

# Crew Of The Triton Tell Their Stories

By Ron Reeves  
Sentinel Staff Writer

People do the same thing for different reasons, and this is strongly pointed out by the six men who are planning to sail out of the Capitola harbor next month on a homemade steel raft. They are to float currents some 7400 miles to the Society Islands and may continue on another 5000 miles to Australia.

The crew members are highly different in background and experience, yet they seem to have a basic similarity. All want to do something different than punching a time clock before settling down to their future lives. All know there is adventure ahead and they know that if the trip is successful they might get rich from movies and books about their adventures.

The trip has already caught the imagination of many people. The men are getting donations of money, food and equipment for final outfitting of the "Triton," as they have named the raft. They have also become celebrities in a sense and are becoming accustomed to speaking before service clubs and being asked by strangers for their autographs.

They're also beginning to feel the tension of the last few days in the quiet Capitola harbor. None expressed any doubt but that they will make the trip successfully.

Although he denies it and refers to the raft as a "ship without a captain," Doug Otis, 26, of 234 Spreckles drive, Aptos, is the most vocal and answers most of the questions when the group is together.

Otis, who stands 5 feet 10½ inches and has a trim 165-pound athletic build, is not a stranger to danger. His hobbies have included testing himself by racing motorcycles and cars, as well as diving.

"They used to chase me out of the cement ship quite often," Otis commented.

"This is the realization of a dream. I want to find out what I'm made of. We're young, healthy and ambitious and now is the time to do it. If all works out, we may be retired when we come back," Otis said.

Otis is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Otis of Rio del Mar. He was born in Fresno, but came to the Santa Cruz area when 5 years old. He attended Aptos Elementary school and graduated from Santa Cruz High school in 1957.

He returned to Fresno where

he spent six years as a welder for a trailer manufacturing company, training which allowed

I could go to work for any major sporting goods company in the U.S.," Otis said.

He is definite, however, in that he doesn't want a clock-punching type of job.

For him the trip is a physical and mental challenge and a tool in a gamble for money and fame.

By contrast, 25-year-old Larry White of 1200 Day Valley road, Aptos, looks toward the trip as a scientific training field.

"The ocean and I have been friends for a long time," White said. "The trip will give me a heck of a lot of experience in marine life. I think I'll be more capable of doing any kind of job when I get back."

If the trip should work out to be a profitable venture, one of the first things White is going to do is organize a trip to hunt down the fabled "Big Foot" in the foothills of the Oregon-California border. Big Foot is the name given to a large, hairy upright walking creature which has reportedly been seen by white men since the early logging days. Indians also have legends about the strange beast.

White's father is R. E. White, produce manager at Shopper's Corner market. His early life was spent in Santa Monica, Salt Lake City, Fresno and Pleasant Hill. He graduated from Watsonville High school in 1958.

him to do the major portion of designing and building of the seven-ton steel raft.

He separated from his wife in Fresno and returned to Cabrillo college where he studied business administration. He plans to tie this training in with the fame he hopes to obtain from the raft venture to open his own sporting goods business or join a major sportings goods corporation.

"I think if the trip works out,

He was in the coast guard, stationed on a land base at Portland, Oregon, for two years be-

biology, and then worked as an oceanographic research technician at the Naval Postgraduate school, Monterey.

He was married when 19, divorced, and is now remarried. His wife, Linda, and their little boy will remain with relatives in Aptos while he is gone.

"She'll be in a little better shape than I am," Larry said of the hardships he knows are ahead.

White is hoping for scientific break-throughs on the trip and is conducting a plankton survey for Cabrillo college. Money which might come about will go to further adventure-science ventures.

fore coming back to Santa Cruz in 1960. Since then he has held a series of jobs, including being a stock boy for an electrical contractor, covering 11 states as part of a door-to-door magazine sales crew, driving a frozen foods company truck, selling men's clothing in El Paso, Texas, and then returning to Santa Cruz to work in the Sentinel display advertising department. He resumed studies at Cabrillo college, majoring in marine



Fred Hametner

While others are looking to the trip as adventure, Fred Hametner, 36, sees the trip as a time of contemplation of his life, which was torn by the war in his native Vienna, Austria.

