

Naval Reserve On Beam In Santa Cruz

By Alan Pugh
Sentinel Staff Writer

High atop the top-most point at DeLaveaga park is woven a web of wires. They comprise a complex of radio antennae.

They lead into a building that is well known to Santa Cruz residents as the U.S. naval reserve training center. But not known to many is the fact that the radio antennae lead into one of the navy's most important and vital standby radio transmitting units on the west coast.

Housed in the reserve center are two powerful transmitters that can reach around the world. And if the 12th naval district's radio facility at Treasure Island were to be put out of operation by act of God or war, the Santa Cruz unit would, in actuality, start reaching around the world, funneling messages to ships at sea and to stations here at home.

At a recent personnel inspection, Capt. W. D. McDaniel, commanding officer of the reserve training center, revealed that the Santa Cruz station is the alternate "or emergency" station for the Military Sea Transport Service. If the MSTS operation at Treasure Island were to go out, the entire group would move to Santa Cruz and take over the reserve installation.

"Plans already have been drawn that would dispatch the admiral and his staff and the necessary personnel to Santa Cruz almost immediately," Capt. McDaniel said. "They would actually take over and the reserve unit would be moved elsewhere."

Always prepared for such an eventuality, the station at DeLaveaga park has living and berthing equipment stored away to accommodate a crew of 100 officers and men. In one of the storerooms, there are sufficient bunks and beddings for the operation. The station also has a galley large enough to feed such a crew.

While First Class Radioman Ron Emons mans the transmitting and receiving station now under the reserve program, he has only three schedules a day which he must monitor and copy. If MSTS were to move in, an entire radio crew with sufficient personnel to maintain a 24-hour radio watch would be on board.

The two transmitters are post-World War II variety. One is a 350-watt affair for code (or CW) work — which would operate at 200 watts on voice communication. The big one pumps out 500 watts when operated as a CW transmitter or 350 watts on phone.



"With the 500 watts of code transmission," Emons said, "there is no place on earth we couldn't reach. The smaller unit also had long-range power, but 'doesn't put out the sock the big one does.'"

Right now, Emons communicates daily with NDW, the naval reserve control station for the 12th naval district. The Santa Cruz station is known as NDW-11. In all, there are 34 reserve units in the district.

At 10 o'clock each morning, Emons "copies" NDW with its series of routine, unclassified messages. These are sent at rate of 60 words a minute by an automatic transmitter. "And we copy it with an automatic receiver," Emons said. "That 60 words a minute is too fast to be handled by ear."

The same schedule with the same messages again come through at 11. Then at 1 p.m., they are sent at 20 words a minute so that operators up and down the naval reserve network can copy them and pick up anything that was lost in the 60 word a minute transmissions.

CPO Jack Reynolds, station public information officer, said the Military Sea Transport Service "brass" inspects the radio facilities every quarter. The two transmitters "are lit off and put in operation as a test." The

MSTS officials declare the station in a state of readiness and go back to Treasure Island.

"But we have to keep it in a constant state of readiness . . . not just for the inspection," Reynolds said. "We don't know when we will be called upon to take over the MSTS operation."

Only last summer station NDW-11 went into operation as a naval station. Santa Cruz residents may recall when a fleet of mine sweepers put into the bay. Bad weather came up and the sweeps had to seek easier waters. Part of the crew was ashore. At Capt. McDaniels' order, Emons "lit off" the smaller transmitter and relayed orders to the sweeps and informed their skippers that the stranded crewmen were safe ashore and were bunked at the reserve center.

"It's good duty," Emons said. "But sometimes I wish I were back on a ship handling the radio transmission without all this automatic paraphernalia . . . it makes me feel like a switch-thrasher, instead of a radioman."

The captain and crew atop DeLaveaga park hope the time will never arise when the voice of Santa Cruz naval radio will be heard around the world, but in case the time ever comes—the captain and crew are ready to meet the challenge.

Radioman Ron Emons prepares to send a message NDW, the naval reserve training "command" station for the 12 Naval District at Treasure Island. Although such procedure with a key is rare, Emons keeps his "fist" in addition with daily practice.



CPO Jack Reynolds, public information officer for the Santa Cruz naval reserve training unit, and RM/1 Ron Emons check messages that are coming in from NDW, the

reserve "command" station at Treasure Island. The 60-word-a-minute messages are sent in code by an automatic device and are recorded in Santa Cruz on the teletype after the

radio signals have been transformed into impulses that activate the teletype machine. The instrument at the left turns the radio signals into the teletype impulses.

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FOR SALE



Radioman Emons "lights off" and tunes the 500-watt transmitter at the Santa Cruz

naval reserve headquarters as CPO Jack Reynolds looks on.

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At their left behind Reynolds is the smaller 350 watt transmitter.