

To a lot of people in Santa Cruz, the tiny North Coast village of Davenport is just a wide spot in the road, little more than a pit stop to tank up on cinnamon rolls and coffee before zipping off to San Francisco. And that suits the folks in Davenport just fine.

Milling about in the trendy Davenport Cash Store, insulated by a blanket of tourists, travelers to Davenport don't realize that just beyond the Cash Store's doors lies one of the last bastions of small town America to survive on the crowded California Coast. And that suits the folks of Davenport just fine too: visitors are welcome to drop in and spend a few minutes and a few dollars in their community, but when they've finished their meals, they're just as welcome to climb back into their cars and take their roller-coaster visions of a good time on down the road a piece. Davenport can get along just fine the way it is, thank you.

Trying to define the essence of Davenport is about as easy as trying to describe the aroma of some exotic blend of tea that's been served in one of your grandmother's old teacups: its calm exterior masks all the energy brewing within. The town is a little of this and more of that, but the whole thing is so much more than the sum of its ingredients — which consist of a few dozen houses of various sizes and architectural styles, a handful of small and non-polluting cottage industries, just a hint of tourist-serving facilities, postcard-perfect ocean views everywhere you look and standing guard over it all, the Lone Star Cement Plant.

But what makes the former milltown so "uniquely Davenport" is the 400 or so people lucky enough to call it home. What used to be a town of 2000 mostly Italian and Filipino cement plant workers has mellowed over the years into a regular hodgepodge of personalities, skin tones and political ideologies: brown, white, yellow, old, young, artists, hippies, craftspeople, cement plant workers, professors, commuters...you name it, Davenport probably has it.

As diverse as the bubbling little melting pot is, the one thread that ties the people together is the boundless love that everyone has for his or her little town. Living in Davenport is a privilege worth fighting for, and the people who live there are prepared to do just that. So, whether they're faced with multi-national oil companies, nuclear power plants, or big city developers eyeing their little town, you can bet that the citizens of Davenport will go down fighting if they ever go down at all.

Fred Bailey, the outspoken but camera-shy owner of Odwalla Juice in downtown Davenport, wants to dispel the myth that Davenport is nothing more than a hangout for old hippies. "This isn't some sort of 'hippie community' up here," said Bailey. "These are all hard-working people. It just so happened that some of us were lucky enough to get here, and we're just trying to protect the little bit that there is — and that isn't a lot."

"This is like a little microcosm up here — a real blend of cultures,



BEAK EXPERIENCE. Located in the shadow of the cement plant, Grandma Joyce Reyes' Fancy Feather Farm is a Davenport tradition.

threaten to ruin everything about the community that the citizens who live there cherish so highly.

Junior Olympio is 45 years old and has lived in Davenport his entire life. Indeed, he was the last baby born in the company hospital back in the days when the Lone Star Cement Company was the town of Davenport. He can dimly recall when the once-prosperous community had 2000 residents and three hotels. And he can recall when the town almost went belly-up in the 1950s when Highway One was straightened to Santa Cruz and 90 percent of the population fled to escape the omnipresent cement plant dust that used to coat people, cars and houses.

Since the cement plant has cleaned up its act, he has seen people start to drift back into town — 15 houses in the last couple of years alone. After witnessing the rise and fall and slow rise of Davenport, the lifetime resident has decided he likes things just the way they are now.

"It's been a big change," said Olympio. "I don't want to see too many more changes. I think we've got a nice little community the way it is right now. It's a nice small community — it's a place where you can still let your kids run around and not worry too much. People here will watch out for them. Everybody gets along here. I don't think anyone has an enemy in Davenport. Hopefully, it'll stay just the way it is."

Olympio is not a man of many words, and the words he had to say about Davenport's future as a potential hotspot for tourists were not particularly happy ones. "I don't want to see Davenport become some kind of tourist attraction," said Olympio. "We don't need it. We've already got places like Carmel. I don't think we need another Carmel."

