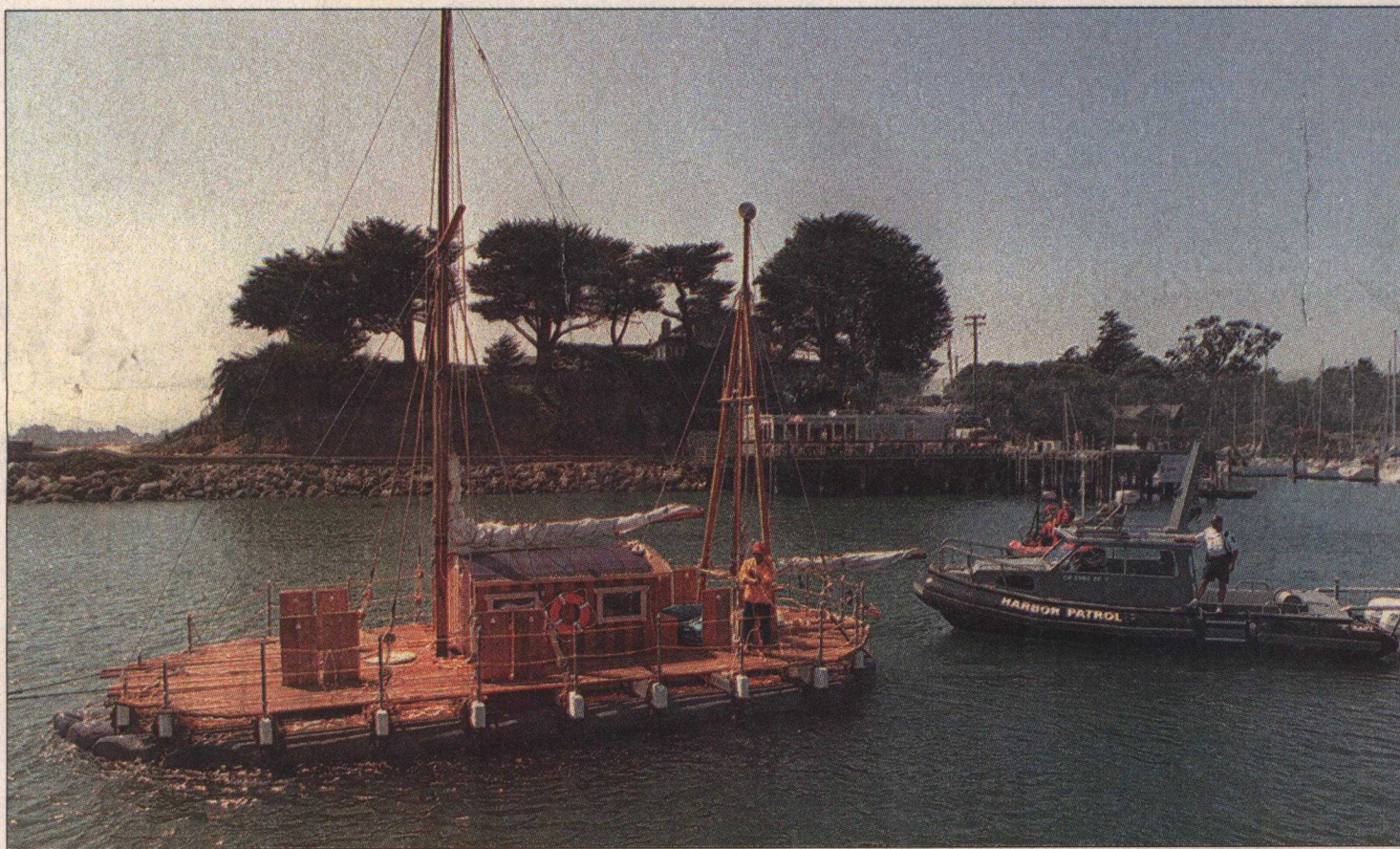


# Jaunt to Japan aborted

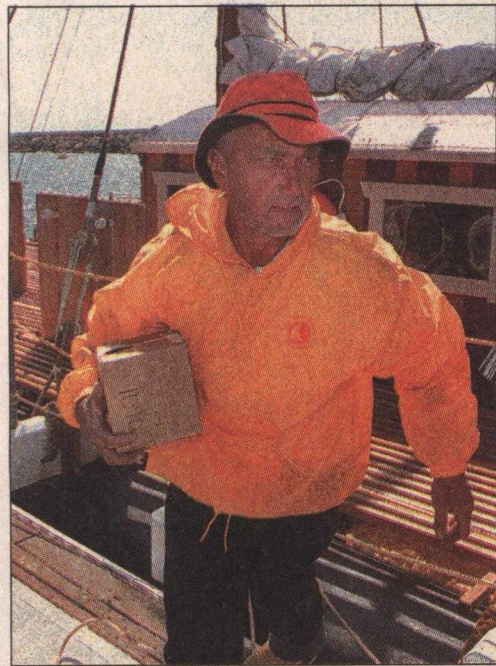
Adventurer's raft towed in four days out of Half Moon Bay



Dan Coyo/Sentinel photos

**ABOVE:** Andrew Urbanczyk and his homemade craft were rescued after just four days at sea, and towed into the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor on Friday. **BELOW:** Urbanczyk left Half Moon Bay on Monday, but abandoned his cruise to Japan because of light winds.

## Undaunted sailor floats plans for future voyage



By **BRIAN SEALS**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

**SANTA CRUZ** — When Andrew Urbanczyk was planning a sailing expedition across the Pacific, he joked it could “take six months to eternity” to complete.

But the Montara seaman's ambitious voyage in a self-made redwood raft was cut to a few days — felled by unfavorable sea conditions.

But the 67-year-old said he wasn't disappointed and would try again, possibly next year.

The roughly 20-by-40-foot raft dubbed the **NORD** was towed to the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor by Vessel Assist Friday afternoon after leaving Half Moon Bay on Monday morning. He was greeted by his wife, Krystyna, who brought him a bouquet of flowers and kissed him on the cheek.

Wearing an orange rain jacket with matching hat, the stubbly faced sailor said he it wasn't the rough sea that halted the voyage, but light winds. The tiller on the craft was not working properly, either.

He called for help Thursday night, and Vessel Assist picked him up early Friday morning about 57 miles from Santa Cruz.

“Light winds are a sailor's biggest enemy,” Urbanczyk said while holding his lone crewmate, a kitten named Nordette. “There was no reason to be persistent, to be stubborn.”

He said he would build a smaller raft next time.

“I'm not disappointed. I've sailed since I was a boy, but each trip is not successful,” he said.

An experienced sailor with 100,000 miles logged during his lifetime, Urbanczyk quietly spent about a year preparing for the improbable voyage. While building the raft, he said he planned to make a 12,000-mile jaunt to Japan and back, though Friday he said he just wanted to cross the Pacific and return.

