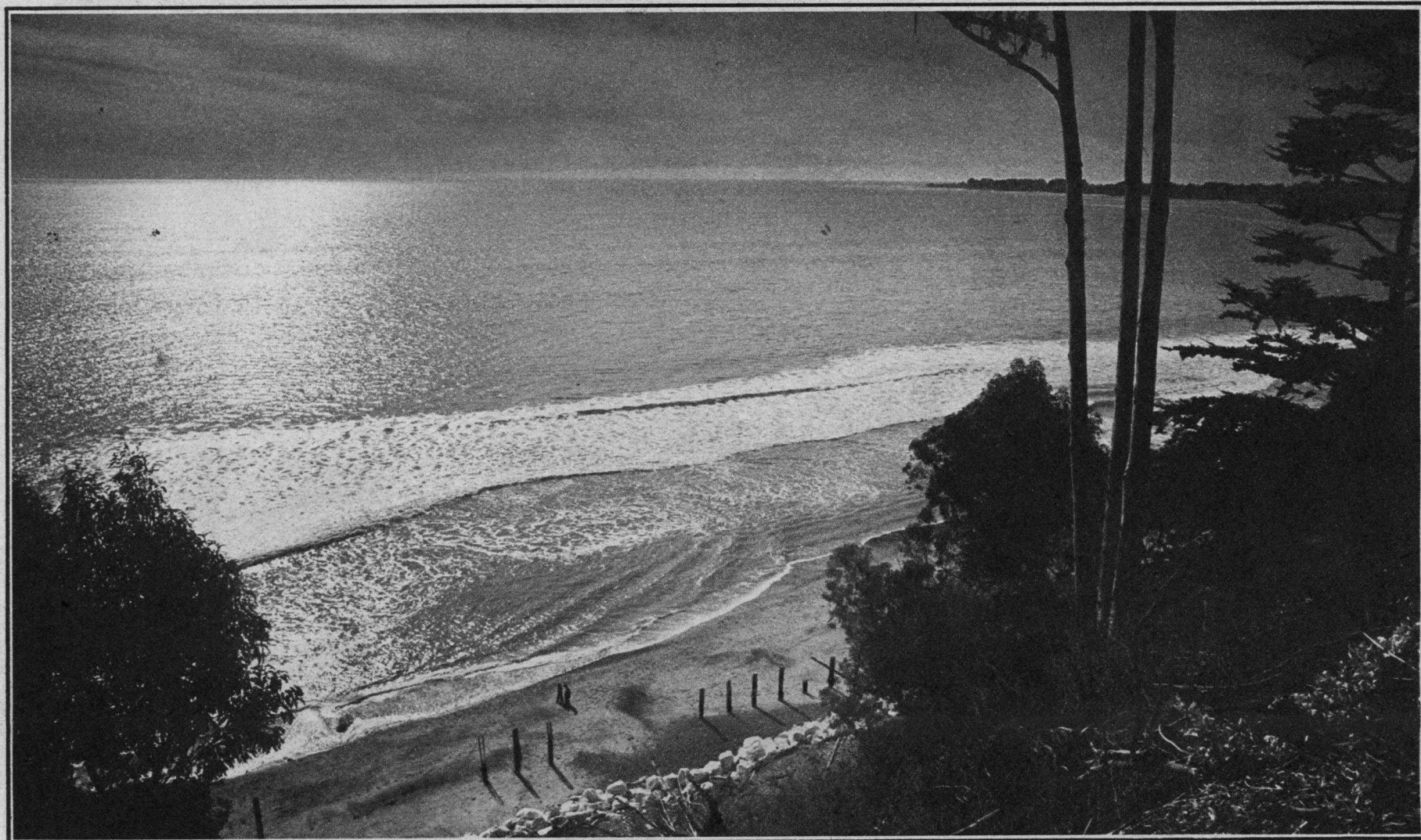


Life Style



Photography: Fran Ortiz

Opting For Life In The Slow Lane

“Lured by a vision of morning jogs on the beach, sailing on the Bay and a blue-denim lifestyle, newcomers come to Santa Cruz County.”

