris E. In* 1927, the year of her creation, the *nation's* production methods existed as a broth, not yet bought to boil; a mixture of rudimentary "cottage industry," and a new and burgeoning technology. The men who labored to build the *Doris* were to become the last of America's hand-tool generation. Shipwrights, ship's carpenters, laborers and blacksmiths, abounded in them towns and villages of the Pacific Northwest; each played a role in the birthing of the *Doris.* Unfortunately, the transition to industrial sophistication which would toll the death of theses hand craftsman was waiting in the wings, soon to destroy an age of primitive tool use

and primitive innocence. But, for now, craftsmanship was a way of life, when the fit of a joint or the bevel of a timber were the standards by which men measured their work and their worth.

While building the *Doris,* those who created her would be molded by a new and changing age. They would see their first "talkies," drink "bathtub gin," dance the rage of the Charleston, and live the thrill of Lindbergh's solo flight across the Atlantic. It was a reckless time of innovation, a time when all the promise of a new and exciting age lay just around the comer or down the block. The paper Grail of Wall Street made every margin buyer a potential millionaire. But, if one listened with care beyond the sound of ragtime music and the "Bunny Hop," they might detect the rolling thunder of approaching disaster. There would soon be no singing in the streets. In a year and a half, the rich and the poor would be plunged into the traffic defeat of the Great Depression. Some few shipwrights, blessed with good fortune, might make their way and their living carrying their transient tool boxes from one job to another, but others would spend years of hunger and deprivation looking for another boat to build.

The Great Depression was a definitive era which victimized a generation and changed the face of America. At its height, men of worth deprived of a legitimated wage through no fault of their own, would walk the lower end of Seattle's "skid road," drowning in a ragtag melancholy shared by millions in a heartsick nation. Some sold apples for a nickel and slept in cardboard shelters in the city's south-end "Hooverville." As a child I saw only those who had shunned skid road and sought the neighborhoods, splitting firewood or cutting grass to pay for a meal. My grandmother often fed them, and I sometimes watched from a far corner as they bolted down a plate of bread and beans in the welcomed shadow of our back porch. She always thoughtfully directed them there that they might escape the humiliating gaze of neighbor or trades persons to wham fate had dealt a better hand.

But for now there was work, and the jack planes of the builders of the *Doris* were carefully laid on their sides to preserve a sharpness of edge. Other birthing tools of these boat-building men would be strewn about on crude wooden tables or even on the damp and trampled ground of the Johnson Brothers Yard. Overhead a rusted corrugated roof gave scant protection from the persistent northwest rains or the incipient fogs which nurtured the colds and influent of the workers and soaked the towering Cedar and Edwardian ferns of Puget Sound. As they labored to build her, there was nothing of dryness and little of

warmth around them save for the steam box used to bend her timbers. The builders themselves were only tools to be used in her creation, and as such, were deemed ineligible for the creature comforts of a more pampered and protected elite.

In those days, the building of a boat required a profusion of instruments, now almost forgotten: spline drivers, beakhorn stakes, spoke shaves and draw knives, braces and bats, baulking mauls, steam boxes and wedges and clamps. One would see hand augers, rip saws, bevel saws and crosscuts, ball peen hammers and miter boxes, chisels, gouges, oakum and spikes...all driven by the muscles of the workers' arms. The price of physical pain was paid out by those who brought her to birth. The bill would be added and totaled in terms of pounded thumbs, mashed and severed fingers, crushed toes and twisted backs, persuasive cold, a pantry wage and a daily and everlasting weariness. Oft times creation is a cruel and demanding master

But through all that which might seem insufferable, her strength and pinnate beauty must have been immediately apparent to those who worked about her. Walking away into the evening after ten hours of hard labor, men must have looked back over their shoulders at her tangential elegance much as an artist might survey a portrait in progress. As she blossomed from the keel, her breast hook, frames, strakes .and knees formed a practical, curvilinear completeness akin to the simple beauty expressed in a functional hand-turned bowl. The richness of her unpainted surfaces and the heady, fresh incense of her woods made her seem virginal, new, and as unsullied as the forests around her. Without doubt, as she took form, she would impress even the casual passerby with the fact that she was blessed with those attributes that would make her sea kindly and hell for stout.

Born in a time when timber and fine craftsmanship were close at hand, she was handsomely over-built. Her ribs were 4 x 6 inch fir covered by planking 2 1/4 inches thick. Like a battleship, from two feet above the waterline to two feet below, she was belted by a four foot wide ring of 6 inch ironbark planks 3/4 of an inch thick. Her knees, with curved grain, were cut from spruce root stock 4 inches thick, and her b x 8 inch deck beams were totally knot-free. The straight grain planking on her deck was 2 3/4 inches thick by 3 3/4 inches wide, and all her bulkhead studding was clear 4 x 4" Alaska Yellow Cedar. In addition to all this innate vigor, the wheelhouse and main deck cabin were through-bolted by long, heavy rods to the bottom of the main deck timbers, making the boat a unified whole of dramatic strength and rigidity.

If my belief that her soul lay somewhere about the keel is correct, then surely the

heart of the *Doris E.* lay within the confines of her engine room. She was powered by a gigantic four cylinder, 180 horsepower, Washington Estep diesel engine of exquisite design and appearance. In retrospect, it now seems totally appropriate that it would be the only engine she would ever know. It was an integral part of her, a perfect fit. The engine was immense, perhaps fifteen to eighteen feet in length including the enormous flywheel on the engine's fore-end and the tail shaft and clutch at the rear. The tops of the cylinders, which were crowned with silver and brass injector nozzles, stood over seven feet tall, brushing against the overhead deck beams with only inches to spare

There was a symphony of color in the engine room, shining like the harmony in a fine painting. The dominant theme was the rich forest green of the engine's main frame, crossed here and there by handsome silver and gold tracings of pristine brass, copper and steel pipe. The grainy floor or sole of the engine room was a rich red, strongly contrasting with the dazzling, many-coated whiteness of the bulkheads. Fore and aft, the room was intensely illuminated by large, glaring, light bulbs in metal grids. They hung from the shining white beams overhead bathing everything in white light or sharp shadow.

Even with closed eyes, one could assess the many wonders of this bright, cluttered world. A sensual soup of soft, warm, engine heat defied the cold wind and rain often present just beyond the open companion way door. The odor of diesel fuel, lubricating oil, worn out morning coffee and the rich smoke from Chief Engineer Claude Graham's "Sherlock Holmes" pipe could be smelled, tasted and savored. Almost edible, all these spicy entities blended into a unique, memorable broth which, even now, triggers a rich awareness, an identification of "place," to be found nowhere else in the reaches of my memory.

The primitive mechanical monster which drove the *Doris* was qualified to be considered a "prime mover." That is, like falling water, steam or the simple lever, the engine was a power producer which performed flawlessly at the most elemental level. There was absolutely nothing superfluous in its being. It was, above all, an assemblage of simple physical principles and theorems translated and forged into metal parts which, when linked together, made pistons move and wheels turn. The basic truth and integrity of its design was so infallible that, given enough fuel and lubricating oil, it could have conceivably run forever. Simply stated, it was fundamental, reliable, and practically indestructible. Should a malfunction occur in one cylinder, the offender could be isolated, and the remainder would continue to function indefinitely without failure. The design was so immaculate that the entire crankshaft could be removed and replaced without moving or disturbing the pistons or

valves. It was a masterfully built behemoth which, in times of danger or impending disaster, could be run and repaired by the untrained or the uninitiated; a priceless advantage when one muddled down the path toward harm's way.

Against the starboard bulkhead of the engine room stood a huge workbench. It was totally covered by a thin sheet-metal plate bearing the dents of a thousand dropped tools. On the white bulkhead above the tool bench, the engine tools were perpetually seated in their respective hangers, the space of each dictated by a traced heavy black outline so they could be instantly grasped in an emergency or in darkness. The placement and return of each tool was a justified and inviolate ritual demanded by the Chief Engineer. Once, when I failed to return a hammer to its proper place, I was made to wipe down all tools, the tool board, the work bench and the engine room sole. The behavior modification involved was so totally effective that I never forgot again.

Bolted at the aft end of the workbench was a colossal primitive metal vise of the type often seen in a blacksmithy. Like the metal surface of the workbench, the blackened vise bore the marks of years of hammer poundings and the abrasions of ten thousand file-marks. On many occasions I used it to hold large halibut hooks for straightening or sharpening. When an iron pipe "cheater" was placed on the vise handle to magnify the force, pennies could be squashed flat and disfigured into strange, circular patterns.

Squeezing pennies was a fascinating and creative activity, but not nearly as intriguing as thumbing through the engine room's "Girlie" calendar, a pastime I truly enjoyed. The calendar in question hung above the workbench and was filled with deliciously nude women. It was like some powerful divining rod, and at fourteen, it absorbed my constant gaze and total concentration. When no one was about, I spent rapturous moments thumbing slowly and anxiously from January to December while listening with rabbit ears for many greatening footsteps which might descend the engines room ladder. April was my favorite, a dark-eyed brunette who displayed an abundance of sexual treasures beyond my wildest imagination. Her page bore many of my greasy thumbprints. The calendars far surpassed the *National Geographic* issues dealing with bare-breasted African maidens I had discovered and studied intently as a younger child.

On mammoth, reinforced shelving far forward on the starboard side of the engine room rested a bank of heavy wet cell batteries which powered the deck winch. In the years ahead, the arrangement would prove an Achilles heel of enormous proportions. Just aft of the batteries rested a noisy air compressor which furnished starting air to the ten-ton engine.

An intricate labyrinth of fuel and water pipes and air lines ran purposely about the bulkheads carrying things of importance somewhere. A couple of non-descript captain's chairs, their weary legs held together with baling wire lent a feeling of conformal livability to the place while several ashtrays ingeniously fashioned from half-pound salmon cans completed the furniture requirements of Chief Engineer Claude Graham and Second Engineer, Kato Schwalling.

Everything within these confines spoke in the language of heat, noise, power and force. In tune with the engine's size and reliability, I always found here an overwhelming sense of anticipation. The giant machine was its own being; its spirit waiting, poised in the blocks, trembling to release the power inherent in its own movement. Even while motionless its attendant vitality warmed the room in the coldest of weather. Everything here was a prelude to the moment the engine was started, that crashing sensory instant for which this place was created. There was so much of the child in me that I always awaited the orchestral downbeat with a slack jaw, bugged eyes, and a heart beat at least half again normal. It was the supreme moment for a kid who loved engines.

Claude stands motionless, listening with all his body. Out of the silence, the jingle from the wheelhouse electrifies this place. Like a baton, Claude throws the master airs throttled lever. With a roaring hiss of compressed air, the starting valves sequence a high-pressure blast into each of the shining, green cylinder heads. A revolution of the crankshaft, and the injectors, under a pressure of four thousand pounds per square inch, spray a fine mist of diesel fuels into each cylinder head. In turn, on the compression stroke, the piston rises, crushes the fuel-air mixture, and ignite a hell of heat and pressure within the cylinder head forcing the piston down. The process repeats myself, up and down, again, and again, and again. Later, a movement of the clutch lever in the wheelhouse will leash this up and down eccentricity and convert it to the rotation of the waiting propeller. With the raw excitement, faith and imagination of a child's mind, I fantasize that with enough water under her keel and a place to tie the tow line, this case-hardened vessel with its mighty engine might well move the earth.

The engine room is awash in an ocean of noise. There is the low whistle of the huge spinning flywheel, push rods and valves clatter, cams turns, oilers click and them huge double-coned clutch edits a great howling rumble of its own. In a scenario repeated again and again till it has become almost inviolate, Claude smiles and draws me close with a rough-fisted, choking twist of my pea jacket collar. He shouts directly in my ear, "Goddam Eddie,

don't she sound grand?" At fourteen I mouth under my breath, "Goddam Claude, she sure as hell does!" I know he cannot hear me. Under the rules of way, the men aboard may use any words they wish around me. At my age, by the skipper's edict, I'm not permitted to join their cussing on pain of being thrown overboard.

And, there is a song for those on deck. From the stack aft of the wheelhouses comes the resonant heartbeat of explosions from the firing cylinders far below. It is the raw, sweet sound of power. Gray exhaust smoke thrusts upward, then trails astern to vanish quickly in a sky filled with the freshness of morning rain. The vessel trembles with expectancy. Laid manila deck lines, fore and aft, tense ever so slightly and squeak against their cold, black and pitted cleats. Now here is the thrill of life here, the *Doris* is awake and aware.

Although I have written of the boat before width that deep affection which time has never destroyed, consistently new upwellings of memory return to remind me, time and timer again, of the myriad small intricacies about her. These tiny bits and pieces of recalled reality seem to emerge through my thinking, link by link, like an anchor chain rising from the clouded waters of a long past time. The whirr of the galley stove's fan mixed with the aromatic wonder of our cook Fred Foster's apple pie--the seat at the galley table which by nature of my belonging was now mine -- Kato Schwalling's rangy and endless humming somehow making the morning rain less wet and cold -- Skipper Norman Hodson's half smoked Mozart cigar, tainting the air but belonging. And, above all, the joyous excitement of the unknowns the next day would surely bring. To me, these fragments constitute the "brush strokes" of the boat and my life aboard her. These are the intrinsic parts of the total painting I am trying to prepare for you.

The heavy stem-iron at her bow showed deep dents from "barge bullying," and spoke eloquently of her personality and style. The steel there most strongly resembled a section of main-line railroad track, and was tapped by an immerse eyebolt from which two cables ran aloft to her mast head forming twin head stays. Double shrouds ran aloft from massive chain plates on her port and starboard bulwarks steadying the mast athwartship. On the starboard side, oak ratlines were lashed to the shrouds to enable one to climb aloft should a block need clearing, while just above her bulwarks, heavy spreaders between her shrouds were fitted with belaying pins. Without question, this was a throwback to the running rigging of sailing ships. Interestingly, someone aboard, filled with sentimentality, deferred to the antiquity of this arrangement. I occasionally saw manila lines traditionally coiled on the bins as if they stood ready to belay the yard of a proper and well-found sailing

vessel. There was no practical reason for this. In our work, only a single line from the boom was ever tied off to a belaying pin. The carefully coiled lines found there were like flowers placed on the grave of the sailing past by a despairing supplicant. As to the identity of the poet who carefully placed them there; sadly I never knew.

Perhaps five feet back from the bow stood a mammoth Samson post. It consisted of two 10x10 timbers faced with ironwork and bridged by a heavy crosspiece member of what appeared to be oak. It was immensely strong, the whole of it being stepped through the foredeck and bolted deep down in the hull. When underway, it was used to secure bow and spring lines from the heavy scows which the *Doris* always used when brailing or unloading fish from the traps. Through the years, manila lines had cut grooves in the dense hardwood leaving velvet-smooth scars of towing jobs long past; like the rings of a tree trunk, a chronicle of the reasons of her years.

