

2
EXILE

The customs house was a large beige stucco building that reeked of tropical decay. The stucco had come off here and there, so the brickwork was visible. There were four or five steps that ran the length of the building with a wide platform at the top. Near the double glass doors a soldier was stationed. Maurice told me that an American had been tortured here a couple of months ago. He was suspected of smuggling drugs. They put a fishhook through his tongue and stretched him up on his tippy toes. They eventually let him go. Still, I wasn't anxious to go into the building.

Bill Becker and Sandra Pritchard had come with me to the customs house and, as we climbed the steps, I told the guard that we were there to go through customs. He directed us upstairs, to the captain of the port.

The hallway we entered seemed to be stained with humanity. The walls looked tarnished and worn with a grayish beige texture. There was a faint toilet smell mixed with rotting wood odor. The steps to the second floor were wide with distinct worn down areas on either side of the treads. At the top of the stairs was a gray wooden door with a calendared glass window bearing the inscription "Capitán del Puerto."



As we entered, the receptionist motioned us to be seated, which we did, *quietly*. No one said anything until she pointed to the inner door and said "entrada capitán." I took this to mean me, so I took a deep breath and walked in.

The port captain was dressed in a rumpled uniform with various insignia. His face was deeply pockmarked and on his head was a crumpled SS look-alike hat that could have been left over from a *Hogan's Heroes* set. His cigar was well chewed and the fetid smoke curled around his head like a halo that glowed from the light streaming through a large

multi-pane chicken wire in glass window. His eyes were not friendly and I knew things were going south.

Speaking in Spanish, the officer asked to see the crew passports. I had everyone's except Claus and Jeremy's. When I tried to explain this in crude Spanish, he slammed his hand on the table and said "Speak English!" I told him how the two passports got lost. He now turned furious. "We know that your crewmen were fighting in that bar last night! Now you tell me they have no passports! I will give you one hour to leave the country." Now I was really feeling homesick. I had no way of following this order. The Richmond was out of supplies and the crew, after some 57 days at sea, was losing its collective mind.

He showed me the door and clarified, "Get your boat and get out now!" He followed me into the waiting room where I explained the situation to Bill and Sandra.

This was more than Sandra could take. No way did she want to be back on the Richmond out at sea. Suddenly she burst out, "Look, we want off that boat. We were only passengers and we have money to buy plane tickets out of here." Bill produced a wad of travelers checks which the officer examined closely. Apparently, money was all that was needed to get his approval. It took me a while to fully understand these procedures. Fifty dollars for the officer and the happy couple was on their way with a thirty day visa.

When they ended the transaction I took advantage of the momentary lapse to plead my case. I explained that we were out of provisions and were in no condition to set sail. There were repairs needed and we would have to haul out and paint. He scolded me for being a dummy and demanded to see at least three hundred dollars in cash.

I just happened to have three one hundred dollar bills with me. These he held up to the light. I should have just given them to him but I still hadn't caught on.

The officer continued with me. "Ok. Here is what we'll do. We will place a soldier on your boat and no one may leave except you captain. You will feed the soldier as long as he is there and you will go to the German and American consulates and get replacement passports for the lost ones. You will report back to me when you have obtained these." He gave me a note and told me to take it to the army barracks two blocks away.

The army barracks wasn't particularly imposing. It was the same two story height that seemed to be the limit of every structure in Puntarenas. The whole town was built on a sand spit so tall buildings weren't a possibility.

The guard at the entrance took my note and showed me in. After passing through a vestibule we entered a basketball court where many uniformed soldiers were milling around. The high ceiling room was ringed with balconies with doors that connected to the dormitories. The body odor of the hundreds on men blended with cigarette smoke to create a truly uninviting atmosphere. This, along with the oppressive heat, made me want to vomit.

We entered a small room on the perimeter of the main floor and my note was handed to a sergeant with a smoldering cigar. The guard left and the sergeant spoke to me in English. He asked me to wait while he fetched a soldier.

The soldier stood rigidly at attention while the sergeant gave him orders in Spanish. I was then instructed to take the soldier to the Richmond and keep him on board for a twelve hour shift after which he was to be taken ashore and relieved by another soldier. This was to be repeated continuously until new passports were obtained for Jeremy and Claus.

Once we left the building, the soldier relaxed and smiled. His teeth were an unpleasant sight but he seemed like a nice guy just doing his job. He stepped rather jauntily, with his rifle bobbing up and down.

Back aboard the Richmond, I explained the reason for our new guest to the crew. This was unhappy news because everyone wanted to go explore the country. Now they were all pretty much under house arrest. They made the best of it though and made the soldier feel at home. He especially liked the Playboy magazines, which he leafed through while sitting on deck still shouldering his rifle.

Bill and Sandra had already split so that left only four crew members plus the soldier on the boat. There was plenty of food on board including lots of dried fish which we prepared from our catch on the voyage to here. It was still early in the day so I headed for the bus station for the trip to the capitol, San Jose.

The road to San Jose is a two-lane winding mountain road with many blind curves. The bus drivers are macho men and are afraid of nothing except being thought of as sissies. They always try to pass on blind curves especially where there is a thousand foot drop off and no room to maneuver. Each time our driver would do this, I could see the lady passengers cross themselves so I know I wasn't the only one who was scared.

I saw in the local paper there was a horrible head-on crash only a week before on this very road. Many people died as the bus plunged to the valley below. I was told that this was a regular occurrence. Good to know but not reassuring.

I tried to remember how I had gotten myself into these circumstances.

It was shortly after Varda's death and the battle of Richardson Bay. Varda's sailing master, One Eyed Roger, as he was called, had taken possession of the Cythera without anyone's permission. He joined up with the Redlegs fleet of funky boats for regular sailing parties. These usually ended at Schoonmaker beach where everyone would go ashore for a barbeque.

The Schoonmaker Beach was just a sandy shoreline in an industrial section of Sausalito. Although it was private property, no one ever bothered us when these parties took place. It was out of the sight of the local police and there was no one controlling the space.

It was here that we conceived the idea sailing up into the Sacramento River Delta with our rock n roll band and our entire fleet of boats. The Redlegs didn't have any gigs and

we thought our colorful group would be welcomed by drinking establishments along the river. A friend of ours, Walter Voorhies, had gotten hold of a place called Rhode Island in the delta and we decided to bivouac there.



A party at Schoonmaker Beach 1972

Saul Rouda

My girlfriend, Pam, sensibly, decided not to go and, instead, stayed with her parents in Mill Valley. Kim, our bassist took her bunk. Joey also sailed with us but he bunked on the Cythera

We had five main boats and about twenty-five people in the group. The Cythera was the largest vessel and it could carry many people. Captain Dredge's "Loafer" was second in size and the only power boat in the group. My own "Hwang Ho," Adam Foreman's "Munger" and Maggie's "Yipes Stripes." made up the rest of the fleet. We also had a few skiffs, some with outboard motors. At the last minute Maggie and Jeff decided to sail on the "Cythera," so "Yipes Stripes" was left behind.

