

A Rock n' Roll Band Sails South In Search Of Adventure

The Last Voyage of the Red Legs



Joe Tate

*Joe Tate*

## FOREWORD

The Last Voyage Of The Redlegs reveals the story of Joe Tate, the life of his crew, and a peek at the history of the Sausalito Waterfront in the 1970's. Maybe you have seen Joe Tate at one of his weekly musical performances at Sausalito's No Name Bar or possibly at his annual displays in local parades, making Joe Tate a household name among many Sausalito residents.

Joe Tate has been described as a genius, as well as a ne'er-do-well, nasty boy, lunatic, actor, child prodigy, professor, musician, songwriter, performer, inventor, adventurer, author, sailing rebel and for me, a mentor. I was lucky enough to be tutored by Joe Tate at the start of my sailing career over 250,000 miles ago.

Joe Tate was one of the rare adventurers, sailing the vast Pacific before digital watches, instant GPS navigation, and SatPhones. In this book Joe Tate recounts his voyages, the events and coming of age that led to his offshore passages, and how he came to return to Sausalito to become the waterfront legend he is today.

Joe told me many years ago when he sailed to remote lands all he wanted to do was meet the locals, and in the end that is what he decided to do, go home and become a local.

As much as this book describes an age gone by, lost to the marvels of the electrical world, it also describes the ingenious onboard engineering needed to keep a vessel progressing along the zig zag course toward its final destination.

They say "it's not the boat that makes the passage, but the crew" and Joe Tate brings his crew's adventures to life in the pages of "The Last Voyage Of The Redlegs." Recounting tales of broken drive gears, lost treasure, crew fights, to being left adrift in the endless Pacific ocean, and near death experiences, dealing with third world authorities, or the Sausalito power brokers of the 70s and finally his triumphant Sausalito homecoming to become the humble man he is today, Joe Tate's words easily paint the story in the minds eye.

In "The Last Voyage Of The Redlegs," Joe Tate shares with his readers another glimpse into a slice of Sausalito from an era gone by, mostly seen on old dulled out postcards but once again given new life through the gifted writings of Joe Tate.

Captain Scott Fratcher  
Catana 90, "Orion"





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LOST WORLD OF INOCENCE

March, 1977, Puntarenas, Costa Rica, Aboard the Richmond

When I awoke, the sun was streaming into my eyes. Thinking I was still in Sausalito, I rolled in the bunk and saw all the beer bottles on the galley table, along with other evidence of last night's activity. The skylight, with its little home made chandelier, refracted the sunbeams. I felt a dull hangover. Not a real jackhammer one, but sort of like a dentist drill to the head. The light from the skylight was overpowering my retinas.

Why wasn't I in my own cabin, which only had a couple of portholes? This was way too bright for my splintered head.

Jeremy Conn was asleep on the opposite bunk. He looked totally out of it. There was nothing unusual about that. Jeremy was also known as "Green Slime." He was an educated fellow from Connecticut who was one of six folks who had sailed from Sausalito, California to Costa Rica with me.

The first thing I thought of was walking up to the Big G supermarket to get some doughnuts or something. That Sausalito supermarket was where we'd always shopped and also, on many occasions, where we scrounged from the dumpster. I reached one of the overhead truss rods and pulled myself out of the bunk. My grogginess forced me to hold on as I made my way to the ladder. As I ascended the steps I could feel an oppressive heat that I didn't understand.

When I stepped on deck it took a few moments for my eyes to adjust to an unbearably bright sun. I saw that I wasn't in Sausalito at all, but somewhere anchored in a river next to what looked like a shantytown of corrugated metal buildings. It was really hot and muggy.

I looked over the railing and saw the Ted Williams skiff trailing from the sea painter- a short boom and clothesline arrangement that holds small boats a safe distance away in choppy water. We called this boat the "Mistake" because it was so ill-suited to be our ship's dinghy.

Looking at the Mistake jogged my memory. It was coming back to me now. So much for getting doughnuts. The Big G was 5000 miles away. The Richmond was anchored in the river at Puntarenas Costa Rica. The weight of the situation asserted itself onto my aching shoulders. All the years of our crazy antics in Sausalito seemed like innocent play, like a lost world that can never be again. A wave of homesickness swept through me. There was no time to think about it now though.