Aft of the Samson post stood the heavy deck winch. The winch drew electric power from the previously mentioned massive bank of batteries in the engine room. A large ring and pinion gear operated two winch heads. The port head was designed to handle cable or line and the other, on the starboards side, was employed to raise and lower the anchor chain. Exposed to wind, weather and waves, the machinery always began the season with a brilliant coat of shiny black enamels, but as the weeks and months wore by, the cosmetics of spring faded like a pretty girl growing old, revealing a flawed complexion marked with rust and wear, a utilitarian machine, old before its time, and bad-used by its years.

Winch heads were controlled through the use of a hand-operated friction clutch and foot-operated brake. There was no conversation while the winch was operating. The ring and pinion gearing which ran the winch was primitive and far from a perfect match thanks to salt air and the aging process. Though smeared with pounds of heavy axle grease, the noise emanating from the running contraption was deafening to anemone in close proximity. Coupled with the clamors from the gears was an ever-present smoke screen generated by the ongoing overheating of the asbestos brake and clutch bands. Immersed in this maelstrom of smoke and noise, the operator stood, like a nesting stork, one foot on deck, them other resting on the foot brake, one hand and arm extended to grip the winch handle, the other grasping anything with which to steady himself. When brailing fish in heavy weather, the operator had all the appearance of the leader of a one-man band playing a lively march while balancing himself on a high-wire. It was not a task to be envied.

The mast and boom were stepped perhaps eight to ten feet aft of the winch and six to eight feet forward of the deckhouse. Both spars had been turned on an ancient lathe from single spruce or fir logs. The mast, smooth as silk to the touch, had a diameter of about 14 inches at the base with the boom being slightly smaller. The lower end of the lifting boom rested in a heavy, cast-iron swivel, attached to the mast perhaps five feet above the deck. The mast stood about 55 feet tall and was crowned by a top-mast, shiny-white and nicely turned. The lifting boom stretched about ten feet higher than the mast head to provide a long reach for brailing salmon traps. A heavy manila line and set of double-blocks constituted a topping lift and controlled the raising and lowering of the boom during lifting operations.

Abaft the mast on the starboard side was the fo'c's'le head, from which a short set of narrow wooden stairs led downward into the somewhat dingy quarter below. It was a place of few graces, in fact a misplaced "steerage" of sorts. The fo'c's'le provided sleeping quarters for two or three temporary crew members who worked aboard the boat during them actual trap-tending period. Coming aboard weeks after the *Doris* had begun her summer labors, these men constituted the "brailing crew," which assisted the regular crew members when the *Doris* was emptying fish traps.

In the highly structured social patterns of a cannery tender crew; these men were regarded as neither a part of the crew nor a part of the boat. Brailing crewmen were simply regarded as outsiders, to be buffered ,and endured only until the business of hauling fish was over and they could be put ashore. Although the new comers were completely innocent, we saw them as guests who would stay too long in our home. Coming aboard with dank duffels bags or cheap suitcases they knew they would the don the mantle of non-belonging as soon as they stepped on deck. The quality of their sleeping quarters mirrored what we self-righteously convinced ourselves was their status as children of a lesser god, another case of raw, unbridled prejudice.

Though painted gloss white, the fo'c's'le was a dreary place with only limited daylight creeping through its port lights on the best of days. It had the feeling of a cell about it and was given to strange sounds and stranger smells. Containing four bunks running fore and aft on each side, there was little room to move about with any degree of comfort. The chain locker, a black and repulsive compartment essential for storing them long anchor chain, was located just forward of the fo'c's'le, Entrance to the locker could be made by a small door in the forward bulkhead, but no one would voluntarily choose to go there unless ordered to do so. The interior was dark and wet, a forbidding place made even worse on those

occasions when the anchor wash actually lowered. When the lengthy chain was retrieved from the bottom, it always carried with it various and sundry bits of kelp and clinging marine life which ended up in the dingy confides of the locker. As the ensuing days passed the marine life and vegetation clinging to the anchor chain fermented like some spoiled fish chowder filling the fo'c's'le and all bits inhabitants with the unforgettable odor of decaying sea-life. Such pungency unjustly set the men who occupied the place apart as if they were lepers of old. But unlike the ancient outcasts, they needed no bells to warn others of their proximity, the smell of the chain locker did it all.

Although some little light fought its way into the area through threes headlights in the port and starboard bulkheads, if one were to see, it was essential to pull the blackened string on a bare light bulb hanging from the overhead. In rough weather the primitive fixture swung back and forth in the darkness creating an elusive game of cat and mouse for anyone trying to turn it on. Selfishly, the dirty bulb illuminated only a direly lit circle above them grimy wash bowl and contributed littler illumination to the rest of the room. The mast dominated the place, piercing the center of the room from top to bottom like a huge spear and providing something really solid to bang into in the darkness of night or in a rough sea.

The fo'c's'le toilet facilities had little of a well-bred feeling about them. They included a small, round sink and a mirrored medicines chest, nailed to the mast at the eye-level of a man four feet tall. The sink was graced by a pair of old-fashioned brass and porcelain faucet handles boasting a green patina of age and neglect. They were labeled in turns, hot and cold, but the labeling spoke only a half-truth since, in my experience, there was never any hot water. If there were ever a stopper I never saw it. The chain to which it had once been affixed dangled uselessly from bits tarnished ring compounding the disheveled appearance of the bowl. The sink had discolored through them years until its bottom bore the unmistakable patina of countless spittings and washings by those who had passed that way before: I concluded in adolescence that only a desperate man would wash his face in it.

The cracked mirror was little better. It reluctantly gave up an image only when it wash blown on and rubbed vigorously with the heel of a closed fist. One opened the mirror door to the medicine chest to find the remnants of ancient toothpaste tubes, empty bottles of Sal Hepatica, Sloan's Liniment, Requa's Charcoal Tablets or other remedies belonging to an earlier place and time. Toothless combs and rusted double-edged razor blades lay in disarray along with health aids which, at age fourteen, transcended my knowledge or experience. Other than the aforementioned smells and noises which abounded in the

fo'c's'le, four bunks with blue ticked mattresses smelling of age, and a small black coal stove on stubby legs completed the furnishings. It was a Spartan place of littler pretense deigned to shelter men who, undoubtedly, had been accustomed to much worse.

Those of us who served as crew on the *Doris* slept in cabins in the main deck house of which there were four: three on the port side and one on the starboard. My cabin was aft on the port side, small and cluttered with boxes of extra gear. It was designated the "Superintendent's cabin," but since my stepfather seldom journeyed about on cannery tenders, it had become a repository for coils of line, boxes of canned food, rolls of toilet paper, and wooden cases of hog-ring fasteners. As did all the crew cabins, this one contained a small head with hand pumped toilet and wash bowl. Compared to the forecastle it was a princely accommodation, and though the eyes of reality might view it as dinky, dirty and disorganized, I saw it as a home and haven beyond compare.

Almost every day, two indelibly magic moments graced this small living space. I recall and relive them both with the joy they gave me as a child. The first enchantment began late at night and at anchor when I pulled the grimy string which extinguished the light above my bunk. I would draw the warm security of the blankets high around my neck as the black serenity of some magnificent abandoned inlet closed around me with the stealth of a creeping fog. Even reticent to breathe lest I miss some night noises from the shore, I could drink in and savor the awesome silence knowing I was safe there, and knowing that a stone's throw away from me immense wild creatures were carefully seeking their way through the stillness and beauty of the night we shared. And there was the coming awake from untroubled sleep, often at first light and in the salt-coldness of a sea morning. Dressed and dirty faced, the scent of dawn coffee always promised the child inside me some new, raw adventure to be easily distilled from the miraculous things which happen in the course of an ordinary day. It was a storybook time whose hours were often filled with rain and always filled with wonder, a time beyond price, forever unforgettable.

The heartbeat of the *Doris* could be most easily detected in her galley and her wheelhouse where the men, who constituted her breath of life, lived out their daily patterns. Although I have written these passages before, they are essential if one is to know the *Doris* as she was, and will always be. No matter what the size or state of dilapidation, the galley was the social hall of every work vessel I ever boarded. The *Doris* was no exception. The galley on the *Doris* ran athwartship, side to side across the boat in the forward portion of the main deckhouse. It was perhaps twelve feet wide by ten feet fore and aft, an immense

space on a tow boat. Much of this area was taken up by a kidney shaped table at the forward side of the room where the crew sat in an inviolate pecking order on a long curved bench. The table was totally bordered by a strip of polished oak extending up from the top surface about an inch. This raised "fiddle" kept the dishes from sliding off the table in heavy weather. The surface of the table was a reddish linoleum which was seldom seen. The minute the boat was underway, the surface was covered with a large dampened table cloth cut to fit the table's exact curved outline. This damp but ingenious addition kept plates, saucers, cups and cutlery from sliding around or upsetting except when the weather got particularly nasty. Tall condiments like Ketchup, Worcestershire Sauce, Tabasco and salt and pepper were neatly tethered in a spill-proof oak box on the forward edge of the table. The heavier the weather, the wetter the cloth. In a real storm the crew ate sandwich makins', cheese, bits of sliced beef, brisling sardines or even peanut butter, all spread on white bread and consumed while standing up; if the storm were bad enough, one didn't eat at all.

The galley of the *Doris* was a light and pleasant place. In addition to the "Dutch" doors on each side, there were two large square windows in each of the port and starboard bulkheads. Doors to the galley were bottomed with high thresholds, perhaps nine inches above the deck, to keep out sea water which often came on boards and poured off the cambered deck through large scuppers. The forward bulkhead was fitted with thick port lights to provide light and to withstand any green water which might roll over the bow; this was not an infrequent occurrence. Fred Foster, our cook, always kept the top portions of the doors latched open; they were his windows on the world. Periodically he would hobble to either side, peek out, and comment on the passing scene, to himself or to whomever might be listening. It was a ritual I would get to enjoy over the treasured time I scent with him.

The aft bulkhead of the galley was fitted with various cupboards and built-in drawers. All were designed to securely hold plates, cups and needed cooking implements. Large posts and frying pans hung from hooks on the bulkhead where they had inscribed small, worn arcs from swinging back and forth through the years. To prevent spillage, drawers had to be lifted slightly to be opened. Inside, there was a place for each and every item. On the port side of the aft bulkhead sat a heavy cast iron *"Shipmate"* stove which was diesel-fired and always warm. Small angle-iron posts rising vertically from the top corners of the cooking surface served as holders for pieces of notched iron bar which could be placed at various points and angles across the cooking surface to keep pots and pans securely in place in a rough sea. A small electric blower maintained a controlled heat in the

oven or on top of the stove. It also warmed the galley in any kind of weather.

The predominant "feel' of the galley could best be described as secure and comfortable. The cannery tenders were painted from stem to stern every spring in Seattle before heading north for Alaska. Thus the bulkheads on the *Doris E.* were covered by myriad coats of gleaming white enamel creating the effect of a deep pool of brilliance. After a season of hard work she would begin to show a few chinks in her armor. Here and there a scratch or scuff might intrude, but the subtlety of her colors and textures maintained an October durability. In contrast to the gloss of the bulkheads, the surfaces of cabinets, tables and benches, all in oak or straight grain fir or pine, gleamed with coat after coat of hard spar garnish, a transparent medium extolling the beauty of their distinctive grains. The gold sheen of brass screws added to the beauty. The deck was covered with heavy battleship linoleum, annually painted a rich red-brown, and softened to a velvet patina by constant sweeping. The stove contributed to the color array with an accent of heavy flat black that was complemented by the gleam of copper bottomed pans and the shine of heavy white tableware. There was a richness here which pronounced this spot to be far more than just a place to eat. It was a dining lounge, a Great Hall and a sanctuary where everyone belonged including the brailing crew.

The wheelhouse on *the Doris* perched forward on the second deck and echoed the gleaming white and warm shining wood of the rest of the vessel. A walkaway bordered by a classic pipe railing circled the front and sides of the wheelhouse, allowing the skipper to exit the cabin and see fore and aft. Three large windows were set in the forward bulkhead and offered excellent visibility. The windows could be opened by lowering them into a pocket in the bulkhead by way of a thick leather belt and they could be raised by the same belt and pushed into a detent which kept them closed. A giant traditional ship's wheel, perhaps four feet in diameter, was mounted forward just aft of a wide shelf running athwartship across the forward bulkhead. The shelf was of sufficient width to hold a dinner plate, several coffee cups, or a round of beers provided the time was appropriate. It also held cigar stubs, old salmon lures, yesterdays socks and copies of very old newspapers.

Immediately behind the wheel, on the same shaft, was a gear and chain which led down through the wheelhouse sole to the mechanics of a primitive automatic pilot, always referred to as "Iron Mike." At times it worked and at other times it produced a zigzag course which would have done credit to a frightened rabbit. The compass was

large, dull black enameled, and lit by a traditional red binnacle light which reflected at night like a ruby against the cold pane of the center window. It was gimbaled to maintain a semblance of being level in heavy weather and was regulated by two large cast iron balls perhaps three or four inches in diameter bolted to brackets on either side of the swinging face. I remember it now, as it was on many a night, a tiny island of light in a world of pervasive darkness and storm. There was a warmth and security there that one came to depend upon.

To the right of the wheel, two rods ran up through the wheelhouse sole and were topped by two solid brass levers about two feet in length. These were the engine controls. They operated in a large horizontal arc. One lever controlled the governor, thus setting the speed of the engine. The other lever operated a massive air-assisted clutch, changing the propeller rotation from ahead to astern, or vice-versa. These were not "finger-food" aerating levers; they were heavy brass castings keyed into inch and a half steel rods. They were moved by using all the muscles in your arm, not by the flick of a wrist The ends of the levers were cast into classical handle forms which had been polished to a velvet smoothness through years of use.

Wheelhouse controls were not the usual fare on cannery tenders. In most vessels, bell signals were sent to the engineer standing by during maneuvering or docking. He, in turn, operated the clutch and governor speed as directed by the bells from the wheelhouse. In the engine room of the *Doris* E, the effect of going from ahead to astern was dramatic. Every movement of the clutch control was accompanied by a tremendous blast of high-pressure air. There followed an absolute symphony of sound as huge drums and levers changed positions and meshed, first slowing, then reversing the rotation of the mammoth tail shaft. In the engine room, the action seemed so decisive and monumental one might think the almighty was moving the levers on the bridge.

If one sat while steering, it was on a high oak stool whose legs were cross-wired at the bottom and which appeared as old as Noah's Ark. The leather seat was padded and encircled by brass tacks with rounded heads. I loved to place my feet on the two lower spokes of the wheel and tilt the stool back slightly. Hours of sea dreams were passed this way. When Skipper Norman Hodgson was on the bridge, I stood up to steer "Like any goddam deckhand ought to do."