"I was always thinking of writing a book. I might start to write, at least to think back," Hametner said.

He was born in Vienna, and grew up there.

"We lost everything in the war," he explained. "We got bombed all over."

He, as other boys of his age, was involved in Hitler's youth movement and when only 16 was captured by the Russians and shipped off on the way to Siberia.

However, in Austria, he and some other prisoners managed to escape from a monastery by getting a girl to lure away a guard.

After the war, he began efforts to get to the United States, and it took until 1961 to do it. He's now a Canadian citizen and in the U.S. on a visa.

In moving about through Germany, Austria, Italy and other countries after the war, he worked at many jobs, includ-

ing being a crew member on a fishing boat, digging coal and then tool making, a trade which now makes jobs easily available for him.

In 1951 he made his way to Canada, and in 1961, he was able to get into the United States. The pattern of shopping around for jobs remained, taking him through many states, but finally back to California. He was in San Jose when he heard about the raft trip.

"I picked up a newspaper and saw they needed another crew member." He came down, click-with the crew, and joined the venture.

"For me, it's just adventure, to have lots of time to think about what I want to do." When the trip is over, he wants to go back to Vienna.

Mel Higley, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Thomas Higley of Watsonville, is 22 and in love. He's engaged, and his secretary fiancee, Susan Esty of Capitola, has promised to wait for him.

"She knows this is something I want to do. She said she'd wait. She also says she's going to meet me at the dock with a preacher when I get back."

Higley's happy, open face tops a 5-foot 7½-inch frame which at 230 pounds shows evidence of his sports interests in football, wrestling and swimming, both at Watsonville High school where he graduated in 1962, and at Cabrillo college.

"I am tired of the routine. I figure this is the best way I can find out what I want; I'll have a chance to find out what I really want to do," Higley said.

Unlike the world-wide experience of some other crewmen, Higley's life has been mostly



Mel Higley

centered around Watsonville. He worked as a waiter and a cook, for his father in the beer dis-

tributing business, loading and unloading trucks, and cleaning up in a bakery.

Higley is getting a kick out of becoming a celebrity.

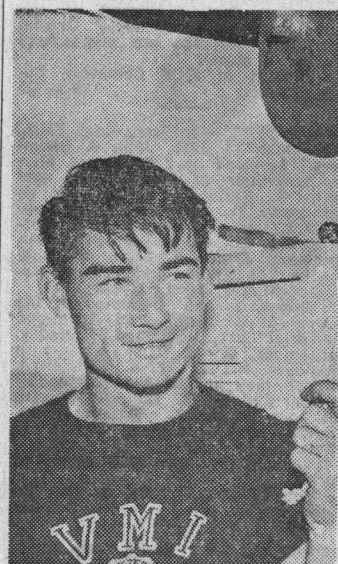
"I'm a natural ham. I enjoy being in the news, but so far I don't think it will swell my head any," he said.

He told of being in a restaurant and having strangers ask him for his autograph.

"I thought 'Who am I to be signing autographs?' It's a compliment of the highest quality," he said.

When he gets back, it'll be marriage first, and career later. He's not sure what it will be, and hopes the trip will give him time to decide.

Dan McGee, who at 18 is the crew's youngest member,



Dan McGee

sees the trip as a way to get to Australia.

McGee has seen a lot of the world already, as his father is a geophysicist for an oil company. His family is currently in Australia, and the raft seems to McGee to be the cheapest, and maybe the most fun, way to get there.

He grew up in Venezuela, but lived in Oklahoma and graduated last year from high school in Dallas, Texas. He spent last year at Virginia Military institute and decided to work his way to Australia.