The night before, Jeremy and Claus got drunk and tipped the Mistake over when I was bringing it alongside the Richmond. The current was swift and we were all swept away. Fortunately there were other boats in the anchorage. Claus and I stayed with the swamped boat and managed to secure it to a neighboring boat while Jeremy disappeared downstream. As we drifted along, we dragged the waterlogged skiff so it would line up with a boat anchored down stream. Swimming with one hand and pulling with the other, we inched over just enough to snag the boarding ladder of a neighboring boat and slam a quick clove hitch onto it.

That's when we met Maurice, a jovial and experienced sailor who also owned a nightclub in Puntarenas. His Tahiti ketch was our only hope for saving the skiff. We could have swum to shore without it but would have landed far downstream.



At anchor Puntarenas, Costa Rica

Laurie Steese



We dragged our soggy bodies onto his deck and called out for Jeremy. No answer. Maurice proceeded to hoist the Mistake out of the water using his handy billy – a little block and tackle suspended from atop the mast. He dropped it back in the water in a way that left it only half sunk. I hopped back in and bailed it out. Of course the oars were gone as well as Jeremy and Claus's passports which had been lying in the skiff. I didn't realize it then, but this was going to be a real problem.

Just then we heard Jeremy's voice. He had been picked up in a little motorboat by a guy named Victor. They went first to the Richmond and got some oars. I don't know why, but Jeremy didn't stay there and change or anything. He was all wet and still plenty drunk.

The three of us wet ones piled back into the Mistake and rowed back to the Richmond. Jeremy managed to fall overboard twice on the trip back. Fortunately the Mistake stayed upright this time.



Green Slime dries out in Puntarenas

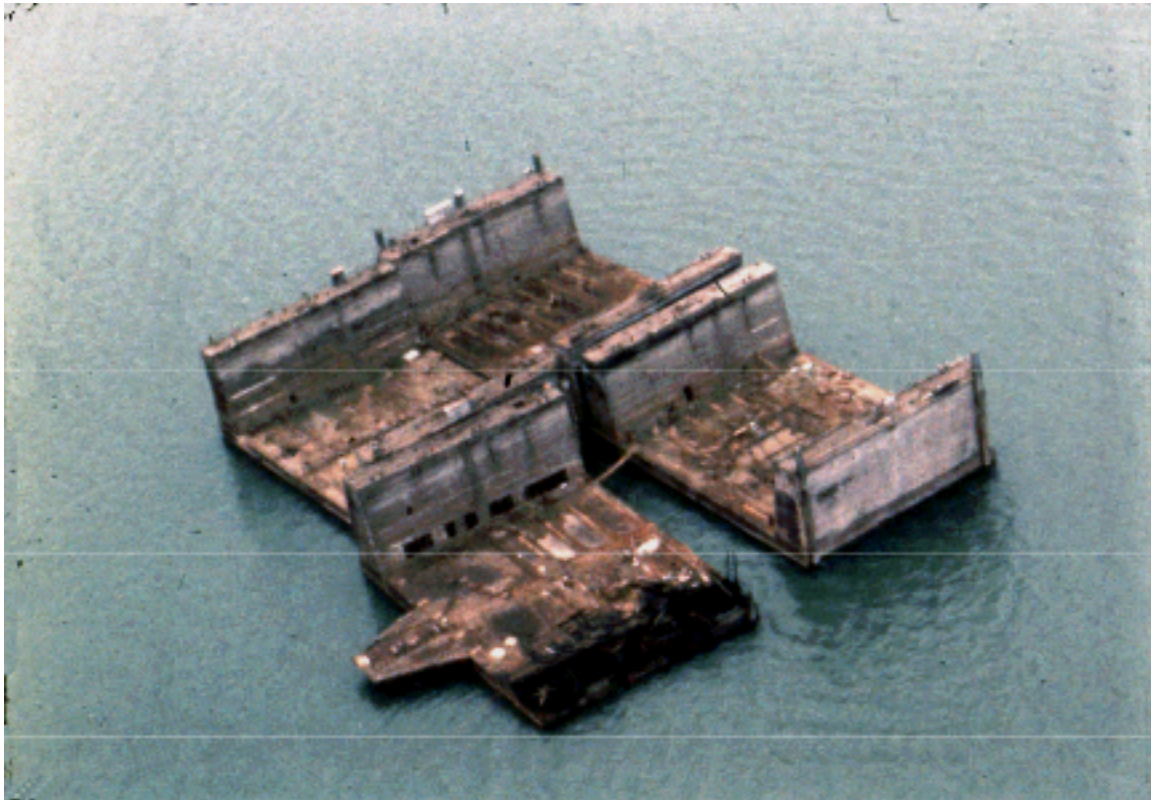
Laurie Steese

Afterwards, Claus and Jeremy rowed back to shore where they got a little more tanked up at a bar and got into a fistfight with some locals. They escaped and returned to the boat just before police arrived.