A single built-in bunk for "cat nap" use by the skipper lined the aft bulkhead of the wheelhouse. Hodgson used it when the *Doris* E was underway at night or in close

passages. After a nap of minutes, he would arise and peer carefully through the windows, orienting himself and making sure that all was well. He would then return to his bunk without a word. I wondered at times if he had really awakened at all. His action was akin to the behavior of a sleeping cat, resting, wary, and vigilant. A change of five RPM in engine speed would awaken him in an instant and, should the situation demand, he could be fully awake at the wheel in less than two seconds.

Mounted above the bunk was the huge black box of the radio. It was state of the art and about two and a half feet square with lots of static and a very short range. When Norman Hodgson used the radio, he screamed into the microphone so loudly that most of us thought his voice carried directly through the air to the intended recipient; the radio transmitted seemed only for "show." The *Doris* was one of only a very few tenders equipped with radios. A daily radio schedule between the *Doris* and the cannery was attempted but not always accomplished due to the vagaries of weather, location, and equipment. Screwed to the aft bulkhead next to the radio, was a fine Seth Thomas striking clock and a companion barometer which was always tapped gently with a forefinger before being believed. From the overhead the heavy brass handle of an adjustable searchlight extended down, perhaps a foot, just short of being a "head-banger."

Next to the searchlight handle hung the lanyard for the air horn. It was beautifully finished off with a "Turk's Head" of fancy knotting which had been dirtied by years of use. The air horn lacked the romance of a steam whistle, maintaining just enough authenticity to be nautically acceptable. On the starboard bulkhead hung an ancient foghorn, a slim brass funnel, perhaps two feet long ending in a five inch bell. The business end of the horn was placed in one's mouth and blown in foggy weather and at such other times as were judged appropriate. I was directed on many occasions to assume the responsibility for blowing this horn, probably as much to entertain the crew as for safety reasons. I always did so with a great deal of reluctance. The mouthpiece of the thing was made of wood and brass which left a poisonous green taste in my mouth not unlike the taste of one of the skipper's cigars I had once stolen, smoked and discarded as unfit for human consumption.

This then is the word picture of the *Doris* E. I have painted for you. Like a portrait done in any age, it constitutes only a frail attempt to portray the depth, spirit and elegance of its subject. To me there was never anything mundane or common about her. She was a beautiful vessel intrinsically tied to the unforgettable times I spent aboard her. But, the discovery of beauty and soul in a working towboat must be fueled by the fantasy and

imagination of the reader. Of necessity, I must leave that up to you.

Section II The Men

I grew to know and admire the men who crewed the Port Althorn cannery tenders only in the context of their interrelationship with their boats. Although I saw them all as flawless, their lives ashore were pages from another book which, at age fourteen, I was too young to read. Like men from any pursuit, the lives of some had darker undertones. Many wintered with wives and children before a warm fireplace in homes of stable comfort. Others, I'm sure, sought the booze and women of the loosest parts of their hometowns. Like sleeping bears, a random number holed-up from the winter rains in the shoddy clapboard rooming houses of Seattle's "Skid Road." With a daily hope and prayer to be drunk before noon, their days were scent, in the sin pits of the lower end of town where they could cadge drinks and roll their own cigarettes from Zig-Zag papers and Bull Durham, the only "makins." they could afford. On beer and beans, their money gone or going, they waited till the warmth and light of spring awakened their senses and sent them in search of another berth and another salmon season.

With the coming of April or May and the promise of a job, a metamorphosis occurred transforming winter outcasts into summertime watermen. Even the worst were at their very best when their blended skills and personalities made them truly a part of their particular boat. Sordid whispers of their sins and failures, heard when I was a kid, fell on one unwilling to believe. Their winter times were of no importance to me. I saw these men as bigger than life, playing out their roles in a land so vast and so incomparably magnificent that even now the memories of them, and of those times are as persistent as was the constant rain or the treasured gift of their friendship.

The Strait of Juan de Fuca cuts like a wind-whipped river between the rain soaked wetness of Washington's Olympic Peninsula and the south end of Canada's Vancouver Island. From the brutish violence of the North Pacific beyond Cape Flattery, the Strait leads eastward to the more benign waters of a great and complex inland sea. Should one turn south at the Strait's east end, his or her vessel will enter Puget Sound, named in honor of Lieutenant Peter Puget who explored the area with Captain George Vancouver in 1792. But, after traversing the Strait, if the mid-ship spoke is laid to the north, the vessel's course will lead one into the maze and beauty of the San Juan and Gulf Islands lying at the southern end of the Strait of Georgia, gateway to Alaska's Inside Passage. These islands, this inland sea and its adjacent shores have spawned generations of seamen who

dedicated their faith and future to their wooden boats and, who in return, too often gave their lives to the sea. Their sons and grandsons, steeped in the traditions of the ocean at their front door, were the mentors I so admired aboard the *Doris E.*

In ill-fitting clothes and with fedora hats in hand, the crews who would man the salmon cannery work vessels came from the coastal villages and islands each spring to seek their summer berths. Men of the sea etched by outdoor life, they gathered nervously in the smoke filled hiring halls, speaking quietly amongst themselves while sweeping the room with anxious eyes in search of a last year's shipmate. Hundreds of hopefuls and returnees were required for the many cannery tenders serving the vibrant salmon industry of the day. Old, young, and in-between, like the boats .they would crew, they came from towns like Stanwood, Mount Vernon, Anacortes and Port Angeles, Seattle, Tacoma, La Conner and Port Townsend. From Lopez Island, one of the San Juan group, came a cadre of seafaring men who were destined to constitute the heart and soul of the *Doris E.* They would work her well, making her all she should be until time and circumstance found her alone when she needed them most.

In a tide-swept welter of shoals and reefs, Lopez Island sleeps in gin-clear waters just east of the San Juan Channel. It is a quiet place, sheltered from the rain by the towering headlands to the west. Its pastoral meadows and rugged shores call for long walks, a pleasant listening to birds, and a deep gratitude for its pervasive peace. I have done and known all these things. Quite passive now, save for summer tourist hordes, the island was once steeped in a mixed history of farming and maritime pursuits. The early days of the century saw it as home to purse seiners, long liners, hand-trollers, reef-netters, whalers and smugglers, activities which channeled many of its youth away from the milking stool and the hay rake and turned their faces toward the sea. Such a young man was Owen Higgins, the first Captain of the *Doris E.*

Owen Higgins

Owen's parents immigrated from Holyhead, Wales a small green island jutting into the Irish Sea. His father, a steam engineer seeking something better, immigrated with his young wife to Lopez Island in 1893. Owen, born two years later, walked its graveled shores and attended school there through the eighth grade. Since there were no high schools on the island, he elected voluntarily to repeat the eighth grade to amplify his education. Following that, his formal schooling ceased ... an obvious waste of a mind seeking

more. Experience would take over and do a credible job of turning a big, strong kid destined for the sea, into a master mariner.

It is easy to imagine the growing years of the island's adolescent men. First there was the pre-dawn awakening, then the wriggling out of warm sheet-blankets into the cold world of northwest damp and darkness. There followed early milking and chores, then breakfast and later the "fidgeting through" of school days in a coal-stoved, one-room building always smelling of oiled floors and kid's wet clothes. If it wasn't raining or blowing too hard there might be some afternoon fishing down at Richardson Bay with a makeshift rod and reel, a pair of splintered oars, and a leaky, narrow-beamed skiff. As night fell into island silence there were evening chores and early bed, an endless belt of sameness. But, for a kid with his eyes on the horizon, there was always the promise of adventure just beyond the tide line, the association, the touching, feeling, smelling and learning of the sea. At sixteen Owen began purse seining, and at nineteen, already a master at handling a vessel, he began a career as a cannery tender skipper that would last, without flaw, for a quarter of a century.

After a near lifetime of remembrance, I remain in awe of the men who successfully captained the fishing and work boats of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Time and circumstance quickly weeded out the unfit, some lasting a season, some a week, and some, perhaps only a day. The demands of the job were constant and complex—the ability to weld disparate men into a working crew, to wisely dispense praise and discipline in an restructured environment, to navigate with precision in the worst of weather and to make life-dependent judgements in the course of a normal day. An endless chain of round-the-clock decision-making became a part of living. Their leadership qualities sprang from an innate energy and a self-confidence as natural and easy as the color of their hair or their shoe size. The challenge of prolonged command could be met only by men with truly unique capabilities. For these reasons, only a chosen few prevailed through the storms, high seas and trials of their years in the wheelhouse. When finished, most walked away from their vessels without a backward glance, unscathed and satisfied with their love-affair with the sea. Others however, never escaping the allure, spent their waning days sharing coffee and lies with others of their kind, desperately needing the chance to prolong, for even one more day, the remembrance of times and heavy seas long past.

To fully appreciate the stature of these men it is essential to understand two basic

factors; first, the nature of unstructured command, secondly, the skills required in primitive marine navigation for which they were responsible. Unlike the hard-bitten status of a military hierarchy, cannery tender skippers derived their power from the "consent of the governed." Without a supportive and cohesive crew they could not fulfill even the most simple of their varied daily tasks. The skippers of whom I speak were not protected by a military protocol; they were, rather, the brightest, most experienced and quickest thinking men aboard, a fact easily recognized by a crew shipping more than a token cargo of common sense.

Most crew members attested to emulate and learn from their skippers in order to climb the ladder of command. I never saw a crewman ignored or demeaned in the earning process. A well established and accepted leadership structure was the hallmark of a comfortable boat and met the individual and group needs of every man aboard. Perhaps the acid test of the quality of command was the fact that crewmen signed on with the same skipper year after year, some for decades of dangerous and adventure- filled salmon and halibut seasons. Such loyalty was a credit to the Skipper, the system, and to all aboard.

The safety of their vessel and the lives of their crews depended entirely upon the navigation skills of the men who commanded these cannery tenders through the reefs and sudden storms of an Alaskan fishing season. To understand the magnitude of such responsibility it is essential to realize that there were no electronic navigation aids available for cannery tenders or small fishing vessels at the time of which I speak. The marvels of depth flashers, radaz, side-scan sonar and global positioning satellites were eons away. Only dead-reckoning techniques, using age-old instruments of navigation allowed these unique and talented men to guide their boats and crews safely through waters that were fraught with potential disaster at every turn.

Dead-reckoning navigation uses factors of time, speed, direction and distance to determine how to get from point A to point B. Its methodology is half science and half an elusive art-form, whose brush is wielded by a chosen, gifted, few. The elements essential to such basic navigation were easily measured by even the most primitive medieval seafarers using the tools of the trade, a timepiece, a simple speed measuring device, a compass, and a cart. The art-form portion of dead-reckoning rests with the ability of the captain or navigator to "sense" an infinite number of additional variables which might spell the elemental difference between reaching one's destination in safety or courting death and disaster.

I have watched enthralled at the navigational "two-tiered" thinking of men like Owen Higgins, particularly in times when one stood in harm's way in heavy fog, heavy weather or the black of night. In possession of the "knowns" of a particular dead-reckoning problem, they grew quiet at the wheelhouse window in the darkness of slender passages. Their minds reached out beyond the givens to calculate and bring to order an infinite number of variables affecting their course and speed. With primal sensing, they measured tidal direction and it's ever-changing velocity, the force and direction of the unmeasured wind, current variations caused by unseen rocks or reef masses or the incessant dragging of a tow; the nuances of engine speed, the hull's condition, the weather and sea awareness, all these factors made a critical difference. For these special few there was a miraculous knowing of unspoken things which directed them through the blindness of night to the safe haven they sought. To me, they possessed an animal-like wisdom of never ending wonders. Their incredible skills were always modestly cast aside in conversations at the journey's end. It is possible they failed to recognize the fact that their gifts were truly unique, or that they really possessed them at all.

Common attributes among these men I so admired were their gigantic processes of memory and recall. Though willing teachers, who shared their gifts with those who sought to learn, the inborn talent of their navigation skills remained a part of the mysteries of their minds. In the rare yellow light of a sunny summer day or the blackness of bitter rain-filled nights, I frequently heard wheelhouse dialogues like this one which pushes aside a curtain and displays the magic of their thinking:

Phil Hastin: "On a straight passage like this, Owen, how come you're holding so close to the right hand shore?

Higgins: "I don't usually come this way Phil `less we're going to Hoonah, but I came through here a couple of years ago with two loaded scows, and damn near got in trouble. You look ahead there at that point on the right and you can just barely see that eddy twirlin' around. It doesn't look like much now `cause we're damn near at slack water, but with a heavy ebb the current runs diagonal across the channel at close on to five or six knots. It comes down from that arm on the right, and yah can't even see it movin'. The evening we were going through here there was a strong southwester building up—we didn't feel it too much here in the passage. When we got abeam the point the damn wind and current hit us as hard as hell. I was in mid channel and the scows swung to port real fast, draggin us after 'em. There's a rock over there just off that east side that

you can't see unless you got a minus tide—then the water just ripples over it—ain't even ' on the chart—anyway, I put the wheel over all the way to starboard and thought sure as hell we were goin' to lose the scows and sixty thousand fish. We didn't miss the goddam rock by ten feet so ever since then I run down the right side here—even in slack water and no wind—it don't pay to take a chance on gettin stung twice—just remember, this place can be a son-of-a-bitch in a heavy ebb. Do me a favor Phil, she don't feel just right, I think maybe that governor control slipped back on the ratchet—we're not getting just the right turns. Claude's asleep so go down and push the handle ahead till it hits that stop we screwed in—that should pick up the speed and stop that little vibration I feel—drives me nuts. Hey, while you're at it, get me a cup of coffee too."

Such was the nature of his command.

Owen Higgins captained the *Doris E.* from the time she slid down the ways in 1927 until he stepped off her rub-rail for the last time in the fall of 1938. Working out of the company's Ketchikan cannery, Owen and the *Doris* won every Fourth of July towboat race they ever entered. There was little doubt he had the Chief Engineer slip some metal washers under her push rods to make her run a little faster. It was said she'd make 12 1/2 knots with a "little help" and looked damn good doing it! When he grew tired of going north each spring, Owen built a handsome model of the *Doris* to keep his memories alive and returned to Lopez Island and a small farm next to the one on which he was born. Both places lie close to the sea he loved and mastered. My father called him, "the finest cannery tender skipper in Alaska," an opinion shared by men that returned year after year for the privilege of being a part of his crew and a part of the *Doris E.*

Norman Hodgson Captain of the *Doris E.*

Following Owen's retirement, Norman Hodgson, first mate on the *Doris* assumed command of the cannery tender. Born and raised on Lopez Island just a stone's throw from the tideline at Richardson Bay, Hodgson was a close friend of and ten years younger than Owen Higgins who had served as his mentor. Norman's father skippered sailing vessels in the orient trade and occasionally took his son on extended trips under sail, apparently infecting the boy with an incurable love of boats and the sea. It was well Norman selected a profession early in life. He was a hell-raiser of a kid and was periodically thrown out of elementary school on the island. One incident adversely affecting his formal education involved stranding a young woman teacher in the school's

attic by removing and hiding her ladder after she had climbed there for supplies. No one recalls precisely how long she was there—it seems none of Norman's classmates hurried to report the problem to the authorities.

