

Cement ship might be saved

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STAFF WRITER

SEACLIFF — The Cement Ship, a long time attraction on the shores of Seacliff State Beach, may be given a stay of execution by California State Parks, who after studying the storm-damaged beached vessel have determined that it can possibly be saved.

Jack Kirchner, district maintenance chief, said during the storms park rangers closed the ship as a safety precaution. "At first glance it appeared the ship was damaged beyond repair," Kirchner said.

That assessment changed after he inspected it closely, but he still has not made a final determination. "I have a work crew starting Tuesday and it appears we can save it, but the crew still has to examine the decking before we make a final decision," Kirchner said. "What we have are some holes in the decking. If we find they are stable enough to be

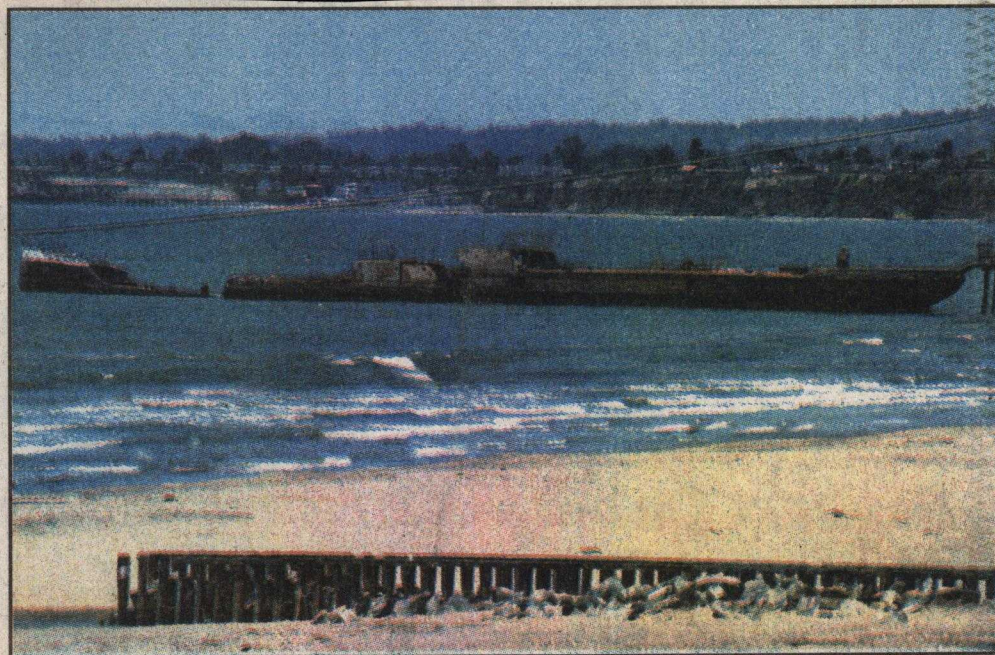
repaired we will do so." *WRP 52998*

Patrick Duggan, owner of Cafe Rio, an upscale restaurant that has been located near the landmark for 19 years, said he is delighted that the state may be able to keep it. "From a business standpoint I don't know if the loss of the boat would have much, if any, impact on us but from a personal standpoint I am very happy about their decision," Duggan said. "It is a landmark and an addition to the community. I have a lot of memories connected to it."

Kirchner said the vessel was built for the Navy during World War I, but the war ended by the time it was finished. "They brought it down to make an attraction of it and in its heyday it was quite an operation," Kirchner said. "It was a popular dance hall and restaurant."

Over the years, the ship's popularity as a nightclub waned and it was closed down but

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Tarmo Hannula

The cement ship off of Seacliff Beach awaits its fate.

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CEMENT SHIP

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the hull was reinforced so that it could still be used as a pier.

Time and nature have been hard on it, however, and this is not the first time its fate has been questioned. "We experienced similar damage during the 1980 storms and with the combined efforts of state

parks and local volunteers we were able to repair it," Kirchner said. "We are hoping to be able to do the same thing this year. I came here in 1979 and I have a personal interest in it as well. We are going to make every attempt to open it up."

Kirchner said he is hoping to organizing a volunteer day so people can help with the repairs. He said he will decide when as soon as a final decision on the ship's ultimate fate has been made.