As I stood there in the hot sun thinking about that night before, I reflected on how simple things had been back in Sausalito. We had a nice place to tie up

next to the Hayoka, a big floating machine shop that had recently been decommissioned. We had a rock n roll band known as the Redlegs that kept us alive for many years. Although we were rejected by the mainstream music industry, we still had a following that allowed us to produce our own shows and thus sustain ourselves.

The Redlegs came about sort of by accident. I was a refugee from the music business living among the boat dwellers in Sausalito. Many of us were very poor and had taken to living on some huge abandoned wooden drydocks that were sunk in the middle of Richardson Bay. It was a really crummy, filthy place to live. They really smelled bad too. It was so wet and moldy that the seams in our jeans kept rotting out. Someone figured out that painting the seams kept them from rotting. We had red paint.



The Drydocks. Notice the bridge linking two units.  
The lower tower accidentally burned one night.

Saul Rouda

The drydocks were gigantic and had been used to lift military ships for repair during WWII. The Sausalito waterfront was largely a big junkyard of marine wreckage from the war. Many houseboats were built on a variety of surplus landing craft, balloon barges as well as submarine chasers and

minesweepers. The drydocks were part of this surplus and they were the ugliest of all this stuff. Not only that, but they were right in the middle of the bay where every complainer in town could clearly see them. And complaints there were.



Sausalito about 1970 showing drydocks at left Gate 6 lower right Aero Photo

It was bad enough before we started partying there but the bonfires at night along with the electric guitars really got the complaining department going. The sporadic gunfire didn't help either. We had a generator and some amps and microphones. Maggie Catfish, a beautiful blonde woman from Wisconsin was usually there to chime in with the guitar.

Maggie had arrived some months before on a three-wheeled motorcycle with her boyfriend Bill Becker. The two fit right in and they found a place to stay on an old sunken ferry called the Issaquah.

About this time Joey Brennan, a drummer from the east coast, moved to the waterfront and was living at Gate 6 on some funky houseboat. I happened to hear him practicing there one day when I came to shore. He had a rhythm that made me want to play, even though I had been rather reclusive musically for quite a while.



I had a small Chinese junk named the Hwang Ho, which I more or less lived on while commuting between shore and the drydocks.

On this occasion, when I reached Gate 6, I introduced myself to Joey and we made arrangements to jam. A local guy, Kim Carrigg, joined us and we got into a really nice trio groove.

There was also a guy named Eric who played with us briefly. With Eric we played at a local gay club we called the Fairy Factory. It was some sort of unlicensed place in an old building near the Big G. It soon closed and that was our last gig with Eric. He, perhaps fortunately, didn't really click with us.

Joey suggested we add a friend of his, a guitarist who had moved west with him from the east coast. This would complete the ensemble.



**The Hwang Ho near the drydocks.**

**Saul Rouda**

Joey took Kim and me to visit one Jeff Costello in some crummy house on Cole St. in San Francisco. Jeff and Joey had worked together before and were in the midst of producing some demo songs to market. Jeff had a studio in the basement with walls covered with mattresses, egg cartons and whatnot. It was damp and moldy and smelled a little like the drydocks. The

mattresses and stuff did their job though, because the room produced a decent sound.

We recorded a couple of songs that night, but apparently the prospective buyer went thumbs down. This was OK with me. I just wanted a good rockin' group that could bring parties alive. I had no faith in the recording business or any of the regular club business, which I regarded as being dominated by people whom I viewed as *ignoratii*.

We returned to Jeff's studio a couple weeks later and Maggie came too. Jeff and Maggie hit it off right away. Maggie had split with Becker by this time and she wanted us to get a hot guitarist. In my eyes he was the man.

With Maggie's help we were able to shanghai Jeff back to Sausalito. This wasn't his first visit and I don't think he wanted to come back but Maggie was irresistible to him.



The ferryboats Charles Van Damme (left) and the Issaquia (upper right). Whiteys Marina is off frame to the right. Jane Koestel collection

Jeff managed to hurt himself right away once he got to the drydocks. We were lowering a heavy stove with ropes and Jeff's hands got skinned. I felt

bad about it. We should have kept a better eye on him. He got his Redlegs anyway.