Norman grew up tough, milking cows now and again but never straying far from the sea he loved. By the time he was twenty-two years old he was operating cannery tenders in southeastern Alaska. The organizational and navigating skills he had earned from Owen Higgins were rougher but no less effective than those of his mentor. Although gruff and hard-bitten, he was admired by his crew as an effective, knowledgeable skipper.

Two yellowed postcards open a small window through which we might view Norman Hodgson, as a man and a Skipper. The postcards tell of a round trip journey from Seattle to Prince William Sound in March of 1928. The journey was made on an unknown cannery tender which may well have been the old and decrepit *Lloyd C. of* which I have often spoken ill. To understand the arduous nature of the journey, one must first understand that Alaska in March is like a Grizzly Bear waking from the sleep of winter. Often there is little to hint of the spring to come. Winds, heavy tides, incessant rain and snow mark the days of the third month with a bad reputation. The first card, written when the vessel was northbound, only hints of the inconvenience of a "pretty tough trip." It reads as follows:

Dear Dad,
Well, I got this far OK had a pretty rough trip fro Queen Charlotte Strait and up to here. Tried Wrangell Narrows last night but had to turn Back and anchor as it was snowing pretty bad will drop a line when I get to Juneau.

As ever
Norman

The truth of the journey can only be realized when one reads between the lines. Had Norman Hodgson told the whole story, the postcard may well have read like this:

Dear Dad,

"It's been a hell of a trip. We were doing fine comin' up Johnstone Strait till we got abeam of Port Hardy. The westerly picked up a little but the glass was pretty steady so we started out across Queen Charlotte Sound, then all hell broke loose. The wind picked

up real bad and we got hit with a mix of snow and freezing rain. The tail shaft bearing was heating up so I had to slow her down. By that time the waves and tide rips got so bad she was rollin' her rails under ands I thought we might lose her abeam of Pine Island. I had three guys so goddam sick they were sloshin' back and forth in the bilge. We finally snuck into Safety Cove and laid over for a day--we were all tired out and a lot of stuff was busted up, The trip was OK again till we hit the Narrows and then it started to snow like hell—night come on and we couldn't see the shore, the channel markers nor nothin'. I had a guy up on the bow lookin' out—lucky we didn't hit the beach! We turned around, went back real slow, and anchored for the night near Zarembo Island. It blew and snowed all night but we'll try it again at slack water in the morning. The stern bearing's running warm but it'll probably be OK till we get back to Seattle.

The second postcard, almost nude of punctuation, was written at Port Althorn after an unexpected return to Juneau for repairs.

Dear Dad

Had trouble with the tail shafts had to go back to Juneau to get repairs looks good and glass pretty high and steady so am going to start across this morning and see if I can pick up St. Elias in 56 hours pretty slow old drag.

Tell the bunch hello So long norm

Again one must read between the lines to gain an insight into the uncertainties that crowned this particular journey. Had Norman Hodgson related the whole story, this is the way it probably happened:

Leaving the misery of winter in Port Althorn, they headed northwest toward Cape Spencer and the open waters of the Gulf. The shop-worn tender bit into a southwestern that brought an ill-wrapped gift of beam winds, driving cold and torrential rain. Hodgson sensed a subliminal difference in the engine and sent the engineer below to check things out. When. Claude Graham crawled in the shaft alley, he palmed the turning six inch tail shaft and felt the heat generated along the shaft from the ailing bearing in the stern. To start across the open waters of the Gulf with such a problem would be insanity. They would have to return to Juneau for repairs, a journey of 85 miles at slow speed and a chilling frustration for all aboard. Claude returned reluctantly to the wheelhouse to report his assessment.

In reverie, I can smile now, not at their misfortune, but at the certainty of Hodgson's reaction. I view Norman in memory, chewing a cigar and peering through the chilled wheelhouse window. Upon hearing the problem impacted in the soft and tender voice of his Chief Engineer, Norman's head would tilt back and his eyes would turn to fire. His roar of "Goddamsonafabitch why here and now?" could be heard on shore through the storm. His gaze would sweep the confines of the chilled room seeking to shrivel and destroy the demon that had caused the problem. It was merely the fates, and no demon could be found. His cigar would be flattened in rage between clenched teeth as he swung the wheel and reversed the course. Of necessity the engine revolutions dropped to a whimper as they turned back, labored down Icy Strait, circled the north end of Admiralty Island, then turned south again and limped toward Juneau which lay waiting in the rain.

The extent of their woe would be totally dependent upon the relative damage suffered by the stern bearing and the shaft. The vessel would be pulled up on the ways and examined a day or so after their arrival. Perhaps the damage would be minor entailing only an adjustment to the bearing surfaces and stuffing box—a day or two out of the water at the most. If the damage were severe, the six foot propeller would have to be driven off the shaft key and the whole shaft pulled, a monumental task requiring a week or more of exacting and strenuous labor in driving rain and snow. The astonishing fact is that these men possessed the practical skills and knowledge with which they could actually solve such a problem. They would properly accomplish the task because of the quality of their leadership and because of the guts, tenacity, and imagination they had developed in the nuts and bolts course of their daily lives. They were men who cared little for poetry or prose but with a marlinspike or an alligator wrench they could fix anything.

Norman Hodgson closes his short, unpunctuated, postcard with the fact that since the glass was high and steady he was sure the time was right to depart Port Althorp for the second time. He made the decision without discussion, without any second thoughts and without equivocation. They would turn west, cross more than three hundred miles of open ocean and pick up Cape St Elias in exactly fifty six hours. This was not a guess nor an estimate nor a conjecture, it stands as a simple statement of fact backed by the confidence of a hell-raising "truant turned navigator" who had earned well and found himself and his future in a lifetime job he truly loved.

As a sea-struck fourteen year old, I saw Norman Hodgson as an icon of what I

thought a man should be—I wasn't far wrong. His gruff voice and brusque ways masked a sensitivity and tenderness that he was probably afraid to show. His shouted orders at me were often followed by the exclamation, "Goodamdumbboss'skid!" Many times that was followed by a shared sidelong grin, the warmth of which I can still remember. I have written before about an incident that most revealed the nature of our relationship—it seems to bear repeating.

Norman Hodgson and the crew were inveterate cribbage players and for some weeks I labored secretly on a new cribbage board for him. I carved it from a piece of yellow cedar I'd found in the carpenter shop. The wood even smelled like Alaska. There was a relief of a ship's wheel, a propeller and a compass on top of the board and I carved special small pegs for it. In spite of all the work involved, I remember being a little embarrassed about giving it to him. At that age I didn't realize the gift was a dead giveaway indicating the deep affection I held for the man.

I brought it to him one forenoon when he was in the wheelhouse by himself. For a few moments there was some surprise then he put his arm around me as any man should do to a kid. He turned away and I was amazed to think he might be having a little trouble with tears, so I left. I never expected anything like that. It was an unforgettably nice thing that happened to us both. The crib board was always used after that and had a special nail on the galley bulkhead upon which it was hung. Like the pots and pans it finally wore its own little marks on the bulkhead from swinging back and forth with the roll of the boat. The cribbage board is now in a special place in Norman's daughter's home on Lopez Island where it belongs.

In 1940, Norman Hodgson waved goodbye to me from the bridge of the *Doris* as she left Port Althorn and headed out on a trap brailing trip, close to the fishing season's ending. My parents needed my help at the cannery and I watched the man and the boat which were so important fade into an afternoon rain shower without me. I expected to see them again in a few days. As the fates would have it, I would never see either of them again. A few days later, about midnight on the fourth of August, the night watchman making his rounds discovered a spire of smoke coming from the web loft over the cannery building—it was the most vulnerable of places, a storage space for tarred seine nets. A prolonged series of blasts on the steam whistle awakened us to the impending disaster. As the fire grew, the super-heated nets actually exploded, and two hours later, the entire cannery was reduced to a smoking ruin and our lives were inalterably changed. The

Doris was rerouted to another cannery and my days aboard her at Port Althorn were over forever.

The war began and Norman ran the *Doris E.* for several years as a towboat for the Corps of Engineers—thankfully they never painted her gray. He also captained a vessel that evacuated the native population from the Pribilof Islands in the face of the Japanese occupation of Attu and Kiska, a dicey operation which he handled with total success. I was flying in China half a world away from Alaska and heard about Norman and the Doris only rarely through letters from my Dad. To my sorrow our paths never crossed again. Norman died in a hospital at Bellingham, Washington on May 23, 1958, only a few miles from Lopez Island where he had played hooky and lived all his life. His death cut short his nine year service as a San Juan County Commissioner and his tenure as a leader in the Reef Netter's Association—a far cry from the kid who'd stranded his teacher in the attic. Some of his *Doris* shipmates acted as pallbearers when he was buried on the island. I never had a chance to tell him of his importance in my life—perhaps the cribbage board made that clear, I surely hope so.

Claude Graham Chief Engineer of the *Doris E.*

Claude Graham, Chief Engineer on the *Doris E.,* spoke as softly as any man I've ever known. When absolutely necessary to talk to people, he pulled as few words as possible from his mind projecting them with the rich vibrancy of a well-played tenor saxophone. He talked best with engines and spoke their language with an eloquence that made him one of the finest marine operating engineers around. Through a prior generations happenstance of death and marriage, Claude became Norman Hodgson's uncle in spite of being only four or five years older than his acquired nephew. They grew up together on Lopez Island and shared a deep affection and inter-reliance in fulfilling their responsibilities aboard the boat.

Claude's dress was as constant as the Wellington pipe which dangled day and night from the starboard corner of his mouth. He dressed in stiff dark coveralls and a colorless, indestructible broad-striped Mackinaw jacket which was far too short in the slaves. Standard footwear was a pair of "laundry gray" stockings and deck shoes that were stained with lubricating oil and diesel fuel. His short-cut gray hair was perpetually covered by a quilted, black, engineer's cap, the bill of which was grubby from the constant tugging of his oil-soaked fingers. Claude and all the men of the crew were

products of the great depression era. They dressed as they lived, without fan fare or elegance. When one has experienced hunger, and cold as had all these men, only warmth, not style, became the critical factor of dress and appearance.

Although he was dwarfed beside it, Claude seemed to live with and for the mammoth Washington Estep diesel that was his charge and his responsibility. In remembrance I see him constantly hovering over it as if to discover some tiny need or Double which might be affecting the performance of the great beast. With a cotton rag in hand he would touch it here and wipe it there, always gently, as if it were a noisy child. At frequent intervals he would circle the roaring machine with a small, long-spouted oil can poking it into the cams, levers, rods and wheels that made the thing run; it was an endless procedure. He was totally immersed in its well being—and his point was well taken, it was the iron giant upon whose back we all rode.

During my time with the *Doris* there was only one serious incident which befell the engine. A piston ring broke scoring a cylinder wall. The damage could only be corrected through hours of hand rubbing with an emery cloth by a string of unfortunate individuals recruited for the task. To smooth the damaged wall one had to crawl into the base of the engine, rest his back against the connecting rod, then reach up the cylinder to the affected area and rub it briskly with emery cloth to remove the scratches. Each recruit could work for only a few minutes because of the awkward body position and the overwhelming vapors inside the engine. Although the repair effort was pretty straightforward, Claude rotated about the scene like a mother hen. His severe depression, created by the breakdown, departed only after the engine had been buttoned up and started—it ran like a top.

Claude Graham was a fine and gentle man who was always kind to me. He continued on as Chief Engineer after the cannery fire and the sale of the *Doris* to new owners. She remained in the Chichagof area hauling scows of fish from the former Port Althorp traps to another cannery located at Hawk Inlet. On a dark night in 1943 a new skipper was in command. The decision was made to lay over and tie up at an unburned section of the old Port Althorp dock in order to make a fair morning tide. Claude Graham was standing by the bow line as the Doris approached the dock piling. There was a miscalculation in the approach to the landing and the *Doris* slammed into the piling throwing Claude overboard—he drowned in the darkness where we had often moored the Doris in times of joy, excitement and the high adventure of summer.

In 1947, the *Doris E.* would again be heading north in her annual migration to the salmon grounds of southeastern Alaska. Aboard would be David Graham, Claude's 21 year old son, now a fresh deckhand on the boat. She was running light and making good time when her helmsman picked a course too far east of the light on Cattle Point .The Doris struck a shallow bar at full speed, a scant mile from the southwest corner of Lopez Island. Although little damage was done to the boat, the resulting jolt threw David overboard into the black waters surrounding Mummy Rocks. In a tragic irony almost impossible to comprehend, the heavy tide running down San Juan Channel carried him away and his body was never found.

Upon hearing of the accident the next morning, Norman Hodgson, then farming at Richardson, dressed for the sea and started for a motor skiff to search the rocks for David or his body. The morning was vicious with high winds and a roaring surf. Norman was forcibly restrained from what would have been a suicidal mission and the population of Lopez Island added the name of David Graham to its long list of men lost at sea.

Kato Schwalling Second Engineer of them *Doris E.*

Kato Schwalling, Second Engineer on the *Doris* was the kind of kid it was fun to be around. Perhaps five or six years older than I, he was an idol with whom I could identify as a peer, a friend and a discloser of adolescent information essential to the process of growing up. He felt it his personal duty to impart to me his extensive knowledge regarding life overall and the psychological and mechanical aspects of love, sex and women, but I realize, after a lifetime of living, that his information came as much from imagination as experience. Nevertheless, in class sessions convened on the aft hatch cover of the *Doris* his instructional efforts served to convince me that women were indeed endowed with those special gifts and talents which would make the years before me a roller-coaster ride of sexual joy and libidinous excitement. He severely overestimated my capabilities

Kato came from the small town of Marysville in the northern reaches of Puget Sound. He was a child of the "Thirties" finding an inordinate amount of pleasure in the few simple things that were obtainable in a depression family of very limited means. Kids of his time filled their lives with Tom Mix movies that cost a nickel and huge double-malted milks that cost a dime. Cheap pulp adventure magazines and Big-Little books were the literature of choice and the radio was the shrine of family entertainment.

Retreads for shoe soles were twenty-five cents (including glue) and you could cut a fine "beanie" hat from an old fedora if the sweat-band wasn't too grubby. Cord pants were seldom washed and most cars were still black. Kids sold *The Seattle Star* or *Liberty* or *The Saturday Evening Post* out of canvas bags or mowed lawns, delivered groceries or jerked sodas—anything to wring a nickel or a dime from a society that was on the skids and wanting.