■ The first time I reached the summit of Highway 17 over twenty years ago, I reveled in the sight of Monterey Bay below with colorful sailboats darting across an aquamarine sea and cottony puffs floating above in a brilliant, blue sky. Drifting downgrade I sucked the invigorating air into my lungs and savored the smell of a forest mingled with the scent of the sea.

Some day, I thought, *some day*, this will be my home. Each time we subsequently crossed the Santa Cruz mountains to enjoy a day on the Boardwalk, or in little villages like Davenport or Felton or Aptos, I repeated my vow to my wife.

She merely sighed. “But how could we afford it?” That was the rub, so we continued to dream our dreams, gloomy in the knowledge that neither of us were willing to abandon our careers to accommodate a lifestyle we coveted. Finally she retired, I changed my career, and

By Joe Alexander

we promptly moved to the pine tree and apple country of Pleasant Valley, near Aptos in Santa Cruz County.

In the three years since then, I’ve met many who solved the problem of economic survival here without waiting until their sixties to pull up stakes and make the move. Lured by a vision of morning jogs on the beach, sailing on the Bay, a glass of wine in a sunny, sidewalk café and blue-denim lifestyle, more than 48,000 newcomers have arrived since.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau in Santa Cruz estimates 8 million people a year pour through this area to enjoy its beaches, climate and ambience. Some of them stay. How many of them wish they could, there is no

way of knowing. For those not willing to live under a bridge or panhandle on the Pacific Mall, opportunities for economic well-being are limited. With an abundance of working senior citizens and students from the University of California at Santa Cruz, wages tend to settle down around the minimum allowable. White collar, or professional, salaries fall far short of those paid in other areas of the state. An executive secretary earning \$1,800 a month in San Francisco would do well to get half that here, according to an employment specialist. The manager of a sizable store might be paid \$1,000 a month with a small incentive bonus.

Most of the newcomers without an independent income who settled down in Santa Cruz County have exercised one of four options: commute to and from a job in Silicon Valley; luck out by landing appropriate work; buy a business, or become an entrepreneur.

continued

Life Style *continued*

Among the 6,500 or so cars that make the daily commute is a Buick Regal driven by Dave Aronovici. He drives an average of eighty miles a day getting to and from his position as vice president of industrial relations at Precision Monolithics in Santa Clara.

"I've got the best of two worlds," says Aronovici. He sits on a chair poised to dart out for a jog on the beach. He radiates enthusiastic energy. His steady rise among the personnel and industrial relations people of the electronics industry is a reflection of his effective use of that energy. "I love my work and I love my life here."

His family loves it, too. The three offspring like being near the beach and Merlyn, his wife, plays competitive tennis at the nearby Rio Del Mar Tennis Club. She is also a painter, with works frequently exhibited at galleries in the Monterey Bay as well as Los Gatos and Palo Alto. In her lighter moods, she designs greeting cards for a firm that has been a client for fifteen years.

"Isn't that beautiful?" Dave points across the tops of the pine trees on the slope below. On the bay, sunlight dances across the wind-stirred ripples. It looks like white yarn has been strewn across the water. Behind him, Merlyn's brightly colored paintings contrast with the somber tones of the wood walls. His time on the beach is reflected by a collection of surf-polished stones harbored in a woven basket behind the Dalmation's favorite chair.

"I've got a sloop berthed in the harbor over there." Dave points to the curving cliffs that border a bend in the bay and hide Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor from Rio Del Mar. "The family says that's my only madness."

They'd lived near the ocean at Newport Beach in Southern California until 1969, when Dave moved up in his career by accepting a position in San Jose. When a friend showed the Aronovici family the Rio Del Mar area, they were immediately enamored with the combination of forest and coastline. The attraction was so great, Dave had no difficulty in deciding that the commute was a small price to pay for the privilege of living out their dream in Santa Cruz County. The day their lease terminated in San Jose, he loaded a rented van and began the westward journey.

"Sacrifices?" Dave ponders the question. "Not really. At first we missed our social contacts but we've made new friends here. Besides, some of the old friends love to come over here for a visit."

As for commuting time, Aronovici says he uses it to operate a "one man think-tank," thinking out solutions to the problems of attracting and keeping good workers for his company.