Even though Bruce McDougal makes his living from Davenport's major tourist-serving business, the Cash Store, he agrees with Olympio that turning Davenport into a tourist destination could only hurt the town. A lot of the town's charm, he feels, is due to the small size of the community. Take that away, and it's just one more boring stop on the long line. At the same time, McDougal feels there is no way to stop the tourists from coming, so the town needs to make sure that what development occurs is consistent with the town's rural and slow-paced character.

"I don't think there's any way to stop the tourists from coming because we're on the most beautiful stretch of coastline between San Francisco and the Mexican border," said McDougal. "As more people find out about that, they will keep coming to it. There's no stopping it."

"I think the criteria for development of any kind is the attitude and the manner in which it is approached, and the quality — not the quantity — of it. I think the town stands to be ruined if the wrong kind of development occurs. One good McDonald's in the middle of town and the whole town's been had. That kind of thing would ruin us. We've got one Boardwalk in Santa Cruz County already. It's in the right

# Davenport

## The Company Town Grows Up

S A M M I T C H E L L

a lot of arts and crafts, a lot of cottage industries in town," said Judith Hutchinson, the captain of the Davenport Volunteer Fire Department and a resident of five years. "There's not a lot of people here, but a rather large percentage of them are outspoken. There are a lot of confident people here. We know what we want; I don't know if that was an accident or if we were just attracted to the same thing. We like being remote. We are isolated, and it is beautiful, but it's not 'Carmel-ish.' It's still funky and we really like it that way.

"There are some people who would like to make this town 'slick,'" added Hutchinson. "We don't want that. We'd rather follow the old path down to the beach. I would like to see this place preserved, this little sanctuary of California."

Bruce McDougal, the owner of the Davenport Cash Store, agrees with Hutchinson that the community is a small but tenacious one.

**Living in Davenport is a privilege worth fighting for, and the people who live there are prepared to do just that**

"Davenport is a unique spot," said McDougal. "It's a mixed bag. There are a lot of independent survivalist-types here. There are people from

the old country, there are a lot of retired people, there is a big arts community, there are people who work at the cement plant...But they all really like the place and they feel really strongly about it. They get very concerned if someone threatens it or if something seems to be a problem coming on. They respond. And people come from the heart when they respond."

The citizens of Davenport have had a lot to be concerned about recently, which probably has a lot to do with the fact that the normally publicity-shy citizenry was willing to share some of its biggest fears when the *Express* visited the town recently. To be perfectly blunt, the people who love their quiet little town are running scared. And the two scariest things of all — tourism and offshore drilling — are two things that

PHOTO: SHMUEL THALER



place; it does its job beautifully. We don't need anymore Boardwalks in this county."

Of all the people who are unhappy about seeing Davenport turned into a tourist attraction, none is more outspoken than Fred Bailey. As the owner of Odwalla Juices (which sits on an ocean-top blufftop), Bailey has proven that there are ways to bring small, non-polluting industry to Davenport that can help the community without ruining it. Although Bailey could make a lot of money by selling his valuable piece of property, he has no intention of selling out the quality of life he's worked so hard to attain. When Bailey gets started on tourists, there's nothing else one can do but let the man have his say. And that's just what Bailey got the chance to do when we visited him a few weeks ago.

"What we see happening is a real

push to make Davenport a destination stop for tourists — if you have one bed and breakfast inn, you might as well have two or three," said Bailey. "That's our major concern. We don't want to see that happen. Hey, we've got a bed and breakfast inn. Fine. We've got a restaurant. Fine. We have a bar. Fine. We have a couple of gas stations and a grocery store. Perfect. We don't need anymore of that.

"I think the community would like to hold together and see it not so developed," added Bailey. "There's enough people here already, enough inconsiderate people who come here in the summer particularly. It's like living in a museum — they park, they walk everywhere, they look in your doors....From June to September, they take every goddamn thing you own, then they leave their shit behind. We don't need anymore of

that."