We all rafted up near the drydocks prior to departure and got plastered before getting underway. We tried to stay in formation but all the boats moved at different speeds so it wasn't long before we lost sight of each other. It was just about dark anyway so we would all have to find our own way and meet upriver.

The Hwang Ho got as far as Martinez that first night and we anchored near the hulk of the Forrester, the last remains of a huge sailing ship. There was a low mist that filtered the moonlight and the outline of the Forrester loomed like a silent ghost ship looking to

overtake us. The anchorage was open to Carquinez Strait and as the freighters passed, we would be awakened, by violent rocking.



Preparing to head up the river. L to R back row "Munger," "Cythera," Saul Rouda
"Loafer," "Hwang Ho" front row "Gene Lee," "Yipes Stripes"

The next day we threaded our way up the river to Frank's Tract, a submerged island that is a popular fishing area. As we worked our way along False River, which abuts Frank's Tract we found the Loafer and the Cythera tied up at a place called the Sugar Barge.

The Sugar Barge was a bar and restaurant built on a barge once used for hauling, what else, sugar. This, we thought, was what we were looking for, a place to play. There was no sign of Adam and his Munger. Without Adam, we couldn't get our band together yet.

Not only that, but there was reason to worry. The Munger wasn't that seaworthy. It had really crappy leeboards that prevented effective sailing to windward. The lifeboat hull it was built on would really buck in the chop of San Pablo or Suisun Bays. As I thought about this prospect I became concerned.

A few of the others piled on the Loafer and headed back down river to hunt for the Munger. As they headed downstream I worried about what might have happened to Adam. Recognizing that we had undertaken a mission with some real risks, my hearts sunk as I imagined Adam driven ashore on a lonely stretch of Suisun Bay. It's nickname is "Suicide Bay," which didn't instill any extra confidence.



The "Loafer" hunts for the "Munger" Frank's Track, background

Saul Rouda

The Loafer returned a couple hours without finding Adam. We never saw Adam again until we returned to Sausalito.

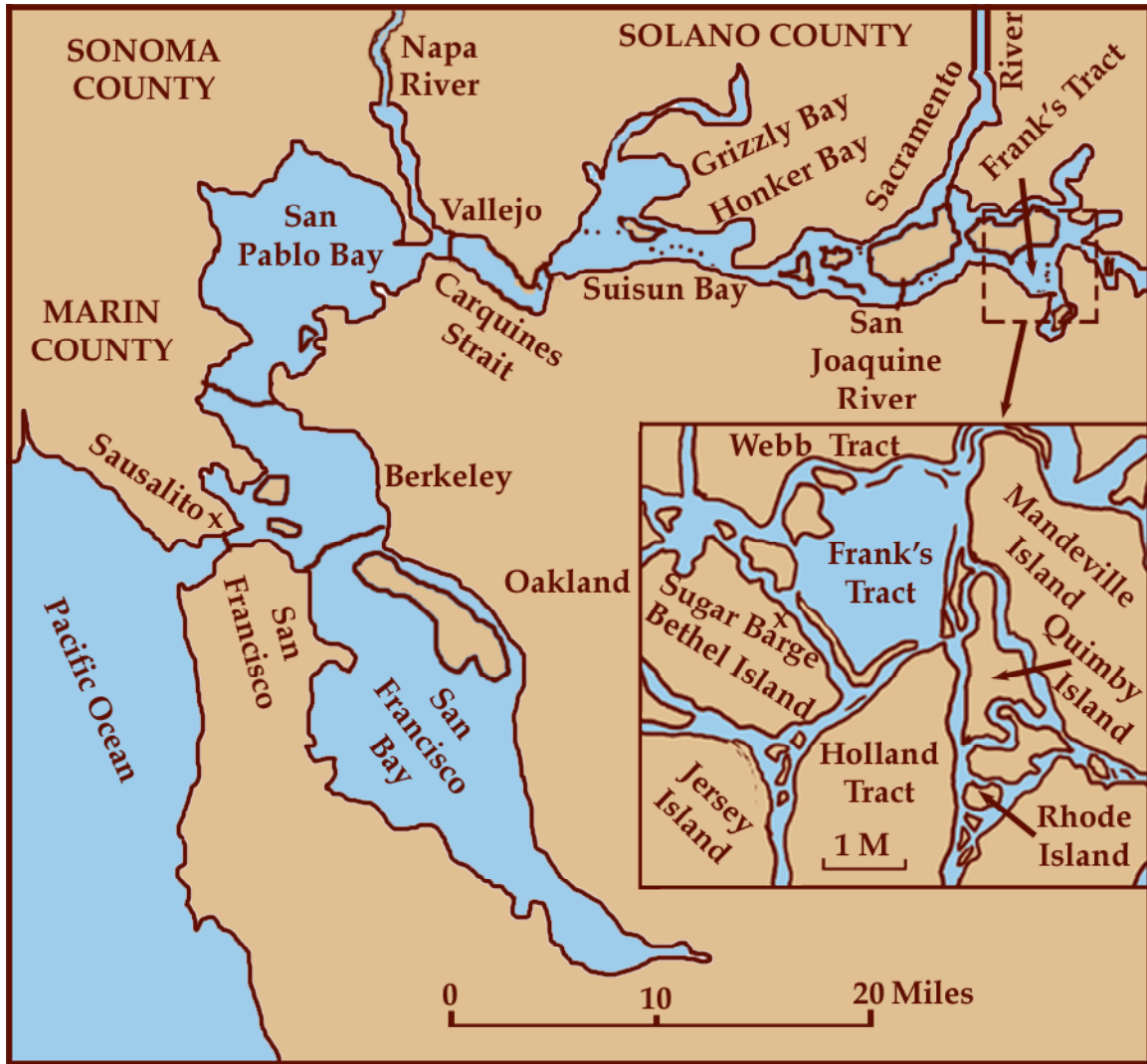
By the time they returned, arrangements had been made by Jesse for us to play that night at the Sugar Barge. Maggie, Jeff and I had sung "Proud Mary" out on the dock and the club owner was impressed. Jesse, claiming to be our manager, persuaded him to hire us for the evening to provide some dance music for the patrons.

This was exactly what we were looking for; someplace to moor our boats and earn money. We didn't know it yet but this was the only opportunity we would get on this trip.

The inside of the Sugar Barge was decorated like a whore house with patterned red velvet wall-paper with red carpeting going everywhere. There was a little stage, which we tried to fit our gear on. Some of the amps were flopped over the edge and leaned back against carpeting which covered the front edge of the stage.

We quickly got everything working and started to play. People were dancing and everything was going great. This was what we wanted to do on this voyage and everything had fallen into place. Except for one thing.