But, in all the bleakness, there was a wondrous dichotomy to his time of growing. From universal want, there developed an eclectic integrity that laid a blanket of relative comfort and security across a people and a land in deep trouble. Women and children were usually safe on the streets—front doors weren't locked and the work ethic seemed a universal commitment. With deep compassion, men on the move seeking odd jobs for a handout were fed, with dignity, at soup kitchens or out of sight on back porches. It was a time when people became rich in the things they could do without; when simplistic pleasures brought color to the drab time and warmth and food were seldom if ever taken for granted. There was a cohesive caring in the most modest of neighborhoods and, most important, people maintained the faith to expect and await something better.

I'm sure Kato's formal education had been severely hampered by the necessity to earn some kind of pittance to maintain life in a time of genuine deprivation. For most kids the need to "help out" through the years of the depression far exceeded the vaunted pursuit of *higher* education; college careers are the birthright of more prosperous and prestigious times. Kato loved engines and through a fortuitous set of circumstances secured a berth as Claude's "second," tending to the many vagaries of the biggest engine he'd ever seen for a salary he'd only dreamed of. His considerable mechanical skills had been gained through natural aptitude and through an adolescence spent in the endless pursuit of twisting nuts and bolts. He relished the experience and spoke often of hopping up Model A Fords and "four banger" Chevys and making them run faster than the manufacturers ever intended. Kato, in short, was a "neat kid" and our times together are recalled with a bittersweet mix of laughter and sorrow.

The Alaska summers we shared were short and filled to the brim with the fun kids love to have—rowing in quiet coves—hunting with scarred Winchester 30-30's in evergreen woods drip with early morning rain—catching fish and telling dirty jokes. We exchanged a couple of letters after the cannery fire in 1940, but the war intervened and I never saw him again. As was the case with many, the lifespan allotted to Kato Schwalling

was infinitely too short for a kid who smiled and hummed loudly during most of his waking hours. We heard the news early in 1942, during the dark days of the early war in the Pacific. Kato had been killed by Japanese machine gun fire while crewing on an Army tug near Bataan in the Philippines. Some son of a bitch with a gun and a five-yen bullet had stolen all the years that were rightfully his. For me the news was a stomach punch of reality. God knows it would not be the last body blow I would feel in the war years yet to come. Our discussions on the hatch cover and the true innocence of the dirty jokes we shared had gone away forever. That was a hurt you could cry over.

Fred Foster, Cook of the *Doris E.*

Fred Foster, cook on the *Doris,* seemed almost fossilized, a truly ancient man. At one time I'm sure he topped six feet, but his many years had bent and grayed his frame like the curved rib of a Nordic folkboat. Born in Portland Maine in 1862, he shipped out aboard steam and sailing vessels through the 1880's. He caught gold fever in 1895 and joined the hordes of hopefuls in the rush to Alaska. Following the classic pathway of the dreamers, he sailed from Seattle to Skagway in 1897, crossed the Chilkoot Pass to Dawson and for a short time worked a claim on Kettle Creek with another fortune seeker. As was the case with others, he and his friend stopped their digging a foot too short. They gave the claim away to a seasoned miner who shoveled a bit deeper, hit pay dirty, and sold out in a week for forty thousand "1897 dollars" a staggering fortune.

Fred drifted up to Nome for a couple of years picking up odd jobs and cooking at timber camps then headed back to Seattle in 1900. Although he spoke to me easily of the early years, he pulled a veil over nearly three decades of Seattle living which I suspect were filled with the pain and afflictions of the south end of town. In 1938 when I first met Fred whom I always called Mr. Foster, he was 76 years old, crusty, and in possession of the heart of a lion. He carried the cross of advanced arthritis without a whine and maintained the minimal flexibility of his joints by constant applications of Sloan's Liniment, the smell of which formed a not unpleasant, but surely impenetrable aura about the man. It was the oil which kept his engine running and was accepted without question or comment by everyone aboard.

The job of cooking for a cannery tender Drew would have been an awesome and demanding task for a man half his age. He was up before dawn to face the irrevocable mandate of preparing three meals a day for seven or eight ravenous men in a pitching and

rolling kitchen little more than an arms reach across. He had joined the *Doris* under Owen Higgins as she slid down the ways in 1927 and was as much a part of her as was her keel or her galley. At an age when most men sought the rocking chair, he hovered like a bird over his cook stove and his crew for fifteen hard salmon seasons, a truly remarkable achievement. The door to his cabin, just aft of the galley on the port side, was two pain-laden steps above the deck. Many times I watched as he agonized over the climb and descent several times each day without complaint. Inside his cabin amidst the clutter of papers and smell of liniment was the ark of his covenant, an ancient Underwood typewriter upon which he wrote rather primitive poetry. The spelling and punctuation are Mr. Fosters.

If I only knew where the smiles are kept
No matter how far it-is away
No matter how strong the box would be
It would open I know for me

Then overall the land and sea
I'd toss them to the wind's
To carry them to all the Children
And Mothers through the land

I'd scatter smiles in the Clay ground,s
And through the schools and home,s
So I could see the boys and girls smile
At home and at School

How often I have seen Children
When they are out at play
One minute they are full of joy
Next minute in A fray
If I could only find the smile ,
And scatter them all around
I know the Children would smile
And quit that mean old frown

The window on Fred's world was the Dutch door on the port side of the galley. In all but the worst of weather he kept the top portion hooked back to watch an ever-changing spectacle of the world's most magnificent scene pass before his eyes. The Shipmate range was only an arm's reach away—an ideal situation for the cook/poet who must have been constantly torn between vistas and vegetables. Mr. Foster cooked well, his offerings were as basic and fundamental as a dump truck—meat and potatoes and other dishes comprised a fare that, in other circumstances, would raise hell with a belt size. The cold, wet, hard work that was a constant fare for a tender crew was an ideal countermeasure for the heavy daily menu. As the days of summer flew by I never saw anyone get fat, only tougher, harder, and more adept with their boardinghouse reach. Mr. Foster set a fine table

In a previous writing I described the social atmosphere surrounding a typical noon or evening meal. It seems reasonable to repeat the scene in this context.

Fred Foster would vigorously ring a small hand bell to announce meal times. The crew of seven or eight would file into the galley in an order which would allow each member to slide conveniently into his particular and inviolate spot. On the *Doris,* the Skipper sat on the port side of the long athwartships table then, in order, sat the Mate, the Chief Engineer, his assistant, then the deckhands. I was relegated to a spot on the table's starboard end, on the outside, so I could be sent on errands of minor importance if necessary. The skipper was always served first. It was as if he were a designated taster for the group, the only one capable of assessing the true value of the menu proffered by the expectant chef.

Like a wine taster, Norman Hodgson would look about, then nod his conviction that the fare could be shared by his underlings. An anxious Fred Foster would constantly hover over the table, dishtowel in hand, waiting for the inevitable praise that was so much a part of this tribal ceremony. Usually the skipper began the audible phase of the meal in a low, barely audible monotone, questioning the mate about the boat. "Was the towline chaffing? Was the compass course certain to clear Althorn Rock? How about that port side fender that had been torn on a trap log?" For some minutes the dialogue was a shared thing between Hodgson and the Mate. The galley would remain silent save for the bell-like clink of spoons stirring coffee which had already probably been stirred enough. Then Hodgson would spear his next target, and the continuing liturgy mighty go like this:

"Claude, that goddam forward winch is leaking oil on the goddam deck. See if you can't fix the goddam thing today before somebody steps in the goddam mess and goes overboard." Claude, who had already filled the top half of the galley with blue smoke from his Sherlock Holmes pipe would reply, "I gotta get a new seal for that thing Norm ... we'll have to order it from Ketchikan when we get back to the cannery." After a swallow of coffee, Hodgson would reply, "OK but don't forget to order the goddam thing. Every time I look out the goddam wheelhouse window I see that goddam oily patch and it's driving me nuts!"

Then, in all likelihood, it would be my turn. "Hey Eddie, did you clean out that goddam paint locker like I told you yesterday?" Not waiting for an answer he'd continue, "I swear if you was my kid I'd drown'd yah ... too goddam lazy to do what you're told and too goddam dumb to learn how to play crib...you better steal me about five of your old man's cigars when we get back or I'll kick your ass right off this boat." When I interjected that I had cleaned out the paint locker, Hodgson lowered his head slightly and mumbled something like "oh" into his coffee cup. Kato Schwalling, Second Engineer, would laugh softly then be impaled by Hodgson's dark eyed stare. "What's so goddam funny Schwalling ... want your ass kicked off this tub too?" Kato would stir a little more vigorously biding for time then say, "Skipper, this slab'd sink without me and you know it." Hodgson's "Hrrmmp" reply would be directed into the bottom of his tilted coffee cup and that bit of repartee would be history.

The galley was all things to us, but mainly a cloister in the midst of a savage land. Always secure and inviting, I see it now, a point of soft, yellow light shining against the torrential rain and intense blackness of some unnamed cove—the only spot in the universe where one might be safe and warm. The smell of late-night coffee and early morning bread mingle with the slap of playing cards and the voices and laughter of the men I knew and remember with so much joy. It was an incomparable place in a time of simple wonders.

Amazingly, Fred Foster left his cooking career on the *Doris* at the age of eighty to captain a small King Crab vessel he had built over a period of winters, an undertaking of monstrous proportions for a man his age. For two years he worked the boat in the vicinity of his old haunts around Glacier Bay and Icy Strait. A telephone call by his daughter in 1943 told of his quiet passing at the age of 82. Mr. Foster, the poet who also cooked, had made his last voyage.

Thor Thorstensen Deckhand of the *Doris E.*

Thor Thorstensen, some-time deckhand on the Doris, was the most powerful man I ever knew. Perhaps 6'5" tall and weighing 275 pounds, his body was as hard as a steel deck plate. Given to constant laughter and good humor, I saw him then and remember him now as being part gorilla and part flower, a delightful, gentle, giant. He drew his language from a word bowl filled with a Norwegian/English stew, combing the two tongues into idiomatic expressions which often left the listener breathless with the effort to understand. His favorite phrase of "Yeesuskrist" often substituted for subjects and predicates; and when particularly intense, he lapsed into pure, rapid-fire Norwegian then looked around amazed that no one knew what the hell he was talking about.

In the off-season, Thor was a professional wrestler appearing occasionally at the old Seattle Civic Auditorium as the feared and deadly Masked Marvel. Thor always entered the ring adorned with a bear tooth necklace. Although previously described in another story, the nature of the violent encounter which produced the teeth for his neck-piece seems worth telling again as an index to the quality and grit of this huge man. The scene occurred at the head of Althorn Bay on a broad tidal marsh bordered by mountains that shed perpetual waterfalls from tops which never cleared of snow—the scenery was breathtaking as were the events

One evening Thor decided to do a little trout fishing. Putting together a fly rod, he rowed to the shore from the gear scow and *Doris E.* anchored a quarter mile away. He had tucked a 30-30 trap rifle in the skiff just in case of an emergency and looked forward to a pleasant evening of quiet fly fishing. A small creek which emptied into the head of the bay was running bank full and amber-colored with June snow melt promising a probable abundance of Dolly Varden or native Rainbow trout. In a falling tide, Thor beached the skiff on a gravel bar close to the mouth. Taking his rifle and fly rod he worked his way up the margins of the creek wading through berry vines and tide grass always damp with summer rains.

Thor had fished for about an hour moving slowly up the stream from hole to hole, and had jammed about fifteen good-sized Dolly Varden trout on the dried spruce branch he used for a creel. The faint wind had shifted to the north, blowing from the tree line. He fast saw the female Brown bear as she pushed through the underbrush perhaps seventy-five yards away. Being upwind she got no smell of him and lumbered slowly

through the grass swinging a mammoth head from side to side as she moved toward his fishing spot. The rifle lay about twenty yards away on the bank. Thor crouched and started running toward it and toward the skiff which lay grounded by the receding tide on the gravel bar a hundred yards beyond. It may have been his movement or a crushed twig that alerted her. She rose up for a second, looked, spotted the running figure, then charged through the tide grass and willows after the Masked Marvel.

Thor grabbed at the rifle as he ran past, levered a shell into the chamber and swung toward the charging bear in desperation. He fired one shot which caught the animal twenty-five yards away full in the throat and knocked her down. Levering in another shell he feed again hitting her foreleg. She roared and rolled about in rage as he turned running for the beached skiff. In seconds she was up again and racing after him.

He reached the skiff with the bear only yards behind him, and pushed desperately at the bow trying to launch it. The tide had dropped slightly and the heavy rowboat only pivoted on the gravel, several feet from the receding tide. Thor leaped into the boat jumping toward the stern and levering another shell into the rifle's chamber. The bear was only feet away from the stranded skiff when he fired again hitting the sow full in the face--still she came on. The firing had attracted the attention of the men on the scow and they crowded the railing and watched powerless as Thor, with huge leaps, rushed into the water with the crazed bear only feet behind him. Hip-deep in the freezing water, Thor fumed and fired again at point-blank range. The bear reared up screaming in a welter of foam, blood and kelp. She lashed out wildly at the water with her huge paws, reared up again for a moment, then fell backward and died in the amber shallows five feet from the beach.

With the whole gear scow crew looking on, Thor trudged wearily from the water and sat resting for a time on the gunwale of the skiff. Then, laying aside the empty rifle, he dragged the bear's carcass above the tide line and into the grass. A couple of weeks later as the crew looked on from the scow, Thor went again to the beach and worked over the rotting bear carcass for some time. He returned with the animal’s teeth and claws which that autumn were made into a necklace by a Seattle jeweler. Phil Hastin told me that the Masked Marvel never appeared at Seattle's Civic Auditorium again without his bear tooth necklace which his handler carefully removed from his massive neck before the match began.

Ashore or afloat, Thor was recruited for every dirty or distasteful job requiring

outstanding physical strength and endurance—he never turned one down. He was an ideal "deckie" who could handle heavy tow lines and cable eyes with the strength of two full grown men while never seeming to tire. He often directed me to chin myself for as long as I wished from the end of his outstretched arm; laughing at my efforts, his arm never lowered and he always outlasted me. He was an exceptionally powerful rower and skiff handler, possessing those small-boat talents which were invaluable when working heavy scows or constructing fish traps on a tidal beach. But, Thor's real strength lay in his marvelous disposition. The peaceful giant seemed to receive all things and all people with a constant, gentle, acceptance which was as welcome and valued as his laughter or the powerful shadow he cast across the working afterdeck of the *Doris E.*

At the seasons ending, like many of the others, Thor melted into the anonymity of Seattle's lower end, emerging only periodically to pick up beer and bait money in his role as a professional wrestler. Even as a kid, I suspected his winters were dark and filled with the loneliness of too many rainy days and too many empty bottles—I loved the man and always wished for something better for the Masked Marvel.

