

At 93, He Launches His 25th Boat -- And It Floats



Mrs. Harlan C. Smith, left watches as her 93-year-old husband prepares to swing his latest

est-built creation off Santa Cruz pier for launching. Harlan, who says he is a frustrated ship-builder, plans to build a yacht at a later date. One of the former Santa Cruz High school

teacher's pupils, Don Stikeman, aids in the launching. Sylvia Butler, in dark glasses, and Mrs. Rose Toepfer, right, are friends of the Smiths.

Yacht club member Harlan Smith rows his latest "dink" away from the pier a few moments after launching the craft.

Named for his wife, the "Gertrude L." performed well, Smith said. Don Stikeman sits quietly in the stern. The long pole ex-

tending to the craft's rear is a mast. Harlan, an experienced seaman, built the boat entirely by himself.

Retired SC Teacher Not Through Yet -He Plans To Build A Yacht Next

By Wallace Wood

Some go down to the sea in ships.

And some don't.

Harlan C. Smith was caught in the middle.

A lover of the sea as a boy, Harlan was talked into more hard-headed pursuits, and became a teacher of math, geometry and trigonometry instead.

Though forced to be a land-

lubber through the week, Harlan decided on weekends he would lead the sailor's life.

Really, he wanted to build ships.

Harlan is 93 years old now, and has just completed his 25th boat, he estimates.

It was the "Gertrude L.," named for his wife, and though only a "dink" of 10 feet, it has features lacking on many a larger and more expensive boat.

With the sky a whistling blue, and a light wind blowing warm ripples around the pier, the "Gertrude L." was launched last week and floated like a gull.

It should. Harlan's dink, short for dinghy, is built into watertight compartments with an elevated flooring that is "self-bailing."

How's that?

After spending the afternoon setting up rigging in the craft, Harlan explained that there is a hole in the center of the boat that drains the water.

but the sail is a little small for light winds. But," he said, "she only got into the water today. I'll be working on her for quite a while."

That is, he added, "until I build my yacht."

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Retired Teachers To See Slide Show

Henry Washburn, for many years Santa Cruz County Farm adviser, and his wife will show colored slides of plant and animal life taken during their extensive travels for tomorrow's program of the Santa Cruz division, California Retired Teachers association.

The meeting and program will

December 2: Birth Or Death Date For Scotts Valley City

Scotts Valley's proposed city will lay its corporate life on the line December 2, when requests for exclusion are counted and supervisors ready to make a birth-or-death decision.

The county board yesterday set the December date for public hearing at Scotts Valley school, to start at 8 p.m.

lic works department was authorized to plant new trees in their place.

LAND EXCHANGE — A proposal to exchange a 60-by-60-foot parcel of land off East Cliff drive near Twin Lakes Beach state park for two acres on Olive Springs road was rejected by the board.

PHYSICIANS — Four physi-



Yes, it does, Harlan says, because the watertight compartments hold the deck several inches above the waterline. So any water that washes in runs right out again.

This man, far past the age most of us will live, says the dinghy is only a prelude to the yacht he plans to build.

Friends don't laugh. They say Harlan is a "most remarkable man."

As a boy, born and growing in Astoria, Oregon, he used to row a skiff two miles a day to school.

"Even then I wanted to be a shipbuilder," he says.

At 16 he built his first boat, a 16-foot canoe. Other boats followed.

"But when I went to college, I was talked out of my ambition, and I became a teacher instead."

He taught at Santa Cruz High school for 25 years before retiring in 1943.

The largest boat he has built was a 42 footer, he says. But only last year, this member of the Santa Cruz Yacht club sold a 53 footer.

"It was an older boat, the 'Searunner', and it washed up on the beach a couple times. It was hard to keep here, so I sold it to a fellow up near Oakland," Harlan says.

Two of his former pupils, Don Stikeman and his wife, Helen, helped their teacher launch his pride and joy. His wife stood proudly by to see her namesake go into the water.

"Come on in," invited her husband.

"I wouldn't go in on anything less than an ocean liner," she replied.

Together with Don, her husband clambered into the craft. After setting up the rigging and installing oars, they were off for hours.

Friends waited anxiously at dockside, fearing the vessel would sink or overturn.

Eventually it became apparent Harlan and his crew of one were having the time of their life.

"Come on in," Mrs. Smith yelled impatiently.

But it took a blast from the klaxon of Ed Twohig, owner of Santa Cruz boat rentals, to catch the attention of the laughing pair.

How did it sail?

Harlan cocked a weather eye, set in his perpetually smiling face, and answered, "Goes fine,

RETIRED CIVIL WORKERS TO MEET WEDNESDAY

The William Harvey Grass chapter 54 of the National Association of Retired Civil Employees will meet at 2 p.m. Wednesday in Hackley hall. Francis A. Algeo, executive vice president of the California federation will speak. Refreshments will be served.