

The Wreck of the Green Cove

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(Stanley G. Triggs)

Oh, I was broke in old Vancouver,
Met a friend, an all-time loser
He set he could help me out
So to the towboat office we set out.
Well, right away, they said, "My boy,
We'll sign you up this very day!"
So to the harbour, unsuspectin',
Ridin' high I made my way.

When first I saw the old Green Cove
Her keel was bent, her planks [pipes] were stoved
Her decks they leaked upon the bunks
And paint was peelin' off in chunks.
Her engine-room was thick with grease
Her stack with rust was eaten through
Deck-head it was in a shambles,
Towline broken right in two.

I went aboard: the mate was drunk,
The skipper passed out in his bunk
The chief was in an awful pain
With a bout of rheumatis again.
In great despair, I wandered aft,
The bilge in the galley was knee-deep
Dirty dishes in the sink
While rats about the shelves did creep.

Oh, I'll never know how we made it out
From the dockside in and round about
Past Brockton Point in a dismal fog
The Green Cove ridin' like a log
But the fog in the mate's befuddled mind
Was thicker than it was outside
As at the wheel he weaved and swayed
As we set out on our fateful ride.

That night as I heard the mate a-snorin',
Keeping time to teredos borin'
I tried my darnedest not to think
Of the long ride down if the ship should sink.

In the dead of night, a storm came up
The pumps gave out, the seas came in
I had to pump her out by hand
And I thought, by God, that the sea would win.

Next day we reached our destination,
A windswept bay, sheer desolation,
Blowin' gale, blowin' cold,
The coldest night that year, I'm told.
We tied the boast up to the tow;
There wasn't much else we could do;
The skipper says, "Boys, let 'er blow,
We'll patch her up as good as new,."

Three days did pass, the wind died down.
We set off towin' logs to town
A mightier wind was yet to blow
But how the hell were we to know?
For old Dame Fate, she smiled at us
As past Refuge we did wind,
Potato Point, Harwood Island,
Towin' logs and makin' time.

Now this good luck that we could not match
Gave out when we reached the Cabbage Patch
Down Malaspina we did trail,
A westerly upon our tail.
We rounded Scotch Fir, turned up Jervis,
Buckin' tide all on the way,
Made poor time at Agamemnon,
Had to tie up in Boom Bay.

Oh, the wind died down and we cast off
But the engine soon began to cough,
The patched-up seams began to leak
And the poor boat she did groan and creak.
We were desperate, low on vittles -
Had some coffee and some tea
Plus twelve cans of Campbell's finest -
Chicken Noodle and Green Pea.

At Merry Island, late at night
A southeast struck, it was a fright,
Trail Islands we knew we must reach
Or the tow would soon be on the beach.
But the skipper he was reading Climax [Penthouse]
Missed the channel in the dark
With a sickenin' grindin' and a crash
He piled her up on Southeast Rock.

He piled her up, he bent her wheel,
He cracked her bowpost, broke her keel
And off that rock we felt her slide
With a terrible list to the starboard side.
The seas did roar, the winds did blow [howl]
The Green Cove went three times around,
She whistled us a last farewell
And slithered forty fathoms down.

Now the skipper and the chief grabbed the only lifeboat
Rowed like mad from the sinking tugboat
Rowin' hard for the nearest land -
That's the last they were seen by any man.
The chief, that skunk from Campbell River
Grabbed the life-rings, one, two, three,
All I had was a hemlock sliver
Tossin' round on the stormy sea.

I was washed up at the break of day
Upon the shores of Sargent Bay
The lone survivor of that gale,
Lived to tell this mournful tale.
And now that you have heard my story
You'll know why forever more
I'll never go to sea again -
I'm quite content to stay on shore!

note: Describes an area of the Inside Passage bewteen
Vancouver Island and the mainland on Canada's west
coast. PJT Coll 236. JB

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