Mostly about People

By Wally Trabing

The Ship That Came To Stay

Seacliff Beach State Park— Among the things we campers do here, when the energy moves us, is to look south down the beach at that great squatty old cement ship grounded at the end of a pier—and wonder.

Not too hard, though, least we strain our laziness. But because it has all the signs of a derelict, some people suppose its captain turned left when he should have turned right.

Or, as they say in nautical circles: "Oops!"

Well, while unbusy practicing proneness on the sand, or walking my bride down the beach, kicking shells and misnaming sea birds, I consulted some salty tomes.

And found that the old ship was a strange duck indeed, living a rather Scott Fitzgerald existence before it fell into broken back disgrace as a fishing platform.

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So, stir up the fire a mite and quit kicking sand in my face, and I'll tell ye about it.

Back around 1916, with war as usual on the horizon, someone, probably a cement salesman, suggested to the U.S. government: "Why not build an oil tanker out of reinforced cement?"

Someone could just as well have said: "Why not build a dirigible out of Kleenex?"

"Oh, yes," said the government, "let us try!"

So at the Alameda shipyards, work began, lickity-split.

Two were built with such dispatch that they were finished about the time the Armistice was signed and the government didn't want to play oil tankers any more.

Which was just as well, because I don't think enemy action would be required to sink them.

At any rate, our $2-million hero sulked in the waters of the Oakland mud flats, but not before it was given a name.

It was deemed the Palo Alto, meaning "High Palo," if my Spanish serves me right, or more closely translated, "Hello Dol-

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Well, the years rolled by, as they are wont to do, and the Palo Alto, or High Palo, which

is 425 feet and 36 tons (if you are thrilled by statistics), merely sat around looking cementy, until 1929.

A group of well-heeled gentlemen, wishing to be even better heeled, formed the Seacliff Amusement Company and bought this hunk of cement. Had it moved, by Red Stack tugs down to Monterey Bay—its first and only sea voyage.

I can't imagine myself being assigned to the Palo Alto.

"Captain, sir, you wouldn't want me aboard. I've got bad breath, Captain, a savage case, sir."

One wild-eyed account said the group was spending $90,000 on the project.

A huge dance hall was built on the deck and a fish restaurant top and plans were drawn to put 18 plush staterooms below, and a warm water swimming pool tucked someplace.

If my memories are intact, the early '30s were not frought with loose money, but there were a few madcap gaieties thrown aboard the Palo Alto.

But, alas, as went the Edsel, the project was a financial flop. By 1935, the Palo Alto, or High Palo, was stripped to its present ghostly hulk.
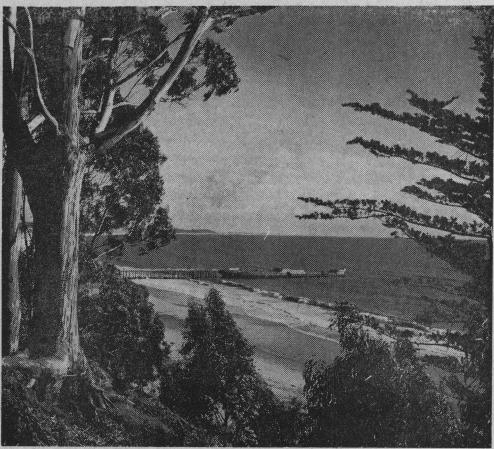
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During the 1939 and '62 storms, a great crack appeared near the bow ("See, captain!") and that part was blocked off to fishermen, who line the railings of an early foggy morning like seamen out of the past with time on their hands.

Now the ship is a curiosity, something to speculate about around the beach campfires.

And I'm kind of sorry I dug all this out because the stories I heard around the fire were far more exciting.

WOMEN TO HARVEST CUBA'S COFFEE CROP

Miami, Fla. (AP). — Half Cuba's coffee crop will be harvested by women, [...] said recently. [...] monitored here [...] ment-sponsored [...] crease the force [...] ily.

This is a rather flattering shot of the old cement hulk at Seacliff Beach State park, now used by fishermen. It has seen hard days since its speculative birth, rose to momentary respectfulness as an amusement center in the early '30s, then fell to its present state.

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Pair Deny Charge To Commit Burglary

Ralph [...] George A [...] day deni [...] cusing th [...] gether an [...] Penny co [...] lary by t [...]

Hill, 43 [...] Warner, 4 [...] were arre [...] night of A [...] found ther [...] tigating re [...] by that a [...] the roof. P [...] ing had be [...] the roof, a [...] assortment [...] plosives ne [...]

A conso [...] pal court pre [...] set for Septe [...]

John Tho [...] 501 Plum s [...] facing muni [...] ances on [...] charge.

Officials sa [...] rested Monda [...] gation by th [...] department. [...] converti [...]