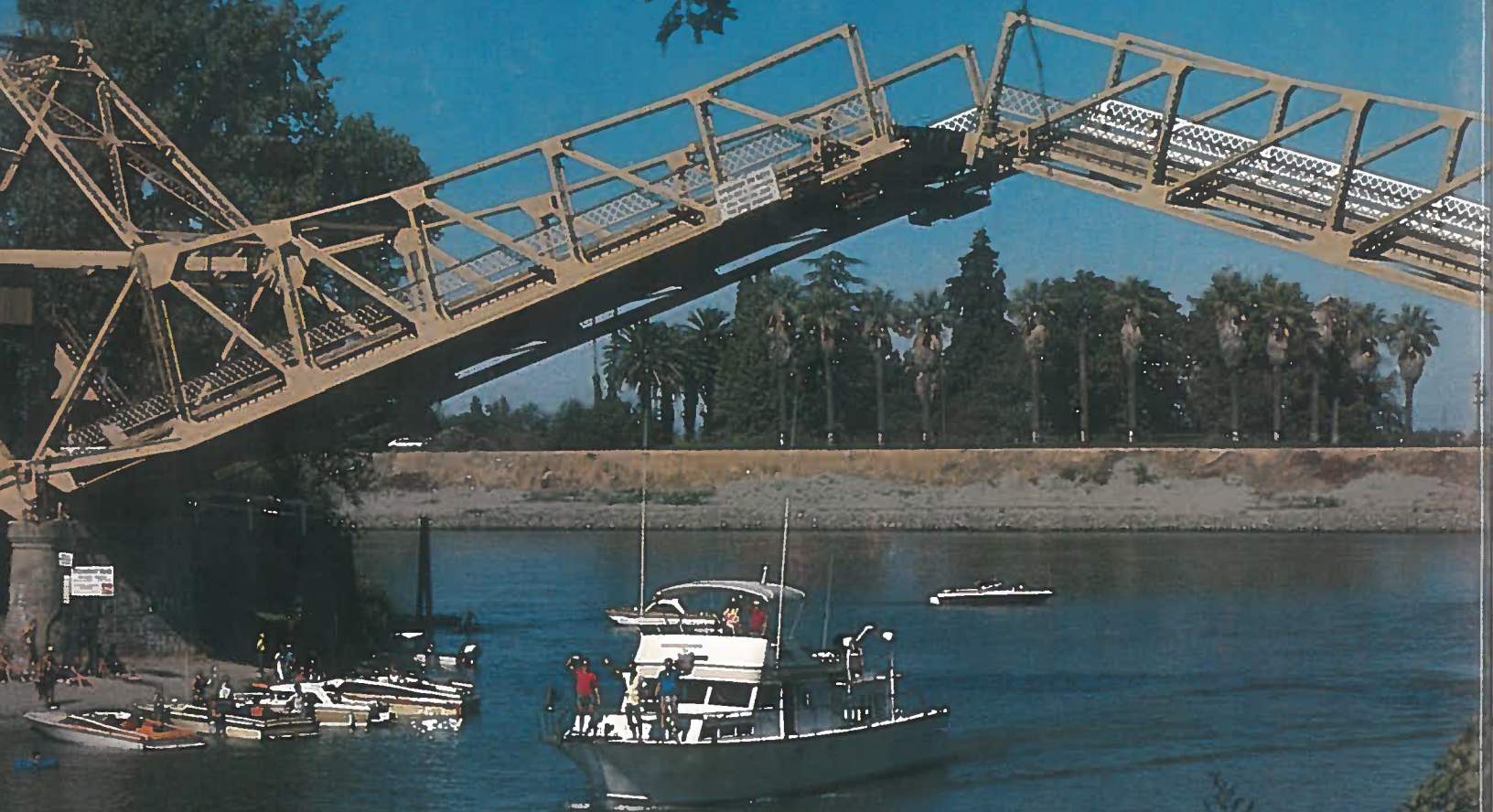


Hal Schell's



DAWDLING ON THE DELTA

The Complete Cruising Guide for
California's Fabulous 1,000-Mile Delta



The Navajo high and dry on Mandeville Island.



This book is about a place that has become my whole life—the California Delta. And if at times I write of it with too much reverence, please forgive me. For I believe in the Delta and it has given me much pleasure.

The book has been rattling around in my head for a decade, slowly taking form. Always I have wanted it to serve as a Delta guide, while at the same time being fun to read. In most cases in the book I chose to use our own Delta Map rather than the NOAA charts. I figure the resort names and locations are of more value than the extra detail of the charts.

The number of photos to be used kept growing. Although I may be no great shakes as a photographer, I take a lot of pictures and my cameras are with me always. It is hoped that the photos show you aspects of the Delta I was unable to put into words.

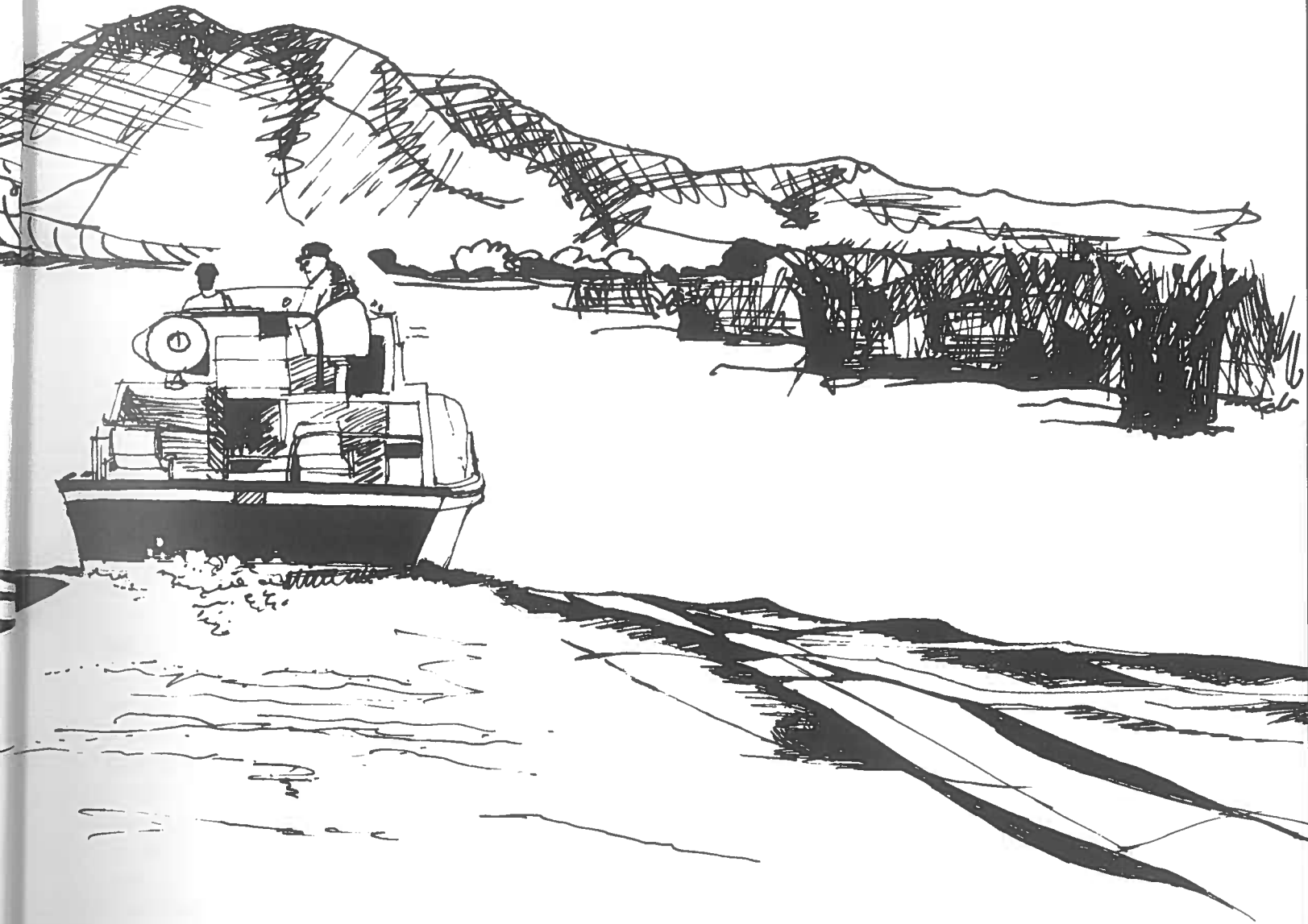
This book is billed as a “cruising guide” and that it is. But in another way, it is a story about a region and the people who inhabit it. Delta people are different, as are the boatmen who choose to cruise here year in and year out. Often the Delta is just referred to as “the river”. And when you go out for the weekend, you are “going to the river”.

This book is about River People.



Hal Schell

*To my mother, who was sure I could move mountains . . .
And to Joanie, who gave her all to this project . . .
And to you other Delta river rats, who gave me inspiration.*



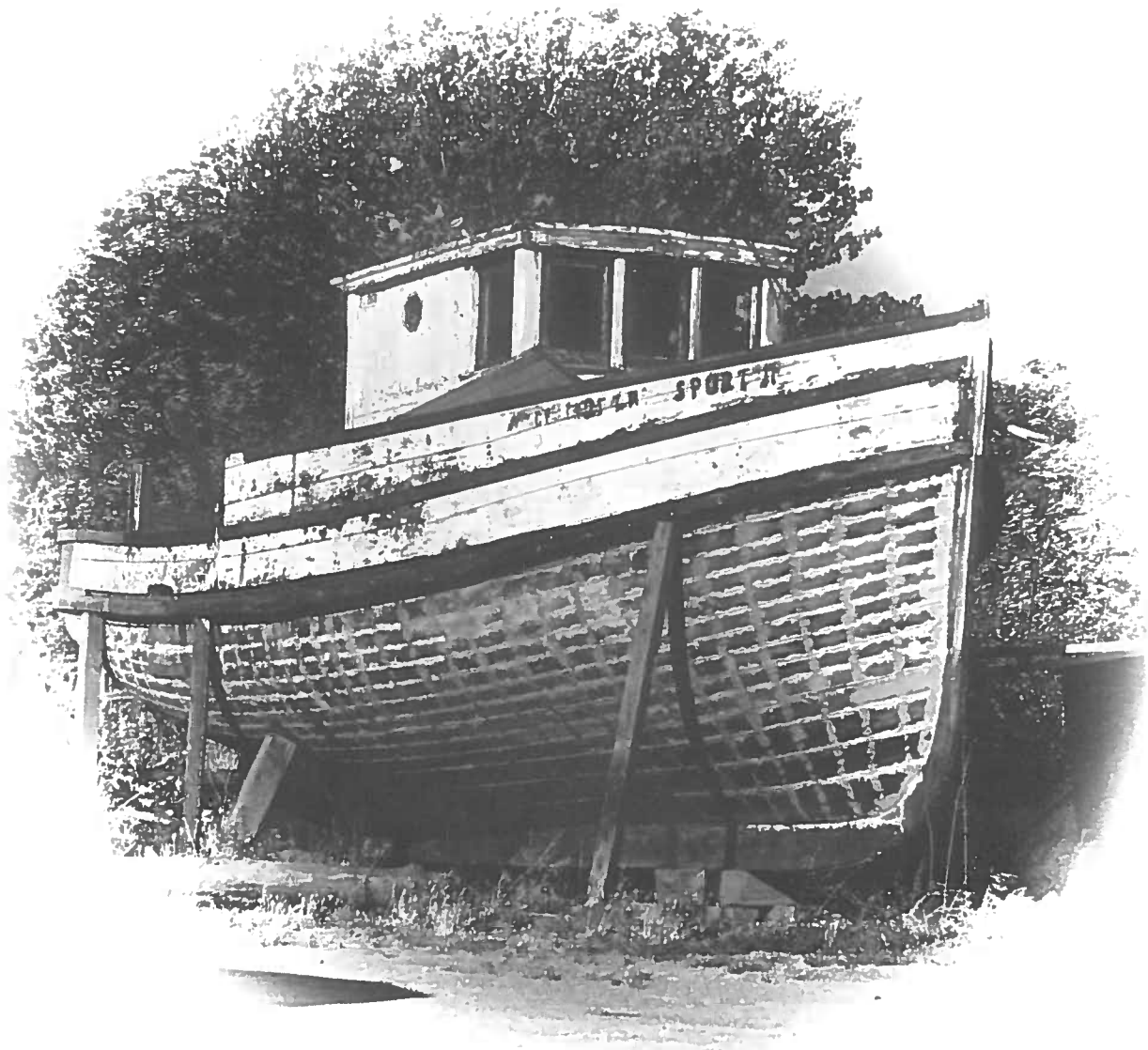
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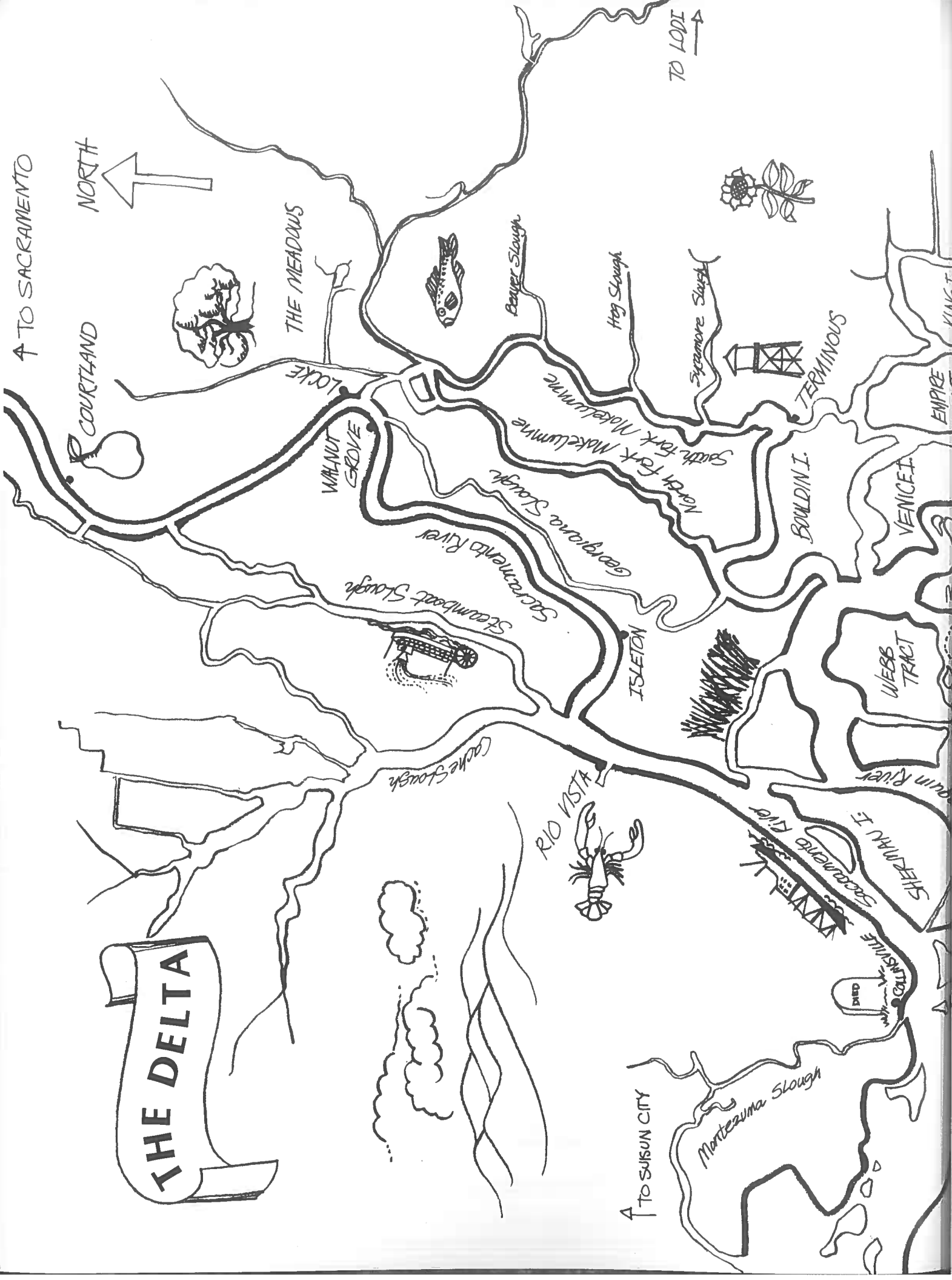
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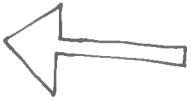
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THE DELTA



↑ TO SACRAMENTO

NORTH



↑ TO LODI

↑ TO SUISUN CITY

COURTLAND

THE MEADOWS

LOCKE

WALNUT GROVE

Steamboat Slough

Sacramento River

Cache Slough

RIO VISTA

ISLETON

Georgiana Slough

North Fork Mokelumne

South Fork Mokelumne

Beaver Slough

Hog Slough

Sycamore Slough

TERMINOUS

BOLDIN I.

VENICE I.

WEBB TRACT

SHERMAN I.

San Joaquin River

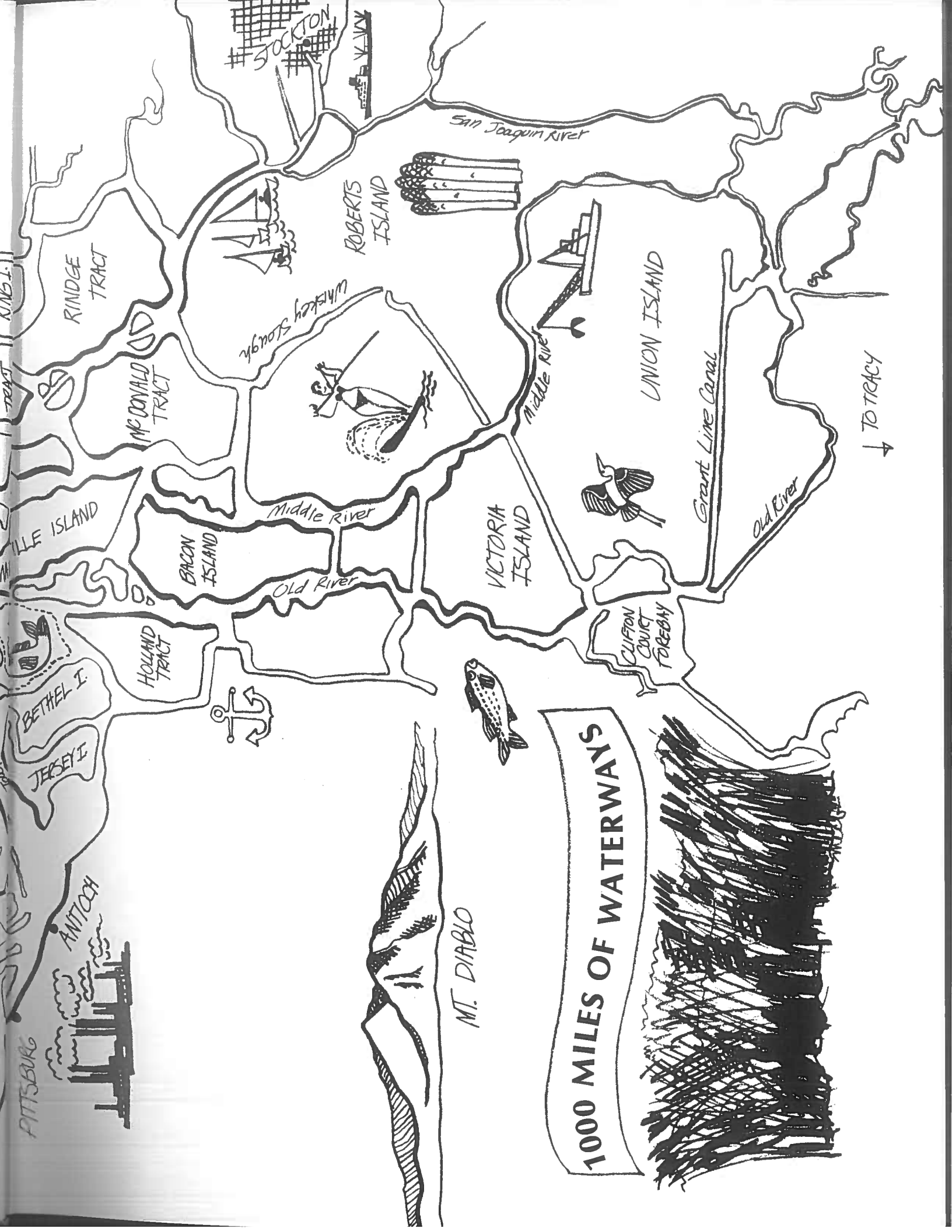
Sacramento River

WINDMILL

DIED

Montezuma Slough





STOCKTON

V. WAY

San Joaquin River

ROBERTS ISLAND

RINDGE TRACT

MCDONALD TRACT

Whiskey Slough

UNION ISLAND

Middle River

Grant Line Canal

TO TRACY

WILSON ISLAND

BACON ISLAND

Middle River

VICTORIA ISLAND

Old River

CLIFTON COURT FOREBAY

HOLLAND TRACT

BETHEL I.

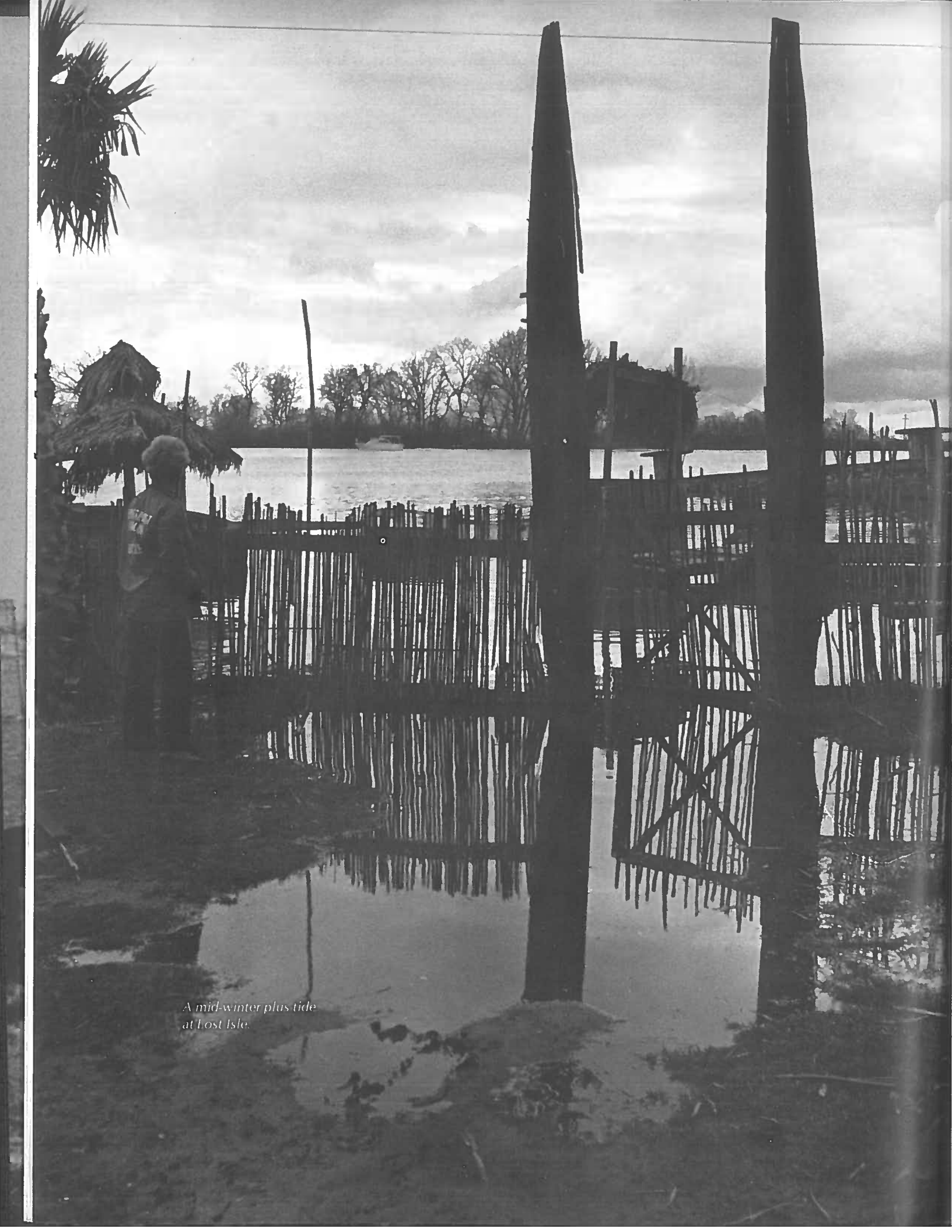
JERSEY I.

ANTIOCH

PITTSBURG

MT. DIABLO

1000 MILES OF WATERWAYS



*A mid-winter plus tide
at Lost Isle.*

YOUR DELTA INTRODUCTION

ABOUT ITS HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE



Sailing on the old San Joaquin.

The Delta. All too often when its praises are sung, its geographical attributes are ticked off one after the other, textbook style—as if these mere physical things were what make it the grand and wondrous place for boatmen it is. To my way of thinking, it is the Delta people and the things these people do here that make the real Delta. Consider:

I sidle up to the bar of Middle River Inn (now shut down), a decrepit little place built by the railroad circa 1912. In quick time I am in lively conversation with a millionaire seated next to me.

A cropduster courting the daughter of the owner of Windmill Cove swoops down Dawn Patrol-style to parachute love notes to her.

Island-dwellers Jim and Franci Warren, neither what you would call a spring chicken, are visited by troubles. Jim breaks a hip. Then shortly thereafter, Franci falls and breaks bones. After a short stay in town, they are back to their island, hobbling around, still feeding an armada of ducks.

A police patrol boat gets hopelessly lost out on the water, radios for help but cannot tell rescuers where to begin looking. Policeman spends all night in small boat, out on the river.

*John Wayne makes his headquarters on the Delta's Virginia S. while filming Blood Alley. Clark Gable quaffs scotch at Venice Island. M*A*S*H's Mike Farrell ambles around his rental houseboat in the buff.*

Boatmen stage midnight raids on asparagus patches, grown men with a bit of the kid left in them.

Forward gear breaks in Bob Luepke's outboard-powered fishing skiff. So in the dark of night he drives it for some ten miles to home, backwards — and then promptly falls in.

The Lost Isle kids, Eric and Cindy, spend a whole school lifetime commuting daily through all kinds of weather in a tiny open boat to catch the school bus.



A freighter hits the old Antioch lift bridge in the raised position, trapping the tender in his high cubicle for 18 hours.

These are the sort of happenings that give the Delta its personality, the kind of happenings that make you chuckle and make you want to become a part of this crazy, wonderful place.

I have not meant to downplay the geography of the Delta, but only to put it in its proper perspective—to make it secondary to the Delta people. With its sloughs and cuts and canals and rivers, it is touted to have 1,000 miles of navigable waterways and I would judge that to be correct. In the territory this book covers, there are some 150 waterside marinas and resorts and I have at one time or another visited every one of them.

The Delta has no clearcut boundaries. There are three different cities that sometimes tout themselves as "the gateway to the Delta" and perhaps they are all correct. Pressed to apply boundaries, I might say: draw a line from Pittsburg to the west, to Courtland to the north, to Stockton to the east, then on to Tracy and back to Pittsburg. This boxes in most of what I normally think of as the Delta, but you may apply your own boundaries. What difference does it make? This book covers the Sacramento up to the capital and includes Suisun City, because they are logical extensions of Delta waters and interesting places to boot. Martinez and Crockett and Vallejo and Benicia looked enticing too, but I had to stop somewhere.

The Sacramento River and the San Joaquin River are the lifelines of the Delta, its major thoroughfares. The other rivers and streams, however, have important roles and help make the Delta the labyrinthine water playground it is. In spite of its profusion of waterways, the Delta is surprisingly compact and easy

to get around in. It is close enough to major population centers to make commuting practical. And I would judge that the majority of boats berthed here belong to boatmen who live in the greater Bay Area. They visit the Delta on weekends and holidays and on vacation and are happy to make the drive of perhaps two hours. When they are but ten minutes away from port in their boats, it is as if they were 1,000 miles from civilization. The feeling of remoteness comes quickly in the Delta.

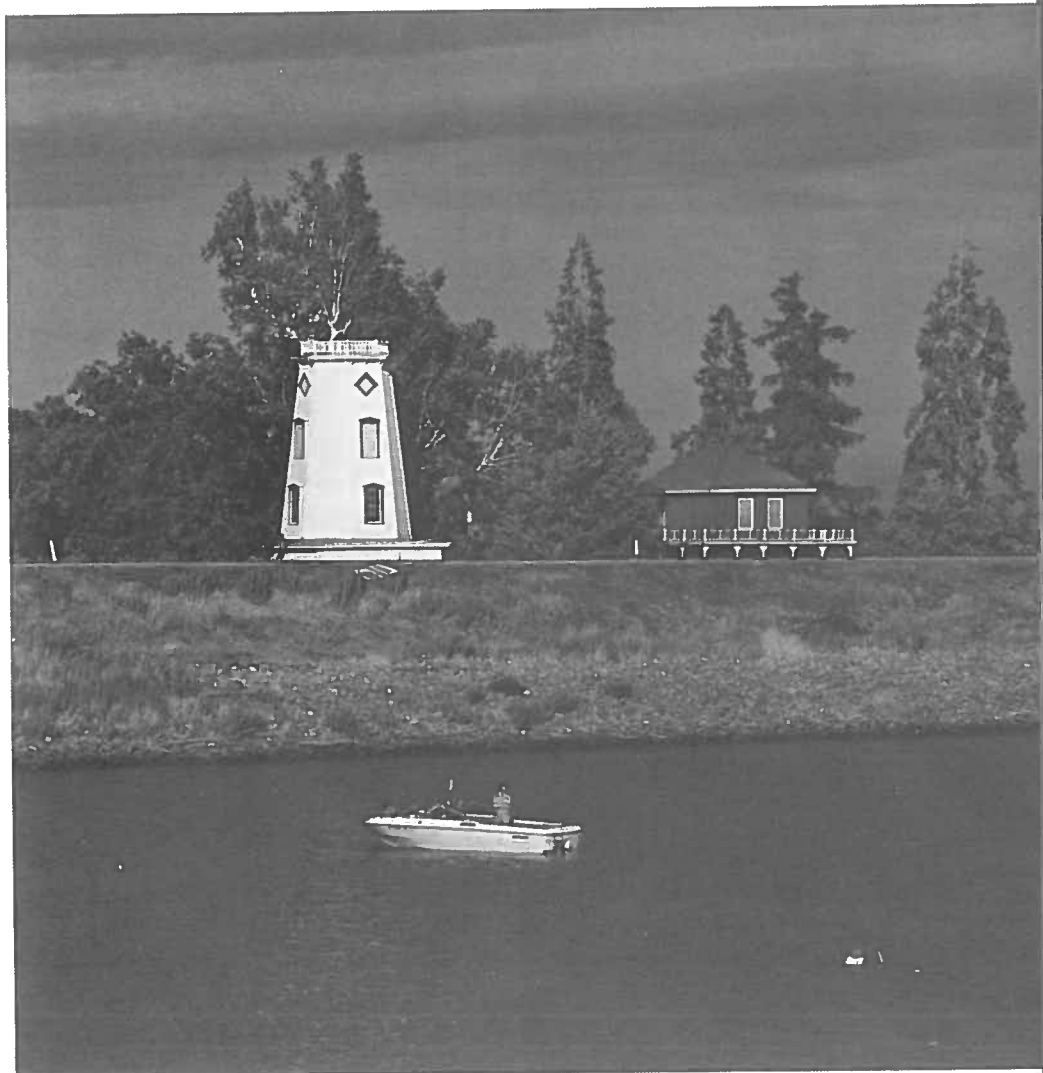
The Delta is an example of man altering nature to suit his own needs, and it seems that almost everyone won because of it. The first white men to cast eyes on the Delta were Spaniards Pedro Fages and Fray Juan Crespi. On a cool March day in 1772, they trekked to the top of Mount Diablo, and there it was, looking every bit like a huge inland lake. For the rivers, swollen by winter rains, had overflowed their banks. Elk and deer and a variety of other game roamed the area. Some 30,000 mostly peaceful Indians lived in the Delta area then. The Spaniards could think of no use for this wretched, swampy, mosquito-ridden land. And they went on their way.

Later there came mountain men and trappers and men with exploration in their blood. Little pockets of settlers arrived, struggling to make footholds. Then gold was discovered, sending thousands of men surging through the Delta waters. Some stayed—to open businesses, to have a go at tilling the land. A few men of vision recognized the value of the incredibly rich peat soil, if only they could figure a way of holding back the water.

It is believed that Reuben Kercheval constructed the first levee in the Delta, around 1849 on Grand Island, with the help of the Maidu Indians who still lived there. It was made of blocks of peat that leaked



Winter comes to the Delta and with it the great white swans.



An old water tank tower peeks over a Sacramento River farm house as a water skier prepares to take off.

abominably when they dried. Kercheval's levee kept giving way and he kept building higher and wider levees to replace those expired. The legislative groundwork for reclamation of the Delta was laid in the 1850 Swamp and Overflow Act which let the state take control of these lands in 1855.

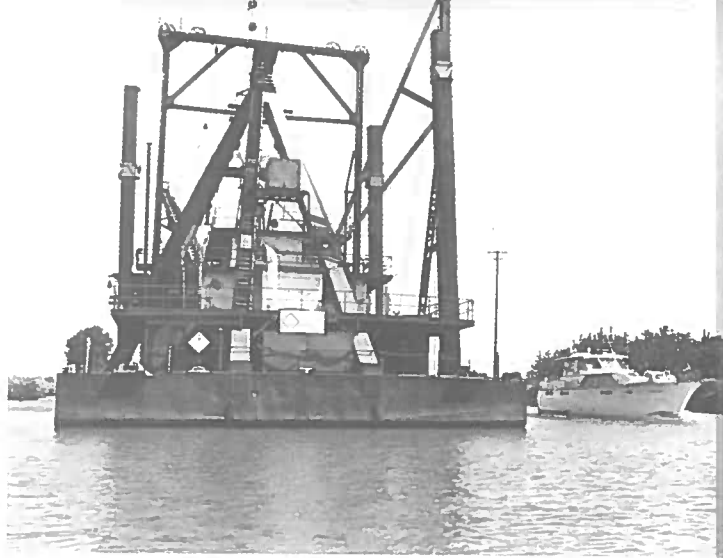
Sale of Delta marshlands was authorized at \$1 per acre and there were many takers. The earlier individual purchase limit of 320 acres was raised to 640 acres in 1859, then lifted entirely as the state gave control of the Delta to the respective counties. By 1871 there was little left to purchase. There were some huge spreads purchased.

When the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, a large force of Chinese labor was surplus. The timing was propitious, for they just moved on over to the Delta and put their backs to the task of building levees rather than laying track. The going rate was 13 cents for every yard of dirt moved to the levees. In time, even this miniscule sum was made to seem expensive. For the newly invented clamshell dredge could sink its iron teeth into the Delta mud and move it to the levees for a nickel per yard. The reclamation pace quickened.

The dredgemen were a hearty lot. They lived out in the bush for long weeks on end, quartered aboard their dredges. The dredges grew ever larger, with ever-longer swings to their booms. They were (and still are) handsome pieces of machinery in a utilitarian way. It is because of these dredges that the boatmen of today have relatively deep water off in some of the obscure waterways of the Delta. The ordinary task of adding dirt to the levee, in the process deepens the waterway alongside it.

Looking at the Delta of today, it is difficult to see that there was much overall planning when cuts and canals were made. And there probably was not. The reasoning that went into the work has been lost in the obscurity of history. Originally, some of the reclaimed tracts were much larger than they are today. A tract owner might sell part of his spread, to maintain the levees in a partnership arrangement. Then one or the other might become disgruntled. He would bring in a dredge and make a cut to separate his portion of the island into a separate island with its own individual levees. No longer would he depend on his ex-partner for survival of the land.

The smart farmers would look ahead when making cuts and building their levees. They would leave dirt enough for levee reinforcement in future years. Dig too deep too close to the levee, and eventually it begins to slough in near its base. Thus, future mud supplies had bearings on how wide a cut might be made and if dirt "islands" were left in the middle of the cut. By 1930 some 700,000 acres of Delta land had



A cruiser splashes by a dredge on Little Connection Slough.



Ski boats and rental houseboats, all part of the Delta fare.



A crop-duster swoops down on Windmill Cove.

Bottom: a waterside home at Discovery Bay. Middle, left to right: Sea Scout boats visit the Delta. Dressing for Halloween on the Delta. The mailbox on Maartin's Happy Isle. Right: Louis Hill with a 45-pound striper.



The Mandeville, last of the many "potato boats" that once worked the Delta.



been reclaimed forming 55 major manmade islands, and the Delta reclamation was pretty much considered complete.

And about the same time, the long, colorful, exciting era of the paddlewheeler was winding down. It had sprung up so quickly, spurred by the Gold Rush. In all, at least 200 of them splashed their way through the Delta at one time or another. They made development of the Delta possible. They raced and they fought and they stopped off at every little brush landing along their routes to pick up passengers and freight. They burst overworked boilers and sank, hit snags and sank, ran into one another and sank, but in spite of it all, provided a quite reliable means of transportation.

Take a look at the NOAA charts and you will see them peppered with riverboat landings, which they mark still in spite of their demise. You cannot travel far into the back sloughs of the Delta without happening upon rows of rotting stumps from old landings.

By the early thirties, it was about over. The railroads, modern highways with bridges, refrigerated trucks—they all took their toll. But wherever you are in the Delta, you can see that the spirit of the riverboat lives on.

I am never quite able to describe what it is that I love about the Delta. It does not have great beauty, in the sense that mountainous places with forests of tall trees have. There are no surf and miles of sandy

beaches. But to me it has a sense of honesty, a reason for being. And there is beauty in tule forests and the leaning trees and the blackberry thickets and the muddied sloughs. There is beauty in the easy bend of a river and in a crumbling old shack ready to fall into the water. There is beauty in the early morning light shining off a boat at tranquil anchorage.

Yet this is no-nonsense, hard-work, big-bucks farming territory. Behind those levees corn fields can spread for nearly as far as the eye can see. You are picnicking off a beach on one side of a levee, and on the other side the tomato crop is being harvested.

The gunkholing possibilities are myriad. You really can get off to yourself, in your own private, just-discovered anchorage. And you can do it in a different place every night, if you so desire. Basically you can anchor just about any place in the Delta you wish and you will not be troubled because of it. The standard procedure in most spots is to drop a stern anchor and tie a bow line to a tree limb or a clutch of tule stems, of course allowing for the tide.

The towns of the Delta are few and most of them are not very large. They lend character to the territory and are all worth visiting. There are no must-see sights. Each person in his own time, finds his own Delta. Even if you tried, you would never be able to see it all. It is best to enjoy what you see—and at your leisure. Happy cruising.

Salvage One

To Delta boatmen in trouble, Theo Stephens takes on the proportions of a knight in shining armor. Call him to help save a sinking boat, no matter what time of day or night, and very quickly he will be off to the rescue.

He hops in his converted LCM-6, WWII landing craft, fires up its pair of powerful 6 D-71 diesels and off he goes at a respectable 10 or 12 knots. At his side is his faithful German Shepherd called "Dog" (pronounced, Dee-Oh-Gee) and one or both of his assistants, Alan Weaver and Rick Hagerman. The rig is outfitted with a stout cherry-picker and its ramp drops down to serve as a handy platform to work off or sometimes on which to plunk sunken boats. All the men are divers.

This crew has been out on perhaps 200 Delta missions of mercy. One interesting rescue took them up the old San Joaquin to where a 150-foot by 50-foot barge had floated up to sink and block the river at the Mathews Road overcrossing. They brought along every pump they could lay their hands on, got the barge floating, then waited for the high tide to push the giant down to its home near Stockton.

Another time a large Department of Fish and Game boat had hit a piling and sank near Woodward Island. "All the fishermen of the area gathered round to watch the re-floating," said Theo. "They laughed and gave the Fish and Game boys a good ribbing."

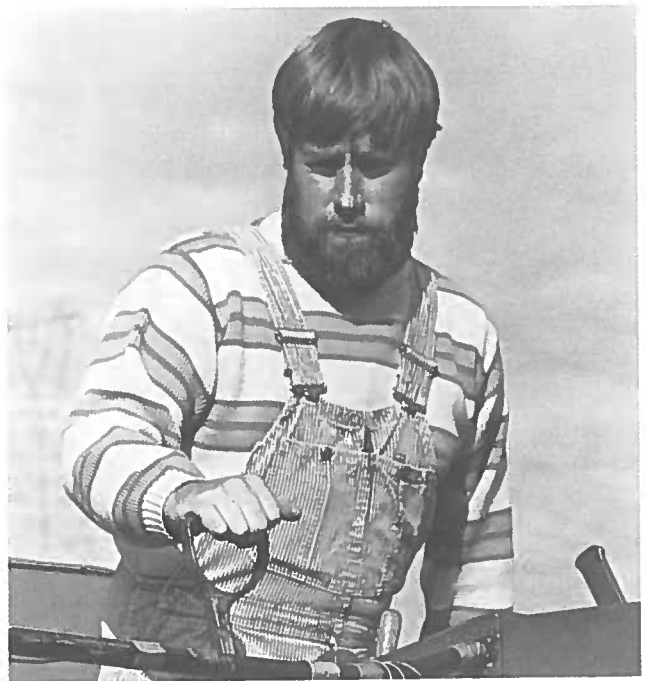
Salvage 1, incidentally, had its name long before the television series of the same name existed. It was named after Air Force 1.

The old landing craft came with Stephens Anchorage when Theo took it over in 1974. It was under five feet of water, the heads were off the engines, and it was in terrible shape. Theo had the engines

overhauled and fixed up the craft to use for jobs around the marina. As its existence became known, Theo was called upon to perform rescues. "Pretty soon, each job became a challenge and I enjoyed the work," he says.

But it can be a grind, too, working in the water all night, then trying to run a business the next day. (All big emergencies, it seems, take place in the middle of the night.) There can be blood and cadavers and other unpleasanties associated with accidents.

Sometimes, the toughest part of the job can be collecting the bill after the job is done!



Theo Stephens at the controls of his Salvage 1.

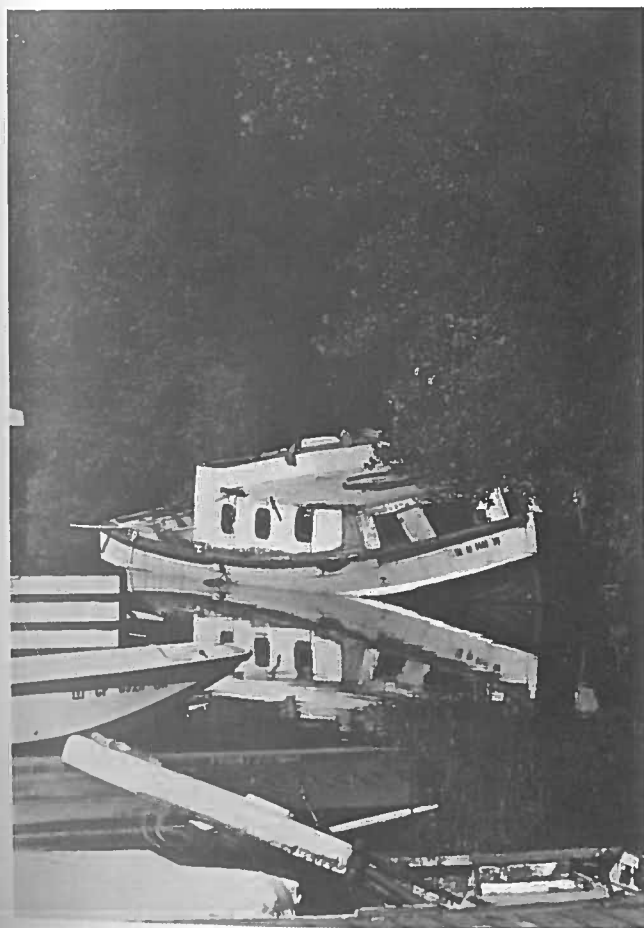




The Freeport drawbridge opens to let a new motorsailor slip quietly through.

THE MIGHTY SACRAMENTO

COURTLAND TO SACRAMENTO AND THE RIVER TOWNS ALONG THE WAY



A decaying old boat.

"What's Hal Schell doing beginning his exploration of the Delta way up on the Sacramento River?" you might well have reason to ask. For in the minds of many boatmen, that vague, ill-defined, ambiguous region we refer to as "The Delta" ends on the up-river run at Courtland. But there are no "leaving the Delta" signs erected here, so I take the liberty of establishing my own imaginary borders. True, up Sacramento way, boatmen are prone to speak of "down in the Delta." But in the Delta or not, this is an important and enjoyable stretch of water that begs to be explored.

And in a way, the things that happened up Sacramento way back in 1848-49 are what lured much of the boating traffic to the Delta area in the first place. But even before the discovery of precious gold, explorers and men of the cloth came into the area. In 1808, the explorer Gabriel Moraga walked the valley from the Calaveras to the Feather River. He made his way across the American River, calling it *Las Llagas*. He named the lower portion of the Sacramento *Jesus Maria*, and when he reached the Feather he figured it to be the upper *Jesus Maria River*. In his confusion, he named the fork to its left the *Sacramento River*, after the Holy Sacrament. Men who came later corrected his error and *Sacramento* was the name that survived.

Ships came later. In 1823 it appears that a ship of the Russian Imperial Navy under command of German Otto Von Kotzebue sailed up the Sacramento, maybe as far as the American. In 1837, W.D. Phelps brought the American cutter *Alert* up to the American. And in the same year the British *HMS Sulphur* sailed from San Francisco 100 miles up the Sacramento. Then came Capt. John Augustus Sutter in August of 1839. In his own words, "It took me eight days before I could find the entrance to the Sacramento, as it is very deceiving and very easy to pass by . . ." He sailed

as far as the Feather, then returned to the American to establish New Helvetia just up river from its mouth. Then in January of 1848 his man James Marshall found gold up Coloma way!

All hell broke loose after that. Anything that would float was pressed into duty to bring Argonauts to within reach of the mines. The quiet embarcadero that Sutter had established on the banks of the Sacramento quickly blossomed into Sacramento City. In April of 1849 the new city's population was a mere 150 and by October it had swelled to around 2,000. In 1851, records show 404 vessels plus 16 barges stopped at Sacramento. And of that number, 173 were steamers. What exciting times they must have been!

And these are the times that the boatmen of today, with a little imagination, can easily visualize while cruising these same waters. Most of the river towns that for one reason or another sprang up after or during the Gold Rush are still there. Still rural-like and pretty much unchanged over the decades. And they are all worth a look.

The river has numbered, lighted markers all the way to Sacramento, so it is not difficult to know exactly where you are. Unlike the broad lower section of the river, this portion measures perhaps 200 to 300 yards wide. And you can see and have a feeling for what is taking place on the river bank. However, after Sutter Slough just below Courtland, there is no navigable water flowing into or leaving the Sacramento until you reach the lock entrance to the Sacramento Ship Channel or the mouth of the American. You are committed to a singular route. Drawbridges on the Sacramento are numerous, but they have good clearance and are well manned.

The hamlet of Courtland is one of my favorite river towns. It is in the heart of pear country and its residents consider it the pear capital of the universe. Actually, the Delta is the oldest of California's pear-growing areas. And some of its trees are well past the century mark. Most boatmen don't see the pear orchards from the water, for the treetops are trimmed "crew-cut" style at a height just below the levees. All Delta-grown pears are Bartletts.

Each year Courtland has a festive Pear Fair the last Sunday in July, with a parade, a carnival, games, art shows and a good many other activities that somehow manage to incorporate pears. The big competition is among the farmers to see who has grown the largest pear. Winners have gone to over two pounds. I've found it easy to boat in to the fair and fritter away most of a day.

Courtland Docks is an excellent stop here, with an overnight guest dock, a good restaurant and rental houseboats. Across the levee you'll find a good market (*se habla Español*), a drug store, a post office,

and even a library. It's a joy to stroll the old town. There is an impressive colonnaded building that prior to the crash of 1929 was the Bank of Courtland but now serves as government offices. Historically, Courtland has had a large Chinese population.

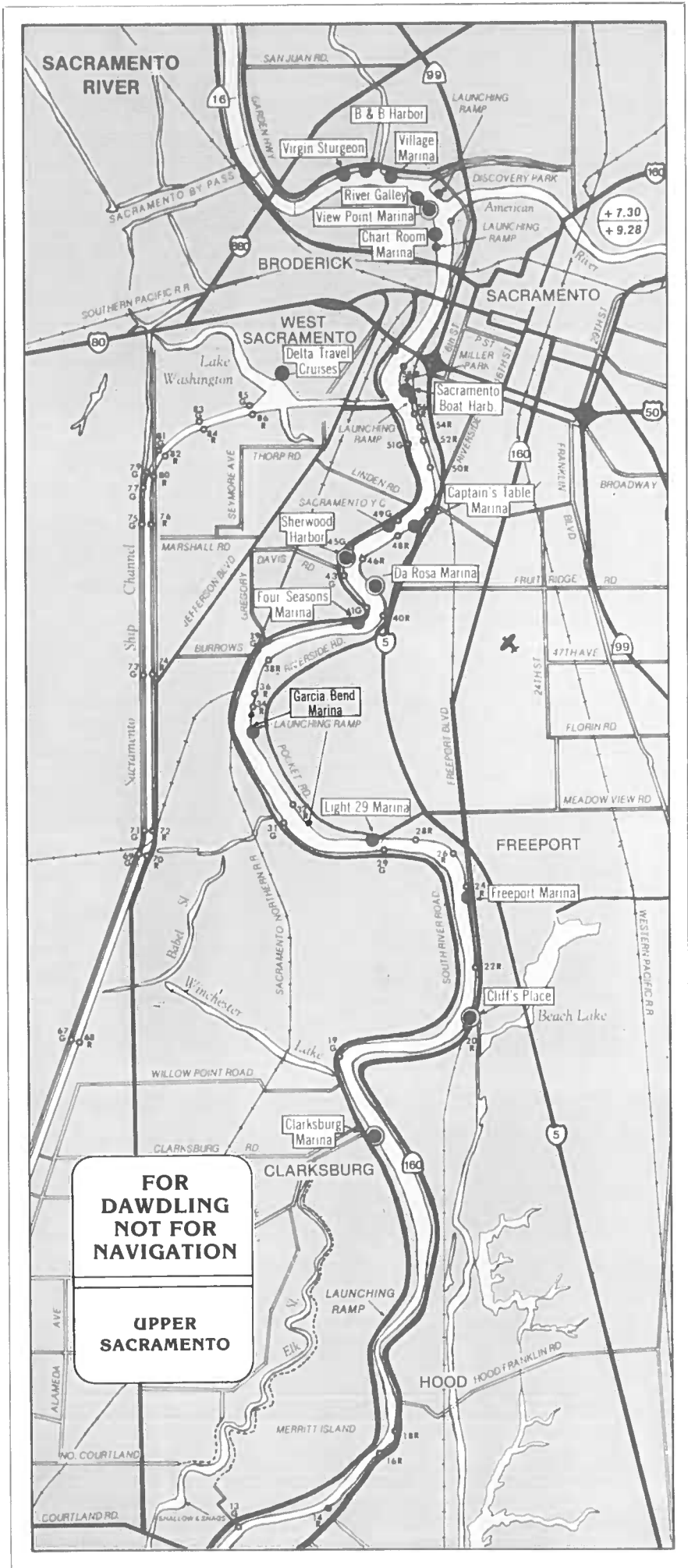
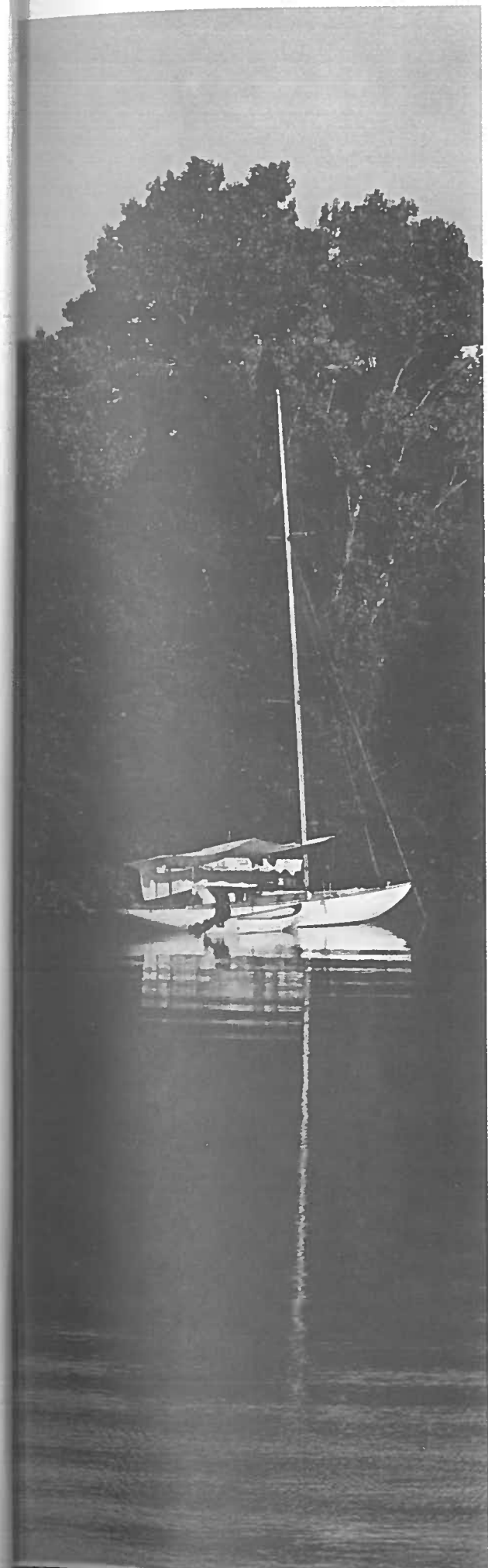
The Chinese lived mostly in buildings erected on stilts on the river bank on the north edge of town. At best, survival for the Chinatowns was perilous, and they were often visited by fire and flood. So well was Courtland known to Chinese in the Delta in earlier times that they referred to the Sacramento River as the Courtland River. The Chinese worked on the levees, on the farms and in several fish canneries in Courtland. Only a handful of Chinese are left in town, but you can still see Chinese lettering on buildings in the north sector of town.

Courtland was founded in 1870 by James Sims, a native of England who had come to California from Canada to find his fortune in the gold mines. Although he apparently found little success in this endeavor, he prospered as a farmer in the Courtland area and was among the first in the Delta to plant grapes. The town was named after his son.

Cruising this section of the river, you will pass a surprising number of marinas. Although few are very imposing, each has its own personality and adds to the overall charm of the Delta. When I have time, I like to stop into all of them, maybe taking half on the up-river run and the rest on the way back. They have their river rats and their liveaboards and their characters. Ownership changes often on the smaller marinas, for this is not an easy existence. Because of strong river currents, you see few boats stern-tied to conserve dock space. Thus the docks at some marinas seem to string out interminably, although they don't harbor great numbers of boats.



Quaffing at Courtland Docks.





You sometimes need to get ashore to get a true feel for the Delta. Left, a fine brick church on the Sacramento's west bank. Below, a Courtland building, at one time a proud bank.



Many of the old homes along the Sacramento are strikingly imposing. Suggesting perhaps that cultivating an orchard on even a modest spread of land can be a profitable enterprise. Most are two-story structures, and from the water you can see them rising proudly above the levee banks.

After Courtland comes the river town of Hood, a sleepy farming community that was established in 1909 and named after William Hood, a construction engineer with the old Sacramento Southern Railroad. Hood was built as a base for the railroad, which planned to reroute the main line that then ran from Suisun to make it run instead along the banks of the Sacramento River, to then connect in with the main line out of Antioch. But the scheme never saw fruition

and the line eventually was completed only as far as Isleton.

Even the last portion of this line is now abandoned, leaving the railroad drawbridge permanently open over Snodgrass Slough near The Meadows, and this is to be removed. Unfortunately, Hood has no public boat landings. But with the completion of nearby Interstate 5, Hood will surely experience new growth. And perhaps someone will see fit to install a marina. The controversial proposed peripheral canal would have tapped off the Sacramento's water via a canal out of Hood. And these days the California Department of Fish and Game maintains an experimental fish screen at the lower end of town.

Clarksburg & Freeport

Next off on the west bank you arrive at Clarksburg, en route passing a fine fishing access with launching ramp, a tall stand of trees and space for parking RVs. Clarksburg Marina has a guest dock and sling launching, but little more. Across the levee from the dock and down the street is a good old-fashioned general store straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting. I always have the urge to go into the general store, sit down and prop my feet up on a cracker barrel. In the town proper is another store and a saloon or two. Just north of town is a refinery to process sugar beets grown in the area. On most Delta maps and charts, Elkhorn Slough appears to connect with the Sacramento here, but there is no boat access. In any case, Elkhorn Slough is shallow and snag-ridden and not much used by boatmen these days. The Tye-a-Lee marina that used to be on the slough no longer exists.

Funky mailbox over the levee bank.

Water skiing practically within sight of the Capitol's dome.



Climbing up to Seamill's crow's nest.

Freeport Marina, an excellent full-service marina.



A runabout slips under Sacramento's Tower Bridge. Old Sacramento lies off to the starboard.



Clarksburg was settled in 1849 by Judge Robert Clark and in its early days had a heavy Portuguese population. In fact, there was a section known as the Lisbon district and Clarksburg was considered to be the upper limits of the Merritt District and the beginning of the Lisbon District. It is known that one Josiah Green built a levee on Merritt Island some time before the flood of 1852 and this was certainly one of the very early Delta levees. The island once boasted forests of oak trees, but these fell to the axe to fuel the river boats.

Later on, much of the land around Clarksburg was purchased by the Netherlands Farming Company and many settlers arrived from the Netherlands, introducing that country's levee-building techniques. Clarksburg today is the epitome of a comfortable farming community and a pleasant place to visit.

Continuing up river, off on the east bank is Cliff's Marina, with a guest dock, fuel, snack bar and other supplies. Next, just past a great bascule bridge (this bridge made its first formal opening in June of 1929 to let the *Delta King* slip through) is Freeport Marina, one of the most modern and complete facilities on this cruise. It has covered berthing (placed diagonally to allow boatmen easier entry against the current), guest docking, fuel, bait and tackle, and plenty of other supplies. Across the street is a cafe and about 2,000 yards up the road is historic A.J. Bump's Freeport Saloon, an exciting establishment that we cover in the dining chapter.

Freeport was established for a singular purpose in 1862. Much to the chagrin of the railroad people, the city fathers of Sacramento had levied a stiff tax on

every passenger and pound of freight that left the river at Sacramento to connect with the trains of the Sacramento Valley Railroad. This amounted to a tidy sum, and the railroad fellows, who were no babes-in-the-woods, decided to do something about it. They would establish a new port, down-river from Sacramento. It would be a "free port" and from this came the town's name. For sailing ships, the new town offered other plus benefits, for it cut out a bothersome bend in the river where they sometimes had to wait for several days to catch the proper wind.

The nine miles of track to Freeport were laid in 1865, and the town began to prosper. In 1870 though, Central Pacific acquired the railroad and the line thereafter was not used for its original purpose, although the town has continued as an agricultural center.

I love to peruse the NOAA Chart 18662 that covers this area. There seems to me to be so much romance in the old names. *Goaters Landing*, *Eagle Point Landing*, *Clay Bank Bend* and *Chickory Bend* all have a certain ring to them. However, one name, *Haycock Shoals*, just above Freeport Bend, is a name that hardly spelled romance for early riverboat pilots. Examination of early records shows that time after time, riverboats were aground on Haycock. For example, the August 14, 1872 *Sacramento Union* reported that the steamer *Yosemite* left Sacramento and went aground on Haycock Shoals. The *Flora* was sent to the rescue, according to the paper, and got the riverboat off after she was aground 25 hours. The *Amador* had also gone aground near the *Yosemite*, so while there *Flora* also hauled it off the bar.

Such were the times, with river conditions deteriorating because of silting caused by hydraulic mining. This method of mining was not outlawed until 1884, but by then it was almost too late for the river. However, later dredging made Sacramento a fit port for large vessels. Commercial traffic Sacramento-bound these days almost never uses the Sacramento above Cache Slough. The deepwater Sacramento Ship Channel now provides a fast, safe (albeit, dull) run to the city's port. Thus, the river is now the province of us pleasure boaters.