For some months we had been having parties at the drydocks by picking up paying attendees from the Sausalito shoreline. We had a friend named Jesse Bolton, who could quickly prepare a feast. He also did a lot of scrounging at the Big G dumpster. Jesse was one party animal and, for his style, he was nicknamed “Jesse Crocodile.”

We also made friends with Frank Werber, owner of the Trident, a trendy restaurant built on a pier in downtown Sausalito. He allowed us to land at the restaurant and schmooze. We would hustle patrons to go with us aboard the Loafer, a small tug owned by Becker.

It was about this time that Becker sold the Loafer to one Captain Dredge, who was a regular dweller at the drydocks. “Dredge“ made the party runs so often, we had to scramble to keep up our appearance as the local outlaw rock scene.



**Life at the Drydocks**

**Wieners, Norman Carlin, Michael Scott, Unknown, Joe Tate**

**Pirkle Jones**



Our passengers were out to have fun though and they loved the Sausalito waterfront ambience. At least they were willing to give us money. We would just load up as many people as we could cram on board. Once the party got going, word spread and Dredge could make several trips a day. Who knows how many violations we were committing.

This scene went on for many months with growing dissatisfaction among the hill people. The rock n roll music, as well as the gunfire, could be heard along the shoreline. Frank Werber was getting fed up too. It may have been Werber who exclaimed “Those people at the drydocks are just a bunch of rednecks”. John Stephens, a local wit, who was present and knew we had a habit painting our pant seams red, corrected the gentleman and said, ”Those people aren’t rednecks, They’re REDLEGS”. The name stuck and our band was forever branded The Redlegs. Later this was changed to *Thep’ Redlegs*, when we invented our own *definitive article*.



Charlotte Von Seppeser

Bill Becker on the Loufer

JT's Collection

Jeff's Redlegs

The first party Jeff played with us was an old houseboat that had been recently towed to Gate 6 from Corte Madera Creek. This was after he had a chance to recover from the injured hand.

There were some folks from Texas who were living aboard and, since we didn't know the name of this houseboat, we called it, simply, the Texas House. Jesse Crocodile and Danny Joe Crumb, otherwise known as the "Public Offender," had picked up Jeff from the City. He didn't seem at ease with these guys at first but after he was pumped up with some mescaline he started to schmooze. I think it helped when Joey showed up.

When I got there, the crowd was howling. Jeff was already playing and people were screaming with delight. When we got the mic and bass working, the whole place erupted with uninhibited dancing.

Women were taking off their clothes and I was getting excited. I hadn't seen this much flesh since playing in the topless clubs of North Beach.



**The Drydocks crew takes breakfast at Gate 6**  
**L to R Beppo, Dredge, Joe Tate, Frank Stewart,**

**Joe Tate collection**

**Jessie Crocodile, Jere Peacock, Captaijn Garbage, Ale Ecksrtom**

The way we all sounded together was the most exciting part. Without any one of us, Kim, Joey, Jeff, Maggie or Me, it wouldn't have had that certain something, makes you want to move. We had plenty of great musicians sit in with over the years. Many of them were more highly skilled players but it just didn't click the same way when they played with us. And so it was from

then on. The Redlegs were adopted by the waterfront. These folks wanted to party and the times were right for it.

After Texas House, there was an endless procession of gigs here and there in the Sausalito area, but mainly along the waterfront. We played a few more times at Texas House after Phil Frank, the famous cartoonist, bought it.

On one occasion Phil rented the houseboat next door for additional space. The “Stone Soup,” as it was called, had a lot of open seams above the waterline. With all the additional weight of the partyers, the open seams went under and the barge filled with water, settling to the bottom.

Fortunately the tide wasn’t very high and most people didn’t panic. As it listed to one side, Phil and I calmly sat at a table drinking wine and predicted the water would never reach the deck.



The “Madonna” (l.) and “Owl” (r.) with Mt. Tam in the distance. Whitey’s is hidden between them. (inset) Chris Roberts

Pirkle Jones

Among the most creative of the houseboat builders was Chris Roberts, who was well known among the locals, as well as the authorities who took a dim view of his activities. Though somewhat impractical, his creations were stunning and beautiful. The “Madonna” was built around an old piledriver



which had a tall wooden structure about 70 feet high around which he created his vision of Mary, mother of Jesus.

We generally referred to the Madonna simply as the “Tower” and often employed it as a place to have parties. Although horizontal space was limited, Chris was always happy to make the place available. This allowed him to recruit cheap labor from the drunks who showed up. Among these, Dredge and Garbage were his regular workers.

