

Behind-The-Scenes Story of Lighthouse

Life Has Changed Since Early Days of Pigeon Point Station

By Wally Trabing

There's a little room in a 155-foot tower not far from Santa Cruz where the shades are pulled at daybreak and raised at night.

Seaman 1/c Mel Braunagel from Spokane, Wash., led me on a spiraled climb up 134 painted steel steps to this room last week, which tops the Pigeon Point lighthouse about 30 miles north of here.

"We pull the shades for two reasons," said the young coast guardsman, "They say when the sun used to hit the big lens just right, the magnified intensity of the light would start fires in the hills behind the lighthouse."

The second reason, and one which is less imaginative, is that the sun causes "pits" in the lens' components.

The light grips a rocky promontory just off Highway 1. It gleams with whiteness, and within its fortress-like brick walls you feel as secure at the top as you would in your own bed. It's eight feet thick at the base and three at the top.

Pigeon Point takes its name from the ship "Carrier Pigeon" which ran aground 20 years before the light house was built in 1871. In the early days before electricity was used, the light was maintained by two bachelors.

Braunagel pointed out two tiny apartments at the base of the light, each with its own miniature fireplace. In those days cables dropped down the center from the top with weights, like on a grandfather's clock, which turned the lens.

Now that's all changed. Braunagel and three other coast guardsmen live with their families in a huge two-story house. Their pin-neat fenced in (No Trespassing) enclosure gives them a sort of private world with a watery front yard.

"TIME DISCLOSETH ALL THINGS"

(Author's Name Below)

The past ten years have revealed the answers to formerly unsolvable medical problems. We now have conquered killers that have plagued mankind through the ages.

Soon, within our time we hope, all diseases will be overcome. The devoted efforts of research chemists and physicians, backed up by the millions of dollars sup-

"Some didn't like it here and asked for a transfer, but it suits me fine. We're on duty six hours and off 18. We've got our own private fishing area, and good living quarters." We could see some of the boys on the rocks below. They looked mighty contented. "If you like it here and can do the job, they'll let you stay as long as you want," he said.

At the top of the tower, we stood under the "jewel" of the lighthouse. The lens, at first glance, looks like an oversized inverted victorian punch bowl. It weighs a ton and a half — all hand-ground glass. Resting on its mounting in the shade-darkened room it seemed like some sacred jewel which only reflected its powerful sparkle in the shrouds of night.

The lens was made by Henry Lepaute in Paris and shipped around the Horn in 1869. A story goes that because of the unrest in the east following the Civil War, it was buried on a beach until it could be shipped to the west.

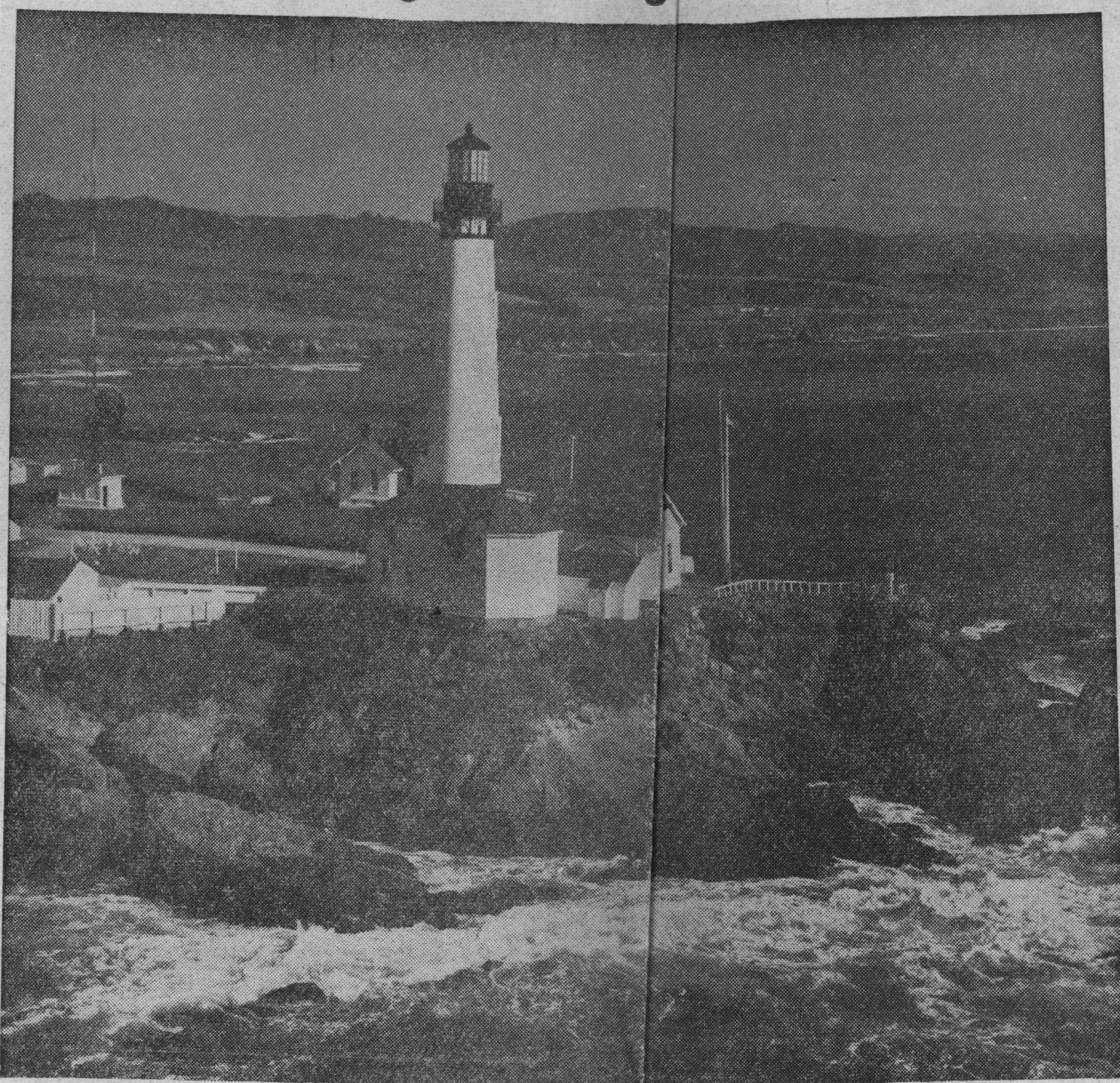
Monsieur Lepaute must have been quite a patient mathematician. Around the top of the lens are 192 triangular prisms. Around the bottom are 153 prisms. The center is girthed with 24 car head-light sized lenses, big eyes which magnify the 150 watt globe in the center to many times its size when you peer through them.