In the summer of 1979 I made the run to Sacramento aboard the 125-foot ex-Coast Guard cutter *Alert*. Hardly a shallow draft vessel, it was manned by Sea Scouts under the able command of Dick Stenger, the group's adult leader. The youngsters, both boys and girls, took turns on watch and at the helm. They took pains to read the river and didn't once scrape bottom—even at ominous old Haycock Shoals. When *Alert* dropped the hook just short of the American River bridge and made a bow line fast to a stout tree, I couldn't help but think of the American cutter, also named *Alert*, that arrived at this very same spot 142 years earlier. That's the way it is, traveling the waters of history.

The Sacramento Area

Cruising up the river from Freeport, you are hardly aware of the residential tangle that spreads out from Sacramento on the east bank, growing ever closer to Freeport. The scene is one of tranquility and the tract homes and the supermarkets and the other trappings of civilization are all well back from the river and hidden from view by the high levee. But the west bank, even behind the levee, retains its rural flavor. I've always maintained that to really know the Delta, you have to travel it both by boat and by car. There are many interesting discoveries to be made behind the ubiquitous levees.

Public launching facilities are many and excellent in the Sacramento area. But the boatman with a big cruiser has to carefully choose his destinations. There surely is no surfeit of guest docking for large craft. Immediately up river from Freeport Marina, you pass the floating digs of the River View Yacht Club, and then a potpourri of small marinas.

First up is a comfortable Light 29 Marina, with guest docking, a beer bar and supplies. Next is the excellent free launching facility at Garcia Bend, then Garcia Bend Marina with some guest docking, snacks and a little beer bar where fishermen gather to swap lies. Up river on the opposite bank is Four Seasons Marina, one of the best operations in the area. A substantial amount of guest docking is kept available here and there are new restrooms, showers and a laundromat. The fuel dock includes diesel and there is an active



Tom Raley's place in Broderick. Old Sacramento is across the river. Raley's Landing now has a deluxe guest dock.

beer bar and cafe with some supplies. Petunias bloom in planter boxes out front and the atmosphere is cheerful.

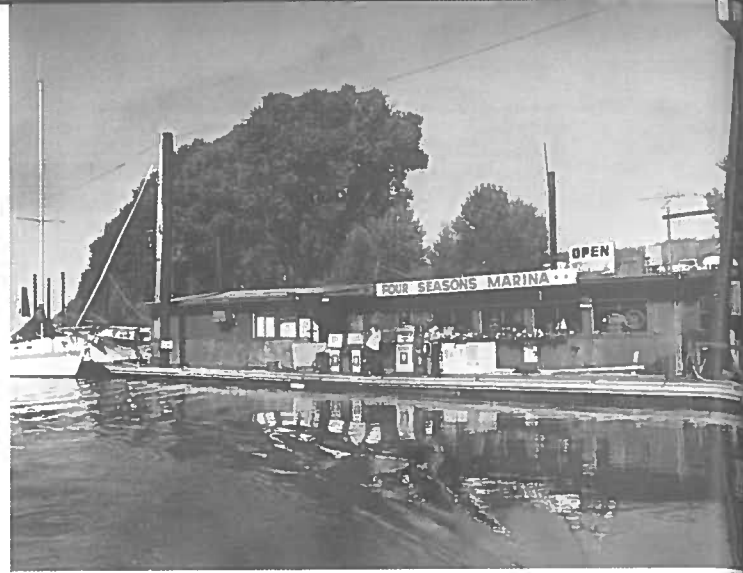
Then on the opposite bank is Pilot House Marina, small but a fine stop when you're thirsty. Back to the west bank is Sherwood Harbor, a jumping funky sort of place that manages to cram a surprising number of fun-lovers into its floating building. Just above this is the splendid new clubhouse of the active Sacramento Yacht Club, perhaps the oldest yacht club in the Delta area. Across from the club is Captain's Table Marina, which until it burned some years ago had an active floating restaurant built on an old riverboat hull. The proprietors have received the blessing of city planners to build a deluxe \$2 million marina here with a restaurant, berthing, plenty of guest docking and much more. Boatmen anxiously await its development. The marina is owned by Harry Schillings, Jr., of the Delta's Spindrift Marina Schillings, and everything is expected to be executed in style.

Some of the very early river towns have disappeared. It was near here that Sutter laid out Sutterville which, though now long gone, is shown still on the NOAA chart. Sutter thought this to be a more

desirable site for a city than at his embarcadero where the city of Sacramento eventually blossomed forth. At first there was competition between these two new cities. But Sacramento won out once and for all when it offered 500 free lots to merchants who would settle there. Sutterville was active during the Gold Rush and for a short time thereafter. Sacramento, actually on a less favorable spot, suffered through some early devastating floods. But up went the levees. Then they hauled in dirt to build up the streets. Then the buildings were literally jacked up to the street levels. The Sacramentans proved they were built of the stuff of survivors.

On the lower edge of Sacramento you'll find the Sacramento Boat Harbor, a fine city-run marina in a protected cove at Miller Park. It has fuel, limited guest docking for boats to 36-feet and free launching. Nearby and opposite the lock entrance, you can tie to shore to walk a few yards to a surprisingly well-stocked snack bar in the park. This too, is a fine place for an afternoon picnic.

Next you'll pass under the Tower Bridge, certainly one of the handsomest drawbridges in the Delta area. The bridge marks the beginning of Old Sacramento off on the right bank, with its splendid old renovated buildings dating back to the city's beginnings. Here are the restaurants to please any palate (including one called the Delta Queen). There are museums, gift shops, cobbled streets, courtyards and boardwalks. This place is a joy to prowl, no matter how many times you visit it. But alas, for all practical purposes, there is no boating access. The old embarcadero that once knew the rub of sailing ship and paddlewheeler is an unused, unassailable high concrete wall.



Top, a pleasant stop with petunias growing out front. Middle, an active watering hole, sometimes with music. Bottom, looking across the river to Captain's Table from the splendid Sacramento Yacht Club.



Yet as we go to press a mammoth barge is being moved to the Embarcadero and fitted with slip rings and a boarding ramp. Pilings are being pounded and the barge will serve as a temporary floating dock, primarily for cruise boats, but for private boats at other times. Its freeboard is seven feet!

The city's master plan calls for a \$7.3 million redevelopment of the waterfront between the Tower and I Street bridges. It would include a wharf that would accommodate excursion boats and a number of "floating vessels" similar to those that long ago called there. The story of these "floating vessels" is interesting.

In early Sacramento City, buildings were in short supply. The first city post office was established aboard the bark *Whiton*, snugged up to the embarcadero. And for over a dozen years, the ship *La Grange* served as the city jail. This ended when it sank during the flood of 1862. Almost from the city's beginnings, boats moored semi-permanently and served as storehouses, merchandising stores, et cetera. The fleet of hulks grew there and many served as convenient boarding platforms for steamers and other vessels.

One such hulk was the *Crescent*, 190-feet by 30-feet and built in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1829. It sailed around the Horn and arrived in Sacramento in 1850. It was sold on the spot, cargo and all. After that it served as a boarding and storage hulk till it was removed to be broken up in late 1872. Sacramento proposes to build a replica of the *Crescent* to be moored at the waterfront redevelopment wharf.

A second plan, which has the concurrence of all planning bodies, but not official approvals, calls for guest docking facilities along the waterfront on the River Lines property just below the Tower Bridge, which encompasses five or six city blocks. But don't hold your breath; this will be a long time happening. Across the river in Broderick, Tom Raley has renovated the old Marina Inn motel and designated the site as Raley's Landing. A plaque registers it as the site of the first Pacific Coast salmon cannery. You can dine here under great circus-style tents out on the green lawn of the motel and watch the traffic out on the busy river. Raley has transformed this into a top facility, one of the few places in the Delta where you can boat in and have a comfortable room for over-nighting. It now has a splendid 340-foot guest dock (fee) and it is recommended you call ahead (channel 16 monitored) to reserve space. You can overnight at the Inn, dine at the Wheelhouse restaurant or have parties in the great circus-style Inn Tent. For guests, there is a regular shuttle to Old Sacramento.

In the paddlewheelers' heyday, many of the proud old vessels were at docks or on ways for repairs or new construction at Broderick. It was important to neighboring Sacramento. August 28, 1932 is



You can visit this old one-room schoolhouse in Old Sacramento.

remembered as the terrible night when fire struck a fleet of steamboats anchored here. The Sacramento fire department answered the alarm, but halted at the river. For not only is Broderick outside the Sacramento City limits, but it is also outside Sacramento County.

Valiant tugboat captains managed to pull a few vessels clear of the inferno. But by the time the ashes had settled, at least eight fine old steamboats had perished, plus numerous other craft. One of the first to go was the paddlewheeler *Flora*, which you may have seen as *Dixie* in the movie, *Huckleberry Finn*. Another was *San Joaquin No. 4*, once considered the most powerful inland vessel in America. This was indeed a sad night for those who loved the old paddlewheelers.

Today the scenario is different at Broderick, although there is still an interesting variety of watercraft snugged to its banks. You'll find a fine public launching facility, then the Chart Room Marina, an active floating facility sometimes left high and dry by the outgoing tide. You can get food and libations here and plenty of lively conversation. Next is quiet Viewpoint Marina with berthing and a neighboring boatyard. Then comes floating River Galley, a boat-in restaurant we cover in the dining chapter. Across the river is Discovery Park, with its newly deepened launching area.

The American River swings off to the starboard here and there are some good anchorages to its left bank up against the park. The American shallows up fast and there is now a 5 mph zone from the bridge all the way to the Nimbus dam. This has always been a popular area for rafting, swimming and just messing around in the water.

If you continue up the Sacramento, you'll find Village Marina with dining, cocktails, a boatyard and modest guest docking. Next is the all-new River View Marina with modern covered berthing, supplies, a snack bar, docking and more. This is an oasis of sorts in berth-starved Sacramento, hopefully a forerunner of things to come.



Behind Islands Marina, a freighter slips up the ship channel.

Sacramento Ship Channel

Skippers Sacramento-bound from anywhere in the Rio Vista area might want to consider using the deep-water Sacramento Ship Channel via Cache Slough, which clips 16 miles off the river route. The Channel, which was dug in 1963 to give freighters easy passage to the Port of Sacramento, has almost no perceptible current. Thus it can be both a time and a fuel saver on a Sacramento cruise. But this run has to be the dulllest cruise I've ever had the displeasure to take. Scenery is zilch. There are no marinas, fuel stops or anything else on the route. I prayed (unsuccessfully) to even pass a freighter. Dull or not, heading to Sacramento via the Channel and returning via the river (with maybe a 6-knot current to help) can make for a thriftier cruise.

The Sacramento Lock (officially the William G. Stone Lock) connects the river with the Channel. It is 600-feet long and 86-feet wide and is touted as the only navigational lock in the state. (Actually, I believe there is also a private lock somewhere in California.) Its use is free and Delta boatmen might want to try it once just for the experience.

Water levels between the Sacramento and the Channel can vary as much as 21-feet and on rare occasions, such as during a drought year, the river can be as much as 3½-feet below the Channel. About four to six times a year the levels are equal. When the difference is little, locking through is child's play. But when the difference is great, as during spring runoffs, with a water wall close to 20-feet waiting to rush in from the Sacramento when the gates are opened, it can be both an exciting, and maybe perilous experience. Then you'd best have the boat well fendered

and have the crew at ready with boat hooks.

Unfortunately, The Army Corps of Engineers, operators of the lock, proposed to shut it down in 1982. Efforts were made by the city of Sacramento, B.O.A.T. and others to find an alternate operator. None was found. The city then graciously stepped in, funded a curtailed operation using Sacramento Boat Harbor staff. Operational hours for 1983 are January through April and Nov. through Dec. — Thursday through Monday 9 a.m. and 3 p.m.; May through Sept. — Friday through Sunday 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. and Monday and Thursday 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. (closed Tues. & Wed.). There is a drawbridge on the Channel side with clearance in the 13 to 20-foot range. It is operated by lock personnel and VHF channels 16 and 9 are monitored.

You signal the lock with two long and two short blasts of the boat horn about a half-mile before entrance. There are marked "talk stations" on each end where you can talk to the lock tender over a PA system. If there is much noise around, he may not hear your horn signal and you will need to use the talk station. There are red, yellow and green visual signals for the lock entry. Sound signals from the tender include one long to enter the lock, one short to leave the lock and four shorts for stand clear or emergency stop. You tie your boat to floating mooring bits on the lock wall.

Passage reads more complicated than it really is. Operational status of the lock after 1983 is not clear. Hours may be expanded, fees may be charged. You can get current information from (916) 449-5712. The lockmaster's phone (during operating hours) is (916) 371-7540. When you clear the lock up river, Miller Park lies dead ahead.

The Ferry Fleet

In earlier times, before the bridge-building spree in the Delta took place, ferries existed in great numbers. And if you planned to travel very far by land, it was certain that you would travel on a number of ferries in the process. It was the accepted way to get across the rivers and sloughs.

Most were simple cable-drawn ferries powered by small engines. The greased cable guided them across the streams. A few were free-running, not dependent on a cable, and able to navigate much as any other powered vessel. Some cable-drawn ferries, in a unique fashion, were able to slip back and forth across the river using the current's force for power.

Some early Delta ferries were even horse-powered. At least one Delta ferry hauled strings of railroad trains across Suisun Bay from Chipps Island to the mainland, and vice versa.

But one by one, the ferries were replaced by bridges or just abandoned because there were alternate routes to get to the same place. Today only seven remain that are available to the public for a free ride. Three of these are cable-drawn ferries in San Joaquin County that go to Venice, McDonald and Woodward Islands. Although you can ride these, they take you only to private property and there is nowhere for you to go once there.

Victory II is a fine-looking, free-running ferry that runs between Bradford and Jersey Islands and Webb Tract, over Bethel Island way. The frequency of trips is strung out, so you need time on your hands to ride this one.

The Liberty Island ferry is cable-drawn and takes you across Cache Slough near Prospect. The J-Mack cable-drawn ferry will shuttle you across Steamboat Slough in a hurry. And the Real McCoy will do a workmanlike job of getting you over Cache Slough with its powerful twin diesels.

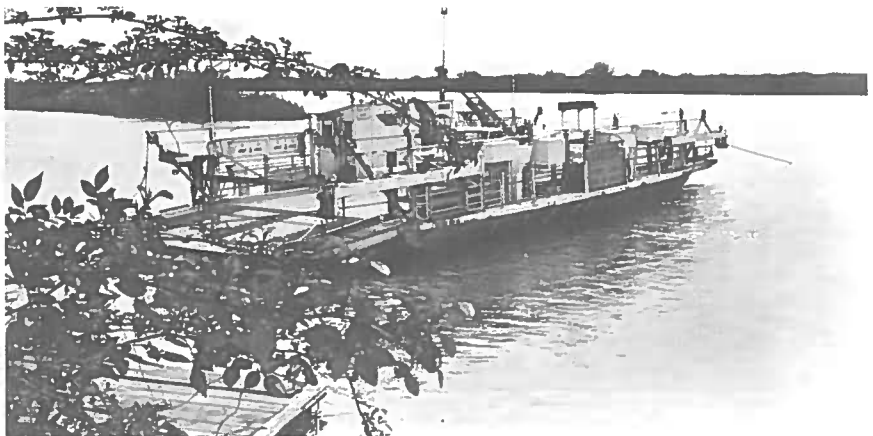
I enjoy the ferries and have ridden on all mentioned except the Liberty Island ferry. And they will all surely one day disappear. There is even now a proposal to replace the one that shuttles to McDonald Island, with a bridge. So if you are of the bent, it might not be a bad idea to get your ferry trips in now while you can.

There are a few private ferries in the Delta. There is a conventional cable-drawn ferry across Empire Cut, and Sport, a huge cable-drawn ferry to Mandeville Island. Sport came to the rescue during the big gas-storage fire on McDonald Island a few years ago, by shuttling heavy fire-fighting equipment to the island. There is even a private ferry to haul garbage off Tinsley Island.

Exciting things happen on ferries. I can recall a loaded concrete truck slipping off one and disappearing in the murky waters of Turner Cut. When the current was strong on Cache Slough one time, the Real McCoy's operator found himself headed for San Francisco and just barely managed to get his ferry into shore in time. Occasionally the ferries are used for shoot-'em-up scenes in movies and television shows.

Most ferry tenders seem a satisfied lot. They travel a lot, but they don't go very far.

The Woodward Island cable ferry.



THE LOWER SACRAMENTO

PITTSBURG TO COURTLAND INCLUDING RIO VISTA AND ISLETON

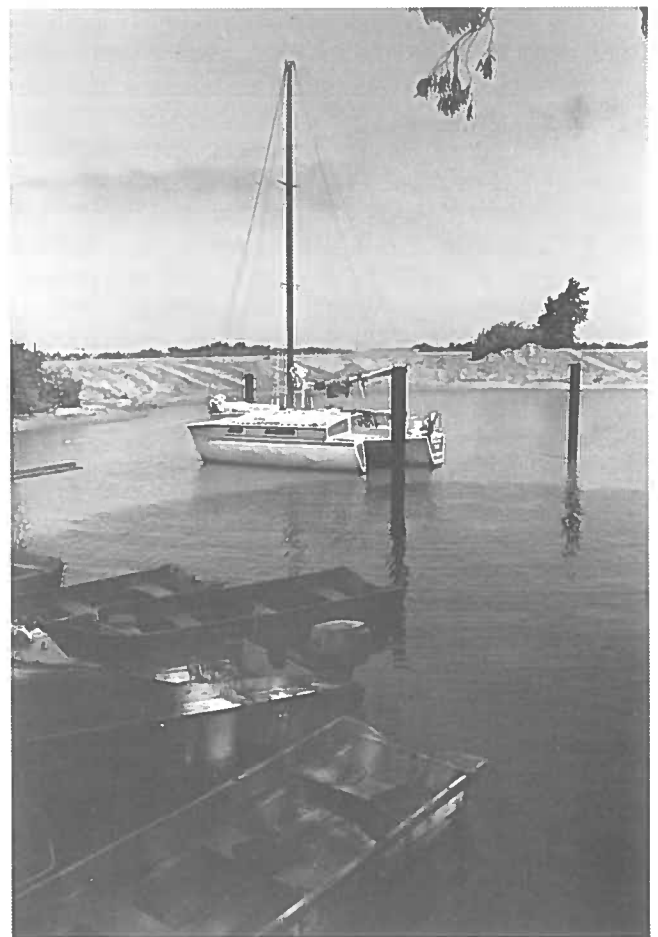
The mighty Sacramento River's appearance changes greatly in its run from Sacramento to where it is met by the San Joaquin River near the town of Pittsburg. From Courtland to where it is joined by a bevy of sloughs just above Rio Vista, the river has the proportions of a large slough. But here the stately river broadens to perhaps 1,000 yards wide. And its appearance is quite formidable.

In this part of the river, the great width can lure unwary skippers onto shoals which seem to be everywhere. The wise skipper will keep to the marked channels. On my boat when I am in these waters, I always assign someone to keep an eye out for walking seagulls. For they may be ambling around on what appears to be comfortably deep water. This is not meant to suggest that you shun these fine waters. For they are used by tens of thousands of pleasure boats annually. And there are some good times to be had here.

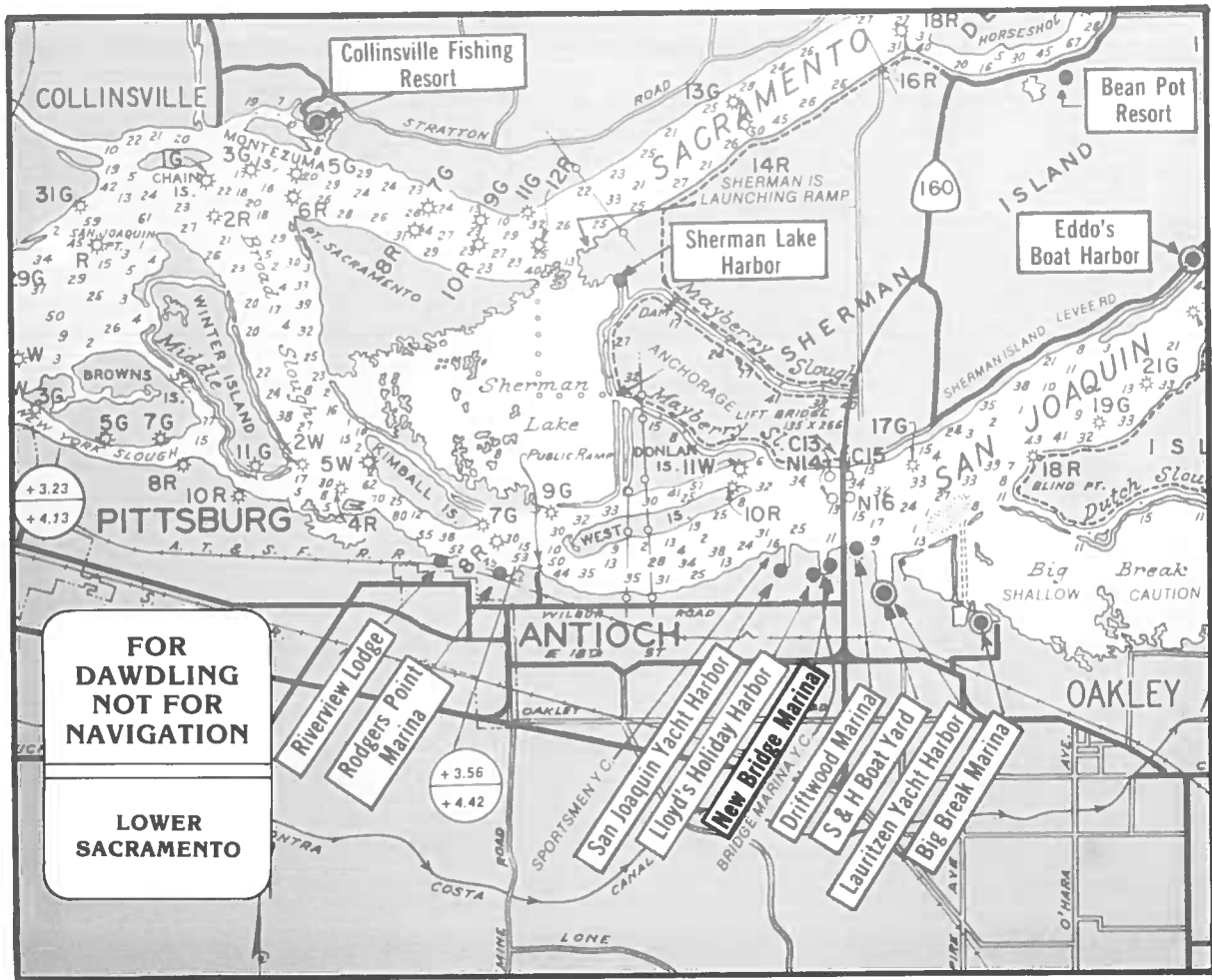
The typical Deltaphile does not just set out for a long cruise on the Sacramento. Usually the river is included as a portion of a cruise that takes you on to other Delta sloughs and rivers. Although of course, Bay Area skippers use the Sacramento as their entry into the Delta.

The city of Pittsburg sprawls out from the waterfront into the nearby hills. And its old downtown area seems somewhat neglected. But there are signs of improvement and this can be a worthwhile overnight stop. The town was founded in 1849 by brothers John H. and W.W. Smith and was given the ostentatious name, New York of the Pacific. A few years later when coal was discovered in the nearby hills, the name was changed to Black Diamond. Then again in 1911 it was changed to Pittsburg in honor of the steel mill that had located there.

Pittsburg has a strong Italian heritage because of



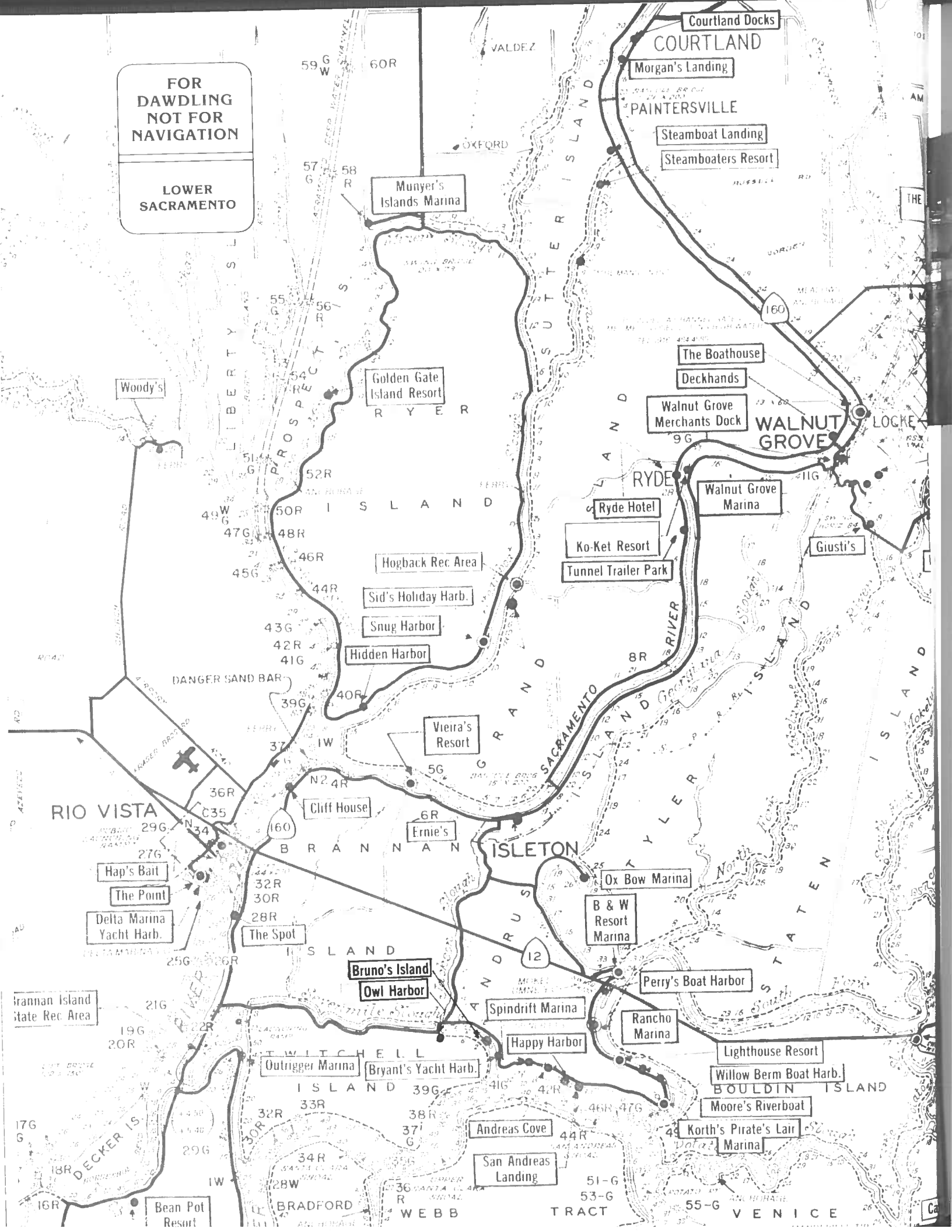
Anchored at Cliff House.



The remnants of Collinsville, clinging to the river bank.

**FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION**

**LOWER
SACRAMENTO**





Left, unique berthing at the new Pittsburg Marina. Below, gas docks at Pittsburg Marina, with breakwater in the background.

the large Italian fishing community that flourished along its banks. Pietro and Russell Aiello were probably the first Italians to arrive there. They came in 1870 to fish for salmon. Within two years the town was known for its fish-canning industry. The commercial fishing industry in the Delta had peaked by 1911, when there were nearly 1,000 fishermen working out of Black Diamond, catching striped bass, catfish, shad, sturgeon and salmon. This came to an end in the fifties when commercial fishing in the Delta was banned.

Each year, the Pittsburg fishermen would follow the salmon run to Alaska, being gone sometimes three months or longer. Even today, you will find many in Pittsburg who still work the Alaska salmon fishing boats every year.

There is a pair of harbors in West Pittsburg you will want to know about. Although both are rustic and isolated, with channels that can be shallow at times, they can be interesting places to visit. The first is Harris Yacht Harbor, off Port Chicago Reach, with its entrance marked by a tower. The second is McAvoy Yacht Harbor, located east of Buoy 22. Both have guest docking, fuel docks and snack bars.

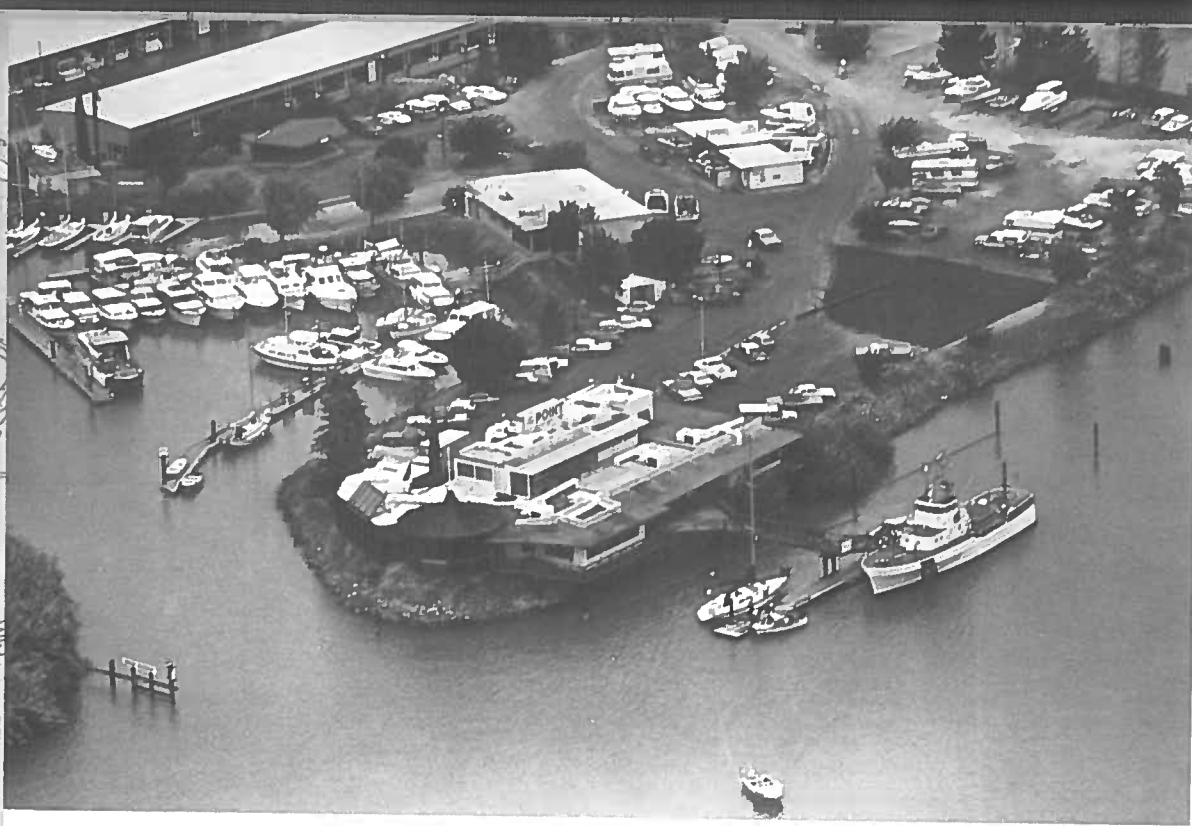
If you haven't visited Pittsburg Marina in recent years, you will be pleasantly surprised. For, thanks to a CAL Boating loan, it has blossomed into a full-service, 500-berth marina. It has plenty of guest docking, a gas dock that includes diesel, and a pair of free launching ramps. Next to the marina you'll find Riverside Park that invites a leisurely picnic. Many other services and supplies are handy in town, but a stroll away. You will find ice, groceries, beer and marine supplies. The marina is called home by the Pittsburg Yacht Club, which maintains a clubhouse here.

Actually, the Pittsburg Marina has existed for a



good many years. And what we have now is both an old and a new marina, both in the same neighborhood. You reach the marina off New York Slough, which serves as a nifty connector between the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. A large Shell sign serves as a landmark for the older marina. And you can't miss the new one because of its notable new breakwater.

Proceeding up the broad Sacramento, you see Montezuma Slough and Collinsville Resort far off to the portside. These are included in our chapter on Suisun City. Almost opposite Collinsville, the wide San Joaquin River sweeps in past Sherman Island. Actually, the charts show a pair of Sherman Islands, separated by "submerged" Sherman Lake. The lake and the lower island, which is mostly marsh, were portions of the main island that were not reclaimed after one of the many floods the island experienced. The lake is considered prime fishing area, but there are old pilings and snags lurking for the unwary. Just in from the tip of Sherman at Mayberry Slough is rustic Sher-



The Coast Guard Auxiliary packs 'em in at Delta Marina during the annual Admirals' Day parade.

man Lake Harbor with beer, supplies and "carry-to" fuel. Nearby is a free public launching ramp.

Sherman Island was last flooded when the levee gave way in 1969. "The water was high and we had some water on our 52-acre island," said Lost Isle's Bill Connor, some 20 miles away. "I was outside and suddenly I could see the water recede. I knew a levee had gone somewhere. It was Sherman Island." There are tremendous pressures on the levees. And when they go, a large island such as Sherman can accommodate a lot of water.

Next is Decker Island, a very popular fishing area. When winds are roughing it up out on the river, boatmen sneak into Horseshoe Bend where it is usually protected behind the island. There are good anchorages and sandy beaches on this portion of Decker. I often stop in at Bean Pot Resort, a cafe with a small dock on Sherman opposite Decker.

Just past the end of Decker is Threemile Slough, with its busy lift bridge. Threemile serves as a connector between the central San Joaquin River and the Sacramento. It sees heavy traffic and I'm always amazed at how quickly the tender can get that bridge up and down. Currents are strong in the Slough. On the "thumb" of Brannan Island is the excellent Brannan Island State Recreation Area with tree-shaded campsites, a grand launching ramp and a harbor with overnight guest slips. It is an ideal boat-camping setup. There is an excellent sandy swim beach off the park at the mouth of Sevenmile Slough, which has no boating access on this end, much beyond the beach. Across the slough is Outrigger Marina, serving fine food on its spacious deck and in its tastefully decorated dining room. The bar and cocktail lounge

overlook the water. The marina has guest docking, fuel and supplies. It makes a fine overnight stop.

Rio Vista Area

Rio Vista is what the old-timers called this fine little town on the west bank of the Sacramento. The rolling Montezuma Hills serve as its backdrop. The great black lift bridge frames it picturesquely on the down-river run. The town is built right out to the riverbank, without the ubiquitous levee to conceal its many charms. A stroll around its sidewalked streets will reveal numerous fine old Victorian-style homes. Rio Vista is proud, small-town America personified. Everyone there knows just about everyone else. There are few secrets.

Founded in 1857 by Colonel N.H. Davis, the town was originally located a couple miles above the bridge near Cache Slough. But after its buildings were wiped out by flood, the town's residents decided to move to its present, more hospitable site. At one time it boasted the world's largest asparagus cannery. But a crop blight sped its demise and diminished the importance of asparagus in the Delta.

Rio Vista has a pleasant little park in the shadow of the bridge and a fishing pier is planned there. A new county park with camping, Sandy Beach Park, is open in the "dunes area" south of town. There is a free public launching ramp in town and a float where you can tie up for a couple hours while shopping. Over-nighting here is permitted by special arrangement. However, this can be a rough tie-up and plenty of fenders are recommended.

Fishing is a prime "tourist industry" in Rio Vista.

Right, Monsoon chugs up Threemile Slough. Below, the tide is out at Brannan Island. Bottom, fun at the Rio Vista Bass Derby. Bottom right, Admirals' Day at Delta Marina. Middle, a fine float in the Rio Vista Bass Derby parade. Top, Sheriff patrol writes tickets on Threemile Slough.



Hauling the sail on
Threemile Slough.



And the town's *River News-Herald* newspaper attests to this, for there are always plenty of fish pictures in it. There are three well-stocked bait shops. Rio Vista is credited with staging California's first bass fishing derby back in 1933. And it has grown to become the town's major event of the year. It takes place the first weekend in October and encompasses three days that culminate in a grand parade on Sunday. This is a top-quality parade, which I wouldn't miss for anything. In 1979, I watched it from a different vantage point, for I was emcee and almost grew hoarse from announcing the many entrants. However, I was upstaged by Nadji, the Grand Marshal—a 500-pound Bengal Tiger!

Marine supplies are available in town and there are stores for about anything else you might need. Foster's Big Horn is a popular downtown restaurant that has its walls almost completely covered with big game trophies. The trophies run from the small-but-exotic to great tusked elephant heads.

Yachtsmen on a Rio Vista cruise invariably migrate to Jack Baumann's Delta Marina on the downriver side of town. Jack has built up an impressive "spread" here and it seems that each year he is doing something to improve it. Its fine Point Restaurant is covered later. The marina is truly full-service with an excellent guest dock, a marine store, laundromat, restrooms, berthing and even a shoreside RV park with full hookups. Walton's boatyard is located there. The marina is a favorite for yacht club outings and is itself home for the Delta Marina Yacht Club. The Point is headquarters each year for the Coast Guard Auxiliary's Admiral's Day parade. The Coast Guard maintains a station a short distance below the marina.

Across the river from the Delta Marina is The Spot, a cocktail lounge with docking and an RV park overlooking the river. Just up from here, some years ago was the site of "Uncle Bobbie's." A fine fellow with a good sense of humor, Bobbie once maintained a fleet of 100 rental fishing boats here. And he was one of the first entrepreneurs to rent houseboats and cruisers on the Delta.

"One day in almost an hour I got three different calls from the Coast Guard," Uncle Bobbie remembers. "Each one was to advise me that I had a rental boat on a certain sandbar. The first two were houseboats and the third one was a rental cruiser. When I got to the sandbar, I asked the fellow in the cruiser why he had gone near that bar when he could see the two houseboats aground.

"His reply was," continued Uncle Bobbie, "'I saw those two houseboats anchored there, so I thought it must be okay!'" Uncle Bobbie figures that outboard motors have greatly improved since those days. He said the early motors would continually foul plugs and that he would establish rendezvous points with his renters so that every couple days he could go out and change plugs for them. Recently Uncle Bobbie pioneered an automatic scrubber used to clean boat bottoms. Time marches on.

Just up river from the busy lift bridge is Cliff House, a rustic place closed at this writing but with plans to re-open. To avoid shoals, head toward shore just below Light #36. Once in close, run parallel to shore where water is plenty deep. Next to the marina is a fishing access with parking. And at low tide here, I have seen children but ankle-deep in water, perhaps 200 yards from shore. Mind the marked channels.

It was near the Cliff House site that the levee broke in March of 1907, quickly inundating nearby Isleton. The town's residents were lucky though that Gardiner's store was on high ground. And they were able to row there in boats for supplies.

Soon you have a choice of three routes. And the course to the right, the Sacramento, seems the least impressive. The river narrows. There are trees in close and the cruising waters are comfortable. First up is Vieira's Resort on Ida Island, which is connected to the "mainland" (which in reality is Andrus Island—everything on the Delta is relative). Richard and Hazel have run this fine resort for years and there is camping and a mobilhome park. Guest docking, previously minimal, has been expanded and the cafe has been enlarged into a comfortable sit-down restaurant. There is fuel, including diesel, a launching ramp, beer bar and some supplies. Vieira's is a good place to stretch, to take a walk among the shade trees. Behind the resort, Bud Cowan (who lives aboard his Chinese junk *Wai Hong*) has a boatyard with haulout. There are comfortable anchorage spots between here and Isleton.

Isleton and Ryde

Slow-paced Isleton is one of the Sacramento River towns often overlooked by boatmen. Founded in 1874 by a veteran of the Mexican War, one Josiah Pool, it still shows signs of those rip-roaring days when it was an important link in the chain of riverboat stops. A portion of the town is almost appealingly run down, inviting inspection by photographers. It is a joy to

stroll the streets, peering in shop windows that are definitely not franchised look-alikes.

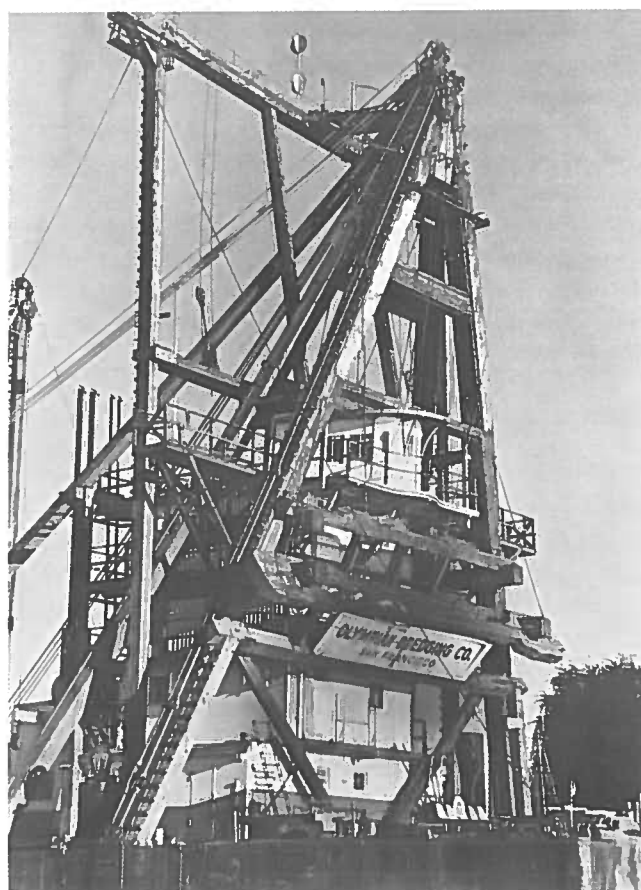
When our boating gang has a North Delta Poker Run, I always try to include a stop at Ernie's Place in Isleton. The food is good here and there are always a few locals hanging around the high-ceilinged bar. Ernie's has the only guest dock in town, adjacent to a residence and you have to walk perhaps 100 yards from the dock to this establishment. Guest docking is for customers (overnight charge), but no one is too strict on this if you at least have the courtesy to drop in and buy a drink or a sandwich. Ernie's is one of the handful of places on the Delta with off-sale liquor.

Isleton has had its Chinatowns and they have burned down and been built back several times over. The present remnants of the last Chinatown were built mostly of brick, tin and asbestos shingles and have managed to survive in whatever condition. Isleton got its first wharf in 1875 and became a regular stop for riverboats. One riverboat, the 167-foot sternwheeler *Isleton*, was named after the town. It was later rebuilt as a motor vessel, sold to the Army and renamed *Army Queen*.

The booklet, *The Heart of the Delta*, reminisces about some of the early days in Isleton. "Do you remember?" it asks—"how the cattle used to rush to



Above, a rarely seen Customs boat on the Sacramento. Right, a dredge at Isleton, perhaps to be transformed into a floating museum.



the front of the old ferry, and break the barrier, then swim ashore and scatter in all directions, to be rounded up later . . . When a death occurred in the area, the *Pride of the River* or the *Onward* was chartered to pick up any friends of the deceased at the many private docks from Courtland to Rio Vista and sometimes even the corpse. The mourners carried their floral offerings from the Rio Vista wharf to the cemetery . . ." Even the geography was different then, for Jackson Slough flowed from the San Joaquin to the Sacramento, meeting it in downtown Isleton.

In recent times, Isleton is perhaps best known for being the only town affected by the devastating Andrus Island flood of June 1972 that laid 58 billion gallons of water on the island. Although the downtown area is located on high ground, the shops ultimately had to close because of failure of the sewage and water systems. Figuring the townfolk needed cheering up when they resettled after the flood, Isleton began its annual Spring Festival. It includes an array of activities in town, plus the Krazy Raft Race. The raft race includes some strange craft — and skippers.

The hamlet of Ryde, fronting on the west bank of the Sacramento, exists for little more than the activities of the historic 50-room Ryde Hotel these days. Dave and Donna Phillips acquired the place a few years ago and through sweat of brow and a little ingenuity have built it into a fun-but-casual place to visit. There is a modest amount of guest docking out front. But as boatmen are prone to do, they somehow always manage to squeeze in one more. One early morning I counted 13 boats tied there in a space that looked about right for four. This is not the sort of hotel where you get much sleep on weekends.

Downstairs at Ryde Hotel is the old speakeasy where it is said senators and other prominent personages gambled, gamboled and boozed during Prohibition. Herbert Hoover announced his candidacy for presidency at Ryde Hotel. There are usually two styles of live music weekends at Ryde Hotel, but the fare may vary. The place will be covered further in the dining chapter.

Up river on the opposite bank, is Ko-Ket Resort (formerly Greenings Ko-Ket) with launching, a guest dock, a cafe with beer bar and supplies. It is a comfortable place with green grass for trailers and camping. Next door is Meaders, a private R.V. park. Continuing, we pass first Georgiana Slough, then the towns of Walnut Grove and Locke. Both the slough and the pair of towns demand their own chapters, so we'll skip them for now.

The levees along the Sacramento are among the highest and strongest in the Delta. And they provide excellent wind protection, giving water skiers fine smooth water all the way from below Vieira's to Sacramento. And you see a lot of this activity. Marinas and resorts are spaced out just right, so that you are neither overwhelmed by congestion, nor are very far from supplies.

From Locke to Courtland, you pass only Steamboat Landing, then just past the Paintersville Bridge, Morgan's Landing. The bridge was the site of a store, saloon, and hotel built by Levi Painter about 1852. Painter was renowned for his "post-hole bank". At night he would creep out into the fields, "depositing" his cash under one of the many fenceposts surrounding his spread. J.M. Buckley and Sons, established in 1918, now maintains its trucking firm headquarters here. Fishing is good in the river here.



An old residence in downtown Isleton.

The Rental Fleet

Although grizzled boatmen have a propensity to scoff at the skippers of Delta rental boats, these boats have introduced a great many people to our unique 1,000-mile Delta. Equally, they have introduced many to the joys of boating and later on to boat ownership itself.

I can tick off for you the names of Delta businessmen who came here first in rental boats. I number among them myself, for I came here early to do a piece on a Camp-a-Float sort of craft, returned to do another on houseboating, then pretty soon bought a boat of my own.

The rental boats provide an opportunity for boat owners from afar to have a go at our Delta on their own terms. And although there are few true cruisers amongst the rental fleet, there are some fine-handling boats that should satisfy most skippers.

Bareboat sailboat charters are difficult to find in the Delta, but I hear about them now and then and expect the number to increase in the near future. A number of small operators offer skippered cruises to just about anywhere in the Delta you might want to go and with all the amenities you might be able to pay for.

There are set cruises on large craft like the 400-passenger riverboats of Delta Travel that shuttle between Sacramento and San Francisco and on the 92-passenger Channel Star that tours out of

Stockton. In a way, these boats are reinforcing the longstanding tradition of riverboat travel in the Delta.

You'd be surprised at the variety of people who explore the Delta in rental boats. They come from all over the world, from Russia to the Orient, from the varied countries of Europe to the outback of Australia.

Surprisingly, many on rental boats see more of the Delta in seven days than some boat owners who have been here seven years. For there is that eager feeling of exploration, while the usual Delta boat owner has difficulty bypassing his favorite haunts. Even this jaded Deltaphile spends ninety percent of his time in 10 percent of the places in the Delta and vice versa.

If you are interested in renting or chartering a boat in the Delta, unfortunately there is no one place you can go to learn all. However, the new Stockton Convention and Visitors' Bureau does keep lists and brochures on rentals and charters. And the address is in the back of this book.

For the best choice of boats, it is a good idea to book as far in advance as possible. If you can manage it, try to have a look at the rental outfit's boats before booking. If this is impossible, perhaps a friend in the Delta area can do this for you. But whatever you do, please don't call this author for recommendations. Such a practice would lead to sheer suicide. Mine, of course.

Rent a boat and see the Delta.



CRUISING TO SUISUN CITY

I'd sooner be in Suisun, goes the little refrain I made up myself. Suisun City lies in the outback of the Delta, off the mainstream for most boatmen. They hardly know this pleasant little waterside community of 12,500 persons exists. Yet it is ideally situated for a weekend cruise. Or it could be comfortably explored in a single day by runabout. And I've enjoyed such runs immensely.

An amiable pair of sloughs heads Suisun City way off the Sacramento River—Suisun Slough and Montezuma Slough. The two connect in their lower portions by man-made Hunter Cut and farther upstream by Cutoff Slough. By properly planning, you can explore most of this water with little backtracking on a single cruise.

The most direct route is via Suisun Slough, which meanders from Suisun City for 14 miles before dumping into Grizzly Bay. Boatmen in a hurry take the lower end of Montezuma Slough, then shunt across Hunter Cut to clip a couple miles off the route to town. At low tide, this cut can be shallow at the Suisun Slough end, so proceed with caution.

If you decide to traverse all of Suisun Slough, you enter it at Light #10. A pleasant aside near here is a stop at Pierce Harbor on Goodyear Slough. There is plenty of deep water all the way in.

The harbor has existed since the early thirties and sits just a cinder's toss from the railroad track. Once trains regularly stopped here to disgorge hunters. Pierce Harbor has fuel, a launching ramp, marine repair, haulout and a warm, knotty-pine paneled beer bar and cafe where you can dine on such as hamburgers and ham and eggs.

Duck clubs abound in this area of fine shooting and you will see many with splendid clubhouses and boat docks. One even boasts a tennis court! Throughout

INCLUDING COLLINSVILLE, MONTEZUMA AND SUISUN SLOUGHS



Authentic nautical decorations at Port Suisun.

There are some interesting old vessels tied to the Suisun docks. Bottom, strolling the Suisun-Pacific boardwalk on a rainy day.



this cruise, the look of the territory is different than in the central Delta. Little farming is in evidence and you don't see the high riprap-protected levees. Very often you are cruising through marshy terrain.

Suisun Slough has plenty of water depth into town, but use caution and stay wide at the three bends below Volanti Slough, where the points have shoaled over. As you approach town, a wide variety of marine activity is in evidence off your port side. First there is a free public launching ramp with an adjacent long loading dock. Next is Suisun Boat Works and other businesses in the old Hunter Boat Works.

Here, from 1937 to 1969 Art Hunter and his employees built hundreds of splendid cruisers. They are coveted Delta boats, known for their solidity, fine workmanship and conservative design. The largest went to 45 feet, although there were many built at 28 feet and under. During World War II, Hunter produced life rafts for the military. According to Red Sharp, who worked at Hunter for many years, the yard turned out a boat a week in its heyday just after WWII.

From here, tiny marinas are shoulder-to-shoulder to the end of the slough, and it is difficult to tell where one leaves off and the next begins. Well defined, though, is Paul's Boat Harbor, a sort of "umbrella" harbor for several businesses. Most noticeable is The Shak with bait, tackle, supplies, some food, fuel, beer (it cools in an old-fashioned bathtub full of ice) and other good things. Farther ashore is the Vista Club with cocktails, live music, dancing and machine sandwiches. Then there's Del's Marine with boat repair, sales and service. There is a limited amount of guest docking at Paul's, overnight okay.

Nearby, is The Schooner, an establishment that offers custom woodwork, marine supplies, nautical gear, custom wood boats and other neat stuff. This is the province of one Stan Pietrucki, a patient man who





The local waterfowl come out to greet us at a Suisun waterfront home.

has been carefully working on his 46-foot schooner for about a decade. His workmanship is flawless.

Every year at July 4th time the schooner is transformed into a war ship. Other vessels join in and there is a cannon fire, pirates boarding and maybe even some walking of the plank.

Next is Port Suisun, a marina with a big haulout yard, storage, open and covered berthing, restrooms and occasionally some guest dock room. An old railroad station building on the grounds will eventually be transformed into a restaurant.

At the end of the slough, in the turning basin, is a string of pilings used by fuel barges that are tugged in when tides are high enough. Across the slough are the commodious quarters of the Solano Yacht Club, with covered berthing, a long roomy clubhouse and a good guest dock. This active group hosts many visiting clubs during the summer months. And PICYA club members are always welcome to overnight here. Ex-Commodore Homer Garton gave me invaluable assistance when I first wrote about this area.

Suisun City has cafes, bars, grocery stores, laundromats and about anything else you might require within an easy walk. Two restaurants of note are Josiah Wings and the First National Bank Bar & Cafe on Main Street. Both are worth a stop if you can find docking. They are but a stroll from the marinas and a short cab ride from the yacht club.

In earlier times, Suisun City was an island, linked to neighboring Fairfield by a causeway. The Suisun tribe of Indians once lived in the area. Later on, sailing scows and other commercial vessels regularly called on the port. In very recent times, the sleepy town has begun to grow as apartments, tract homes and con-

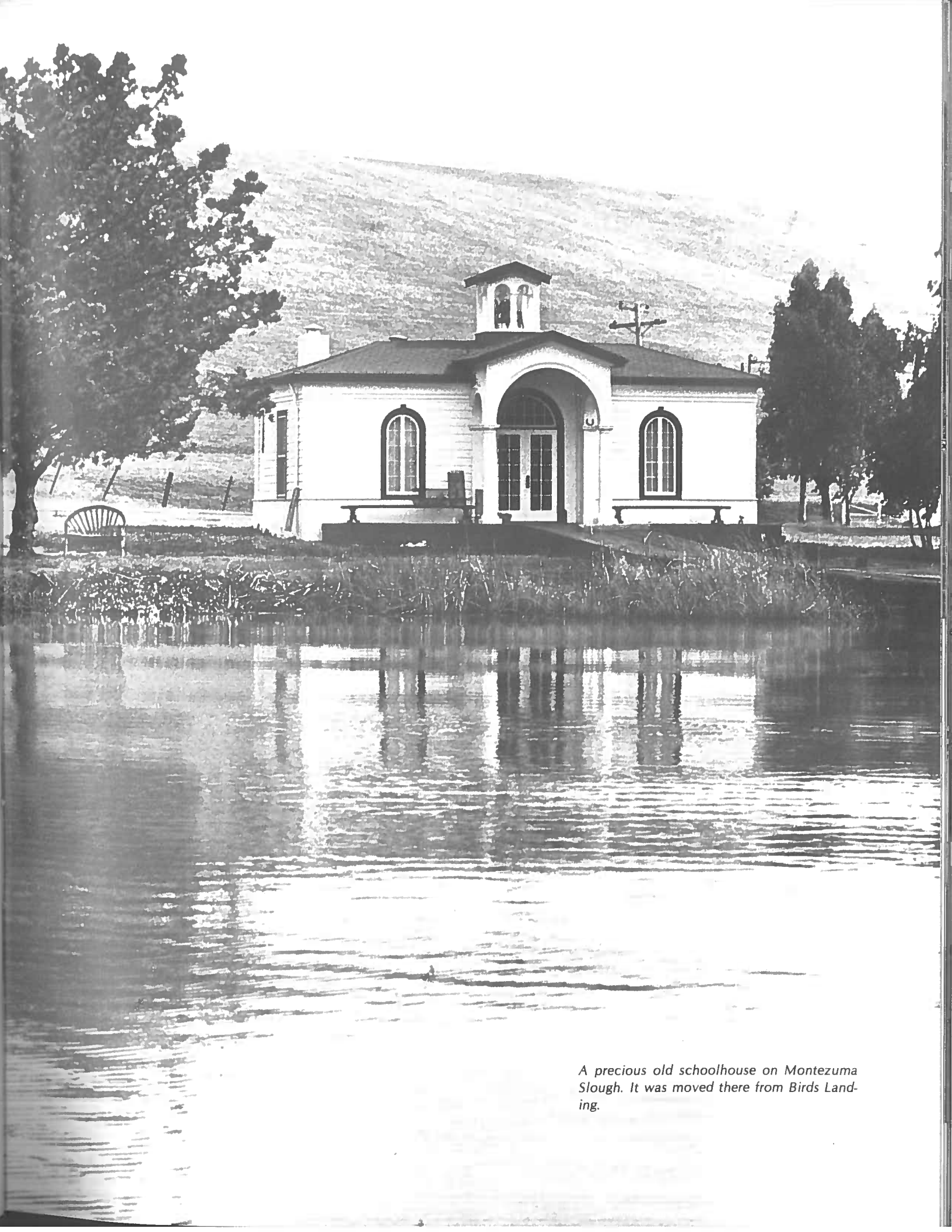
dominiums are built. Anheuser-Busch now has a huge brewery in neighboring Fairfield. Its building is a landmark seen by boatmen many miles away on Suisun Slough. The new city master plan calls for marina development.

Approaching Suisun City by water, just past the busy public launching facility, the slough has a branch off to the starboard. This shortly leads to the old Suisun-Pacific Marina. A few years back this was a model marina, with 125 slips, dry storage for 80 boats, launching, fuel, a broad boardwalk, and a beautiful glassed-in tower that gave the harbormaster a commanding view of everything.

The marina's floating docks were designed utilizing concrete flotation tanks. Some of these deteriorated, filled and sank, not to be replaced. The harbor began to silt in. Plans to dredge it have been thwarted by lack of an acceptable site to dump the dredging tailings.

Now called Whispering Bay Marina, there are plans for dredging, renovation and expansion of the facilities, construction of condominiums and much more. This is a beautiful site and would offer much-needed facilities. Boaters eagerly await the renovation. At this writing however, the marina offers no waterside facilities.

Beyond the marina, a cut was made for a subdivision. It has five small branch cuts, each with seven waterfront lots. Many have splendid homes with private docks. You see ducks sunning themselves in back yards, children paddling about in small boats and residents picnicking on waterside docks. Boatmen residing in this beautiful setting are fortunate, but the tide tables must be on their preferred reading list.



A precious old schoolhouse on Montezuma Slough. It was moved there from Birds Landing.

Collinsville Resort is a lively place.



Returning on Suisun Slough, in small boats only, you can take Cutoff Slough to Montezuma Slough if the tide is well in. But otherwise this slough can be shallow and you might be advised to proceed down to cross at Hunter Cut for a much longer run on Montezuma Slough. On Cutoff Slough, there is a bridge to Joice Island that clears about 12 feet at high tide. There is also a high-clearance concrete bridge over Montezuma Slough.

Although Suisun skippers who know the water run large craft on Cutoff Slough, they don't recommend it to others. "I went so far aground on Cutoff Slough," says Bob Johnson, Stockton skipper of a 28-foot Trojan, "that even the dinghy I was towing was aground."

Montezuma is a wide slough that slices through the Suisun Marsh, the largest single marsh of its type in the USA. Much of it is under the control of the California Department of Fish and Game. Waterfowl are everywhere and tule elk roam the grasslands of the Grizzly Island Wildlife Area. DFG has a free launching ramp on Grizzly Island. Sturgeon and striped bass fishing is excellent in the slough and you pass many bank fishermen.

A smattering of duck clubs and fishing shanties is about all that graces the slough banks. You pass the abandoned railroad that once crossed to Van Sickle and Chipps Islands, from which trains were ferried to the mainland. Some distance farther, off to the port side, you will come upon a residence and another structure constructed on a pair of high-and-dry barges. Next door is an exquisite old white schoolhouse in pristine condition. It even sports a ringing bell in its belfry. The building was moved here from Birds Landing, restored and now serves as a private residence. It is truly a jewel, and I couldn't believe my eyes the first time I saw it.

Finally, Montezuma reconnects with the Sacramento River at Chain Island. Heading up river, you pass

the once-thriving fishing village of Collinsville. Most of its buildings have collapsed or been torn down and it is nearly a ghost town. But the few remaining buildings are occupied. Next is Collinsville Fishing Resort, a lively marina with guest docking, a bar, an RV park of sorts, and a launching ramp. Home of the "Collinsville River Rats", it can be a fun place to overnight. And the cruise has now gone full circle.

Boatmen cruising to Suisun City need to consider the weather when planning their route. Heavy winds can turn Grizzly Bay and Suisun Bay into treacherous waters. With the wind blowing, Montezuma Slough via its Collinsville entry is considered the protected route, running in a counter-clockwise direction.

The Sacramento River in most all of this area is broad with many shoals and sand bars. Skippers must follow their charts. If you prefer to run this cruise clockwise by heading downriver to enter Suisun Slough (as yours truly recently did), then the shortest route is via Suisun Cutoff between Simmons and Ryer Islands. But by so going you would miss the treat of seeing the Navy's "mothball fleet" at anchor on the north bank of the Sacramento just up river from the Martinez bridge. It is an awesome sight to see this great gray fleet of over 100 ships. This is a favored fishing area, usually sheltering a hodgepodge of fishing boats. Sturgeon, striped bass and even flounder are taken here.

During the Vietnam conflict, our military was searching for a suitable place to train troops. They wanted to duplicate the waters and terrain of the Mekong Delta. Suisun Slough filled the bill quite nicely and they set up a headquarters there. Military riverboats threw a fright into more than one unknowing yachtsman and troops tromped through the marshlands.

But all is at peace here now. And the only shooting you hear is during duck season.

