



Harbormaster Larry White, a 31-year veteran at the Small Craft Harbor, patrols on a quiet morning last week.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

WHO YA GONNA CALL? HARBOR PATROL!

They'll pull you from the water, tow your boat and maybe even share a cup of coffee

Harbor

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By **JENNIFER SQUIRES**
Sentinel staff writer

Drunk, naked people stuck on Seal Rock. Suspects fleeing into the water to escape police officers or sheriff's deputies. A car driving off the wharf.

Who are you going to call?
The Harbor Police.

"It's almost like 'Ghostbusters,'" Deputy Harbormaster Don Kinnamon said. "The way they're always going to call the Harbor Police."

The smallest law-enforcement agency in the county, the seven sworn officers of the Harbor Police are responsible for keeping the peace at the 91-acre Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor and watching over the waters 10 miles out, north and south of the harbor mouth.

Kinnamon likens the harbor to a small city.

A barrel-shaped man with an easy smile, Kinnamon slows to wave at boaters as he drives a Ford Explorer up the east side of the lower harbor. (North Bay Ford donated the truck for patrols.) He stops just beyond the

Murray Street bridge to shake hands with a harbor user-turned-pal with whom he made weekend plans.

"I wouldn't know him if I didn't have this job," Kinnamon said.

After 17 years with the Harbor Police, Kinnamon knows most slip-holders by name and boat, and can recall when they needed help from the Harbor Police.

Few of those calls for service necessitated the officers' law-enforcement expertise. Although officers do catch boat burglars, arrest intoxicated folks and enforce boating regulations, they spend most of their time rescuing people or vessels from distress.

"Over 90, 95 percent is rescue," Harbor-

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Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor

PORT DISTRICT FORMED: 1950.

AREA: 91 acres of land and water.

BUILT IN: Woods Lagoon, the other 'twin lake' to Schwan Lagoon.

SOUTH HARBOR OPENED: 1964.

NORTH HARBOR OPENED: 1973.

BOAT CAPACITY: approximately 1,000 wet-berthed, 275 dry-docked vessels.

BOATS WAITING FOR SLIPS IN THE HARBOR: about 1,000.

VESSEL BREAK-DOWN: 15 percent commercial fishing boats, 35 percent pleasure power boats, 50 percent pleasure sail boats.

BOAT VALUES: \$2,000 to \$700,000.

RESIDENTS: About 50 boats are 'live-aboards.'

FUNDING: \$6 million budget generated entirely by user fees.

GOVERNED BY: Five-person board of commissioners.

EMPLOYEES: 21, including Harbor Police and a lifeguard.

Harbor

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master Larry White said.

White has been with the Harbor Police for 31 years, more than half of the harbor's lifespan. He started two years after the North Harbor docks were completed, which added 455 slips to the harbor.

"I really enjoy coming to work," White said, navigating a 20-foot hard-bottom inflatable patrol boat up the harbor channel toward the jetty.

The HBI gets most of its use inside the harbor and close to the county's beaches, White said. Harbor Police officers use it when responding to cliff rescues, stranded surfers and swimmers in distress. Even though its jurisdiction ends at the harbor mouth, the Harbor Police has responded to those water rescues over 30 years as part of a "good Samaritan" relationship with local fire departments.

"They don't have the expertise or the equipment," Kinnamon said.

The U.S. Coast Guard sends a cutter or a larger HBI up from

Harbor Patrol

ESTABLISHED: 1946, began carrying firearms in 1991.

OFFICERS: Seven full-time, most have previous experience as lifeguards.

POLICE POWER: Same as any other law enforcement officer in the state.

RESPONSIBILITIES: Law enforcement, safe-boating education, rescuing people and vessels in distress.

WATER RESCUES ANNUALLY: About 100.

RESPONSE TIME: About 15 minutes to any call.

BOATS: A 20-foot hard-bottom inflatable and a 26-foot Alomar.

SMUGGLING CASES SINCE 1975: "Two or three, but they're 15 years apart," says Harbormaster Larry White.

Monterey for larger rescues, but because those vessels take at least an hour to reach the waters off Santa Cruz, they're not practical when a body-boarder gets caught in a rip current or a boat gets



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Though the Harbor Patrol's responsibility ends at the mouth of the harbor entrance, the patrol routinely helps with rescues and patrols on the open waters of the Monterey Bay and beyond.

turned around in the fog.

But floundering swimmers and assistance from Coast Guard helicopters is the exception, not the rule, Kinnamon said.

