ATLANTIC WATCH





U.S. COAST GUARD

Later Forties





A Memoir 1946-1949

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"It's chilly this morning," I said.

"Not only that, but choppy with lots of white caps – you can tell winter's coming," Norm said. "It's December."

The thirty-six-foot motor lifeboat had three of us holding on in the open, but canvas protected, rear crew-area while it bucked waves head-on. Willard Orr, the Chief Boatswain's Mate held the wheel. He and Norm both wore foul-weather clothes. I had my dress blues and pea-coat on and felt the blustery winds.

Despite the coat, cold air slid down by my chest as the jumper allowed it due to its open neck area. Foul-weather jackets, that the others wore, covered navy-blue turtle-neck sweaters worn under work shirts. Wool stocking caps pulled down over their ears plus dungarees and heavy work-shoes provided protection and warmth from hard driven spray by waves incessantly striking the bow. Originally, one of Orr's crew, I rode one-way, as a passenger, to White Island more than six miles off the coast.

I had mixed feelings about moving. White Island, just a barren rock with a couple of houses and other infrastructure, appeared bleak. The station lacked electricity, running water and indoor plumbing lighthouses normally had. However, it would provide a new place and I'd get a new officer-in-charge – welcome changes. Chief Orr never really hacked it with any of us. A slow talker, he thrived on giving orders, and hard as he tried, never jelled relations with our young crew.

"These trips drag. Nine miles each way is a lot even under good conditions," Norm said.

"The lifeboats are good and dependable – but slow," I said.

"Yeah," agreed Norm. "You can't sink 'em. If they roll or get swamped, they'll self-right and dump the water back into the sea. We can tow boats twice our size."

"Out here, it seems no progress is made due to the distant shoreline. It appears to hold still. No encouragement at all," I remarked, glancing at White Island from the boat. "The couple acres doesn't amount to much. It's similar to Wood Island, the harbor station sits on. The difference -- it's out here."

Orr agreed. "The island's small. In fact, its nearly insignificant compared to the larger islands. The closest -- a mile or more away."

Slowly, we approached White Island while under protection of its lee side. Diminishing wave action on the boat gradually became noticeable. Staring at the nearby shore by the boathouse I saw the area, cut in two by a shallow opening and water pushing its way through a hundred feet wide chanel.

"When the tide goes out, it dries up," the Chief said. "You can ford the area then by walking over that stony section."

"Big deal," grunted Norm. "Why would anyone go there? What would they do?"

"Well, I guess nothing, but it's hiking space," the Chief said.

That didn't matter much to me, the area looked useless. The main portion of the island, containing the station, sat higher in elevation and better protected from the sea. Living quarters, situated on the inner side of the island, looked right at us. They stood

fifteen to twenty feet above the water and faced the distant coastlines of three states -- Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. Storms didn't bother the living area and seas supposedly didn't get close. The low-flat portion of the island, lost with high water, only added aesthetically to the area. It provided good habitat for birds.

Moving within a hundred feet of shore, Orr threw the clutch into reverse. Noisy vibrations sounded, as water against the prop changed direction, and signaled our arrival. He slid the gears into neutral. With louder screams, of free spinning rotation not under load, the boat wildly tossed and rolled.

Ahead, a small boat with two men slid down a greased slip and in minutes came alongside, rapidly bobbing up and down with the waves. The two boats required several of us to hold them together. A fellow in dress blues passed his bags up as mine went down along with the next week's provisions. I felt like a castaway while climbing down into the small boat which moved every-which-way with the rolling seas. That part didn't bother me -- I liked boats and felt comfortable on the water.

I held out my hand, "I'm George Tolman. You must be Doug. Happy to meet you."

"Good to have you, George. You'll like it here. The crew's good and the station's not bad, either. It'll grow on you," Doug said, watching the wave action while holding the small boat steady as possible with the bigger boat.