Once Bailey is into his oratory, he's hard to stop: "I feel the town of Davenport should show their concerns to the county that they want to retain some semblance of what the town is, and not turn it into some other little false-front, goddamn phony little town that sells a bunch of shit to people that relates to the whales and all that. I don't think that's healthy."

As opinionated as Bailey is, he wanted to stress that he is not saying people shouldn't be allowed to have a good time in Davenport. All he asks is that they be a little mellow and show some respect.

"We're in no way saying people shouldn't be able to come here and enjoy it and all that," said Bailey. "My god, everywhere you go there's a Great America. It just depends on how you want to manifest it. We're part of that concept. We just don't

have a goddamn Ferris wheel — and we don't want to put one in."

**F**erris wheels and hamburger joints will be the least of Davenport's problems if the other threat to the peaceful little community makes its way past the paper stage. We're speaking, of course, about offshore oil drilling. Should Big Oil manage to rear its slimy head in the pristine waters off Davenport, the peaceful little town can kiss good-bye its unique character and become a regular little Santa Barbara.

It's not so much the sight of oil rigs and the threat of spills that threatens Davenport — although those are very serious concerns — but it's the fact that all those oil

rigs will need an onshore support facility — a place to dock oil tankers, a place for refineries, a place for several thousand employees.... And what better place for all these grandiose plans than Davenport?

Judith Hutchinson, one of the major opponents to offshore drilling, can't hide her sarcasm when she thinks back a few years to the time when the oil companies were sniffing around Davenport, as they doubtlessly will be in the next few years. "The first time they targeted Davenport, they wanted it to be some kind of support base," recalled Hutchinson. "They had this little model of what Davenport was going to be like — how wonderful life was going to be for us. They had little tankers parked here, and little

## Whale of a Man

**L**ike Melville's Ishmael, Captain John Pope Davenport went down to the sea to hunt for whales. The profitable trade in blubber and oil he established off the north coast in the 1860s and '70s has disappeared, but the town he founded still bears his name.

While other 49ers came around the Horn to California searching for gold, Captain Davenport set his sights on the abundant pods of whales he spied off the Monterey Coast. After a brief return to Rhode

Island to fetch his bride, Davenport started his whaling business in years later, he moved to Capitola to work for F.A. Hihn's on that town's new wharf.

In 1867 Davenport relocated his family north of Santa Cruz at El Jarro Point on the Agua Puera Creek. At what came to be known as Davenport Landing, he built a 450-foot wharf used both for whaling and shipping limestone from the nearby quarries. By the 1870s the beach at Davenport Landing

was filled with huge caldrons for rendering whale blubber.

The demand for oil from the sea dropped off in the 1880s and Davenport moved back to Santa Cruz, where he worked as a real estate agent and justice of the peace. Davenport Landing did not, however, disappear with its founder. The small settlement flourished about a mile south of El Jarro Point, becoming eventually just Davenport.

*(The facts in this profile were culled from Santa Cruz County, Parade of the Past by local historian Margaret Koch.)*

— Al Roberts



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WATCHING THE STORE. Marcia and Bruce McDougal, owners of the Davenport Cash Store, are some of the town's "Independent survivalists."

tank cars coming up the Pacific [railroad]. Of course, there were a lot more houses. Such a nice place!"

Bruce McDougal remembers the unsettling day of a few years back when a flashy PR man from some oil company came to the Cash Store and told him what a rich man he would be when Big Oil moved in, and what a bustling little city Davenport was going to become. Never, however, did the guy ask the residents what they thought.

"He didn't care what the people's feedback was," said McDougal. "He was telling, not asking. He didn't have the slightest concern about anybody's opinion. [The oil companies'] point is that, given enough time, they can accomplish anything. They have a very cynical view of anybody who's trying to stop them. They've reached the point where they're throwing their weight around just to prove they can do anything they want. There's not enough oil out there to risk destroying the whole coastline."