Most days Harbor Police officers, dressed in the requisite white shirt, blue shorts or pants, deck shoes and a badge, walk the docks to check in with slip-holders and check boating equipment. They take the 20-foot HBI through the harbor channel to make sure the boating environment is safe

and loop around the outside of the harbor in the Explorer.

Educating harbor users before they get in the water is a priority, as is keeping the mood happy and fun.

"We try to create kind of a Disneyland atmosphere," White said.

And, every 15 years or so, they catch a smuggler.

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Shipwreck shows camaraderie of harbor community

By JENNIFER SQUIRES
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Capturing the man who stole Tim Litvin's beloved sailboat and navigated the Samantha out of the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor on a stormy January day nine years ago was actually an easy arrest for Harbor Police and Santa Cruz police.

For Litvin, salvaging the wrecked sailboat and recovering his life proved to be the more difficult task, he said.

"This was not just a faceless crime," Litvin said. "This was my home."

The tragedy began while Litvin attended his brother's wedding in Florida, a rare vacation in the winter of 1997. Frederick Coleman, a homeless man in his mid-30s, somehow got past the dock's locked gate and onto the 27-foot wooden sailboat that Litvin lived aboard in the harbor. He managed to launch the boat and sail it out

of the harbor in foul weather, then crashed ashore around 7:30 p.m. on the beach near 12th Avenue.

Litvin didn't learn about the theft and beaching of the Samantha for several days. The boat had been seriously damaged, but the community came together to help Litvin recover.

Litvin had lived on the Samantha since he bought the boat while attending UC Santa Cruz in 1990. The wreck left him homeless and ruined some of his belongings.

By the time he returned from Florida, he had 36 offers of places to stay. His tools had been cleaned, clothing washed and pressed, computer sent off to have the water damage repaired and the Yacht Club organized a benefit for him.

"I'm not even a member of the Yacht Club," Litvin said.

And Coleman had been apprehended.

Harbor Police officers worked around the clock to track down

leads. They found witnesses who said they'd seen a man in red foul-weather gear they assumed was Samantha's owner come ashore after the crash. One gave him a lift downtown. He had two guitars, they told officers.

Coleman, still wearing the red foul-weather gear, was arrested on Pacific Avenue for grand theft and possession of stolen property. He was later convicted of burglary

and served three months.

Litvin, who now lives aboard a larger version of the Samantha, still praises the Harbor Police, and the community, for their response.

"It was a big moment in my life — the kind of thing you never forget," he said.

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A rescue leads to romance

By JENNIFER SQUIRES
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Hollywood couldn't have come up with a better "how we met" story.

Deputy Harbormaster Don Kinnamon tells it casually. Two brothers from Los Gatos sailing a catamaran went missing in the middle of a windy Labor Day weekend six years ago. Two women — one brother's fiancée and the wife of the other — knocked on the Harbor Office around 8 p.m., worried that the men had been gone for five hours. Winds were blowing at 30 mph with gusts at 40 mph. The sun was going down.

Kinnamon knew the outcome could be bad. The brothers' Hobie Cat, a popular brand of catamaran, wouldn't stand up well to the blustery day, and they'd been gone too long.

Harbor Police regulations require two officers aboard a search vessel, so Kinnamon called back Cary Smith, an assistant deputy harbormaster whose shift had just ended, and contacted the Coast Guard to start the search. The pair searched miles of open water to the south of the bay on a grid pattern laid out by the Coast Guard, but saw no sign of the brothers, Matt and Bill, or their boat.

At 11 p.m., the Coast Guard released Kinnamon and Smith from the search.

"We felt we should still be out there searching," Kinnamon said.

Around 2:30 a.m., they heard a faint cry come from the choppy water 8½ miles from shore. They'd found Bill alive. Later that morning, they plucked Matt from the overturned Hobie Cat about a mile from where Bill had been found.

Both brothers survived, and so began the Hollywood romance.

"I'm getting married, and you've got to show up at my wedding," Kinnamon remembered Bill Hopps telling him that night.

Neither Kinnamon nor Smith wanted the attention that would come with attending the wedding, but they obliged because the brothers wanted to thank them. The first toast at the reception went to the Harbor Police officers, not the bride and groom.

And Kinnamon met the maid of honor. They've been together ever since.

"Now we have a young son," he said, tugging a black-and-white snapshot of Dawson out of his breast pocket and sliding it across the table.

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