It seems that Jesse had gone back in the kitchen and found some steaks. He started cooking these for everybody without asking the owners or anything.



He came out of the kitchen with a huge grin on his face like the cat that got the cheese. “Hey everybody!” he exclaimed, “dinner is served.” The owner was fuming.

Of course, we were all kicked out immediately. Jesse seemed to always be getting smarter and smarter. He wasn’t the only one though. When it came to burning bridges, we had plenty of experts. We could always snatch defeat from the jaws of victory

By the time we were loaded up, it was completely dark. It was determined that we should proceed to Rhode Island where we would be able to hang out under Walter Voorhees’ hospitality. This was easier said than done. The delta in this area was a maze of small islands and channels that looked utterly confusing to neophytes such as ourselves. Plus it was dark.

We made our way in a group to one of the slivers of land that used to be the levy around Frank’s Tract. These serpentine strips of land were only a few yards wide but snaked along for a mile or two. They were populated with trees and sandy beaches and had no facilities of any kind, but they were our only refuge for the moment.

We ran the boats up onto a nicely sloped beach and tied them to the trees. At least we thought they were tied. We made a bonfire and partied on as if nothing happened. We had to talk loudly because the insect noise was very loud in this area. There were no roads or other signs of civilization and the only light was our bonfire. We were all alone in the blackness with only the insects to remind us of the outside world.

At some point we came up with the brilliant idea of taking the loafer, which had a powerful searchlight, and go find Rhode Island. Cici decided to stay and get some sleep aboard the Cythera. The rest of us were pretty torn, so blundering around in the dark on this strange river seemed like a good idea.

The Loafer was overloaded with noisy drunks speeding south along Holland Cut, which seemed like the right way to go. The Loafer was so top-heavy, with all the extra bodies, that it swayed from side to side with each turn of the wheel. Fortunately, the area was uninhabited, so the noise didn't awaken anyone. There could have been gunshots.

Occasionally, when we got too noisy, the insects would stop and we would be startled by the sudden quiet. At these moments, the only things that seemed to exist were those illuminated by the beam of our light, the stillness broken by our passing wake.

We counted all the inlets and islands we passed, tallying them with those on our chart. After a couple hours of mistakes, we finally located Rhode Island. In the glare of the light we could see a couple buildings and a small pier, which was actually a bridge between two small islands. There was moss hanging from everything and the place looked haunted.

Satisfied that we had found our objective, without even venturing ashore, we returned to the to the bivouac at Frank's Tract.

The beach was deserted with no sign of the Cythera when we arrived. There were still coals from the fire but no sign of Cici or the boat. The tide had obviously risen and floated her away.

After some confused discussion, half of us stayed behind while Dredge piloted the Loafer downstream in search of our flagship and Cici.

They weren't gone long. The Cythera was found washed up on another beach a short distance away. Cici was still asleep when Dredge came on board on board and didn't even know she had gone adrift.. It was like "What are you doing here?," when she awoke.

I guess the tie up job wasn't done too well. I thought everyone was good at tying knots but, somehow, this one had slipped. Either that or, it wasn't tied at all. With the various crews intermingling it was easy to overlook something.

It was about this time I started thinking; this floating band tour would work better if we had one boat big enough to carry the whole entourage. We wouldn't keep getting lost

from each other and the crew would be more as one. I knew it was possible to find some old hull and rigged it for sail. But where would I find it?



The fleet at Rhode Island

Saul Rouda

The next morning we tied all the boats together in a string and towed them in masse to Rhode Island. We thought we would be able to set up a base of operations there but the place was very different than we had imagined.

After securing our boats to a sort of bridge between two islets, we discovered that the place was a real dump. The buildings had been flooded from time to time and there was an odor of rot. Cobwebs everywhere and no sign that anyone had been here for a long time. The stinking undergrowth covered everything on the ground and it squished underfoot. The webs from this stuff also enveloped large portions of the buildings.

Jessie set up his makeshift portable kitchen and did his magic. It was crappy place to be but no one was bothering us and we were having fun. Jessie's barbeque drowned out the smell of the place so we broke out the guitars and sang our songs around the fire.

The next day we abandoned Rhode Island and meandered away, this time staying close together while noodling back and forth to keep track of the slow ones. The slowest was, of course, the Hwang Ho.



The Navajo at Mandeville Island

Hal Schell

This was true delta dawdling. I think we started to *enjoy* ourselves rather than just having fun. This was more relaxed and we had time to take in our surroundings.

Following the shore along Holland Tract, we reached Quimby Island and turned into a slough leading to Mandeville Island. It was a crooked waterway but the wind followed through it, so it was downwind all the way to Mandeville Island.

We reached Old River, which fronts Mandeville Island where we found a giant sternwheeler in the middle of an asparagus field. It was the remains of the Navajo, which had been swept into the middle of the island many years ago when the levy broke.

This was more than we could resist so we tied to some trees and went ashore.

There was no one around and the wind had died. It was very quiet and we could see the ferry landing where the farmers brought their gear in. Most of the islands in this area are isolated this way. We would have had to set off a bomb for anybody to notice.

Anyway, we climbed all over the Navajo while Saul shot some 16mm movies. It was equipped with many small rooms connected by long hallways. There was also a beautiful staircase inside and Saul tried to shoot a little skit there but the light was too low. We had spent the whole day going just a few miles and it was getting dark already.



Cici at the Navajo staircase

Saul Rouda

As darkness closed in, it felt kind of creepy inside the old ship. The musty smell evoked images of the great riverboat and all her passengers who walked these corridors and slept in these rooms. It didn't stink like Rhode Island but no one wanted to stay the night.

We crashed on our boats that night and headed to Bethel Island the next day. There we met up with friends who had driven up from Sausalito.

The latest news was Jeff and Maggie's houseboat had sunk. For this reason, they decided to jump ship and return home. Another circumstance had crept in to split us up. But it didn't really matter. This river excursion was pretty much over and we all made our way back to Sausalito, each at their own pace.

The Hwang Ho didn't go to weather very well so we mostly drifted downstream on the outgoing tides. We would anchor anywhere we could find during the floods and most of the progress was made at night when there was little wind.

It took two days of this to reach Sausalito. It felt like we had been around the world and were returning home after an epic voyage. It was good to be back at Whitey's though I was dreadfully tired and I collapsed in my bunk.

As I dozed off, I was thinking about all the things that went wrong up in the delta. Then, Pam showed up with some news; she was pregnant.

I wasn't ready for this and we had a huge fight. I told her to abort but she was determined to become a mother. It took some time but I came to accept this.

I decided to cooperate with Pam's family plans but I had plans of my own. I wanted a large seagoing boat that could transport the whole band plus entourage to anywhere in the world. I would be looking around for a sound hull, perhaps from an old tug, that could be rigged for sail cheaply.

