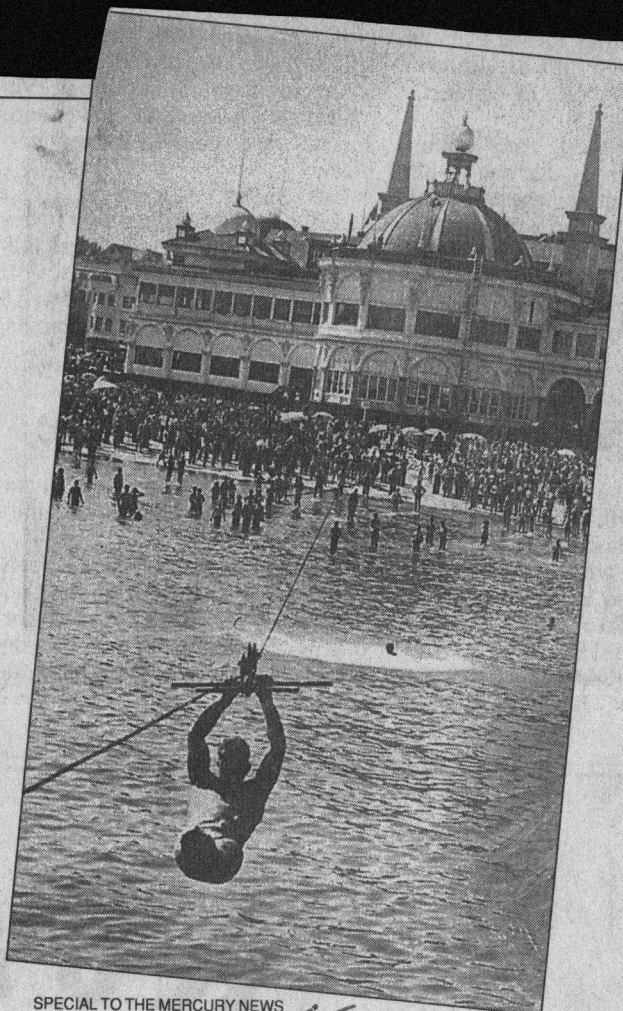


# SPLASH

from the

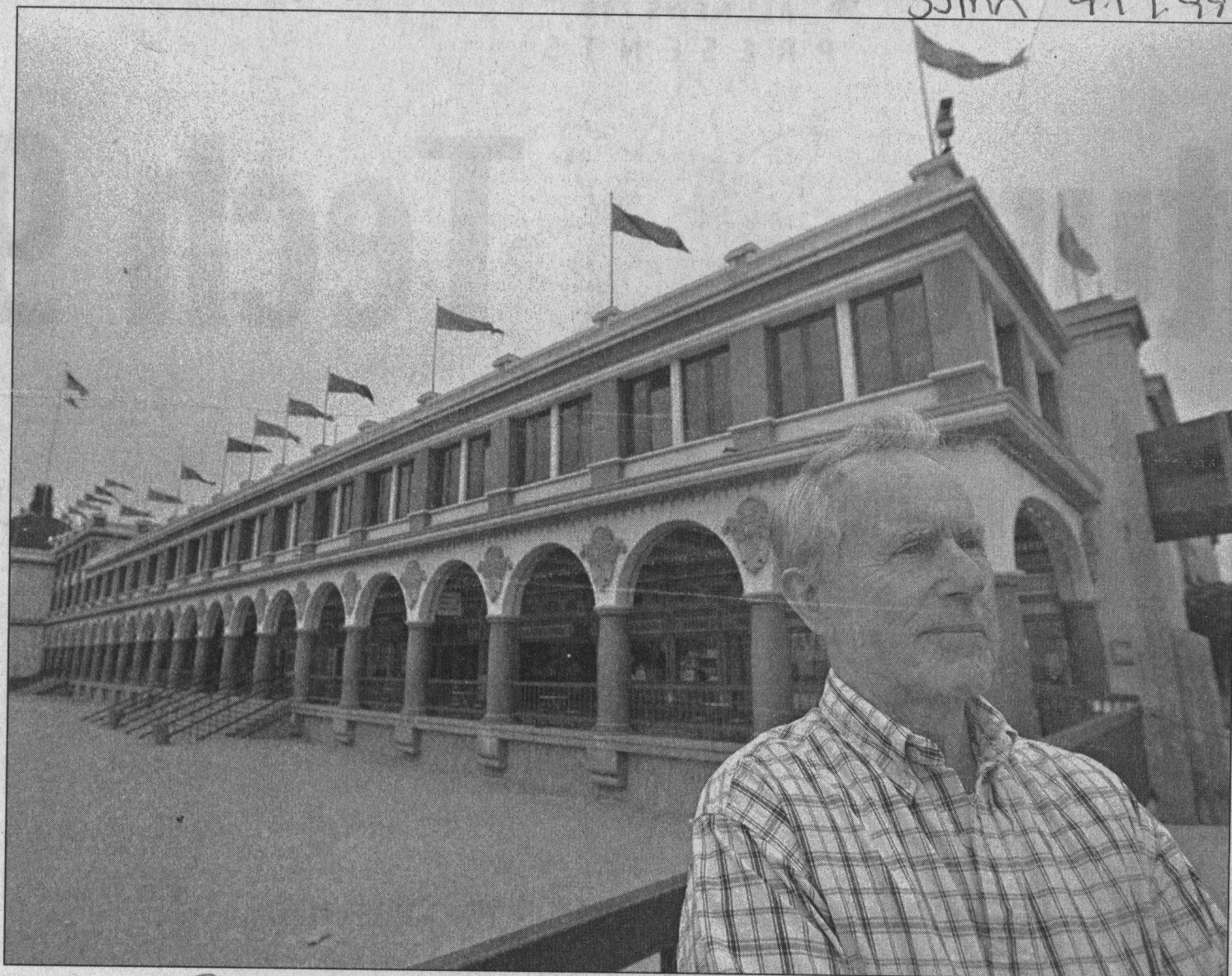
# PAST

This 1940 photo shows the Mighty Bosco (Don Patterson) performing the "Slide for Life" on a cable strung from the top of the Casino building across the beach and surf and out to the end of the old Pleasure Pier at the Santa Cruz boardwalk.



SPECIAL TO THE MERCURY NEWS

SJm 9.17.99



JUDITH CALSON — MERCURY NEWS

## INSIDE:

■ A capsule history of the plunge, a huge heated-saltwater pool at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

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Boardwalk

## Boardwalk's water daredevils to be reunited

BY LEE QUARNSTROM  
Mercury News Staff Writer

It's been a half-century and more since daredevils such as the Mighty Bosco and Freddie Baldwin, suspended from a rope cable above the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk's fabulous saltwater plunge, thrilled locals and tourists alike as they scooted down the "Slide for Life."

In fact, it's been 36 years since the plunge, a huge indoor swimming pool that was the scene of the boardwalk's Water Carnival, was filled

with sand and converted into the amusement park's miniature golf course — now known as Neptune's Kingdom.

On Oct. 1, Baldwin and a dozen or two other old-timers who cut their entertainment teeth in the Water Carnival will reunite at the boardwalk.

The Mighty Bosco, born Don Patterson, won't be there except in photographs.

— Freddie Baldwin

He died at age 70 in 1977.

He was a legend among Water Carnival performers. See **SPLASH**, Page 4B

**'Boy, at that age, 13 or 14,**

**we had a lot of guts.'**

Freddie Baldwin returns to the scene of his Water Carnival performances in which he swung on a trapeze 80 feet above the cavernous saltwater plunge, now a mini-golf course.





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The pools held 408,000 gallons of water and were drained and cleaned almost nightly during the early years of the attraction.

## Bathers took plunge for 56 years

The plunge, a huge, heated-salt-water pool, opened at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk in 1907 and closed for good 56 years later. It was filled, covered and turned into a miniature golf course that today is known as Neptune's Kingdom.