Judy Martin-Hoyt hustled up one of the scarce salaried jobs in the area that allowed her to follow her career path. "Please don't call

me lucky," she says. "I worked very hard to get myself relocated. For a year and a half, I sent out resumes and flew around the state appearing before civil services selection boards. I was almost a burn-out victim before I got myself out of that mess in Los Angeles."

At the time of Judy's escape, she was executive director of the Southwest Regional Training Center. Her work there included the design, development and direction of training programs for city, county, state and federal employees. With that, and all the commuting, she had little time or energy left for enjoyment of other things in life she values: music, walking on the beach, or just relaxing.

"I felt like I was on a merry-go-round that had gone crazy, rushing around in circles." She shakes her head as though the memory triggered a little dizziness. "It was just too much of everything. Too many people. Too much traffic. When I wasn't rushing somewhere, I was standing in line."

When it all began to get to her, Judy didn't have a specific alternative in mind. "I just wanted to find a slower pace, live where I could see some green trees and clear skies once in a while."

At one of her job-seeking interviews, the personnel director of Santa Cruz County was a member of the selection board. He encouraged her to apply for work in his county. The result was a half-time position as a personnel analyst. That gave Judy time to slow down while she established a new base, some time to get reacquainted with her cello and play with the Santa Cruz Symphony once in a while.

A later move to the City on a Hill (the local name for the University of California, Santa Cruz) centered her among the towering trees that dominate the campus and in a swirl of the special kind of energy that goes with the mixture of youth and learning. As employment manager there, she's back in an administrative position and feeling some of the stress that is part of the management game.

"Things are different now, though. The time I used to be locked up in a car is available for relaxation." She points out the window at the redwood trees. "Just being around those makes me feel better physically and psychologically. When I feel the pressures building up, I do a little running during lunch hour, or after work I can go sit on the beach and stare at the surf."

Charles, Judy's husband, wanted to get out of the Los Angeles rat race as much as she did. Corporate game-playing, plus a 120-mile daily commute, had diluted the excitement and enthusiasm he'd once felt as regional training manager for a multinational corporation. Once Judy had made her job connection in Santa Cruz, he rejoined the United States Postal Service, his employer during his student days at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo.

"They can have their prestige and suits and ties in that other world," he says. "Me, I've got fresh air and exercise. I didn't drop out, I dropped in."

He's a physical fitness buff. After a day of walking his route he may go jogging or push iron for a while, not to make his muscles bulge, but because he's a true believer. Occasionally,



he spends some time with his charcoal pencil and sketching pad.

Judy and Charles are emphatic about one thing. "No way," they say. "We'll never go back to the city life."

Romance sparked John Fry's commitment to the shores of Monterey Bay. While studying for his master's degree in business administration at the University of Santa Clara in 1965, he began dating Dottie, who is now his wife. "She was teaching school here," John says. "I was living on campus and it's a nice place, but Santa Cruz was different. I liked the weather, all the greenery, and the pace. People had time to stop and talk. They were friendly."

After his graduation they lived in San Francisco a while and then, moving up the career ladder, John moved to Texas. He continued to advance in his company and build a reputation in the field of property management. In 1973, he transferred to Menlo Park as real estate operations manager for Saga Corporation. With his office that close to Santa Cruz, he surrendered to the magnetic attraction the area held for him and bought a place tucked into a *cul de sac* on the fringes of the Aptos Seascape Golf Course.

"We found the ideal place for us," says John. "Problem was, I had a 120-mile daily commute. And if I wasn't going to the office, I was on my way to the airport in San Jose. Covering three states kept me away four or five days a week."

John took the plunge into entrepreneurship with some friends, and his headquarters became Los Gatos. That cut sixty miles a day out of his commute, but success expanded his territory to ten states, which didn't improve his at-home time. When differences in management policy began to strain the relationship

with his partners, John felt it was time to step out on his own.

"We talked it over at home," he recalls. "Dottie has always supported me in my ventures. We knew there would be risk involved, but decided we could get what we wanted out of life without my traipsing all over the country."

John began a one-man operation as a consultant and real estate manager. That has worked out well for him and his family. He works from his home and is only away four or five weeks of the year. Though he keeps one room reserved as an office, the best place in the house to spread out maps and blueprints is on the tiled island in the huge kitchen, with the sunshine streaming through the glass wall of the eating nook. The vivid reality of daylight bathing the garden makes it difficult to know the inside from the outside.