Phil Hastin,First Mate of the *Doris E.* Captain of the *Eagle.*

Lopez Island is flatter than the other islands in the San Juan group making for fine summer tourist bicycling. In the spring the low hills and meadows are a verdant green from the winter rain and though summer brings some tawny yellows to the fields, the island, like a 1920's wool bathing suit, really never dries out. I love it there, peaceful in the feeling chat I am bound safe and secure, cocoon-like, in woven threads of isolation—I trust that's why people choose to live there. Given the opportunity, I may well have done the same.

To get to Phil's house, you take the blacktop road out of the village toward Mud Bay, pass Hummel Lake and the Peterson place and continue on toward Cape St, Mary. Eventually one turns onto a rutted dirt pathway marked by a home-made sign: Beyond that, a hundred yards of bouncing and bottoming-out ends in the back yard of Phil Hastin, former Mate on the *Doris,* Skipper of the old *Eagle, my* dear friend and my last living shipmate from the Alaska we used to know. He was born on Lopez Island and has lived there through his 84 winters leaving only to work the summer months on cannery tenders where we shared days and adventures. Phil is an island icon, known to everyone and is the proud possessor of a case-hardened opinion on every subject known to the mind of

man. In age his body is still wrapped with a semblance of the athletic vigor and quickness which were his three-quarters of a century ago. His mind is as keen as a store-bought boning knife, and he remembers all the worthwhile things we shared with a marvelous sensitivity of laughter and tears.

There are some broken fences on Phil's place. He runs about twenty sheep, a few head of cattle and slops twenty or so pigs with goodies he picks up at the village and feed he buys off-island. With all that stock to feed, meetings of the Historical (he calls it Hysterical) Society to attend, and political convictions to dispense, he really doesn't have a hell of a lot of fence-mending time. Last time we were together we took a minute, picked up and leaned a big broken gate against a Madrone tree. No point in fixing it, it wasn't keeping anything in or out anyway: We visit a little with Betty, they've been married for sixty years, then we wander outside, jump in the truck, and figure we'll take a little ride.

Prowling the graveled backroads of the island, Phil's old 70 Ford pickup stretches to do 20 MPH partially because of valve problems and partially because we talk a lot and don't do anything fast anymore. The interior is totally littered—papers, soda cans, broken garden tools, receipts for pig feed, a 22 rifle, a box of "shorts" and birdshot, an empty egg carton and maybe a small bottle of Vodka—held in reserve in case of a sudden hard freeze. The cab is also littered with memories which we pick up and reexamine as if we were seeing them for the first time. We bounce remembrances against each other like children playing with a rubber ball—one thing leading to another, to another, to another, weaving a crazy-quilt of water-borne adventures which bound us together on the *Doris* more than sixty years ago.

We always have to go down to Shoal Bay where Jeremy Snapp writes books and breathes life into old wooden boats and old iron engines—that's a favored place. Sometimes he's there sometimes he's not. Then there's a stop at Marguerite and Barney Goodrow's place, they're not home, probably in Anacortes. So, a short crawl to Norman Hodgson's daughter's place out above Richardson—Margaret Ann, (Norm's daughter) and Bob Jenison have old pictures we share and there's the crib board I made for Norm so long ago—she keeps it dusted. From their big front window you can see the surf break on Mummy Rocks where the Doris hit the shoal that night and David Graham was lost, and Norman Hodgson tried to go out in a skiff and find him. There's a vast panorama beyond that window, one of great slanting, yellowed meadows striding down to the

ruffled waters of The Strait of Juan De Fuca—everything painted today with a brush of the sunlit present and a touch of the tragic past. I'll never forget the beauty, nor the irony of the scene.

Like Higgins and Hodgson before him, Phil is a consummate waterman. As Mate on the *Doris* he brought aboard a package of ethics and skills I tried, as a child, to emulate. I recognized then as I know now they were the kinds of things that good guys said and did. As Skipper on the ancient *Eagle* he brought out the best in a shop-worn wooden boat as did her last fine skipper who lies at rest with her now in the coarse deep waters off Yakobi Island. In the old pickup the miles roll by almost a foot at a time as do the memories. We speak of heavy fogs, and heavy weather and of Kato and Norm and David—of good trout fishing and berry hunting, tide rips and shoals—of hot Devil-fish and too much red wine, and sometimes we speak of how much time we have left to share all the things that crowd back aground us. Phil wipes the windshield then his eyes. Small crying is a fault we both share while we recount the rush of gone-by adventures brought to a sharp simmer in the aged pickup and devoured by Phil and the old man he still calls "Kid."

Goodbyes at the Ferry slip are always prolonged and a bit nostalgic. The life styles and adventures we lived have been dented and scraped by the years, but in the retelling they become rekindled, grasping again the vivid life they had when they were new. Those memories are important to us both. When we are gone, they will be gone as well. Each goodbye brings a recognition that we are traveling toward that point together, and in the shaking of hands, there's an honest reticence to let go and turn away—as Phil says, those are the times it's well to keep the tear ducts open.

These then, are the men I remember. There are others who worked the *Doris* during her living, breathing, years. They became doctors and lawyers and even a Governor of Alaska, but they were aboard her before or after my time and their stories are pages from books that belong only to them. In retrospect I see theses friends of whom I've spoken as catalysts, change-agents, — an intrinsic part of what I have become, whatever that may be. As an immensely impressionable adolescent I was dipped in a mold of their making which has forever changed the way I talk, think and act. I extend my hand in thanks to each of them wherever they are. They taught me that a properly coiled line follows the sun, and that responsibility, at any age, is a part of living. They also made me a better deckhand, a position which I recognize as one of the truly

worthwhile achievements of my life.

Section III Passages

The realm in which the *Doris E.* played out her life and times lies in that portion of southeastern Alaska located in the immediate vicinity of the Alexander Archipelago. Admiralty, Baranof and Chichagof are the dominant northern islands in the group. One walks these islands with some care and alertness since they constitute a part of the domain of the great Alaskan Brown Bear. Probably separated by some tectonic plate movement eons ago, the three islands stand aloof in the harsh, gray waters off the Alaskan coastline, looking like huge stone weapons chipped from the continent. There are those who argue that these islands and the treacherous complex of waters which surround them embrace some of the most magnificent vistas to be seen on this planet—I tend to agree with that premise. My ancient chart, holed here and there and gratified by Loran coordinates and old course lines, sets forth a frightening litany of warnings about the violence of this place while totally ignoring its inherent majesty. It is, quite simply, a land so incredibly unique it must be seen to be understood.

From the storm ridden Gulf of Alaska to the west, a broad corridor of water dotted with islands runs eastward past the northern end of Chichagof Island. The passage, known as Icy Strait, opens on the north into the incomparable magnificence of Glacier Bay. It then turns southeastward and is blunted by the Mansfield Peninsula and the western shore of Admiralty Island. Split into two parts, that segment of the Strait heading north becomes Lynn Canal. The channel leading southward is called Chatham Strait. The latter forms a wide passage separating Admiralty Island from its two sisters to the west. These passages are huge, rough bodies of water and each has its own unique capability to destroy the careless or uninitiated. Lynn Canal has been described as "a funnel of horrible winds and storms," and is the scene of one of the great tragedies in Alaska's maritime history.

On an October day in 1918, the Canadian Steamer *Princess Sophia* ran aground on Vanderbilt Reef. Although appearing to be in no immediate danger she issued a distress call to which many vessels in the vicinity responded. Because of the heavy seas and winds, the Captain of the *Princess Sophia* refused to remove the passengers and crew and decided to remain secure on the reef until the weather improved the next day. During the night the winds increased and a heavy snowfall covered the scene.

Sometime after midnight the *Princess Sophia* slid off the reef and sank like a stone carrying 343 passengers and crew to their deaths. A dog was the only survivor.

The whole of this vast water empire seethes with monumental natural forces constantly effecting movement and change. It is the home of enormous ranges of mountains whose glaciers shed themselves into its wild and wind-torn straits. The straits, in turn, are lined with a thousand reefs and torturous passages demanding constant vigilance and respect. Tides of mammoth proportions create rushing currents whose speed is often greater than that of the small indigenous vessels who work and die here. Historic winds and breath-stopping rains constitute the normal weather pattern while, beneath the surface, the constant shifting of continental plates makes the magnetic compass shudder in confusion and disbelief. Painted with the ongoing threat of massive earthquakes and tidal waves, it is not an easy place for the sedentary soul

The elemental face of this land and its seas have changed drastically in the geologic wink of time which has passed since I was a child. Since the twenties and thirties glaciers have receded and extensive shoaling has occurred. Following the great earthquakes of 1958 and 1964 massive magnetic reorientation has confounded navigation. It is an area in constant flux, a place filled with vitality, spirit and breath-taking beauty. It is a living land bathed in the continuity of change, a treasured spot in which nothing is benign.

But, the birth of another season on a cannery tender begins in the Seattle hiring hall, one thousand miles to the south. In the spring, Alaska with its winds and weather, is still only a deckhand's last-year remembrance. The boats, newly painted and refurbished, free the mooring lines which have bound them to Seattle's Lake Union, pass through the locks of the Lake Washington Ship Canal, and head north on the eight hundred mile pilgrimage to Port Althorn and the fishing grounds. Should the tender be assigned the arduous task of a heavy tow, the journey will be made at the maddening pace of five or six knots at best, making the vessel a tethered goat in a land of roaming wind-tigers. If en route storms "blow up" at an opportune time, the prudent skipper can seek a place of refuge and await improving conditions. But, in times aboard the *Doris, truly* dependable weather forecasting services were decades away and more often than not, violence struck without warning. In early spring or late fall, oft-voiced fears of bad weather hung over the boats and their crews like a trap anchor tied with twine to the overhead.

On the journey to or from Alaska, two bodies of water open their storm windows to

the wickedness from the west. The first to be encountered, Queen Charlotte Sound, has a width of about 38 miles of hardship and trouble particularly in any variety of westerly. Like a dreaded trip to the dentist, Queen Charlotte Sound punctuates the north and southbound journeys with a toothache of anxiety regarding its crossing. For the elegant cruise ship or the thirty-foot troller the experience can often be worse than expected. Each year the *Doris* and her crew tip-toed north and south through the Sound's vagaries, oft times finding Queen Charlotte mill-pond smooth and, at other times, filled with the terrible rage of a woman scorned. It is safe to say that once the crossing was made, a visible relief was painted on the face of every man aboard, particularly Fred Foster whose galley had been laid awry and awash more than once by a beam sea with a three-thousand mile punch which began in the south Bering Sea.

The second window open to the west is Dixon Entrance, a baneful domain of wind, tide and weather, and a place I have feared since I was a child. This vicious, testing sea lies just south of Prince of Wales Island whose two southern capes, Cape Muzon to the west and Cape Chacon to the east are dreaded by manners and spoken of in soft-toned awe before the quiet firesides of December. It's a place I have symbolized as the land of the black, puking Cormorant, a bird I detest. Flying arrow-straight across its wind-topped waves, these vile birds seem an agent whose very presence there speaks of threat and of eternal evil.

There is just reason for a personal melancholy here. Early in the fishing season of 1938, Frederick Buschmann, just twenty-one, and a member of my extended family, was a crew member on the purse seiner *Eidsvold* out of Waterfall. She went down unseen and without a sound, leaving only her broken skiff and a torn life preserver on the rocky and hostile shoreline just north of Cape Muzon. For months following the tragedy, Fred's brother Richard, my closest friend, was tortured by dreams that Fred was stranded on the bleak western shore of Dall Island shivering in the bitter cold and wind and crying out to his mother and father for rescue. For over sixty years the specter of Richard's nightmare has painted my thoughts about this lonely and forbidding place. I fought my own demons therein years gone by and may well battle them again in times to come.

The drama of Dixon Entrance occurs when the villainous trilogy of wind, tide and weather conspire to destroy the unthinking or the unwary. The assault can be unexpected and final. From the open passage to the west, all the violence of the Gulf of Alaska is free to rush toward the shoreline manifesting itself into monstrous swells and heavy tides.

From the north, Cordova Bay and Tlevak Strait empty their immense containment of water twice each day, sending the flow south to collide with the tidal currents and swell moving in from the open ocean to the west. From these dual sources, the waters meet at Cape Muzon and Cape Chacon in a maelstrom of elemental proportions. Rushing winds from any point of the compass can then conspire to carve the waters into immense and violent storms which beggar description. In a shockingly short period of time, Dixon Entrance frequently becomes an unbridled horror.

The year of 1937 was decent by all accounts. Mid April saw the *Doris* in the company of Dall's porpoise moving northward in fine and quiet weather, creasing the glistening waters of the Strait of Georgia with a bow wave of confidence and expectation. There were Orca pods blowing in Johnstone Strait as there usually are. The glorious yellow-gray of granite shores and the deep green of pristine forests rolled by, virginal and unbroken, save for the sight of an anchored troller sunning itself in an inlet here and there. Wispy strands of high cirrus, with their ends turned up, crossed the sky and the breeze from their own passage was the only wind aboard. The silence of their morning was broken only by the sound of Fred Foster's pots and pans and Kato's humming. The crew no longer heard the constant rumble of the diesel nor recognized it as a part of their stream of consciousness.

Owen Higgins held to the eastern shore of Hecate Strait and by the time they were abeam Cape George, the *Doris* had been snugged down for the fifty mile crossing of Dixon Entrance. Now, a slight westerly, like a flickering fire, had birthed itself somewhere far out at sea, but it's gentleness spoke more of calm than of violence. Foster had washed the morning dishes and dampened the cloth on the galley table. The catsup, malt vinegar bottle had been laid flat and suitably braced to meet any threat ahead. Sandwich "makins" and four cans of brisling sardines were spread low across the dampened table cloth sure to survive any rolling or pitching ahead. A few mid-morning coffee cups were placed in the bottom of the sink, new coffee was made, and the iron bars were tightly slotted across the top of the cook stove to keep the pot in place. Foster tottered aft to his stateroom and moved his beloved Underwood typewriter from its place on the small desk to safety on the floor by his bunk. Up since four, he would rest for awhile.

By then, Phil Hastin had double lashed the skiff aft of the stack, checked the latches on the lazarette, then tied the massive manila fenders tightly against the toe rail—they tended to swing outboard in a heavy sea. He slowly made his way about the

deck checking the closure of cabin doors and windows, latching and pinning the foc's'l head doors, and looking aloft to the topping lift and to its belay at the port pin rail. All seemed secure. With final satisfaction, he climbed back to the wheelhouse, lit a Camel and ate a Hershey bar. Owen tapped the glass which dropped only three-tenths. He stared at it for a few seconds, weighed its reaction with a shrug, then turned back to the wheel. Phil once again studied the chart to renew his recollections of the course lines ahead—though merely an assurance of something he already knew, it was a personal wheelhouse habit which spoke volumes of the man.