The seaman I replaced grabbed Doug's hand with a measure of affection. "So long Doug. Its been great. I won't forget you guys." He nodded to me and climbed up for his final trip ashore. Discharge meant time to leave.

back towards the coastline.

My short ride to shore immediately created a new experience. "You really are good at rolling and swaying with the waves, Doug. You make it look easy."

"It won't be long before you're doing the same," he said, guiding the boat over incoming seas. "Out here, handling boats becomes part of life. It's second nature."

Approaching the boat-slip on the island, where we'd get hauled up from the water, I watched a man standing at its lower end just above the water line. Holding the end of a cable that trailed back to the boathouse, he watched waves crashing in at the slip just ahead of him. They forced his occasional retreat to a higher level. I could see the tricky part would soon take place.

As we got closer, Doug, standing back in the boat, rowing in typical Coast Guard fashion, faced directly ahead. Closing in on the slip, he watched sea conditions while waiting about fifteen feet out from its end. As the peapod, our sixteen-foot double-ended boat, swayed and slipped over each oncoming wave, he said, "We'll get in as soon as a lull appears." One came. He dug the oars into the water and pushed. "We're going in." The bow headed straight for the slip and stopped on contact between the two rails, it slid a little sidewise within its well greased skids, then straightened out.

With quick agile movements, the seaman on the slip met the boat and rammed the hook-end of the cable into the steel eye on the bow. He stepped back. "Got ya'," he said. He quickly moved out of the way yelling, "pull 'er up." Lurching forward, the boat moved from the water. A second man, in the boathouse, had thrown the diesel into gear. Before

ashore.

Doug bellowed while climbing out of the peapod and onto the slip in front of the boathouse. "Okay, you dumb slaves, take this stuff up! What do you think you're doing? No time for napping." Everyone pitched in and grabbed supplies including my hand bag. I threw my seabag over a shoulder and followed up the steps. "After you drop all that stuff off in your quarters, everyone to my kitchen. Paul, take care of those jugs. Don't let Lester within ten miles of 'em."

First order of business included my getting acquainted. All of us took food, supplies and bags up the walkway to our respective houses. I'd already met Paul, one of the seamen with whom I'd share quarters. My other house-mate, ashore on liberty, would return in a few days.

We entered Larabee's kitchen. Doug grinned "Come on in," he said. "It's about time we discussed operation of this place. Things have been getting slack around here. Time to change that." It didn't take long to see who ran the place. Doug's voice likely resonated clear to Portsmouth. The biggest person there, and comparably authoritative, he made the day. Jolly during those initial hours, Doug seemed friendly and fair. The others obviously liked him. The group sat around talking and I felt at ease – as if I had been there for some time.

It didn't take long to get to know Doug who, at forty, always displayed an outgoing personality. Not many had his temperament. He seemed perfect for White Island. His booming voice, great sense of humor and a jovial personality made him a

To the gang, there couldn't have been a better officer-in-charge. Occasionally, an outsider might ruffle his feathers – I could see he'd better watch out. Doug's smile would easily dissipate or take on new meaning, as he later proved on occasion.

An *old salt* with a lifetime as a 'down-east'r' on lighthouses off the rocky shores of Maine, Doug obviously loved his work. Many years on Mt. Desert Rock, Portland Head and other lights, provided him good grooming for White Island with its unusual responsibilities. With him, came Lester Davis, a longtime booz-loving associate, as his number two man. Lester, also about forty, helped run the place. Both he and Doug were civilians acquired by the coast guard in 1939 when it incorporated the lighthouse service into its operations.

Doug, a married man and father of a fifteen-year-old son, spent most of his time on White Island alone in his family quarters, as did Lester. Their wives and families mostly remained ashore. During the summer, Doug's son Dick came on the island. He sometimes took over his Dad's watch and obviously liked the place. A seaman in his own right and two years younger than me, it seemed like having an addition to the crew. On occasions, Doug's wife visited for weeks or months, as did Lester's wife.