We had that baby too. A little guy we named Samuel Louis Littleday Tate. He was born on the December 21, the shortest day of the year and that's why we stuck the Littleday handle in there. We brought Sam to his first home on the Hwang Ho. He had his cradle on one side and we slept on the other. Right away my natural instincts kicked in and I became protective and attached to Sam.

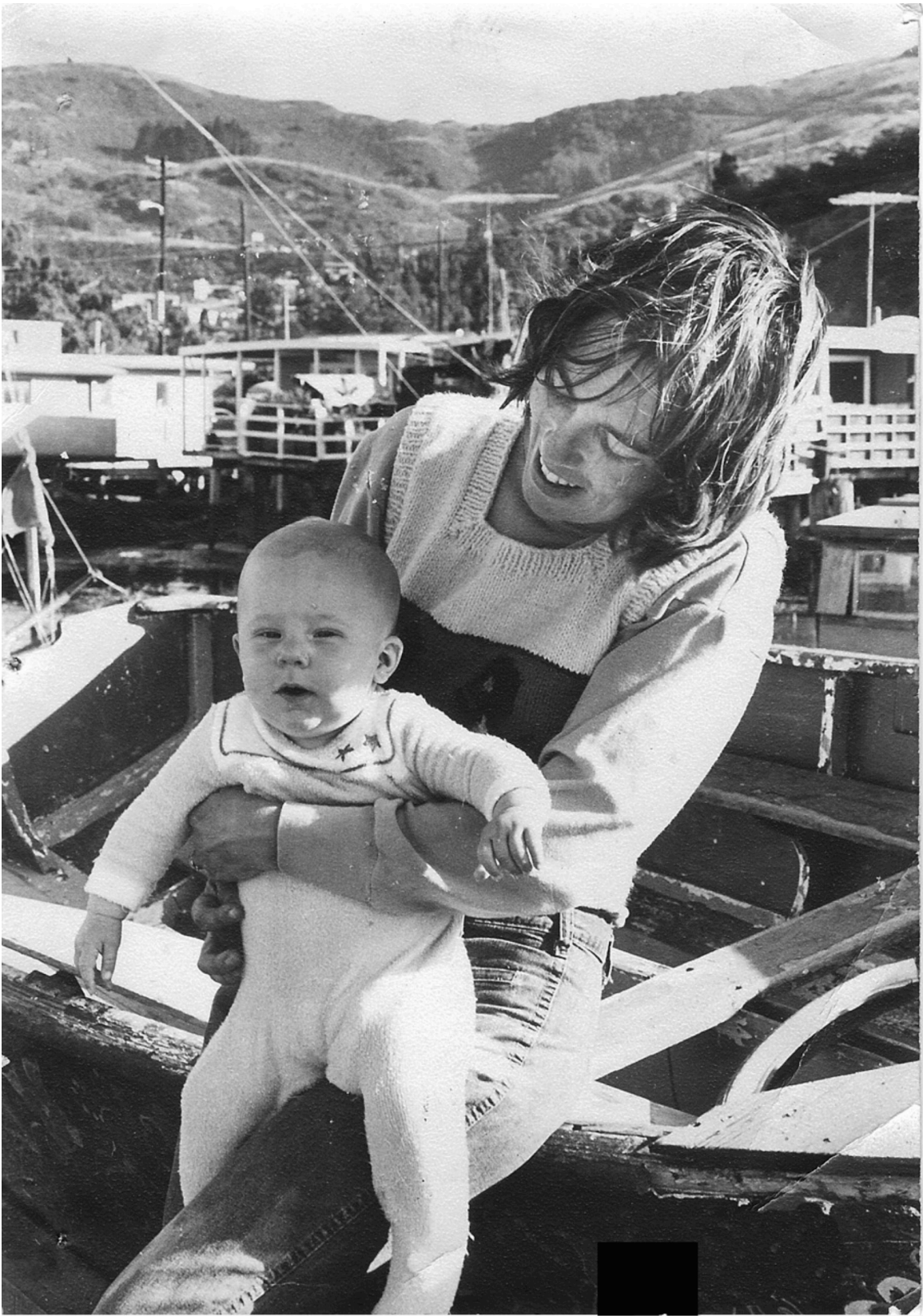


I'm pregnant. Last days on the Hwang Ho

Saul Rouda

The Redlegs regrouped after the delta voyage and we started holding events at the drydocks. We rigged up Joey's lifeboat with an engine and a small canopy. This we used to ferry passengers to the drydocks parties. We named it the "Cruncher" after one of our dance tunes called "Doin' The Crunch." It had a carved wooden fist protruding from the bow with the "Cruncher" scrawled on the side with spray paint.

These parties were a lot different than the earlier parties there. These were organized as pay to attend events in which we charged admission at the Napa Street Pier to board the Cruncher. Sometimes we charged for the trip back to shore also, depending on passenger attitude.



Pam and Sam at Whitey's

Pam Massie Collection

We made some money doing this and there was no rent to pay on the drydocks. It was all pretty much gravy. We did have equipment problems though.

We had to furnish our own power and the generator was fussy, sometimes it wouldn't start. People, who paid to attend, were growing exasperated with us. Just when they were about to revolt it would start and the party would be on.

The Cruncher would break down occasionally so we were in danger of being caught by the Coast Guard for carrying passengers without a license. We couldn't just call them up if we had a problem. The Loafer would always come to the rescue. Many times the Cruncher would arrive loaded with partiers with the Loafer tied on her hip doing the work she was made for. This means the Loafer was tied tightly alongside near the aft end so that whichever way the Loafer went, the Cruncher followed.



The Cruncher arrives with passengers for a drydocks party

Saul Rouda

Amazingly, the authorities never once interfered in these activities. As we became emboldened, we did more stuff that wasn't allowed.

Since we were an unknown band and wanted to become known, we decided to write "Redlegs" on the drydock walls so it would be visible from highway 101.

To do this we cut 16 foot high letters out of plywood. These were painted red and hoisted into place using a bosun chair and miscellaneous ropes. Dredge dangled over the edge in the chair while the letters were hoisted up from below. I was in a rowboat a short distance away using sign language to help position each letter.



The Redlegs logo on the drydocks

Saul Rouda

There was already a daisy emblem on this particular wall along with the words “LOVE IS.” This was interpreted by many as “LOVE ISLAND,” as the drydocks were called by tourist types. We never called them that. To us they just these huge filthy, stinking wrecks that gave us a place to be our somewhat anti-social selves.

You could read the sign from Bridgeway Blvd but not from highway 101 as we had hoped. It did cause a little stir around town but it didn’t last long. About two weeks later the red letters disappeared. We were crestfallen and blamed it on Bill Graham because we thought his organization was trying to censor our music. Who knows maybe it was true but we never found out what happened.

We didn’t bother trying to replace the sign, but the parties went on for the rest of the summer.