Collinsville—A Ghost Town

When they were looking for a hiding place for the Delta King a few years back, they towed it to Collinsville, figuring no one ever goes there anymore. But in better times, this tumbleweed-swept town near the confluence of the San Joaquin and Sacramento Rivers thrived, with nearing 500 persons calling it home. It was a regular stop for paddlewheelers, a strong fishing village where Italian was heard everywhere. It had fish canneries, hotels, saloons and other good things. And there, the skillful hands of Diamanio Focaracci and his sons crafted around a thousand boats at the Collinsville Boat Works, which opened its doors in 1907.

"Dad built a 65-foot tugboat when he was only 21 years old," says Silvio Focaracci, who with his brother Julio, operated Delta Boat Works behind Moore's Riverboat. "He was one of the first, maybe the first, to build the Monterey double-enders." The Focaraccis built over 100 salmon fishing boats, 32-footers that would sail to Alaska each year.

Collinsville must have been the progenitor of the river rat, for I continue to meet Delta people who have ties there. Pat Simpson, well-known Delta dredger, was born there over 75 years ago. His father arrived there in 1865, having sailed around the Horn with Pat's grandfather. "My father at one time was the only non-Italian living there," says Pat. Al Adomi, of Al's Place in Locke, came from Collinsville.

The village was continually subjected to high-tide flooding. "I used to dig holes in the mud under the cows so I could get a pail under them to milk them," says Pat Simpson.

"We slept with one foot over the edge of the bed," says Silvio Focaracci. "When your toe got wet, it was time to think about getting out of there." Typically, children rowed to the schoolhouse up on the hill.

The houses were built on stilts (as are those still standing today) with a Main Street boardwalk built up to door level. It was strong enough to support the few cars around in the early days.

At one time, the town was a prime shipping point for cattle bound for San Francisco markets. The entire sugar pulp output of the American Crystal Sugar Company in Clarksburg would be barged to the McDougal Livestock feed lot in Collinsville for cattle feed. But when commercial fishing in the Delta was outlawed in the fifties, the town began to quickly die. Empty homes began to decay and fall down.

For a look at the ghost town, boatmen can anchor

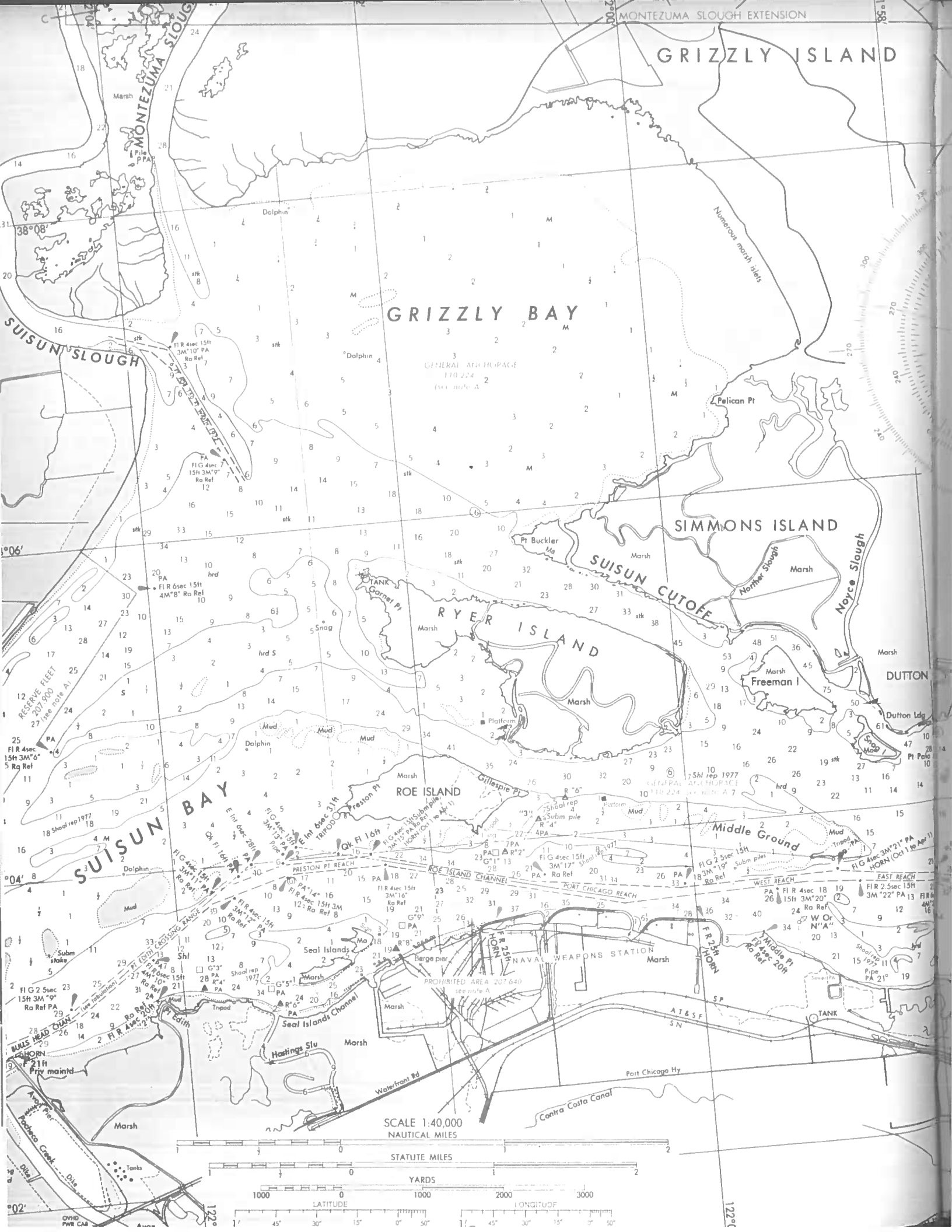
in McDougal Cut and dinghy ashore, or tie to the docks of Collinsville Resort, some distance away, and walk to town. You see empty streets and an interesting cemetery up on the hill—little more.

Memories of Collinsville are strong for those who once lived there. From Pat Simpson: "At flood times, entire houses would float by . . . The river was solid orange with a pumpkin crop swept off Liberty Island . . . The river silted in so much that at low tide you could almost walk across to Pittsburg."

"My dad built boats that didn't contain a speck of caulking," says Silvio Focaracci. "He would go into the hills of Mount Diablo to select natural oak knees for the boats." His brother Julio says, "Now we have to use wood on boats that my dad wouldn't have used for packing crates . . . I remember when we got a half-cent a pound for salmon . . . And we sold 32-foot fishing boats, delivered in San Francisco for \$700."

Collinsville's cemetery.





GRIZZLY ISLAND

GRIZZLY BAY

SIMMONS ISLAND

RYER ISLAND

ROE ISLAND

DUTTON

SUISUN BAY

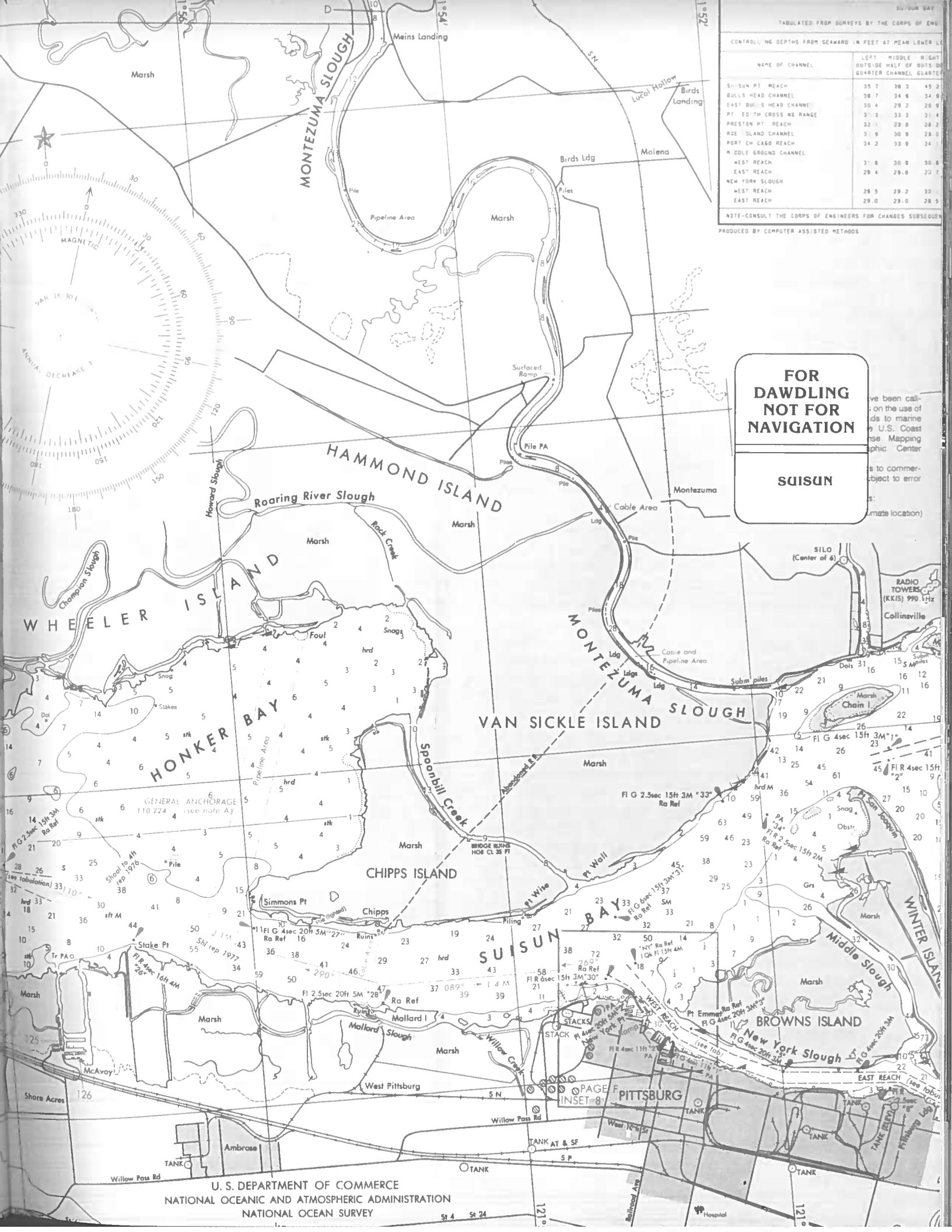
SCALE 1:40,000 NAUTICAL MILES

STATUTE MILES

YARDS

LATITUDE

LONGITUDE



TABULATED FROM SURVEYS BY THE CORPS OF ENG.

CONTROLING DEPTHS FROM SEAWARD IN FEET AT MEAN LOWER LOW

NAME OF CHANNEL	LEFT	MIDDLE	RIGHT
SUISUN PT. REACH	35.7	38.3	45.2
BULLS HEAD CHANNEL	36.7	34.6	34.9
EAST BULLS HEAD CHANNEL	38.4	29.2	28.9
PT. EDITH CROSSING RANGE	31.3	33.3	31.4
PRESTON PT. REACH	32.1	29.0	28.2
ROCK ISLAND CHANNEL	31.9	30.0	28.0
PORT CH. CADD REACH	34.2	33.0	34.1
MIDDLE GROUND CHANNEL			
WEST REACH	31.8	30.0	30.8
EAST REACH	29.4	29.0	23.7
NEW YORK SLOUGH			
WEST REACH	29.5	29.2	28.5
EAST REACH	29.0	29.0	28.5

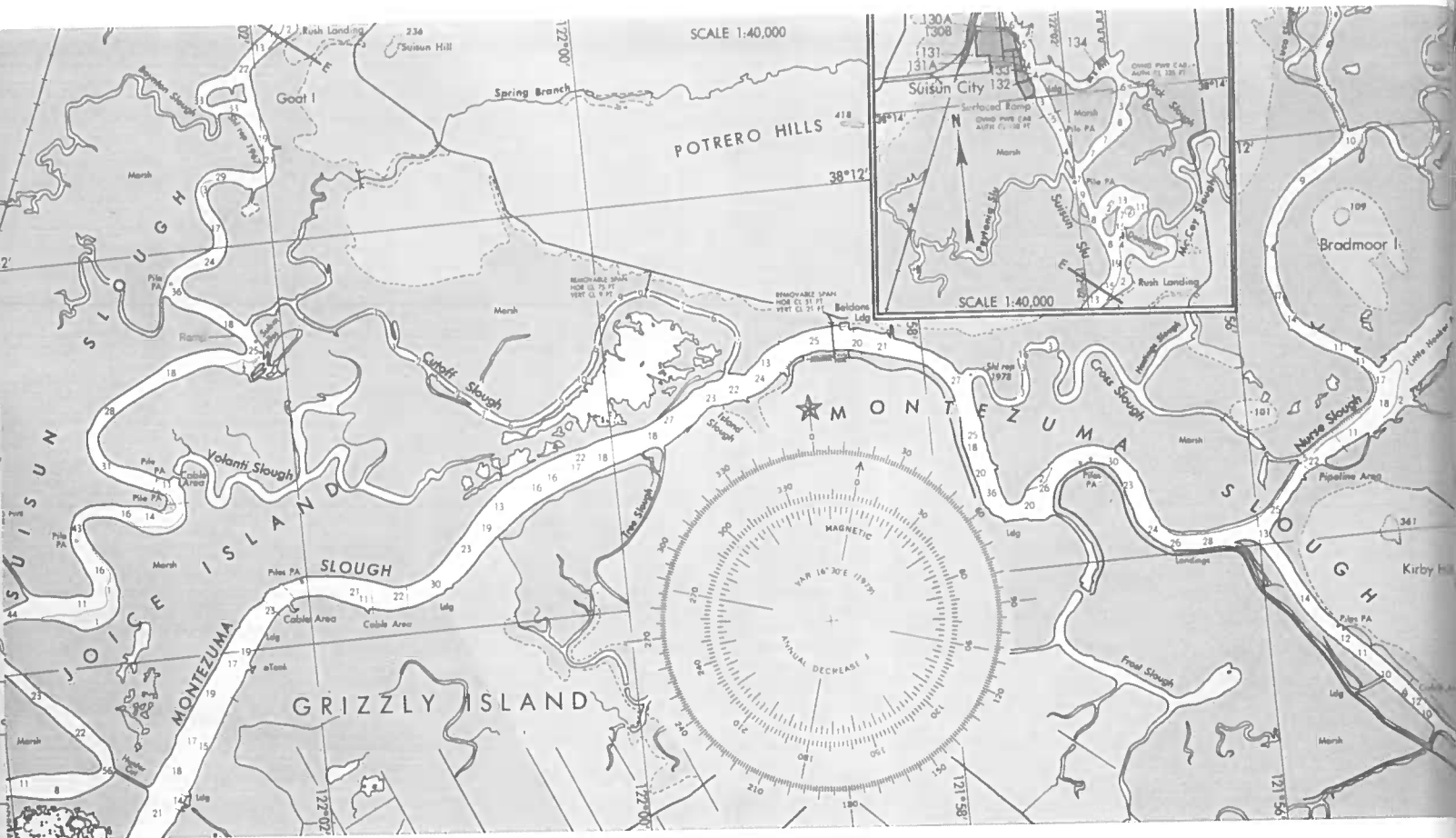
NOTE-CONSULT THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS FOR CHANGES SUBSEQUENT TO DATE OF PUBLICATION.

PRODUCED BY COMPUTER ASSISTED METHODS

**FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION**

SUISUN





**FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION**

NSIUS



HISTORIC STEAMBOAT SLOUGH

INCLUDING MINER,
SUTTER AND
CACHE SLOUGHS



Motoring in for provisions.

There are names that capture the color and the excitement of an earlier era, and Steamboat Slough is one of them. Every time I cruise this amiable 12-mile stretch of water, I can visualize the paddlewheelers thrashing their way up this brush-lined slough, always wary of snags. And from shore, I can hear the shout, "Steamboat comin' round the bend!".

In its relatively short 12-mile run, Steamboat has a lot to offer. You can laze in the fine sand of low-tide beaches or picnic in the shade of live-oak trees. You can dine quite regally, go disco dancing or tie a bow line to willow branches, anchor the stern against the current, and stay put for a day, a week—or even the entire summer.

This slough came into its own during the early days of the Gold Rush. Vessels plying the lucrative run from San Francisco to Sacramento to discharge Argonauts stricken with gold fever and supplies for the mining camps, used it as a handy shortcut. After all, time was money. And Steamboat bypasses a long, wide bend in the Sacramento River, trimming a neat six miles off the run. Too, it did not have the profusion of snags and shoals that took such a heavy toll in the swift current of the Sacramento.

Steamboat is actually split into two segments by the juncture of Sutter Slough. And this is significant for today's pleasure boater. For by using Sutter and Miner Sloughs, there are some very handy full-circle short cruises that utilize but a portion of Steamboat. For example, I often enter Steamboat at its beginning, then cut across Sutter and Miner for a stop at Islands Marina. Then I double back a short hop to Sutter, taking its upper portion to the Sacramento near Courtland. Likewise, I can enter Steamboat at its mouth, cut across Sutter to Miner and maybe visit the unique Golden Gate Island Resort, before proceeding

to where I began above Rio Vista. There are also other variations of the theme.

For touring Steamboat's entire length, I somehow always think in terms of entering at its up-river end. Perhaps it is because of the tantalizing variety of activity always taking place there, practically in the shadow of its great bascule drawbridge. It was this site that I chose as this book's cover photo. And I had the scene etched in my mind for years in advance.

First to come in sight is Steamboat Landing, with docks on the Sacramento side of the bridge and a fine sandy beach just below the bridge. There's a fee to use the privately-maintained beach and it is no doubt well worth it. For the people we see there are invariably enjoying themselves. Steamboat Landing has a restaurant, pizza, cocktails, fuel and overnight guest docking.

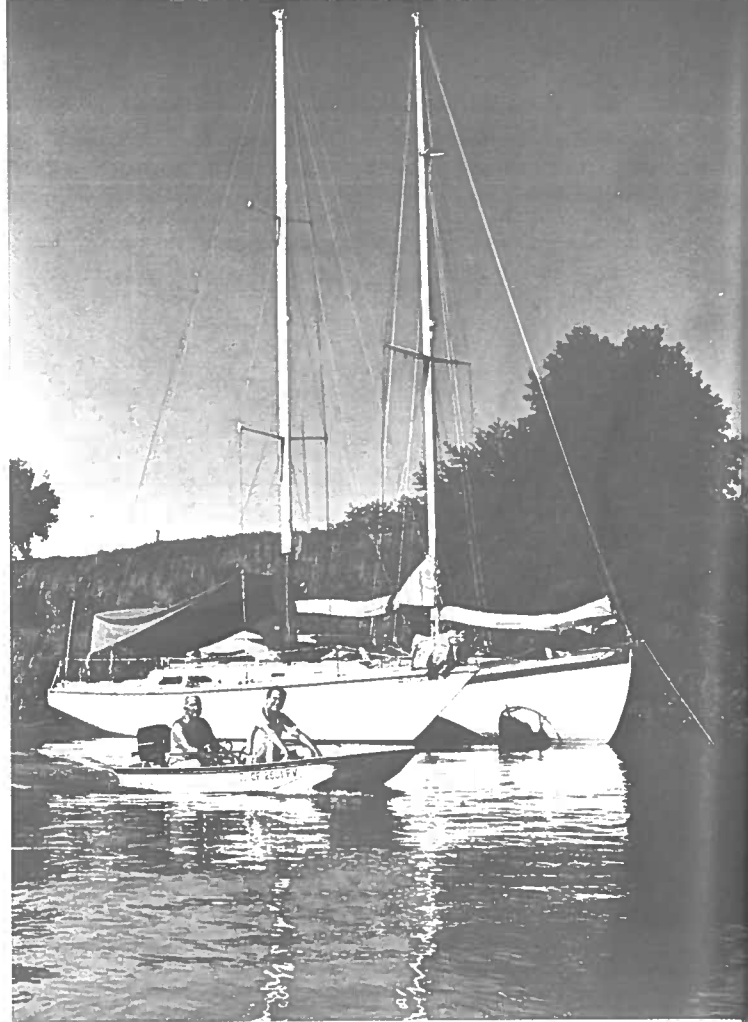
Below the bridge, pleasure boats are tethered to the slough's west bank for sometimes nearing a mile. And as the day awakens, the anchorage becomes like a small community of activity. Dinghies are shuttling pets to nearby shore. Others are motoring or rowing up to the store for ice or other provisions. The smell of brewing coffee permeates the air.

On the opposite bank of the slough, in a fine looking building that could be right at home on an Alpine ski slope, is Steamboaters. There have been times when it was teeming with boaters and the dining fare was quite good. But no one seems to have figured out how to operate it profitably and the business has had a succession of owners. At this writing, it has been closed for several seasons. This beautiful place is deteriorating and the habitués of Steamboat Slough pray that someone will come along and breathe life into it. Perhaps . . . perhaps.

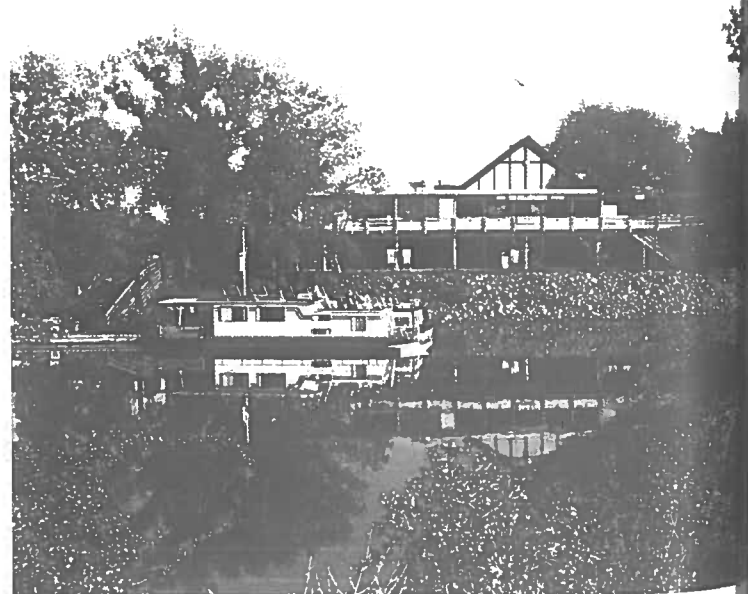
"Steamboat Slough has a history as a favored anchorage," says Bill Cameron who used to own Steamboaters and now has another place in the Delta area. "One yachtsman family I know has been coming here for three generations. The guy is forty years old and his father and his grandfather before him used to spend summers with their boats tied up on the slough."

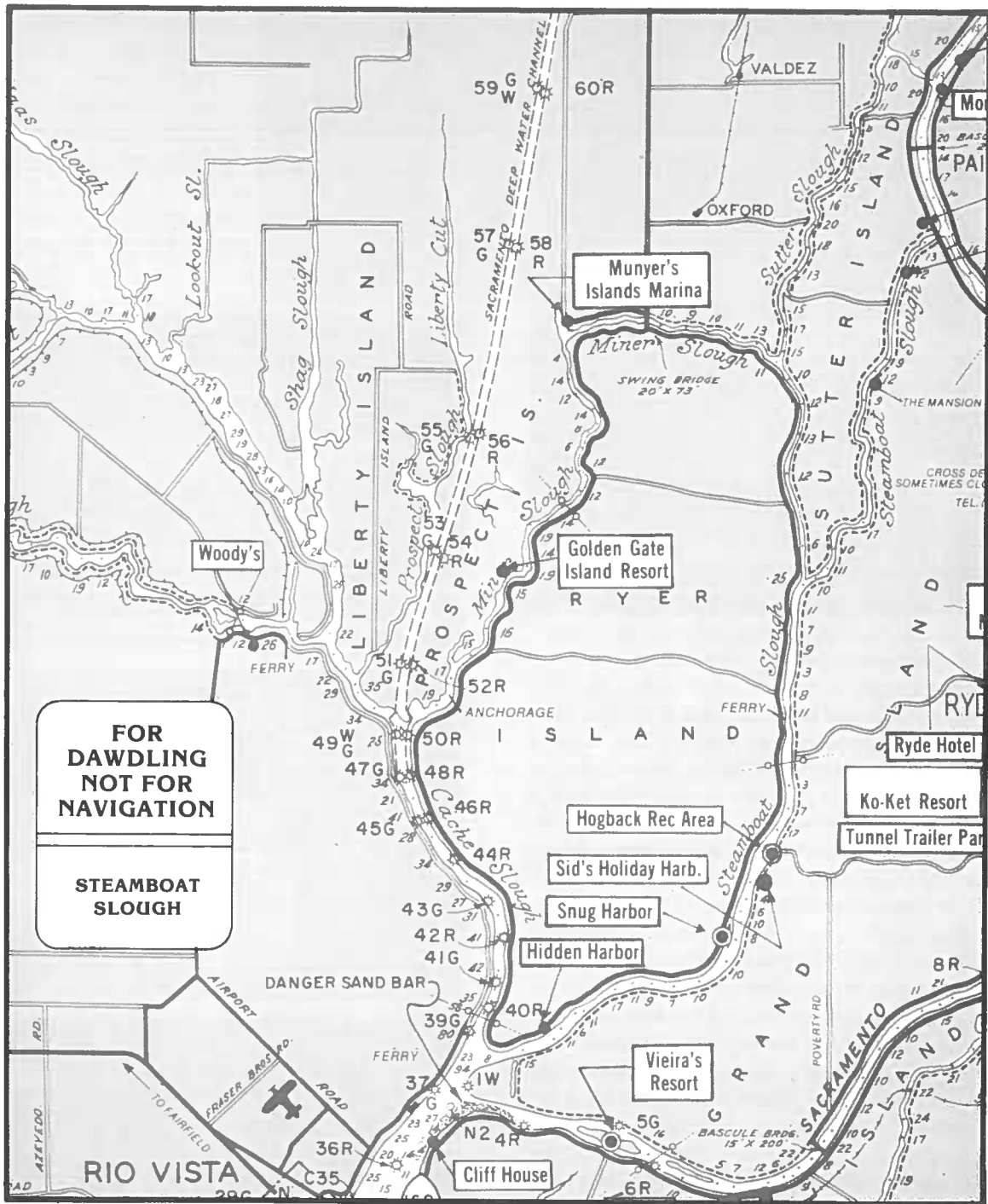
Some boats tie up here for the entire summer. And there certainly is the feel of community to it all. One skipper even brings his bugle (no, not your scribe) to start each dawn with reveille. Although there are other quite suitable places to anchor on Steamboat, it is this first mile that sees the lion's share of the action.

About two miles down the slough is Grand Island Mansion, also known as Club Lido and for many years known as River Mansion. This is a splendid structure with 58 rooms, and even includes a one-lane bowling alley with automatic pin-setter. It was built in 1918 by Louis Myers, a local orchardist. With its tall columns, it



Above, the raftup on Steamboat begins to awaken. Below, Steamboaters on a quiet winter day. It is now closed.







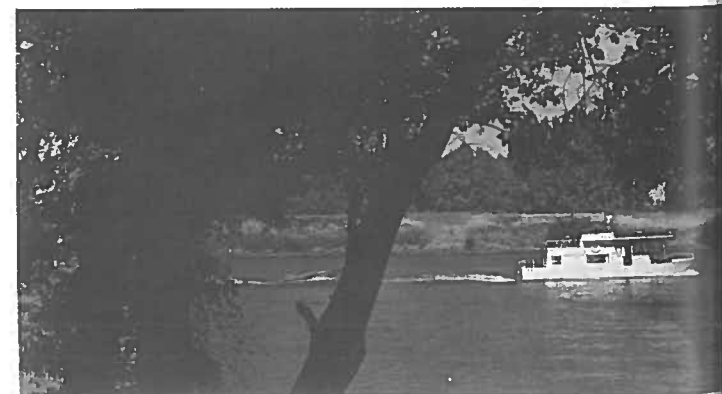
Left, a sandy beach down the slough. Bottom, a houseboat slips by Hogback. Middle, ready to go jet-skiing from Hogback. Top, a small boat raftup in the early morning on Steamboat.

looks like a mansion straight out of the ante-bellum South. And over the years there have been some grand parties here.

Through several owners, the place had fallen into neglect. Then some dozen years ago it was purchased by Bob Miller, who restored it and now and then ran it as a restaurant and cocktail lounge, as well as providing tours for a nominal fee. Miller installed a huge pipe organ from the old Fox-Senator theatre. And I can say that he certainly impressed me with his skills at the keyboard. The music seemed to reverberate through the whole structure.

But it takes a lot of money to keep a 58-room mansion glued together and it is doubtful River Mansion ever made much money for Bob. Several years ago he sold it to investors who quickly spent a tidy sum further sprucing the place up. For awhile they had it closed to the public and now and then they threw some grand parties. Some were for charity, others were political fundraisers. Guests might arrive by helicopter or elegant yacht. Straight out of *The Great Gatsby* it was. Now Grand Island Mansion is open Sundays much of the year for tours (fee) and for a quite-nice Sunday brunch. It would be difficult to find a better setting for dining, but be sure to check ahead of time, the scene here seems to be a changing one.

About a half-dozen miles farther down the slough, off to the port, is Hogback Island Recreation Area and on the way to it, you will pass the free cable ferry, *J-Mack*. Hogback is a county-run park and one of the prettiest in the Delta. The island is actually linked to land and has an excellent launching area. There is plenty of parking area, restrooms and beautiful picnic grounds. The entire island is shaded by tall trees and water is sufficiently deep to allow you to nudge your boat right up to shore. But no overnight ties to shore are permitted here.



Hogback was first developed by the Army Corps of Engineers, and then handed over to the county. Some say it was the Corps' way of apologizing for ripping out so many of the trees that once grew profusely along the Delta levees. You can beach on the slough side of the island or bring your boat around to the inside where the water still is sufficiently deep.

Since the very beginning of boats plying Steamboat Slough, Hogback has been well known by skippers. But not because of its amiable anchorages or pleasant picnic areas. It historically was heavily shoaled and riverboat captains figured they had a very good voyage indeed if they could clear both Hog's Back (as it was then called) and Haycock Shoals.

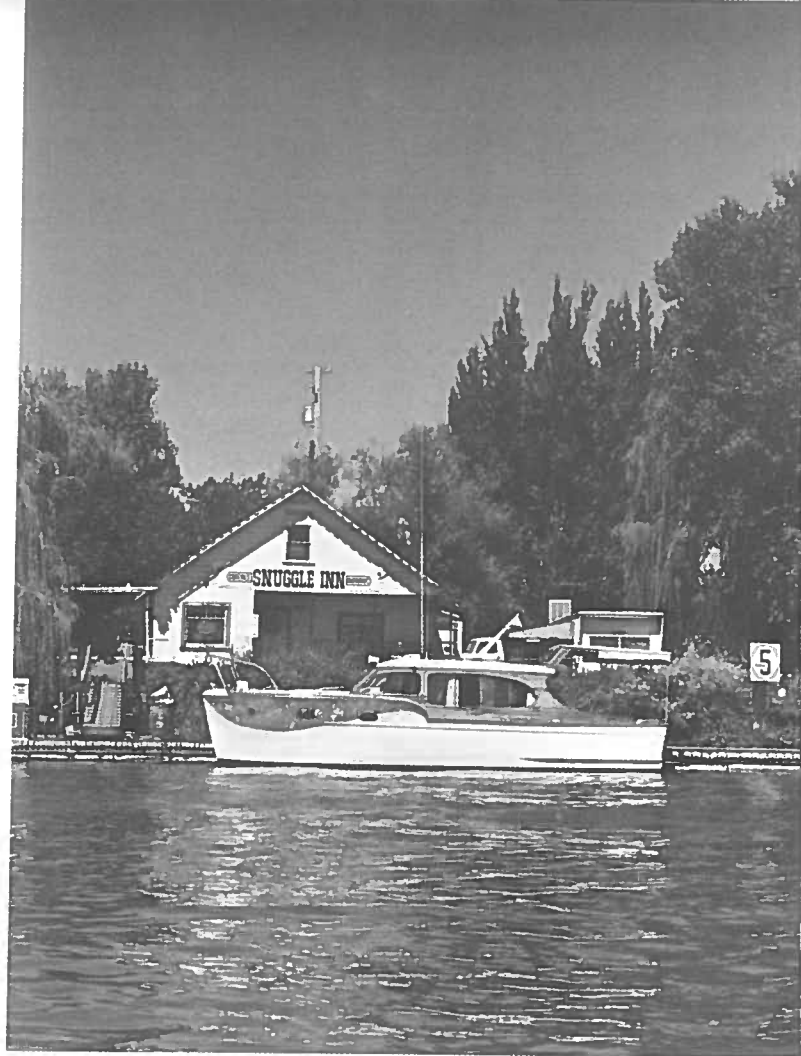
Early issues of the *Sacramento Union* are rife with reports on difficulties at Hogback. On June 10, 1856 the paper reported that "the steamer *Senator* left early to avoid detention on Hog's Back." Then in March 1867 it reported the *Chrysolopolis* stuck on Hog's Back for two hours. In March of 1874 the steamer *Cora* was reported grounded on Hog's Back for 25 hours. *Cora's* passengers were taken off by the *Julia*, but *Cora* was rescued and beat *Julia* into port by one-half hour.

Then on April 16 *Cora* was again aground at Hog's Back. At that time the *Union* wrote of Hogback, "The bar in the slough changes about quite frequently and the steamboat men only know of its whereabouts at times when they get stuck on it."

But shoals and low water were not the only problems of the early river pilots. When the water got high, then the trees on the banks became a hazard and many steamers were in for repairs to their superstructures. Snags, of course, took a heavy toll. On October 12, 1861 the schooner *Mary A. Evans* struck a snag on Steamboat and went down with a load of coal. All of this sort of thing was just considered part of the hazards of the business. And even today in the Delta, boatmen must be wary of snags, shoals and—yes, even at times, overhanging trees.

Probably the earliest steamship to use Steamboat was the *Sitka*, a tiny 40-ton vessel of Russian ancestry. It left San Francisco on November 28, 1847 and made one round-trip to New Helvetia (Sutter's Fort) before it sank at the docks in San Francisco. Within two years the elegant 219-foot, 750-ton sidewheeler *Senator*, newly arrived from New York, began regular service on the San Francisco-Sacramento run. It could make the voyage in a single day and the fare was around \$30 with a couple of dollars extra for dinner.

With mobs of would-be miners begging for passage at any price, it became apparent that more money could be made with a passenger boat on the river than in the mines with pick and shovel. By 1850 at least a dozen other steamers were vying with *Senator* for passengers and the competition rapidly became



Cocktails and good food at Snug Harbor Inn on Steamboat.

fierce. By 1851 that \$30 fare had dwindled to \$1. And by May of that year it dropped to a meager 25 cents!

What began as friendly competition soon became open warfare. And its battles were regularly waged on or near the waters of Steamboat Slough. Passengers were often casualties as captains pressed their steamers for more speed in races with their competitors. In the winter of 1850-51 the sidewheeler *New World* exploded on Steamboat killing seven persons. Later, the steamer *Washoe* exploded near the mouth of Steamboat, killing many and injuring scores. Luckily the 650-ton *Antelope* came to the rescue and hauled the injured to the hospital in Sacramento. On one occasion, when a steamer blew its boiler, killing many passengers, a board of inquiry concluded the cause was "too little water in the boiler and too much fire in the furnace."

Efforts to organize the steamboat owners to regulate fares never seemed to quite succeed. There was always a renegade to get the price war going anew. Eventually though, the situation stabilized. By 1926 the majestic *Delta King* and *Delta Queen* were making daily runs between San Francisco and Sacramento in nine hours for a \$6 fare with an addi-

tional \$2 for a stateroom. This continued until just prior to World War II with many a passenger making the trip more for a lark than for transportation.

But the spirit of the steamboats lives on in Steamboat Slough. Just below Hogback is Sid's Holiday Harbor, a bit rickety-looking perhaps, but a comfortable stopping-off place with a small guest dock, a beer bar and a few supplies. Across the slough is Snug Harbor, built on an island with a causeway to it. There are many summer dwellings here and a few occupied year-round. There is camping, a fine sandy beach and a launching ramp. Its Snug Harbor Inn has a seasonal liquor license, supplies and a snug little dining area. The fuel dock out front is easy to dock at and also doubles as a guest dock.

Every marina has its own characters. And around Snuggle Inn, while quaffing beer, they talk of the grizzled old ferry tender who lived at the marina for years. He used to operate the *Real McCoy*, a free-running, twin-diesel ferry that shuttles cars across Cache Slough. Well, the old tender was retired and put out to pasture at Snug Harbor. But he dearly missed his ferry-operating job and he talked of it incessantly. One night, probably after tipping a few, he decided to do something about it. He went down, commandeered the *Real McCoy*, and took it out for a joy ride. He was having a grand time when finally discovered. He didn't haul any cars or passengers. And he handled the ferry with his usual skill. And he really didn't do any harm. And if his lark ever reached official ears, they decided not to do anything about it.

The grizzled old tender passed away awhile back. But he has become something of a legend around Snug Harbor. The next marina down the slough is Hidden Harbor, at the juncture of Cache Slough. The feisty lady who, for years, ruled this sailboater's outpost was reverently called "Gran", and she would serve you Granburgers in the marina's comfortable cafe. If you needed fuel, Gran was the one most likely to pump it for you. Gran has since retired. But the marina lives on without her. There is a plan to dig a second harbor there and install a quite-nice mobile home park. Permits for the project have already been approved. I think Gran would like it.

Cache, Miner and Sutter

Cache Slough feeds into the Sacramento River and serves as a connector for the deepwater Sacramento Ship Channel. Although the slough continues after the Channel with Prospect, Shag and Lindsey Sloughs dumping into it, that area is not much frequented by yachtsmen. It is mostly the province of fishermen and duck hunters. There is a cable ferry to Liberty Island and a place called Woody's that harbors a few boats.

In earlier times, there was an old pontoon bridge across Prospect Slough. And of course, the aforementioned *Real McCoy* runs across Cache between the mainland and Ryer Island. This is a state-operated ferry and there is no charge to ride on it. This is a favored run for bicyclists, who will cross both this ferry and the Steamboat Slough ferry.

Miner Slough, in a roundabout way, connects Sutter and Cache and has a bridge with good clearance on its upper portion. Miner is sufficiently deep for large craft, but I always see evidence of snags and suggest keeping a wily eye out for them. It has some fine anchorage areas near the Cache Slough end.

My main reason for cruising Miner Slough is invariably to visit Golden Gate Island Resort or Islands Marina. Usually I take in both. And both are rare jewels in what some boatmen consider to be the hinterlands of the Delta.

Golden Gate, up about two miles on Miner and hidden behind an island on the west side of the slough, has, for many years been a labor of love for John Stringer and his wife, Lorraine. The main attraction is the bar and recreation building that is built on a huge 100-foot by 50-foot dredge. This vintage dredge was originally steam-powered and it drove pilings for the Golden Gate Bridge as well as performing many other chores throughout the Delta when owned by old-timer Pat Simpson.

Stringer has done an absolutely outstanding job of converting the old dredge into a combination museum-art gallery-cum bistro. He is an artist with the welding torch and somehow manages to lug heavy marine-oriented objects into the appropriate spot to be welded into place by his deft torch. The bar rails are stainless steel shafts out of some giant old vessel and are probably at least six inches in diameter and must weigh a thousand pounds each. The fireplace is part of the dredge's old boiler. People bring Stringer things, and he either welds them into, or screws them onto his dredge. I've been there dozens of times and can always find something new.

There is a well-manicured campground adjacent to the still-floating dredge, but Golden Gate is accessible only by boat. The place has a beer and wine license and machine sandwiches.

You can see the tall A-frame of Golden Gate before you arrive. Then you have to slip in around part of the island. At low tide, water depths can be marginal and at any tide you should keep to the starboard next to the island for best depth. Future plans call for dredging and perhaps breaching the levee to build an inner harbor. Golden Gate is truly a unique addition to the Delta, one that you should not miss seeing.

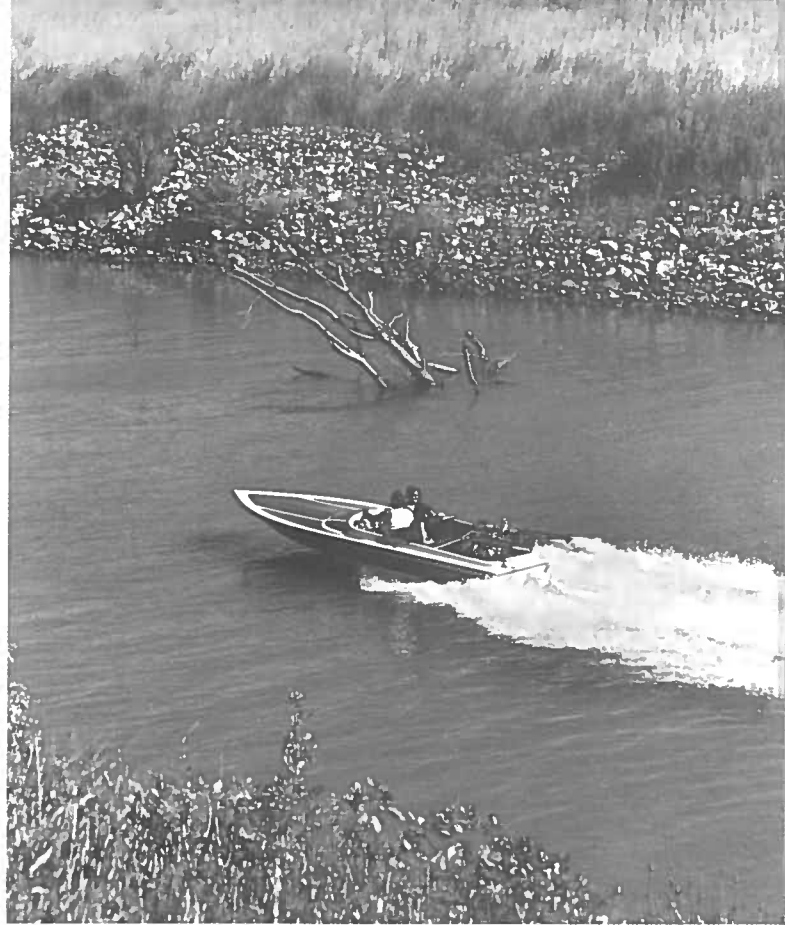
Further on up the slough, where it makes its 90-degree turn, is Islands Marina, a favorite destina-

Right, a fast ski boat roars past a snag on Sutter Slough. Middle, tied to the docks of beautiful Islands Marina. Bottom, this old dredge is your headquarters at Golden Gate.

tion for Bay Area yacht clubs. The marina is situated on three separate islands. And when the flowers are in bloom and the grass is green, this is one of the prettiest places in the Delta. The island can be rented by groups for their own outings, and they have barbecues and picnic tables. The favorite island is about 400-feet by 25-feet in size and can accommodate up to 300 persons. Some years over two dozen yacht and boat clubs are hosted here. The island is connected to the "mainland" by a wooden walk bridge, and there is a swim beach and an excellent guest dock.

There is a restaurant and a beer and wine bar in the spacious main building. And the marina includes covered berthing as well as a fuel dock with both gas and diesel. Old-timers may remember Islands Marina when it was little more than a humble fishing resort called Five Points. At that time it was at the juncture of five sloughs, counting both legs of Miner. But when the Ship Channel was dug, it drained off most of the water from the other sloughs, altering the geography considerably.

You can continue on Miner to Sutter Slough, taking it north to connect with the Sacramento below Courtland (there are two bridges to reckon with) or south to connect into Steamboat below The Mansion. There are snags to watch for on both legs of Sutter Slough and here and there you will find comfortable anchorages. This is a favorite area of commercial crawdad fishermen. On the upper leg, Elkhorn Slough feeds in, but as mentioned earlier, the slough is shallow and snag-ridden and not recommended boating fare.



Paddlewheeler Saga

It was indeed a sad day on February 11, 1938 when a combination of high tide, heavy rains and a beating wind breached the levee on 5,440-acre Mandeville Island, transforming fertile farmland into a vast lake. Some mighty feats were in order if the island was to be reclaimed. And that's exactly what was dished up.

In May a fleet of four aging old paddlewheelers was rounded up. Three—the once elegant Navajo, the Onisbo and the Reform—were derelicts, already stripped of their engines. But the 206-foot J.D. Peters, built in 1889, was still operable. The 252-foot Navajo had long been touted as Southern Pacific's floating palace. And it was a handsome vessel even in its dying days.

This was the scheme: the riverboats would be floated in to block the breach in the levee. And what a formidable opponent to inflowing water the quartet made. Then the engine of the J.D. Peters was to be fired up, to push the water off the submerged island with its paddlewheel. The three derelict riverboats then were to be floated to various parts of the island to serve as bunkhouses, and conventional pumps would dispense with the remaining water. What a daring undertaking.

The amazing thing is that it worked. When the aging J.D. Peters' paddlewheel sloshed into action, it began pushing water off the island at a rate of 30,000 gallons per minute. A fine rate when you consider that the wheel was turning little more than one-third of the rpms it would turn in normal travel. It is said that you could actually see the water level on the island dropping.

The levee was repaired and one by one, the derelicts were floated to their designated resting spots, while the J.D. Peters pushed water until it was left high and dry. Later, the sight of the vessels, resting proudly on dry land, in the midst of asparagus patches, cornfields and plowed fields as the crops were rotated, was a strange scene.

Then time took its toll. One by one fire destroyed the old riverboats till only the Navajo remained. It was about then that I arrived on the Delta scene. Lou Sparrenburger, the River Route postman, showed me the Navajo and I snapped off a few black and white photos, vowing to return by car for a full day's shooting of this still-proud riverboat. But when I came

back a few weeks later, it had disappeared. Navajo had burned, the ashes were plowed over, leaving not a trace. So those few photos I took were probably the last ones taken of Navajo.

This story went into the annals of Delta legends. And as is prone to happen to legends, the story gets distorted with repeated telling. Over the years, I have read several variations of the tale. Some have only three paddlewheelers in on the show, and others have all the boats pushing water away. In another, Navajo is even spelled Navaho—incorrect for sure. I am convinced the story as told here, is the correct one. So quickly does even recent history slip by.

Old Tom Case, who spent half his lifetime aboard his beloved Virginia S., and a well-known person around the Delta, was married aboard the J.D. Peters. And not when it was in the asparagus patch, either. Tom has gone to the "marble orchard" now, but I always think of him when this tale is retold.



The Navajo on Mandeville Island. This is one of the last photos taken of the old paddlewheeler.

WALNUT GROVE & LOCKE

HISTORIC RIVER TOWNS WITH A STRONG CHINESE HERITAGE



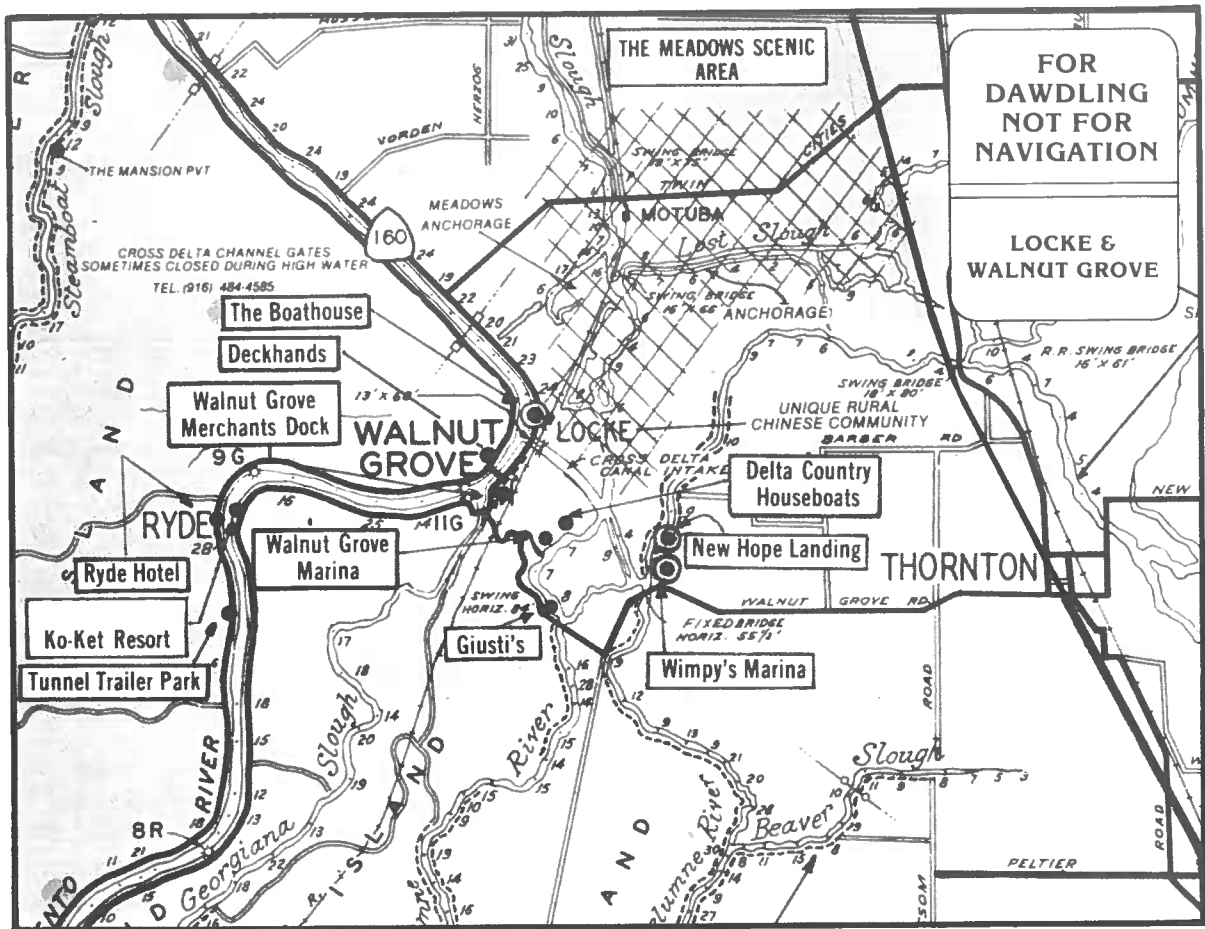
Docked at the Boathouse in Locke.

This aging pair of river towns serves the needs of pleasure boaters probably better than any on the Delta. Oh, I don't mean that they are rife with marine stores and boat purveyors like, say, Bethel Island. Rather, they give us a vital link with the Delta's past—a glimpse of how things used to be. And conveniently so, for there are places to dock, places to eat, places to shop and places where you can have one very good time. And facilities there are improving each year. Locke is the only rural community in the country built and occupied by Chinese.

I first approached the Chinese community of Locke by boat via the back route, probably too lazy to make the trek from the merchant's courtesy dock at Walnut Grove. Or perhaps the Cross Delta Channel gates were closed. I don't remember. We were in what is referred to as Dredger Cut, but it is not so-marked on the charts. We nudged the bow of the old *Delta Dawdler* up to the bank about where the slough makes a 90-degree bend and made it fast to a tree, at about the same time dropping a stern anchor. We scurried ashore, hiked up over the Southern Pacific railroad tracks, past neat little vegetable gardens, skirting barking dogs in the process. And lo, there was Locke.

To tell the truth, I didn't figure this route out all by myself. In an earlier auto visit to the area, I had a long chat with Walnut Grove grocer, Ping Lee, who advised me of this access. Lee is a second-generation resident of the area and is oft-quoted about Locke. He is an amiable sort of guy who cares about the place.

I've always been hesitant to recommend this back route to Locke in print, for I've had the feeling I was trespassing, although no one has ever chastised me for going this way. You will have to decide for yourself. However, now there is an even better and perfectly legal way in. That long, venerable old produce-storage shed that clings to the river bank in front of Locke has



been purchased and is now operated by Frank Schmiedel and his family. Called The Boathouse in Locke, it now has guest docking. You pay a moderate per-foot fee to leave your boat there three hours while visiting Locke. Boathouse also has fuel, boat storage and some marine supplies. There is a grocery store across the street.

The Boathouse building actually predates Locke. It was another of the riverside produce sheds that once dotted the Delta waterways. Riverboats would pull up to its high pilings to off-load produce, which was stored until the arrival of Southern Pacific trains via a spur running beside the shed. The first part of the building was constructed sometime during the 1890s and it was enlarged and completed in 1921.

Locke itself is an anachronism, a little hunk of the past plunked smack in the middle of the 20th century. Its weathered old clapboard buildings cling tenaciously to the inside of the levee bank. Boardwalks out front creak as you trundle over them. Paint on the building fronts has peeled, and behind some you can see the faint lettering of enterprises of bygone days. Now and then you see an old Chinese shuffling along the sidewalks. Worn wooden steps between a few of

the buildings lead to Main Street down below.

Most buildings on this street are two-story, with the upper story at levee level out front. The wood balconies hang out over Main Street sidewalk, providing respite from the hot Delta sun. The morning's washing flaps in the breeze, hanging from clotheslines strung between the balcony posts. If you probe deeper into Locke, you find neat old one-story dwellings along dusty old streets. You may see Chinese tending their vegetable gardens, both for sustenance and as a labor of love. It is quiet and comfortable and you almost imagine you can hear a lazy fly buzz by.

Locke is not quite as old as its weathered buildings might suggest. The first town building was erected by Tin Sin Chan in 1912 and he is generally credited as being the town's founder. That building, quite appropriately, was a saloon. Other essentials, such as a boarding house and gambling hall followed. Then in 1915 a fire destroyed Walnut Grove's Chinatown.

Members of the Yeung Wong Tong met and elected not to rebuild in Walnut Grove. Under the guidance of Lee Bing, a half-dozen families obtained permission from sympathetic rancher George Locke to begin a new town on 14 acres where one of his pear orchards

Old wooden clapboard buildings in Locke. Look closely and you can still see the faint lettering of the old Star Theatre.



stood. Six two-story, \$1,200 structures soon rose. They were built against the land side of the levee, with the top story fronting on the levee road and with the back on the street—exactly as they stand today.

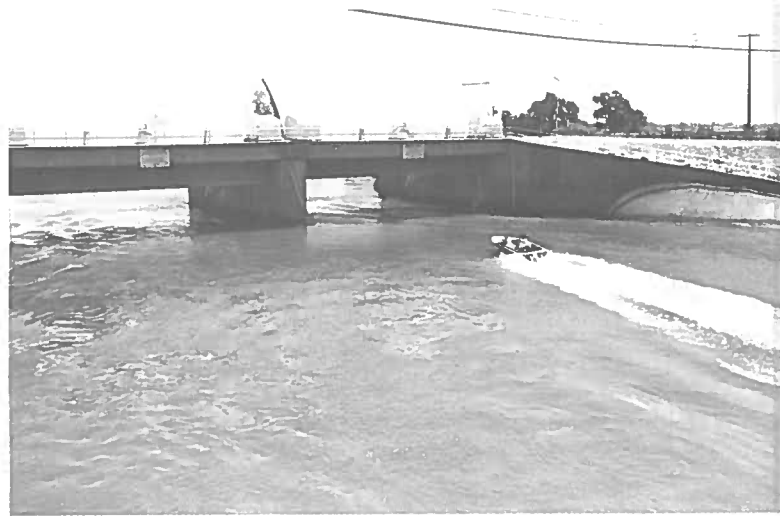
The harsh Alien Land Law of the time prevented Chinese from owning land. The builders apparently trusted George Locke, for they proceeded with nothing more than a verbal lease—probably not the first time that a town has been built relying on a good man's word. Even today, Locke homeowners do not own the property on which their homes rest.

The new town grew and was known as Lockeport. By 1920 the name was shortened to Locke. Prohibition came and Locke flourished. There were gambling halls, bordellos, opium dens, booze joints and other evil things. Daily bus service connected Locke with other Chinese villages and with San Francisco.

The lot of a Chinese field worker was a tough one in those days. And their opportunities for recreation were pitifully poor. So you can imagine how they looked forward to their day off when they would be transported to Locke so they could have a good time and relieve some of the tensions pent up from their regimen of hard work in the fields. They came to Locke, much as tourists, to spend some money and have some fun. Their visits were valued by the town's business community.

The old Star Theatre in Locke (you can still see its faint lettering on a Main Street archway) hosted theatrical groups from both the old country and around the state. The town also had restaurants, a candy store, pool halls, herb stores and markets. So not all pastimes were sinful ones.

Thanks to the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society, you can now see what one of Locke's old gambling halls was like. Called the Dai Loy Museum,



Above, a runabout splashes through the open gates of the Cross Delta Channel. Below, one of the old weathered shops on the edge of Locke.





Buildings in Walnut Grove, straight out of a western movie set.

it is in a Main Street building constructed by Lee Bing in 1915. Actually, the building began as a sort of recreational hall for the single Chinese men who came to work in the area. It was furnished with newspapers, magazines, musical instruments, dominoes, cards and other games. Eventually, the bored men began to bet on the games, as did the East Indians, Filipinos and Caucasians who came later. The sheriff ended this by closing the place for good in 1951. The museum is furnished with original gaming tables and other mementos of the past and is well worth a visit. It is open weekends from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and other days by appointment.

At one time Locke had a permanent population of 400 that seasonally swelled to 1,500. But time has taken its toll. The younger generation of Chinese have left the quiet town for greener pastures. Today 52 Chinese and other Asians call Locke home. A handful of Caucasians have moved in, some to open businesses in town.

Over the past few years, there have been studies and proposals for the state to purchase Locke to

transform it into a living monument, not unlike Columbia. And some money was broken loose to update the town's water system and fire-fighting apparatus. The California State Parks system would like to buy a couple of representative Locke homes, to preserve them for the public to view. But even this is a hassle because of the split home-land ownership. Even as I write this, legislation is in the mill for funding to preserve Locke. You can be sure that *something* will take place. Locke is too valuable to just let it slip away.

Aside from all this, the Locke of today is an enjoyable place to visit. Small gift shops and art galleries have opened. Al's Place (known irreverently everywhere as Al-the-Wop's) serves good food and is a hangout for locals and visiting boatmen alike. And where else in the world but in the Delta could you find a pizza parlor named The Tules?

I had visited Walnut Grove perhaps two dozen times before I realized that it existed on both sides of the river. For the town indeed has a pleasant little residential community tucked behind the levee on the

west side of the river. And many nice homes are hidden there. At one, I managed to peek through the high hedge and discovered a beautiful putting green.

But for the most part, boatmen are concerned with the town on the east bank and the few business establishments up at levee level on the west bank. The town was founded in 1851 by John Sharp, who was instrumental in development of the area. He ran a ferry across the river and this played an important part in the town developing on both sides of the river. It is the only town south of Red Bluff that occupies both sides of the Sacramento.

By 1865 there was a busy saw mill in Walnut Grove that helped provide lumber for a Delta that was growing fast. When Sharp died in 1880, his widow sold their property to a Mrs. Agnes Brown who with her son Alex operated a hotel there. The town bank the son founded bears his name still and these days boasts branch banks in other communities. It is said that he was the first one to plant asparagus in the Delta.

Walnut Grove prospered as a produce shipping point on the route of the paddlewheelers. Although when more riverboats began using the shortcut Steamboat Slough provided on the San Francisco-Sacramento run, stops at Walnut Grove lessened somewhat. Still, plenty of waterfront activity continued here and it was a natural stop on the Sacramento-Stockton run via Georgiana Slough, as it is even today for the pleasure boat fleet.

The boating geography here seems complicated until you consult a chart. The Sacramento, of course, flows by Walnut Grove. But gentle Georgiana Slough also curls off here on the lower edge of town. Each has a drawbridge nearby, practically within shouting distance of one another. Behind the town perhaps two miles, Snodgrass Slough wends its way toward The

Meadows. Then, from a spot behind Walnut Grove and Locke, the broad Cross Delta Channel flows between the Sacramento and Snodgrass. Follow all that?

The Cross Delta Channel has powerful gates that may be closed or partially closed to regulate the water flow between the Sacramento and Mokelumne river systems. Most of the time, especially during the strong boating season, these gates are open. But there are a pair of fixed bridges there that will typically clear but eight-and-a-half feet at high tide. Thus small boats use it freely as a short cut and medium-size cruisers and houseboats (no rentals except Courtland Docks permitted here) manage to tweek through when tides are right. Everyone else is out of luck. It is a pity the gate engineers did not plan better, for just a couple more feet clearance would have accommodated many more boats. Our map has a phone number boatmen can call to see if the gates are open, if there is any doubt.

Boatmen in craft that will not clear the gates must plan their itinerary carefully if they want to visit Locke and Walnut Grove. It is no problem if they arrive via the Sacramento, of course. From the San Joaquin, they must opt for Georgiana Slough. This means they won't be able to boat both The Meadows area and the Locke-Walnut Grove area without a lot of backtracking.