In addition to me, the crew included two other seamen. Bill Balnaves, a twenty-six year old New Jerseyite had an effervescent and buoyant character. He let nothing drag in his presence. Formerly a Navy Petty Officer, he enjoyed liberties excessively and twice had been broken back to seaman for drunken brawls. Paul Boone at nineteen proved quiet and friendly. He had another year and a half to serve on his hitch.

challenge than running down the side of the greased slip pushing the peapod; jumping in just before hitting incoming waves which would, on contact, drive the bow nearly vertically into the air. We'd do it on seas driven by winds – occasionally up to thirty-five miles per hour.

Remote lighthouses on islands, like Boone Island, had one, maybe two men on duty at a given time with another ashore on liberty. Keepers with those extremely lonely jobs had generous time-off allowances. Someone would always enjoy life ashore. We had an exceptionally large crew, White Island included both lighthouse and lookout duties. In addition to keeping the light glowing, our charge included keeping a watchful eye, in case of trouble, with fishing boats and others in the area, plus larger vessels farther out at sea.

We would operate as an intermediary with someone needing help. The plan revolved around radioing Portsmouth Harbor for their boat. In emergencies, our twenty-five footer could go down the slip.

Insuring station integrity meant round-the-clock watches from strategic locations that overlooked ocean areas surrounding the island. Our presence, at specific times, required a time-clock punched with numbered keys chained to posts located at remote lookout areas.

The winter ocean, constantly in motion, displayed immense power. Waves rolled and struck the exposed high rocky bluff on the island's outer edge by the light tower. Sometimes, they enclosed the entire tower with spray thrown more than ninety to a

hundred feet up. Even with the doors and windows closed, pounding sounds penetrated our living area. Occasionally, this battering and fast moving spray resembled rising rockets. Waves shot for the sky in thunderous claps and salt smell permeated the area. Toward the mainland, on the lee side by the slip, lapping sounds filled the air. The houses, beyond range of the sea, provided comfortable living space.

Dead seaweed rotted on tidal area rocks in the summertime near the base of the boat-slip creating unpleasant smells. Under a hot sun, the air loaded up with decaying matter and transported odors towards the boathouse. Dried-up plants lay sidelined from ocean movement and bunches of small delicate periwinkles grew among the rocks. Occasionally, I collected a few for eating. Boiling and then picking the small worm-like bodies out of their shells, with a pin, created a delicacy resembling small butter clams.

During slower times, I observed marine life and ocean activity. When tugs towing barges farther out didn't move, wildlife remained active around the island. Almost daily, whales traveled the coast a mile or more out from us. We watched them, through the window from our eating area while sitting or talking. The island had no trees blocking our view. Vegetation consisted primarily of grasses. Directly behind the houses, a small, level yard planted on thin soil, originally hauled in by a buoy tender, dressed up the area. Taller grassy plants grew wild on the flat low lying area across from the boathouse.

Above, and in the ocean, seabirds circled, screeched and squawked while on the prowl. They plunged like Stuka dive-bombers towards the sea, disappeared for periods of time, then emerged with their prey. The bird population included gulls, cormorants and

other islands mostly left for the winter, ...

The Isles of Shoals came alive during summer, with populations of hundreds of people. Nearly all lived on the larger islands -- Star and Applegate. With the arrival of warm weather, activity exploded on them only a mile or two away. Placid waters encouraged pleasant exercise plus occasional rowing. People never came to White Island.

White Island Light and Lookout Station had unique duty and required five people. The station, one of only two on the East Coast with no electricity or other utilities, still offered good living in simpler times. Keeping the main light burning properly while maintaining personal comforts required extra effort. Even weekly bath water for a round galvanized tub required heating on our coal burning stoves.

White Island and the other islands, had legendary pasts. Shipwrecks, ghost stories and seafaring events dated back to the early 1600's. Pirate treasure occasionally surfaced in conversations with local people. Numerous pirates, including Blackbeard, used the islands for their operations.

