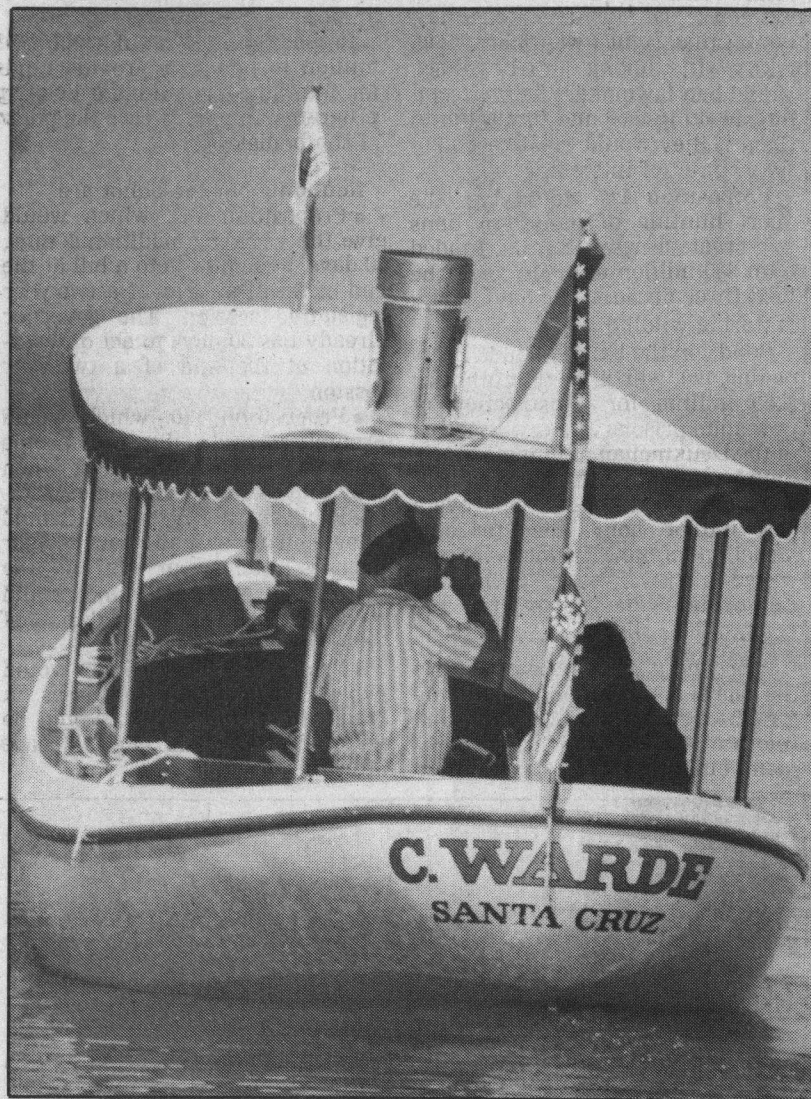


Steamboat dream launched in Pinto Lake



Jim Hatch refreshes himself aboard steamboat replica Sunday.

By PAULINE HALAJIAN
Sentinel correspondent

WATSONVILLE — Pinto Lake became the scene of a reflection of times past Sunday as Jim Hatch of Santa Cruz took his steamboat replica on its maiden voyage. Friends and family cheered as the steam whistle blew in celebration of the accomplishment.

For three years, Hatch has been reconstructing a steamboat much like the ones built by the U.S. Navy around 1900. He has worked meticulously on the 22-foot launch, looking forward to the day when the steam engine would once again power a vessel, making his dream, which was also his father's dream, come true.

"The marine steam engine was built by the Navy in 1894 at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in the San Francisco Bay," says Hatch, looking proudly at the antique brass and red-lead engine, which he spent hundreds of hours renovating. "My father found the engine at an estate sale in Alameda over 50 years ago."

Hatch says that the engine was built to power 30- to 35-foot Navy launches that were run by crews of three men: an engineer, a coxswain — who steered the vessel — and a gunner. This particular engine is thought to have been used to propel a party steamboat on Lake Tahoe after the Navy changed to a newer engine design in 1895.

"I built the C. Warde and gave it my father's name, Chelsy Warde

Hatch. My father had a Monterey fisherman boat, but had always wanted to build the steamlaunch (steamboat)."

Hatch says that the engine sat in his garage for many years before he decided to renovate it.

"When it was finished, I was very proud of the results and wanted to put the engine in my living room. It was in museum condition, but I got

too much flak from my friends," says Hatch. "That's when I decided to build the steamlaunch that my father had once intended to build."

While Hatch searched for someone to build the steam boiler, he ordered a fiberglass hull from a boat builder in Rhode Island who said that the boat design came from an old merchant sailboat. He finally found a steam boilermaker in the town of Nanaimo, Canada.

"My mother will be 95 years old on Monday," says Hatch. "I wanted to have it finished so she could christen it in my father's name on her birthday."

The 5,000 pound vessel, made with beautiful Honduras mahogany wood and polished brass, took years of hard work, but was worth every bit on Sunday as Hatch looked upon his friends, smiled and says, "I did it."



Photos by Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Friends help launch boat, named for Hatch's father, who bought its engine half a century ago.