Although neither town is an unreasonable walk from the Walnut Grove Marina on Snodgrass Slough, or even Giusti's. When he has time, Rich Mielke, proprietor of Wimpy's Marina on the Mokelumne's South Fork, will sometimes drive boatmen to Locke. He's even been known to hand over the keys to his dusty truck to let you drive over yourself. But no reasonable boatman can plan on such serendipitous occurrences. And the dilemma continues.



Shops on the levee bank at Walnut Grove.



Walking the streets of old Locke can be a rewarding experience.

Morning light reflects off a Sea Ray tied to the Walnut Grove Merchants' dock.



When author Erle Stanley Gardner prowled this area in his River Queen houseboats, he used to tow along a runabout and keep a car stashed in Walnut Grove as well. But even this would not provide perfect mobility.

As I mentioned earlier, Walnut Grove has had its Chinatowns. The Chinese quarter here burned in 1915 and again in 1937. But the Chinese influence lingers still in the town. And behind the levee is a weathered old town, not unlike Locke. And I like to walk its streets equally as well. There is more space here and some of the decrepit old buildings with faint letters from former businesses give it the feel of an early western cow town. And in fact, western movies have been filmed here.

A number of thriving businesses are entrenched up on the levee. And some of the old buildings have been renovated into strikingly attractive structures. You'll find a supermarket, liquor store, hardware, drugstore and other stores here. Tony's renowned restaurant is behind the levee. Across the river is another market, a

laundromat and Deckhands' Marine Supply.

The Walnut Grove Merchants have done what we wish every waterfront town in the Delta would do. They maintain a courtesy guest dock (with a fee for overnights) so that boatmen may come in and shop and enjoy their town. Each merchant participating pays a fee to operate and maintain the dock. And I say kudos to them. Deckhands also now has a dock where it is possible to overnight.

A favorite watering hole for boatmen in Walnut Grove used to be the old Boondox Hotel. There was a sort of Delta-style romance to the name and certainly an improvement over its first name—Brown Hotel. The fine old structure always looked imposing from the river. But fire struck, leveling the place. And it never seems financially feasible these days to rebuild such structures.

Maybe things haven't changed that much from the old days. In the hamlets of the Delta, both fire and flood are still to be feared.

Delta Sentinel

Rising spectre-like out of the marshlands behind the hamlet of Walnut Grove, its trio of 100-foot prongs giving it the look of a giant Neptune's trident, is a 1,549-foot television antenna. The tallest structure west of the Mississippi, they tell us.

For the boatman Walnut Grove-bound, it serves almost as a benevolent lighthouse. You can see it from afar, and it lets you know that you are heading in the right direction. At night, while at anchor in The Meadows or in Lost Slough, you can see its red lights twinkling. And you just know that everything is going to be okay.

The antenna serves television channels 13, 10 and 3, plus public television channel 6. The first three share the operational costs. It permits the stations to provide 25,000 square miles of coverage. The structure weighs a trifling, 3.5 million pounds and is steadied by eight and one-half miles of guying cables. It went up in six months and cost \$1.5 million.

It seems I always had wanted to go to the top of that antenna. So, I wrangled an assignment to do an article on the critter, then still had to do a lot of talking to get permission. Although there are 1,400 small-diameter rungs leading to the top, taking the elevator is the preferred mode of ascension.

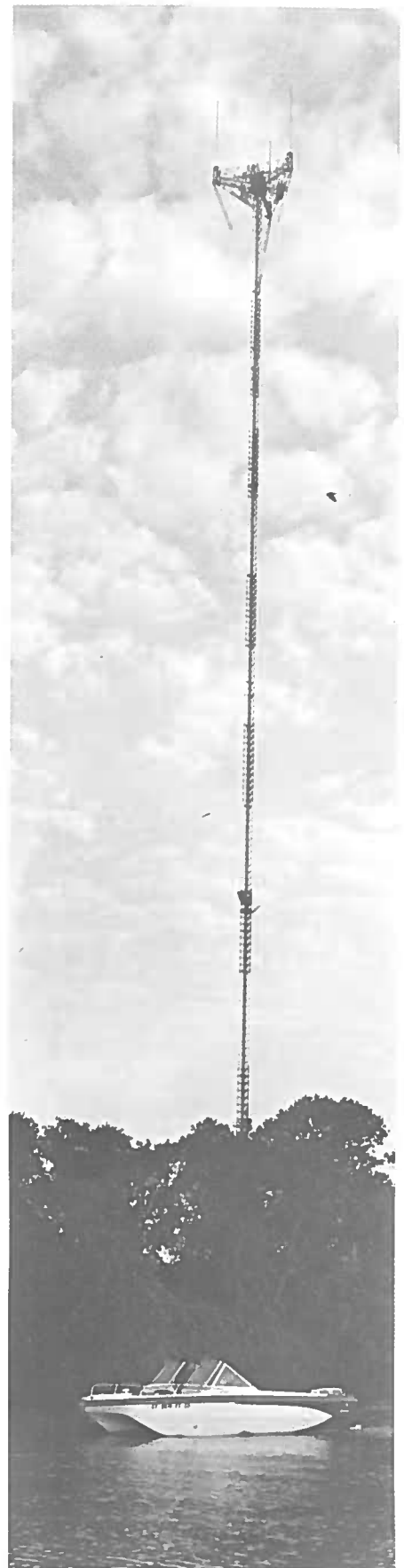
TV engineer Bill Barclay and Joanie and I crammed ourselves into the tiny cubicle of an elevator that rumbles up the inside of the antenna. And it is good that none of us is claustrophobic. It is small. Its interlocked doors slid closed with a clank, sounding every bit like a San Quentin prison cell. It took a very long 18 minutes to reach the top. "The ride back takes only 15 minutes," said Bill Barclay. "But psychologically it seems much faster than the ride up."

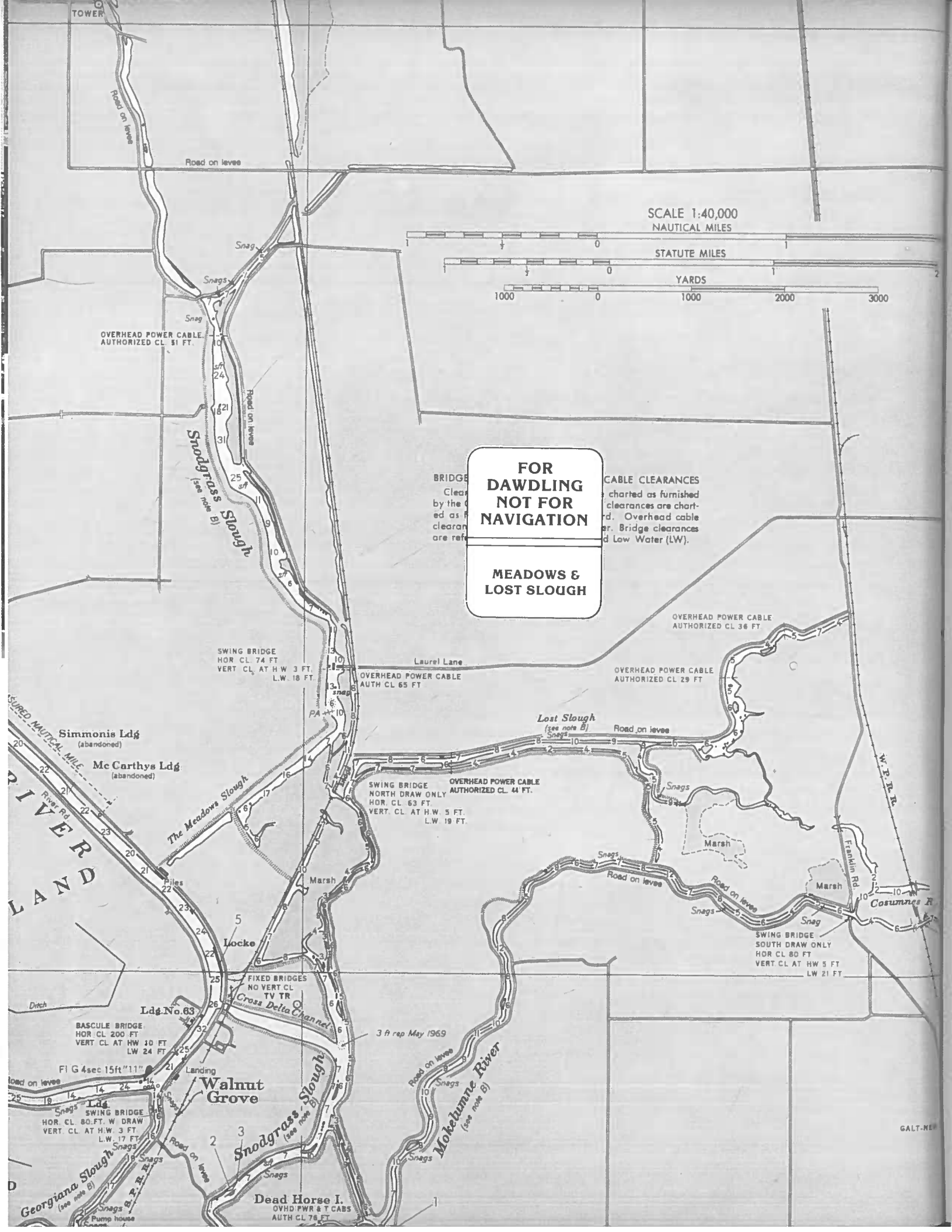
From way down on the water, you don't realize the size of this structure. The top platform has a metal 450 square-foot room. The platform extends out with walkways and in all is as large as the normal city building lot.

I felt as if I could see forever from up there. Houses in Locke looked like children's toys. And I had never noticed before how closely Georgiana Slough parallels the Sacramento. The Meadows and Lost Slough seemed slight.

Because of sturdy guys, the tower does not sway with the wind. Although at wind velocities of around 40-knots, the tower's parts begin to vibrate and sing. Contrary to local lore, no one was killed or injured during the antenna's construction, nor have there been casualties since. And it was proved that the airplane that crashed nearby a few years ago did not hit the antenna's guys, as was reported by the media.

Troubled with the current price of a bottom paint job on your boat? Consider that repainting the antenna costs in the neighborhood of \$30,000!





**FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION**

**MEADOWS &
LOST SLOUGH**

BRIDGE Clearances as furnished by the charted as furnished by the chart. Overhead cable clearances are referred to Low Water (LW).

CABLE CLEARANCES charted as furnished by the chart. Overhead cable clearances are referred to Low Water (LW).

OVERHEAD POWER CABLE AUTHORIZED CL 51 FT.

OVERHEAD POWER CABLE AUTHORIZED CL 36 FT.

SWING BRIDGE HOR CL 74 FT VERT CL AT HW 3 FT L.W. 18 FT.

OVERHEAD POWER CABLE AUTH CL 65 FT

OVERHEAD POWER CABLE AUTHORIZED CL 29 FT

Simmonis Ldg (abandoned)

Mc Carthys Ldg (abandoned)

SWING BRIDGE NORTH DRAW ONLY HOR CL 63 FT VERT CL AT HW 5 FT L.W. 19 FT.

OVERHEAD POWER CABLE AUTHORIZED CL 44 FT.

MISSOURI RIVER LAND

The Meadows Slough

Lost Slough (see note B)

FIXED BRIDGES NO VERT CL TV TR

Cross Delta Channel

BASCULE BRIDGE HOR CL 200 FT VERT CL AT HW 10 FT LW 24 FT

Ldg No. 63

3 ft rep May 1969

Walnut Grove

FIG 4 sec 15ft "11"

SWING BRIDGE HOR CL 80 FT W DRAW VERT CL AT HW 3 FT L.W. 17 FT

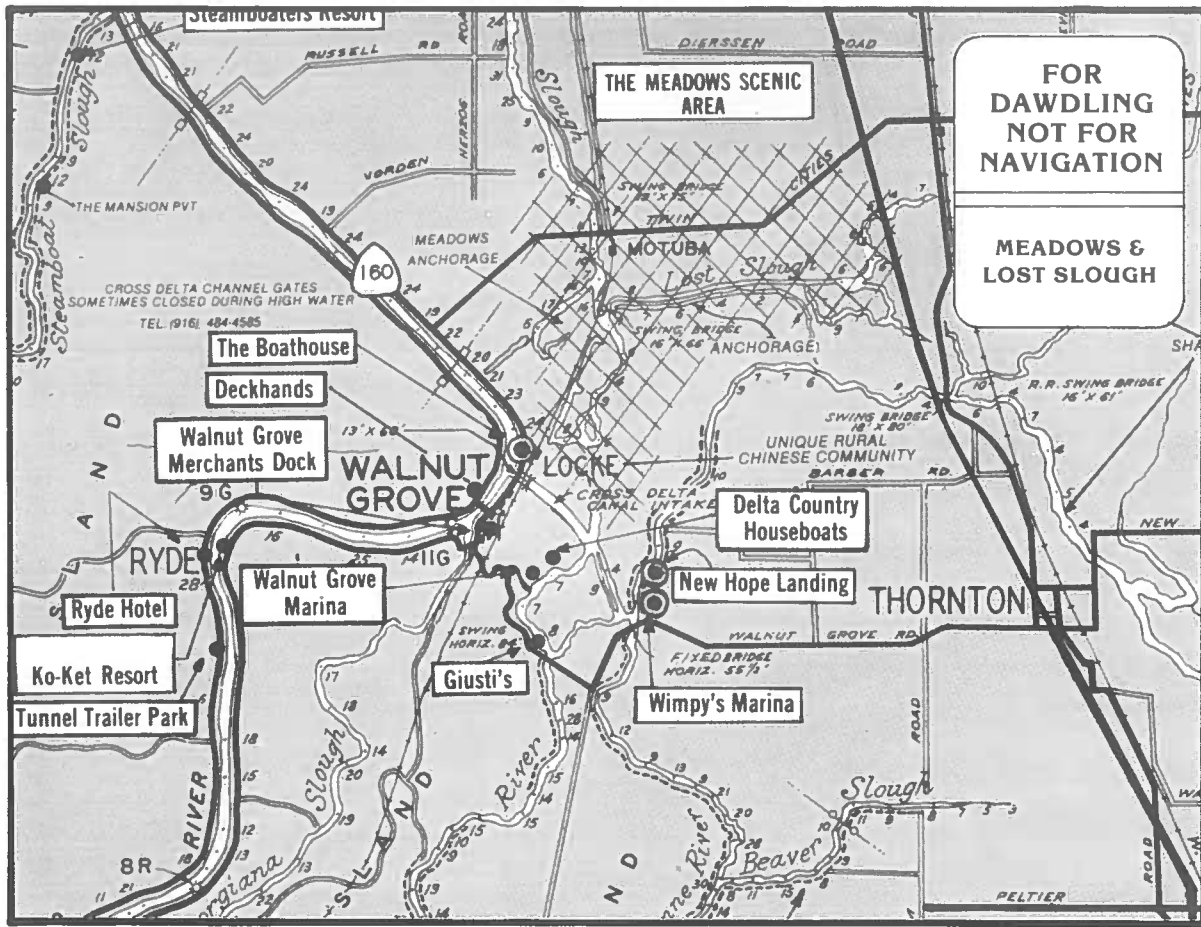
Georgiana Slough (see note B)

Snodgrass Slough (see note B)

Mohokumne River (see note B)

Dead Horse I. OVDH PWR & T CABS AUTH CL 76 FT

SWING BRIDGE SOUTH DRAW ONLY HOR CL 80 FT VERT CL AT HW 5 FT LW 21 FT



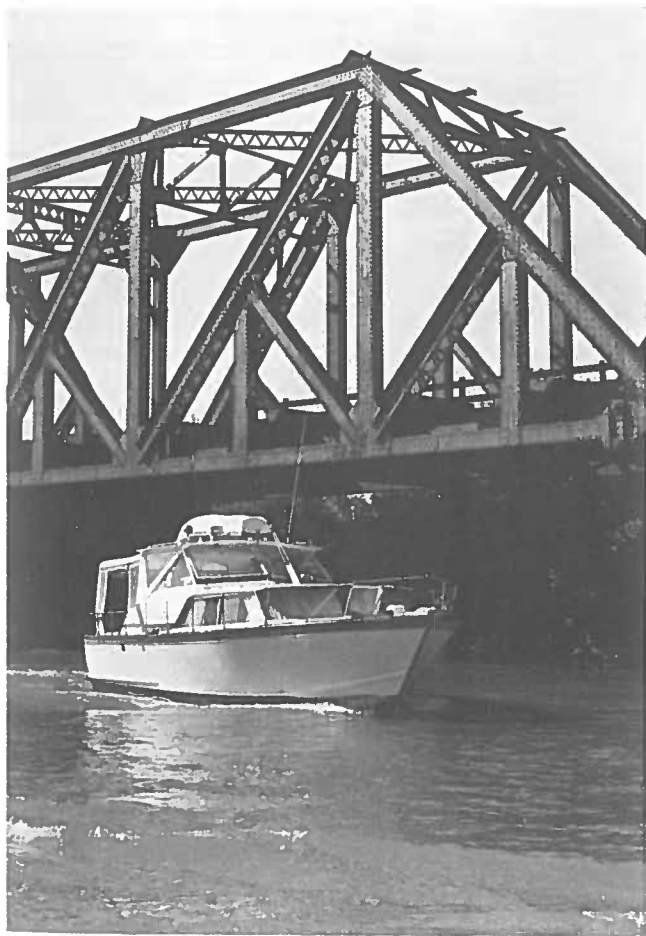
A quiet winter scene in The Meadows.



Jim Hayworth's Mockel sloop is found most every summer at anchor in Lost Slough.

THE MEADOWS & LOST SLOUGH

A PAIR OF
OUTSTANDING ANCHORAGES,
EASY TO GET TO



Almost to The Meadows.

If popularity awards were given for Delta anchorages, The Meadows would win hands down. For its fans are legion and its praises are sung in far off places. It has become the mark by which all other Delta anchorages are measured.

Can one place be all that good? Probably not, but The Meadows does have a lot going for it. First, it has tall stands of trees along its primary bank. They provide shade. They make it cooler, and they are handy to tie a bow line to. Second, the levee is set back a considerable distance from the water, giving a fine shoreline with good land access. You hardly know the levee is there. But it is indeed there, and it helps provide seclusion, but in an unobtrusive way.

The Meadows is a relatively short dead-end slough, so wake-producing "through" boats are no problem. It is sort of a self-policed slow zone and I can attest that it really works. The current and tidal movements are slight and the water is deep, tapering up nicely to the shoreline. You see some very large, deep draft boats in here.

No denying, The Meadows area is beautiful. The late Erle Stanley Gardner called it "the Everglades of the west" and many feel he was not far off the mark in that respect. Meadows-bound through Snodgrass Slough, the course narrows and the brush seems to close in. Vines seem to hang down and there is considerable depth and density to the swampland to the port side. You feel a man could go in there and never be found. Now and again you see a great blue heron take to the air and you are sure there are crocodiles slithering around waiting for a warm body to fall overboard. The close brush deadens the sounds. And if you did not know better, you would swear that no boat drawing over a few inches would ever be able to make it through.

But really, The Meadows is a happy place. On past



Camp-A-Floats reflect off the quiet water of The Meadows.

Lost Slough, through the great black railroad drawbridge, (to be removed) then forward through still another short stretch of close brush and fallen trees, and finally the openness and the happy sounds of The Meadows.

It juts off to your port at a near-90-degree angle, a clean 1,500 yards long and maybe 150 yards wide its entire length. At its end a section kicks off to the left to form a little basin. Most of the anchoring takes place along the slough's west bank, with its more inviting shoreline. To the east are tules and brush and peat bogs and more typical Delta terrain. Behind the levee is a vast, flat plain. And it is from this plain that The Meadows got its name.

The Meadows is more than just a pleasant anchorage—it is a way of life. And there is a form of entertainment that goes with being anchored there. Our boat club goes there for a nine-day raftup every summer with typically over 20 boats in the group. Runabouts are hauled along as commute boats. We have potlucks and singalongs. We go in small and large groups to dine at Wimpy's and Giusti's. We go to Tony's to sip "streakers" and down to Ryde Hotel for fizzes. We devour omelettes at Walnut Grove Marina's Snack Barge and eat steak sandwiches at Al-the-Wop's.

For you see, for all its seclusion, The Meadows is in close to a lot of action. The convenient trappings of civilization are just around the next bend in the slough. We laze around in the water for endless hours, floating on air mattresses and inner tubes. Strangers drift by and soon become friends. I take up my bugle and blow taps at night and reveille in the morning, and they seem to be appreciated.

The floor show is endless. Boats cruise by as though it were Saturday night and this were Main Street and they were in their lowered '57 Chevies. They stare at us and we stare back. They wave and we wave back. We see people we know and people we don't know. It is a good place to study people and their pets. Dogs of every variety are seen. They ride the bows of the boats, their noses thrust out into wind. They too drift by on air mattresses, a part of the gang.

The Meadows can accommodate a hundred boats or more without seeming crowded. And on fine summer weekends the count can get that high, dwindling to a few dozen on weekdays. By mid-September, it can get downright lonely in The Meadows. And on a sunny winter weekend morning, all you are apt to see is a solitary fisherman plugging for black bass—and there are some grand ones caught in the slough.

No one dare speed through The Meadows. I've seen

Right middle, Frank and Bobbie Marceau cruise The Meadows. Right, lazy summers in the water. Below, plugging for bass in the winter.



Right, The Meadows in the summer is a water playground. Bottom, a Meadows raftup in the the stillness of early dawn.



them try, but quickly slow to an idle because of the shouts and the threats and the blowing of air horns. That too is part of the floor show. If the boatman wants to blow off a little carbon that his engine might have accumulated, then neighboring Snodgrass Slough is the place for that.

As mentioned earlier, you arrive at The Meadows via Snodgrass. It then juts off to the right for several miles, seeming every bit like an extension of The Meadows. However, it is more open and often wider. It slips under a drawbridge and eventually tails off into some beautiful territory. It provides numerous fine anchorages, but here you must be prepared to take your lumps from the wakes of boats passing at speed. These are favored water skiing waters. At some times of the year, I've seen slalom courses semi-permanently set up in one part of the slough. And it is fun to go by to watch the feats of derring-do on that single wood slat. But I would not want to anchor on this part of Snodgrass. There are too many other quality places nearby where you do not have to put up with the wakes.

For years the landing fronting on The Meadows has belonged to the Locke family. With little ado, it has let the boatmen use the property, more or less as honored guests. And the problems have been few. Sure, some amount of refuse is bound to accumulate, for not all boatmen are caring. But always there are good Samaritans, boatmen who will clean up after those who have been there before them. And I know local businessmen who have gone there, too, with their trucks to clean up.

Several years ago, the Locke estate was purchased. The purchase included The Meadows and most of the town of Locke. And there was fear that The Meadows as boatmen know it today, might cease to exist. The situation, however, has remained pretty much status quo. Now, the California State Parks Department is making a move to acquire some 500 acres in The Meadows area, with the intention of making it into a state park. The land extends in behind Locke and there are several land owners including Southern Pacific Railroad and the Golden State's own State Lands Commission.

Because of litigation between the railroad folks and State Lands, the land acquisition has fallen far behind schedule. But funds have been allotted and when the legal dust settles, the purchase will be made. After that, it will take several years to "inventory" just what values are to be protected in the acquisition area. And it may be five years before anything much really happens. Parks people expect to keep The Meadows operating very much as it does today, probably with the addition of sanitary facilities and refuse bins. And that is how it should be. The



With the railroad bridge now remaining open, sailboat fleets flock to The Meadows.

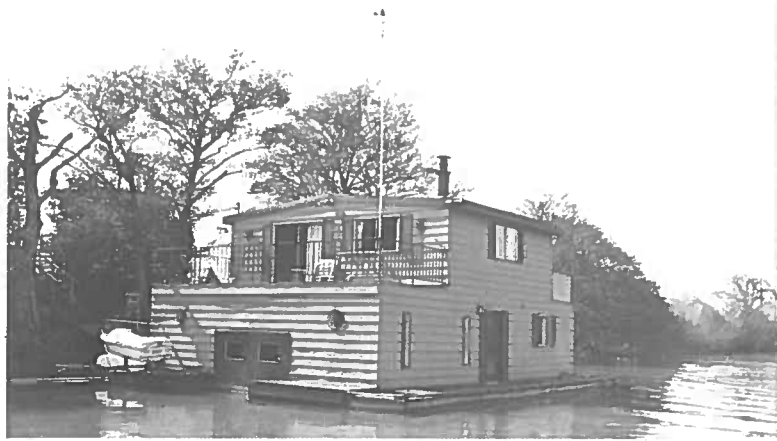
Meadows works as it is today, so why mess with a good thing? A few docks and picnic areas might be set up along the railroad track bed behind Locke, and this would provide a welcome "back door" access to the town.

I cannot proceed to Lost Slough without further discussion of Snodgrass. For its usage varies so much in its short eight miles, that many boatmen use it almost without thinking about it. Meadows-bound, you begin on the slough at Giusti's, proceeding past a few private docks and on to the Walnut Grove Marina sprawling complex, with its complicated potpourri of owners and leasees and sub-leasees. First is Hap Sosso's boatyard, called Walnut Grove Haulout. Then comes Captain C's which includes the fuel dock, marine store and Snack Barge cafe. This is built on an old WWII barge that had battle ribbons of its own. Next is headquarters for Delta County Houseboats, a rental operation that has its own facilities. Along with a considerable amount of berthing, the marina also has an active boat brokerage. With all it has to offer, Walnut Grove Marina is an important provisioning post for boats using The Meadows.

From here, Snodgrass broadens and you pass the wide Cross Delta Channel, off to the left. As if it were guarding the channel, the Walnut Grove television antenna rises from its bank and extends up into the ionosphere. Later the slough narrows greatly as it plunges into the brush on its way to The Meadows. Here, another piece of water forks off to the port, running in behind Locke and eventually making a 90-degree turn to continue along the former railroad tracks. This is known as Dredger Cut, but is not so marked on the charts. Few boatmen use it, but there are some fine anchorages on it after the 90-degree turn. And it is sufficiently deep, for this is where the dredgings came from to build up the railroad track footings. I have gone all the way to the end of this, only a very short distance from the bridge on Snodgrass, but there is no getting through.

On Snodgrass' final run to The Meadows, you are afforded both a port and a starboard route, for there are many small islands in the center. I think it best to stay to your right both ways, keeping an eye peeled for oncoming boats moving at speed. This is a beautiful run in here, always much cooler than out in the open water.

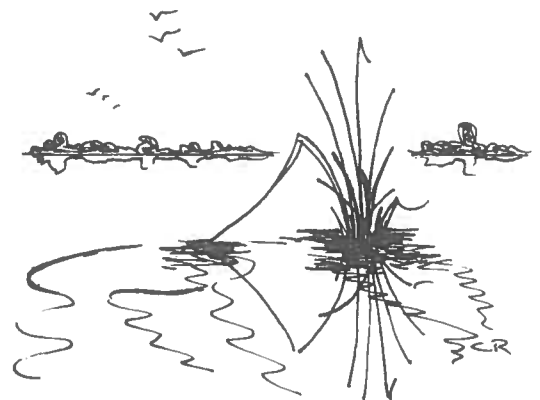
Speed restrictions were recently passed on Snodgrass all the way to The Meadows. So you best take it easy. Yet that section of Snodgrass that doglegs north from The Meadows is not restricted and is fine for skiing or blowing off carbon.



Bill and Sally Nero's floating home by Giusti's. It even has a wet garage for their runabout.



Hard aground on Snodgrass, waiting for the tide to come in.



Lost Slough

No question about it, Lost Slough takes a back seat to its neighbor, The Meadows Slough. Hell-bent for The Meadows, many pass it by with nary a look. And those aficionados of Lost Slough would probably prefer that it remain just that way. For part of Lost Slough's forte is the easy, quiet anchorage life with little traffic passing by.

Cruising toward The Meadows on Snodgrass, the black ominous railroad bridge (to be removed) looms in sight. And there, the entrance to Lost Slough presents itself, off to the starboard. You make a near-90-degree turn to enter and to the port is an island rimmed by a thicket of blackberry bushes. On the far end of the island is a little cabin of sorts and a dock where the *Mokelumne* is generally tied during the summer. Here the slough widens and makes another turn, forming a basin that generally harbors ten to twenty boats in the summer. Here also, the slough splits, being parted by tule berms that give you two distinct routes down the slough with but one cross-over opportunity. Most of the anchoring is done within a couple hundred yards on the basin at the turn.

For years, Lost Slough was considered the province of the sailing crowd. They were unable to clear the bridge into The Meadows, so they had to make do here. But now, even with the bridge permanently open, Lost Slough is still predominantly populated with sailboats. From the anchorage area, the slough runs pretty much straight for three miles or so. The banks are densely brushed and the center berms heavily grown so that you do not see to the opposite side of the slough. There are plenty of anchoring opportunities nearly the full length of the slough, but shore access is minimal. A private farm road leads back to the slough, and I see a spot where small



Lost Slough waters are deep and can accommodate a good number of anchored boats.



Fishing in Lost Slough on a sunny winter day. The weather is fine and the fish are biting.



Lost Slough is still a favorite of sailboatmen and is generally quieter than The Meadows.



Anchored in a sea of greenery at the far end of Lost Slough.

fishing skiffs are no doubt launched.

Toward the end of the slough is what looks like an inner swamp, mostly hidden from view. One day I ventured close enough to look inside and it was like a bird sanctuary in there. The slough tails off into a huge growth that looks like water hyacinth, but is something else. Formerly, the slough continued, becoming an ever-smaller stream and I have gone up farther in it than it was wise to do. Now, a dirt impound that supports the new Interstate 5 highway abruptly ends the slough. But it really deprives boatmen of no cruising water.

Lost Slough demands a kind of respect. You wouldn't ever consider speeding by boats anchored there. In fact, a law regulating speed on the slough was recently passed. But the tranquility of the scene equally requires that you poke along and dawdle for much of the cruise. Fishing is not bad in Lost Slough and you see anglers there in the winter—not seeming to really care if they get a bite or not.

If you want privacy and beauty and quietude, Lost Slough can provide it—and a whole lot more.



Walnut Grove Marina, the main provisioning point for The Meadows and Lost Slough.

Wild Berry Picking

Although it is not a matter of record, it is doubtful that anyone has ever purchased a boat specifically so that he could go blackberry picking. Yet picking wild blackberries by boat is a perfectly respectable and practical pastime in the Delta during the summer. And if the fish aren't biting, well then, maybe you can eat berries.

The tenacious thorny bushes are to be found thriving along the levee banks through much of the Delta. And there seems to be no holding 'em back. You see thick brambles of berry bushes along a levee that the dredge is dropping huge scoops of mud on. The bushes disappear under tons of mud. Gone forever, you think. But next year they are back again, as healthy as ever.

The berries are an excellent addition to any boatman's larder. I like a handful or two tossed into the breakfast pancake batter. Too, I am not averse to eating them with cream—again, at the breakfast hour. I have cohorts who have gone so far as to make wild blackberry fizzes. But they were not greeted with any great fits of ecstasy. There are boatmen who espouse baking blackberry pies aboard and even canning the fruit. But that seems to me to approach work and is not my idea of a fun Delta outing.

The blackberry season starts by Memorial Day and extends at least into late August. In many areas, you can pick them right from the boat. Just nudge the bow into the bushes and start picking. This, of course, is not advisable along rocky levees where you could damage the boat. You can also take the dinghy out for berry forays. You can also go ashore to pick afoot, but this is not considered in the spirit of the sport.

A berry picker who wishes to remain unbloodied will wear a long-sleeved shirt, jeans and boots. He brings a couple pairs of long gloves. For getting farther into the bush when the outside berries have been picked earlier by another picker, he throws a carpet onto the bush which will support his weight when he steps onto it. Some of the real pros have a hinged plank (teak?) about 18 inches wide and 5 feet long, folded to drop from the boat to the bushes for climbing on.

The serious picker has his berry bucket hanging from his belt so that both hands are free to pick.

A nice thing about this sport is that you can snack while you are working. Berries make nice gifts for neighboring boatmen and you can make many new friends this way. Excess berries can be bagged and frozen, to be enjoyed later in the year.

Anyone can find good berry pickings in the Delta. They abound in The Meadows and Lost Slough as well. They grow along Holland Cut and on the back side of Lost Isle. They are just about everywhere.

Anyone for blackberry brandy?



Expert berry picker at work. Note can hanging from his neck.

UP THE MEANDERING MOKELUMNE

FROM THE COSUMNES
TO THE FORK AT
NEW HOPE LANDING

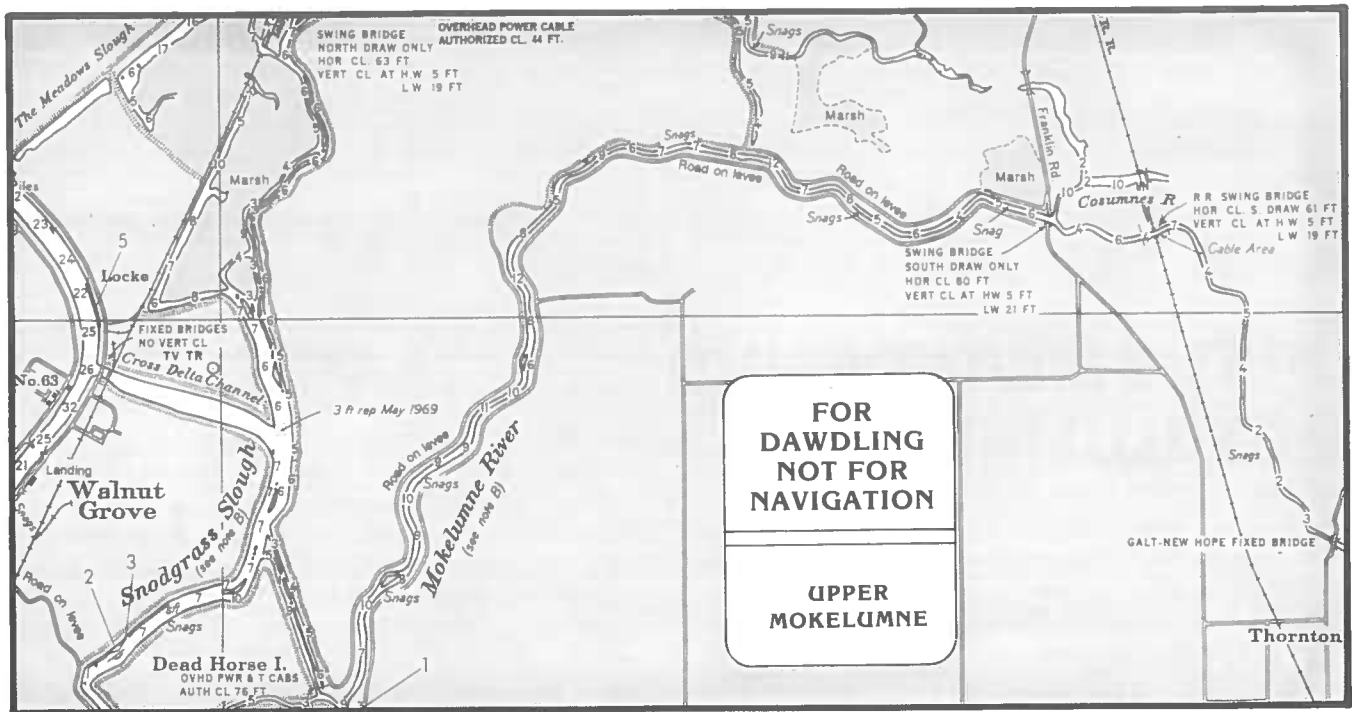


Anchored on the Mokelumne.

The Mokelumne River, while perhaps of no great importance to early-day riverboating, provides some vital waters for the yachtsmen of today. Its two forks, beginning behind and below Walnut Grove, represent a fine pair of waterways. And after they later join to flow toward the San Joaquin as one, they are the site of a string of important and popular marinas and resorts.

If for no other reason, the Mokelumne is worth having around just to hear newcomers try to pronounce it. Say it as *mu-col'-umne*, with the first *u* soft. The river is named after an Indian tribe that once had a village along its banks. Sometimes I call it the Moke, which has a nice ring to it and is in keeping with today's trend of abbreviating anything you can.

I invariably think of that stretch of river above its fork as the "upper" Mokelumne, as do most of my boating pals. And although it is only reasonably navigable for five miles or so, it is an enticing stretch of water I always try to visit when I am in the area. I usually feel comfortable enough running up past the Benson Ferry bridge. Then I'll carefully snake into the Cosumnes River for a look at what once was Erle Stanley Gardner's favorite hideout. For the past year or so, a couple of formidable trees that have fallen into the water here present something of an impediment. And the skipper of a medium-to-large boat must use great care going into the Cosumnes. The Cosumnes quickly opens up into a comfortable tree-shaded basin that has been called, "The Little Meadows". On occasion, I have seen a nice assortment of boats an-



chored in here.

It is thought that the renowned mountain man Jedediah Smith and his party camped in this area during an expedition in May of 1827. In 1849 a ferry was established where the bridge is and the next year it was purchased by John A. Benson who built a wagon train between Stockton and Sacramento. Soon a town named Mokelumne City grew here and it was at one time the second largest city in San Joaquin County. By 1850 and perhaps earlier, schooners began arriving here, and there were great hopes for the new town. After all, it had deep-water access all the way to San Francisco. In August of 1861, the town included a hotel and 23 houses. Then the thriving new town was wiped out by the devastating flood of 1862.

This was indeed a bad flood and the entire area was under water, causing a scarcity of food in the mountain camps and mines. It was then that Dr. D.J. Locke decided to charter a steamer in San Francisco. He loaded it with a variety of goods and food and planned to have it run to his town of Lockeford on the upper Mokelumne. He expected the town would then become a supply depot for the mines. And he rather liked the idea of the prestige his town would garner by being head of navigation on the river. He instructed his captain to use caution and to take as long as two weeks if it seemed necessary.

But the well-meaning Dr. Locke failed to reckon with the cunning of his down-river neighbor, J.H. Woods of Woodbridge. Woods was not exactly enthralled with the idea of his town being upstaged by neighboring Lockeford. He had plans of his own. On February 12, 1862 the tiny steamer *Fanny Ann*, loaded

with supplies, left San Francisco bound for Lockeford with Captain Haggerty at the helm. But when the petite steamer reached Woodbridge, the sly Woods bribed the captain to drop anchor there and to tell Dr. Locke that he would risk going no farther because of the danger of snags. To the joy of everyone in Woodbridge, the supplies were off-loaded there. The citizenry staged a gala party during which they collected \$200 as a gift to the benevolent Captain Haggerty. They offered him 260 cords of wood if he would make continuous trips to Woodbridge. It is reported that the captain declined the kind offer.

To say the least, Dr. Locke was not pleased with these goings on. So he once again journeyed to San Francisco, but this time purchased the twin-engined steamboat *Pert*. But the purchase was contingent on delivering the boat to Lockeford. And sure enough, on April 5 *Pert* steamed into Lockeford and its Captain Allen collected his money.

With *Pert* as the beginning of his fleet, Locke formed the Mokelumne River Steam Navigation Company and quickly expanded by buying the *O.K.* and the *Mary Ellen*. To what must have been the joy of Mr. Woods, the *Mary Ellen* proved too big for the run and never got up river farther than Woodbridge. However, the *O.K.* lived up to its name and irregularly called on Lockeford for the next few years. Then service petered out.

Such were the trials and tribulations of the era. You start this mini-cruise where the river forks at Don and Jen Deckert's New Hope Landing, a marina with fuel, a store, rental houseboats and camping. This site, extending down to Wimpy's Marina, was a former river-



Left, youngsters at play jumping off the Moke's Twin Cities Road bridge. Bottom, Petrified finds a quiet anchorage on the Moke. Below, an early building on the Moke's bank.

boat landing for the town of New Hope, now located several miles away and called Thornton. Thornton today is an inland town, sleepy and run down, boasting little more than a tomato cannery, a beverage company and an off-ramp from Interstate 5.

There is always plenty of action around old New Hope. The marinas here are located in front of the levee and the grounds can be splashy on plus tides. The area has an early history of flooding. And it is said that one early New Hope Landing resident tired of the inundation and moved his residency permanently to a tree top. You see boats busy launching at Wimpy's. And there are boats headed up the Moke's South Fork and boats headed up the Moke's North Fork and boats Meadows-bound, heading in behind Deadhorse Island. This is an important and busy waterway intersection. But after you slip by New Hope Landing, you enter into another world. The trees close in and the boat traffic disappears. There is a hushed tranquility, a placid river scene.

For the most part, the river is narrow in this stretch. But here and there it widens to provide some inviting anchorages. And if you don't keep a keen eye peeled, you can pass by an anchored boat, hidden by the brush, and never see it. I can think of no finer place in the Delta to drop the hook if you want to get away from it all. In recent times, the scene has been intruded upon slightly by construction of the Interstate 5 overpass. But the trees and the lush growth very quickly deaden any traffic sounds.

Many times I've dawdled in this area. To watch youngsters jumping off the drawbridge into the calm river. To study a couple old buildings on the river bank that date back to before the turn of the century.



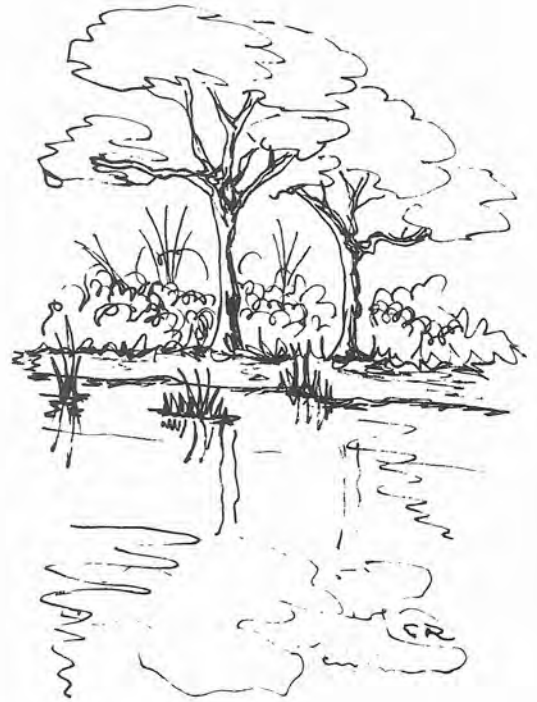
To picnic or to beach the boat and go for a swim.

I normally do not consider the river navigable much above the Cosumnes unless you are in a small boat, and even then you must be careful. Up by Lodi, the river is dammed to form Lodi Lake on which no power boats are allowed.

Someday I want to put a small boat or raft into the water just below the dam to drift or paddle down to New Hope just so I can see this stretch of water. Jet-skiers I know tell me it is a beautiful up-river run and they have invited me to go along with them. But when I hear them gleefully talking of the logs they must jump to make it through, I somehow lose my enthusiasm for the undertaking.

On numerous occasions I have visited the Mokelumne up above Lockeford where the water runs swift and clear. Today, it is difficult to imagine river-boats traveling to that area. But then, dams have altered the nature of most of the rivers in California. Once I traveled with the San Joaquin County Sheriff's water patrol up here in what they called a jet-sled. It was a stout, beamy, flat-bottomed aluminum boat powered by a jet outboard. We had some exciting times on the river that day.

But for Delta boatmen, the upper Mokelumne just above New Hope, remains a little-known stretch of scenic waterway to be enjoyed at one's leisure.



Hap's Amphibian

Since the first instant he set eyes upon the amphibian, Hap Sosso knew he would one day possess one. There were times he dreamt about it, and always they were good dreams.

The Amphicar is a nifty little package. And it is a true amphibian. It has a pair of props astern that work off the rear end in a clutch arrangement, very much like a pair of Vee drives. The front wheels serve as rudders of sorts. The "hull" is steel and the wheels protrude through rubber boots, not unlike a boat's stuffing box. The craft will go about 11 knots in the water and close to 80 mph ashore. It is powered by a thrifty four-cylinder Triumph Spitfire engine.

When Hap opened up a boat yard in Walnut Grove, he knew the time had arrived to acquire an Amphicar. Only about 300 of the cars were built. A German firm manufactured them from 1962 through 1964. Of that 300, Hap figures about 150 remain. As you can imagine, the attrition rate is high on a vehicle such as this. Hap began to search for one. He also commissioned an outfit called Auto-Search to help fine one, which it very quickly did. Hap drove to Denver to tow it back with a motorhome.

From there it was all fun and games. Typically, he drives it down the launching ramp at nearby Wimpy's. He shifts into "water" and drives off into the Mokelumne River. One evening while driving it in the river with the headlights on, a fellow at the bar who had tiddled a few spotted it. He could not believe his eyes. And it is said that he has sworn off the sauce for life.

Hap talks of the big 70-foot boat he is going to build. The Amphicar will be aboard, serving as both his dinghy and his transportation on the highway. He drove it in the Walnut Grove parade in 1979, with the bow of a row boat bolted to its front. He called it the "Wop Navy".

However, Hap looks at how it is appreciating in value and he takes it out less and less. Only on special occasions does he wet its hull now. Most often it is padlocked in the garage. Hap also has dreams of possessing lots of money some day.



Props engaged.



Splash in.



Away we go.

TWO FORKS OF THE MOKELUMNE

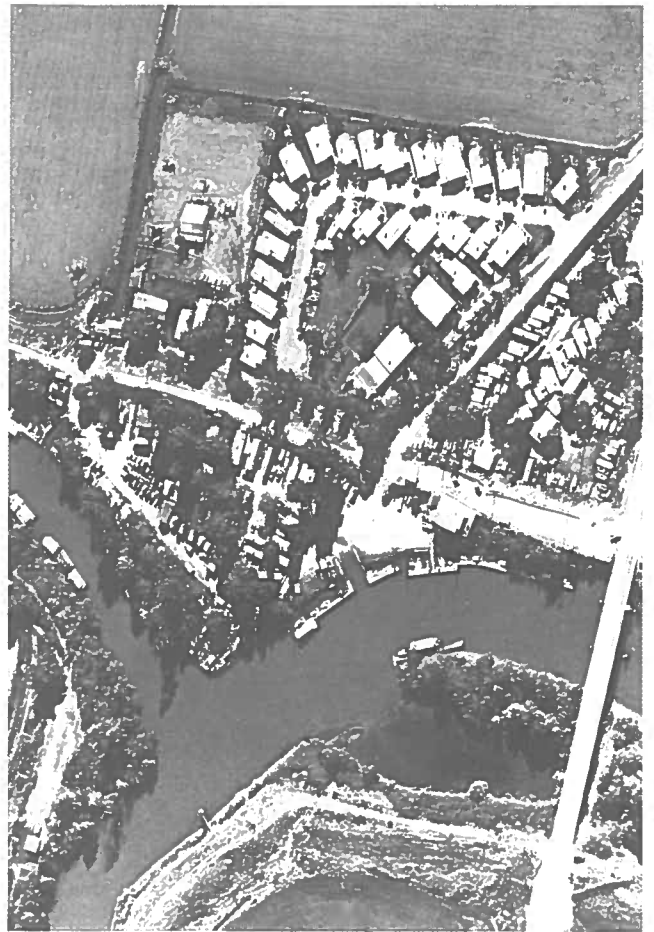
NORTH FORK, SOUTH
FORK AND ON INTO
THE SAN JOAQUIN

Each boatman in the Delta establishes his own boating patterns. And each has his own favorite routes for getting from hither to yon. When I think about it, I conclude that I use the two forks of the Mokelumne almost as much as I do any water in the Delta. They serve as splendid connectors from my end of the Delta near Stockton to The Meadows area and to Walnut Grove and the Sacramento River via the Cross Delta Channel.

I've always wondered just who named the Mokelumne's two forks. Obviously, he was operating without a full deck, or his compass was broken. Both forks run pretty much north and south. And if anything, a more logical designation might have been East Fork and West Fork. I know I have to think about it before I can be sure which fork is which by name, although their routes are etched into my mind.

The meandering Mokelumne forks at New Hope, with its South Fork rushing by Wimpy's and heading toward Terminous. Its North Fork makes a 90-degree turn from the main river and heads toward Giusti's in a narrow channel that is not over-deep at low tide and is impeded by a fixed, private bridge. For years I did not realize that this short little channel was in reality the North Fork itself. Large craft cruising between the two forks will often go around Deadhorse Island and take Snodgrass Slough (or vice versa) to connect between the forks, in order to be sure of plenty of water or because they cannot clear the private bridge.

It is an interesting phenomenon, but both forks of the Moke seem to be larger than the mother river off



The Mokelumne forks at New Hope.

Right, Wimpy's is a popular stop where the Mokelumne forks. Below, the tide goes out, leaving a rental houseboat on the South Fork high and dry.



which they derive. I suppose water from Snodgrass and the Sacramento via the Cross Delta adds to the flow.

As was mentioned in the last chapter, the Mokelumne never had much historical significance as far as river trade was concerned. I can't even recall a riverboat named after it—perhaps it was because of that difficult pronunciation! For a time, the impetuous Dr. Locke ran the Mokelumne River Improvement Company that cleared the Moke of snags above Georgiana Slough. For this service, his company collected ten cents per ton on cargo hauled up the river. But this venture saw no long success, as the mines began to peter out and the railroad began eating into the riverboat commerce. So much for history.

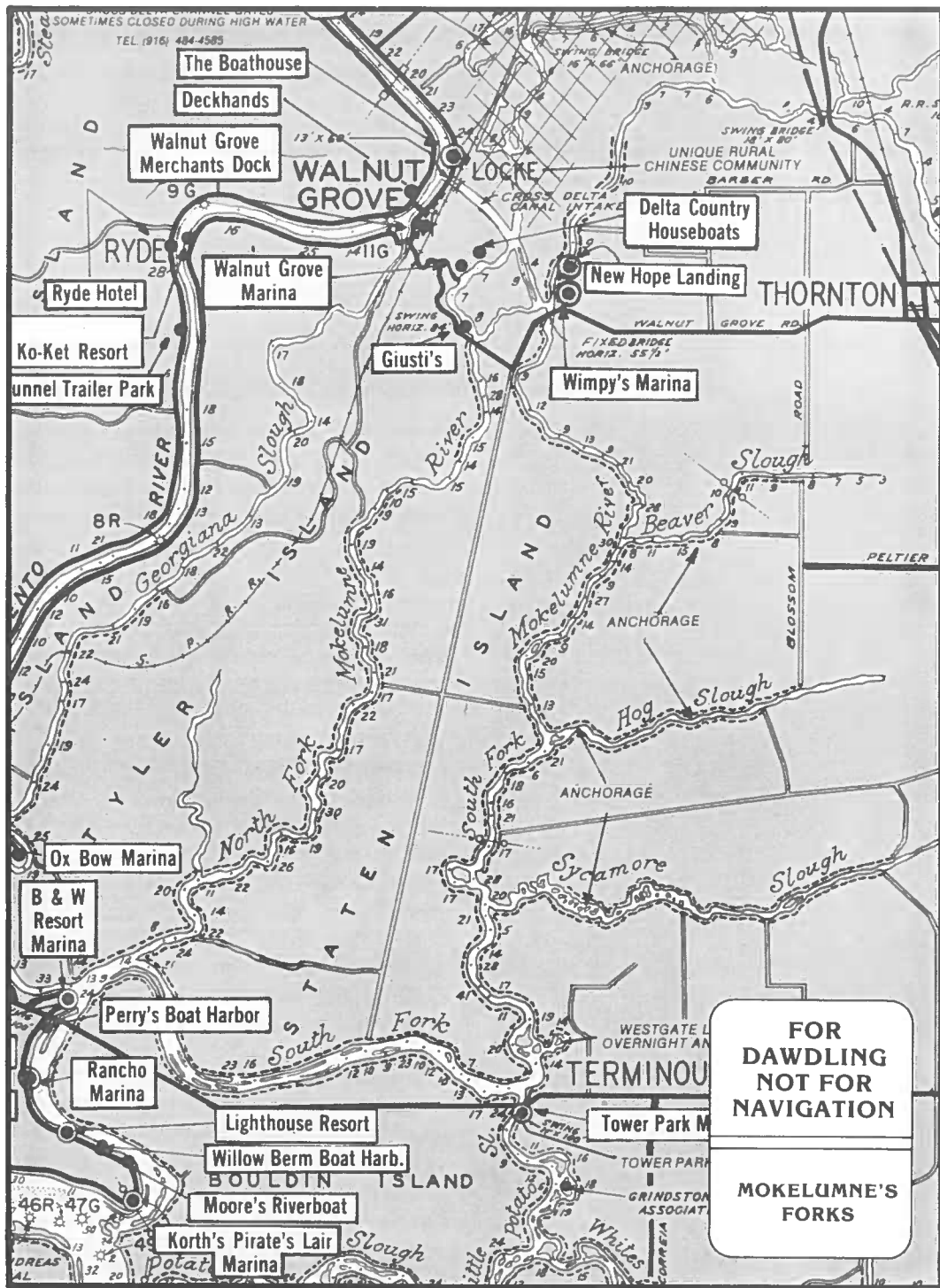
The Moke's two forks meander around Staten Island before again joining. For as far as the eye can see on the island, there is corn. And I am told by a

farmer who should know what he is talking about, that this is the largest single cornfield in the country. Considering that most of the major Delta islands are given over to agriculture and consist mostly of private land that is daily trespassed by boatmen, the farmers are a pretty friendly lot. They coexist reasonably amicably with the boating fraternity.

But there can be problems. In 1978 I motored to Sacramento to help wage a battle against legislation that would have made all of Georgiana Slough and the Mokelumne's North Fork, plus other waterways, 5 mph or restricted speed zones. Fortunately, we won the battle due in no small part to some knowledgeable members of the Sacramento Y.C. But another battle was waged in 1983, and we lost. The restrictions were much less sweeping and did not cover the Mokelumne. The chaps behind it were attorneys representing farm interests. Boats make wakes and wakes can erode levees. Levees cost big bucks to repair. It is easy to understand the consternation of farmers, but taking our boating rights from us is no solution. I've digressed, now back to the Mokelumne.

The South Fork

The Moke's South Fork, in my estimation, is the more heavily traveled and the prettiest of the two forks. First off, it represents the shortest route from the Stockton area to The Meadows area via Little Potato and Little Connection Sloughs. Second, it seems somewhat narrower, with brush-lined shores and numerous low-tide sandy beaches that invite anchoring or leisurely midday picnicking. Too, there are three dead-end sloughs feeding into it that can offer some variety if one is in the mood for exploration. The first several miles below New Hope are especially beautiful.



A conveyor that once loaded grain onto barges in the South Fork, still stands today.



Skippers of some larger craft prefer the North Fork because of its better water depths and because they fret over clearance at the fixed bridge at Wimpy's. More than once I've peered into the depth-finder while cruising the South Fork, and not once have I seen any numbers small enough to worry me. My friends in larger craft regularly use this fork without difficulty. Except during times of flood, I've never seen the bridge at Wimpy's with less than 13 feet clearance and I make a point to have a look at it the several dozen times I am there every year.

The only difficulties I know about on the South Fork were experienced by my friend Reggie White when he got off route and led a group of boats down Beaver Slough. But then, Reggie is the kind of guy who buys several antennas each year because his first mate Carol forgets to lower them before they enter their covered berth.

Beaver, Hog and Sycamore Sloughs all enter from the east. Although they offer a few pleasant anchorages and some excellent quiet places to fish, they have never enjoyed any particular affection of boatmen. Just short of Terminous, San Joaquin County has been developing Westgate Landing, a fishing access with restrooms and picnic facilities. In conjunction with this, CAL Boating has dredged around a few of the tule islands it owns thereabouts, with the idea of ultimately developing them into better anchorage areas. But even before this, the area had been a favored anchorage for knowing boatmen and, at least in my circles, was (and still is) called The Bedroom.

Little Potato Slough meets the South Fork shortly, flowing past the great spread of Tower Park Marina in

the long string of old packing sheds on the levee, then through the busy drawbridge. You can still see the remains here of the old Terminous cable ferry that shuttled autos to Staten Island where they could make the straight-arrow drive down the center of the island to the Walnut Grove area. The fork then swings westward, broadens, and makes a five-mile run to meet the North Fork in a large basin just above Georgiana Slough.

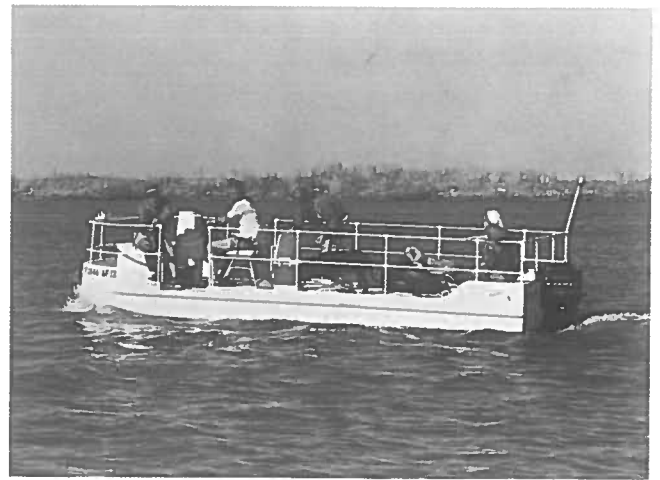
I can never get very excited about this cross-portion of the South Fork, although it does have a number of tule islands where you can drop the hook for perhaps an afternoon's session of basking in the sun. Mostly for me, it is just a fast piece of cruising water. It does provide good, safe water skiing. Much of the rest of the South Fork is also popular with water skiers. And you can see them staking out their beaches most any summer weekend, spreading their gear on the beach, to free the boat for its designed purpose—pulling a skier at speed. However, I think of water skiing on the narrow, windy upper few miles of the South Fork as too risky a proposition on a busy weekend, although there are many who do it, and skiers are something to watch out for when cruising this area.





Tower Park Marina, by the South Fork swing bridge, is a busy place.

Giusti's was a favorite stop for the late Erle Stanley Gardner.



Above, cruising the Mokelumne. Below, a nice pair of stripers.



The North Fork

It was on Memorial Day weekend, I believe. And a large group of Sacramento Yacht Club boats was stacked up at Giusti's. One member's trawler was anchored on the down-river side of the drawbridge over the North Fork, having arrived a few minutes too late to catch the bridge tender. Tsk, tsk. On the Delta, you have to always keep in mind the bridges. I happened by the scene and shuttled the party in aboard my runabout. I imagine they found some way to get back after dinner.

From Giusti's the North Fork heads approximately southwest, joining the South Fork just above Georgiana Slough. It is fine, fast cruising water, unimpeded further by bridges and plenty deep its entire route. It offers excellent and safe water skiing all the way. There is no surfeit of beaches along the way

and much of the levee surface is securely ripped. Tule islands are few and boatmen must enjoy this waterway for what it is—a safe, fast and deep route for getting from one place to another.

Very often when I cruise to The Meadows area by way of the South Fork, I will return by the North Fork for variety of route. Too, this represents the shortest route there for Bethel Island boats and those boats berthed at marinas all the way from B & W to Owl Harbor.

It is interesting that there are essentially no resorts on either fork of the Moke except at their beginnings and ends. On the South Fork, it is Wimpy's at the beginning, then B & W Resort Marina just after it joins the North Fork (with maybe an easy aside to Tower Park). With the North Fork, it is Giusti's, then nothing till B & W.

Top to bottom, the Mokelumne seems able to handle the whole Delta fleet at times. Traffic on the Moke is considerable. A steamboat puffs out of B & W's harbor. Making movies at Perry's.



The Moke's Mouth

I liken those last few miles of the Mokelumne, after the forks join to surge toward the San Joaquin, to Sunset Strip, boatman's style. For in those brief few miles, there is stuffed an amazing potpourri of boating facilities and activities. And there is a large number of boats berthed and nestled in their slips there. Month for month, year-round, it is one of the most active boating areas in the Delta. The resorts are connected by a good assortment of levee roads leading to Highway 12. When skippers aren't moving around by boat, they are shuttling from marina to marina at the helm of their autos. This sector can be compared to a medium-sized community, one with an excellent communication system—the jungle drums of the tules.

First up is Jim and Joan Deak's B & W Resort Marina just below the busy Highway 12 swing bridge. A full-service marina, it has a protected harbor, fuel dock, easy launching ramp, snack bar and more. It is one of the very few places on the Delta with cabins. This makes it a favorite of small-boat pilots who will boat all day but then are able to return to a comfortable bed for the night. This also is home for the Mokelumne Yacht Club.

Then comes Perry's Boat Harbor, home of the Perry Nut. (You don't eat it, but install it on your prop to prevent electrolysis damage.) Seldon Perry has a fine home on the tip of this island marina connected to shore by a wooden bridge. He and his wife graciously let a movie crew use their beach and grounds for the filming of *Swim Team* in 1978. Moore's Riverboat was also used for the movie. Perry's has a boatyard, easy-in fuel dock that includes diesel, a "minute-lift" for boats in need of quick prop repair and other facilities. This is one of the Delta's earliest marinas.