Junior Olympio doesn't have a lot to say about Big Oil moving into little Davenport other than to say he doesn't want it. "It'll be a headache, that's about it. I'd just as soon leave the ocean the way it is." Olympio's wife, Bonnie, just plain doesn't care for the sight of oil rigs out her picture window. "I don't want to see a refinery sitting there in front of my picture window," said Bonnie.

As concerned as the citizens of Davenport are about their town becoming a new Santa Barbara, they seem confident that they — with help from the county and a strong coalition of environmental groups — can stop the onslaught. They managed to stop it before, and they can stop it again. It's the old where-there's-a-will-there's-a-way philosophy, a philosophy that runs strong and deep in this strong-willed little community.

Of all the strong-willed spirits in Davenport, none is more deadset against offshore oil drilling than Judith Hutchinson, who is to offshore oil drilling what Fred Bailey is to rude tourists. Hutchinson has already collected thousands of signatures of people opposed to drilling, she has plastered Santa Cruz with posters, and she's even initiated a project for schoolchildren to let everyone know that everyone in town is opposed.

"Nobody wants it, as far as I know," said Hutchinson. "We're all afraid of the development, the pollution, the big city oil companies coming in here and changing our lives."

Hutchinson admits her little town has an uphill battle, and she also admits that Exxon could stomp

## Davenport's Pride

Little Davenport has a long list of things to brag about, but probably the town's biggest pride and joy is its volunteer fire department, which has been guarding North Coast residents and visitors for some 30 years. Although the 12-member fire department (10 men and two women) was officially absorbed into the county network last year, for all practical purposes it is still your old-fashioned little firehouse: when the alarm goes off, all the firefighters drop whatever it is they are doing to race to the rescue.

Fighting fires is actually only a small part of the department's business (it usually fights five to 10 fires a year). About 90 percent of the calls are for medical aid, particularly to vehicle accidents and for people falling off of cliffs. The department responds to calls from the Santa Cruz city limits to the San Mateo County line, and the vast majority of the people it helps are tourists from the Santa Clara Valley. Depending on the type of call, the volunteers race to the scene in one of three vehicles: a forest fire engine, a four-wheel drive beach patrol, or a rescue unit. Fortunately for accident victims, four of the volunteers are trained emergency medical technicians and one is a registered nurse.

Judith Hutchinson, the captain of the department and a firefighter for five years, says the job, while rewarding, can have its drawbacks, especially considering the number of

Davenport in a second if it really wanted to. Nonetheless, she is going to remain optimistic that something so horrible could never happen — not in Davenport, anyway. Davenport may be just one more mosquito to swat, as far as Exxon is concerned, but it is a mosquito with a fierce bite.

"We can make a statement," said Hutchinson. "That's about all we can do. I'm going to remain optimistic. I like to think that if enough people care — and if enough people do their best — that we can ward off all those bad things out there."

"We feel like such guardians up here. That's why the energy is so high to stop it. We'll be devastated if we can't. That's the one thing that we all share: the love for these beaches, the love for this coast." ■

bloody accidents she and her colleagues respond to. "I don't think anybody handles [bloody accidents] well. To say that a rescue official gets calloused to that kind of thing is not true. We're always affected. This highly charged stuff on the highway in the middle of the night just knocks you off the wall. There's something special about adrenalin; it's god's way of protecting people in this field."

With a "paycheck" of about \$35 a year, it certainly isn't the money that makes people rush out of bed at 3 am to go scrape some drunk driver off the highway. No, the rewards of being a volunteer firefighter lie on a much more personal level. Said Hutchinson: "The rewards we get are those rare people who send us letters saying, 'Thanks for saving my son's life.'"

One firefighter who has probably saved more lives than anybody is Junior Olympio, who made quite a name for himself as a cliffhanger and rescuer in his 22 years on the department. Even though Olympio is now retired, he says that everyone knows he's still available.