A pirate's woman, left behind to guard treasure on White Island once surprised Paul while approaching his lookout post. He looked ahead. There stood the tall, shapely woman wrapped in a dark cloak with her head and neck uncovered. She gazed seaward from out on the point. I figured Paul must have partied too much.

The main navigational light, eighty feet above the sea, frequently required difficult finessing to keep brightly lit. Unlike others where turning on required throwing an electric

switch, White Island required twenty minutes or more of pre-heating with an alcohol flame before its mechanism would function. An incandescent oil vapor head covered with a fragile and brightly glowing fabric mantle required careful lighting and maintaining. Many times the light required careful work and even then, would, at times, suddenly and unexpectedly cool.

The large slowly rotating glass lens assembly imported from France during civil war times, required close attention when working inside it. Excepting flashlights, and recently added diesel compressors for the fog horn, living probably hadn't changed much since that time. Kerosene lanterns in use then could not have been much less dependable than some of the batteries our flashlights relied on.

Artistic and beautiful, the large lens assembly consisted of many fine, cut-glass quality prisms. It rotated during the shift, after manual winding of heavy suspended weights hanging down inside two-foot thick tower walls. Raising them by ratcheting the spool tighter provided stored energy needed for our four-hour watches. Once wound tight, and relaxing the cable, a gradual settling slowly turned the reflecting prism assembly at a pre-determined movement producing characteristic flashes as designated on navigational charts.

I groped my way along the sloped triangular passageway that angled slightly upward from the back yard. That night, my flashlight batteries needed changing. I might as well, not had it at all. Shortly, I'd pass through the compressor room, housing the diesels and other fog horn equipment, leading into the tower. It would lighten up then.

Returning, I reached the exit at the lower end of the wooden passageway and crossed the backyard to the house. The tilted wood-covered structure gave good protection from the elements and bridged a large rock crevasse through which the ocean sloshed through as it beat against rocks below – the same crevasse supported our outhouse on its upper edge. After climbing to the tower, and back down, we felt relief when emerging to see the light still burning bright and strong. Nights, when it misbehaved, wracked our nerves.

I watched the light dilligently. On bad nights it could cool without notice. This tempermental incandescent unit created a spotty record of integrity. Once cooling occurred, if adequate attention hadn't been provided, a steady stream of partially burned carbon spewed out that could smoke up the entire area, causing a big cleaning job for the entire crew. Luckily, it only happened once. What a mess!

I carefully picked my way across the rock, focusing a small beam ahead on a smooth walking area soon cresting on the elevated rock-head facing the seaward side of the island. I stopped, reached into a protected area above the steel post, and pulled out a brass key that had a number "5" on its edge. Inserting it into the watch clock and snapped it twice, the number, indented on the chart inside, verified my presence at two-thirty during that rainy night.

Peering straight ahead, four or five miles out, I could see lights of a seagoing tug with three barges. Numerous ships sailed up and down the coast -- virtually all of them tankers or tugs with barges in tow. Spotting no problems, I turned back towards the house. The island had two lookout locations.

White Island -- an exceptional place with few luxuries had infrastructure that made our living an old-time experience with boat activity unequalled – whether on calm or rough seas. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, a daily ferry, the Kaboko, served the area. It made round trips from Portsmouth to Star Island, a home for religious conventions, summer residences as well as a large hotel. Even some of the smaller islands became lightly inhabited during summer.

The Isles of Shoals, and particularly White Island remained remote from mainland humdrum. Life, for sixteen months – unique.



STORMY DAY – WHITE ISLAND

PART 4

Lester usually remained quiet until that first drink, which immediately invigorated him. After that, he no longer maintained his normal taciturn self, but rambled incoherently on many subjects. He became an expert on everything, his eyes half-popped and his facial expressions -- tensed. New interests, experiences and solutions abounded. He became a different man.

The weekly boat to White Island, arrived for crew rotation and replacement of provisions. It carried a Larabee trademark. Excitement rose, as we unpacked five fifths of Gilbey's gin with the food. After the boat's departure, we put away newly acquired food and headed for Lester's.