The Russian native's plan was to use northeast trade winds en route to Japan, sailing just south of Hawaii, and return with northwest winds and the Japanese current, according to a brochure he published about the trip.

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## Voyage: Adventurer pulls the plug four days into raft trip to Japan

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“It's a like a hot air balloon — you don't know exactly where you will land,” Urbanczyk told the Sentinel in March as he built his raft. He repeated that sentiment Friday.

He built the foundation of the raft on the grounds of Big Creek Lumber Co. in Davenport and completed it at Pillar Point Harbor near Half Moon Bay.

Urbanczyk estimated his creation cost \$50,000.

Redwood logs served as a base, with strips of wood laid over them to serve as a deck.

The rugged raft did have some modern

**As far back as 1957, he crossed the Baltic Sea on a wood raft at age 21. Between 1989 and 1992 he made three attempts to sail solo around the world. Twenty years ago, he sailed to Japan and back on a 27-foot sailboat called the NORD III.**

amenities, including a geographic positioning system, navigation lights and solar panels on the cabin's top.

“He had a pile of electronics on there,” said Kevin Miles, deputy harbor master at Pillar Point Harbor.

Inside was a small living space, where noodles, candy, pancake mix and other food was stored.

This was not Urbanczyk's first solo voyage. As far back as 1957, he crossed the Baltic Sea on a wood raft at age 21. Between 1989 and 1992 he made three attempts to sail solo around the world. Twenty years ago, he sailed to Japan and back on a 27-foot sailboat called the **NORD III**.

In 1984, he soloed around the globe

with only three stops. That voyage ended without ceremony in San Francisco, where only his wife greeted him — not the throng of reporters that were awaiting him Friday.

The **NORD** was to remain overnight in the Santa Cruz harbor; Urbanczyk said he planned eventually to sell it or donate it.

He was philosophical about the effort and about future trips.

“Next year I will be better prepared,” he said. “We will build another raft.”

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