Chris Roberts also built the “Owl,” another unusual houseboat on which he lived. It was constructed around an old wooden stiff-leg crane which also had a towering structure. Though much shorter than the Madonna, it was still huge compared with the neighboring houseboats. Together these two creations formed the signature of the Gates skyline.



Joe Tate and the Schnargemobile. F.B.S. was our motto meaning “Fuck a Bunch of Bullshit.”

We somehow got an old GMC panel truck that we called the Schnargemobile. Its named was derived from an old Gahan Wilson joke in which an alien spacecraft has landed and the occupants are mimicking John Glenn by exclaiming “One small step for a Schnarge, a giant leap for Schnargekind.” This was our band truck and only real land transportation.

We were able to get rehearsal space on an old sunken potato boat called the Oakland, at Gate 6. We were slowly moving our operation from the drydocks. That's what was going on when Jeff was injured. It was a lot easier and safer playing parties ashore and not having all the logistical problems of the offshore drydocks. The Oakland was ideal for us and we were able to create the core of our original music there. There was a big WWII subchaser sunk next to the Oakland and both hulks together formed a large island with a walkway connecting to shore.



Whitey's Marina with the Oakland (Center) and the Richmond (tall mast). The houseboat with the whale design is where Maggie and Jeff made their home. Charlotte Von Segesser

It was winter and there was a big storm with violent winds. A huge section of floating dock broke loose from Kappas, a marina just north of Gate 6. This thing was drifting near Strawberry Point when it was spotted by our friend Bill Becker. He immediately went out with the Loafer and towed this giant hunk of flotsam back to the Oakland.

With these floating docks tied to the Oakland, we had an instant Marina, which filled up with small boats right away. We named it Whitey's Marina after Green Slime's cat. We painted a big sign on the side of the subchaser that said "WHITEY's MARINA". Persons of authority would show up

asking to see Whitey. Nobody ever knew where he was. And of course, Whitey didn't know either.

Unfortunately, crowds always flocked to the place whenever we practiced. Also, the police showed up a lot and they would make us stop. We solved both of these problems by installing a drawbridge. We took part of the walkway out and replaced it with a hinged ramp that could be raised with some rope and pulleys.

We often played outside on the Oakland deck allowing only a certain number of people past the drawbridge. This created a great visual from shore and crowds would fill the parking lot near the Charles Van Damme. We met



**The drawbridge at Whitey's Marina with  
Charles Van Damme at right**

**Saul Rouda**

many talented musicians and singers at these open-air parties. From these we recruited many auxiliary members who played and sang with us on a regular basis. Most notable among these were CiCi Wilcoxon, Adam Fourman, Bob Seal and Francine Lowenberg. Cici would later write the title song to our movie, "The Last Free Ride." Adam was adept on piano as well as guitar and was able to play and sing many American favorite cover songs. Bob



Seal could play most any instrument and he was always waiting around for his chance to play. We nicknamed him “Ben Waitin.” Francine and Adam paired up and had two children, Jarred and Jadine.

We were spending about half our time at Whitey’s aboard the Oakland and the other half ferrying stuff from the drydocks. Each of us that had lived there had a couple years of accumulation. It was all crap, but it was all we had and we were attached to our stuff like a millionaire to his dough.



The Redlegs in the Oakland shop 71

Charlotte Von Segesser

One morning, we were just leaving the drydocks with more stuff when we saw helmeted police officers maneuvering in a boat offshore from Gate 6. We were still a half mile away but their gold helmets created a lot of glare in the bright sun. After alerting the other guys on the drydocks, we set sail for Gate 6.

There wasn’t much wind and the Hwang Ho was moving slowly. The police boat was seen entering the gates then coming back out towing a houseboat. This was slowing them down too but we couldn’t catch them as they proceeded north, toward the heliport.

We recognized the houseboat as one belonging to Russell Grisham, a local guy who was into meditation and had decorated his converted military lifeboat into a little ashram. It had little oriental shaped windows reminiscent of Alladin and the Arabian Nights. It was a very stylish and practical place

for him to live. We couldn't see Russell on board, so we assumed he knew nothing about this.

We sailed in to Whitey's and alerted everyone we could find. Multitudes of waterfolk piled aboard dozens of skiffs and other small boats and headed out to confront this aggression.



The "Joe's Camel" is surrounded. Two policemen are trapped out of view.

