

MORNINGTON BAY RESCUE

The following poem is based on two actual incidents that occurred during my early years in the service. The first being that of rescuing a family that should never have put to sea, and the second being my first night rescue in mid Winter. Huge seas, freezing cold and each time the Shark Cat reached the top of a wave, the wind would hit the underside of the hull and hold it upright, a most unnerving feeling.

To All Members Past, Present & Future

A JOB WELL DONE

My hands are blue,
I'm soaking wet,
My eyes are red and
sore,
But we're back at
base and safety,
and the family's safe
ashore.

As the coffee slowly
warms me,
I ponder hours gone
past,
Of standing at the boat
ramp
with the weather
building fast.

Mum and Dad,
excited kids, make
sure the baits not
missing,
At last the promised
outing,
They're off to do
some fishing.

The children's
glowing faces turn a
paler shade of dark,
as their father swears
and curses,
when the outboard
doesn't start.

The sky is getting
black and I think
it's heaven sent, that
they'll make the trip
another day,
I'm sure that's what was
meant.

I'm pleased, yet
disappointed when

the outboard bursts to
life,
If it doesn't start a
second time, I know
they'll be in strife.

I watched them
rounding Schnapper
Point just south of
Mornington Pier,
then headed back to
work to dispel my
growing fear.

At home that night I
settled in and read the
local Flier.
The kids had put the
telly on and were
nestled by the fire.

It was halfway
through the movie, 9.30
maybe 10, when my
pager sounds it
warning,
I'm sure the calls for
them.

Cars descend upon
the base from all across
the town. The
same familiar faces
with that same
intensive frown.

The base is fairly
jumping and the
police have just
phoned through, that
their trailers at the
boat ramp and the
family's overdue.

Its black as pitch and
blowing hard.
It feels like ten below.
Wet weather gear gets
thrown aboard and
the skipper yells out
'go'.

Those who want a
jacket on can do so
without shame, it's no
time to be a hero,
more dead would be
insane.

The first wave hit us
soundly, it was thick
and frothy rimmed.
The shark cat lifted
skyward and hung
there on the wind.

Numb fingers fight to
keep a grip as the
bow completes its
rise, then teeters
undecided, silent
prayers help it decide.

Hundreds more would
hit us before the night
was past and
everyone that did we
hoped would be the
last.

Our spotlights cut the
blackness till they hit
a wall of spray, then
bounce right back to
taunt us, she fights to
keep her prey.

Eyes and ears are
straining for the

slightest sight or
sound of Mum and
Dad or children,
calling to be found.

Was that funny shape
a wave. Was that
Phosphorous in the
water.
Was that the wind I
heard or the cry of
someone's daughter.

The winds picked up
a knot or two, the
waves surge over the
deck to send their icy
cargo down our
flamin' necks.

Over there! The cry
goes up. My God I
think it's them.
"Going about" the
skipper yells; "Grab
rope and blankets
men".

The look of hope on
frightened faces, save
our souls the plea, as
our towline joins the
two of us like corks
on a raging sea.

It's never easy getting
back,
In a following sea so
wild,
But back on shore a
simple thankyou,
Makes it all
worthwhile.

Ross Burriss
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