

Mercy ship anchors at Santa Cruz

By JOHN ROBINSON
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The Anastasis, a Christian missionary/hospital ship anchored off the Municipal Wharf is on a mercy mission of its own.

The 522-foot ship is looking to replenish its stocks and coffers during a 15 port tour of the West Coast before returning to Mexico to aid victims of 1985's earthquake.

The ship arrived Friday and was met by a group of local dignitaries, including Santa Cruz Mayor Jane Weed and other Council members, media and church groups. The visit is sponsored by AMI Community Hospital and local church groups.

The Anastasis, the Greek word for resurrection, is an Italian built passenger and cargo liner that initially sailed in the Mediterranean. The 34-year old ship was purchased by Mercy Ships, part of an international Christian relief organization, in 1979 under a special agreement with the Italian government, for \$1 million.

The ship spent three years being refitted before it embarked on relief missions.

There is still evidence of the ship's heyday in the spacious lounges, brass fixtures and curved teak railings, but it is obvious that the ship is no longer plying the luxury trade. The deck is weathered and rough, shuffle board courts have worn away. The tiled pool is empty and coils of rope are stored on the sun decks. Rust is evident in many places.

Keeping pace with the rust, however, are patches of fresh paint and other maintenance. The ship's inside decks are sanded, if unfinished. The walls of the main lounges are covered with new material and paint, but a look into some of the staterooms reveals the decay that comes with an old ship.

"It's a lot of work," said Mike Stupak, a tanned, 20-year old deckhand from San Pedro. "We get one day off a week. For guys on the deck crew, it's normally two days off, but we're a little short handed."

Stupak, like the rest of the crew, works for no pay. He signed on as part of a "discipleship" training program and has been aboard ship for a year.

"You meet all kinds of people," Stupak said.

The ship carries a multinational, interdenominational crew of 300, including two doctors, 15 nurses and other medical support staff. The core of the crew has a professional



John Robinson/Sentinel

Dawn Magwood enjoys her tour on the Mercy Ship.

teens, has been on the ship with her parents for about two years.

"It's not too long," Magwood said as she looked over the railing toward Santa Cruz. "My parents wanted to be in the missionary field. They called the ship, found they needed teachers and nine days later we were here. I was just back (home) for a week and I miss it, but this is great. We want to go to the Boardwalk."

As Magwood spoke, a 6-year old

boy named Christopher rode a tricycle across the deck. He is one of 54 children on board.

"The whole ship has a job," Christopher, replied when asked how life on ship was. "It's starting to fall apart."

Actually the sections of the ship viewed by the media appeared to be in fairly good, if worn, condition.

"Our mission is three fold," Anastasis' Captain Ron Applegate

said. "It is for evangelism, training missionaries and maybe more importantly, it is a mercy mission. We deliver supplies to third world countries, medical teams, construction teams and food."

During its recent six-week mission in Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico, the closest port to the epicenter of 1985's earthquake, ship members built houses, delivered fire fighting equipment and provided medical aid.

The Anastasis has an operating room whose doctors deal primarily with eye and plastic surgery, specializing in cataract, cleft palate and cosmetic surgery for burn victims.

Funding for the ship is provided by contributions and grants. Their operating budget for 1986 was \$3.5 million. According to project director Don Stephens, a former Santa Cruz resident and graduate of Bethany Bible College, it will take about six weeks for the ship to receive enough funding and donations of aid materials before it returns to Mexico.

The Anastasis will be in Santa Cruz through May 12. Public tours are available from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Fridays through Sundays leaving from the Municipal Wharf.