As partying gained full force, Doug and Lester quickly changed – we all did. The century-old apparatus that brightened and characterized the main light did not receive standard supervision. A slightly reduced diligence and community effort marked party-time. The seaward watch had been reduced to peeks out the windows and the watch clock ignored. The main light received slightly less observation -- just enough to keep it bright. Fortunately, the light behaved during those nights.

Lester's place, the other half of our big house, made a natural for parties and our kerosene lamps, with gossamer fabric mantles helped make good atmosphere. The setting -- as good as any place in Portsmouth.

Bill Balnaves wasted little time in adapting to the weekly event. Never without a smile, and armed with stories on every situation, he never failed in a verbal meet.

While I refilled my glass by the sink pouring directly from the bottle, I looked up through the window at the brightly shining light. Had it been flickering, or darkened at all, I'd have headed for the door and beat it up there. Babysitting that light could spoil an evening. We always lucked out.

One such night, when Lester had the watch, he stared through the window and saw the light clouded over with fog. Startled, he dropped his glass, grabbed his flashlight and ran out the door. We soon heard the diesels, followed by the eerie blasting of the foghorn. "That's all we needed," said Doug. "That damn thing sounding off! It hasn't run in weeks and picked tonight."

"Yeah, but the good side is that it will scare hell out of anyone trying to sneak onto this island to rob us," Bill said.

"Balnaves! Anyone even thinking such a thing would have to relate to you. He'd never make it, anyway. He'd have to have a brain like yours -- the size of a pea. Imagine anyone coming up that slip in the dark."

Balnaves upper body had been well covered with tattoos. Both arms and torso reflected his past. Bill could never forget navy liberties on the West Coast and in the Pacific theater. Ashore, he must have been a different person than at sea. Like Lester, once he got started, creativity abounded. One tattoo, extending up from the small of his back formed a monstrously large leopard climbing up with its claws digging in and drawing blood from his right shoulder.

Tattoo

Paul loosened up, but remained quieter than the others. Partying slightly dragged for me at first, but I adapted. When I first came to White Island, I smoked two packs a day, but didn't drink. My yellow stained fingers couldn't bear discarding those 'Old Golds' with any smoke left in them. In a few months, shortly after turning eighteen, I unexpectedly quit my three-year habit. The catalyst for change -- my stomach started aching continually. I made up for it with increased participation in the parties.

The winter, with all its attractions, never allowed even slight thoughts of loneliness. Lobster boats came around most days. Three lobstermen, operating from Star and Applegate Islands set traps off White Island all year long. Doug knew them well. We knew 'em too – but from a distance.

Occasionally, Morey brought his boat in close and provided us with 'shorts' – small lobsters, to cook up and eat. Even though illegals tasted every bit as good as the larger ones, they should have been thrown back. Old John wouldn't give us any. We rarely asked – once in a great while. The few we wanted never amounted to much.

John

One time Doug came tromping into the house. "That damn John. I'm going to fix him."

"Why! What's he done now?" Bill asked.

"It's what he didn't do. The S.O.B. wouldn't come across yesterday. I'm going out and cut his traps."

"You wouldn't do that, would you?" Bill asked.

"Watch me!" Heading out the door, Doug stormed to the slip -- his knife tucked into his pocket.

Late that fall, the temperature dropped and the winds breezed up. No more than expected, but sufficient for a wake-up call after months of warm sunny days. Winter began evolving.

"Well, Paul will return tomorrow. We'll get fresh food in from Frisbees," Doug said. "It's a good thing that lifeboat station has a good boat to keep us in supplies and transportation, otherwise we'd go hungry out on this rock."

"Don't forget the Gilbey's," I said. "Tomorrow night's party-night."

"George, how could I miss that? You know Lester'd never let me forget it. He'd sit on my tail constantly. The old boozer would never forgive me if we slipped up. Anyway, all of us have been looking forward to the boat arriving. It won't take long now."