"After 24 years, I figured I'd had enough," laughed Olympio. "It's kind of nice to relax. . . . There aren't too many people who are going to want to go over a cliff at three in the morning to rescue somebody. But they know that if they need me, I'm available."

— Sam Mitchell



KEEP ON FIRE TRUCKIN'. Judith Hutchinson, captain of the Davenport Volunteer Fire Department, prefers the beautiful isolation of the North Coast community.

# Closed-Lipped if Not Closed-Down



TOWN OF PLENTY. This photo of Davenport, taken about 1918, shows several hotels in the bustling community as well as the cement plant at the far left.

During its sometimes rocky and often dusty 80-year history, the Lone Star Cement Company plant in Davenport has developed a unique love/hate relationship with the local citizenry. Newcomers to the North Coast may curse the rambling collection of dust-covered buildings and wonder how such an eyesore could be allowed to exist so close to such a scenic little town. Old-timers from Davenport, however, know that the town owes its existence to the cement plant. Like children of parents that embarrass them, residents of Davenport accept the cement plant as a necessary and unimpeachable fixture on the North Coast landscape.

Although only a handful of Davenport residents work at the cement plant now, there was a time not so long ago when the town owed its life to the plant. Not only did the plant employ the majority of the town's workers, it also provided a life-or-death service to Davenport — the company hospital. As the cement plant began producing more and more cement to feed such projects as the Golden Gate Bridge and the Panama Canal, the folks in Davenport would curse the omnipresent cloud of cement dust that coated houses, cars and lungs. But you can be sure that most of the cursing was done under one's breath: without the cement plant, life would've been a lot harder on the rugged North Coast.

The citizenry's true feelings about the obnoxious dust cloud were aired in the mid-1950s. That was when Highway One to Santa Cruz was straightened, allowing the cement plant workers to live away from the dust while still enjoying the benefits the cement company provided. It's a wonder that Davenport survived the mass emigration from its dusty shores at all.

As the environmental movement reached full swing in the 1970s, the cement plant was told to clean up its act — literally. The end product of environmentalists' complaints was a brand new \$74 million facility that could produce a lot more cement with a lot less dust. Over the years, the old cement plant has been continually dismantled until little is left of it today.

With the dust out of the air, people once again began returning to Davenport. However, few if any of

the people moving back to town worked at the cement plant. Today, the cement plant adds little to Davenport's cash flow directly; at the same time, Lone Star's tax bill of \$1,267,015 is worth something to the town, and it's still not easy to find any complaints about the company.

"Lone Star has been a real good asset to the community," said lifetime resident Junior Olympio. "The manager [Dave Maars] has done a real good job, public relations-wise."

"Relations [with Lone Star] are pretty good now," added Bruce McDougal, owner of the Davenport Cash Store. "It's been pretty rocky over the years, but generally they've been very responsive. They haven't done too badly."

Even the opinionated Fred Bailey agreed that there could be a lot worse neighbors than Lone Star, although he said there is still room for improvement. "[Lone Star] is there, and they're rather imposing, and they're noisy, and their trucks run up and down our streets all day — but maybe that's a trade-off to what *could* be here. And they can be good neighbors. It goes up and down."

With such a generally supportive report card from the local citizenry, the *Express* was a little surprised about the less-than-friendly response we received when we asked to take a quick tour through the cement plant. Manager Dave Maars passed the buck to Ralph Mitchell, a PR guy in Pleasanton, California. Mitchell kept us hanging for *two months* trying to find a morning that he could spare to come show us around. Once a date was set, Mitchell canceled the appointment.

Mitchell assured us he would love to show us around the new plant, but he was only following orders from a company vice-president in Greenwich, Connecticut, who did not want to open the plant's doors to us. Quoting the vice-president of the company [Jim Powers, who never returned our calls], Mitchell said in a tone of voice that sounded like he was in for a major chewing out:

"We're not interested in having stories in newspapers. We don't do that sort of thing. If we want a story, we'll write one and sent it out."

— Sam Mitchell