Saul Rouda

By this time the police had returned after leaving the first confiscated boat at the heliport where it was to be destroyed.

Their next target was a small anchored-out houseboat that I used to live on that was known as "Joe's Camel". It was built on what is called a camel. These are huge military surplus blocks of wood formerly used for fenders between battleships. This camel was about 18 ft. long by 12 ft. wide and 6 ft. deep. So this flimsy little house was sitting on a float that weighed about 85,000 lbs. A lot of the steel truss rods that held it together were protruding all around the perimeter. These tended to get caught on stuff. At low tide, when the sides of the camel were exposed, these rods stuck out every which way. It looked really gnarly, like with giant fishhooks sticking out everywhere below water.

This was taking place about halfway between Whitey's and Strawberry Point in an area that was increasingly attracting anchor-outs. Folks that lived out here enjoyed not paying rent.



**A Coast Guard cutter moves in to rescue sheriffs from Joe's Camel. Moments after this photo, the Hwang Ho collided with the cutter.**

**Saul Rouda**

The cops had hitched their boat, a Boston Whaler, to Joe's Camel and were trying to pull it away. It wouldn't move. There are so many old anchor chains and other snags in this area that this thing could only be moved on a really high tide. I knew this from experience.

So while they were struggling to get the camel to move, we surrounded them with at least 50 people. These were folks who didn't take kindly to having people's homes jerked out of the neighborhood. Blows were exchanged with oars and boathooks. People were clubbed and thrown in the water.

The Boston Whaler was piloted by a private operator who, suddenly feeling vulnerable, quit. He left the scene with two officers still on the camel. We had them cornered but they had guns. For a few minutes the cops walked around the edge of the camel which was constructed with a narrow deck all



the way around. Whenever someone got too close they would swing their clubs at them.



**Last of the Nice Guys confront Russell Grisham as he tries to save his boat.**

**Arthur Frisch  
S.F. Chronicle**

Just then a Coast Guard cutter showed up to rescue the cops. There were so many boats jammed in the area by now they that couldn't reach the camel. Everyone was screaming at the cops and Coast Guard men. Someone threw a grappling hook onto the cutter and tried to wrap a chain in their propeller. This didn't work but made a lot of noise and enraged the cops.

Finally the cutter was put in reverse and backed up through the flotilla, smashing the skiffs out of the way. At that moment the Hwang Ho was sailing toward the cutter with as much speed as the wind would give. Just as they reached the camel and were rescuing the cops, the steelwork on the bow of the Hwang Ho crashed into the cutter full force, making a screeching noise and removing a lot of paint from the cutter. The pilot gunned the engines and the cutter sped away. "Gaters," as we sometimes called ourselves, one, cops zero.





After the battle, peace for the moment.

Saul Rouda

But it wasn't over yet. Russell's boat was at this moment about to be destroyed at the heliport and we felt we needed to stop it somehow. We set sail north making our way around Kappas Marina where the action at the heliport came into view. As we neared the scene, a large tow truck was being hitched to Russell's boat.

Somehow Russell had gotten there and was now on board. As the tow-rope tightened, the boat started crunching up against the shore. Russell produced a knife and cut the rope. At that moment the police drew their guns and ordered Russell to drop the knife or be shot. They were serious too. Russell slowly put the knife down.

The cops seemed to have the upper hand now. Fortunately a lawyer named Carl Shapiro got wind of the action and obtained a court order to stop the destruction. The papers were served to the commanding officer and he ordered the boat released.

It was a sweet day of victory for us underdogs. We were swelled with pride as we paraded back to Gate 5 with Russell's boat.



**Pam Massie in the cabin of the Hwang Ho**

**Pam Massie collection**

My girlfriend Pam Massie was waiting for me when I arrived back at Whitey's. She lived with me on the Hwang Ho. This wasn't easy for her because I was always sailing here and there. She was a waitress at Fred's Coffee Shop and she took good care of me. Quite often when she got off work and came home, the boat and I were gone to parts unknown so she had to wait around until I showed up. This was surely maddening for her but she took it all in stride. Times were tough and we all had to make sacrifices.

Pam was always making things homey and comfortable. Pretty much the opposite of me. She had patched my one pair of blue jeans so many times and so colorfully that they became recognized as art. The flamboyant Jean Varda saw these pants from his boat as we were sailing past one day. He immediately called out, "Young man your pants should be in a museum!" I couldn't think of an argument against it.