In Doug's kitchen later during the blustery day, I peered through the window towards the distant shoreline. "The boat from Portsmouth Harbor will make its weekly run shortly. Doug, have you called in the order yet at Frisbee's?"

"No, I'll do it this afternoon. It'll feel good to get that stuff out here," Doug responded, stretching his neck and gazing out over the water.

"Yeah, it will."

The winter-ocean typically kept us secluded. Weekly arrival and departure of our crew created anticipation of the boat's arrival and party night. Once it became visible, we'd watch it bounce off wave after wave during the last couple of miles of its seemingly endless trip. That last remaining mile or two always dragged.

Later that afternoon, the whitecaps had grown. The island lay well out towards open sea -- heavily exposed. Clear-crisp days with scattered clouds could blow hard on short notice.

"Doug, it's getting heavy out there," I said while staring out the window.

"Yeah, but there's no problem. The boat can take it. I see no reason for not running that scow out here. It's seaworthy and unsinkable. You know that."

"Yeah, no problem. We go out in equally rough water in our sixteen-foot pod."

"Nan-Mike-Fox-Nine, this is Nan-Mike-Fox-Seven. Come in please,"

picked up the radio mike and responded, "This is Nan-Mike-Fox-Nine. Go ahead, Seven." White Island had no telephone, its only shore communication depended on the Coast Guard radio system.

"Doug? Orr, here! It's getting pretty windy. We won't run the boat out tomorrow morning. We may have to wait a day or two."

"Chief, it's not that bad out here. Besides, we need those supplies. There isn't a boat problem out here."

"Well, we'll look the situation over tomorrow. Nan-Mike-Fox-Seven, out."

Doug said, "He'd better come out! After a week of looking forward to the boat. I hope Paul gets in to Frisbee's early. Balnaves has been pressing his blues. He's more than ready to leave."

The station radio blared the next morning. "Nan-Mike-Fox-Nine, Nan-Mike-Fox-Nine, this is Nan-Mike-Fox-Seven: Come in, please."

Doug reached for the mike -- "Nan-Mike-Fox-Nine, reading you."

"Doug, the winds still blow strong. We can't come out today. We'll keep an eye on it. Probably tomorrow."

"Chief, it's really okay here. We'd appreciate your reconsideration. We need those supplies and can't wait. You've got to bring 'em out. The trip is already overdue."

"Sorry, too rough for a trip that can wait another day. We'll keep in touch. Nan-Mike-Fox-Seven, out."

"Nan-Mike-Fox-Nine out," Doug shouted, slamming the mike down. "That dumb S.O.B.! I don't know how he ever made Chief. He'd make a good Grandma.

"Yeah, old Granny," I laughed. "Well, Paul gets to stay at his station for awhile. Lucky him.

The weather didn't improve that day or the next. The whitecaps remained as seas rolled along the coastal area. If anything, they increased.

"Doug, give Granny a call," I said. "He should have been out here yesterday."

"You're right. I'll give him another call. We have to keep on him or he'll never come out."

Orr wouldn't come out.

"Damn him! He has no business running a station such as that one. The next time I'm ashore, and in South Portland, I'll lean into him."

"We've got to do something" I said. "Looks as if we ever hope to get those provisions, get Bill ashore, pick up Paul and the supplies, we'll have to do it ourselves. That's probably what we should do. We can use our own twenty-five foot boat. It's not as seaworthy as Granny's, but it'll do."

"Good idea! I'll call him back and tell him to get his ass out here or we'll go in on our own. We're entitled to a little consideration! Nan-Mike-Fox-Seven -- This is Nan-Mike-Fox-Nine, over."

"Go ahead, Nine."

"Chief, we need those supplies and I'm asking again for them. We need 'em now."

"Sorry, can't do it today."

"In that case," Doug bellowed. "We'll make the trip ourselves. It's a lake out here, Granny. You sit by the fire. We'll come in. Take Paul back to Frisbee's. We'll pick him up ourselves. Nan-Mike-Fox-Nine, out!"