There was an intense bond between the two. Each respected the other's particular capabilities and each was confident and comfortable in his place in the hierarchy of command. That mutual respect, built on the past sea trials they had shared would last each a lifetime. Now they watched the totality of the sea and sky around them seeking some glimpse into the hours which lay dead ahead. Below, Claude and Kato had cleared the work bench and engine room sole, lashed their dilapidated chairs to a stanchion and locked the Johnson bar in its place against the forward bulkhead. The engine room was secure. If it were to be, the *Doris* would be ready for a blow.

To the west, Rose Point on the tip of Graham Island, was the last bastion protecting them from what was to come. They passed it in innocence just past noon. Some off-shore cloud cover began to drape the scene turning the sky flat gray like a dead mackerel. With it all, the westerly continued to build. It tugged at Phil's Mackinaw whipping at its corners and bending the brim of his Sou'wester as he stood outside the wheelhouse, grasping the pipe rail and watching the mounting sea. An hour and a half and fifteen miles north of Point Rose, the wind had shifted to the northwest and was coming now in gusts which raced across a rising sea already roiled with tidal masses from the north and west. To avoid the hammering of the heavy beam sea, Owen reluctantly reduced speed and began alternately tacking back and forth seeking a softer way of going—there was none; it had begun to rain.

The gulls and their cries had long since gone, soaring downwind to huddle in the safety of the lee shore. Half way across the hellish place the untouched coffee pot somehow slipped its moorings. It fell from the stove, spewed its contents of water and grounds, and became a loose cannon rolling across the galley floor with a clamor ten times its size. From below there was the sound of other things crashing, banging and rolling that had never crashed, banged or rolled before. The waves had become wind-torn

mountains and the *Doris* was bathed in the sea sweat of her efforts. Glazed with spray and falling rain, she moved as much in the vertical as the horizontal, rolling and pitching without respite in the savagery of the tide and wind-borne waves. She struggled for headway like a swimmer whose arms have become dangerously tired. Alternately, bow up and bow down, she sought the depths, shoveling green water over the wheelhouse then, in fear of going under, rising again and again to shake herself like a wet dog seeking breath and surcease from a sea too powerful and too abusive to endure.

Black diesel smoke cleared the stack and was instantly vaporized by the feral wind. The noise on all sides immersed the mind in a concert of creaking timbers, crashing swells and crockery, a laboring engine and the goddam banshee winds which swept across Dall Island and Cape Muzon with every intention of destroying them. For the first time in a lifetime at sea, Phil Hastin became seasick. Fighting a valiant battle he final accepted the inevitable and contributed what was left to leeward. There was ample justification. He was not alone.

In such a passage, time is not reckoned in the language of passing hours or days. Like life, it is rather measured in terms of slow `and steady progress toward a distant promise of peace and respite. In such seas, headway seems a cruel myth and one is prone to believe there will be no ending to the ravage of the journey. The vessel and its people must reach out to grasp the faith that each turn of the screw brings the craft imperceptible inches nearer to a place of sought solace and quietude. Without commitment to that faith, a journey or one's life can be likened to the fabled legend of the *Flying Dutchman;* that of sailing for eternity through dark and terrible storms, closing on, but never reaching the blessed refuge of a short.

There were two more endless hours to be suffered and endured until the wind recanted and softened its anger against the southern hills of Prince of Wales Island. With the welcomed lowering of the seas, the cadence of the diesel increased and the *Doris,* bent but unbroken, headed up Revillagigedo Channel toward Ketchikan, a town with wooden streets whose whorehouses perched on stilts. The galley had long before become an affliction of disorder and chaos. Water, ankle deep, sloshed against the bulkheads. Fractured cups and saucers littered the blood-red cabin sole. A wayward loaf of white bread unsliced and sodden, had lost its identity against a table leg and a head of lettuce, falling from some perch, lay in the filthy mess like a child's green rubber ball. The black-iron galley stove had been extinguished in deference to the violence around it.

The cross-barred top was as cold as a gravestone. Utensils and pots and pans, hanging from the bulkheads, still swung back and forth in the relative calm of the channel swell tracing their faint arcs of wear against a brilliant white background. Their movement tolled only an absurd silence like a church bell without a clapper. The time of need for prayer had passed.

For the *Doris* and her crew the trial was over. She slid smoothly into a mooring at a barnacled fish float near the cannery at Ward Cove. Beneath a clearing evening sky now turning red, the small lights of town winked on, challenging the coming darkness one by one. It had been, quite simply, the worst weather any of them had seen. It was a time to be thankful for the *Doris* and her way of going, for the through-bolts which held her together, and for that shared intangible spirit that had carried them through what I am convinced, is now, and will forever be, the evil realm of the black, puking Cormorants.

We didn't work all the time. I recall a Sunday at Port Althorn when the *Doris* lay fallow, tied against the plank-topped log float where the mail plane came in. There wasn't much to do so I decided to take a company skiff and row to the remote and sheltered head of the bay. The boat was painted a repulsive dull red color, dirty inside and required a great deal of bailing with a rusty salmon can. She was heavy planked and about as ugly as a narrow-beamed, slab sided rowboat could be. When the company made them to float, I could never understand why they built them to sink, as heavy as a lead ingot—they were a bitch to row. It was about a mile and a half trip one way, but if you picked up the last of the flood you could row and coast a bit on the way up then return with ease in slack water or better yet, the beginning ebb. If you fought the tide it would be a long day.

It was a magnificent morning with bright sunshine and no wind. The barometer and the weather had been high and beautiful for days. When the weather turned fine at Port Althorp, people became despondent and suspicious, fearing there was something dreadfully wrong. It was, quite simply, God's will that it rain there all the time. I threw a light fishing pole, some bait, sandwiches and a Winchester rifle in the skiff and watched the *Doris* and the cannery grow smaller and smaller over the transom with each pull of the oars. I rowed very close to the western shore through nearly slack water passing between patches of shoreline alternately painted yellow green by the morning sun or shadowed into a deep, verdant emerald by the towering firs lining the shore. Outboard two-hundred yards from the rocky beach, gulls argued over some kind of carrion, probably fish eggs or guts cast off and tide-carried from the cannery, now a fading sight to the north.

This morning, the dished mountain behind the cannery was painted a mottled light and dark green. Its open crater was tipped toward me and its insides were black-shadowed by the very steepness of its own creation. Solidly covered with timber, its carpeted flanks were marked here and there by the bone-gray trunks of trees quite randomly selected from millions of others of their kind to die from this cause or that. Singled out at the beginning to be victimized by fate, they suffered the ultimate indignity of being destroyed and left still standing. In the branches of these condemned, it was easy to see an occasional eagle or raven at rest, thus even their mute deadness served a purpose.

The geological history of what I had decided at first sight to call "Dish Mountain," was so clearly written this morning that I could understand it with ease. There was almost a sensing of the cataclysmic volcanic explosion which must have occurred to reduce a once-high mountain to what it had now become, only half a mountain and half-crater. I had always wanted to peer over the side of it, to see what was at the bottom—it could have been done in a half- day climb. But, there were lots of brown bear about and sadly, I was too young and much too cautious to make the effort. At one dark point on the near shore perhaps a half mile into the journey, a group of chocolate brown river otter, whose energy never ran down, played like children in a small stream entering the bay. I caught glimpses of them swimming below the surface with the speed and grace of gamefish, seeking nothing but the enjoyment of the morning and the company of others of their kind. Symbolic of this land, they observed me with fearless curiosity, then sensing no threat, returned almost immediately to more important things at hand.

I was at it for an easy hour and a half, with the rasping oarlocks and dripping oars creating the only noise in my universe. At last, I passed the small island and southwest point which guarded the entrance to the head of Port Althorp Bay. Fifty yards beyond, the last dainty headland graciously .stepped aside and the refuge I sought lay before me. The end of the bay formed a circular body of water perhaps a half-mile wide, totally rimmed by rich, brown tide flats and a gray, graveled shoreline. Beyond that, a broad expanse of yellow tidal grass, like a lion's mane, terminated in thick green foliage at the forest's beginning, two to three hundred yards from the shore.

Several months before the place had been stuffed with the overwhelming human presence of the trap building crew. Thirty men in oilskins ran about, lifting, yelling and cursing the wet misery of their labors and their tide-soaked feet. The donkey engine on

the gear scow worked steadily during each period of low tide pulling logs, snorting fire, blowing its whistle with needless regularity and scaring the hell out of anything wild for miles around. The beach and tidal meadows had been scarred and scraped by the drag-paths of countless trap logs and the devastation of sixty or seventy cork-booted feet. In short, the place looked for all the world like a head of uncombed hair.

But now, with oars still dripping, I turned toward the bow and was stunned at the miraculous transformation which had occurred. By tidal action and the respite of a few short weeks, the place had again become untouched and virginal as if no one had been there since the beginning of time. I floated in a mirrored world of forests, right-side up and upside down, the images cast back and forth between timbered reality and the reflected magic of a sea without a ripple. The ugly skiff had become something akin to a magic carpet, suspended in crystal clear water twenty-feet deep, while the bottom, speckled with red and gray gravel, seemed only an arm's reach away. A couple of unused trap logs lay above the tideline a quarter of a mile away, but aside from that discordant intrusion, it was as if humanity had blissfully by-passed this spot rushing on it's way to somewhere else. For a minute I held my head still and sensed a silence so profound it was at once unique and unnerving—the tranquility of the place was absolute.

I grounded the skiff on a graveled bar, then realizing a task undone, picked up the rifle and threw the lever forward and back putting a shell in the chamber. Instantly I was sorry. The alien metallic clatter of the act of loading the weapon seemed raucous and frightening in the utter stillness that enveloped everything around me. The ugly finality of the sound didn't belong in this place. It bounced across the tidal meadows, banged into the timbered verges of the bay, then returned as an equally unpleasant and inappropriate echo. Sound was a cruel disturbance here, and its distasteful impact had set a raven to flight from a spruce branch at the edge of the forest's beginning, three-hundred yards away. A small creek flowed gently between two low rocky banks on my left emptying its icy, amber waters into the sunlit silence of the morning. It would be a good place to fish.

From the skiff to the creek's first shallow pool was a distance of only fifty yards, the maximum distance I would stray — I wanted no traffic with bears. The view towards the timber was unobstructed, and should one appear, I could spot it immediately. My massive caution and terror stricken feet could put me in the skiff and out of harm's way in a few seconds. I fished for the better part of two hours as the morning turned the corner

into a warm, delicate afternoon. It was as if I were totally alone in the universe—that no one had known or experienced this place before. Aside from the buzzing of a few miserable little mosquitoes we called "no-see-urns", I saw only eagles lazily traipsing across the granite cliff faces above the forest and small red-throated hummingbirds who pushed their noses into the fragrance of light purple blossoms which lined the green margins of the pond.

I had caught five unimpressive Dolly Varden trout and was baiting my hook when some kind of small animal confrontation erupted in the short underbrush perhaps a quarter mile from where I stood. The first faint rabble of squeals and rustle of brush exploded against my senses like a shot, widening my eyes and bringing my whole being to the knife edge of an adrenaline high. The skirmish between my small unseen neighbors, surely no bigger than mink or martin, was over quite as soon as it had begun, but the fishing was finished, the fear of bear persisted and it was tough to bait a hook with shaking hands. Also, the ugly red skiff would have to be pushed to the tideline — it was probably a time for leaving.

The ebb tide which would carry me back to the cannery had just begun. A tiny southerly breeze had worked its way over the crags above the timberline bringing a faint ruffle to the mirror stillness that had been my lot since I arrived. I rowed a hundred yards off shore then stopped to seek the last draught of stillness that transfixed the scene. The beauty and tranquility that lay before me at that moment is still fresh after sixty years of remembering. Even then, as a youth, I felt a reluctance to leave it all. Looking down at last I saw the brown bag of my lunch propped between the ribs above the skiffs bilge. I shipped the oars and ravenously ate the entire ham sandwich and three cookies I had brought with me. The thought crossed my mind that the experiences of the day must have been very special indeed to make me forget to eat my lunch. At my age, that was a thing that seldom if ever, happened.

1939 was a handsome year for pink salmon. The voracious traps in Icy and Chatham Straits were particularly productive and the fleets of Port Althorp cannery tenders scurried about like water bugs trying to deliver the resulting catch to the cannery. Wine must age, but fish is a volatile and fragile commodity. There can be no exultation until it's in the can. Now came the time when men and boats gave up the luxury of rest. Shunning a bunk, the crew on the *Doris* stole only short naps while underway, dozing on hatch covers or with their heads in their arms on the galley table. There was a constancy

of noise and activity. The huge Washington diesel ran day and night, regulating, in its way, the actions and content of their lives. In the course of shutting the engine down for an essential oil change, the silence brought a strange uneasiness as if a heart had stopped beating. Comfort and security returned only when the air starter revived the thump of pistons, and the clatter of valves, and her bow wave proved she was underway again.

Small vessels like the *Eagle* brailed fish directly into their holds and serviced those traps closest to the open sea and most plagued by heavy weather and swell. A towboat and fish scow were unmanageable in such conditions. These "outside traps were relatively close to Port Althorp thus their catch was delivered directly and almost daily to the cannery. The *Doris* and *Sally* however, were used in an ingenious relay pattern to braile and deliver fish from traps located farther away in Icy and Chatham Straits. They emptied the salmon from their assigned traps into scows perhaps 25 feet in width and 60 feet in length which had a capacity of about 30,000 fish. When full, the fish laden scows were towed to the cannery where the fish were processed for canning. The *Sally,* servicing the most remote traps, up to seventy miles away from the cannery, would deliver her loaded scow to an agreed upon rendezvous point at the Sisters Islands close to the conjunction of Icy and Chatham Straits. The *Doris,* which had already brailed her assigned traps on the way to the rendezvous at the Sisters, would then take both scows in tow and, with the hammer down, head for Port Althorp fifty tide-ridden miles away.

The twentieth of 1939 was a bad day for the *Doris.* She had brailed her traps on the way to the Sisters Islands and, with her fully loaded scow, dropped anchor at the rendezvous. The anchorage at the Sisters Islands was adequate for the purpose of temporary moorage, but there was a great deal of reefing and fouled bottom in close proximity—a fine place for the unexpected to occur. The *Doris* and her crew waited impatiently for the *Sally* to appear, but she had encountered difficulty in brailing the trap at Point Hepburn and, as a result, returned in mid-afternoon, late, out of breath, and towing a scow load of thirty-thousand humpback salmon.