Meanwhile my search for our ship went on. I found out that many of the older wooden tugboats had lines taken from clipper ships, lines that would be ideal for sailing. There was a certain type of tug that possessed these lines that were called Miki Miki tugs. There were a lot of these old tugs around the bay area and many of them were in good condition. Most of them were decommissioned and were not at all operable. Among these were some that had sound hulls. This is what I would be looking for.



Party at the drydocks summer 1972

Saul Rouda

L.toR. Joey Crunch, Rob Moitosa, Seagul, Jeff Costello, Bob Seal, Adam Foreman

John Dervin came to the parties and occasionally sat in on drums. He knew I was looking for a boat and he had one to show me.

It was tied up at the end of the Napa Street Pier, directly ashore from the drydocks. It had just arrive there the day before and I hadn't noticed it yet. It was a 65 foot fishing boat that had been converted from a Miki Miki tug. The name boards read "RICHMOND SAN FRANCISCO." There were a lot of rust streaks on the gunwales and there was worm damage along the waterline. There was a stoutly built cabin with a handsome galley and plenty of sleeping quarters.

There was evidence of rot but mostly around the deck. Down below there was no engine but the frames showed this ship was heavily built. The propeller shaft protruded from the oily bilge water and there was a strong smell of diesel. With 8"x8" double sawn frames there was no doubt this was originally a tugboat. There was evidence of this everywhere, from the raised deck where the tow bit was mounted to the sweep of the rails, this was the real deal. With masts and sails this thing could eat wind and waves.



The Richmond at the Napa Street Pier 1972

Joe Tate

The wheels were turning in my head. It wasn't as large as I envisioned but this boat could do the trick. John wanted \$2300 and I knew someone who was interested in the Hwang Ho.

It took about two weeks of finagling, but I was able to sell the smaller boat and acquire the larger one. This was the largest object I had ever owned and, standing alone on the deck, I seemed dwarfed by its size. I wondered if I had bitten off more than I could chew.

John Dervin, as I well knew, had just made some easy money. He had bought the Richmond cheaply in (where else?) Richmond, brought it to my doorstep and gave me his sales pitch. I went for it this time as well as many others later on when I needed rowboats, life-rafts and whatnot.

The next big thing was repairing the many defects in the hull. To this end, I made a good deal with Bob Long who operated a large but dilapidated boatyard right at the head of the Napa Street Pier. By hauling out on a weekend we could do the work ourselves and save a lot of money. The downside was it had to be ready to launch first thing Monday morning or else his paid crew would finish the job. This would be far too costly for my meager budget.

I managed to enlist plenty of help doing this because the Redlegs had bought into my idea of a large sailing boat to carry us all. Most of the help came from our enthusiastic fans though, who were only too willing to ingratiate themselves us.

Once we had her up on the ways, we found several rotten planks above the waterline near the stem. The rotten areas were just a few feet long and we set about replacing these with wood salvaged from the drydocks as well as other sources.



Replacing some planking on the first haulout.
Maggie has painted some nice eyes.
Adam Foreman and Joe Tate finagling.

Saul Rouda

There was also a lot bug damage along the waterline. The critters had eaten away about an inch deep and two inches wide nearly all the way around the hull. This was repaired by burning with a torch followed by driving in many nails and plastering with cement. I thought the nails, with a little wire wrapped around them here and there, would hold the cement in place and keep the water out. This worked surprisingly well and lasted many years.

The copper bottom paint was obtained at Abrahams Salvage in San Francisco for just a few dollars per gallon. Abrahams salvage was a dingy South of Market place that had all manner of Marine wreckage at rock bottom prices. It was an interesting place that provided a great deal of the gear we used to outfit the Richmond.



Tiki Junction with Bob's Boatyard
The canopies allowed 50' boats to be
hailed out and kept dry.

Donna Bragg Collection

The boatyard was an interesting place too, with large canopies built above the smaller ways. There were four ways. The canopies over the three small ones had overhead hoists built on rails so that heavy objects could be moved anywhere within the yard. The canopies were huge and were the main feature along this section of the waterfront

Out in front of it all was Tiki Junction, the creation of Barney West, a south-seas refugee who had taken a notion to carve large wooden tiki statues. These were fashioned from huge redwood logs that were delivered by rail.

We managed to finish the work on time and launched Monday morning. The Richmond was towed to Gate 6 and moored next to the Oakland at Whitey's Marina.

The water was shallow here and it was necessary to come in on a very high tide. She would sit high and dry on the mud at low tide. This wasn't the best situation but was one of many compromises that would have to be made.

Next, the cabins were removed and a large section of the deck, which had rotted, was torn out. This was perfect for catching rainwater so a ridgepole was erected and a large tarp was stretched over the huge hole. This kept most of the water out and allowed work to proceed even during rainy weather.



Removing the cabins using the boom on an old oyster dredger belonging to Scott Diamond

Saul Rouda

I was able to score an ancient two-cylinder engine from Gene Lee. It came with the proper power matched propeller. There was a propeller shaft in the boat so it was fairly simple to put the prop on the shaft and mount the engine on the other end.

When I say it was fairly easy, consider that the propeller shaft was three inches in diameter, weighed about six hundred pounds and had to be machined to fit the inch and three quarters bore of the Hicks propeller. Because the Richmond sat in the mud at low tide, we were able to remove the shaft and bung the stuffing box without hauling out. The shaft was trucked to San Francisco where the propeller taper was turned down at a place called the Ramp, which specialized in this type work.

There were so many things I didn't understand about this undertaking. Fortunately, I had befriended Don Arques, the property owner, who was kind enough to share his knowledge with me. On one occasion, he visited me at the Richmond where it was tied up next to the Oakland at Whitey's Marina. This took the guesswork out of the engine installation.



Installing the Hicks. This antique was made around 1906 and required hand starting.

Roy Nolan

With engine installed the Richmond was now self propelled. It wasn't a lot of power but it could push the boat at about five knots in calm conditions. A large jib sail could also be set from the steel fishing boat mast that still remained. With the jib and engine together, we could make decent speed and the next phase of the transformation began.

We motored up the river to Stockton, past Frank's Tract and all the other places we had visited earlier that year. This time we were all together on one boat, heading for Baxter and McCormick, a company that produce telephone poles. At their facility in Stockton, they treated the poles with creosote. However, untreated poles were also available there and this is what we came for.

We must have been a shocking sight to the locals when we arrived, with our redlegged pants and filthy appearance. We had been living in conditions as bad as the drydocks below deck where everything was oily and wet. We were used to it though, and thought nothing of appearing in public with blackened faces and dirty clothes.

Baxter and McCormick was located on a short canal that meandered through downtown Stockton. It upset the folks there that all these uglies came sauntering in from the water instead of coming through the front gate.

Our appearance and manners were all forgiven once we explained our mission. They allowed us to sort through the many thousands of poles before the perfect one was chosen.