Now, I always thought the light flashing from a lighthouse was made by a powerful revolving spot light. Well, live and learn.

Braunagel explained the lens is rotated once every four minutes around this steadily burning globe. Because of the arrangement of the main center censes and the prisms flashes are released from the huge glass piece only every 10 seconds. He said the flashes could be stepped up by increasing the speed of rotation.

Teamwork within the lens builds up a flash that equals the light of 450,000 candles, which can be seen on a good clear night about 18 miles out at sea.

Braunagel pointed out some painted sections of the tower light windows. "Since the high-



The World Today

Conference Is Smashing Soviet Victory

By James Marlow

Associated Press News Analyst
Washington (AP).—This has been an almost weird seven months in high diplomacy. During most of that time—until now—it would have been hard to find anyone willing to bet a dime on a summit conference in 1958.

But Khrushchev saw a new and golden chance to score on the West—and took advantage of it fast — when American troops were sent into Lebanon and British troops into Jordan at the request of the heads of government of both countries.

Khrushchev moved fast, but

certainly be the kind Eisenhower never wanted: one without thorough preparation or agreement on what will be discussed.

This picturesque unit is the Pigeon Point Lighthouse, on a rocky finger off the coast highway, about 30 miles north of Santa Cruz. It has warned shipping of the dangerous reefs since 1871. The shades are drawn during the day in the lens room, because old timers said that the sun shining through, caused fires in the mountains behind it. The sun also pits the lens. Operation of the light is handled by the coast guard.

BEST BUY . . . CLASSIFIED

way was built by here, they had to black 'em out because the flashes blinded the motorists."

The next wide-eyed question: "Just what would happen if you came up here when the light was on?"

Nothing at all," said Braunagel. "We can walk around the light and look at the lens. Of course, if you looked right in one of the big lenses you'd get a flash." He said the lens was cleaned about once a week.

Since the days of Moby Dick, there's been some added lighthouse tricks to ward wandering ships from the rocks.

Timing between flashes identifies the particular lighthouse. A two-toned fog horn, audible for some five miles out at sea is sounded in foggy weather on a code basis. Added to this is a radio beacon which operates twice every hour, 24 hours a day, and continuously during times of poor visibility.

The man on watch sits in the radio room separated from the tower, and on foggy days he's got a noisy six hours on his hands. Besides the blasting fog horn, there's a beeping radio signal. This requires almost full volume on the room's TV set.

If you're interested in all this carrying on, you are welcome to visit the light station between 2 and 4 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays or holidays. The congenial guardsmen also welcome school groups by special arrangements.

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SANTA CRUZ TRADING AREA**