He couldn't get a boat job on the east coast, so came west, and was in San Francisco trying to find a boat when he read about the raft trip.

"I was doing my laundry, saw the paper and said, 'What the hell, I'll give it a try,'" he said.

At the time he was working at a service station and staying at the YMCA.

A telephone call to the raft members brought a flat refusal. They didn't want any more members.

He's thinking about being a psychiatrist.

As for money from the trip: "I'll get rich first and then worry about it."

Al Parvin, 26, says of the venture: "Everybody says we'll get fame and fortune. I'm looking for the adventure and knowledge."

"I just want to settle down, buy a small house and maybe a small business when I get back. I don't want to work for anyone else," Parvin said.

Parvin is a bit bitter with employers as he, Otis and Higley were all fired by a Capitola discount house when it was discovered that they were going on the trip.

Parvin is originally from Gordon, Nebraska, but came to California when 11 years old with his grandparents who raised him. He graduated from high school in Oceanside in 1957, and went to junior college there, studying pre-engineering.

He's had more distance sailing than his crewmates, spending six months on a sea jaunt to Mexico and back on a 35-foot schooner which was given to a college friend as a graduation gift.

"I've always wanted to go to the Society Islands, not on a raft, particularly," he said.

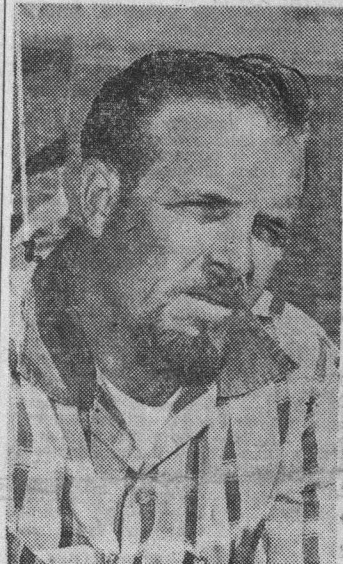
He also spent 55 days on a tuna boat off the southern California coast, a venture which he said was hard work and non-profitable.

"This will be a little more pleasurable than tuna fishing," he said.

Parvin questions the celebrity angle which is gradually creeping up on all the crewmen.

"I look forward to the fortune. I don't know about the fame," he said.

If money does come about, it will be used to set him up in



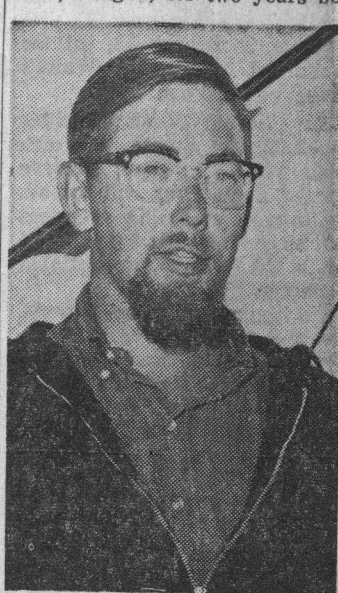
Al Parvin

business, perhaps an auto parts store.

Parvin's leaving his wife,



Doug Otis



Larry White



The Adventurers: front row, from left, Mel Higley, Fred

Hametner; back row, Al

Parvin, Larry White, Doug Otis and Dan McGee.



from Santa Cruz High school in 1957. He returned to Fresno where

The Adventurers: front row, from left, Mel Higley, Fred

Hametner; back row, Al

Parvin, Larry White, Doug Otis and Dan McGee.

## Down It Comes



quarters of Redevelop- ing demolition work last week. Mrs. Marty Gion and avenue, suite F. They moved in to the new quarters Sep-

## Deputy Sheriff Commended For Rescuing Teenage Girl

A letter of commendation has gone to Sheriff's Deputy Andrew S. Murray for his part in the rescue of a teenage girl who was caught on a cliff ledge in the middle of a mass of bees.

The letter was issued by Sheriff Doug James.