The poles were treated by loading them onto special rail cars which were rolled into giant pressure cookers. The massive doors would close and be bolted shut. The creosote was then impregnated into the poles, as well as the rail cars, under high pressure and temperature. Most of the poles had already been treated and were stacked in gigantic piles. We had to hunt around to find the untreated ones.



Motoring to stockton with sail assist using original mast

Saul Rouda

The one chosen was sixty three feet long and about eighteen inches in diameter with tightly packed grain. After paying one hundred seventy five dollars, the pole was dropped into the river using a specially adapted forklift.

With the pole in tow, the trip back to Sausalito was delayed only by fog so thick we couldn't see the bow of the boat. This forced us to leave the river channel and anchor in shallow water for about a day. Using a sounding line, we determined that our anchorage was out of the way of the many barges and ships that continued to operate using radar.

Once back home, using the Schnargemoblie, the pole was dragged out of the water next to the Issaqua. About two inches of the sap wood was shaved off using a drawknife and power planer.

Following the traditional technique, the pole was first hewn into a square and then it was made octagonal. This ensured straightness and helped to gauge the depth of sap wood removal. The whole process was time consuming, taking a bout a month to complete. Making sure not to cut too deeply slowed me down quite a bit but it was important to not screw this up. This mast would have to last a long time and would not be easy to replace.



Don Arques pays a visit and gives some friendly advice.

Saul Rouda

Don Arques gave me a steel band that fit the base of the mast. The masthead iron was welded together by Bob Long using my drawings. This was a new design that had a ring welded to four gussets. The gussets had holes to fasten the shrouds while the ring would accommodate the blocks or pulleys of the running rigging.

With the mast ready, a set of stout mast partners was installed into the deck. These were bolted through the entire boat from side to side using one inch diameter steel trusses, all made with salvaged material.

The ironbark outer rub rails were removed then, boring through the inner rails and shear clamp, the steel trusses were passed through from either side and joined together inside by a threaded turnbuckle. When the turnbuckles were tightened, the heavy wooden mast partners were compressed by the gunwales to form an extremely stout structure to support the mainmast.

The steel mast was used to hoist a long boom into place, which in turn was used to hoist the mainmast. The boom was a little longer than half the length of the mainmast so that by lifting it from the middle, it would balance and clear the rails high enough to be inserted through the mast partners. A five to one block and tackle was rigged to the top of the lifting boom while the bight was carried to a single action deck winch.

The operation was done at low tide with the hull resting on the mud to ensure stability. I wasn't sure if there was enough clearance to erect the mast or if the whole contraption was even strong enough.



Hoisting the mast using a boom salvaged from the wreck of the "Rendezvous" near Mile Rock.

Saul Rouda

The hoisting boom had its own little story; a famous and very beautiful schooner named "Rendezvous" had recently been blown ashore along the south shores of the Golden Gate near Mile Rock. Using a motor launch borrowed from Bob Long, Jeremy, Kim, Beppo and myself were able to snag a few spars from the surf. It was only necessary to disconnect some rigging to separate them from the wreck. These spars included a mast as well as the aforementioned boom, all loaded with top of the line fittings that were perfect for fitting out the Richmond. There was also a bunch of portholes and whatnot.

With everything in place, the tackle purchased at the center of the mast, it was assumed it would swing upright owing to the greater weight of the lower end. With Jeremy and Claus operating the winch, the full weight of mast was quickly brought to bear on the whole vessel. In spite of the groaning and creaking, the Richmond stood straight up

standing solid in the mud. When the mast was nearly erect, the hitch holding it to the tackle slipped a bit and everything shook. Everyone reacted with fear but we all sighed with relief when the shaking stopped. I'm not sure what stopped shaking first, the rigging or my legs.

The mast got jammed in the mast partners so it had to be jerked out with more scary shuddering. It took a while to enlarge the hole with chisels while the mast dangled menacingly over our heads. I can't see how anyone would believe this was the proper way to do this, but it was free and for us, it was the *only* way.



An erection at Whitey's next to the Oakland
The tied is low: The Richmond rests on the mud
Background: The Charles Van Damme

Charlotte Von Segesser

Finally the mast slipped through and dropped into the pre-carved step, but not before a silver coin was placed, according to tradition. We didn't have a silver dollar but used a dime instead which must still be there to this day.

This was a supremely satisfying moment, when all the drudgery of obtaining, carving and installing the mast was over. Now I could turn my attention to finding a deep water berth. It wasn't good for the vessel to sitting down on the mud day in and day out, what with all the teredos and pile worms looking for a fresh bite.

I contacted Bob Rich, who owned the old yellow dredge which was sunk down by Napa Street Pier. I had worked for him salvaging his old tug "Hilda," which sank next to the pier. Later I was caretaker of the dredge for a while and I lived there.

It was a creepy place located offshore where it rested in the mud about fifty yards from the pier. It had a lot of dingy crew rooms, all of which smelled about a hundred years old. The walls were all constructed of this really nice first growth tongue and groove douglas fir. This stuff interested me and, since it seemed abandoned, I asked Bob if I could salvage some of it.



The Pacific #5, better known as "The Old Yellow Dredge"
Bob's Boatyard and Cruising Club upper right
Schoonmaker Beach right

Saul Rouda

Bob responded by saying he didn't want any salvage going on but he would be happy to sell the dredge to me then I could do with it whatever I wanted. This took me by surprise he said and I said I didn't have that kind of money. "Joe," he said, "I'll sell it to you for a hundred bucks." Now I was even more surprised! I might be able to get this amount together though I thought there must be a catch. I just couldn't figure out what it was yet.

When I told Pam, she informed me that we had that much in small change that she kept in a coffee can. This was from tips and receipts from the Ark parties and her job at Fred's Coffee Shop. We consummated the deal as quickly as possible and Bob gave me a bill of sale, selling me the dredge, "as is, where is." He pretty much relieved himself of all liability, as I would come to understand later.

There was deep water on the south side of the dredge and that was what I was thinking about; that and all of the lumber and steel I could salvage. I now had a deep-water berth for the Richmond, a lumber yard and a hardware store.

Pam, Sam and I had been living on a little houseboat that I had built on a navy motor launch and we longed for more room. The Richmond was still a nightmare scene, covered only with a tarp but having a rudimentary galley. We moved aboard, sold our houseboat and moved the Richmond to the dredge.

The dredge was a nightmare too, but it provided lots of room. I quickly tore out some of those tongue and groove walls and set up some primitive living space. I scored a big

galvanized steel tank which, mounted up high provided water pressure. A hose was run underwater to the pier to fill the tank. This took a few hours but we always did it at night. I also hooked up to electricity there but it was soon discovered by Del Wiese who ran the boatyard. He pulled as much of my cable out of the water as he could and then chopped it off.