Next you pass Sycamore Park, now abandoned, but a few years back a thriving little fishing resort with a good-sized mobilhome park. The Andrus Island flood of 1972 raised havoc with this entire area, wiping out



most of the resorts that were at ground level behind the levee. Many were able to recover and rebuild quickly after the levee was repaired and the billions of gallons of water pumped off the island. But some never did make it and a few are still struggling. Sycamore Park is one of those that did not make it.

For anyone who was not there, it is difficult to imagine how frightening the flood must have been. It swept whole fleets of boats through the breach in the levee. Some are missing still, perhaps buried under tons of soil beneath one of today's thriving corn fields.

Hal and Becki McCabe's Rancho Marina was one of those hit hard. But with a lot of elbow grease and a modicum of long green, they are bringing it back. It has camping, a fishing pier, a mobilhome park with hookups, launching and a beer bar and snack bar called The Fishery. Next is Lighthouse Resort, a deluxe RV park with all the trimmings—launching, fuel, boat storage, and other good things. Up front is a cocktail lounge and restaurant and some very good times are had in this casual establishment.

Then comes Willow Berm Marina with one of the finest fuel docks on the Delta, and it includes diesel. In its covered berths, hidden by stands of eucalyptus trees, are tied some of the finest yachts you will find in the Delta. Occasionally I will put-put in there in my runabout for a look around and I usually come out feeling somewhat the peasant. But doesn't everyone one day expect to buy a dazzling great yacht?

Next is Moore's Riverboat, certainly one of the most popular places on the Delta. Captain John Moore presides over this marvelously renovated and converted old Delta freighter with its guest docking out front. A neat 156 feet long, it floats still and you can feel it rock when a good wake rolls in. The overheads are festooned with ladies' panties and there is live music weekends. Much more on Moore's in the restaurant chapter. Out back is the boatyard called Delta Boat Works.

Next is Lloyd Korth's beautifully manicured and peaceful Pirate's Lair Marina—towering palm trees, trimmed green lawns, well-scrubbed mobilhome park, fuel dock and a little cafe and store, berthing and launching. Out back, behind a man-made lake, is the Korth home of Hawaiian design. High on concrete pillars, with a sweeping concrete walkway leading up to it, it is stunning. Korth is another of the early Delta marina owners. This is also home for Delta Fish Finders, a tackle shop and fishing charter business along with an art shop specializing in "river rats".

Wakes from passing boats are a continual problem for unprotected marinas on this stretch of the Mokelumne. And you really need to have your boat well tied and well fendered here. I expect one day at



Sailboat snuggled into the docks at Lighthouse Resort.

least part of this area will be zoned 5 mph.

Unceremoniously, the Mokelumne flows into the San Joaquin and the river is very broad here. On the right, downriver, is another string of resorts and marinas that also occupy Andrus Island. In the boating scheme of things, they are just considered an extension of our Sunset Strip. Across and up the San Joaquin a short distance, is an entrance to Frank's Tract.



Lawmen Of The Delta

Keeping the peace and being around to lend a hand when one is needed is no simple matter out on the Delta's 1,000-mile waterway. Waters of the Delta proper meander around in five counties, if you don't count a small amount of water by Del's that is in Alameda County. There are also a number of fair-sized cities through which a substantial amount of Delta water flows.

It would appear to be a jurisdictional briar patch. However, the five sheriff's departments that have some sort of Delta water patrol work together quite smoothly. The problem is more one of logistics—how can a handful of patrol boats be where they are needed in this vast Delta waterway?

Most of the boats are equipped with VHF marine radio and monitor channel 16. Some are also outfitted with CB radio. Most also have their own department radios on board. That is a lot of chatter to listen to. Because these law boats are more numerous in the Delta than Coast Guard boats, they are often the first to arrive in emergencies.

Because many county borders run along the middle of waterways, some areas find they are patrolled by boats from two different sheriff's departments. Boats from one county will venture into another's territory when help is needed, if they are closest at hand.

Besides rescue work, the patrols do routine law enforcement, much as officers in a patrol car do ashore. They write speeding tickets, and at least one boat is radar-equipped. The San Joaquin Sheriff's boat sometimes has a computer aboard to instantly check CF numbers to see if a vessel is properly registered or if it is stolen. Sometimes they have to dive for cadavers.

Some of the funding for Delta water patrols comes through CAL Boating and the department also sponsors training programs. It encourages uniform enforcement by the various law enforcement agencies.

The water patrol officers become known to regular boatmen, much like the cops on the neighborhood beat at home. They are boatmen just like the rest of us, subject to breakdowns and errors in judgment. Once I towed in a sheriff's boat that was broken down. And I must admit I rather enjoyed the feeling of superiority it gave me. Another time I was out with a water patrol in a special boat that broke down in the upper Mokelumne. We all ended up in the water (cold) towing the boat by hand for a long way upstream to its launching site. It was in a remote area and no help was available.

I consider the water patrol officers the boatman's friends. They are sure handy to have around when you need them.



The sheriff stops an amphibious motorhome I was doing an article on.

GENTLE GEORGIANA SLOUGH

Jack London used to hang out in his houseboat on Georgiana Slough. Each day he would write, and then in the evenings he would visit nearby friends. Although it has not been recorded, I'm sure this amiable 15-mile slough must have inspired him to scribble some better-than-average prose.

For there are good vibes aplenty along this winding brush-lined slough that snakes through the fields of Andrus and Tyler Islands from the Sacramento River at Walnut Grove to the Mokelumne. Narrow, but not too narrow; winding, but not too winding—by God this is one fine stretch of water.

Georgiana presents an excellent waterway route for "middle" San Joaquin River boatmen, bound for Walnut Grove or the upper end of Steamboat Slough. Smaller craft that can clear the Cross Delta Channel use Georgiana on whim, as a variation of route when traveling back and forth between the San Joaquin and the Meadows-Walnut Grove area. For boats running between Sacramento and Stockton, Georgiana is considered a shortcut.

And this was historically true for the old riverboats, although the slough never enjoyed any great amount of riverboat traffic because it was snag-ridden with some never-easy-to-negotiate tight turns. It is said that paddlewheelers on Georgiana during flood times would shortcut across the inundated fields using "wheatfield navigation".

As the rivers and sloughs of the Delta silted in from placer mining, a different breed of paddlewheeler evolved. First, the conditions favored the stern-wheeler rather than the (twin) sidewheeler. Since this type boat, by design, was narrower, it had a better chance of clearing the brush along the banks. Plus, the paddlewheel was to the stern in a relatively protected position. Paddlewheelers of this era were designed with a boxy hull that was the epitome of buoyancy,

A FINE RUN FROM
THE SACRAMENTO TO
THE SAN JOAQUIN



Liberty on the way to the Sacramento.

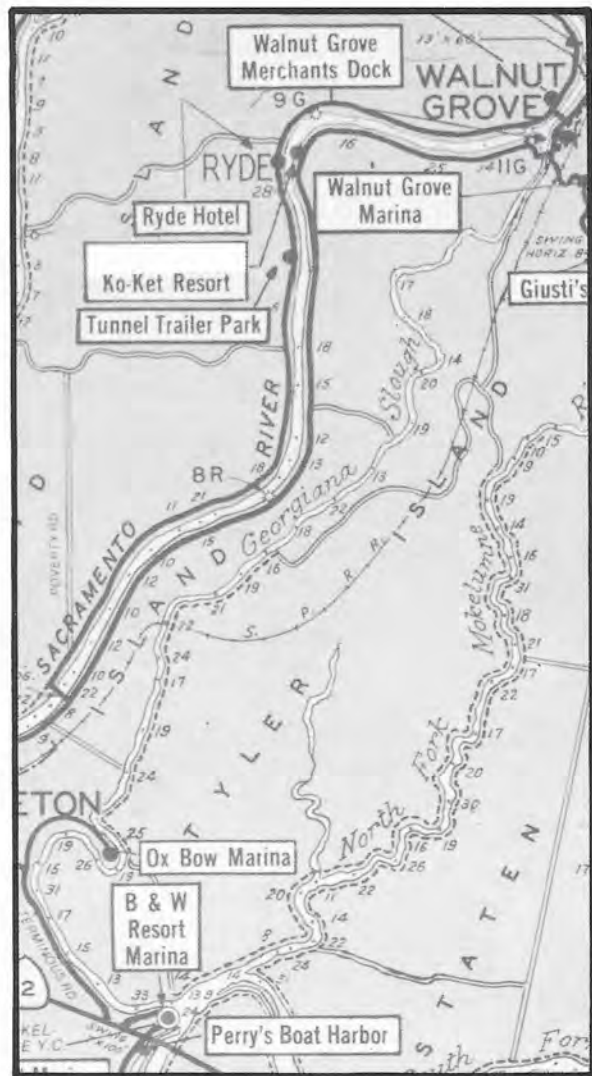
and draft was measured in mere inches. It is said that some of these boats could navigate on a heavy dew if necessary.

One also has the impression that most of these old riverboats were large, imposing craft—and many were. But there were many at under 100 feet, perfect for runs on the narrow rivers and sloughs.

Georgiaiana has the dubious distinction of being one of the last of the sloughs to destroy a paddlewheeler by snag. Rather late in the game it was, on November 2 of 1921, when the 125-foot *Neponset No. 2* snagged on Georgiaiana and went to the bottom. The pink slip to a paddlewheeler was not of much value then.

So it was decided not to bother with recovering this once-proud riverboat. The government snag boat came along and tore the old boat apart, depositing its remains on the bank. From there, no doubt, it kindled the fires that warmed the bones of tired old river rats who resided in the area.

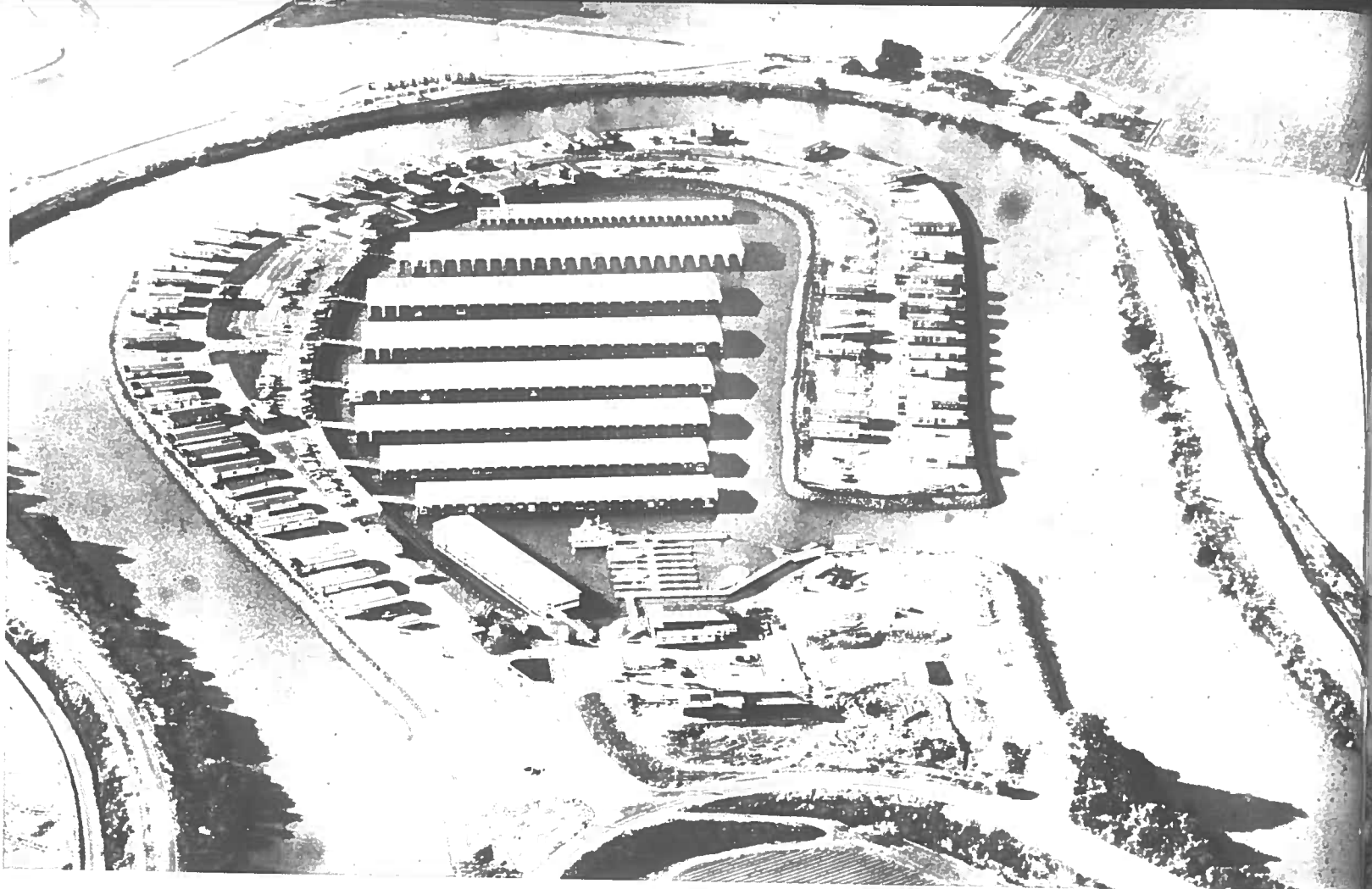
Snags on Georgiaiana present no particular problem for today's skipper and the water is adequately deep. Most Georgiaiana-bound skippers have at least three bridges to reckon with. Two are on the slough itself. They are reasonably well-manned but offer only modest clearance. The third is very often the "entry bridge" at Highway 12 on the Mokelumne or from the upper Sacramento River, the bridge at Walnut Grove.



**FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION**

**GEORGIANA
SLOUGH**

Brand new Ox Bow Marina on Georgiaiana.



Ox Bow Marina, 15 years in the making and a deluxe addition to Georgiana.

Because I live in Stockton, I more often enter Georgiana from its Mokelumne end, slipping in just past B & W, then cruising easy past a bevy of private docks and floating recreation rooms. From there, it's on to the brand new Ox Bow Marina, one of the latest and finest additions to the Delta, and the province of Jules Duc and Lloyd Korth. Fifteen years, Ox Bow took, from inspiration to execution. But once work started, the marina went in in no time at all. Built in a natural, great sweeping ox bow with a sort of inner lake, the marina has a deluxe mobilhome park with all waterfront sites. And they are not hidden behind a levee, either.

The unique arrangement of the ox bow does not require 5 mph zones out on the slough. So the boatmen passing by do not have their wake to worry about. The Ox Bow has covered berthing, a fuel dock that includes diesel and a few marine supplies. Later its store will be expanded and a deluxe motel and restaurant are planned. This fine addition to the Delta is the only commercial establishment on Georgiana Slough.

Georgiana is also a favorite of bank fishermen who have good access to both banks much of the way. And they sort of add to the flavor of an easy cruise through

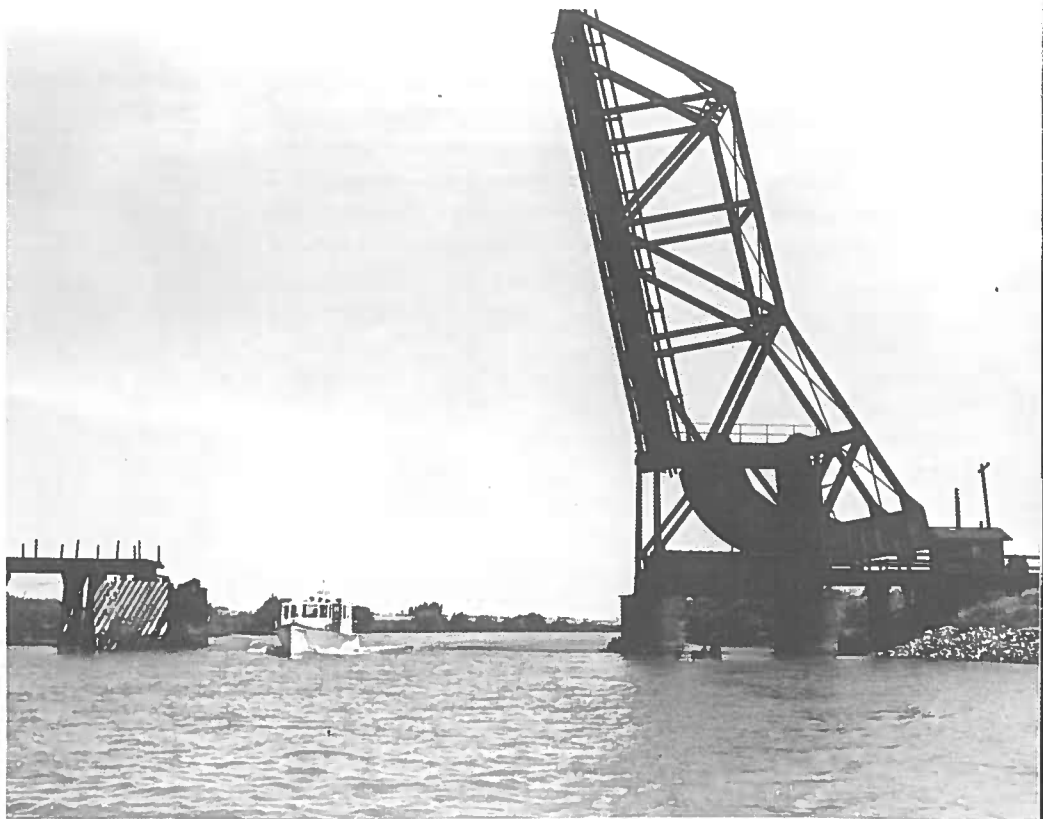
the slough. When we wanted to set up a recreational vehicle for a waterside photo for the cover of our Delta map, where else did we go but Georgiana? And it was perfect.

There are a few good places to anchor along the slough, but not a great many because of the width of the slough. Coming out of Walnut Grove, the slough makes a near 90-degree bend and widens, with some fine beach area off to the left. This long was a favorite anchoring spot where you could get ashore. But it apparently had been deeded to, or sole access given to the Boy Scouts. Like so many other places in the Delta, boatmen still use it, permission or not and I hear no ill talk about the practice.

As you enter the slough from the Sacramento end, you first encounter the most modern swing bridge I've seen in the Delta. Then there are a few private boat docks on the left bank. Among them is Hap Sosso's. Hap owns the little amphibious Amphicar automobile. But don't worry, he doesn't drive it in here.

In a way, Georgiana has probably not changed a lot since Jack London used to prowl its waters. It is still chockful of inspiration.

Below, boat camping along Georgiana. Right, a stout old cruiser toots open a Georgiana swing bridge.



NOTE: In early 1983 the County of Sacramento made some restrictions on the use of Georgiana. There is a 5 mph zone for the first two miles on its northerly (Walnut Grove) end, a "restricted wake" zone from the northerly end of Oxbow to the Moke-lumne and no water skiing on the entire slough. This makes a cruise on the slough take longer, but hardly less enjoyable.

The Georgiana railroad bridge remains in the open position. But since the first edition of the book, the rail line has been abandoned and the bridge torn down. You can see its remains.

Feed 'Em Fenceposts

During the first half-century of paddlewheelers in the Delta, most of the venerable old vessels would burn wood. The readily available cottonwood yielded a hot fire, but burned fast and had to be constantly replenished. Of course, river oak was used, too. Bull pine was favored, but this was also a favorite of the fast-growing railroads and not always available.

A good-sized steamer might burn a cord of wood per hour, at a price of perhaps 12 dollars per cord. Although captains would like to leave port with enough wood for their cruise, they often made advance arrangements with cutters to take on a load off some river bank along the route. The wood was usually cut into four-foot lengths. A captain who thought he might have a riverboat race coming up, would have his stoker stack out separately some of the finest wood, to be used at just the proper moment when an extra burst of speed (heat) was desired.

Coal was also used, and much of this came from the mines on the slopes of Mount Diablo and was on-loaded at Black Diamond—the town we now know as Pittsburg. It is estimated those mines yielded about \$20 million before they were closed by competition from higher-grade coal from Oregon. A big paddlewheeler might consume 20 tons of coal on the

round-trip, Sacramento-San Francisco run.

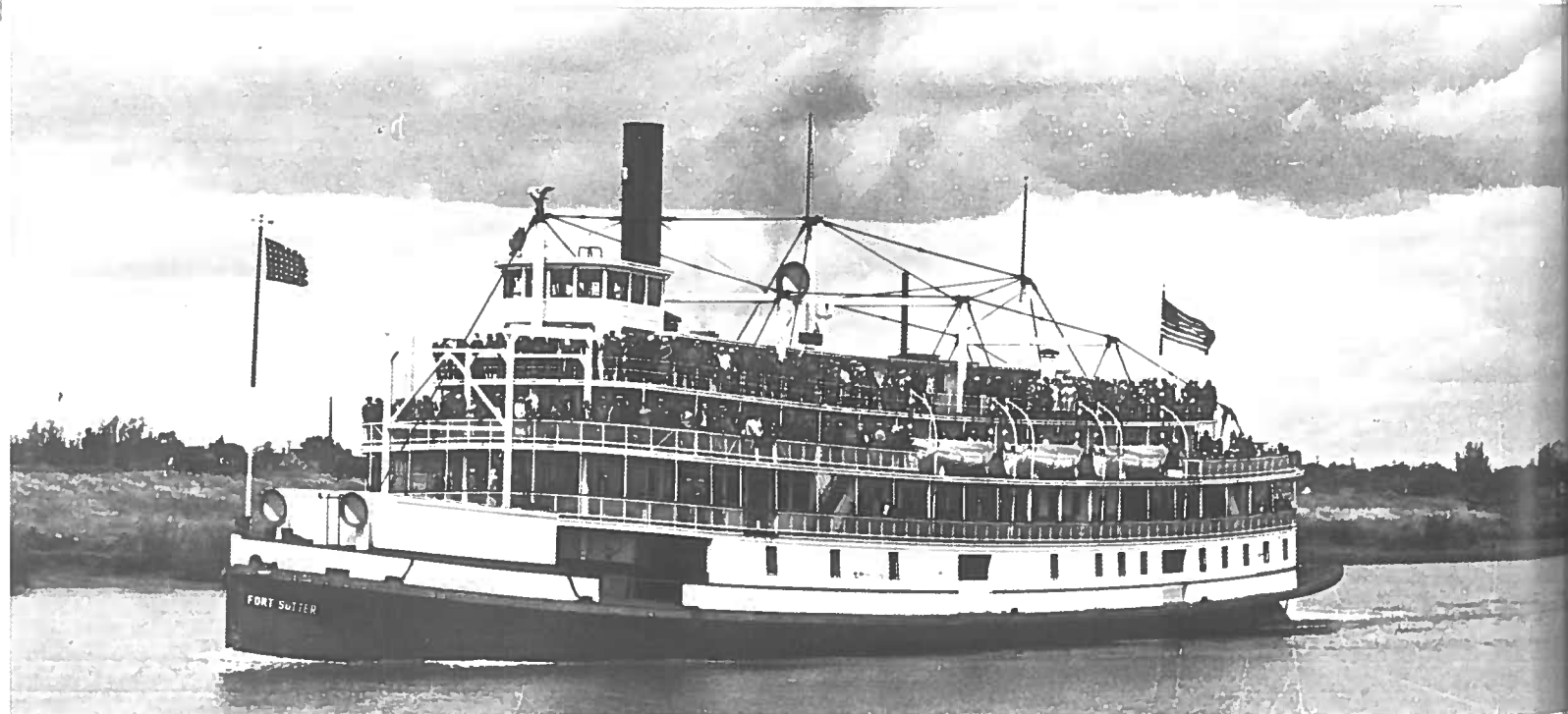
By the turn of the century, most Delta paddlewheelers had been converted to oil. This might have occurred a decade earlier if it had not been for the violent explosion of the first oil-burner, Julia in 1888 at South Vallejo. The fire burned a good section of wharf and took 30 persons to their graves. For the next few years, oil was considered too dangerous a fuel.

In Stockton it was the custom to stack the cords of firewood on the docks, handy for the paddlewheelers to take on as fuel. However, in 1873, disaster struck. The area was visited by a devastating flood that washed all the fuel off the Stockton docks. What were the waiting paddlewheelers to use for fuel?

Today, it is difficult for us to realize just how enterprising some of those old-timers were. It occurred to them that the surrounding farms all used wooden rail fences. A raid was made on nearby farms and wood from the fences was used to stoke the boiler fires of the steamers.

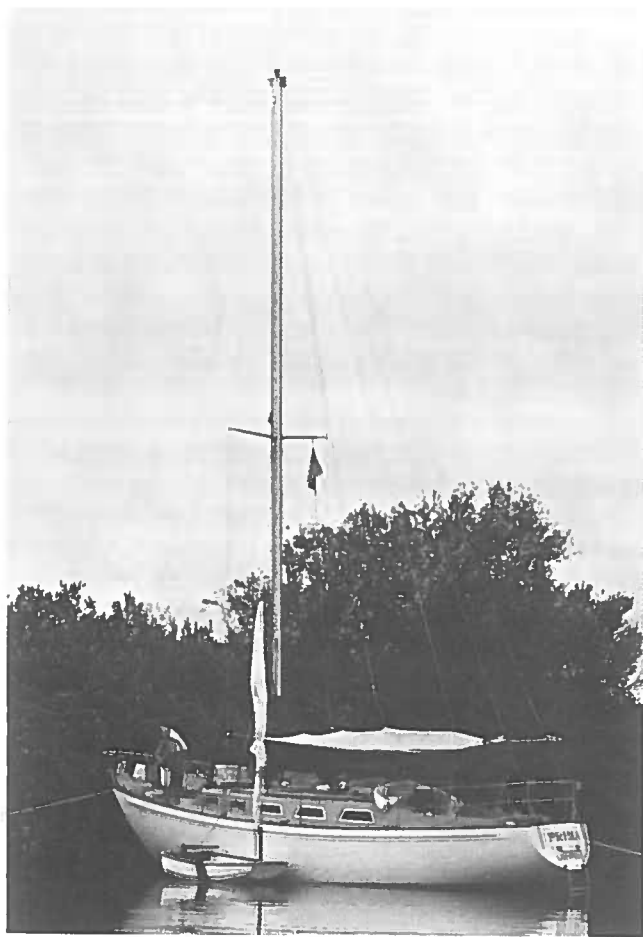
And as oil was soon to replace wood for steamboat fuel, barbed wire soon was to replace wood fence rails.

From Covello Collection



A PAIR OF POTATO SLOUGHS

INCLUDING LITTLE
POTATO, "BIG" POTATO
& LITTLE-KNOWN WHITE SLOUGH



Prima at anchor on Potato Slough.

No one has ever said that the Delta place names are pretentious. Confusing at times, perhaps, but never pretentious. In this vein, two excellent sloughs have names that are confusing to many boatmen and can be considered colorful only in the way that things in the Delta are done. Potato Slough and Little Potato Slough the charts call 'em. In conversation, one has to keep his "Potatoes" straight, or communication is apt not to occur. Such a communication gap is evident, for example, when you drive over the Terminous drawbridge that spans Little Potato. The official road sign labels it as Potato Slough. Naming the sloughs Big Potato and Little Potato might have helped keep things sorted out, but that did not seem to be in the scheme of things.

Little Potato Slough feeds off the Mokelumne's south fork at Terminous, running along Bouldin Island, past White Slough and on to join at a point with Little Connection Slough (which seems an extension of it) and Potato Slough.

Potato Slough runs roughly east and west from the Stockton Deepwater Channel at Light #51 between Venice and Bouldin Islands before it meets up with its sister slough. Both sloughs fit well into the Delta pattern and are heavily used.

Little Potato is a part of the busiest route from the Stockton area to The Meadows area. It, along with Little Connection Slough (elsewhere in the Delta there is a Connection Slough, but no "Big" Connection. Maybe there is a method to this madness.) serves as a handy connector between the channel and the south fork of the Mokelumne. I cruise Little Potato numerous times every month and think of it as little more than a part of the south fork system. Its west bank along Bouldin Island is mostly riprapped and there is little to be said about it. But its east side is dotted with tule islands and offers several excellent



Just a portion of the Tower Park facilities.

anchorage. I'll often slip around one or two of the islands just for variety of route.

Here too, just north of White Slough, marked by tall stands of poplars, are the island headquarters of Grindstone Joe's Association and the El Camino Boat Club. I will often cruise by both just to see what is snuggled to their docks. And they are both active boating groups.

Next up is a straight slow run past the facilities of Tower Park Marina. The main buildings here once were produce packing sheds, strung out along the levee bank. They were served by a railroad spur. Each of the covered berthing sheds here has a vegetable name, such as "carrot" and "lettuce". The tall conveyor building once was used to transport produce up off the riverboats to be sorted, then dropped into waiting railroad cars. It has been retained and over-shadows the swim beach. The old water tower serves as the resort's logo. Here there is a sense of caring about history.

This marina-resort may not be the largest in the Delta in terms of numbers of berths, but it is becoming a model facility and is probably the most complete in the Delta. It has a good store, marine supplies, an RV park, a cocktail lounge, launching facilities, a fuel dock that includes diesel, new boat sales and an excellent restaurant. The busy drawbridge beyond the marina is well manned during the summer. There are excellent anchorages just beyond the bridge off to the east in the Westgate Landing area, as mentioned earlier. The marina is home for the Tower Park Yacht Club.

Little Connection Slough runs for perhaps a mile and a half and has tule islands along its center part of the way. By staying to the west side, you avoid some of the marina slow zones. Herman & Helen's Marina, the province of Dave Smith, is the main supply stop here. And this sleepy old fishing resort has been transformed into a lively place with rental houseboats and ski boats, a cafe, groceries, a fuel dock that includes diesel and much more. Next door, a lumbering

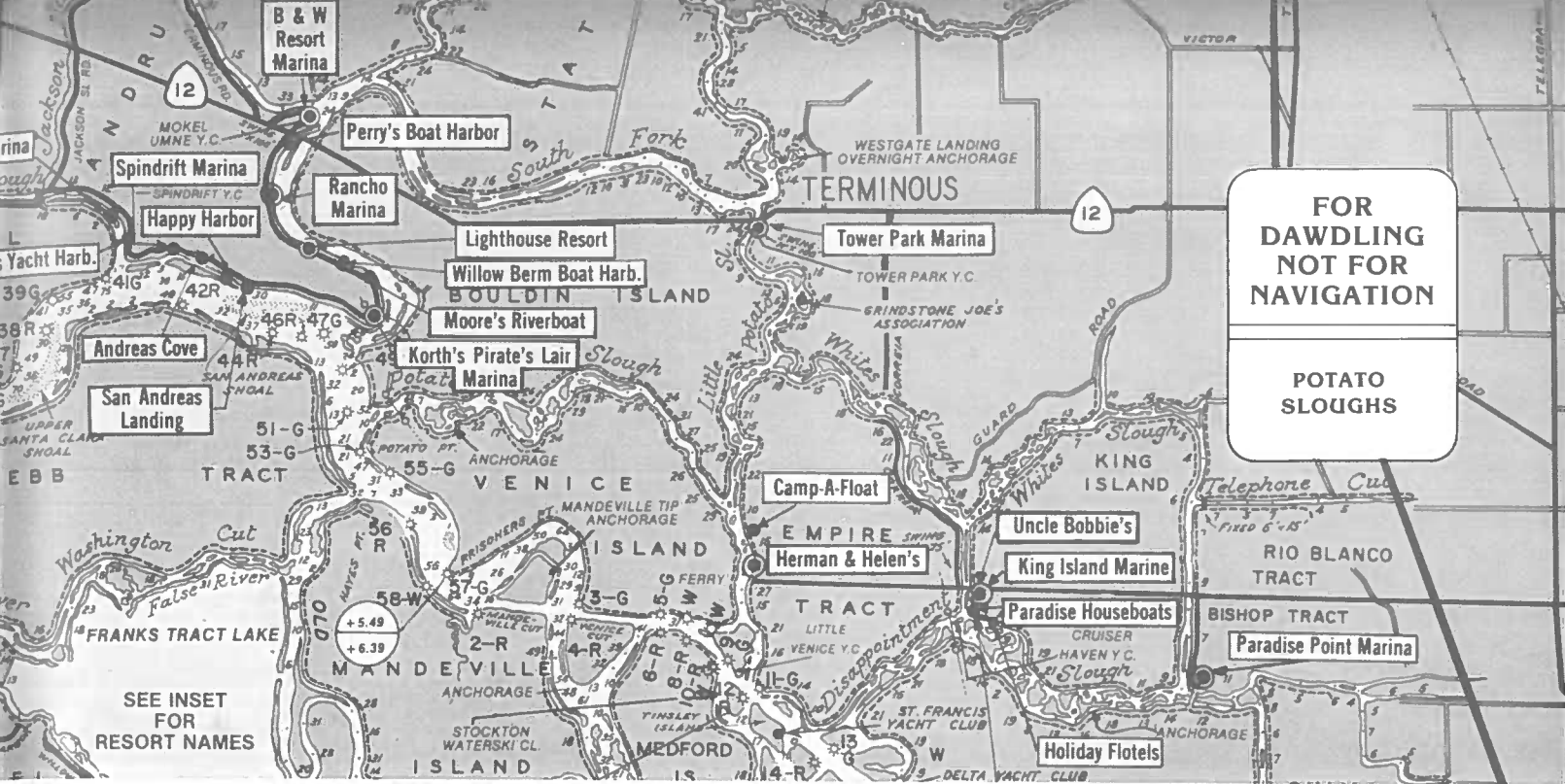
cable ferry shuttles vehicles to Venice Island.

I rather like the idea of marinas retaining their original names. There really were a Herman and a Helen here at one time. Herman was an industrious commercial catfisherman and at one time ran a fleet of rental fishing boats that numbered perhaps 100. Helen would rise at 3 a.m. daily to bake pies for their cafe. Always there was the worry of floods and much of the marina was washed away when floods inundated Empire Tract in 1957 and again when the Venice Island levee broke in 1982. The River Route postman starts his water route from this marina. To the north of the marina is Camp-a-Float, a rental outfit that will transform your RV into a motorized houseboat. Near the channel on Little Connection is the island headquarters of Little Venice Yacht Club. Venice Island is home for two prestigious duck clubs. One you see on the corner of the island where the two Potato Sloughs meet. The other faces the channel across from Mandeville Tip and is the bailiwick of Barron Hilton.

It is difficult today to comprehend the importance that the potato crop once held in the Delta. It represented millions of dollars—and those were pre-WWII dollars. Millionnaires were made and unmade by potatoes. Even today, the Delta potato crop is far from being modest. The potato keeps cropping up, if I may try a pun. There is a Potato Point. Produce buyers used to flit from island to island to make their deals, driving fast long boats built by Stockton's Stephens Boat Works, and called "spud boats". There were large riverboats that primarily hauled potatoes and were called potato boats—the last of these remaining is the derelict *Mandeville* pictured in this book. Each year Stockton would have a parade and festival to honor the potato, during which the year's potato king would be crowned.

Potato ("Big") Slough is a beautiful broad stretch of water with a string of lovely islands along much of its center. It thus provides two distinct cruising routes for the skipper on the move, as well as some nice exploring waters for one who wishes to poke around the islands. Toward the western end of the slough is a good-sized island called Fig Island, although it is not so marked on the charts. Fig has a gentle curl to its eastern side and all summer long there is a good-sized fleet at anchor here.

It generally harbors a number of large sailing craft. And the anchorage is a favorite of Bay Area skippers who slip in off the channel and enjoy its deep water and amiable setting. It is isolated, yet handy for a quick runabout hop to Moore's Riverboat, Spindrifft or other favorite spots on the channel or this end of the Mokelumne. The island also has a private cabin and landing owned by a grizzled Stockton skipper called "Balky". Balky complains long and loudly about



trespassing on both his dock and his property. Of course, it only takes a single bad apple to mess up the barrel. Yet it is surprising that with so many places to go, boatmen will still trespass on posted property.

But the vibes in this anchorage are primarily good ones. Groups get together in little raftups. Dinghies are constantly on the move and there is a lot of swimming and lazing around on air mattresses. When the wind comes in strong, it is here that you see daring youngsters dangling from lines off flapping spinners. They put on a pretty good show for all in the anchorage.

Farther in on the slough there are other clusters of islands that see near-equal anchorage activity. And there are skippers who leave their boats here all summer. Fishing is surprisingly good in this slough also. I once made a run through here in the company of Jay Sorenson, a fisherman of great skill. Although we were not fishing, Jay stopped, baited a hook and dropped a line in a certain spot. "That's my fishing hole," he said. "Whenever I'm on my way in, I always stop here and give that hole a couple minutes. You'd be surprised how many big stripers I've pulled out of there." He did not get one this day.

White Slough

As wonderful sloughs go, White Slough is probably the best-kept secret in the Delta. It runs roughly eastward from Little Potato, intersected by Honker Cut about midway and by Bishop Cut at its far end. In its run, there are several dozen small islands in its center. These neatly divide it into two distinct courses with numerous crossover opportunities. But the skipper who wishes not to get lost best keep to one bank or the other. It can get confusing here.



Herman & Helen's on Little Connection.



Leaving a Palo Alto Y.C. raftup on White Slough.



A lovely anchorage on White Slough. See the houseboat nearly hidden by the tree.

For a long while I have used a portion of White Slough as an alternate route from the Stockton area to Little Potato and points beyond. I enter off Honker Cut running in a small boat. And I have great fun on White running between the tule islands, "switching banks". Occasionally I see a water skier and sometimes a fisherman plugging for black bass. Seldom do I see any other boats, except at the Little Potato end where several might be anchored.

Less often have I entered White from Bishop Cut, for that run is somewhat longer. But when I go there, I see even fewer boats. So for me, White Slough became a scenic stretch of water I usually saw at speed on my way to somewhere else. I never much thought of it in terms of a fine anchorage.

In the late summer of 1979 I was clipping down White Slough, Stockton-bound after a long day of photography out on the Delta. Just for variety, we decided on returning via Bishop. Then, a short distance past Honker Cut I saw a forest of sailboat masts protruding up through the tule thickets ahead. I could not believe my eyes. Out came the cameras and I made haste for the masts. There, in a comfortable harbor formed by a couple of islands, were anchored perhaps 20 boats of the Palo Alto Yacht Club. An inflatable was motoring over to deliver some people to a car waiting on the levee road. Dinghies were moving about. Someone played with a small sailer. There

were swimmers and floaters. There was the festive air of a private anchorage. This club apparently comes here annually.

I was excited and began to explore on. We found a houseboat in a beautiful spot in the shade of a comely tree. We saw cruisers, and a variety of craft using this end of the slough. We went everywhere, systematically—getting lost! The old Delta Dawdler, the guy who figured he knew just about all the good spots on the Delta, was shown a new anchorage—and by outsiders at that! I very nearly ran out of gas before I gave up my exploration of the area.

Probably one of the reasons White Slough does not see a lot of anchorage activity is because the low bridges on Honker and Bishop effectively make it a dead end for large craft. Thus, it is a fairly long cruise for an anchorage unless the planned stay is long. If the skipper brings along a runabout, supplies are near at hand on both of the cuts.

Entering White from Little Potato, you pass the island headquarters of a group of members from the Diablo Power Squadron. They call it Devil's Isle, but the beautiful setting belies the evil connotation of the name. Farther down the slough, you see the old landing from the Correa cable ferry. Several years ago when the Honker Cut bridge was down for repairs, this ferry was pressed back into service to provide land access to Empire Tract.

Ghost Town Of Terminous

Awhile back, there was a television news piece about agricultural experiments taking place near the Delta town of Terminous. But when the name of the town flashed across the screen, it was spelled Terminus, which is the correct way to spell the word — but the wrong way to spell the town. For you see, someone erred when they applied for a town post office, and the town has had to live with that error ever since.

Not that there is much of a town left. These days Terminous is a ghost town in the truest sense. Back in 1900 an enterprising chap named John Dougherty constructed a road out of Lodi and terminated it where the Mokelumne's South Fork and Little Potato Slough meet. It soon became an important riverboat and barge landing and a small settlement blossomed.

In 1907, Western Pacific Railroad ran a line to it and then the action really began. Huge packing sheds were constructed along the levee bank, stretching for more than a half mile. Terminous became the largest produce terminal in the West, shipping as many as 20,000 carloads of produce a year. Asparagus, celery, tomatoes, potatoes and many other crops were brought in by barge from the isolated nearby island farms. Here the crops were washed, trimmed, crated or sacked and packed into the cars on the spur tracks.

At one time, over 4,000 workers and their families lived in a "box car city" situated where the Tower Park campground now is operating. As many as 10,000 workers were said to be employed at Terminous in a single day. And it surely had to be an active place.

Eventually though, refrigerated trucks eliminated the need for hauling produce by rail. Western Pacific pulled out in 1959 and Terminous died. Ten years later it occurred to someone that the old produce sheds that had survived fire might make the basis for a fine marina. And it has grown ever since. A few blocks from the river is the old Terminous General Store, still operating today. The town school house is a private residence.

For a while, a small marina called Bayport-on-the-Delta operated just north of Highway 12, but it has been closed for years. There have been efforts to revive it, but always there are problems with permits.

Nearby, a cable ferry ran to Staten Island, but it was closed down a few years ago. The county is building a fishing access with picnic areas and a dock nearby at a former riverboat landing called Westgate Landing. What with that and growing Tower Park and nearby Interstate 5, the old town may yet come back to life.

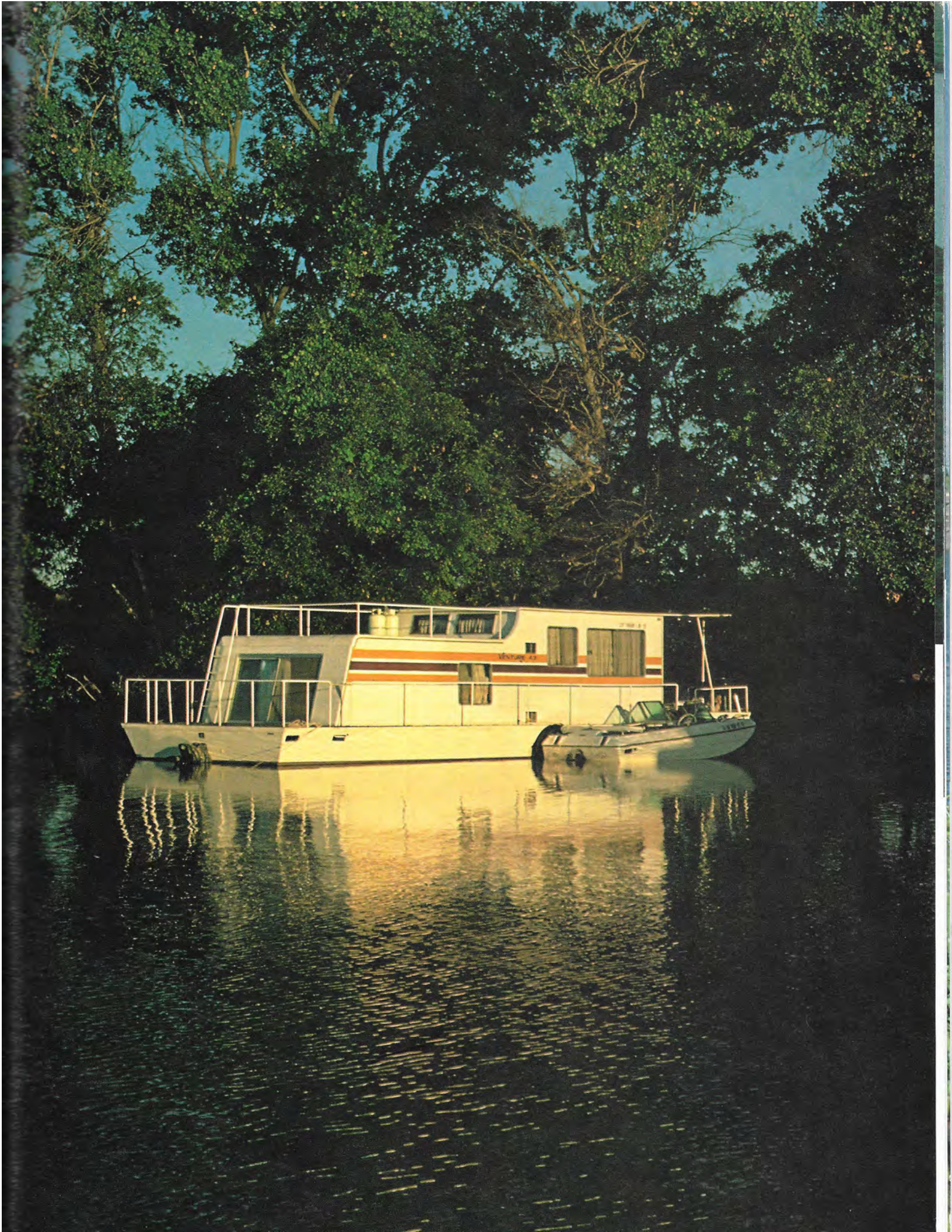


The old market in the quiet ghost town of Terminous.



Tower Park Marina during its annual DeltaFest & Boat Show in May.

Facing page: A Venture 43 houseboat snugged into a comfortable Delta anchorage. The Delta has almost a surfeit of pleasant places to drop the hook.





The Happy Annie in the Opening Day parade at Bethel Island. This beautiful 1929 Columbia River trawler, owned by Wayne Johnson, was restored by Marine Emporium.



Flags aflap with color in front of the San Joaquin Yacht Club headquarters on Opening Day.

Good friends, a good raft-up and good music can make a Delta day.





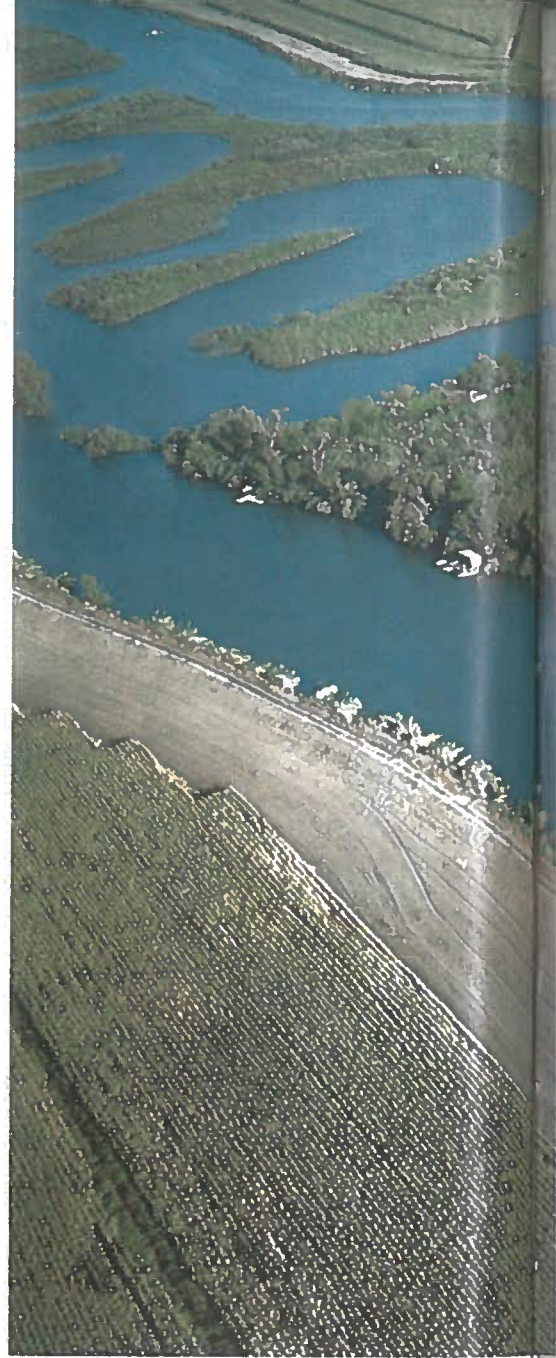
The St. Francis Yacht Club's elegant digs on the Delta's Tinsley Island.

If you've been around the Delta for awhile, you'll remember this diving helmet from Moore's Riverboat.

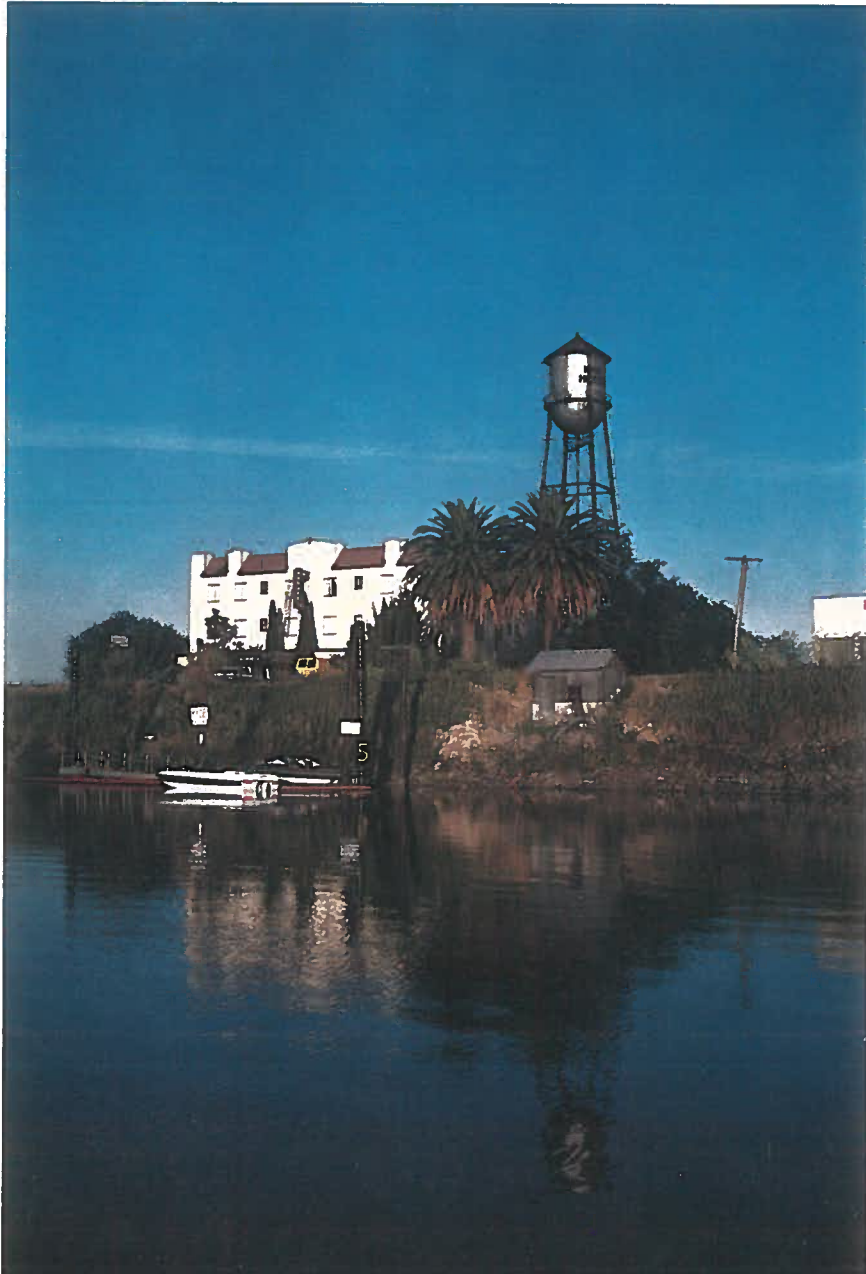




With the railroad drawbridge over Snodgrass Slough now remaining open, The Meadows sees more sailboats.



An aerial view of Dissappointment Slough, with its interlocking chain of lovely islands.



The historic Ryde Hotel on the Sacramento has entertainment and plenty of action.



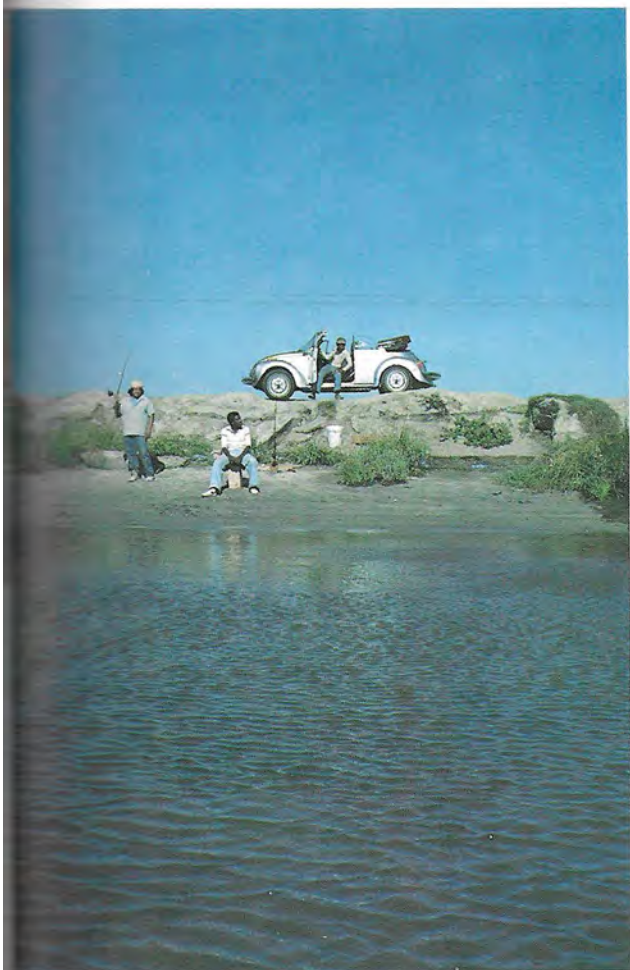
Jerry Ladley's SabreJet blends in with the colorful Delta foliage.



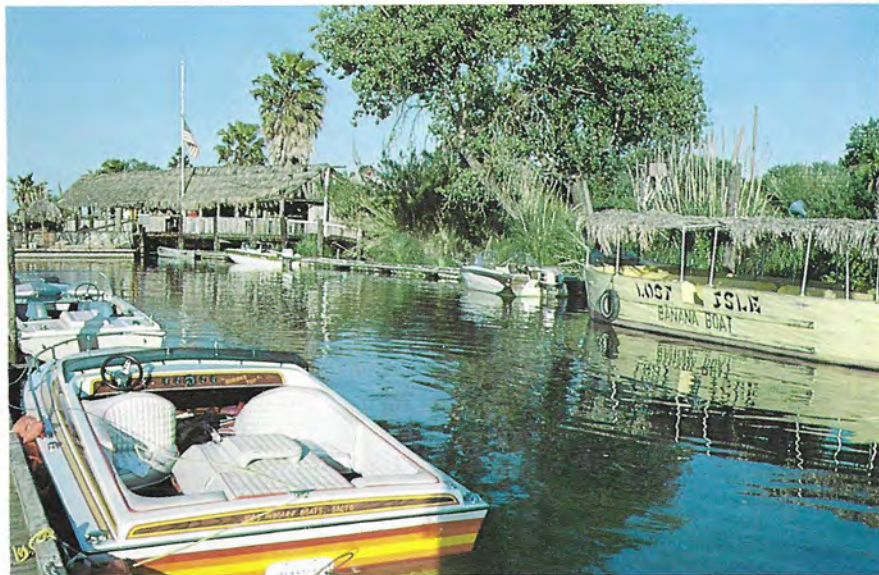


The Delta is a place of many contrasts. Above, the sun struggles to cut through the fog as a runabout clips up the river. Right, Jan Burns waits for the fog to lift so she can ski. Below, a sailboat is silhouetted by the setting sun.





Think fishing on Old River. Who cares if the fish aren't biting?



Accessible only by boat, 52-acre Lost Isle near Stockton, is a boatman's favorite.



Members of the Classic Yacht Assn. gather at Village West Marina for a show and parade.



A courageous group of San Franciscans led by Scott Newhall rescued the Tyneside paddlewheeler Eppleton Hall from the boneyard and sailed it 7,000 miles to San Francisco. I had a very good day aboard the venerable boat when it visited the Delta.



There are few "must-see" sights in the Delta. But Capt. John Moore's venerable old converted 156-foot freighter, now called Moore's Riverboat, is one of them. You'll find it, still afloat and jumping with activity, on the Mokelumne River.

Dr. Stanley Chew, owner of Stanley's Steamer, and an incurable steam buff, measures the boat's fuel consumption in "apple boxes" of firewood.





A tiny cabin on Fisherman's Cut, in the process of being reclaimed by the river.



A colorful tugboat pushes a freighter about in the Port of Stockton.

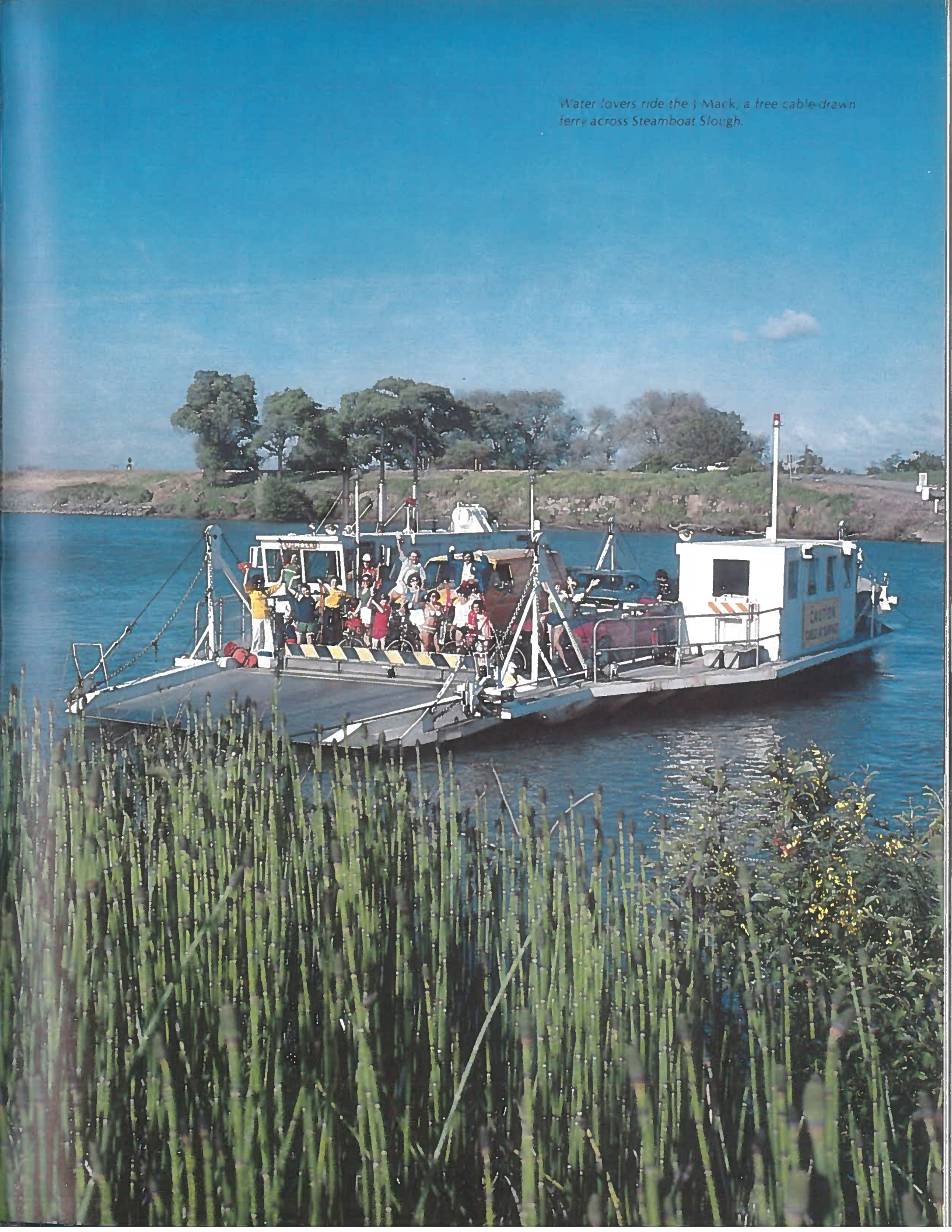


A cruiser shares the Channel with an outbound freighter.

A fishing boat by the Paintersville bridge.



Water lovers ride the J Mack, a free cable-drawn ferry across Steamboat Slough.





The elegant old River Mansion on Steamboat Slough. It is no longer open to the general public and is called both The Mansion and Club Lido. A vintage Stephens is tied out front.

Fishing boats at Eddo's Harbor. It was considered quite an innovation when they installed those protective plywood covers on the boats, remembers the owner.





A Camp-A-Float tranquilly anchored at The Meadows. You just drive your own R.V. aboard these rigs.

Sailboats rafted-up at Mandeville Tip awaiting Hilton's July 4th fireworks display.