It states in part: "I am very pleased to have the opportunity to commend you on your quick response and effective action which brought about a successful rescue. I am proud of your caliber as part of our staff and as representatives of law enforcement in the county of Santa Cruz."

Deputy Murray climbed down a cliff at Seacliff Beach State park on September 19 and carried up Robin Lynn Schull, 13, of 614 Seacliff drive, Aptos. The girl became stranded while hiking and was attacked by the bees. Murray received several stings in the incident.

Sheriff James also issued a letter of commendation to his patrol and detective divisions for their work in recapturing Robert Hunsucker, 19, who escaped from county hospital Monday

in the U.S. on a visa. In moving about through Germany, Austria, Italy and other countries after the war, he worked at many jobs, includ-

response, your initiative and diligence in the search and for the effective results. It is a pleasure to have men of your caliber as part of our staff and as representatives of law enforcement in the county of Santa Cruz," the commendation reads.

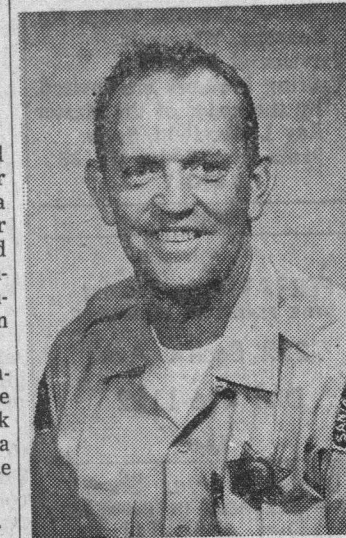
Hunsucker was arrested Monday afternoon after an intensive search in the Carbonero creek area. He was being held as a kidnap-robbery suspect when he escaped.

Sheriff James also commended Mr. and Mrs. Will P. Lass, of 151 Bartlett way, who alerted deputies to seeing Hunsucker on their property.

### SINGERS TO MEET

Sponsored by the Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation commission, the Madrigal Community singers will meet Mondays at 7:30 p.m. in room 12 at Branciforte Junior high school. Maude Byer is director. Information may be obtained at the parks department in the civic auditorium.

Mel Higley centered around Watsonville. He worked as a waiter and a cook, for his father in the beer dis-



Andrew S. Murray

Their sighting helped deputies determine the search area.

Sheriff James wrote: "We want you to know how much we appreciate your fine assistance in notifying our office regarding the presence of subject Hunsucker and for your cooperation in allowing the search party the freedom of your property. Alert and cooperative citizens do much to increase the efficiency of any group of law enforcement officers."

A telephone call to the raft members brought a flat refusal. They didn't want any more members.

Undaunted, McGee came down anyway and sort of worked his way into the crew's friendship by helping out on the raft. When Chuck Starbird, one of the original crewmembers, got drafted, McGee was voted upon and accepted as the sixth member.

He broke the raft-floating news to his parents in Australia with a 10-page letter, which used "as many approaches as I could," McGee said. His parents had to sign documents absolving the other crew members of any liability in case of accident.

He said he told of the "beautiful raft" and even threatened never to come home if they did not approve of the trip. They did, and he's ready to go.

His only other experience on the sea has been a passenger on a "big ship."

"You never have any fun unless you stick your neck out," said McGee, whose face sparkles with wit and mischief. Some of his fun has included sky diving, skin diving and judo.

McGee thinks of the trip as the "easiest way to get to Australia" and if all works out, he may see his parents in Toowoomba about a year from now.

He plans to continue college but doesn't know what to study.

"I was majoring in math, the one course I failed," he laughed.

business, perhaps an auto parts store.

Parvin's leaving his wife, Judy, and their two children with relatives while he is away on the seas.

"There's quite a bit of danger coming up," he said seriously. "It worries me, but I think we'll develop pretty good sea legs by the time we hit the sea."



### ROPING EVENTS CALF TYING

### Western Horse Show

Santa Cruz County Fair  
September 23-26  
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