The plunge was actually two pools situated side by side with water heated to a pleasant 85 degrees at a power-generating plant across the street.

The pools held 408,000 gallons of water and were drained and cleaned almost nightly during the early years

of the attraction.

During World War II, the heated water was used for therapy by sailors at a naval convalescent hospital across the street at the old Casa Del Rey Hotel — which came down after the Loma Prieta earthquake a decade ago.

The plunge was converted into the miniature golf course in 1963 because of aging equipment and damage to the pools, according to boardwalk management.

— Lee Quarnstrom

# Boardwalk splash

## ■ SPLASH

from Page 1B

formers and fans for his death-defying acrobatics: high dives from the plunge building's rafters after being doused with kerosene or gasoline and set aflame, and slides down a cable from the top of the Casino building. He would slide across the beach and surf and out to the end of the old Pleasure Pier.

Baldwin, now 73, of Santa Cruz, a retired bread-truck driver, said he's looking forward to seeing his old Water Carnival teammate Harry Murray.

"I understand he moved down South somewhere," Baldwin said last week. "I haven't seen him since, oh, since before the war. We were partners on the Slide for Life."

"We'd climb up to the top of the plunge — it was 80 feet up there — and slide down that rope all the way to the other end of the building," he said. "It must have been 100 feet. We'd land at the shallow end of the pool."

Baldwin, who specialized on the trapeze above the plunge, said he and his former Water Carnival comrades won't be performing this time around.

Helen Graham Hall of Scotts Valley, a teenager when she swam in Water Carnival races, will attend the reunion.

"At this age, no, I don't think I could do that again," he said. "But boy, at that age, 13 or 14, we had a lot of guts."

Helen Graham Hall was also a teenager when she performed as a "sprinter" in Water Carnival races and as part of a synchronized swimming group that punctuated the acrobatics and fearless feats of the Mighty Bosco and Freddie Baldwin with shows of grace and beauty.

Now 74 and a Scotts Valley resident, Hall, too, will be on hand for the reunion.

Hall still swims her daily laps, at

least said one sal