"This beats any office I ever worked in," he says. "And I've enough time now so I can be involved with Dottie's community activities like the League of Women Voters."

However, life isn't always a rose garden for John. There are people here who consider anyone connected with land development as the *enemy*. They'd like to barricade the highways and stop all growth. John is sympathetic to their view and is able to persuade many of his clients that bringing a property up to its highest potential demands compromise between the interests of investors and those of the community.

"I guess you could call me a mediator. I live here, too, so I want it to continue to be beautiful. I do all I can, consistent with providing my clients a decent return on their investment," John says. "There's no denying there's a basic conflict, but everyone can't have their own way. . . something has to give under the pressure."

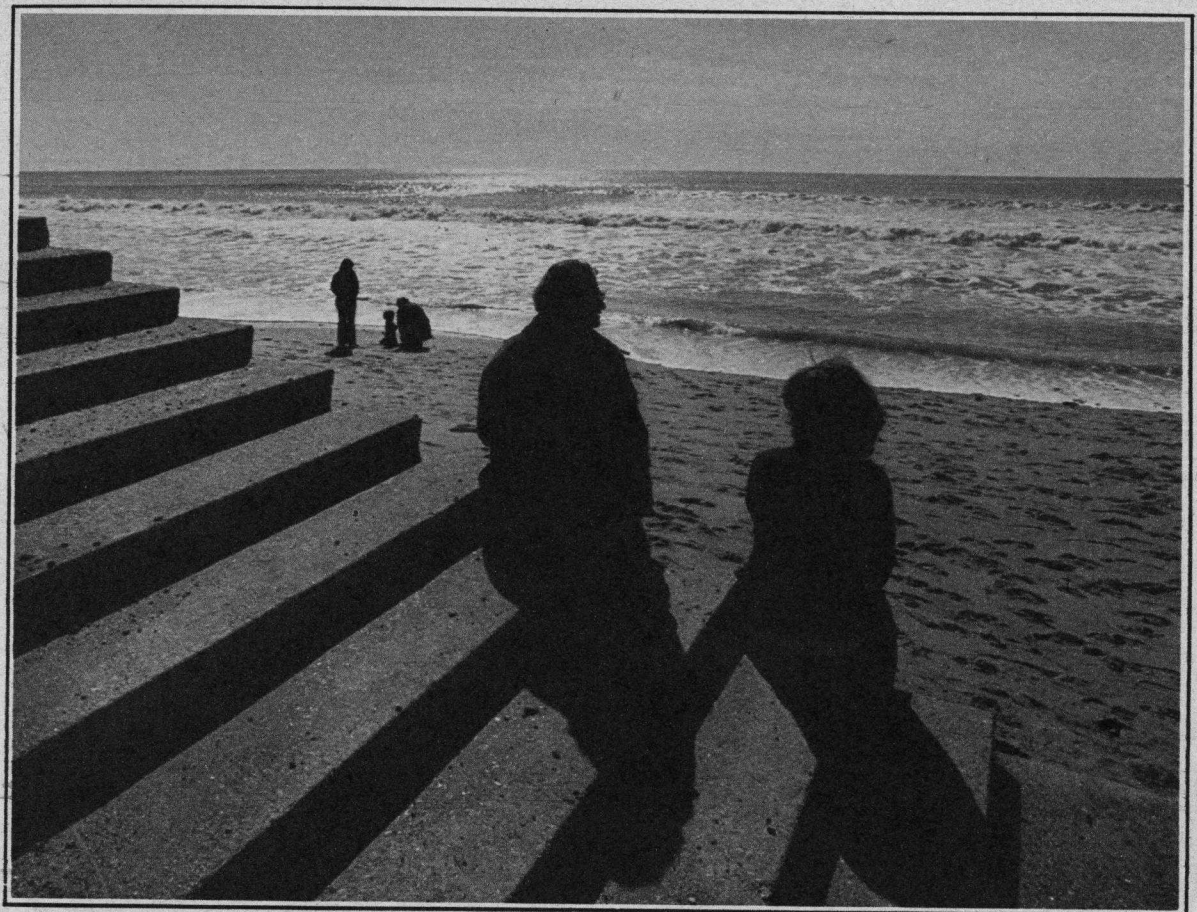
For some of the people who put their lifestyle ahead of traditional success, one thing that gives is commitment to a predictable career path. Steve Skold is one of those.

