

EVENTS

The Bay's Days In The Gloom

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With horns blaring and passengers waving from the railings, a parade of more than 15 fishing boats circled the Santa Cruz Wharf Sunday morning before delivering the distant descendents of the Italian village of Riva Trigoso to the dock.

Unlike their grandparents, who had fled San Francisco following the 1906 earthquake to find new homes and to start a new fishing industry in Santa Cruz, Sunday's sailors had begun their voyages at the Santa Cruz Yacht Harbor. But the short sea trip had brought several generations together in memories of the tradition of the Santa Cruz fishing industry.

The experience was described by one passenger as a source of "pleasure and pride."

Sunday was Santa Cruz' second annual "Day On The Bay," an event sponsored by UCSC's CIAO Study Group and the Santa Cruz Wharf Association to celebrate not only the contributions of the Italian fishing colony, but also of the Portuguese, Chinese and others who made Monterey

SEE BACK PAGE

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FROM PAGE 1

Bay fishing a major industry in the early decades of the 20th Century.

"The immigrants are arriving!" announced Riccardo Gaudino, master of ceremonies and organizer of the event. Despite gray skies and a biting wind, a small, jovial crowd had gathered to greet the fishing boat procession and hear Santa Cruz Mayor Joe Ghio recall that his grandfather had been one of those fishing pioneers displaced to this area by the 1906 earthquake.

"I doubt that my grandfather ever thought that 75 years later, his grandson would be mayor of this town," said Ghio to the applause of the crowd.

Gaudino, a UCSC student, had revived the first "Day On The Bay" fishing festival originally begun by Skip Littlefield in 1937. The Wharf Association had given considerable support to the project, and provided the cioppino feed, beginning at 2 p.m.

Jack O'Neill's colorful hot air balloon hovered over the foot of the wharf briefly, before rains drove everyone indoors. The bar at the Miramar was packed with people watching a series of videotape interviews with descendents of those original Riva Trigoso families.

Mark Schwartz had directed the videotaping with Eric Thiermann doing most of the shooting on the production, which will be edited for showing on local television. The video production — punctuated with laughter, tears and lots of memories — tells of the rise and decline of the fishing industry, and the rise of the descendents of those first non-English speaking families to positions of prominence throughout Santa Cruz.

The weather wasn't helping matters much, and the U.S. Navy band — scheduled musical headliners — reportedly had a flat tire in Milpitas and never showed up.

A Navy trailer truck carrying a nuclear energy display did arrive on schedule. It provided a setting for at least one discussion of the pros and cons of nuclear power in the course of the day.

Despite the sheets of rain coming down at noon, the organizers proceeded with plans for feast, featuring cioppino — a stew of crab, clams, calamari and other seafood swimming in tomato sauce.

By 2 p.m. the rain had stopped, and several hundred hearty souls stood in line, waiting for the food and drink that would take the chill out of the wind that was still blowing from the west.

A quartet calling itself "the Four Sicilians" arrived not long afterwards, setting up in the back of a Cardinale seafood panel truck, and filling the wharf with sounds of mandolins and guitar that soon had the more daring of the onlookers dancing.

Through it all, Gaudino, wearing his trademark tassled "beanie," kept things rolling along, laughing off the threat of rain with the same abundant energy that had made the whole thing come together.

By 4 in the afternoon, traces of blue were poking through the silver clouds. Bicycle racers on nearby beach hill were concluding their colorful blur of two days of competition with an event named in honor of Riva Trigoso.

From the unique and spectacular vantage point of the wharf's end, sails danced over the waters of the Monterey Bay as clouds clung like whisps of cotton to the lush mountains to the north.

Showing some of the same perseverance of those first fishermen, the organizers — and the several hundred guests — had come through the worst of the weather and now watched as "A Day On The Bay" turned finally, and exquisitely, beautiful.