A freighter outbound from the Port of Stockton. No matter how many times I see these behemoths, I always want to pause and wave.



The little fishing resorts that rent a few boats and purvey bait and tackle add a certain charm to the Delta. This is Pop's Marina on Middle River, as it was a couple years ago.

Franci Warren and her striper.



The morning sun glints off this water skier's spray and the water is like glass.

Kay Parker is obviously a gal enamored of striped bass fishing. This one is a 21-pounder weighed in at Taylor's Marina.





A sailboat with its spinnaker billowing glides up the Channel.

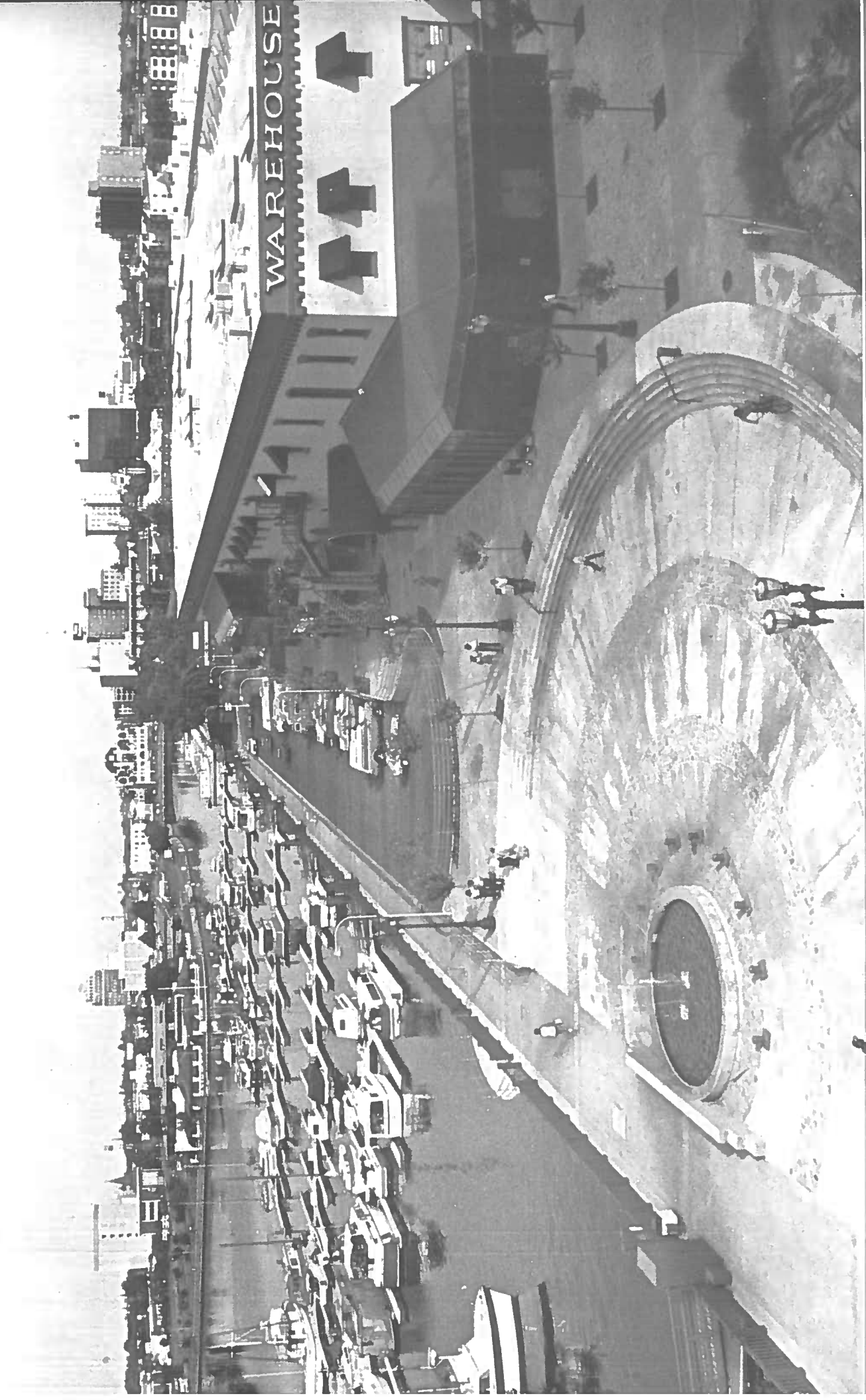


A bird's-eye view of Grindstone Joe's Assn. with El Camino Boat Club's island in the background.

The morning sun casts a pinkish glow over a potpourri of pleasure boats at Stockton's Windmill Cove Marina.



Stockton's new Waterfront Yacht Harbor. Its Warehouse has a wonderful collection of shops and restaurants. Past the far end of the Warehouse is Castaway. Across the Channel on the left is Calamity Janes and the Holiday Inn. The old Stockton Hotel is visible past the end of the Channel. Off to the left is McLeod Lake.





THE CENTRAL SAN JOAQUIN RIVER

ANTIOCH TO STOCKTON
PLUS FALSE RIVER,
FISHERMAN'S CUT AND
OTHER PLACES ON THE WAY



Rodgers Point Marina with the remains of the Solano in the background.

Certainly no stretch of water in the Delta system is of more importance to the pleasure-boat fleet than is the San Joaquin River. From where it comes meandering out of the flat farmlands of the valley to become the Stockton Deepwater Channel just below Stockton, and on to where it joins with the Sacramento just below Antioch, it verily teems with every type of water activity imaginable. And it accommodates it all very nicely.

On its waters I've seen everything from nude houseboaters to naval warships; everything from sea planes to marathon kayaks. Freighters from round the world use it. Fishermen use it. Swimmers use it. Just about anyone who dips a hull into Delta waters very quickly finds himself on the San Joaquin.

It connects to just about everywhere in the Delta. From the Sacramento to Stockton, it has nearly two dozen openings for entry or departure. It is the boating freeway to all places. The openings are its on-off ramps. Yet long runs on the San Joaquin on busy summer weekends can be tiring, especially in a small boat. Traffic makes for wakes, and a steady diet of same has never particularly suited my appetite. But what a floor show the river offers. Just staying put and watching the traffic flow by can be terrific entertainment.

Before the Stockton Deepwater Channel was dug, the San Joaquin to Stockton was a ship captain's nightmare. There were terrible pretzel-like twists and turns in the river. Some had names such as Turkey Bend and Devil's Elbow. Sailing ships would lay over for days waiting for the proper winds to enable them to negotiate these bends. Paddlewheelers would go aground, plowing into brush on the bank, thrashing to negotiate turns that were impossibly tight. From very early it was evident that the deepwater channel was essential.

It was proposed in 1871, to be dug as far as Venice Island. It was brought up again in 1874 and plans were drawn. In 1901 a Congressional committee inspected



Fishing off the Antioch public pier.

the site. In 1906 loyal Stocktonians were chanting, "fifteen feet to the sea." By 1919 things looked up because of favorable Army Corps of Engineers reports and the chant was changed to "twenty-four feet to the sea". By 1925 the Corps was recommending that a 32-foot-deep channel be approved. In the same year, Stockton voted for a Deep Water bond in the amount of \$3 million to pay its share of the channel project. In June of 1927 President Coolidge signed the bill. Digging started the next year and on February 2, 1933 the *Daisy Gray* entered port with a load of Oregon lumber. The Stockton Deepwater Channel had officially opened.

The channel now represents easy boating for skippers of all type craft. It is well marked, red even-numbered lighted markers on the right heading up river, odd-numbered green markers on the left. Plenty

deep, plenty wide. New islands were made by the dredges and the old routes of the meandering river left for dawdling. The channel improved the boatman's lot in all respects. Now let's head up the channel from Antioch to Stockton.

Jack London wrote of his trials and tribulations aboard his sailing ship *Roamer* in Antioch waters. He awoke at 6:30 one morning in 1913 to find *Roamer* dragging its anchor, a fierce wind blowing. He described the water as "smoking white" and he battled the elements till 1:30 p.m., being blown aground once in the process. Finally, pleased with himself, London got to the lee side of West Island and made three lines fast to the trees. Then he relaxed. In many ways, the Delta has changed little in the 66 years since London experienced the wrath of the winds.

Antioch stands guard over the San Joaquin River, barely above its confluence with the Sacramento, as if to welcome Bay Area boatmen to the central Delta. A role not entirely new for it, I might add. For in earlier times, when winter winds blew long and hard, commercial sailing vessels would hole up here for a week or more waiting for the weather to abate.

The town was founded in 1849 by a pair of brothers, both ministers, and at first was simply called Smith's Landing. The brothers invited 25 hearty pioneers who had sailed round the Horn to join them in settling the land. Two years later the group voted to change the town's name to Antioch after a town in Syria that similarly graced the banks of a river backed by rolling hills.

When the Antioch Lumber Company established there, the town became a major port for lumber-carrying schooners. The company exists still and its building is one of the oldest in town. The town has long had ties with the agricultural industry of the Delta. By the 1920's, the Delta was producing 90 percent of the world's asparagus. In 1920 the Hickmott Cannery relocated to Antioch from Bouldin Island to more efficiently process the "grass".

The \$2 million Antioch bridge opened in January 1, 1926. Prior to that, access to the great Delta area was either by boat or by ferry to Sherman Island. It was an impressive drawbridge that would clear 135 feet when raised. Ship collisions with the bridge in 1958, 1963 and 1970 caused considerable damage, but the bridge persevered. Antioch became synonymous with its long bridge. The bridge was replaced by a new \$40 million fixed bridge that opened to traffic in late 1978. It also will clear 135 feet vertically. The old drawbridge was spectacularly demolished by explosives. A portion of it was retained on the south bank to serve as a fishing pier.

Much of Antioch's boating and marina activity exists practically in the shadow of that bridge, relatively



A quiet morning on False River.

on the outskirts of town. In "downtown" Antioch, there is Riverview Lodge looking out on the river and with a handy guest dock. Adjacent to it is a fine public fishing pier that sees considerable use. Some very good fish are landed there. Farther up river is Rodger's Point Marina, a comfortably run-down establishment at which I can feel comfortably at home. It has berthing, fuel including diesel, some supplies and a next door restaurant. Its rather efficient breakwater is formed by the sunken hulk of the old ferry *Solano* that for years ran between Port Costa and Benicia. Nearby is a public launching facility and a noble Antioch mainstay, Fulton Shipyards. Fulton constructed wooden tugs, ferries, and river freighters, including the first diesel-powered boat to travel the San Joaquin.

Continuing up river, all lies off to the starboard bank. First up is Sportsmen, Inc. Yacht Club, in its spectacular clubhouse in the converted 236-foot sidewheeler ferry, *Sausalito*. Next is San Joaquin Yacht Harbor with berthing and a fuel dock, followed by Lloyd's Holiday Harbor with fuel, marine repair, supplies and Bridgehead Marine's excellent haulout yard. Tucked in here too is Bridge Marina Yacht Club, with its beautiful clubhouse overlooking the river. Next door is New Bridge Marina (formerly Petri's) with fuel, including diesel, and other accommodations.

In this entire area stretching on both sides of the bridge, there is a potpourri of boating support activity. And the boatman in need can get most anything accomplished here. Three boatyards are included, probably more than you will find in any other area in the Delta of similar size.

First up after the bridge is Driftwood Marina, a well-cared-for facility with berthing, a fuel dock that includes diesel, and other good things. For awhile, this marina sold its berths somewhat as condominiums are sold. But the idea was not met with great enthusiasm and was perhaps too early for the Delta. Next door at Lauritzen Yacht Harbor is S & H Boat Yard with haulout, marine repair and rental houseboats. Operated by partners Ted and Dan, S & H is the oldest rental outfit on the Delta. The harbor, run by Chris Lauritzen III, the grandson of a Delta Pioneer, also has fuel, launching and some supplies. Next to it is E. Ramey Seeno Boat Works with haulout.

Just up river to the southeast lies Big Break, another island that was inundated and never reclaimed. It looks like a vast lake, but it is snagged and extremely shallow. There are barely visible pilings in the area and hulks of sunken vessels. Stay to the marked channel or follow your charts carefully. To the southwest side of Big Break is Big Break Marina with haulout, launching, supplies and a cafe with excellent food. The boatyard here is now operated by Bethel Island's



Fisherman's Cut can provide a protected anchorage.

Marine Emporium. The rail haulout system permits the Emporium to haul larger craft than its sling lift can handle and you thus see large craft on the ways.

Several years ago when I bought a new runabout, the salesman launched it at Big Break for me. After a test run, with a wave of the arm and some vague instructions on how to cruise out of the place, he left me. I had no chart with me and within five minutes was aground. Fortunately, the boat came with a paddle and I pushed myself loose and slowly probed my way to deep water. Big Break Marina accommodates some very large craft, but you must carefully follow the deep water route in and out.

Your first opportunity to leave the San Joaquin is Dutch Slough to your right. It circles around busy Bethel Island, connecting first with Taylor Slough, then with Sand Mound. Dutch affords good water skiing and a few pleasant anchorages. It has two fixed bridges. I had to leave Bridge Marina Yacht Club one day with the runabout (to get to a shark feed at Union Point Resort) when the winds were blowing fiercely and there was white water everywhere. Every skipper within earshot was proffering local knowledge of the water. I stayed to the calmer right bank all the way, deftly avoiding pilings and hulks, curling around Big Break and into the calm water of Dutch Slough. The slough can provide a better, albeit longer, route up river when the water is rough.

Continuing on the San Joaquin, off on the port bank on Gallagher Slough protected by tule islands, is John and Ellen Gulick's Eddo's Boat Harbor. It has new berthing, fuel, supplies, launching, camping and more. Very shortly after John and Ellen bought this place, they were visited by the flood that inundated Sherman Island in 1969 and it was a tough way to start. When the Antioch Bridge was struck by a freighter in late 1970, it was closed for five months. There were many Delta people who daily commuted to work over that bridge. What were they to do?

A funky old boat was pressed into service as a ferry boat, hauling passengers out of Eddo's across the river to Lauritzen's. It was impromptu and passengers threw a few coins into a can to help pay for the gas. Just as the old boat's wheezing engine decided to expire, the state moved in to sponsor a more streamlined ferry service out of the harbor. Gallagher Slough is used by knowing boatmen for its protected water when the San Joaquin is rough. In that vein, it is known as "Chicken Slough".

Proceeding up river, False River runs off to the starboard. Its broad deep water provides an excellent, often calmer, much shorter route for boatmen running up or down the San Joaquin. It is a pretty stretch of water which curls around Franks Tract, offering numerous fine anchorages in the process. It is intersected by Fishermans Cut, which itself offers many anchorages in and out of the wind. Just to the west of this cut, Taylor Slough enters False River from the south after meandering around Bethel Island. *Victory II*, a free-running diesel ferry, hauls autos and passengers from Jersey Island to both Bradford Island and Webb Tract.

The Port of Stockton is further deepening the Deep-water Channel. And there have been proposals to run it through False River for the short cut it would provide. But such a project was deemed too expensive, as was the proposal to run a portion of it across Franks

Tract. Deeper draft freighters will soon be accommodated.

Next up, off to the port side, is Threemile Slough, a heavily used connector between the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers. Outrigger Marina and Brannan Island State Park are situated on it. Its lift bridge is well manned and busy. Continuing, you pass the other end of Fishermans Cut off to the starboard, then to the port Sevenmile Slough.

Sevenmile actually flows through to connect with Threemile Slough, but you can boat into it for only a few hundred yards before your route is blocked by a culverted road crossing. There is another near the other end. I have seen people canoeing in there and they have the water all to themselves.

But in the short up-river stretch of Sevenmile prior to the road, there are three thriving marinas. The first is Blue Heron Harbor with fuel, berthing, camping and some supplies. Next is Dave Snoderly's The Island with open slips available for rent or lease, primarily used by sailboatmen. The marina is situated on Owl Island and is connected by a wood bridge. On the south side of the slough is Owl Harbor (formerly the Yacht Locker) with covered berthing, there is considerable expansion taking place here, and it is now home for many sailboats.

Because of good winds, deep water and broad stretches of river, this area is a favorite for sailboatmen. And most of the marinas hereabouts berth a good number of big-stick boats. From Sevenmile to the mouth of the Mokelumne, all of the resort activity is on the river's north bank. It is good to mind your charts unless you know the water in this area, for the river's broadness can be deceiving. Both Santa Clara Shoal and San Andreas Shoal take their toll of the unwary.

Now you approach Harry Schilling's Spindrifft Marina, which has one of the consistently excellent restaurants in the Delta. It includes The Deck, a good grocery store and delicatessen with supplies and beer and wine. The marina has a fuel dock, a lively cocktail lounge, berthing and other accommodations. It boasts a fine mobilhome park behind the levee. If everything seems newish around Spindrifft, it is because most everything previously there was lost when the island was flooded in 1972. The levee break occurred just a short distance below the marina. The Spindrifft Yacht Club maintains its headquarters here.

From here it is but a hop to Andreas Cove, a pretty marina populated primarily by sailboats. It has a restaurant with deck, an R.V. park and is home for the Andreas Cove Yacht Club, avid sailors. Next door is Happy Harbor, to be renamed Delta Showboat upon the arrival of the 150-foot vintage 1922 vessel *General Frank Cox*, which in its new home will provide

A now-gone cabin on a berm on Fisherman's Cut.





A skier and a freighter share the channel.



Sailboats in slips at Spindrift Marina.

food and grog on two decks. The place has cocktails, food and an R.V. park.

For the boatman marina hopping, the logical cruise direction from here is up the Mokelumne with its many stopping off places which were covered in an earlier chapter. As was Potato Slough, the next stretch of water off to the left. Across and up the river from Potato, Old River enters the San Joaquin terminating its long journey through the Delta farmlands. From here you can slip into False River to skirt the north side of Franks Tract, or follow old River to Sand Mound Slough, or follow Old River's snaking course into the South Delta, or cut across Franks Tract. The choices are too numerous to mention.

Continuing on the San Joaquin, Mandeville Tip, lopped off the main island by the channel-digging dredges, lies off to your left. On the right are two entrances to Middle River through an area of beautiful anchorages.

The next four miles appear confusing if you look at a chart. For the channel dredges cut through four islands, Wards, Tinsley, Fern and Headreach. The

result was seven islands, with water snaking off seemingly in every direction. Little Connection Slough and Disappointment Slough feed in from the left. Columbia Cut, Whiskey Slough and Headreach Cutoff seemingly muddle up the right side of the channel.

But in reality what we have is an outstanding boating area, off the traffic pattern and rife with pleasant anchorages. Four yacht and boat clubs have facilities in this area to the right of the channel, and two have headquarters to the left. In here, it is active but seldom crowded. The Delta's west and south sectors (including Five Fingers) are easily accessible from here via Columbia Cut. Members of the Stockton Water Ski Club (Wards Island), St. Francis Yacht Club (Tinsley Island), Port Stockton Boaters (Tule Island) and Delta Yacht Club (also Tule Island) are lucky boatmen indeed.

Up river still, the channel splits Spud and Hog islands in two and the county maintains a boat-in park with a sandy beach, picnic tables and portable heads on the channel side of South Spud Island. There are some splendid anchorages on the back sides of all these islands. Weber Point Yacht Club has its clubhouse on the back side of North Spud.

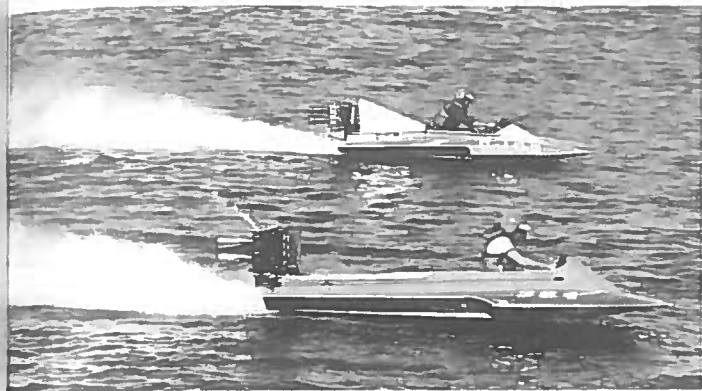
Cruising this way, I always find it difficult to pass 52-acre Lost Isle without stopping. Situated on Acker Island, it is accessible only by boat and is one of the liveliest places on the Delta. Domestic animals roam freely. You are awakened in the morning by crowing roosters. You sip and dine under thatched roofs. The dance floor has a decided list to it. There is a swim beach, plenty of docking and cocktails. I once lived on my houseboat here for a year and barely got any writing work done at all. The status on Lost Isle is in limbo at this writing.

On the up-river route to the Isle, I usually arrive via Haypress Reach and Twentyonemile Cut, also good skiing water. Across from the Isle, McDonald Island flooded in 1982, but has since been pumped dry.

Continuing on the San Joaquin, we pass the two entrances to Fourteenmile Slough to the port side, then on the Starboard is Ray and Maxine Everitt's Windmill Cove on Vulcan Island, which has land access. Here too, the river's original course curled around Vulcan and the real estate was considerably altered by the dredges. Windmill has cocktails, fuel, protected guest docking, food, launching and other services. A comfortable campground is nestled out back. It is in the covered berthing here that *Delta Dawdler III*, my 30-foot Carver is snugged.

Next up, off on the left bank, is Buckley Cove, an inlet with a surprising amount of boating activity. This too was a snake in the old San Joaquin. The land here where Stephens Anchorage facilities and the Stockton

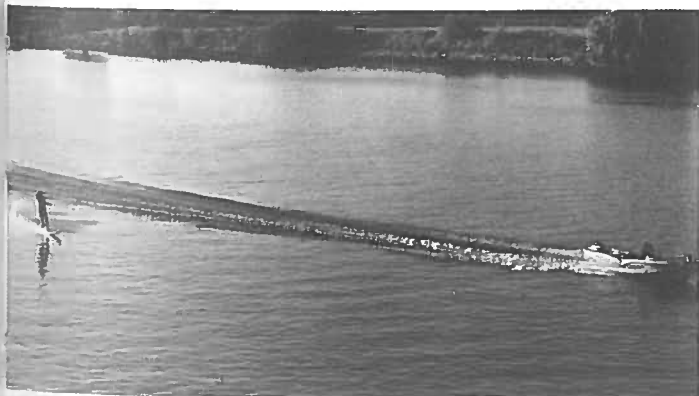
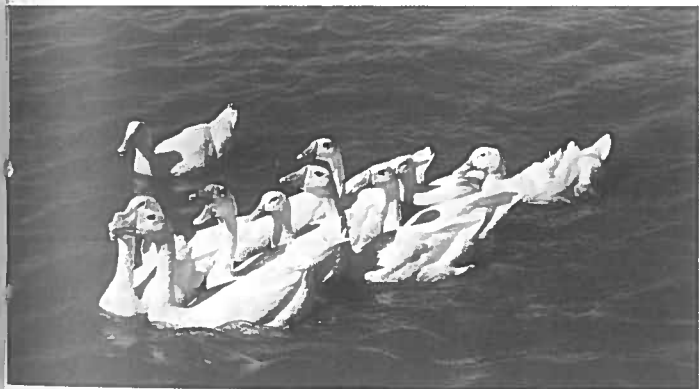
From bottom up, waterskiing, a duck flotilla, fast cruising, annual racing, all on the channel.



Cruising the channel on a rainy day.



A Delta beach party is where you find it.



Kite flying over the channel.





An aerial view of the channel off Spud Island.

Sailing Club flank the city park, was originally part of Roberts Island, across the channel. The dredges sliced it off, leaving a fine little island original members of the Stockton Sailing Club had a lease on.

Enter George Ladd, just after WW II, along with his partner Bob Armstrong. They leased a few acres at the Cove from the State Lands Commission and started building runabouts and cruisers in 12 to 24-foot lengths. They built a thriving business. Kit boats became a specialty. They built the shell of the boats, then inside tacked instructions and everything from glue to screws. In the years 1953 through 1955 they turned out some 500 to 600 boats per year. "When we first moved out there, everyone said we had lost our marbles to go so far out of town," said Ladd. "The road was filled with ruts and nearly impossible to drive on. But we showed them."

Ladd and his partner split the business and Ladd stayed on, to pioneer the rental houseboat business and building his own aluminum-pontoon houseboats. He later ran a boat yard, which is the province of Allen Bonfield these days. Part of the water was land-filled to give access to the island and the city acquired all the property. A marina was built there and the Sailing Club facilities blossomed.

First in at Buckley Cove is Theo Stephens' Stephens Anchorage, with a fuel dock that includes diesel, berthing and home of the Sheriff boats. Next is Ladd's Stockton Marina with haulout, berthing, marine repair and some supplies. The excellent free Buckley Cove launching facility lies between the two marinas. Because the road to the former island effectively severed the two coves, you have to go back to the channel and proceed up river to get to the sailing club's entrance in what they call South Buckley Cove. In the back portion of the cove is Stockton Yacht Sales with docking and a variety of marine supplies.

No chapter on this area would be complete without mention of Malibu Beach, a sandy beach area on the channel just below the Buckley Cove entrance. For years it was unofficial headquarters for the bikinied crowd and you would see swimmers and sunbathers by the hundreds out there. For activity, it would rival most any beach anywhere. When the channel was ripped there, the beach pretty much disappeared. But it lives on in the memories of thousands of Stocktonians.

The remainder of the channel into Stockton will be covered in the Stockton chapter.



Chris Lauritzen — Delta Pioneer

Delta-born on Woods Island in 1882, Chris Lauritzen became a Delta legend before he died at age 91 in 1973. As a child, he would row or sometimes swim from his island to school. And he lived to see the island that was his home chomped to nothingness by giant dredges. Antioch was his home, his base of operations. During the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, he and his brother, Fred, took their boats to the City to help transport refugees to Oakland.

Chris and his brother were the first to operate small, fast power boats on the river. In 1903 their speedy 15 hp gasoline boats were thought novel. Later they operated both propeller and sternwheeler boats, transporting passengers and some freight to Sacramento, Stockton, Collinsville and about any other brush landing where their services were needed. "They were days when we seemed like a big family," said Chris. "For many Delta people depended on our boats for the necessities of life." The brothers operated as the Lauritzen Transportation Company from a wharf near where Riverview Lodge is now located. Their fleet at one time numbered perhaps eight boats.

Chris acquired a shipyard in Antioch in 1903 which he ran till he sold it to Fulton in 1925. One of the most beautiful boats in the Lauritzen fleet was a

90-foot, 200-passenger craft called Empress. In 1920, Chris went deeply in debt to build the car ferry, Sherman. With its 10-car capacity, he made a ferry run every two hours from Antioch to Sherman Island. He was joined by his nephew, Howard, in 1921. By 1923, the business had built to where it had hauled 16,000 vehicles and 35,000 people. A later boat, Victory, was put into service. Chris directed pile-driving crews that drove piles for the Antioch Bridge, which opened January 1, 1926, and spelled the end of his car ferry business there. But many were wary of the bridge, and chose to continue riding the ferry. The bridge people finally bought out Chris' franchise.

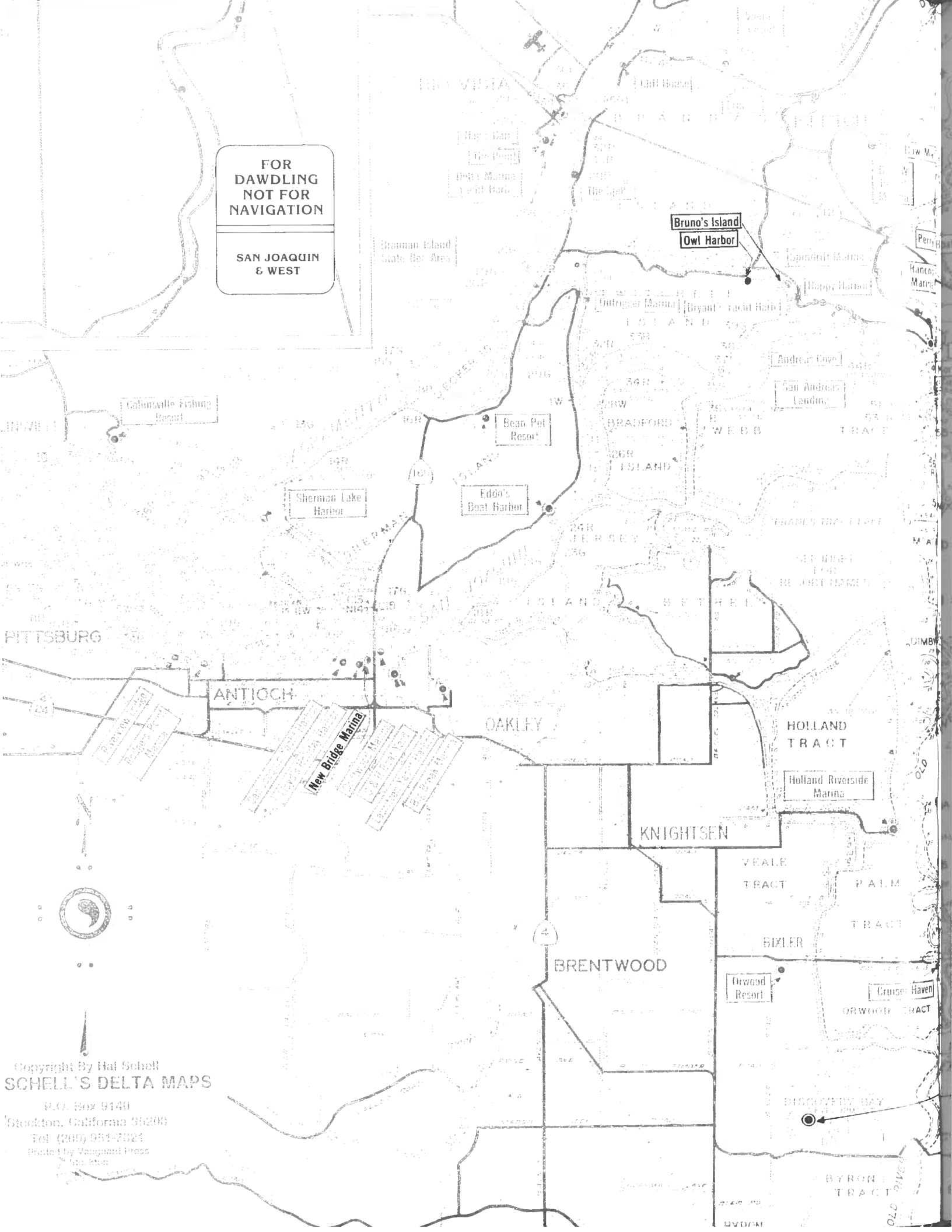
He moved Victory to ferrying service around Bradford Island. A new steel-hulled Victory II was built and today still is doing ferry service from Bradford. The hulk of the old Victory lies in Fisherman's Cut and its old wheelhouse is at the Lauritzen marina.

Chris ran dredges and tugs and other vessels in the Delta and he was always there to help when a levee broke. His son, Chris, carried on in the tradition, at one time operating three tugboats. Chris' grandson, Christian Lauritzen III, operates Lauritzen Yacht Harbor at Antioch and appreciates his Delta heritage.

Chris Lauritzen helped build the Delta. And his spirit lives on.

FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION

SAN JOAQUIN
& WEST



Colinsville Fishing
Report

Sherman Lake
Harbor

Bean Pot
Resort

Eddo's
Boat Harbor

Bruno's Island
Owl Harbor

ANTIOCH

OAKLEY

KNIGHTSEEN

BRENTWOOD

HOLLAND
TRACT

Holland Riverside
Marina

VEALE
TRACT

PALM
TRACT

SIXLER

Orwood
Resort

ORWOOD TRACT

DISCOVERY BAY

BYRON
TRACT

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SAN JOAQUIN TO THE WEST

There are certain areas of the Delta that defy comfortable cataloging. And to my knowledge, no one has come up with an acceptable and descriptive name for the area west and south of the San Joaquin River bordered roughly by an imaginary line from Stockton to Brentwood to the mouth of Old River back at the San Joaquin. (The waters to the south of the Stockton-Brentwood line I have always considered to be the South Delta.)

This southwestern sector takes in a great number of sloughs and cuts, and includes nearly unidentifiable sections of Old River and Middle River. Their waters are surprisingly deep and the area is rife with tule islands. There are large farmed islands here such as McDonald and Mandeville. Land access to some of these islands is tricky business and usually requires leap-frogging from island to island over rickety bridges and aging ferries.

There are no enclaves of resorts in this area as there are in other parts of the Delta. So you must plan provisioning stops with more care. Tall trees are few and there is a remote flatness to the terrain. Tules seem everywhere. To the west towers Mount Diablo and I often use it as a casual landmark to make sure I am generally heading in the proper direction.

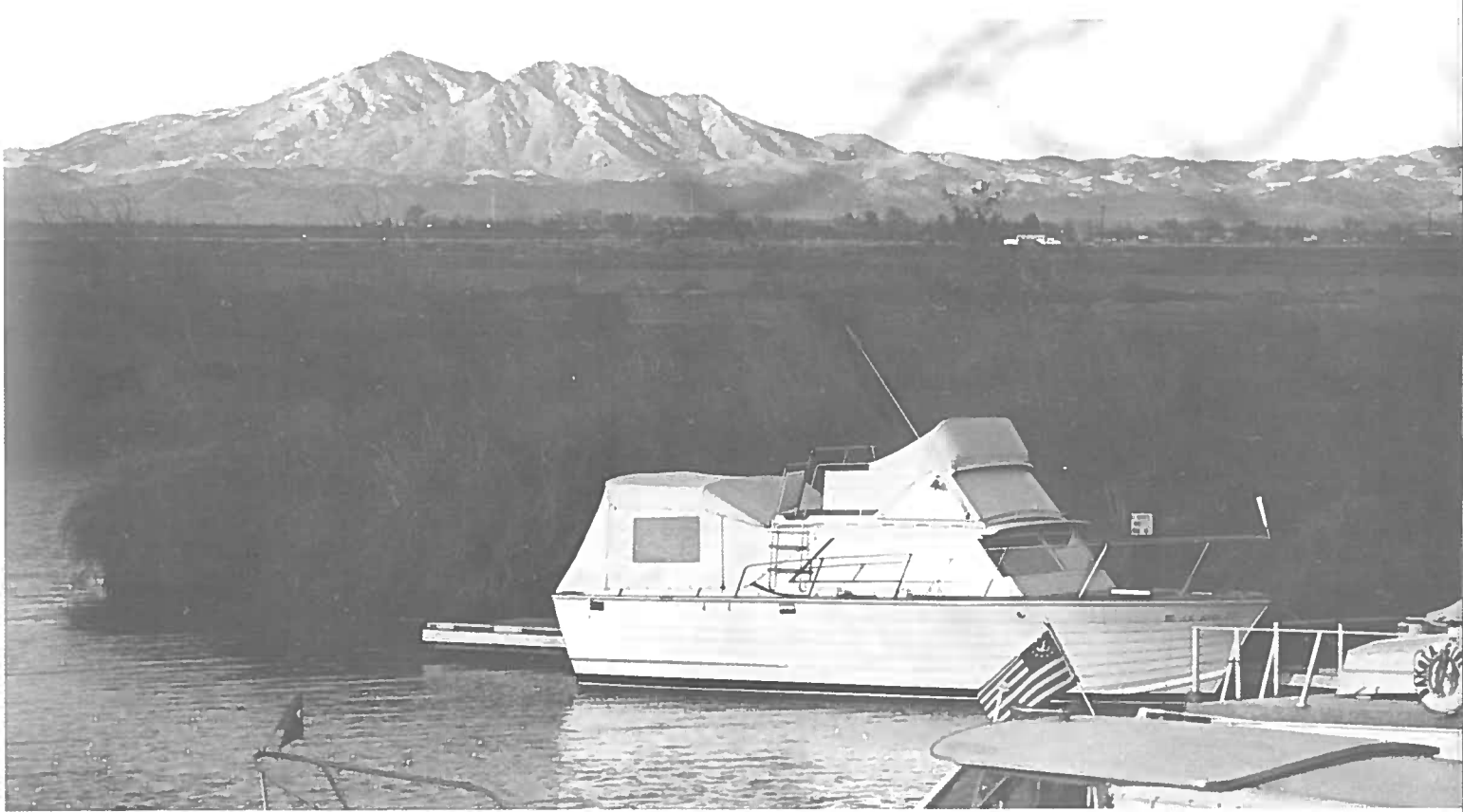
It is easy to let a tule island lure you off route. You decide to cruise around the island for a look at what is on the other side, and before you know it, you are following another course. The trick is to plot your course following the leveed banks of main islands, switching from island to island as necessary. Few of the minor islands, that often interlock into confusing mazes, have levees. If you get stuck in the fog, following the levee banks can help get you to port. Too, the water a short distance out from the levees is usually the deepest. For it is from here that the clamshell dredges dig the soil to heap atop the levees.

I like to start explorations of this area from Lost Isle

INCLUDING PARTS OF
OLD AND MIDDLE RIVERS,
HOLLAND CUT, TURNER
CUT, WHISKEY SLOUGH, ETC.



A floating cabin at Whiskey Slough Harbor.



Mount Diablo looms up behind Bob Johnson's Trojan at Windmill Cove.

(Acker Island on NOAA charts) at Light No. 24 on the San Joaquin below Stockton. You can slip in behind this 52-acre isle and continue into Turner Cut, keeping McDonald Island on your right. To your left you'll not even notice where once-thriving Erich's Resort used to be. It more or less decayed, slipped into the river and disappeared. To my way of thinking, it is the little resorts that help give the Delta its personality. And I always hate to see one go. Sure, new and better resorts are being built, all gleaming and with every facility. But like with a growing child, it takes time for them to develop personality.

Next up is Turner Cut Resort, a comfortable place where the locals like to hang out to eat, swig beer and shoot pool. The cafe serves good food. The marina has fuel, propane, camping and covered berthing. There is a guest dock. On a tule berm out front, you see the residence of a large family of beavers. The marina has irregular pool tournaments and occasional free catfish feeds.

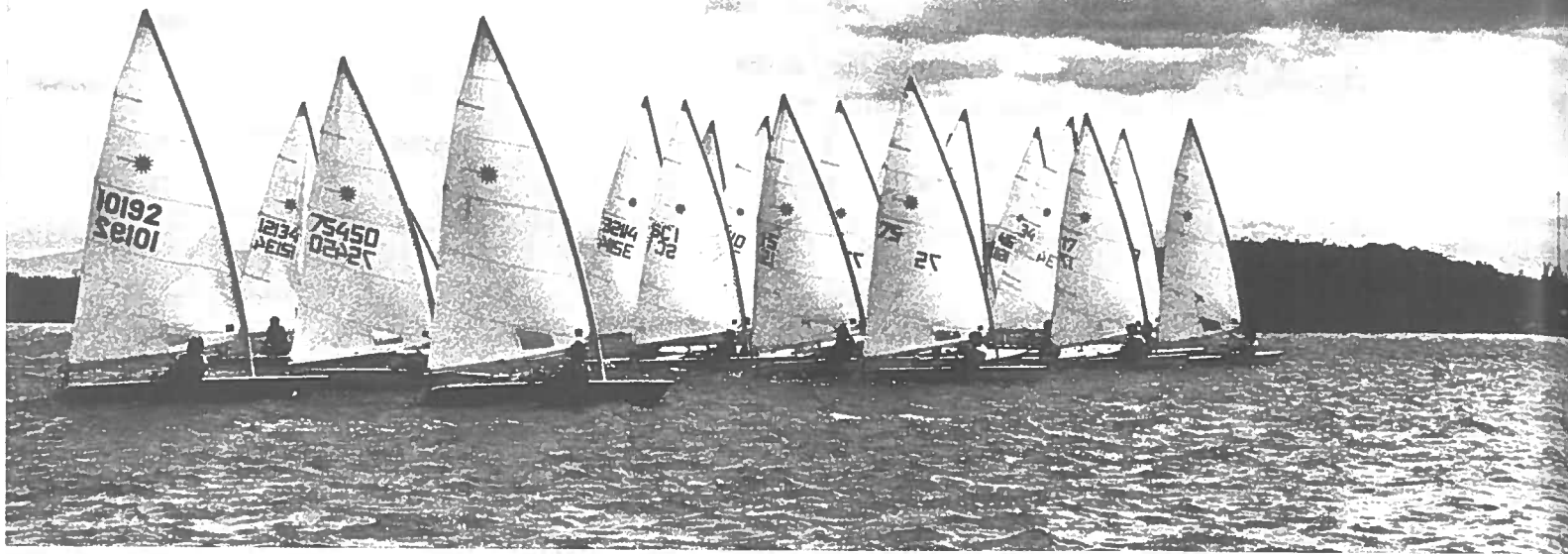
You next pass a cable-drawn ferry to McDonald Island. In 1979 there was a move to replace this ferry with an ugly, concrete fixed bridge. But yachtsmen banded together along with marina owners and other interested Deltaphiles to fight the proposal. At a Coast Guard public hearing, they came in great numbers to speak against it. The major opposition

move was organized by the Stockton Sailing Club and the Stockton Yacht Club, and PICYA lent its strength to the battle. The fixed bridge was defeated. Now, a novel sliding-section drawbridge is to go in and it seems acceptable to the majority of boatmen.

As rural and remote as the Delta farmland islands are, they are now and then the stage for happenings of great import. During a heavy fog in 1946, two B-29 military planes crashed head-on over the Delta. One crashed into McDonald Island and the remains of the other fell to Rindge Tract, a couple miles away. Three survived and eighteen were killed.

For many years P G & E quietly maintained one of the largest natural gas storage facilities in North America on McDonald Island. It flamed into public eye May 17, 1974 when a gas well blew spewing tongues of flame over 200 feet into the sky. I was at Bethel Island at the time, out on a story with a bait-clam gatherer. We could see the flames even in the daylight sky, and I knew what it had to be.

"At night we could read without bothering to turn the lights on," said Louise Deall who lived in a nearby floating home. "The constant roar of the fire was like being under a jet bomber." Famed Texas fire-fighter Red Adair was imported to battle the blaze. It had burned for 18 days before he managed to snuff it out. But P G & E has continued to build and four



A swarm of Lasers off Tinsely Island.

cylindrically-shaped tanks poke their snouts skyward, looking every bit like missile silos. They seem curiously out of place out there in the corn fields.

Just past the ferry is Tiki Lagun Resort, originally built by Harold and Carol Taylor, with excellent berthing and well-cared-for grounds. It has camping, launching, fuel, some supplies and the Tiki Hut Restaurant. There was little more than an old barn here when the Taylors started their marina in 1963. Erle Stanley Gardner kept two boats berthed here for a couple years and wrote about the Taylors in his Delta books. In earlier times, there was a riverboat landing here. Residents from many of the west and south Delta islands would come here by private boats, to then take the riverboat for a weekend in Stockton. Not long ago I attended a wedding on the green grass of Tiki Lagun. Television cameras were grinding away as the newlyweds left for their honeymoon — aboard the Turner Cut ferry.

Whiskey Slough

Continuing nearly straight on the cut, you come to the junction of Empire Cut and Whiskey Slough. The slough runs about four miles before it deadends at Ed and Jolly Holsworth's Whiskey Slough Harbor. On some maps and charts, the slough appears to connect through to Trapper Slough, but not so (Trapper is not navigable, anyway). Of course, the Holsworths have done nothing to discourage this notion, for each year they get a sizeable number of customers who thought they were on their way to Trapper Slough.

For years, Whiskey Slough Harbor was just another of those sleepy Delta fishing resorts, with a few old floating (sometimes) rental cabins and rental fishing boats. But considerable building has been taking place here with new covered berths, a launching ramp and other facilities. There is a fuel dock and a cafe.

Cock-fighting is a major sport deep in some of the

Delta farms. Workers wage sizeable sums on the outcome of fights. And it is not unusual for several hundred people to attend one of these fights. Neither is it unusual for the fights to be raided by the sheriff. When such raids occur, men scatter quickly to hide in the cornfields and asparagus patches of the surrounding area.

It was after just such a raid on a cock-fight on neighboring Roberts Island that Ed Holsworth noticed a sudden upswing in his business. Men were lined three deep at his little bar and cafe. The cash register was a-ringing. Then deputies arrived, proposing to haul off Holsworth's new-found "customers". Now Holsworth is a feisty sort of fellow, who also works as a longshoreman supervisor for the Port of Stockton. He has not been known to turn his back on a battle. Those deputies were not going to get his customers. So they got Holsworth himself, hauling him off to the pokey. A little drama on the Delta helps pass the time.

Today there is little evidence of the thriving community of Holt that existed here in earlier times. It supported a Chinese settlement that is said to have been one of the largest in the Delta. A two-story hotel building, that later burned, was at the Harbor site when Holsworth arrived on the scene in 1961. The Harbor was then called Hopkin's Boat House. As Holsworth relates it, the Holt Township of the early era was quite a swinging place, with bordellos, gambling and booze. He says there was a big barge down at the end of the slough and it supported an operational still.

Whiskey Slough ran on through before the railroad land-filled and built its tracks. The present Trapper Slough was then just an extension of Whiskey. For years there was a little joint on Trapper called Uncle Tom's and it was a favorite watering hole for local farmers. It rented out a few fishing boats that were

Right, a cruiser splashes up Turner Cut. Middle, children play at a worker's home on Mandeville Island.



landlocked into Trapper and some very large black bass have been taken in that slough.

For sixteen years up into the early 1970s, Terry Thomson ran the Farmers Cash Store, which was located on the far side of the railroad tracks about 150 yards from Whiskey Slough Harbor. It had a gas pump, a meat market, groceries and other general store items. It was also the U.S. Post Office. In a move to pretty up their post offices, the Feds required Thomson to move the office to its present rather pedestrian facilities. Thomson is still the postmaster, but it is clear he would sooner be back in the old site. But the building is no more.

"Water in the area was not fit to drink," relates Thomson. "I would have a railroad tank car of water shipped in and parked on a spur near the store. I paid \$1.25 for the water and about \$60 freight. Then I sold it at a cent a gallon to my customers." Even today, because of a longstanding agreement, the Holt Ranch is supplied its water in tank cars by the railroad.

The railroad station at Holt was discontinued about the time the old store was closed down. At one time, this station was of great importance to local residents and farmers. In the winter roads to Stockton became impossible, and the ladies used the train to go to Stockton to shop. Once a week a grocery boat came up the slough and its arrival was always a happy affair.

I did much of the research for this portion of the book in the old Delta Tavern in today's Holt. Thomson would stop off for a couple belts after work and we would be joined by a farmer named Sonny Welser who considers himself something of an historian. At one time Sonny kept a B-25 bomber on his ranch just for the fun of it. And there are those who say they have seen him rumbling across his farmlands on Roberts Island in his own Panzer tank. The bomber I can confirm because I have seen it, but the tank I cannot. Delta farmers are a hardworking lot. But when they play, they play hard too.

It was on a farm near Holt that Benjamin Holt in 1904 developed a tractor that laid its own track. A



Above, just caught a catfish in the tules of Latham Slough. Right, Jerry Ladley dressed for a swim.



photographer at the time thought it resembled a caterpillar and the name stuck. Before this, Holt built tractors with wide wheels that stretched 46 feet across so that they could negotiate the fragile peat soil without sinking in. Horses were fitted with special shoes that resembled iron snowshoes. The Caterpillar tractor was the forerunner of the military tank which was put into action against the Germans during WW I.

Whiskey Slough is a favorite of water skiers. And there are a number of excellent anchorages behind the several islands on the slough. To the port side, about halfway up the slough, is a duck club. The charts show a second Whiskey Slough over near Columbia Cut. This had always puzzled me, for I couldn't imagine why there would be two sloughs with identical names in the same general area.

While looking at some old charts of the Delta, circa when the channel was being dug, I got my answer. Whiskey Slough actually ran its present route, then went across McDonald Island for some four or five miles, emerging at Columbia Cut and continuing to the San Joaquin over the short route of our "second" Whiskey Slough. The slough was obviously diked off at each edge of the island and charts show some of its remains still running through a portion of the island. It now seems so obvious. With this discovery came the working title for an article, "The Tale of Two Whiskeys." But I decided to save the tale for this book.

Back Way to Bethel

Now back to Empire Cut which runs straight arrow for considerable distance and offers excellent water skiing and cruising water. I use this as part of my "back way to Bethel Island" route, one of the shortest and fastest courses to Bethel from the Stockton area. It goes through beautiful and interesting territory and avoids the traffic on the channel. On this route you curl around McDonald Island, off Empire into Latham Slough, keeping the levee bank on your right. When you see the giant old ferry *Sport*, which shuttles between Mandeville and McDonald, you switch to the left side of Mandeville, then keeping its levee to your right. You will pass large old double-decker barracks buildings which once served as housing for the field workers. One of these was floating, so that it could be moved where needed. It recently burned down.

This puts you onto Connection Slough. Here is the only private drawbridge that I know about on the Delta. For years it was manned by a fellow I knew only as Jess. He would trudge out to the center of the bridge, stick a pipe into a fitting, then put his weight and muscle to it walking in a circle. This would lift up the ends of the bridge so its motor could swing it open. Sometimes Jess' wife would handle this task. It

is manned (womanned?) year-round, 24 hours per day (so the book says, I hear otherwise at times).

Once there was a multi-section pontoon bridge connecting these islands and it was a bane to boatmen. "I used to fish these waters in my 16-foot Nunes boat," relates River Route mailman Lou Sparrenberger. "We used to squeeze the boat underneath that bridge by lying down in the boat and pushing up on the underside of the bridge as we passed under a small opening between the pontoons. It was a tight fit."

The old bridge could be opened, but it was an involved process the tender was not always in the mood to tackle—especially if the wind was blowing. "One day a big barge came along in about a 20-knot wind," relates Sparrenberger. "The tender wouldn't open for him. So the skipper of the tug pushing the barge just hooked a cable onto a section of the bridge and wrenched it open himself." Nearby, you can still see sections of the old pontoon bridge lying half-submerged by the levee.

Without note, you leave Connection and cruise into Old River. Ahead lies Franks Tract, a submerged lake (I'll never get used to that term). Just short of the tract, take a left onto Sandmound which will take you to Bethel Island. By turning somewhat before that on the edge of Quimby Island, you could make the route shorter. Be careful not to get shuffled into long, straight Holland Cut.

In a fast boat and not paying close attention to the chart, it is quite possible to get lost on the back route (I've done it on occasion). But if you keep Mount Diablo to your port, most any water over there will eventually get you to Bethel Island.

A few years back, some entrepreneurs pitched a grandiose scheme to make Quimby Island into a sort of Delta paradise. There would be floating homes in lagoons, bicycle paths and a full line of facilities. You could buy property there and also buy a club membership. The *Robert Emory*, a great white ship, was purchased for a clubhouse and a rather grand and handsome freighter it was. It was run out to the island and anchored. It was to be converted into a grand clubhouse, the likes of which have never been seen in the Delta. It all sounded quite attractive.

Yachtsmen bought memberships and property. Some built summer cabins along Quimby's reinforced levees. Then the project went belly up. The great white ship was moved over to languish near Rio Vista, eventually to be sold at auction for a pittance. It was then run up to Washington, nevermore to be seen in Delta waters.

There are good anchorages everywhere in this area, especially along the tule islands on the west side of Quimby and Rhode Island below it. Water seems sufficiently deep everywhere and there are long wide sec-

Top to bottom, anchored near Quimby Island. Having a good time in the water near Quimby in a little lagoon. Launching at Orwood Resort. Good times at the Orwood Resort swim area.



tions for excellent and safe water skiing.

At the south end of Holland Cut is Holland Riverside Marina, a Western Water Ways facility with berthing, supplies, launching and more. The old Sugar Barge resides here and it is doubtful it will ever again be a swinging bar and restaurant. Rock Slough is dammed at its west end near here, but if you proceed south on it into what is also known as Werner Cut, there are some pleasant anchorage areas. Runabouts and the like can tweak through an opening in the railroad bridge and the pipeline bridge to take this route to Tom and Alma Moir's busy Orwood Resort.

Orwood

The more common route is to slip over into meandering Old River and on down to Indian Slough (Cut) to Orwood Resort. On the way you will pass Fay Island, given over almost completely to duck hunting. Then the Santa Fe Railroad bridge. This bridge is well-manned and is sometimes left partially opened. The railroad bridge over Middle River less than two miles away is not manned. Skippers needing an opening on Middle River, must skirt the railroad along the appropriate canal that runs on each side to sound the bridge open at Old River, then return to Middle River. It makes sense that both these bridges need not be manned simultaneously.

Near the bridge is an inlet to Cruiser Haven, a Western Water Ways marina with berthing and a fuel dock. In this inlet, locally called Old Railroad Cut, there were massive old sheds built out over the water. Vegetables would be barged in here to be off-loaded into the sheds where they were sorted, packed and then loaded into railroad cars on a spur track next to the buildings. Unfortunately, the buildings were too deteriorated to be saved. This railroad stop was called Orwood and for a short period of time, it even had its own post office. All that is history now, and today all is quiet except when the Amtrak roars by.

Orwood Resort property on Indian Slough is owned



*Hauling potatoes off
Bacon Island.*



by Leo Fallman, a lively old gentleman who spent his working life handling dredges, tugboats and barges for California Delta Farms that at one time farmed about 100,000 acres of Delta land. When he retired from this activity, he settled near Orwood. In 1948 a fellow named Otto Miller leased land at the present resort site and opened Otto's Black Bass Resort. When Otto moved on, it became Bob's Fishing Resort and then about 20 years ago it got its present name. Orwood Resort has one of the busiest launching ramps on the Delta, fuel, camping, cabins, a cafe, a grocery store and other facilities. The clientele consists predominantly of water skiing aficionados. There are bleachers by the launching ramp and it is a regular floor show to watch the activity there on a busy weekend. Tom Moir directs the show with all the flash and show of an Italian traffic cop.

The area where the resort's launching ramp and gas dock are located was for years one of the Delta's few dry docks for dredges. It contained a grid of pilings about 10 feet apart. The dredges would be brought into this dead-end harbor, then with their clamshell shovels they would take dirt from piles on the bank and close off their entrance. The water would then be pumped out, and there you have it—a dry dock. When repairs were done, the dredge would dig its way back out and in came the water.

It is difficult to comprehend the importance of these waterways to Delta farming in earlier times. Times that are really not all that distant. Fallman speaks of the corn cribs, roughly 10 feet wide by 16 feet long by 10 feet high that were used to stow corn in the fields while it dried prior to removal from the cobs. With rotation of crops on the islands each year, there was a constant moving of cribs from one island to the next one to grow corn. "We could handle about three cribs to the barge," Fallman said. "I figure that in one busy season I barged maybe 1,000 cribs."

You see, fellow boatmen, we are cruising through

the waters of history. Returning from Orwood to the railroad bridge at Old River, you can head east on either of the railroad cuts to connect with Middle River. On the up-river side of the ominous bascule bridge here, are the remains of Middle River Inn, a dowdy but wonderful little place that has given up the ghost since the first edition of this book. The building and property were owned by the railroad and leased out. When the twice-daily Amtrak trains passed by about 50 feet away, the building would shake and shudder. At low tide, the mud flats would extend out nearly to the end of the dock. But we always managed to find water deep enough for our boats.

Just a couple hundred feet up river from here is B & G Boats with a fuel dock, rental fishing boats and bait. Down river a short distance is Bullfrog Landing, with a fuel dock, rental boats, bait and supplies. Middle River, in a way, is a Delta community. Until recently it had its own school. At one time there was a cannery behind where B & G Boats is now located. And with the people who live here, you sense still the feel of a community. They help take care of one another. A levee break on Lower Jones in 1981 brought them even closer together.

From here Middle River flows by Empire Cut, jogs at Connection Slough, meanders by Five Fingers (covered in another chapter), slips by Columbia Cut and flows out into the San Joaquin near Mandeville Tip. It is peppered with tule islands and pleasant anchorages all the way. What a wonderful melange of joyful boating opportunities it presents.

Peddling Peat Dirt

Delta skippers are not much endeared with peat dirt. For in the dry time of the year, stiff winds pick up the peat and deposit it on Delta-berthed boats, not to mention on about everything else in the area. The fine stuff sifts through every tiny crevice. And the skipper is faced with a big cleanup job.

But an outfit out of Stockton makes peat into an enterprise. They are peat purveyors. And I am sure you have seen the firm's 50-foot, 29-ton converted LCM pushing a behemoth peat barge up and down the Stockton Deepwater Channel. "Peat is nothing more than decayed weed — in our case decayed tules," explains Delta Humus' Fran Koser. And Koser ought to know. As senior member of the partnership, he has been processing peat for some 30 years. He explains that regular fertilizer burns up soil nutrients, whereas peat, being an organic fertilizer, adds to the soil's richness.

Nature's production of peat is no hurried process. It takes about 10,000 years to accumulate a one-foot depth of the decayed vegetation. They dig the peat from beneath the water with a clamshell dredge at dig site over the under water tip of a submerged portion of Venice Island. It is dug from under water, because there it is "pure" and free of weed seeds and other contaminants.

The dig site is shallow, so the two-man barge crew must enter and leave with the tides. Back at headquarters on Roberts Island at a site where fuel drums were off-loaded during WW II and where potato boats stopped before that, the peat is unloaded by crane into dump trucks. They in turn spread it out in the fields to dry. After it starts to dry, in a week or so, Koser begins to attack it with an assortment of home-built equipment to chop it up into ever smaller pieces to make it manageable. It is then conveyor loaded into trucks that ship it bulk to distant markets. Some of it there might be bagged, to ultimately find its way to your corner nursery — and then to fertilize your petunia patch.

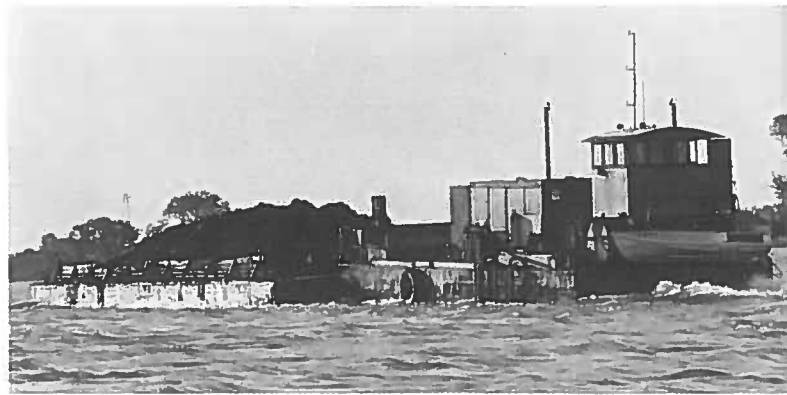
It is dirty business all the way. But it has its light moments. For a long time, the firm regularly shipped hundreds of bags of peat to a Hollywood TV studio that was filming a combat series. Charges were placed inside the bags. When they were set off, they simulated combat explosions.

"Regular dirt is more tan in color and doesn't show well on film," says Koser. "While peat is jet black and films beautifully."

"We've been written up in TV Guide on this," says Koser. "When they filmed Tora! Tora! Tora!, we shipped 5000 bags of peat to Hawaii."

There are few peat processors in the USA. Peat has been used as a fuel in Russia, Finland and Ireland for years. Russia has 26 electric power stations exclusively fueled by peat.

Koser figures that he is not taking anything away from nature, but is trading Delta peat for improving the overall quality of California soil.



The peat barge with a fresh load.



Fran Koser with a clump of peat dirt.

BUSY BETHEL ISLAND

INCLUDING FRANKS TRACT,
SANDMOUND, PIPER AND
DUTCH SLOUGHS

One's life takes interesting twists and turns. A chance happening can totally alter the direction of one's personal life, one's work, one's play. The Delta is rife with businessmen who have come here and are in a totally different line of work. An attorney who now rents houseboats. A Beverly Hills stockbroker who, among other things, works the gas dock. A cinematographer who runs a marina. A purchasing executive who writes Delta books.

The lives of cities and towns, and even islands, take similar twists and turns. So often I wonder what happening or series of happenings it was that fated Bethel Island to be the boating hub of the Delta. Geographically it does not greatly outshine all other Delta islands. Its 3,554 acres have good access from the Bay Area, but so does the acreage of other islands. The sloughs and rivers which surround it give Bethel Island boatmen choice of several directions in which to cruise. But then, the same thing can be said of other islands.

For whatever the reason, Bethel Island has hands-down become the single most important place in the Delta as far as pleasure boating is concerned. Within 100 yards of the two-lane bridge over Dutch Slough that gives land access to the busy island, over two dozen new boat brands are represented. You can kick hulls on more power boats here than at many boat shows. And the local entrepreneurs stock the boats they sell, many of them in the water and ready to go.

Boating support facilities are outstanding, with marine repair shops, three boatyards with haulout, several marine stores, a propeller repair shop, marine surveyors, boating insurance specialists and even an attorney who specializes in marine legal matters. There are close to a hundred business in the Bethel



The bird watches over Delta Resort.

