



## Rupert V. Hagan

### Coast Guard WWII, 1943-1945

By: Edrie Vinson and Victoria Atkins

Rupert Hagan came to Patos Island Lighthouse Coast Guard Station during World War II from Long Beach, California. He took his turn cooking until Russell S. Slocombe was appointed as the best cook on the island. But his main job was manning the watchtower in 4 hours units. He watched mainly at night. They were to look for any sign of the enemy: aircraft, ships, submarines, and incendiary balloons.

*One night I was on watch during a blackout. I saw six red lights and reported it right away on radio watch. A few days later people from Seattle came out to interview me. We discovered it had been an exceptionally clear sky that night; the lights were from Vancouver, B.C. airport.*

Once the war began and the Navy took responsibility for the Coast Guard on Patos, all the family life, gardens and farm animals disappeared. It was a military base.

*We got all of our food from the supply boat. We had no gardens or chickens. Sometimes we pried oysters off the rocks. We had a small boat with a small engine to use for fishing in our 'spare' time if we were not painting buildings.*

*We painted the buildings so often we joked that the officer Ben Wilcox (who gave us our assignment) must have owned a paint store.*

*We used to see Lummi fishing boats close to the island.*

While Patos had been a veritable crossroads or stopping over-night place for many years, and a recent "go to" place for excursions, all that changed when the war began. It was isolated from the rest of the world.

*We didn't get a lot of visitors, but I do remember the Boy Scouts coming once.*

*We used to get mail once a week. The Com-*



*manding Officer Ed Larson drove the boat to the north side of Orcas Island, and then we would walk to Eastsound.*

*... We didn't know how good we had it on Patos. My brother was at Guadalcanal (battle in the South Pacific in 1942-43 with 30,000 soldiers killed.) We didn't know how bad the war was until later.*

The supply boat was their life blood on the island. All of their supplies and equipment came in that way.

*The tramway hauled among other things coal, which we sacked and then put in the basement. We were so dirty afterwards, we jumped into the sound. It was so damn cold! We never did that again!*

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