We were lucky to know Varda because he provided an occasional venue for us to play as well as a chance to rub shoulders with the local artists community.

I met Margaret Hannigan there and fell madly in lust. She was one of Varda's many young and beautiful girlfriends. She had her commitments so I had to be satisfied with just being friends. But I always found excuses to visit Varda just so I could see the beautiful Margaret.



**Joe's museum quality Redlegs**

**Pam Massie collection**

I was rewarded for my trouble by getting to play at some of Varda's parties. He also showed me his workshop and how he did the collages. He would glue bits of cloth onto a backing and when dry he ground the surface with a rotary sander. I couldn't quite figure out why he did it this way. As far as Bohemia goes, Varda was the real deal. His presence made it a truly magical time on the Sausalito waterfront.

Varda left us in the early days of the Redlegs, and the waterfront has never been the same. He died in 1971 in La Paz on the way to the airport. I was at Whitey's when I heard the news. Things were changing faster than we knew.

There was a huge wake for him at the ferryboat Vallejo where he had lived and worked for many years. He shared the Vallejo with Alan Watts, who wasn't a real party guy, but that was part of the mix.



**Scattering Varda's ashes from his boat, the Cythera, just west of the Golden Gate Bridge. 1971**

**Saul Rouda**

We took his ashes out in a flotilla of colorful boats including his own Cythera as well as the Hwang Ho. We scattered his ashes just beyond the



Golden Gate Bridge amidst many bouquets of flowers. The sea was awash with flowers as the ashes settled beneath the surface. Almost all of the craft were sailboats but the ones with outboards shut them off. The wind had fallen and our sails were slack. Everyone was silent as the boats drifted toward the bridge with the incoming tide.

When we returned to the Vallejo, the Redlegs played on a raised platform on the beach. This was about the best party I have been to in my life. It was also the last time we ever played there.



Varda's wake. Maggie Catfish (center R)  
Adam Foreman (black cap) Bob Seal (drums)

Saul Rouda

There was a huge teepee erected next to the stage and the sweet smell of ganja was drifting around. The entire waterfront was there along with all of Varda's friends, everyone dressed in their most flamboyant clothes. Varda would have been pleased, I thought. Varda was gone though, and the sadness we all felt was profound and sincere.

The fallout from the battle over Russell Grisham's was that a couple people got arrested and money was owed to Carl Shapiro for the court order. This was the beginning of a long series of legal debts we would incur.

We decided to have a benefit and the only logical place to have it was on the Charles Van Damme. It had been closed for a few years since it was operated as a nightclub by one Marty Martinez. It belonged to Don Arques, as did all the land above and below water at the Gates.

I had gotten to know Arques and it fell upon me to get permission to use the old ferryboat. When I went to talk to him, he was most sympathetic to our cause. Contrary to what one might believe, Don was against the county and all their plans to get rid of the houseboats. He was a strait shootin' kind of guy and he minced no words about things he didn't like.

He had acquired the property after WWII and wanted to build a marina there. In the meantime, highway 101 was built uphill from his property and during construction the runoff had silted in his harbor area at the Gates. He sued the county and state for damages.

The court ruled that, although his property had been damaged, he suffered no loss because the property was now more valuable because of proximity to the highway.

This didn't sit well with Arques, who only wanted to have a nice marina and now all he had was mudflats. So, out of spite or whatever, he allowed just about anyone to pretty much squat on the property in their makeshift houseboats and shacks in the parking lot.

This of course enraged the county officials who were determined to eliminate this blight and so they were taking action to get rid of us. I wasn't aware of all these facts when Arques said it was ok to have benefits on the Charles Van Damme. His only stipulation to me was to call it the Charles Van Damme and not the Ark. Although I agreed, we never really followed this rule because the place was so well known as the Ark. We didn't want to confuse anybody.

Maggie created the first of many posters that would be used to promote the benefits at the Charles Van Damme. This one had a sketch of the Loafer and

the headline TONIGHT! That's all the time we had. The posters were silkscreened on Tuesday, night then I rushed all around the county on the



**Don Arques in his shop**

**Albert Morse**

day of the dance, putting up posters everywhere I could. Someone made a banner and hung it up on the Charles Van Damme that said "TONIGHT THE REDLEGS." This sign could be read from highway 101 and a lot of people must have seen it.

At the time, there wasn't any local rock and roll venue. Bill Graham had pretty much dominated the Bay Area scene at that time and had taken an active part in shutting down most of the competition. Because of this, people were anxious to have some fun without having to go to the Fillmore and pay ten bucks. Our dance was only two dollars and we gave out free beer. Needless to say, people came in droves.