Meanwhile, the rest of the Redlegs and associates moved to the dredge, bringing their own boats. In addition to the band members, we had Salty and his wife Marla, Dean Puchalski and his wife Christa and also Daniel Romero and his wife Judy. Jeremy, who was dedicated to the cause, also moved to the dredge along with Marcia Meyers and their son Caleb.

There was a whole mess of children by this time. Our second son, Woody, was born during the dredge years. Maggie and Jeff had Annie and Jake, Kim and Heather had Quinn, Salty and Marla had Captain Easy and Lani while Dean and Christa had a son, Deneb.



The Dredgetown Family with our Sausalito dock in the distance

Adults L-R Joe Tate, Jeff Costello, Daniel Romero, Marcia Meyers, Jeremy Conn, Salty Forest, Christa Puchalski, Maggie Catfish, Pam Massie, Dean Puchalski, Judy Romero, Marla Forest, Kids L-R Pablo Romero, Caleb Conn, Sam Tate, Tina Romero, Dova Romero, Annie Costello, Kitt Conn, Jake Costello, Woody Tate, Deneb Puchalski, Captain Easy

Salty brought a lot of stuff including a crane barge which came in real handy picking up all the heavy stuff we salvaged from the dredge. Dean had a big barge too, along with a big old tug called the “Mirine.” The best thing though was “Sewer City,” our version of a night club built on an old ammunition barge that Salty dragged in. It had a large

corrugated metal building that took up most of the 110 foot barge. It had a smaller building up on stilts where Daniel and family lived. We built a stage at one end and had a dance party every week. The whole conglomeration became known as Dredgetown and it became the center of Redlegs activity for several years while the Richmond was under construction.

I tried one more time at getting shore power from nearby Cass' Marina but, when the City found out, they threatened to revoke Cass' license if they didn't pull the plug. So it was that I obtained a nice four cylinder powered generator from Doyle Nance. This thing was quiet and delivered all the power needed for the entire community. I did manage to hook up an underwater phone that only broke down occasionally.



Pam Massie Collection

Dredgetown with the Richmond, Salty's crane (L), the Loafer (L), the Mirine (R), Sewer City (gray building R), living quarters upstairs on dredge
The foremast has been installed and much of the dredge has been cut away

We were joined by saxophonist, Larry Graber, who added just the right touch to our music. Unfortunately, we also lost Joey who, because of personal problems, moved back to New York. We started using a succession of drummers including Michael Aragon and Ted Stewart, who played my 60's band Salvation.

It was great having a musical home base at Sewer City. It brought us a small but steady stream of cash. The only problem was the local authorities, who naturally considered us a

complete nuisance. It turns out that Bob Rich had sold the mud underneath us to the City of Sausalito so, from their point of view, we were trespassing.

We made lots of noise and built big bonfires at night. The fire department would walk out on Napa Street Pier and yell at us to put out the fire-they didn't have a fire boat then. We would shout obscenities back at them along with certain anti-social hand gestures. Steve Osborne, the battalion commander, would say, "Won't you please put out the fire. We're just doing our job." I eventually became friends with Steve. He was nice guy but his entreaties fell on the ears of true miscreants.

We also had a lyle gun, a device used for throwing a line over a long distance for rescue operations. It had a two inch bore and we took pleasure in firing various projectiles from it. Sometimes we would spend hours blasting away at some old hulk with short lengths of chain that we found in the dredge. It would leave jagged holes in the side of an old landing craft we used for target practice. We imagined being pirates and sort of bemoaned being born in then wrong century.

I got permission from Gordy Hansen to set up a skiff landing on the Zack's property just south of Dredgetown. Sam Zakasian, who owned Zack's Restaurant, was sometimes at odds with the City, so it was his pleasure to tweek them a little here and there. This worked to my advantage and, in this case, I was able to have a private boat landing in the midst of hostilities, free of charge.

The city council didn't take any of this lightly and I was called up to explain myself. The City wanted to get rid of the dredge and all its inhabitants without cost. I played to this by explaining, at the city council meeting, that I was dismantling the dredge. And this was true. I was earning substantial money by selling the scrap iron, about 100 tons of it. In addition, the large timbers were re-sawn for use in the Richmond. So the dredge was slowly disappearing.

I gave my presentation as much sincerity as my acting skills could provide. Everett Hienemann, the mayor, was very kind and suggested the City allow me to stay at the dredge and continue the dismantling process. Amazingly, the rest of the council agreed. I was expected to get rid of Dredgetown in its entirety though. This, of course, was impossible. I didn't have the gear to do the job and I certainly had no inclination.

Strangely, the issue of noise and all the other violations didn't come up. I don't know why. Perhaps, I just said what they wanted to hear and they thought they won. It wouldn't be the last I heard from them.

The parties just kept going and we did a lot of silly stuff like making a ten-gallon tub of margaritas. Everyone got so incredibly drunk and there were regrets. We never tried that again. On a typical night, a hundred people would come and we charged two bucks. They came out on the pier and waved their arms. Salty usually ran a skiff back and forth up the people. A lot of waterfront folks came in their own boats so on Saturday night there were dozens of craft tied up every which way.

It wasn't to last though. On Christmas night 1974 we saw fire and smoke rising to the north in the area of Gate 5. The Madonna was burning and the flames revealed her outlines so we knew what it was. It wasn't a party night so we were in bed. I went ashore and headed for the Gates. It was the end for the Tower.



Chris Roberts' Madonna burns Christmas Day 1974

John Kendall

We found out right away that some crazy hippie had been inside using a fire to heat up nails red hot and then pushing them through his hands. There is no word on how successful he was. No one knew him but his activities were observed.

Apparently it got out of control (how in control could he have been?) and the Tower did what it was ultimately suited for. It did burn well. It was all constructed around the heavy timber frame of a pile-driver. But the outside skin was made up of flimsy redwood

“bender stock.” This was Chris Roberts’ favorite material and the way he used it violated every building code there ever was.

The remains were refloated soon thereafter and it was sunk offshore near Strawberry Point, where it remained until another madman reclaimed it and turned it into a very nice home.

The drydocks, which we continued to plunder, were next. Apparently, the City was anxious to get rid of them any way they could and, since they were no longer occupied they hired someone to torch them before some one else moved in. That someone was Andy Schlepp, as he was known among the locals. “For fifty bucks,” he said later, “I poured gasoline on each of the towers and lit it off.”



The drydocks start to burn. The searchlight at left is from a Coast Guard vessel. There was nothing they could do. Saul Rouda

It was in the early morning hours when we were awakened by the phone, which just happened to be working. Someone, I don’t remember who, said they could see flames at the drydocks. Looking east I could see the light of dawn obscured by a huge plume of black smoke. Incandescent embers twinkled above the hulking walls and an orange glow radiated from the swirling clouds of dense soot.