Slamming down the mike, "That S.O.B.! Okay, George, I'll tell Balnaves to get ready to leave. You find Lester and fit the boat out."

"Fine, we'll move her outside and rig the small canvas at the bow."

"You bet! We'll have it ready in a few minutes."

Doug continued. "This will make a good ride into Frisbee's. After an eighteen-mile round trip, we'll know we've done something."

Pushing the twenty-five foot self-bailing boat out of the boathouse took little effort. We fastened its windbreaker over the bow end. "That'll help some," remarked Doug. "Have we got everything we'll need?"

A few moments later, boat preparations finished, Doug said, "Get in, Bill. Hope you don't get too wet." Doug chuckled, "You've spent too much time pressing that monkey suit."

"Maybe you can chew on Granny next week when coming back. Anyway, we'll have our party tonight. That's the main thing," I said.

Smiling, Doug started the engine and said, "It purrs like a kitten. Okay, Balnaves climb on in. You can hide under that piece of canvas. Maybe you won't get so wet."

"You just keep that motor running," Balnaves said, climbing in and tucking his bag up front.

"George! You and Lester get ready to shove us down the slip. We'll get a respite from those waves in a minute or so."

A couple of minutes later – "Okay, you guys, let's go."

With the boat moving down the runway – I jumped up and onboard, "Get this out there fast!"

Doug quickly gave it the gas and reverse gears had us safely offshore. Turning it around, he had it bucking waves and the long trip began. We all had two thoughts – hang on and keep dry.

The nine miles in proved rough and bumpy. The small boat rolled with the waves and we held on. The bow pounded on the surf drenching us. Bill's press disappeared. His dress-blues looked like a damp dishrag.

Ninety minutes from the island, Doug stood up as we passed Portsmouth Harbor Station. "Hi-ya, Granny, you old bastard!"

Pulling up at Frisbee's wharf, Paul saw us. He looked as if he couldn't believe his eyes. The provisions all sat on the dock alongside his bag, neatly packed and ready to come aboard. We stowed it in the bow under cover.

The three of us, crouching in the stern, departed on the long trip out. The going had been rough, and we got wet, but everything went okay until the last couple of miles. A fog rolled in and visibility shrank to under a mile. "It had to happen," Doug remarked. "A fiasco like this would never go without something happening. I hope that dumb Lester knows enough to start that stupid foghorn."

"I've got a compass bearing on the place," I said. "Hope we can get close enough to hear it. I'd sure hate to have to call Granny out here to help us."

"You can say that again, but it'd serve him right!" drawled Doug. "That's the way I'd look at it."

About twenty minutes later, Doug shut down the engine. The boat bounced around fiercely. "Can you hear that damn thing?"

"No, nothing," I responded, listening for the dull-dreary sound.

Ten minutes and another mile passed. "Hope we can hear it now, George. We don't want to end up in Europe."

Then, it came. The eerie elongated two-tone foghorn blasted faintly in the distance.

Smiling, Doug said, "I guess Lester has some capability. He's got it going. It's a good thing that gin is here and not out there."

"I've got a rough bearing on it – oh-eight-oh. Let's go!" I said.

Five minutes later, a welcome sight met our eyes. Paul exclaimed, "It's right ahead." The island loomed faintly in the distance -- barely visible through the fog. A big grin spread across Doug's face. Minutes later as we approached the slip, the waves rolled in steadily. "George, get up on that bow. Lester has to stay in the boathouse ready to throw that clutch in."

Finally, the break came – we had a lull. "Get ready to go in," Doug said. Seamanship couldn't have been better. It hit right between the rails. Jumping down while holding on, I grabbed the cable and hooked it, careful not to slip on the greased wood.

"It's in," I yelled. "Pull this damn thing up!" The boat moved almost immediately. A few feet and the waves couldn't reach it.

"Boy, wait until I see that Commander next week. Will I give it to him about Granny. He'd better straighten things out around here," Doug muttered.