

Haliotus Splendens May Help Get Levees

By John J. Corrigan

One day in the not too distant future a visitor to Santa Cruz might pause to study a system of grassy levees built astride the banks of the San Lorenzo river and Branciforte creek to protect the city against a repetition of the flood of 1955.

There might be set, somewhere along the sweep of these earthen barriers, a plaque or stone listing the names of those who were most instrumental in getting them erected.

And it is just possible that as the visitor scans this roll of honor he may see that the name of Haliotus Splendens leads all the rest.

Who is Haliotus Splendens and what might be his contribution to the safety of the lives and property of Santa Cruzans?

Haliotus, to use his first name, is the common abalone found along the California shore.

Tomorrow, in a setting under the capitol dome in Washington, Congressman Charles S. Gubser will formally introduce Haliotus to a select group of the nation's legislative leaders.

The occasion is a luncheon arranged by Gubser for some 25 of his capital colleagues. Invited guests include House Speaker Sam Rayburn, Majority Leader John McCormack, Minority Leader Joe Martin and Chairman Clarence Cannon of the house appropriations committee.

The originator of the idea is Malio Stagnaro, major domo of the C. Stagnaro fishing interests on the Santa Cruz municipal wharf.

Stagnaro was aware of certain things when he suggested that Gubser gather a number of influential congressmen over table linen for the purpose of salving legislative palates with typical California gastronomic delights.

He knew that Gubser was preparing to ask a subcommittee of the house appropriations committee on Tuesday to approve \$307,000 in planning and preliminary construction funds for the San Lorenzo river flood control project.

He had been informed that City Manager Robert Klein, representing city hall, and Steven Wyckoff and Sam Nigh, delegated as spokesmen for the chamber of commerce, were scheduled to fly to Washington today to fortify the position of Santa Cruz in the hearing room.

And so he iced choice abalone steaks, picked out the finest crab meat and packed smoked salmon—enough to serve a luncheon of 25 or more.

The local Birds Eye plant contributed another Santa Cruz product—packages of fresh-frozen, luscious strawberries.

When Klein, Wyckoff and Nigh board their plane at San Francisco airport at 8:30 a. m. today they will be weighted down with charts, maps, flood copies of The Sentinel-News, explanatory brochures, statistics—and one whale of a lot of fish and fruit.

The hoard of edibles will be handled with the tenderest of care until they are delivered to-night to one of the capitol kitchens. Even there, vigilance will not cease.

Gubser, who knows as well as any Californian that the abalone must be prepared just so, will oversee the cooking of every individual Haliotus if necessary to insure that the delicacy is served at its best.

At noon tomorrow, then, the tables will be set, the guests will arrive and Haliotus Splendens will do his bit for the common weal and for good old Santa Cruz.

The guest roster includes the names of all members of the pub-

lic works subcommittee of the house appropriations committee.

By sheerest coincidence, this subcommittee is the very one to which the Santa Cruzans will be addressing their pleas the following day.

To avoid misunderstanding—cynics might, after all, intimate that the brash Californians were endeavoring to demonstrate that the quickest way to a congressman's vote is through his stomach—Gubser assured those invited that there will be no mention of flood control matters during the meal.

Originally, the 1956-57 federal budget carried no appropriation for flood control on the San Lorenzo. Immediately following the flood, however, Gubser succeeded in having the budget revised to include \$207,000 for preparation plans.

An additional \$100,000 still must be obtained if the army engineers are to prepare specifications and call for bids from contractors before July 1, 1957, with the understanding that the funds necessary for actual construction will be provided by the next congress.

Gubser and the three-man delegation will be fighting for the extra \$100,000 as well as the \$207,000 already in the budget on a tentative basis.

On Thursday, two days after their appearance before the house subcommittee, Klein, Wyckoff and Nigh will deliver a similar appeal to members of the senate appropriations committee.

The three expect to be back in Santa Cruz on Friday.

Material and brochures with which the chamber has armed Wyckoff and Nigh were prepared by the chamber's flood control committee under Chairman Ted Schipper.

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Briefly, the arguments of Klein and the chamber representatives will tell of the loss of life in Santa Cruz the night of December 22-23, the estimated \$7,500,000 damage within the city limits and the urgent necessity for protecting the city from future watery invasions.

The works the army proposes to build on the San Lorenzo and Branciforte creek would be ample to contain a 20 per cent greater volume of water than roared down the streams two days before Christmas, according to Col. John Graf, head of the army engineers' San Francisco district.

But, to those of a romantic turn of mind, the impressive rows of figures and stacks of charts occupy an anti-climactic role in comparison with the impact of fresh abalone steak on congressional taste buds.

To the aficionado of diplomacy the fragment of time it takes the Hon. Clarence Cannon to sight his fork on his first morsel of Haliotus Splendens, and then to strike—that is the moment of truth.

However, to paraphrase Robert Burns, the best-laid plans of mice and Santa Cruzans can get goofed up.

There is the possibility—the terrible possibility, however remote—that abalone will not achieve complete rapport with every distinguished digestive system at Gubser's luncheon.

The chance of such an unforeseen development—and its possible tragic consequences at the appropriations box office—was hinted gently to the city manager.

Klein was stunned—but only momentarily.

"I guess we'd better take along some bicarbonate of soda," he said, in what may go down as one of the historic utterances of the 20th century.

"Everything," he added philosophically, "is a calculated risk."