Island sphere of influence, and virtually all of them in one way or another are involved in boating. Actually, many of the establishments that are considered to be a part of Bethel Island are located on the opposite banks of Dutch and Sand Mound sloughs.

The island has a golf course, motels, a large assortment of RV parks and campgrounds, numerous launching facilities, boat builders, three houseboat rental outfits and several good restaurants. There is a grocery store, a card parlor, a post office and clubhouses for two yacht clubs. Yet "downtown" Bethel Island only stretches for a few blocks. And there are times in the winter when you could shoot off a cannon down the main street and probably not hit a soul.

The perimeter of the island is lined with private residences built behind the levees, many with upper stories projecting up high enough to provide a view. Most have private docks, many of which include covered berths. Traditionally, these were the abodes of the weekend warriors who came here regularly to play in the water and relax. Most were modest little cabins of equally modest value. But waterfront land values have skyrocketed and even the most modest of the modest will now command a price in the order of six figures.

Some excellent waterfront homes have also been constructed. There are condominiums with berthing. And Delta Coves, a project that will breach the Piper Slough levee to form an inner lagoon along which will be constructed condominiums and private residences, has received initial approvals. The island now boasts its own sewer system, which will surely make obtaining building permits easier. It takes no crystal ball to predict that the island will grow.

When I began producing my Delta Map, we practically walked the island perimeter to be sure we did not miss any of the marinas and resorts along its banks. When we were done, we had some 40 establishments on the water, that qualified for inclusion on the map. The project proved enlightening for many of the resort owners themselves who were not very clear on just where the other Bethel Island resorts were to be found. Many are small, perhaps with little more than a few covered berths, but they each lend a certain character to the island.

In the very early days, Bethel Island was connected to the mainland. It was the man-made cuts that transformed it into an island. Until the one-lane bridge was built, the only access was by boat. Then after WWII when recreational boaters began to discover the island, a new two-lane bridge was built. But prior to that, Bethel Island made do nicely with its single-lane wooden bridge. It was farming territory, like so many of the other Delta islands. Asparagus, sugar



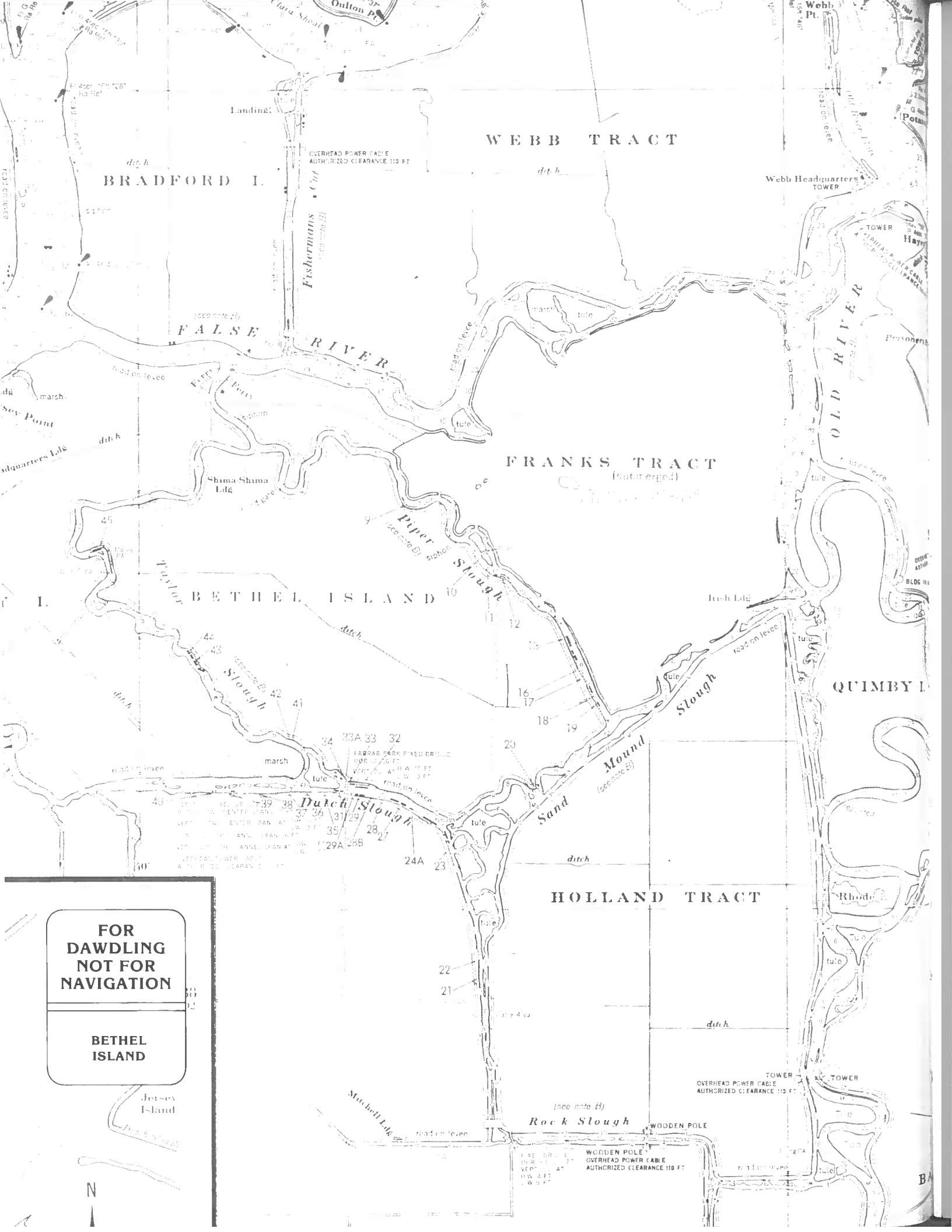
A Burns Craft negotiates Dutch Slough.



All dressed up for the Opening Day Parade.



Cruising Piper Slough.



WEBB TRACT

BRADFORD I.

FALSE RIVER

FRANKS TRACT
(submerged)

BETHEL ISLAND

HOLLAND TRACT

QUIMBY I.

**FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION**

**BETHEL
ISLAND**



OVERHEAD POWER CABLE
AUTHORIZED CLEARANCE 110 FT

Fishermans Cut

Webb Headquarters
TOWER

TOWER

Hayes

Prisoners

Trash Ldg

FARRAR PARK FIXED BRIDGE
HBR 100 FT
VERT. C. A. 11 W 17 FT
VERT. C. A. 11 W 3 FT

Dutch Slough

Sand Mound Slough

OVERHEAD POWER CABLE
AUTHORIZED CLEARANCE 110 FT

TOWER

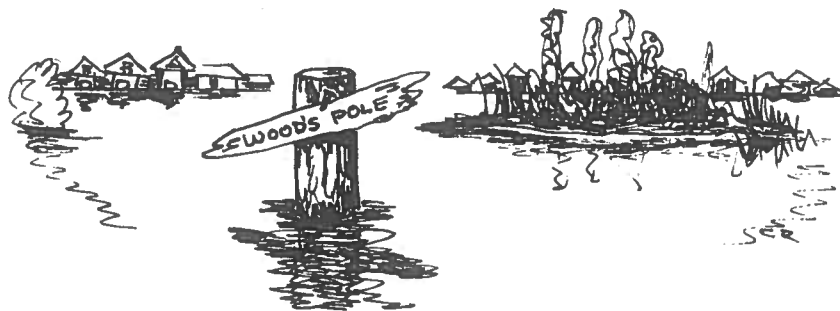
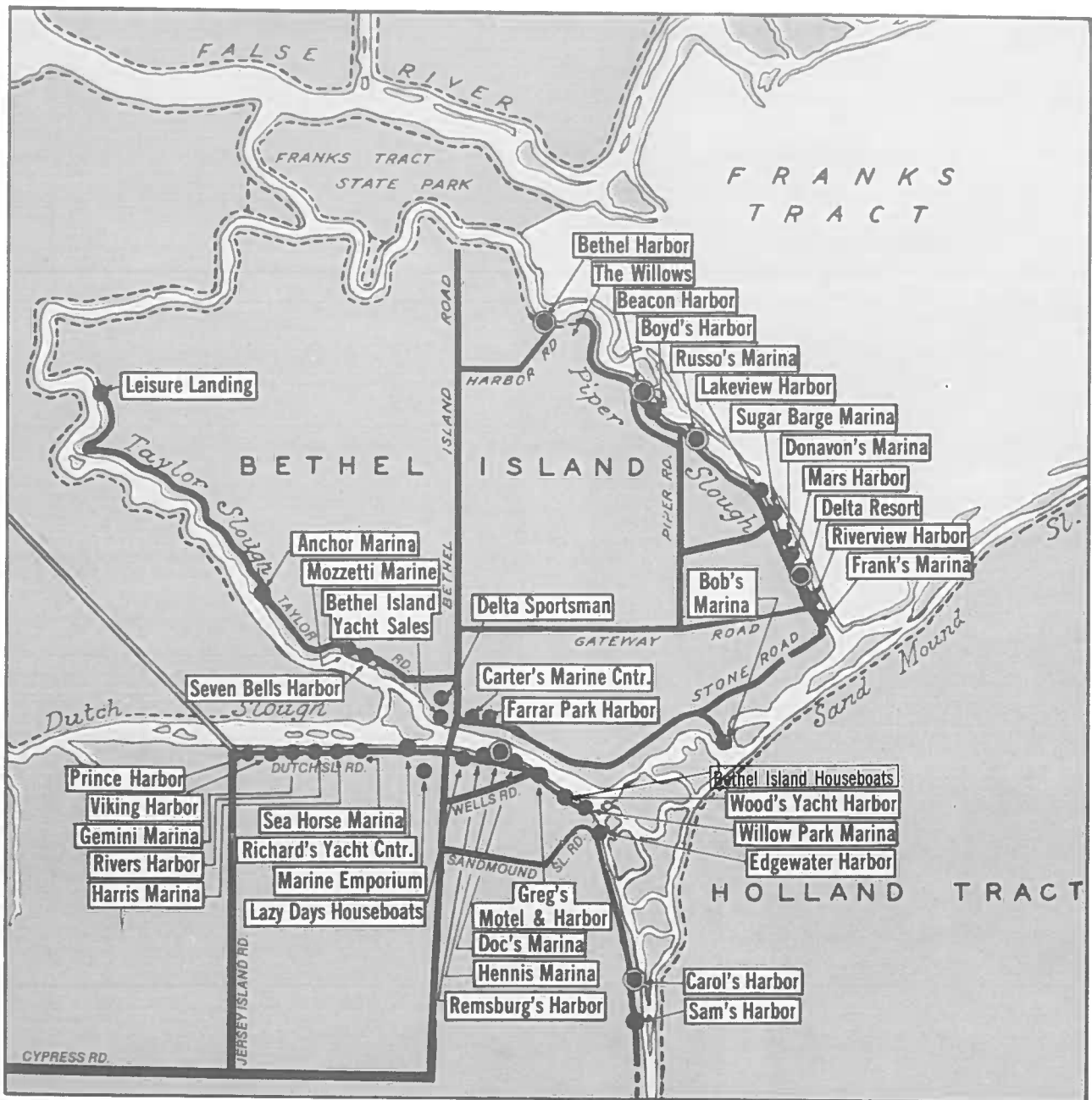
TOWER

Rock Slough

WOODEN POLE

WOODEN POLE
OVERHEAD POWER CABLE
AUTHORIZED CLEARANCE 110 FT

BA



**FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION**

**BETHEL
ISLAND**



Bethel Island people worked together to get their own Fire/Rescue boat.

beets, corn, barley, celery, beans, onions and other crops thrived here.

The island was not connected to electricity until 1946! Dairy farming had long been important on the island and at one time it boasted seven dairies. Nearby Knightsen, with its railroad terminal, was a major shipping center for milk and dairy products. Many of us forget now about the old saying, "taking the milk train." But the trains did indeed stop off at every little station to pick up the milk from local dairy farms.

But for contrast, Bethel Island at one time had seven mink ranches. Race horses and polo ponies were also bred there. Vita-Peat had a going peat "farming" operation on the north edge of Franks Tract and the Peat was spread out to dry near Bethel Harbor. Barge-loads of the rich peat were shipped to Treasure Island for all the plantings for the 1939 World's Fair. The island at one time had its own schoolhouse and it was considered an isolated, end-of-the-earth position for early teachers there. They traveled far around the Delta islands to count their pupils.

The oldest existing house on the island was built in 1913 and now houses Wirth Construction and Engineering. It was a thriving restaurant and cocktail lounge for a spell during the forties and was called the Mounds Club. There are those who say it even did a stint as a bordello, but this is unconfirmed.

In the levee-building days, Bethel had been part of a large holding that included Franks and Webb Tracts and Bradford and Jersey Islands. As early as 1885 there were Bethels listed as part owners. Its name often changed with new owners and it was known as Stone's Tract and Sandmound Ranch. It is said that the island eventually came under the ownership of a Major W.K. Bethell, although that spelling seems confusing.



Rick Philippart with his latest "catch".

Right, a quiet cruise on Piper Slough along the old Franks Tract levee. Below, the water bed races. Below right, a paddlewheeler in the Opening Day parade.



Decorated boats and decorated people for Opening Day.



When Jack and Blanche Farrar cleared an eucalyptus grove near the bridge to make a picnic area in the 1920s, it was the first recreational enterprise on the island. This became a pretty little place with a sandy swim beach, cabins, picnic areas and even at one time a small motorcycle track. Farrar Park is still there, but now it is a thriving boat yard and marina.

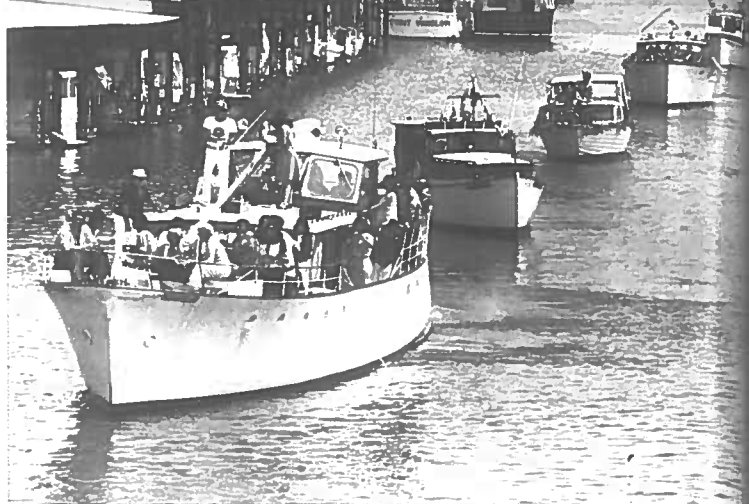
Probably the first launching ramp in the area was at the bridge at Remsburg's Harbor. It was a busy place on weekends. The concrete ramp is still there, but it is hardly up to today's standards and is seldom used. "There was also a place across the bridge where Bethel Island Yacht Sales now is," says Bob Gromm. "It was a sling launch for small boats and was called 'Chet's Sling'. There was also a nearby restaurant called Mary's. And if you bought the \$1 breakfast there, Mary let you launch free down on her beach."

Adjacent to Bethel Island is Franks Tract, a farming island that went under in the winter of 1937-1938 when a combination of heavy rains and exceptionally high tides tore open 300 feet of False River levee. The cost of hauling rock to patch the levee and pumping out the island was considered too expensive and it was never reclaimed.

Boatmen regularly use Franks Tract, but you need to use some care. And it is best to get some local info before doing so. There are numerous entry spots to the tract and some safe routes across it. There are also places like "Snag Island", so use care.

Franks Tract quickly became a favorite fishing hole, yielding many fine striped bass. One enterprising Bethel Island businessman obtained boating rights to the island and set up a toll gate to charge fishermen who wanted to use the tract. The toll collectors were armed! The pilings for the toll "gate" still stand on Piper Slough, but the little shack they supported and where the toll collector sat, is no more. The tract is now a state park.

You have to consider that in these early recreation days in the Delta, the outboard motor had yet to come into its own. Renting fishing boats was a nice business, for few owned their own boat. It is estimated that during its heyday, there were 500 to 600 rental fishing boats available at Bethel Island. Most of the



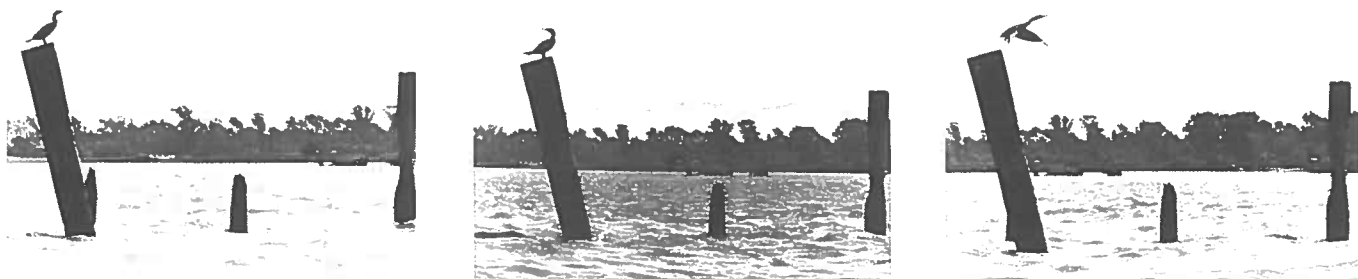
Lined up in the Opening Day parade.

resorts located along Piper Slough, within an easy row of popular Franks Tract. With all those boats out on the tract, the "good humor man" who put-putted out there with hot coffee, sandwiches and other goods to sell to the fishermen, had a good business going. And I have seen times when I wished he were still around.

In the busy Bethel Island of today, there is little evidence of the isolation the pioneers there knew. John Honegger tells about the only doctor to serve early island residents. He lived in Antioch and when he came to the island to call on a patient, he brought along a carrier pigeon. He would leave the pigeon with the patient, who would later send the bird off with a note letting the good doctor know whether he was healing or in need of additional help.

Now let's tour the island, in a clockwise direction from the bridge. To keep this from looking like a laundry list, I'll touch but briefly only on the more important establishments. The map and the facilities chart will tell you what you need to know about most of them. First, on the south bank of Dutch Slough, is Marine Emporium, province of Joe and Julie Spotts, with the only real guest dock in the area. They have marine supplies, a boatyard, sales, repairs, canvas shop, delicatessen and take-out liquor, all more or less under a single roof.

Next door is Richard's Yacht Center with fuel, boat sales and supplies, closed at this writing but expected to re-open. Here too is the Courtyard restaurant. Across the slough is Bethel Island Yacht Sales and



Photographer braves the snags of Franks Tract to photograph bird.

Discovery Yachts. If you were to continue up Dutch Slough, you would find Artist Table at Viking Harbor, small and intimate, but one of the Delta's finest restaurants. But to continue around the island, we slip into Taylor Slough.

The island bank here has almost continuous residences to Leisure Landing. While on the opposite bank on Jersey Island there is little noteworthy. You pass Ben Mozzetti's boatyard with haulout and repair, and it is now home for the late Tom Case's *Virginia S.* (now back to its original name, *Suisun*). Then comes Anchor Marina with fuel and some supplies, followed by the island clubhouse of Caliente Isle Yacht Club, accessible by boat or over a footbridge built in recent years to replace the club's ferry. Then on the west end of the island is Leisure Landing, a big marina with fuel and some supplies.

From here there is a stretch of nothing. Taylor Slough juts north and you enter Piper Slough waters. More residences appear, then a string of marinas, the first of which is Bethel Harbor, with fuel, launching, supplies, camping and other facilities. Next is Beacon Harbor with fuel and then busy D J's Landing (formerly Boyd's Harbor) with fuel, groceries, camping, marine repair and a restaurant. Next door is Island Holidays with rental houseboats and marine repair, followed by Jody Russo's Russo's Marina with fuel, camping, a cafe, launching, supplies and other facilities.

From here there is a string of little marinas with berthing and little more, then Delta Resort. This bustling place has the only ramp-style launching on the island. It has a comfortable bar and cafe where patrons are afforded a good view of the action out on the sloughs and Franks Tract beyond. The place includes a large campground. Nearby is Frank's Marina with fuel, camping and repair and the province of cigar-chomping Frank Andronico, an old-timer on the island. Included, in the renovated old facilities of The Anchor, is Frank's Cove restaurant and cocktail lounge, a very comfortable place.

At Bob's Marina you are well into the waters of Sand Mound Slough and the marina has a commodious fuel dock. Sand Mound then flows away from the island to the south. On it here you find Jackie and Ken Carver's Carol's Harbor with launching, fuel, supplies and fishing boats. You can get beer and snacks at its snack bar. Next door is Sam's Harbor with a cafe, fuel, rental fishing boats and camping. It is a picturesque little side cruise down to the end of Sand Mound where it deadends at an earthen dam that separates it from Rock Slough.

Back on Dutch Slough to continue our island circumnavigation, the action now is on the left bank Wood's Yacht Harbor has berthing, fuel and marine



"Monks Retreat" on Taylor Slough.



Trawlers lined up on Bethel Island.



On the beach along Franks Tract.



The Marine Emporium gang, circa 1979.



The Jersey Island bridge over Dutch Slough.

repair. Greg's Motel & Harbor has rooms and camping. Doc's Marina has fuel, supplies and a head pumpout. Hennis Marina has camping, launching and repair. At the bridge, Lazy Days has a formidable armada of houseboats, both rentals and sales. Across the slough, at the bridge, is Gary Carter's base camp for his boat sales empire at Carter's Marine Center. Next door is Farrar Park Harbor with a boatyard with haul out, berthing, boat sales and other services. Neighboring the park is the facilities of the active San Joaquin Yacht Club, its clubhouse on a WWII barge now perched on pilings. From up on the Bethel Island bridge, one has a commanding view of all of these facilities, and it becomes evident how compact things are along the waterfront. And if the community is to grow even more, some think the bridge might not be able to handle the traffic.

Again, our tour left out some of the smaller places and makes only note of part of the facilities and services at the marinas mentioned. Consult our maps and facilities charts for more complete information. Too, this kind of information is an ever-changing thing.

Owners change, facilities change. But it was up to date as we went to press.

To be sure, though, it takes more than facilities to make a place a good place to visit or live in. And Bethel Island seems to also have that intangible. There is a certain spirit the island folk and weekenders possess. The island has its own Chamber of Commerce, active in promoting the Delta. And boats or boating seem to enter every conversation. The Bethel Island Water Ski club stages its annual Frozen Bun Run on New Year's morning for masochist skiers.

Each year the San Joaquin Yacht Club's Opening Day of Yachting Season Parade in April at Bethel Island is a gala event that signals the year's beginning for boatmen throughout the Delta. Bathtub racing has been part of the island fare for the past several years. The Thanksgiving Fishing Derby is always a big one with uncountable numbers of prizes contributed by merchants.

When you think of Bethel Island, you think of boats. And that's the way it should be.



Bathtub Fever

I can remember when bathtubs were used for bathing. But these days, around Bethel Island, they hang outboards on bathtubs and race 'em. Well, they aren't exactly your run-of-the-mill bathtub. They are fiberglass molded to specified configurations and are feather-light. They are placed on swift hulls that cut through the water. Then highly-tuned, modest-horsepower outboards are placed on them. They even got organized and formed their own bathtub racing association. A Bethel Island outfit called SCAMPO even makes things easy for you by manufacturing a commercial racing tub.

About \$2,000 will get you into the sport with a new outfit. You can buy used equipment for a lot less. Kid stuff, you say? Well sure, kids do race 'em. There's the Pee Wee class for kids 8 to 11 years, using unmodified 5 h.p. engines. Boys and girls 12 to 18 race with stock 12 cu. in. engines that will haul them along at say, 30 mph. That can seem quite swift in a tiny tub.

As they are so often prone to do, the adults got into the act. Both men and women over 18 years race the 12 cu. in. stockers. But the real hot doggies go for the unlimited class with both men and women 21 years or older racing engines up to 22 cu. in. that have been breathed upon. They will go 45 to 60 mph! You can readily see that this is a family sport. With a couple engine swaps, everyone from Mom to the toddlers can have a go at relatively inexpensive racing.

The good guys in the Bethel Island tub association stage about a half-dozen races a year at various sites around the island. In 1979, the group raised over \$28,000 at one race for the American Cancer Society. So they can't be all bad. One interesting race is staged on New Year's morning. There is no charge to spectators at these races. There are beer and food booths, feeds and other good things at the races. You always see someone you know there. Many yachtsmen arrive in their boats, anchor adjacent to the courses, and thus have the best seats in the house.

Bathtub racing also takes place at Clear Lake. Bethel Island racers from time to time make raids on these events, usually coming home with most of the trophies. If the sport sounds interesting, check with the Bethel Island Chamber of Commerce for details, then amble on down to one of the events or attend a tub association meeting.

Climb in the tub—the water's fine.



The racing bathtub of today looks very much like a racing hydro.



An early day Bethel Island Fire Dept. tub. You can see how the breed has evolved.

NOTE: Alas, most of the Bethel Island tubbers have mothballed their tubs and the racing program is, ah, down the drain as we update this book. Yet there are those who hope new life might be breathed back into the program — perhaps.

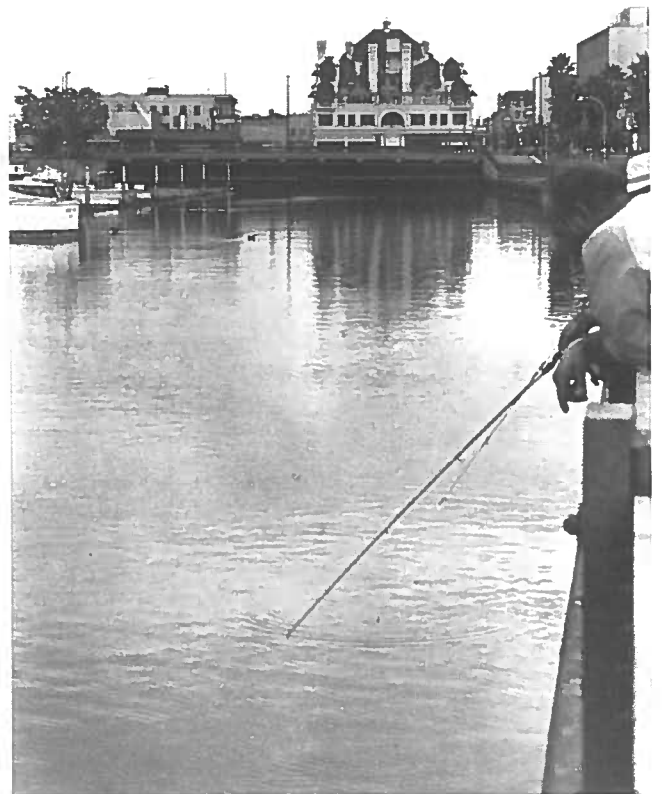
STOCKTON —A MAJOR PORT

Stockton has been a water-oriented city since even before founder Captain Charles Weber brought in his 38-foot, two-masted sailing sloop *Maria* in 1848. The first steamboat arrived the next year in November and is thought to have been the sidewheeler *John A. Sutter*, with a flamboyant Captain Warren at the helm. He made a line fast to a stout oak tree at the foot of what became Center Street and broke out the bubbly for the townfolk. A love affair between the city and paddlewheelers that was to last for over 75 years had begun.

And over the years yachtsmen and men who just like to mess around with boats have come to appreciate Stockton. You can cruise right up to the Channel head in town, where on your starboard side you will find the all-new Waterfront Yacht Harbor, with fuel, boat sales, rentals and other offerings. Its ample guest dock is one of the best around. The harbor includes The Warehouse, a stunning renovation of a grand old brick building that historically housed the Sperry Flour Mill. Inside, the building offers up some five restaurants and a sprinkling of gift shops, candy stores, and other good things. Historic photographs grace the walls, there are plants, brick walkways and fine old heavy beams. You get a good feeling in here. In the summer, many of the restaurants offer dining at sidewalk tables. The building is neighbored by tall glassed-in office towers. These, along with new apartments and condominiums, are part of a \$100 million redevelopment of the area by SDI, being accomplished in two-year increments.

Next door is the Castaway restaurant on the water. On the opposite bank is the Holiday Inn, handy to boaters who do not wish to sleep out in the elements. Guest docking is planned here. Next door is Calamity Jane's, a restaurant and bar with country western

INCLUDING THE
CALAVERAS RIVER
AND SMITH CANAL



A fisherman trying his luck at the channel head in Stockton.



From Covello Collection

Digging of the Deepwater Channel was of immense importance to Stockton. Here you can see two dredges "straightening" the meandering San Joaquin. They are cutting through Tinsley, Fern, Headreach and Tule Islands.

music, in a handsome Spanish-style building overlooking the water but with no guest docking.

It seems that Stockton's founder knew a good thing when he saw it. With William Gulnac, his partner, he obtained a land grant in 1844 for 48,747 acres that included Stockton and the surrounding area. In 1845 Gulnac sold Weber his interest for \$50 worth of groceries and a \$10 white horse. The town was founded in 1847 and became legally known as Stockton in 1850. It was probably the first town in California with an English name.

Over the years, Stockton has enjoyed a number of different names. For a time it was known as Tuleburg (I like this one) because of the tules that grew profusely along the water's edge. It was called Castoria because of the great numbers of beavers trapped in the area. (Castor is Spanish for beaver.) It was even called the City of Windmills because of the many windmills used and manufactured here. Now, the Stockton Convention and Visitors' Bureau calls Stockton The Delta City.

Stockton was also called Mudville (need I explain that?) and this handle has caused much controversy over the years. When Ernest Thayer penned his poem about Casey at the Bat and used the line, *But there is no joy in Mudville—Mighty Casey has struck out*, all

loyal Mudvillians are sure he was writing about Stockton. But there are outsiders who think otherwise and the arguments have been going on for decades. Just recently a series on this very subject appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Initially, Weber had difficulty attracting settlers to Tuleberg. But that all changed when gold was discovered. The river route through Stockton and then overland became the easiest and quickest route to the southern mines and the town prospered.

It was recorded that 44,000 persons passed through Stockton between April of 1849 and February of 1850. Officers and crewmen were abandoning their ships in Stockton to head for the mines. Some 14,000 of them are said to have done this during that same 11-month period. The abandoned ships began to clog the channel and were moved to Mormon Slough to be stripped of usable lumber and burned.

The channel head in Stockton looked vastly different in earlier times. Five sloughs branched off it there. They were called Asylum Slough, Fremont Slough, Miner Slough, Branch Slough and Mormon Channel. Over the years they were land-filled to make getting around in the city easier, and the only one to survive is Mormon Channel. Filling in of the sloughs caused serious flood problems in Stockton until diver-

sion channels and dams were built.

Of course, this filling in of sloughs did not occur all at once. Even as late as 1947 a large portion of McLeod Lake was filled in up to Center Street. Historically there had always been river people living in their floating river shanties. And an enclave of these floating abodes had always existed in McLeod Lake. This progress left them homeless.

Jack London, who traveled in and out of Stockton for decades, chided Stocktonians for not appreciating the beautiful waterways lying at their doorstep. And he said, "... you do not fully realize the uses to which it might be put." He predicted that there would one day be boat clubs and "... harbors and floats and landing stages for the pleasure-boats."

London was not far off the mark in most of these respects. He sailed Delta waters often and he knew the value of good facilities. But until recently, Stockton facilities seem to have grown more in the outskirts of town rather than in the "in-town" area itself. Village West Marina in north Stockton is a model facility. And there are many others out on the sloughs and the cuts with Stockton addresses. But now, in town, the boatman's time has finally come.

A marina with waterside condominiums was proposed in the harbor that once housed the Pollock Shipyards on the east side of the Channel. However, after a long battle it lost out to a commercial project there.

From the beginning, Stocktonians were smitten with the paddlewheelers. The same Captain Warren who arrived first with the *John A. Sutter*, soon returned with a sidewheeler called *El Dorado* and began making regular runs between Stockton and San Francisco. Competition arrived posthaste and the price war began. The fare to San Francisco got as low as a dime. And for a time free trips were offered. Of course, such tomfoolery could not last. The intrepid riverboaters got their collective heads together and prices were stabilized—for awhile!

Stockton later had its own favorites. The 206-foot *J.D. Peters* was one of them. Built in Stockton's own Jarvis Shipyards in 1889, it made the Stockton-San Francisco run for nearly 50 years before it ended its days high and dry in the asparagus patches of Mandeville Island.

The *T.C. Walker* (number 2) was another darling of the Stocktonians. A 200-foot sternwheeler, it was built in 1885 and until it was abandoned in 1938 or thereabouts, it made regular runs between Stockton and San Francisco. But all was not fun and games. On November 27, 1898 this fine riverboat blew up about 15 miles below Stockton, killing nine men. It was repaired, however, and soon was back in business.

The old riverboats also served as hotels and enter-

tainment centers when large conventions were in town. And I suspect that today's Convention and Visitors' Bureau chief would welcome such facilities. The riverboats would tie up on McLeod's Lake handy to the Civic Auditorium. Delta Riverboats also got their share of glory appearing in such films as *Steamboat Round the Bend*, with Will Rogers; *Dixie*, with Bing Crosby; and *Huckleberry Finn*. While the Mississippi River seemed to capture the fancy of movie producers, the Delta never did, other than as a handy location for filming.

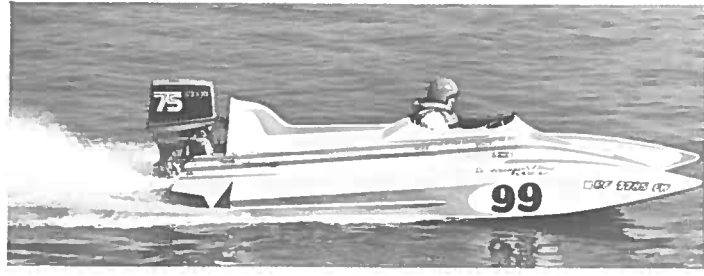
The Stockton Chamber of Commerce has a department to attract movie-making to the area and to work with filmmakers. And this activity brings a good amount of money into the community. John Wayne, Lauren Bacall, Gregory Peck, George Kennedy, Paul Newman and other luminaries have filmed in this area, often on the water or near it. And boatmen take it as just another part of the Delta scene. I can recall awhile back driving on Eight Mile Road out by Herman & Helen's Marina and coming upon perhaps a dozen sheriff's cars, many of them wrecked. I thought a minor riot had taken place. But it was little more than the results of a chase-'em scene involving drawbridges and ferries for a segment of television's *B.J. and the Bear*.

Now, let's take an easy cruise up to the channel head, beginning at Buckley Cove, which was covered earlier. The beautiful facilities of the Stockton Sailing Club slip by on the left bank. Quickly off to the right is the lower entrance to Burns Cutoff which curls around the Navy's Rough and Ready Island to connect with the San Joaquin. Nearly across from it the Calaveras River snakes off to the northwest. The explorer Moraga gave the river its name because of the numerous skulls he found there. In Spanish, *calaveras* means skulls. If you ignore the meaning, it is a pretty sounding name for an equally pretty piece of water.

I think of the Stockton Yacht Club whenever I pass this river. For the club has beautiful facilities on the south bank of the river. You can cruise up the river for about a mile and a half and it makes a nice aside if you have some time to spare. Entering the river, off to the right side you pass a number of fine homes, their green, well-manicured lawns sweeping down to the water. One home in here belongs to Dick Stephens of yacht-building Stephens Marine. Mahogany (of course) was used profusely in its construction.

Next you will pass a pair of small islands. One has a comfortable home on it, a garage for a boat and a thriving orchard. The owner has a small, private cable-drawn ferry connected to the mainland. The next island too is inhabited. When a great noisy party took place down here awhile back, with minors drinking and other fun-but-illegal things taking place, the

Right bottom, a sailboat on the Channel. R. middle, a boat on Smith Canal. R., The Exploration Lines cruise ship docks at Waterfront Yacht Harbor. Bottom middle, a floating home on the Calaveras. Middle, boat races on the Channel. Bottom left, a sign remembers Stockton's early name. Below, Waterfront Yacht Harbor and the Warehouse.



police staged a raid. There were many dozen to arrest, and getting them off the island posed quite a transportation problem. To date, there are no water-borne paddy wagons.

From here on there is a hodgepodge of floating homes and liveaboard vessels. Their architecture and design are whatever their builders thought they should be, although availability of material seems to have had some influence. After you pass the yacht club with its covered berths and fuel dock out front of the clubhouse, the sights peter out and you can drive at speed to the I-5 overpass. End of mini-cruise. Now back to the channel.

Over at Rough and Ready, the concrete wharf runs from 6,500 feet, making it probably the longest in the world. I always enjoyed looking at the mothball fleet anchored there, but most of these vessels are gone now. Still, there are interesting military boats and ships and usually a mixture of amphibians ashore. On the other side of the channel are splendid homes overlooking the water, several with boat landings. Stockton marine dealer and an outboard racer of considerable renown, Bob Larson, has a home here. It is outfitted with a launching ramp.

Next you pass Louis Park, on the left bank, locally called Dad's Point, with its public launching ramp and adjacent park. From here, Smith Canal runs straight through Stockton residential areas for about two miles before ending at a park. You can cruise its entire length, to peek into the back yards of homes along its banks. Several have private boat landings. Until recently, such a cruise was made difficult by a permanently closed railroad swing bridge. But local yachtsmen who keep boats beyond the bridge waged a successful battle to get it permanently opened and it has just been removed. Prior to the bridge opening, several of the boatmen had to plan the tides carefully to be able to cruise to and from their homes.

Continuing up the Channel you pass a rectangular harbor cut into the left bank. Once the site of Pollock Shipyards, a marina was proposed here (as mentioned earlier) but instead Sohio developed it and adjacent property into a site to construct large buildings and other structures to be towed to the oil fields of Alaska by barge. These multi-story structures are impressive and will be doubly so when they are under tow.

During WWII, Stockton was quite a ship-building community. Virtually all of this activity took place on the north bank of the channel. Builders included Pollock, Kyle and Company, Colberg Boat Works, Stephens Marine, Clyde Wood, Moore Equipment and Stockton Steel Fabricators. Of these, only Stephens and Colberg remain in the business. I recently attended launching ceremonies for a new boat for the Red and White Fleet at Colberg's. The firm, founded in

1896, is operated by Wilton Colberg and his son. Many of the Delta ferries have the Colberg stamp and you regularly see them and Red and White Fleet boats on the ways there. Stephens Marine, founded in 1902, is operated by Richard and Theo Stephens, brothers. They turn out some outstanding motor-sailers and motor yachts, some costing over a million dollars. They also do haul out and repair.

After Rough and Ready, the Port of Stockton occupies the west bank of the channel up to Mormon Channel. You see freighters flying the flags of nations from all over the world tied to the Port's docks. In 1979, the *Valerie F* was in port with a deck cargo of 10 or 12 used yachts purchased in Florida at favorable prices and shipped to owners and dealers here. These days, the Port is a valuable financial asset to the city, and I think also gives it a certain prestige.

In the shadow of the Interstate 5 overcrossing is a recently constructed public launching facility. This gives the city three public launching facilities plus two more in San Joaquin County on the upper San Joaquin.

Invariably you see some interesting vessels around a port city. Stockton is no exception. Until recently, the homeless WWII submarine *Pampanito* was anchored out in front of Colberg's. River scuttlebutt has it that during the war, the sub sank a Japanese hospital ship that was loaded with American soldiers. The sub, it is said, was donated to the San Francisco Maritime Museum, but was unwanted there. However, it recently made the grade and was accepted. Another now-gone familiar sight around the waterfront was F.D.R.'s old Presidential yacht, *Potomac*, a 165-foot Coast Guard cutter acquired and converted in 1935. After a several-year stay, it ended up in the Port of Oakland to be renovated.

The great cruise ships of the Exploration Cruise Lines also call on Stockton on a regular basis, docking at Waterfront Yacht Harbor during their three-day Delta cruises. Jim Gerhart's 90-passenger, 65-foot excursion boat *Channel Star* calls the Yacht Harbor home. Originally brought here from Lake Tahoe by Gene Calcagno years ago, this tour boat has introduced thousands of landlubbers to Delta waters.

As you enter the channel head in Stockton, you are afforded the beautiful view across the water of the old Hotel Stockton. This fine, mission-style building was opened in 1910 and has 252 hotel rooms in its five stories. It was closed as a hotel in 1960, but continues as an office building. KJOY radio is headquartered here.

The Delta City. From a boatman's standpoint anyway, that pretty accurately describes our Stockton.



Returning from the first Redding race is Bud Jones in X-6 and Marvin and 10-year-old Patty Powell in X-4.

Racing From Stockton To Redding

The marathon outboard races from Stockton to Redding and to Colusa are still talked about wherever in the Delta hulls are kicked and beers are quaffed. It was a brief but exciting era and a great many local people were involved. The idea for the race came from the Stephens brothers who took a cruise to the area and came back raving about its beauty.

The first race was staged in 1955. It went from Stockton to Colusa, where the boats were impounded. The next morning the second leg of the race began, from Colusa to Redding, totalling 316 gruelling miles. Stocktonian Marvin Powell ran in that race with his 10-year-old daughter Patty going along as "deck-rider". Within five years, Patty, at the ripe old age of 15, was to be overall winner of the race, which had then been shortened to Stockton to Colusa and back the next day. Patty's deck-rider for the many marathons she raced was Vicki Zappettini.

After several years, the Redding stretch of the race was discontinued because it was too hard on machinery. Water depths were not dependably adequate. "You brought along plenty of spare props for that leg of the race," remembers Marvin Powell. "It was nothing to go through four or more of them."

Nearly 200 boats entered each marathon. The Port

Stockton Boaters were organizers of the event, which started (and later finished) at the Rod & Gun Club on the Stockton Channel. The competition quickly grew keen and there were racing hydros with twin outboards. A 35 h.p. outboard was a big engine in the beginning, but soon some boats were running twin 75s.

The sheriff gave the race his blessing and non-competing boatmen were asked to stay out of the racers' way. The race route took the racing horde through Georgiana Slough and the banks were lined with spectators. Every bridge on the route was filled with crowds cheering the racers on. The drivers drove all day on their knees and were aching and bruised at the end of the two days.

But the Delta was fast-growing at the time. There was more traffic on the waterways. And a couple hundred racers going flat-out to Colusa and back, posed potential problems. You couldn't block off the whole Delta. In a few years, the race was discontinued.

However brief the era might have been, no one can say it was not exciting. And the people who were a part of it treasure its memories.

FIVE FINGERS & MANDEVILLE TIP

There are anchorages that command a vast following. They are talked about wherever yarns of the Delta are spun. Everyone it seems knows about them. And boatmen will pass by some very good anchorage spots to get to these favorites. Consequently it may not always be easy to find space. Groups will send scouts ahead a day or two early to rope-off space or make one vessel seem to occupy the space of nine.

The two anchorages this chapter discusses command this kind of popularity. And perhaps more. There is no denying, Five Fingers has the characteristics of an outstanding anchorage. Very likely it is saved from the hordes because many boatmen do not know how to find it. Tucked away on Middle River just north of Connection Slough, it has no designation on the charts. Until I recently noted it on the Delta Map we produce, none of the commercial Delta maps showed it.

When a dining writer gives an exquisite little restaurant high praise in his newspaper or magazine, he knows he may be destroying it forever. He may be sending the masses there to ruin it. However, I command no such following. And if boatmen want to hear about Five Fingers, then it seems only proper that they should hear it from me. As much as they might wish to, the old timers cannot keep the Delta to themselves. Besides, Five Fingers can accommodate a surprising number of boats. I pass by there often and see only a handful of boats at anchor, sometimes with vacant fingers. Sometimes with but a solitary boat, way to the inside end of the finger.

As you have probably guessed, Five Fingers consists of five finger-shaped cuts into a medium-size island situated cross-wise in the river. The cuts are wide and in varying depths I'd judge to be 50 yards and more. The brush is thick and high everywhere on the island, providing isolation and deadening sounds from

A PAIR OF EXTRAORDINARY
ANCHORAGES, EASY
TO GET TO



Tied to the Mandeville Tip docks.



Rafted up near Five Fingers.

neighboring boats. You could be anchored in one finger and hardly be aware that there was a group in an adjacent finger. On a windy day, you feel no wind at all in one of the fingers. The direction for passing boats is to the side of the fingers, so there is little or no wake action. Water depths are excellent.

So well are the fingers hidden that you could easily pass by them and not notice that there are a few dozen boats anchored. Each finger becomes its own private harbor. You see club raftups, whole families afloat on air mattresses, dinghies everywhere and a lot of laughing and good times. There are no nearby supply stops, so you come to Five Fingers well provisioned.

In the past, there was much speculation about how the fingers were formed and what use they were put to. Some said they were used as hidden supply pickup points for illegal Chinese workers smuggled into the area. The entrances were hidden with floating brush, so the story goes. As interesting as this tale may be, the explanation is a simpler one. A nearby farmer with some time on his hands and an idle dredge merely dug a few cuts into this otherwise worthless island. He hoped to turn a few bucks by leasing or renting them out to boatmen or clubs. Apparently it never worked out. And boatmen benefited immensely because of it.

Mandeville Tip

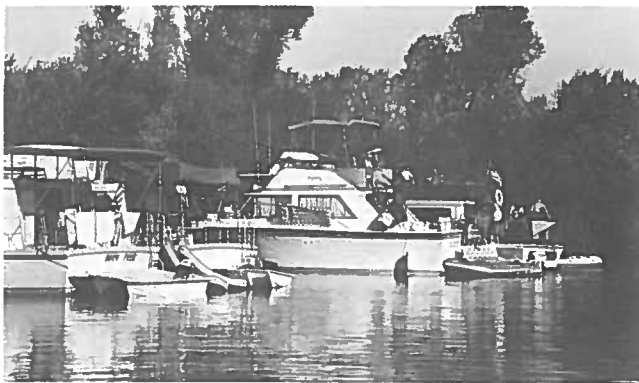
Too seldom it seems, do boatmen who own medium-to-large-size craft benefit from tax dollars spent to improve boating recreation. There are tax-paid-for launching facilities a-plenty. And fishing piers and parks. But what for the cruising skipper or houseboat pilot? Perhaps the idea perseveres that to own such boats, one must be wealthy, and why spend tax dollars to improve the lot of the moneyed.

Mandeville Tip is an exemplary example of what can be done. And at the expense of only a modest amount of the long green. Geographically it is a

Below, an uncrowded finger.



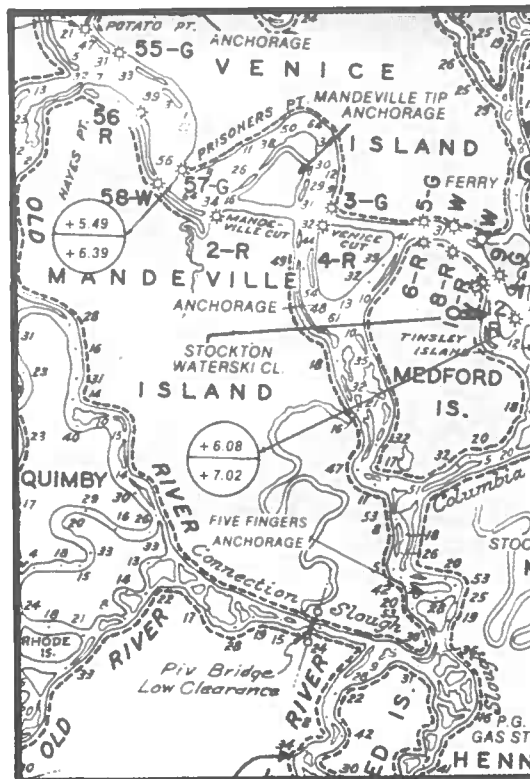
Below, a busy finger.



Below, taking Fido for a pit stop.



A busy raftup in a Five Fingers inlet.



175-acre tip that the dredges sliced off Mandeville Island when the Stockton Deepwater Channel was dug in the mid-thirties. Property of the Port of Stockton, it lay dormant for some 30 years after that. Just another tule fringed island in the Delta, situated near Light #3.

Enter the San Joaquin County Parks Department. On August 30, 1965 they awakened the slumbering island by arranging a lease from the Port. They constructed a series of docks around part of the Tip's perimeter. They built barbecues, picnic tables and installed portable toilets and trash bins. They raised a wooden nature tower you can climb to survey the island. They trimmed back the tenacious blackberry bushes to establish a mile-long nature trail.

They invited the boating public to use the facility free of charge. And word of this excellent facility spread fast. Just off the channel, its visibility is excellent. It is easy to get to. The docks — or most of them — are on the lee side of the island for protection from the wind. Tall trees spring up from the shoreline. Raccoons amble around cadging food from the picnickers. And there are no landlubbers on the Tip, for it is accessible only by boat.

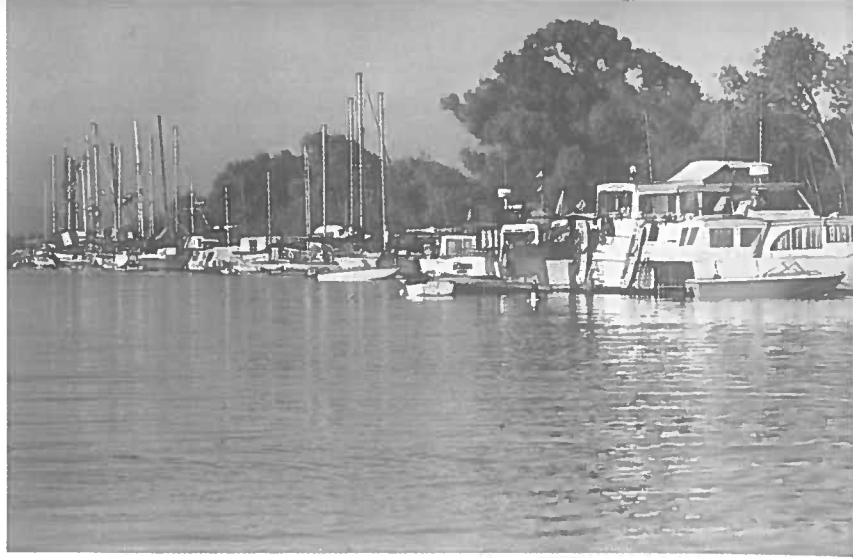
Mandeville Tip has the advantage that so many Delta anchorages do not have — you can get ashore to stretch the legs. The early arriving boatmen get space at the docks. Those that come later must be

content to bow-in to the shore with a stern anchor out, getting ashore as best they can. When we go there in a group, which we do for at least one outing a year (an S.O.S. feed) we try to get a couple boats to the dock, then raft the rest off them. So popular is Mandeville Tip, even in January, that we often send our scouts out a day early.

The Parks Department has a crew that operates out of a Boston Whaler to haul refuse off the Tip and empty the heads. They do the same thing at a less-popular park (shallower access, wakes from passing boats) adjacent to the channel on South Spud Island. There is little vandalism, but the docks need plenty of attention. In all, there is a grand amount of enjoyment received for a modest expenditure.

There is a great broad and deep natural harbor adjacent to the Tip, between it and neighboring Venice Island. Many boats anchor throughout these waters. And you see some grand yachts there, measuring in excess of 100 feet. On the 4th of July weekend, there may be over 500 boats anchored in this area. The floor show is constant.

With all this popularity, why not then build a few more such facilities. Sprinkle them around the Delta in convenient and likely spots. Well, it seems that the county Parks Department has not had an overabundance of funds in recent years. They visit the Tip, count the boats, and find out their home ports. Lo, the majority of them are from outside the county. However good the public relations value of it might be, the county is not enthused about spending its money on "outsiders". They began to search for a way to make the Tip pay for itself. Like maybe hiring a con-



The action is everywhere at Mandeville Tip over 4th of July as boatmen party and play, waiting for Hilton's fireworks.



Sunseeker tied to the trees of Mandeville Tip.



cessionaire to operate it and collect use fees.

Finally, Port of Stockton Director Alex Krygsman decided to bring the Tip back under the Port's wing. Krygsman is the man who in a few short years transformed the Port into a profit-making operation. His stock is very high these days, and what he wants he very often gets. He wants to continue Mandeville Tip with the Port operating it pretty much as it has been operated in the past.

Alas, there is a sad ending to the Mandeville Tip story. The Port of Stockton gave the Tip its very best try, but hauling garbage and effluent from the Tip by boat, using union longshoremen, just didn't work out. Reluctantly, the Port eventually decided to get out of the parks business. A sweeping courts decision that made the Port liable for most anything that might happen out on the Tip was the last straw. The Tip was closed. Piers not damaged by winter's high water were salvaged by the Parks Department. All pilings were removed.

Although signs now post Mandeville Tip as "no trespassing" territory, boatmen still use it for the fine anchorage it is, snugging up to the trees and tules along its shores, perhaps not going ashore. What we all wonder now is, "who feeds the Mandeville Tip racoons?"



Houseboats at Mandeville Tip's docks.



Guitar playing at a winter outing at Mandeville Tip.

Hilton's Fireworks

Barron Hilton started something back there in 1958 when he put on a little fireworks display for his children, who were with him at the exclusive duck club retreat on Venice Island across from Mandeville Tip. It seems there were a few boatmen anchored thereabouts and they enjoyed the fireworks display. The Delta jungle drums did their job, and next year there were a few more boatmen on hand, just in case the big hotel man were to do his fireworks thing again. And he did.

Very quickly it grew into a Delta tradition. "It kept getting bigger and bigger every year," Hilton told me as we sat at the duck club bar, sipping a libation. It was that time of the year again, and outside the great harbor between the club and the Tip was already getting crowded. "More and more boats would stop to watch," Hilton continued. "After about 10 years I began hiring professionals to put it on, and the corporation took over financing it. We like to do it and it is good public relations."

On a good 4th, perhaps 600 boats will be anchored in the area to see the fireworks. They come in groups and are tied about six deep all the way around the Tip. They fill up the great harbor. They line the banks of Mandeville, their anchors pitched in Middle River waters. Threeriver Reach is stuffed with boats. There are parties everywhere.

The Lost Isle barge is at anchor out in the harbor. The pyrotechnicians arrive with their goods in a truck aboard a Camp-A-Float. Everything here is done in style. The barge is operations center for the fireworks. Inside the duck club Hilton speaks of how both he and Clark Gable were both charter members of the duck club. He talks of Gable's hunting prowess. Behind the bar is a partially full bottle of 20-year-old Whyte & Mackays Scotch, along with a glass. They were used by Clark Gable the last time he was at the club and they are more or less enshrined under a dome of glass.

Hilton is an easy man to be with, relaxed like the rest of us out here in the Delta. When they come here for duck hunting, no women are allowed. They hunt with the likes of the late John Wayne and Jimmy Dolittle and other notables. But they are like the rest of us, enjoying the Delta.

Darkness comes and the show begins. The sky is filled with bursts of scattering light and the sounds boom through the air. You can hear the oohs and ahhs of the spectators. And finally when it is all over — too soon, too soon — many boats are fired up.

Lights are turned on and the area looks like a fair-size city. Boats are on the move in every direction and the situation is almost precarious. The smart ones stay anchored, to head home at their leisure the next day.

Over at the duck club, Hilton smiles. Perhaps chuckling and wondering how such a simple thing as a family fireworks display could have grown into such a grand and special thing. And it is special. Thank you Barron Hilton.



Barron Hilton. He enjoys doing it and his fireworks display is appreciated by boatmen.

DISAPPOINTMENT SLOUGH

You can easily imagine the disappointment of early-day Stockton-bound riverboat captains plying the San Joaquin River when they found they had been lured into Disappointment Slough and were miles off route. On dark, moonless nights, or during times of heavy tule fogs, the gentle bend of Disappointment at the San Joaquin was easily confused for the river itself. Thus, disgruntled riverboat pilots gave the slough its name.

But the name is certainly inappropriate as far as pleasure-boat skippers are concerned. For this five mile slough has more to offer than many several times its length. For years it seemed the slough's attributes were known only by the locals. They found it handy and close-in to civilization, yet with the feel of complete isolation—deep enough just about everywhere, with plenty of comfortable anchorages. However, the word has been getting out. And now we see flotillas of Bay Area boats, with anchorages staked out in Disappointment for much of the summer.

The slough has three entrances off the Stockton Deepwater Channel near Light #13. They snake around Fern and Headreach Islands. Thanks to the dredges that chomped through the middle of them when digging the channel, these two islands became four, with a pair occupying each side of the channel. Headreach has an inner lake and the Power Squadron maintains a dock near it. There is a move to develop the lake and its surrounding area into a deluxe marina called Irish Isle. But at this writing, final permits for it have not been issued.

Both these islands provide excellent anchorages on their back sides, that is, the sides away from the channel. They offer wind protection and there is little wake-producing traffic. Fern has the added advantage of a long tule island to its back side, which provides both protection and isolation. It can accommodate a

INCLUDING BOTH LEGS OF
FOURTEENMILE SLOUGH
AND HONKER CUT



Art Wyatt's 1925 Stephens, Graceta.



Tied to the tules of Disappointment Slough

good-sized fleet of anchored boats. I stopped by there recently during a Grand Banks owners' outing when nearly three dozen of the beautiful trawlers were ensconced there.

The slough has a string of good-sized islands in its center very nearly all its length. So you have two distinct routes to cruise here. If you stay to the starboard side going in, you are on the fast route, running along Rindge Tract, unimpeded by docks, 5 mph zones or commercial establishments. It is fine water skiing water. I often use this route when I am in a hurry, connecting with Fourteenmile Slough and on to my berth at Stockton's Village West Marina.

The port side of the slough is intersected by Honker Cut and has marinas with boats in slips along its bank, plus there are numerous islands with docks on this side. Here, you poke along much of the way, enjoying the scenery and rubbernecking at the boats in their slips. The slough ends at Paradise Point Marina where Bishop Cut juts off to the left. So much for the lay of the water and land.

Most of the islands in this slough are interlocked, and thus they offer some excellent hideaways in the channels that snake around between them. I used to keep a boat at Paradise Point Marina and have run this slough hundreds of times—more than once in pea-soup fog. One day I decided to poke around one of the islands I hadn't previously explored. And lo,

there hidden away on one of the inner shores was a quaint A-frame summer cabin. I had never known it was there.

Originally, most of these islands were connected to (and were a part of) the adjacent main islands (Rindge Tract and King Island, primarily) and the narrow slough ran a very meandering route between the two huge tracts. But when the dredging cuts were made to provide dirt for the levees, protrusions of land were severed from the main islands, producing the string of new islands that dot the slough's center. The slough's meandering identity was lost in the process. Ownership of the islands very nearly alternates, with one being owned by King Island interests, then the next by Rindge Tract, ad infinitum. Most of the "Rindge" islands are unoccupied and have no docks or other structures on them, while those once connected to King Island have portions leased or rented out—many to water-ski clubs and boat clubs.

Many of the docks on these islands were installed without benefit of permit, which not long ago was the manner in which things on the Delta were done. But a couple years ago, the Army Corps of Engineers decided such a practice had gone on long enough and informed island lessees that if they did not get permits for the docks or remove them, then the Corps itself would handle the removal. There were over 70 docks involved.

Apparently these difficulties were eventually resolved and Disappointment's island jewels continue to serve as a playground for boatmen who love the easy waters of the Delta. Now, the State's parks department has its eye on Disappointment and would like to transform its islands into primitive parks.

The story of the Delta waterways is one of constant change. Sloughs were dammed and filled to form parts of major island farms. New channels were dug to provide levee-building material. And the courses of rivers and sloughs were changed to meet the needs of the moment. Apparently a slough called Twentyonemile ran through Rindge Tract at one time, but was filled. King Island had a slough called Elkhorn (not to be confused with the north Delta's Elkhorn Slough). If you study the large NOAA charts, with all their detail, you can sometimes see where this water manipulation occurred. For example, on Disappointment, you can clearly see the original route of the meandering slough as it ran before the cuts were made. And if you wish to do so today, you could cruise the old slough's route, curving in and out

through the maze of "new" islands.

About a third of the way into the slough, Honker Cut enters from the port side. It runs for almost a mile and connects with White Slough. I often use this route in a small boat, taking White Slough to Little Potato and on to the Mokelumne. It can be somewhat shorter, depending, of course, on where you are and where you are going, and I like the varied route. Unfortunately, Honker Cut has a relatively low-clearance swing bridge that is not regularly manned. So the cut is little used as a through route for larger craft.

Cruising into Honker, you see Cruiser Haven Yacht Club's beautiful little island at the cut's juncture with Disappointment. Bustling King Island Resort is on King Island's "corner" and has fuel, boat haulout, a cafe with home cooking, groceries and other supplies. It is home for King Island Houseboats rental fleet and is the province of Harry and Isabel Britton and their partners.

Next up is Uncle Bobbie's Marina with its boat scrubber, fuel dock and launching. At the same location is King Island Marine with sales, repair and



King Island Resort, a handy provisioning marina for Disappointment boatmen.