TONIGHT!

8:30 P.M. wed June 9

The Redlegs

and

★ The Greater Revolting-Tones Revue ★

The Rubber Band ★ Ale Ekstrom

John Stephens

Mary Wynn's Puppets



THE ARK GATE 6 SAUSALITO

\$2.00 DONATION ★ Free Beer

BENEFIT FOR HOUSEBOAT DEFENSE FUND

Maggies first Redlegs poster

Annie Costello Brown Collection





The Charles Van Damme was better known as the Ark

Jane Koestel Collection

It was one rockin party with the Redlegs and what we dubbed “The Greater Revolting Tones Revue.” This was simply a conglomeration of Redlegs members and other musicians we knew, but was mainly characterized by the powerful singing of Bob Seal and the baritone sax of Dirty Dick. Bob Seal often appeared with us over the years but poor Dirty Dick went missing along with a whole crew of people on an experimental concrete boat sailing to Mexico. Also appearing were Ale Ekstrom and his wife Mary Winn who gave a puppet show. Ale played the concertina and performed authentic sea chanteys from the olden days. He had become well known and performed at radio station KPFA where he recorded about two hours of material.



Ale Ecksrom at home

John Kendall

A favorite of the Revolting Tones Revue was Dirty Dick's "The Ballad Of D.B. Cooper," a tribute to the mysterious original airline hijacker.

Andy Goodman loaned us money for the beer, which was the cheapest crap we could get. It cost about one hundred and sixty dollars for 12 kegs of beer. This brought in about a thousand dollars at the door. No business license, no liquor license, no rent thanks to Don Arques and probably so many infractions of the rules that there isn't space to mention them. So, in other words, we made a profit. After paying expenses, we were able to give the lawyers about six hundred dollars. This helped save the houseboats for a while.



**The Redlegs at the Charles Van Damme aka "Ark" benefit  
portrayal from Last Free Ride.**

**Roy Nolan**

Those were the days that we thought they would last forever.

There was a song we used to sing:

Do you remember  
Lost world of innocence  
Of a day gone by  
When we lived so free

It seemed poignant now that there was no turning back.

I was still day-dreaming when Jeremy came out of the scuttle and broke my reverie. “Joe, you’ve got to check in with customs!”

Jeremy was followed on deck by the rest of the crew and they all stood there looking at me.

Jeremy, who got his “Green Slime” nickname from a long ago incident in which he untangled a chain from a propeller and emerged from the mud covered with seaweed and slime, still looked hungover. He was drunk at the time and this condition became an adjunct to the title. Whenever he was drunk he became Green Slime. Sort of like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.



Green Slime addresses the crowd at the Ark.

Saul Rouda

Claus Koestel was a German immigrant who hooked up with the Redlegs and had once dated Maggie. Claus and Jeremy didn't get along. Whenever Green Slime emerged, these matters got rather heated and I often had to get between them.



Kim Carrigg, of course, played bass in the Redlegs and we called him “Rock Steady,” because he gave us such a steady tempo. Kim grew up at the Gates living on an old sunken tugboat called the Mariner. He was also connected with Varda and played at his parties long before the Redlegs existed.

Bill Becker was my old sailing buddy. He had previously sailed a small knockabout, the Merriman, to Hawaii and Australia with many islands in between. He was without doubt the most experienced sailor aboard. And, of course, there was the business with the Loafer.



Sandra Pickard, who was Becker’s girlfriend at the time, came along reluctantly as cook. She was the only female aboard and she deeply regretted her decision to come on this voyage. As a result there was much friction between her and some members of the crew. Bill often had to intervene in trivial, petty disputes between Sandra and the crew.



**The Richmond 1977, Richardson’s Bay**

**Hank Tate**

took over as drummer when Joey left the Redlegs. Bob could play most instruments but he was inexperienced at sailing. He adapted to the situation but it was a painful voyage for him. He developed a toothache during the voyage and, at one point, got into the medicine chest and downed half bottle of percodans. From this he lay in a gooned-out state for a couple days. The weather was nice, so we just left him out on deck. I think it was Bob's attitude that most infuriated Sandra.

With myself, Kim and Bob, we had a working trio that we hoped would allow us to play some bars.

Maggie and Jeff had opted for not going. They certainly couldn't be blamed. It was a long and dangerous voyage and they had two small children.