When the *Doris* attempted to raise her anchor, Claude discovered that it had fouled in rocks on the bottom. With Norman Hodgson screaming from the bridge, the winch clutch smoking and the *Doris* churning from every angle attempting to dislodge it, the chain suddenly parted and the six-hundred pound anchor became forever a part of the lore of the sea. It was the first knot in a tangle of misfortune. With a flattened

cigar between his teeth and a curse in his heart for the two hours wasted on the anchor, Norman Hodgson maneuvered alongside the *Sally* and her tow. Phil Hastin and Kato leapt aboard the scow and attached the scows together, line astern, on sixty-foot coupling lines. As Hodgson brought the *Doris* alongside, the two jumped back aboard and fed one-hundred yards of towline through the stem fair]ead to the lead scow. At Norman's direction, Phil and Kato secured the huge manila line to the tow bit and the entourage turned north then east out of the anchorage. A westerly headwind had just begun to whisper its way down Icy Strait.

Because of the delays created by both vessels, the *Doris* had missed the favoring tides by hours and the only option was to play the game with the cards they had been dealt. Two hours of running put them abeam of the small mountain on Pleasant Island and they calculated their speed at about 71/2 knots...not too bad with a two-barge tow and a whimper of adverse tide. That would leave them about five hours running time to the cannery barring bad currents or wind. For Norman Hodgson the situation called for a new Mozart cigar, and for Phil Hastin, a large Hershey Bar followed by a fresh-lit "tailor-made" from his pack of Camels. The night had darkened into a twilight which drained the world of color, leaving only dim outlines serving to define the sea, earth and sky. The wind had vanished; there was no moon and a gossamer haze had settled across the channel like a down quilt. To avoid tide rips in the South Pass, Norman had chosen a slightly longer but more secure route to the north; tidal problems could raise particular hell with two scows in tow.

Through the red glow of the binnacle light, the two talked of fouled anchors, salmon and the whims of fate. From time to time, Phil reviewed the chart and directed the beam of the spotlight back toward the two laden scows checking the towline and assuring that all was well astern. These were hours of respite for them both as time and the journey ticked by midnight and into the next day. Another hour's running put the *Doris* and her two scows just south of the entrance to Glacier Bay, another eight miles closer to their destination and a hot shower.

The light on the north cape of Lemesurier Island flashed its six second darning with monotonous and soothing regularity; they were right on course. Their speed, with the welcomed help of a beginning ebb tide, had picked up to a respectable 81/2 knots, bringing a good mix of confidence, comfort and warmth to the wheelhouse. It was a very pleasant night, and all things aboard and about were precisely as they should be.

A minute later a sudden impact and thunderous report sent both Phil and Norman reeling against the port bulkhead in the wheelhouse. The *Doris* had suffered a crushing blow on the port bow which sent her in a wild yaw to starboard. Norman grabbed at the controls slowing their speed then, aware of the two loaded scows bearing down upon them from astern, he pushed the massive levers slightly forward again. There had been first the crash, then the sound of a welter of plates, cups and other objects jarred loose in the galley. Moments later, a chorus of four-letter yelling and cursing issued from every part of the boat. In ten seconds, without direction, Phil Hastin had descended the bridge ladder and had disappeared into the foc's'1 head to evaluate the damage. Grabbing the spotlight handle, Norman rotated the light aft of the port beam in time to see a massive flat topped iceberg awash in their bow wave and moving rapidly astern close to their port side. Calved from the wall of McBride Glacier days before, the berg had drifted aimlessly southward until coming abreast of the tidal inferno at Willoughby Island. At that point, the tide rushing south at eight knots had carried it directly into the course line of the *Doris* where it lay hidden in wait, just below the fog carpet that spread out before them.

Still underway, Norman spun the spotlight forward then astern to check the tow. All seemed secure. Five minutes passed until Phil's head appeared in the foe's'l head as he shouted a report of no sign of water in the forward bilge. Beside the mast, Thor dressed only in gray winter underwear looked up at the open wheelhouse window and screamed "Yesuscristvatindegoddamhelleesgoingon?" He had been sound asleep in the foe's'l and thrown from his bunk by the sudden collision. Fred Foster, also awakened by the crunch, had made his painful way to the galley. His shouted "Son of a bitch," was an ample description of the devastation inside. Phil, Kato and Claude assembled in the wheelhouse with Norman Hodgson. All were amazed that no extensive damage had occurred. In fifteen minutes, after a thorough spotlight check of the surrounding waters and the two scows astern, Norman pushed the governor handle forward and they resumed speed altering course slightly to the south to circle Inian Island.

Perhaps forty five minutes passed until the *Doris* began laboring and gradually losing way. A panic check of the bilges showed no problems, and the lead scow astern seemed to be towing well although its bulk and the fog blanket obscured a careful examination of the trailing scow. In another mile, the *Doris* veered sharply to starboard and stopped as if she'd been suddenly moored to a mountain. Norman spun the

spotlight toward the stern and the situation which met their eyes can be best described by Phil Hastin:

"Eddie, you couldn't believe it! The damn trailing scow looked like a duck with its ass sticking clear up in the air—just like a mallard duck feedin' in the shallows! That iceberg had punched a hole in the rear scow and she started taking on water and going down by the bow—we couldn't see what was happenin'. After a few miles, the whole load of fish slid forward—hell, all that weight pushed the bow deeper and deeper into the water until the ass-end raised up and the whole load dumped out—thirty thousand Humpies floating around—yeah!"

Phil chuckled and continued: "The tail-end scow just wallowed around half sunk after the load dumped. She wouldn't sink all the way yah know, being wood n'all that. It was sure a bitch of a job to get both them scows back to the cannery with one loaded and one half sunk—like draggin' an anchor. It was near noon before we got t' the cannery. We didn't lose everything though. I pitched twenty-three Humpies out of the rear scow, that was all that was left floating around in there—ain't that a hell of a note! I joked about it being some different than the thirsty thousand we'd started out with, but your dad didn't think that was too funny." Phil chuckled and went on: "Hell Eddie, the *Titanic* hit that iceberg and killed all them people—all we lost was thirty thousand Humpies—we didn't have a band playing either—more fish where them come from—yeah."

There were many passages aboard the *Doris* and alt became threads in the tapestry of those years of adventure I spent aboard her. Fog, storms, wind and rain were a part of our daily reality. In the relatively rare times when good weather prevailed, Port Althorp and the Straits were transfigured into a land of heart-stopping beauty. Here one was constantly assailed by the sheer magnificence of the earth's most elemental features. Without a turn of the head, there was a tremendous arrays of towering, snow-covered mountains, immense glaciers, broad seas, untouched timbered mountains, granite crags, wide highland meadows and quiet coves of such beauty they defied description. Being young, one easily became oblivious to such splendor and it is only in the memory of those times and places that the sheer scope of the wonder of the place can be remembered, recaptured and embraced.

The immensity, sights, sounds and smells of the land are what I remember best. The scale of the earth structures here was gigantic, virtually impossible to comprehend. I recall the old Bellanca mail plane as the only measuring stick against which I could

finally place my surroundings and recognize the immensity about me. One could hear the engine noise of the plane long before it ever became a presence. The sound would emerge as a faint hum against the mind, growing louder only after an interminable time of waiting. In this arena of mountains, which I felt 1 could reach out and touch, the plane was suddenly infinitesimally small, beginning as a far speck in the sky, watchable, visible, but miles away and totally dwarfed by the bastion of timbered peaks that surrounds us everywhere. Thee was so much space to traverse that the plant seemed to crawl across a blue void toward us leaving one with the feeling that; in fact, it was an illusion which would probably never arrived.

At last, as the plane finally drew closer, even the lowest pinnacles around the cannery towered over its flight path and drowned its sight and sound into obscurity against the green forests which covered them. After a time, it would emerge again assuming its own identity, still far off, but now displaying the unmistakable colors of wings and fuselage against the mammoth backdrop of timbered peaks. Minutes more and it could be seen to descend and, at long last, crease the waters of the bay with twin white slashes that disappeared as soon as they were created. Only when it reached the float did it suddenly become a full-scale airplane, illustrating somehow the infinite borders of the sea and dearth around us.

In the presence of stores this whole world was painted gray. Vision remained but color vanished and the world became a single-hue continuum with glacial white at one end and black, timbered, shadows at the other. There was an impersonality about such colorless times, a drab sameness that left one truly longing for the sun. When it arrived, the transformation was, at once, dramatic and complete. As the *Doris* headed northwest out of the bay on fine mornings, dead ahead and far away the rampart of the Fairweather range, fourteens thousand feet high and perpetually snow laden, glistened in the morning sun. Brady Glacier, ice-blue and tarnished-white tilted toward us like a giant frosted meadow ending abruptly in frozen cliffs that dropped into the intense blue green of Taylor Bay.

Turning east, the world narrowed through North Inian Pass and the yellow light of a summer sun gave a sense of warmth to the steep, crevassed granite banks which rose from the shore to the forest's beginning. Stellar Sea Lions lounged on the massive rocks, wet-dark-brown or dry-beige, they remained alert but unconcerned at our intrusion. At intervals through the pass, huge logs the color of a chocolate bar, were cast like jack-straws

across bouldered beaches, carried there by the mammoth tides and swift currents that were so much a part of Cross Sound and the Straits.

In full sunlight, the forested mountains became almost lemon-yellow while the shadowed timber stands remained dark havens of concealment. Like a visual dividend, the realities of everything around us vas inverted and cast back in equally intense reflected images on the placid blue of the seas we were crossing. In the water-mirror around us, the sparkling white bow wave of the *Doris* would briefly erase the earth's reflected images, but they would reappear in the passing swell as undulating counterpoints of the reality which had created them. Even in feeble sunshine, the whole of the scene became so texturally rich and so color intense that, at times, it seemed suddenly new and totally unfamiliar—as if never really seen before.

The smells of this small universe were equally dramatic, ranging from the sordid stink of rotting fish to the rich, many faceted nuances of brackish tide water. Underway and forward of the stack on the *Doris,* the breeze of passage was pristine, a scent of trees and salt water, scoured and crystal clear. Aft of the stack, the morning air was usually colored with the delicious quality of Foster's doughnuts and the ultimate practicality of diesel smoke. And, of the men aboard Fred Foster was, of course, Sloan's liniment and Kato was lubricating oil, Phil Hastin was Camel cigarettes and Hershey bars and Norman Hodgson the clinging trace of Mozart cigars and washed clothing. Claude's scent was from his heavy mackinaw, axle grease, and an ancient pipe which, to the best of my knowledge, was never cleaned.

Aboard, there was always the baseline odor of heated coffee, enamel paint and "diesel engine" mixed somehow with the aroma of creosote and tarred seine-twine. New manila line had a sense of the jungle about it, but as it aged, it picked up the iron smell of the towbits about which it had been wound. All hip boots smelled the same and yellow slickers had a characteristic and distinctive aroma distilled from the oils used in their making. Rope fenders carried the scent of green algae and second-hand sea water, and the blue ticked mattresses bore, to me, the odor of rank hay from the bottom edge of the stack.

In my quiet times, the voices of over half a century ago can still be heard. They arrive in concert with the small mannerisms that constituted the "soul" of the men aboard—those things which set them apart, one from another. There are also sounds of the long past, the faint "tick" of a massive towline as it strained under the load of a heavy tow—the

growl of winch gears and the soft purr of the turning propeller shaft—the myriad clinking sounds of Fred Foster's galley—the engine room bell and, late at night, the pervasive quiet of the world. *The Doris* was a mix of all these sensual experiences. The remembrance of the smell, look and sounds of her is oft-times strangely triggered in my life today. Such clashing instances renew the connection between us which has not dimmed in a near lifetime. There is a totality of remembrance about her which, thankfully, will never go away.

Near the end of my times aboard the *Doris,* we had made a journey far down Icy Strait to effect some type of needed fish trap repair. I recall it as being a rather disagreeable morning and afternoon, late in the season of 1940 and just preceding the cannery fire which brought the idyllic adventure of Port Althorp forever to a close. It was a day of heavy rain, a mean pelting downpour which trickled down through buttoned coat collars and up oil skinned sleeves. Late in the afternoon we made for Inian Pass beneath clearing skies, knowing of the small, quiet bay where we could lay over and rest. At last the sun fell beneath the cloud's edges, erasing the day's grayness, and giving back to our world the yellows, greens, and blues which were its beauty and its birthright.

It was evening when we reached Inian Cove, a remembered place where in earlier days the crew often picked berries. The fading light of the hard day had become quite simply ethereal and I search for words to describe the remembered loveliness of the evening which enveloped us. Far to the south the channel was crowned with thunder clouds, now made benign and pearl-like by the falling sun. Seeking anchorage inside the sheltered cove, we glided into a Chinese painting of inestimable beauty and solitude. Here, in a dead slow passage, we were dipped in broad shadows of indigo and green cast down by the heights of the towering evergreen mountains around us. It was a palette of magnificence I have not seen before and will never see again.

Beyond the stem iron, the small inlet was wreathed in the silent half-fog of a T'ang tapestry. Black spires of spruce and hemlock pierced the moving mists while gulls, finished with the day's windy trials, sought sleeping places as they lined the heights with white tracings against the granite colored sky.

In a few minutes, the new anchor shattered the inverted images around us. A bell from the bridge and the engine's strident beat stopped and became only a memory of the harsh day. We were invasive. Ashore an evening creature of some size, unseen and

fearing us, dashed from the saw-grass into the safety of the trees leaving behind the loud rustling of its terror. After that, there was only the breathless quiet of the night and the peace and warmth we had sought since the journey's beginning.

Epilogue

There is, of course, a sadness in pursuing the details of the end of the Doris E. I was regrettably not there in her final days. It is only through research and the kindness of others that I can shed any light on what transpired toward the end when those of us that knew her best and were closest to her had gone away. From what 1 am told, she fell into the care of those who knew little or nothing of her beginnings and who, without question, failed to identify with her as we did. I attach no blame to anyone but admit to a deep sadness at her less than noble passing.

She was working in Frederick Sound near Sukoi Island in the late summers of 1952 when a fire started in the bank of batteries secured against the forward bulkhead on the starboard side of her engine room. Whether it was an inherent fault in one of the many batteries or something falling across a set of terminals no one can say. The massive short circuit heated the batteries to the boiling point filling the engine room with acrid fumes from the sulfuric acid contained in the wet cells. Rumor has it that the crew was unable to fight the fire either because of the acrid nature of the smoke or from lack of extinguishers and expertise. The blaze quickly spread to the overhead and she was towed, still burning to the beach behind Sasby Point across from the town of Petersburg, Alaska. There she was run aground.

An individual named Norton purchased her "as is" on the beach, and by fall she had been stripped of everything of value by Mr. Norton and local beachcombers. Norton, in turn, sold her hull to Mr. Glenn Reid of Reid Brothers Logging Company who towed what was left of her to a location on the beach in Scow Bay outside Petersburg, ----------[missing page 62 of DRAFT].