Steven grew up in Stockholm, and his family took him to Chicago when he was seventeen. After spending four years in the United States Air Force during the Korean War he entered Northwestern University and graduated with degrees in psychology and business. His Air Force experience led him into the management musical chairs game, moving from Chicago to Cleveland to San Francisco. The next stop was Long Island with a round trip daily into New York.

"That's no place to raise a family, not for me," Steve says with the trace of Sweden still strong in his speech. After six months, he and his wife packed their three children and the family dog in a seventeen-foot trailer and headed back to California.

"It was the first real vacation we had ever taken, so we took our time. It took two months. We stopped at every state and federal park we could get the trailer into."

The trip ended in Foster City, where a former neighbor urged Steve to go into the automobile business. In preparation, he sold



cars and trucks, worked as a sales engineer, body shop foreman, and assistant service manager. Sharing a pizza with a friend one day, they began talking about the pizza parlor business. "We got carried away with enthusiasm and the first thing we knew, we had an option from the Round Table Pizza people for Santa Cruz County. First we opened one on 41st Avenue and then a second one in Watsonville."

Would he do it again?

"I don't know. It takes a lot of money to do that now. A lot of money." He shakes his head. "I wouldn't want to go through all the start-up headaches again. There's lots more competition now and interest rates would eat you up if you had to borrow any money."

In time, his partner grew restless and wanted to do other things. They sold out in Watsonville, and Steve took over the Santa Cruz place. Subsequently, Steve began dreaming of greater challenges. Working with so many youngsters stimulated his thinking about the problems of youth, and his interest was encouraged by his wife, Sherry, who is a grade school principal and licensed educational psychologist in Cupertino. Steve returned to college at San Jose State to earn a master's degree in Educational Counseling and sold out of the pizza business.

"Proposition 13 got me," he says. "School budgets shrank and the market dried up for counselors. So I was out of business and no clear directions. One thing I knew for sure. We were going to say in Ben Lomond. Period. No matter what."

The Skolds have good reason for their choice. The town has the flavor of a small mountain community, but it's only about fifteen miles from Santa Cruz and thirty miles to Sherry's work in Cupertino. She likes the area so much that when it is her turn to drive for her car pool she chooses the winding tortuous route on Highway 9, rather than the relatively easy trip on Highway 17, the choice of most com-

muters.

"My brother-in-law has been in the printing equipment business for twenty years down in Orange County. Every time we went down there on a family visit, I told him to get some of that equipment working, not to just let it sit idle waiting for a buyer," Steve recalls. "Then last year he announced we were going in the printing business."

That started a new round of learning for Steve. After nine months of practically living in print shops in the Los Angeles area, C & S IMPRESSIONS became a reality. Steve rebuilt the garage at his home and moved in offset and letter press printing equipment. He can handle a lot of volume there by himself and they do the big orders in the Southern California shop. When he isn't running off an order, he's over in Silicon Valley hustling up business.

"I spend about a week a month in the Los Angeles area, and that's not bad," Steve grins. "My wife likes it here. The kids love it and we get a lot of sunshine. When the pressure gets heavy, I can jump in the pool for a few laps."

Then there's the fellow who comes to the house to tune up our cars with his shop in the back end of a Volkswagen van. He has two degrees in fine arts and once studied at Oxford. "Tuning cars is what I do to pay for what I really am," he says. "I'm a sculptor. I'd rather sculpt than teach."

And there's Ruthmarie, who may be the most versatile of the people here who have alternative careers. Her business card states, "Arts and Handicapped Persons Innovative arts employment/Educator—all ages, workshop & in-service/Media productions, TV & Radio/ Visual & Performing Arts/Resource Consultant/Ventriloquist/Storyteller/Puppeteer/Writer."

When she isn't doing all that, she directs the American Storytelling Resource Center in Santa Cruz. □