The fire was quickly gaining intensity and, by the time I was dressed and in the skiff, it had spread to the outside of the walls. The engine wouldn’t start until after about fifteen pulls so by the time I got underway, the drydocks were a flaming hell.

Saul Rouda got there before me and he recorded the whole event on 16 mm movie film. The Coast Guard was there too but, what could they do? I suppose the San Francisco fire boat could handle this fire. However, I think the attitude of the authorities was, “Why bother?”

I guess it was just an eyesore as far as the City of Sausalito was concerned. But to us, it had been our home, the birthplace of the Redlegs and a great resource for lumber and scrap metal. This “trash” had been our lifeblood and it was painful to see it destroyed.

We had to stay back a good distance on account of the heat. But what we saw was a specter of awesome beauty and terrifying horror all at the same time. The walls were consumed so fast they seemed to vaporize like the Hindenburg in slow motion.



The 8 inch thick walls evaporate

Saul Rouda

I headed back to Dredgetown feeling like an era had ended. All the wonderful times we had experienced at the drydocks played through my head like a movie reel. I had to somehow let go. After all, Dredgetown was a much better scene; it was close to shore, it had telephone service, even running water if we kept the tank filled. And the parties were held indoors in relatively clean conditions. Yeah, things had definitely gotten better for us.

I could still feel the heat when I tied up the skiff. Those pathetic drydocks would never trouble me again though it took a while for me to fall asleep. My mind was running and I could smell the smoke which would linger around for days.

When I returned a few hours later, the charred remains were a ghastly sight. I was taking it personally because I knew this was what the authorities wanted to do to us. What I saw looked like a terrorist attack and there was anger among our friends.

Some of the guys wanted to blow up the police station. They had dynamite and were making plans.



The aftermath

Saul Rouda

This kind of talk really scared me because I knew some of them were nuts enough to carry it out. I understood if they did this, we would be mercilessly wiped out. We would be killed by the police and totally vilified in the press. I just didn't think it was right. It was thing to thumb our nose at the cops but this would be a total descent into violence.

I buttonholed the ringleaders of the plot and gave them a stern talking to. Again, using my sincerest acting, they were told what a tragedy this action would unleash. If they cared anything about our friends and community, they should reconsider.

These guys were a lot bigger than me and I couldn't just push them around. Without any authority, I ordered them to desist with this madness. They could have just kicked my ass but, just like the mayor had, they gave in and just let things stand.

The bus lurched to a stop and I awoke from the bad dream and found myself in San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica. When I stepped off, I was nearly overpowered by the exhaust fumes of about fifty buses, which were parked up and down both sides of the street, all with their engines running. This is the way they do it here, sort of like the way they drive these buses on the mountain roads. I wanted to get away from here as quickly as possible so I caught cab to the United States Consulate.

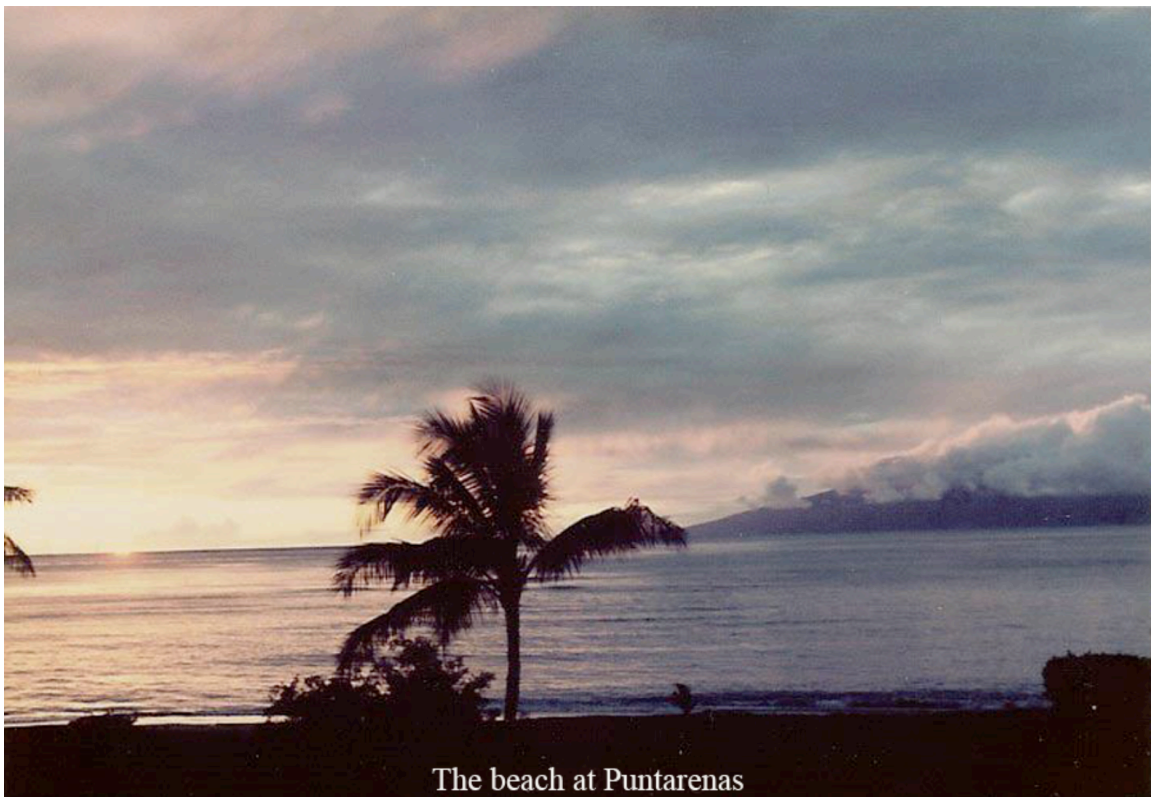
It was important to get to the US and German consulates as soon as possible. The Richmond was under armed occupation until new passports were obtained for Jeremy and Claus. The boat was low on food and there was no way the crew could go ashore to get supplies. They also had to feed the soldier.

The American Consulate was swanky with lots of expensive furniture and everyone looked well rested. I would soon find out why.

When I explained the circumstances nobody was interested and pretty much told me to get lost. I came back everyday for a few days until I finally convinced them that I wasn't going away. I guess they figured out that it would be less trouble to help me out than putting up with my daily appearances.

They were much nicer at the German consulate.

I eventually received verification papers from both consulates and headed back to Puntarenas. The bus ride was even more nerve wracking than the first because this time it was mostly downhill and I couldn't fall asleep.



The beach at Puntarenas

Arriving in the late afternoon, it was beautiful to see Puntarenas again and, after a couple of days jockeying back and forth between the port captain, the army barracks and the Richmond, the crew was freed.

Jeremy and Klaus got little permission slips and were able to travel to the consulates and get new passports.

There was one other little detail: I had to pay a five dollar fine for a special presidential pardon. I should have just paid the bribe when I had the chance