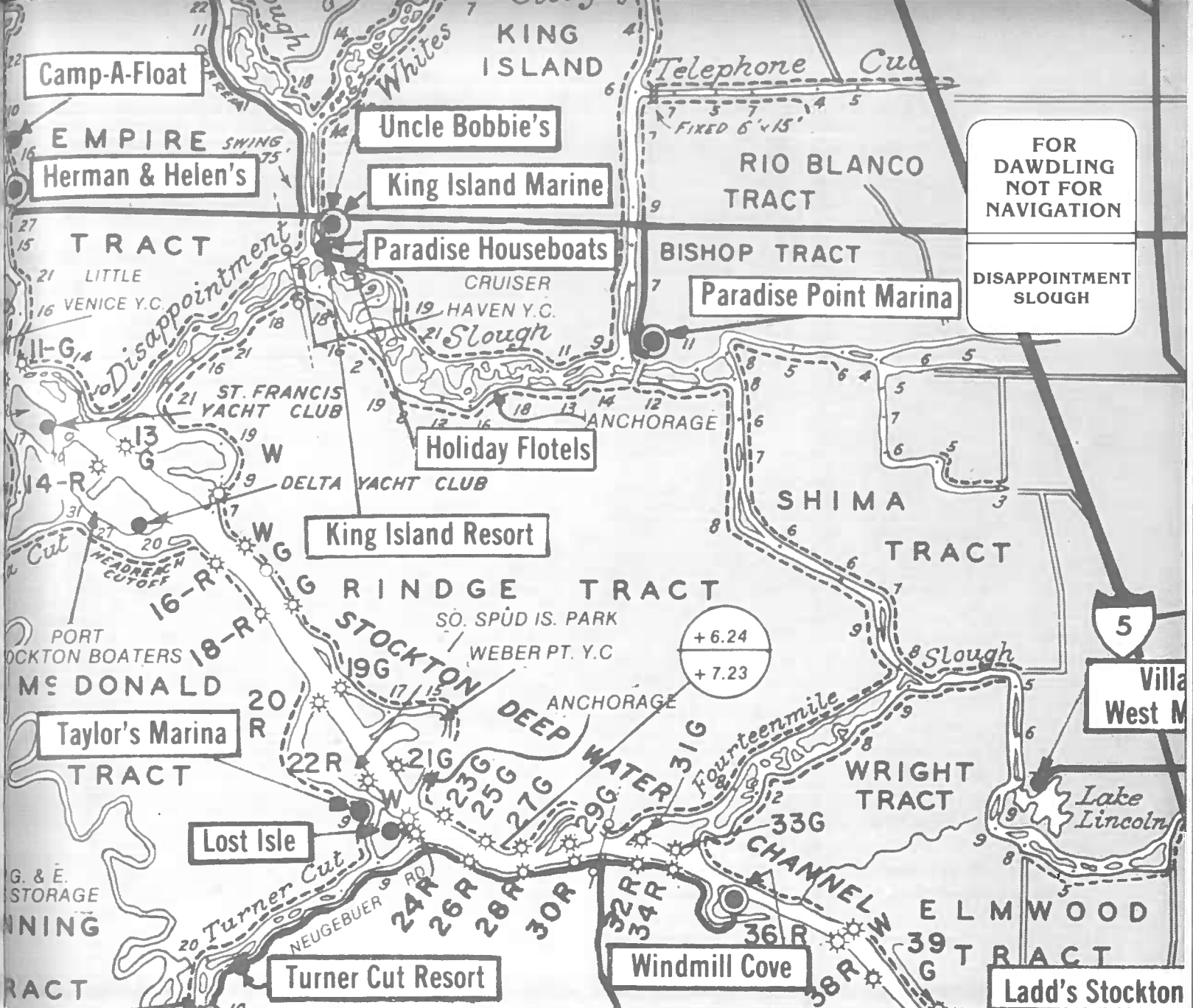
Summer cabin on Disappointment.



Rental houseboat on Disappointment.



Connie Johnson, Miss Wheelchair USA, ready to go houseboating.

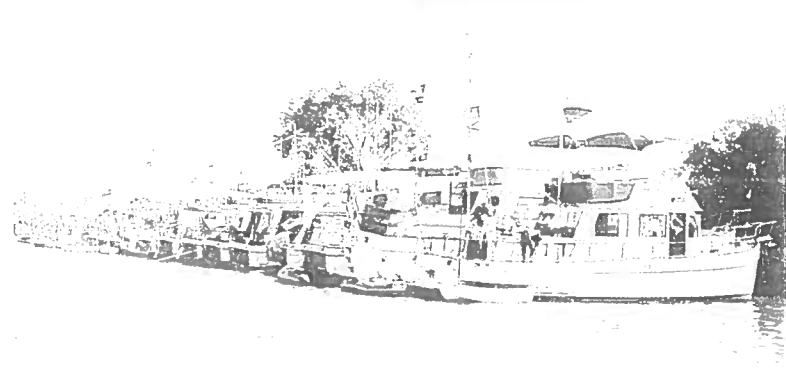


marine supplies. These two outfits are located practically in the shadow of the bridge and there is considerable activity around here on summer weekends. Returning to Disappointment, Meta Jackson's Holiday Flotels occupies a sizeable portion of King Island's bank. It has rental houseboats and some supplies and is quartered in a handsome old wood building that for years was Elkhorn School where the island children went for their Three Rs. The marina has a long stretch of open slips, mostly occupied by privately owned houseboats.

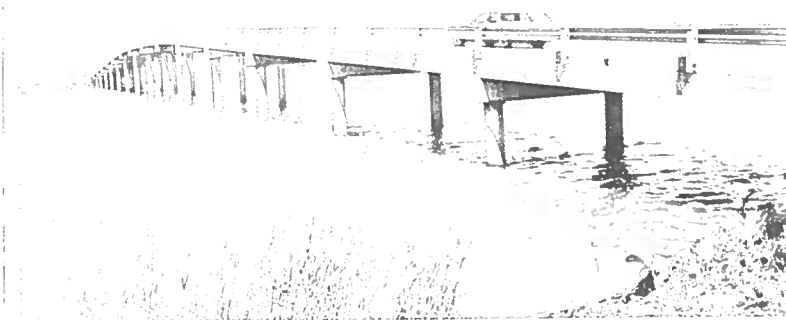
Near the end of the slough, Bishop Cut enters from the port side. As with Honker Cut, it connects with White Slough and has a low-clearance unmanned bridge. The cut is popular with water skiers. You see serious skiers here from a club at Stockton's University of the Pacific. They run in their specially prepared

ski boats and they don't let the cold winter weather deter them from the sport they love. Telephone Cut makes a short dead-end run off Bishop Cut, tailing off to the east. Its entrance is guarded by a very low fixed wooden bridge and the club uses part of the cut for a slalom course. This seems like a splendid place for it, for here it does not infringe on anyone else's boating waters. At the north end of Bishop, a small unnamed cut runs west for a short distance. We have carefully run this to its end and it has little to recommend.

Paradise Point Marina sits at the juncture of Disappointment and Bishop, occupying frontage on both sloughs. It has a fuel dock, rental houseboats and ski boats, a cafe, launching, supplies and a boatyard. Newly owned by Play Mate Resort Marinas, which has a number of other marinas in the West, considerable expansion has occurred here. Paradise Point was the



Bay Area Grand Banks owners rafted up behind Fern Island.



The bridge by Paradise Point Marina.

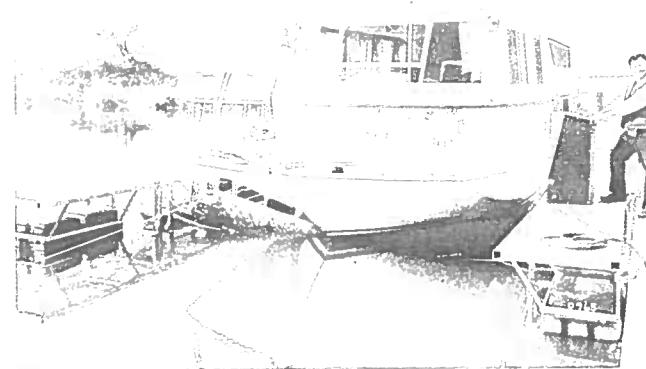
location of a cable ferry to Rindge Tract until a few years ago when it was replaced by a high-clearance fixed concrete bridge. This "freeway-style" bridge looks out of place out here in the hinterlands of the Delta and I have long jokingly referred to it as "the ugliest bridge on the Delta". So far no one has disputed this claim.

It is about at the bridge that Fourteenmile Slough begins. Actually, this portion of Fourteenmile would more logically be considered an extension of Disappointment, but in the naming of things on the Delta, logic is often not a consideration. Immediately after the bridge, a run of water snakes around an island to the port side, making a short dead-end run in what is locally called Atherton Cut or Slough. It is shallow and not greatly used, although the charts show an old landing there and a prominent place marked as Atlas Point.

In every direction, farmlands extend almost as far as the eye can see and you can get a good view of it by walking up on the bridge. Over the years, the crops have varied as one gains in popularity and another wanes. Potatoes have long been a mainstay. And in the old days you could see boats loaded with potatoes snugged to landings around Rindge and other islands. "You can still see the pilings from the landing on Rindge opposite Honker Cut," says Stockton's Jim Frazier. "As kids, we used to look at the potato boats tied there and longed to leave on one of them," he continues. "So one time another kid and I snuck aboard one and hid and made the trip to San Francisco and back. We thought it was a grand adventure."



Oscar Kaudent is proud of his striper.



Uncle Bobbie's boat bottom scrubber on Honker Cut.



Fishermen on Fourteenmile Slough, dressed for winter boating.



Plugging for bass in the tules of Fourteenmile Slough.

When running the early section of Fourteenmile, the Rindge levee bank is the preferred route. This section meets the "real" Fourteenmile, which runs from bustling Bill Ladd's Village West Marina in north Stockton to the Stockton Deepwater Channel near Light #33. This relatively new marina is done with great style and is a definite asset to the neighborhood. It also transforms Fourteenmile into an important, much-used waterway. The marina harbors a great number of large and small craft, all of which must use the slough to get anywhere.

Many boatmen are not aware that the slough continues behind the marina, on into an area of fine waterfront homes. After a long-fought battle, owners were able to install docks and you see some nice boats here. When the tide is up, taking a short cruise up here in a small boat is worth the time. At low tide, forget it.

Village West Marina is home for the Marina West Yacht Club and has marine repair, some supplies, a fuel dock with diesel and a nice little cafe. A floating store has marine supplies, beer and some groceries. The waterside Hatch Cover restaurant there is highly rated by boatmen. The marina's guest dock is com-

modious and is well visited by yacht and boat clubs.

On its run to the channel, Fourteenmile boasts a number of enticing tule islands. They are strung out along Wright Tract and water can be very shallow around them. The preferred route here too, is along the Rindge levee. The slough forks around Morrison Island, locally called Jim Stone's Island or Bora Bora, and a portion of this was the old route of the meandering San Joaquin River. There are some nice anchorages along the island, but the slough sees considerable traffic. Thus, wakes are a part of the anchorage life here. Windmill Cove Marina lies across and up the channel, on Vulcan Island.

Village West Marina boats headed down river, often use the other portion of Fourteenmile to connect with Disappointment for a shorter run to the lower channel. But at low tide, water depths for large craft can be marginal in some places, especially so around some of the land points where shoaling has occurred. More than a few props have been consumed here. The entire slough is excellent for water skiing, providing protected smooth water even on windy days.



Charlie and Betty Thomas in the "fire boat" at Village West Marina's boat show.



Gary Dilday's Suwanee anchored off Bora Bora on Fourteenmile Slough.



Summer Wind waits for the tide to come in on Fourteenmile Slough.



Left, the Port City Jazz Band entertains at Village West Marina.



Four steamers line up for a cruise.

Petite Steamers

There exists in the west a handful of stalwart individuals who strive to keep alive the spirit of steamboating. Although their vessels are not so very large, and in some cases not so very elegant, they are powered by honest-to-God steam engines. And that is the whole point of it.

I am lucky enough to have two of these steamers berthed near my boat in Stockton. One is Dr. Stanley Chew's Stanley's Steamer. It is one fine specimen of a launch, all glistening and varnished. It has a sturdy mahogany hull, is 23 feet in length with an eight-foot beam and was built in Oregon as a steam launch in 1965. It weighs in at about 5,000 pounds and draws three feet of water. With a full head of steam (160 pounds) its three-blade 18 inch X 26 inch prop will push it along at a respectable six knots. "Fuel consumption," says Stanley, "is about one apple box of wood per hour."

Of late, Stanley has been experimenting with other fuels. He tried coal, but that plugged up the flues and Stanley himself looked the color of a lump of coal by the time he had it functioning again. Last time I saw him, he was using charcoal briquets—quite successfully.

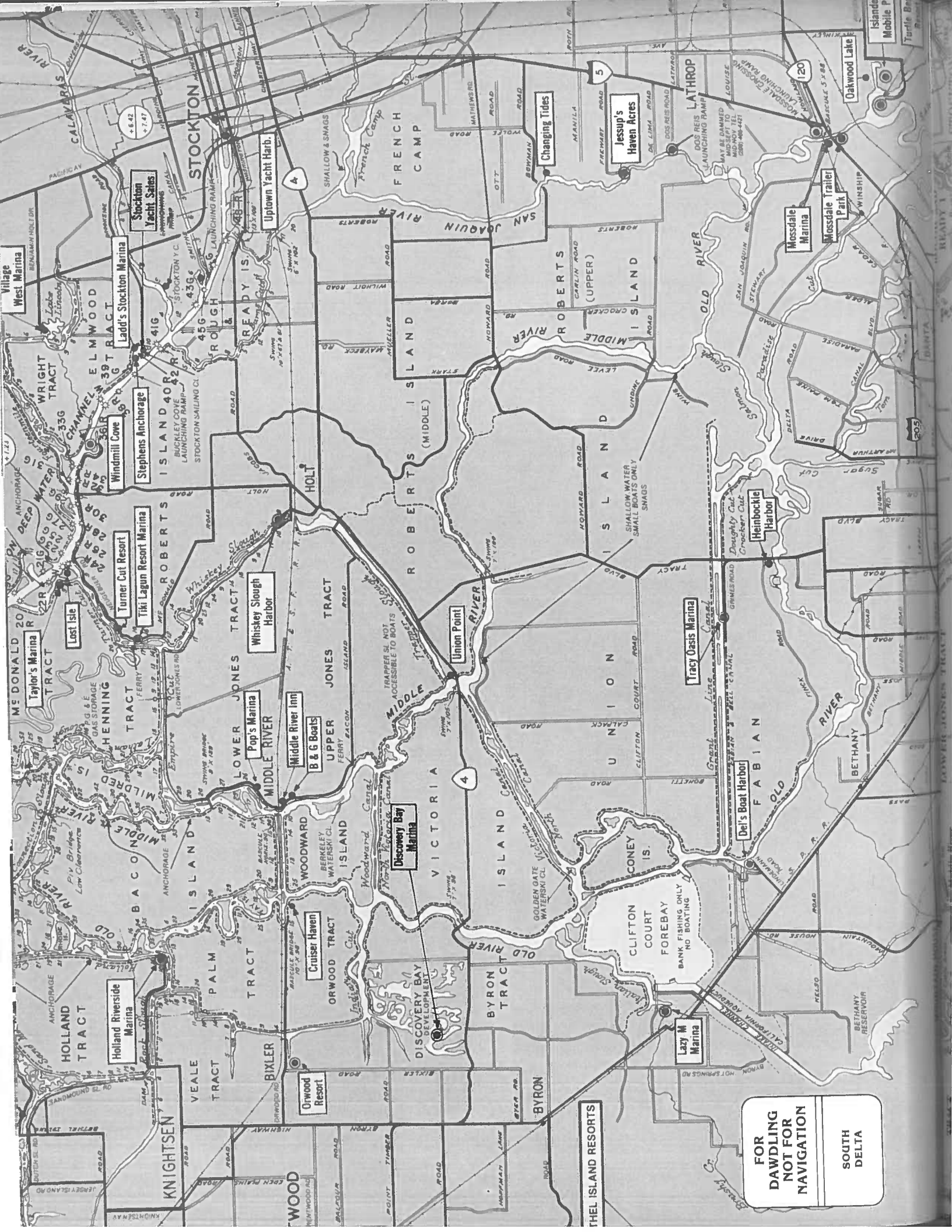
Stanley's neighbor at the marina is Wendell Earle, skipper of the steamer Charles Kilburn. This 23-foot oil burner is a familiar sight on the Delta and is good for five knots on two gallons of oil per hour. "One advantage of using oil," explains Wendell, "is that you can fire up and be under way in just a few minutes." (Stanley's wood-burner takes about forty minutes). "But oil is not as clean a fuel."

Bruce Hepler will visit the Delta whenever he can, bringing along Zepher, his 12-foot single horsepower wood burner that will turn 5 knots and go all day on three apple boxes of wood.

In the fall of 1979, a dozen western steamboat buffs brought their steamboats to B & W Resort for a weekend of steamboating. Some were propane-fired, clean and uncluttered.

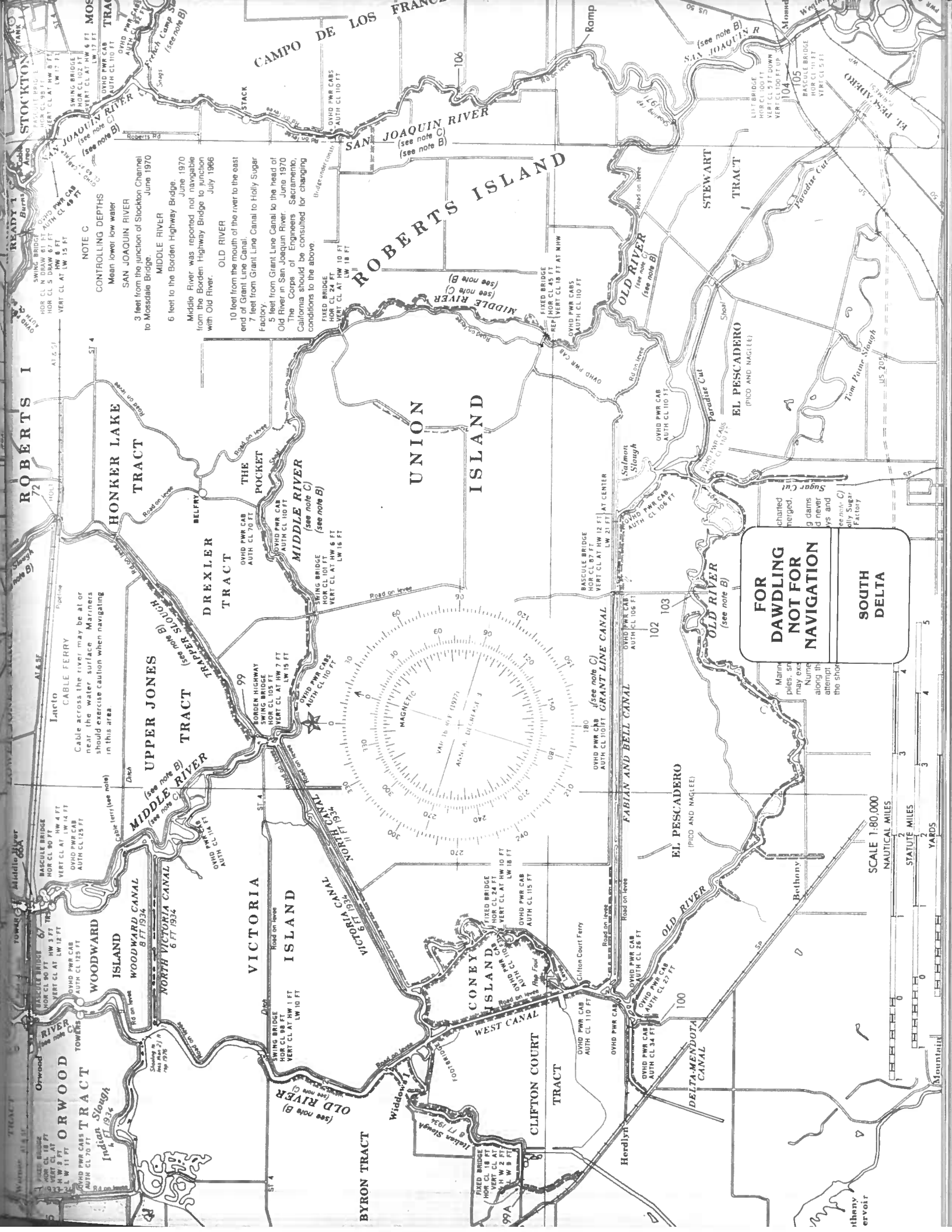
The most important accessory on a steamboat is its whistle. And, although it drains off valuable steam and uses fuel, the whistles seem worth the cost. Dr. Chew now has a steam-powered calliope aboard Stanley's Steamer. And he enjoys playing with it a lot more than he does drilling teeth back at the office.

A little bit of nostalgia never hurt anyone.



FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION

SOUTH
DELTA



ROBERTS I TRACT
 Cable across the river may be at or near the water surface. Mariners should exercise caution when navigating in this area.

HONKER LAKE TRACT
 Mean lowest low water
 SAN JOAQUIN RIVER
 June 1970
 3 feet from the junction of Stockton Channel to Mossdale Bridge.
 MIDDLE RIVER
 June 1970
 6 feet to the Borden Highway Bridge.
 OLD RIVER
 Middle River was reported not navigable from the Borden Highway Bridge to junction with Old River.
 10 feet from the mouth of the river to the east end of Grant Line Canal.
 7 feet from Grant Line Canal to Holly Sugar Factory.
 5 feet from Grant Line Canal to the head of Old River in San Joaquin River.
 The Corps of Engineers, Sacramento, California should be consulted for changing conditions to the above.

UNION ISLAND
 MAGNETIC
 VAP 15 47 (1977)
 ANGLE 3

FOR DAWDLING NOT FOR NAVIGATION

SOUTH DELTA

SCALE 1:80,000
 NAUTICAL MILES
 STATUTE MILES
 YARDS

ORWOOD TRACT
 SWING BRIDGE
 HOR CL 98 FT
 VERT CL AT LW 12 FT
 OVID PWR CAB
 AUTH CL 125 FT

WOODWARD ISLAND
 WOODWARD CANAL
 8 FT 1934
 NORTH VICTORIA CANAL
 6 FT 1934

VICTORIA ISLAND
 SWING BRIDGE
 HOR CL 98 FT
 VERT CL AT LW 12 FT
 OVID PWR CAB
 AUTH CL 115 FT

CONEY ISLAND
 SWING BRIDGE
 HOR CL 98 FT
 VERT CL AT LW 12 FT
 OVID PWR CAB
 AUTH CL 115 FT

ROBERTS ISLAND
 SWING BRIDGE
 HOR CL 98 FT
 VERT CL AT LW 12 FT
 OVID PWR CAB
 AUTH CL 115 FT

EL PESCADERO
 (PICO AND MAGLEE)
 SWING BRIDGE
 HOR CL 98 FT
 VERT CL AT LW 12 FT
 OVID PWR CAB
 AUTH CL 115 FT

EL PESCADERO
 (PICO AND MAGLEE)
 SWING BRIDGE
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THE SALUBRIOUS SOUTH DELTA

It was our club's annual poker run into the South Delta, in which we leave the big boats behind and squeeze everyone into a couple dozen runabouts and ski boats. Part of the idea of such runs is to introduce boatmen to new water and new watering holes. Jack Carlson was along, serving as navigator in a six-passenger runabout. Jack is an experienced skipper, an ex-Navy nuclear submarine officer, and owner of a 47-foot Carl Craft.

Out of Oasis Marina, bound for the upper San Joaquin through Old River, Jack and his bunch got hopelessly lost at a notorious spot known locally as "Four Corners". Several times the boat returned to Oasis (once to refuel) for a fresh start. But the upper San Joaquin was not to be found that day—at least not by this crew.

Surely, the South Delta is the least-known, least-discovered and least-appreciated area in the Delta. Even the NOAA charts appear to neglect it. The whole vast area is merely included as an inset on the chart. And soundings for depth measurements have never been made there. Yet there is a lot of beautiful water down there, as Jack Carlson more or less discovered that day.

For our purposes, the South Delta includes all that water south of the imaginary Stockton-Brentwood line we drew in Chapter 13. Yet for practical purposes, cruises into the South Delta will usually include West Delta waters, or the Upper San Joaquin, and very often both. I have carefully gazed into my crystal ball and am predicting that the South Delta is a "sleeper", that it will one future day be more developed, more utilized and it will receive the praise it justly deserves.

The marinas there have needed to be improved so that boatmen from other parts of the Delta will look to them as destination sites. And it is happening. Oasis Marina has seen much expansion and improvement in

INCLUDING PARTS OF
OLD AND MIDDLE RIVERS,
VICTORIA AND GRANT
LINE CANALS, ETC.



Ready for a rough landing at Berkeley Water Ski Club.

Right: Mike and Rose Roskin's boat at Discovery Bay. Below: Wally King and his controversial island.



recent times. Haven Acres has become a totally different and classier place than in the past. Orwood Resort has improvements in the works. You enter the South Delta basically three ways — lower Old River, lower Middle River or upper Old River off the San Joaquin. Let's start with Old River at Indian Slough. The slough takes us to Orwood Resort, covered earlier. But, if instead of taking the 90-degree right into the resort, you were to go left onto what is called Kellogg Creek, you would immediately be in Discovery Bay. This is a beautiful area of fine waterfront homes fronting on man-made bays that connect to the natural Delta waters.

When waterfront lots were first offered here a number of years ago for sums that could almost be considered minuscule, I, in all my infinite wisdom, predicted they would never sell. "That's the outback of the Delta," I muttered. Well, those lots sold. And sold again at prices manyfold higher. Homes were built, with classy yachts tied to the backyard docks. Eventually a community of several thousand homes (not all on the water) will exist here. At this writing there are some 1200 homes and new bays are opened as needed

The new Discovery Bay Yacht Harbor, with its shops, boat-stack dry storage, boat sales, restaurant, fuel, launching and other facilities, will eventually expand to 650 berths, covered and open. Its construction is among the best to be found in the Delta. It is home for the Discovery Bay Yacht Club, an indeed active group. Guest docking is ample and you can boat in to dine or visit the shops.

Now back to Old River. When you cruise South Delta waters on a summer weekend, it is evident that this is the province of water skiers. You see them in the early part of the day, staking out their ski beaches. And on all the principal waterways you see people skimming across the water on their wooden slats. The quickest entry to the Delta from the heavily populated San Francisco peninsula is in the Delta's



southern end, and the launching facilities are kept busy on summer weekends. Several water-ski clubs are based in this area. Thus, when the weather cools and the water-skiing season is over, the South Delta quiets. All you see are a few knowing boatmen, a few fishermen — and the locals.

Italian Slough slips off Old River to the west, flowing through a tiny fixed bridge (about 10-foot clearance at low tide) into Lazy-M Marina. "We see flying bridge boats ready to launch we know won't clear it. We told one fellow, but he launched anyway and just sat around and waited for low tide to let him clear," said a marina worker.

Although the slough deadends past the marina, there are other fingers of water flowing from the slough, including Brushy Creek where some nice crawdads are taken. Oldtimers speak of the great sturgeon fishing that once existed here. Lazy-M has a busy launching ramp, supplies and other services. Inland a couple miles from the marina is Byron Hot Springs, a facility that has had a checkered past. During WWII, top Axis war prisoners were secretly interrogated here. Italian Slough runs along one side of the Tracy Pumping Station's Clifton Court Forebay. Boating is not allowed on the forebay, although you

Right: a rental fishing boat at Del's. Below: cabins line the waterfront into Del's.



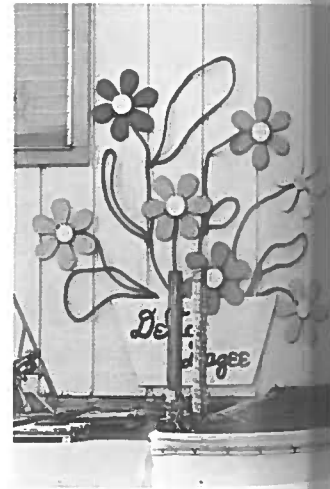
can bank fish, and during duck hunting season hunters in sculls are allowed on the water—but no motors. There is talk of a park going in by the forebay.

It is difficult to believe the effect the powerful pumps of the station have when they are turned on to suck the fresh water out of the Delta. They can reverse the direction of tidal flow in neighboring waters, and considerably lower water depths. Fishermen claim the pumps have ruined the fishing and that, in spite of a \$2 million fish screen, small fish are still sucked into the system. An estimate made by the California Department of Fish and Game a few years ago, put the count of fish that go through the screen and into the canal system at 60 to 80 million.

A story that goes around Del's Boat Harbor, which is adjacent to the fish screen, is about the 400-pound sturgeon that got caught in the fish screen and was dying. Of course, no one wanted that wonderful meat to go to waste. And you can rest assured that it did not.

Back out of Italian Slough again on to Old River, you pass several islands. One of these, well manicured and well occupied on summer weekends, is King's Island. It has 85 lots on it with trailers, lawns, shade trees, fire pits and boat docks. There are no telephones and everyone arrives by boat. A land-filled causeway connects the island to the mainland, but it is blocked off by a locked, tall chain link fence.

This island kingdom is the realm of Wally King who rules it as though he were born to the purple. His father purchased the 12-acre island in 1940. King moved here in 1961, barging his house in. Since then he has transformed a veritable swamp into an island paradise. It is a beautiful place, superbly maintained. King has become well known, especially so by the myriad agencies that rule the Delta. There are battles with county, state and federal agencies. Each claim much of the island work was done without benefit of permit or approval. In earlier times, King had difficulty leasing sites on the island for \$50 per year. Now they are quickly grabbed at \$650 per year. A lot of people appreciate what King has done and hope that



Above left: Middle River Inn hunters, happy with a pheasant. Right: one of the decorated cabins at Del's.

he will get his difficulties resolved.

Heading toward Del's Boat Harbor (or Oasis) the preferred route is on Old River along the bank of the Forebay where it is sufficiently deep. In a small boat, I will poke around the islands on the west side of Coney Island to look and talk to island dwellers there. But there are mud bars to be dodged and getting hung up on them is the fate of those not intimate with these waters. Too, a wooden foot bridge goes to Coney Island from Union Island. The Golden Gate Ski Club occupies much of this territory with their enclave of trailers.

Old River takes you past the pumping station and just past that on a dead-end stretch of water once known as Kennedy Cut, is Del's Boat Harbor. Owned and operated by Del and Annette Hansen, the place has a cafe, a busy launching ramp, supplies, a few rental fishing boats, fuel and other facilities. Del Senior used to come here by horse and buggy. Later on he had a cabin here, and in 1939 he started the resort. Old Del did a stint here as a commercial fisherman, catching primarily catfish and carp. Fish buyers from Pittsburg would arrive on pre-arranged days to buy fish. And it was not a bad living.

Along the cut coming into Del's are 27 cabins, on property leased from Del, belonging to members of the Livermore Yacht Club. In the summer, this cut is a very busy place. On the wall of Del's is a mounted 67-pound striper, an unrecorded record fish, caught by Otto Walters back in 1942. Otto lived in a floating "ark" nearby and recently died at age 92. About once a year, Del's has a beaver feed.

Del Jr. is an outdoorsman of the highest caliber. He is a professional trapper. "These days I make more off trapping than I do the marina," he chuckles. He learned his trade from Bill Webb, who trapped the South Delta for the reclamation districts. The beavers are hard on the levees. And when the animal was protected, trappers would trap them alive, then Fish and Game would transport them to the mountains to be released. Soon, the mountains had a surfeit of beaver! Now there is an open season on beavers and trappers are not allowed to be paid a bounty by reclamation districts. Del traps perhaps 1,000 muskrats in a season.

From Del's you have roughly three routes to take. The first would be back to Victoria Canal for a long straight run to Middle River at Union Point Resort. This lively place for years hung tenaciously to the levee, ready to slip into the water. It has been completely rebuilt and has cocktails, food, and some supplies. For years it was noted for its annual shark feed that really packed 'em in.

If you continue down river on Middle River, you come to the site of the old Middle River Inn, an old railroad building constructed in 1912 and located but



A good view of the February Delta Dip at Oasis.



Winter cruising in a ski boat.



The water is cold for the annual February Oasis Marina Delta Dip.

Bottom right: fishing the South Delta. Bottom l.: Heinbockle's on Old River. Middle l.: crop-dusters are standard South Delta fare. Middle r.: the hot tub at Oasis. Below r.: the water's cold at Delta Dip time. Water skiing the South Delta. Right: gassing up at the Oasis fuel dock.



*A floating home on
Middle River.*



a few feet from the railroad tracks. The place was closed in late 1982, but many good times will be remembered there. Next door is B & G Boats, with fuel, rental fishing boats and bait.

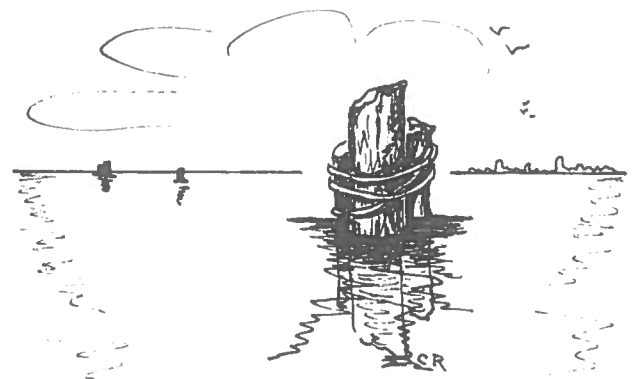
Actually, this route is very often the entry route for boatmen cruising to the South Delta. Middle River above Union Point is not considered navigable. Much of the south Delta water is favored by water skiers. The canals, usually two distinct routes, are straight and beautiful ski runs. Most knowing skiers will keep to the right side of these canals, using them almost as one-way pieces of water.

Your second choice out of Del's is another of these canals, in this case Fabian & Bell Canal and Grant Line Canal. As it is told thereabouts, this is another of those cases in which land owners agreed to disagree. And each made his own cut, building his own levee and to hell with the other guy. Permits are evidently something no one had to worry about in these days. You just got a dredge and began digging.

About halfway down the canal is Mike and Korrine Brooks' Tracy Oasis Marina. It has berthing, a launching elevator, camping, fuel, a restaurant and probably the largest and most complete grocery and general store on the Delta. There is deep water from almost anywhere in the Delta to Oasis. In fact, the Brooks' home was barged here from Oakland. And I would judge this to be a good base for anyone who wants to explore this area. For exploring, a small boat is necessary. Water depths in parts of Old River are not adequate for large craft. If you continue on the canal, you pass under a drawbridge, taking a right that will lead you to Jack Carlson's "Four Corners" and the easiest place in the Delta to get temporarily lost.



The rental fleet at Heinbockle's.



The Maertins depart from their beautiful Happy Isle.



But let's go back to Del's for the third choice out. Staying to the right out of Del's you would head up river on Old River. Between here and Four Corners, the water is mostly used by fishermen who have an idea where they are going. Although there is plenty of deep water (if you know where it is), there are a great many shallow spots at low tide. Yet this is a beautiful area, with gracefully flying blue heron, beaver along the banks, cattle grazing on adjacent pasture, goats nibbling on island grass, and a lot more. There is truly the feel of the river here.

Even as I write this, I have only today returned from a water cruise on Old River, just to again capture the feel of it. We didn't pass another boat on Old River. It is as pretty as any place on the Delta. And I would recommend to cruising skippers to come here with a small boat in tow, anchor where there is good deep water (or stay at one of the marinas) and go small-boat exploring.

Old River runs to Heinbockle Harbor, a funky fishing resort with fuel, rental fishing boats, a grocery store and a bar. It is worthy of a stop. From here, Four Corners is not far away. To your right you will see Sugar Cut, which on several occasions has led me off route. For many years, this cut gave great barges access to Holly Sugar's Tracy refinery. Sugar beets were hauled in from farms in the Rio Vista and Walnut Grove areas, arriving via Old River and the Grant Line Canal aboard 600 to 800-ton barges. At the refinery's "beet dump" they were off-loaded by crane.

"Our last beets were barged in back in 1968," Holly's David Eddington told me. "Improved highways made it easier and faster for truckers to operate. Truckers priced the barges out of the business. All the beet dumps in the Delta have now been torn down."

Originally sugar beets were grown on the rich peat soil of the Delta. But it was discovered that peat was

too nitrogen-rich for good beet growth. So they are grown on less valuable soil. Sugar beets are exceptionally salt-tolerant, thus salt water intrusion on any irrigation water poses few problems for Delta area beet growers.

In the area around Four Corners and beyond, there are fine sandy beaches by the dozens. And they are well appreciated by water skiers who encamp on them. Sand was once a product of this area and was taken out by the barge load. Old River is broad from here to where it splashes off from the San Joaquin. Using this route around October-November, make sure to first check to see if the Fish and Game rock dam is not in place on Old River.

Admittedly, the South Delta is off the beaten track. But it is worth the bother to have a look.





Boat camping is a way of life on the Delta.

Boat Camping

There are few places on this earth that offer the opportunities for boat camping that the Delta does. For wherever in the Delta you cruise, you are not very far from a marina that has both guest docking and camping. By consulting this book's Resort Facilities Chart, you could easily chart a cruise route with a stop-over at a marina with camping each night. There are dozens of them.

Many boatmen also "camp wild", that is, they pitch their tents in an isolated spot that looks inviting. It may be a quiet little island of less than an acre, or by a sandy beach fronting on a huge island spread. When pitching your tent close to the water, be sure to consider the tide. Many are the campers who have awakened in the middle of the night to find their campsite inundated!

Although I hesitate to recommend trespassing — which is what "camping wild" is in most cases — it is a fact of life in the Delta and there seem to be few problems because of it. There are some beautiful campsites near Franks Tract if you know where to find them. The South Delta is rife with them.

Camping in a formal campground has numerous

advantages. Most have showers and restrooms and other facilities. You are around other boatmen and there is a sort of camaraderie. Security is better.

The campground variety is interesting. You could stay at friendly family-run Eddo's Boat Harbor on the San Joaquin, or grand Tower Park that is almost like a small community. You could pound your tent stakes in the green grass of Lost Isle, which is accessible only by boat, or cruise way up the San Joaquin River to pitch your tent beneath the shade trees of Turtle Beach. The state has an outstanding campground on Brannan Island and a county campground was just constructed in the "sand dunes" area below Rio Vista.

Many boatmen start out with small boats, over the years working their way up to that large cruiser or houseboat. By boat camping they can enjoy the distinct joy of overnighting near the water. They can explore without worrying about returning to the base marina at the end of the day for a long drive home.

The odor of the breakfast bacon frying is just as enticing in an early morning campground as it is in a boat raftup.



The meandering San Joaquin snakes its way through the flat Delta farmland.

CRUISING THE UPPER SAN JOAQUIN

FROM THE CHANNEL TO ABOVE MOSSDALE, AND BURNS CUTOFF



Launching at Mossdale Crossing.

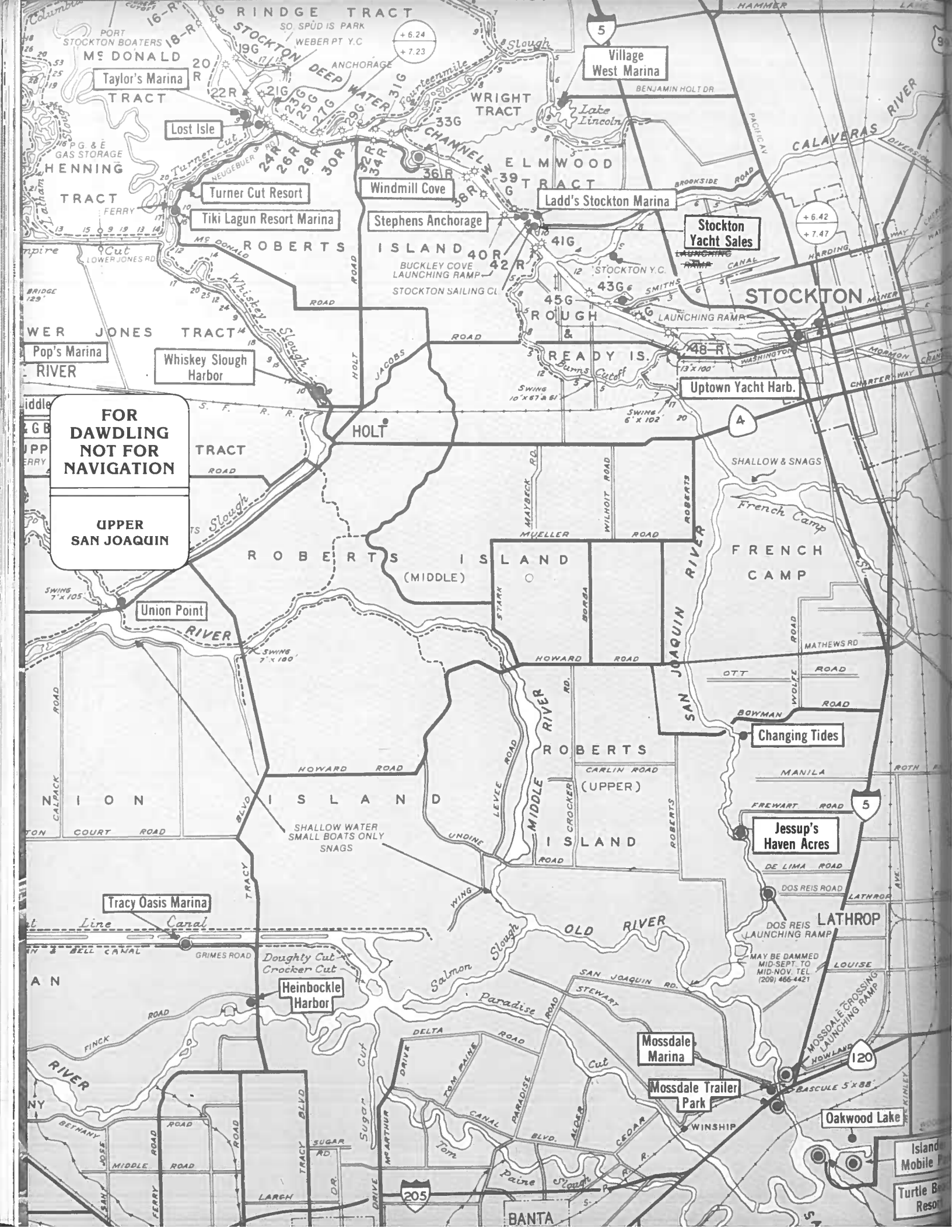
Following in the wake of the giant freighters making their way up the broad Deepwater Channel to the Port of Stockton, you hardly notice the gentle run of water entering from the starboard at Light #48. Yet this is the formidable San Joaquin River, subtly announcing itself as it flows by the bustling banks of the Navy's Rough and Ready Island.

This is foreign water for most local boatmen who seem perfectly content to cruise the more familiar haunts of the lower Delta. Yet the upper San Joaquin offers pleasant cruising waters all the way up to Wetherbee Lake, with adequate water depths for runabouts and small cruisers, or even larger craft with careful skippers at the helm. It is perfect for a relaxed mini-cruise that can comfortably be handled in a day round-trip—or better yet, over a weekend with plenty of time for stops and exploration treks ashore.

There are adequate facilities along the route for food, fuel and libations. The marinas are simple but adequate, and most have room for overnight tie-up. Several have camping. Safe, overnight anchorages are not difficult to find. There are some splendid beaches along the route.

On this run, you get the feel of the classic river and its remoteness. The banks are often high, hinting of days gone by when the water was deeper, when the river was more powerful and of more importance. It is tree-lined with towering cottonwoods, poplar and oak. And there are plenty of places to tarry for a swim or a picnic lunch.

The signs of civilization are few. Now and then you see an ancient belt-driven pump laboriously pulling irrigation water from the river. An occasional farmhouse roof can be seen peeking over the bank. Livestock sometimes venture close to the bank. I have made quick weekday runs up here, seeing only a handful of boats in the water, mostly water skiers and fishermen.



**FOR
DAWDLING
NOT FOR
NAVIGATION**

**UPPER
SAN JOAQUIN**

Village West Marina

Taylor's Marina

Lost Isle

Turner Cut Resort

Tiki Lagun Resort Marina

Windmill Cove

Stephens Anchorage

Ladd's Stockton Marina

Stockton Yacht Sales

Pop's Marina

Whiskey Slough Harbor

Uptown Yacht Harb.

Union Point

Changing Tides

Jessup's Haven Acres

Tracy Oasis Marina

Heinbockle Harbor

Mossdale Marina

Mossdale Trailer Park

Oakwood Lake

Island Mobile

Turtle Bay Resort

Manning the "cannon" at Changing Tides Marina.



Dams have tamed this once-fierce river. The Friant Dam in its upper reaches controls its flow, as do other dams on the Merced, Stanislaus and Tuolumne Rivers that flow into it. Pleasant as the old San Joaquin may now be, it has clearly seen better times.

In the mid-to-late 1800s, it knew regular steamboat traffic. Paddlewheelers would slosh up as far as Fresno and a ways beyond during high water season. Firebaugh, 217 miles up river from Stockton and the only river port in the lower San Joaquin Valley still existing, was a regular stop for riverboats in the 1850s. These old river towns were rough and rowdy. They had noisy saloons and call girls and were reported hangouts for *bandidos* such as the infamous Joaquin Murietta.

The riverboats up here primarily hauled freight, coming up river with an assortment of goods and returning heavily-laden with grain. But by the 1880s, the railroads had cut heavily into this trade, and later the dams robbed the river of its water. In 1906 the *J.R. McDonald* made the last riverboat call on Firebaugh. It was left high and dry there by receding waters. It was only after considerable arguing and cajoling that dam officials agreed to loose enough of their precious water to float the vessel so it could return to Stockton.

These days, Wetherbee Lake is considered about the head of navigation, even for small boats. Although you do see jet boats and fishermen venturing even farther up river. And a water skiing school operates in a man-made lake area the other side of Wetherbee.

Starting from the Channel, you will pass under no less than a dozen bridges on this relatively short up-river cruise. They come in a variety of styles and all will clear in the neighborhood of 13 feet or better.



Above, fishing near Rough and Ready. Right, smoke stack of the old Stockton Brick Company.



Barely are you into the river before you encounter a pair, providing vehicle and rail access to Rough and Ready. The flimsy Brandt swing bridge below Changing Tides Marina was torn out a couple years ago after the new concrete Mathews Road crossing was built. I rather liked that old bridge. It was rickety and when a farm truck passed over it, I was certain the whole structure was going to collapse. It was built in 1900 and was one of the oldest in the Delta.

From the old bridge site, you can see today the imposing brick smoke stack that towers many feet into the sky, serving sort of like the television tower does in Walnut Grove. High up on the side of the stack, fashioned by a collage of brick, is "S.B.C. 1893". The stack has weathered the years far better than the deceased San Joaquin Brick Company for which it once belched smoke.

From here it is but a pebble's toss to Changing Tides Marina off your port side, now with new owners. This interesting establishment was owned by Roy Jacopetti, an entertaining chap of Italian descent, only too happy to expound on subjects varying from the current men's hair styles to how to string up boatmen who speed by leaving hefty boat-banging wakes as calling cards.

With his wife Tex, a retired postal employee, Roy ran an immaculate beer bar. There is camping and ample guest docking. On the grounds is a sturdy 100-year-old brick building. "During Prohibition the government made alcohol there," advised Jacopetti. As you trundle up the walkway from the docks, you notice what looks like a Civil War cannon, positioned on high round overlooking the river, as if to guard the establishment from enemy naval craft. It takes close scrutiny to ascertain that it is a fake, constructed from old wagon wheels, an automobile drive-shaft housing and other odds and ends from the farmyard junk pile.

A couple miles up river, again on the port, is Haven Acres. It has guest docks, a launching ramp, fuel and a mobilehome park overlooking the water. The beer bar is bright and cheerful. A snack bar dispenses hot sandwiches, which you can enjoy on the outside patio deck while watching the boats go by. During occasional floods, you may need waders to get to the bar. But the spirit of good times prevails here.

Up river from here you see the San Joaquin County's Dos Reis launching ramp, a free facility that sees some 24,000 launchings annually. It has picnic sites, portable toilets and a parking area that overflows on holiday weekends.

Still, with all this activity the river exudes a remoteness. We followed a graceful crane that would fly then land, fly then land, always eluding my camera lens. Fallen trees stretch out into the water. You need to be wary of snags, staying to the middle, taking river



One of the many beaches along the river.

Animals perform at one of the river marinas.



bends wide to avoid shoaling.

Shortly after Dos Reis, Old River curls off to the starboard and can form part of a long day's circle cruise through the South Delta. And this is covered in another chapter. At Mossdale Crossing, you seem back into civilization. Just past a mammoth black railroad bridge, the Mossdale Crossing launching facility looms up on the port bank. Another county-operated facility, it has an excellent park and a long free launching ramp made to handle the fluctuations of flood waters that can come screaming into this area. The facility was funded by CAL Boating and is new but busy. In perhaps a hundred yards here are four bridges, all mammoth. First is the towering railroad bridge, then a pale green drawbridge that spans the old highway. Next come the two stationary concrete bridges of Interstate 5. The drawbridges will never again yawn open to allow river traffic to pass.

To the starboard past the railroad bridge, perched up high on the levee, is Mossdale Marina. You can tie up to the docks here and hike up a path that leads to a cozy old structure that houses a quaint beer bar. You can buy snacks, groceries and other supplies here. And the place is reminiscent of a Jack London

hangout. Just up from the four bridges is a clutch of trailers and mobile homes seemingly carved into the river bank. An assortment of private docks and walkways serves them. The area is known as Mossdale and this place in particular is called Mossdale Trailer Park. It is a hornet's nest of activity on summer weekends. At its far end is a launching ramp and a small RV park and camping area.

Mossdale is at the site of an historic ford called El Paso del Pescadero, at one time part of the main trail into the Bay Area from the Sierra. Indians used to ferry mountain men across here on rafts built of tules. Moraga, the Spaniard who gave the river its name, crossed here in 1810.

At this point, you are practically at Wetherbee Lake. Actually, there is no lake here and the name is cause of much confusion. Wetherbee Lake is in fact a subdivision of some 50 summer and year-round homes established on Walthall Slough by one Joe Donato

back in 1933. The slough had a habit of drying up during the summer months. A local rancher named Wetherbee dug a hole in the middle of the slough to form a pond so his cattle would have water during the dry months. Residents took to calling the pond Wetherbee Lake and the name stuck. Donato made it legal when he registered his subdivision plot plan. Sign posts and maps spell Wetherbee in various ways, but I have a copy of an early plot plan and the spelling on it is as used here.

Situated on 34 acres at the junction of the river and the slough is a place long known as Wetherbee Lake Resort. Its name was changed to Turtle Beach several years ago, although no one that I know of has seen any turtles on the resort's beach. It has a beer bar, restaurant, launching ramp, carry-on fuel and a small guest dock. It is simple to beach a small boat on the resort's ample sandy beach. This is a lively, fun place. Alas, in 1983 it became a members-only park.

From here to continue up Walthall Slough, you must pass through 26-foot-high flood gates, completed in 1963 to protect the subdivision from floods. The gates are most always open, except for a few minutes every 90 days when they are operated to be sure they will work if needed, or during floods.

Wetherbee Lake and Turtle Beach are still subject to the whims of winter and spring floods, and wet years almost assure some flooding. Flood warnings will still send trailerests a-scurrying. "I can recall someone rowing my 12-foot aluminum boat *into* the resort bar," chuckles long-time resident Gene Scott.

Through the flood gates it is but a few hundred yards to the end of Walthall Slough to The Islander Marina, now not open to the general boating public, but only to those with trailers and mobile homes there. At low tide, you best go very slowly in the slough, for there are mud bars. Although it is often written that tidal action ends at Mossdale, the difference between a good high and a good low tide can measure a couple feet here.

Although not strictly open to the water, it is worth taking a good look at neighboring Oakwood Lake Resort, a lake in the true sense even though it was man made in 1970. It covers over 40 acres and is growing each year. It has a full-facility grassy campground. It has a store, a snack bar, a sandy, life-guarded beach, and splendid picnic grounds. Day-use fees are modest. And it has a bevy of water slides including the world's longest. Owner Budge Brown built this fine facility starting with a sand and gravel pit. And it is now one of the finest in the West. Kids love the place. The park actually fronts on both the slough and the river. And I have the feeling that someday the waterfront portion will be developed to give boatmen easy access.



Launching near the campground at Turtle Beach.



Going through the flood gates to Walthall Slough.



Hulk of an old fishing boat on Burns Cutoff.



Cattle came to greet us on Burns Cutoff.



Remains of an old drawbridge on Burns Cutoff.

Burns Cutoff

When we slipped into the meandering San Joaquin off the Deepwater Channel at Stockton, we were entering into a stretch of water that circles around Rough and Ready, returning down river to the San Joaquin. The charts call it Burns Cutoff.

Although it is of no import, as Delta waterways go, it is there to be explored by small boat on one of those days when there is little better to do. My first time through here was perhaps nine years ago with a boatman in a 19-foot I/O that had power tilt on the outdrive. He tilted the outdrive up a goodly amount, and off into Burns Cutoff we went. We poked along and it was a fascinating little cruise, without mishap. I promised myself to return.

I wondered just who Burns was that he was able to get a slough named after him. "He was probably just someone who lived there," said Wilton Colberg, prominent Stockton ship builder. "Those fellows who used to live along the river would be considered hippies if they were around today."

The Cutoff has obviously seen better times. During the Delta's commercial fishing days, it was the location of an important catfishing camp. The catch would be cleaned and packaged there, then shipped off to markets in the Bay Area and beyond. In those days, a fisherman could make a comfortable living off the river.

The Cutoff was also home base for Princess Port, a lively marina that catered primarily to a fishing clientele. But all that is gone now. You see a few pilings poking up through the muddy water. You see the decaying hulks of sunken boats, half submerged near the shore. You see a few crumbling buildings, and there is a sad sense of the past.

On this run, you see the remnants of old drawbridges. One of these was of major importance, for it supported the Borden Highway, giving motorists a shortcut into Stockton via Rough and Ready.

Although the charts show adequate water in here, I recommend you plan to cruise it at high tide. At less than high tide, I've found much of my time was spent pushing off mud bars. No problem really, for there was always good depth once I found it. I like to enter from the Cutoff's upper juncture, beginning in what is actually the San Joaquin, then running in a clockwise direction. The starboard bank is Rough and Ready. It sports cyclone fencing around its perimeter and is of no great interest. The port bank is where it is all at. Here and there you see a bank fisherman. Cattle clop down to the water to quench their thirst. They stare wide-eyed as you put by.

I've seen sailboats and houseboats on the Cutoff, and I imagine they knew where to find the deep water. I've seen shacks that look inhabited. And fishermen who look right at home on these waters that must be familiar to them. Burns Cutoff is a peaceful place. Maybe just right for getting away from the hubbub of the Channel for an hour or so.

A nice place to go when you need a rest.

River Route Mailman

Lou Sparrenberger is one postman who attacks his mail route with unbounded enthusiasm. Lou is the Delta's River Route mailman. Six days each week he loads the mail aboard his 18-foot runabout and splashes through the backwaters of the Delta to deliver mail to the inhabitants of some 22 islands.

In the process, he logs close to 20,000 water miles annually — that is more distance over the water than many boatmen log in a lifetime. He has to bring his boat up to nearly 50 docks and landings each day, many in the most challenging locations imaginable. Yet he accomplishes this with few mishaps or mechanical failures.

Sure, his boat gets battered and bruised. For it is near impossible for a person to single-handedly battle wind, current, tide and wakes to bring a craft into some of those wretched docks without garnering a few hull scars in the doing.

Lou is not a regular postal service employee. He delivers River Route mail out of the Stockton main post office on a contract arrangement. His day starts at sunrise when he trundles off to the post office to sort his mail. "I get a lot of ill-addressed mail", says Lou. "If a letter has the word slough or river or levee or anything like that on it, you can bet it will end up in the River Route batch."

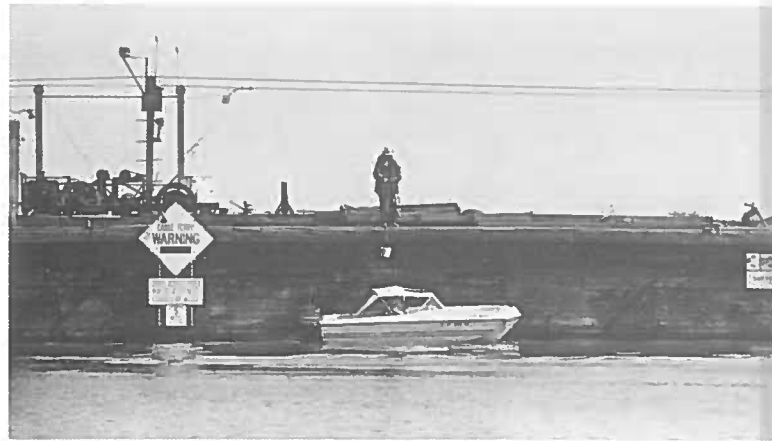
Lou begins with a 45-mile land route that is mostly in Delta territory. His water route starts at Herman & Helen's Marina — and ends there. He delivers to everything from yacht clubs to river-rat shanties. During harvest season, there is a lot of mail for migrant workers. Many of these people are foreigners and it often takes a bit of deciphering to figure out where the mail goes.

Some think of Lou's job as cushy. But they don't see him out there in pea-soup fog and fierce winds. They don't see him peering through the tiny windshield trying to see through beating rain. They don't see him garbed like an astronaut to ward off the winter cold.

To the people along his route, Lou is a friend, a vital link with the outside world. He runs errands for them and brings medicine when they are in dire need. He looks in on the ill and chats with the lonely. He feeds pets when patrons are away on vacation, and makes certain the premises are in order.

Lou knows his part of the Delta as no other man does. And he appreciates its flora and fauna. Many times I've run on the route with him, over nearly a decade. He points out the plants along the way and offers tidbits of background material. Although he has many times been in print and on TV, he is not jaded by it all.

He is a good guy. A hard worker. I am proud to call him a friend.

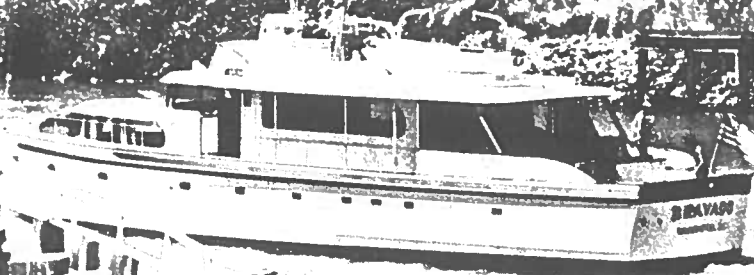


The mailboat stops at the Mandeville ferry.



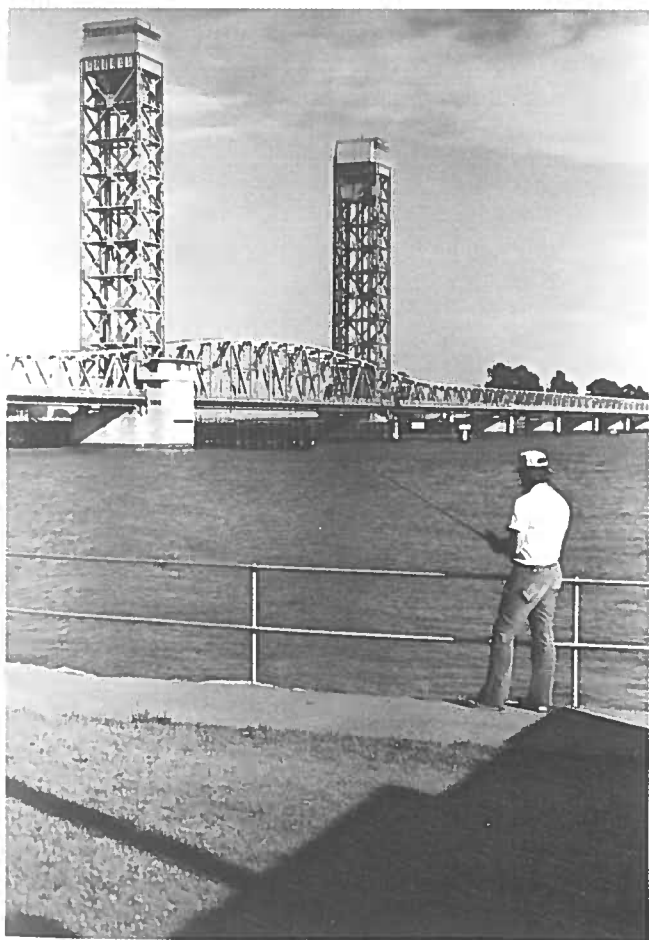
Up in the bucket goes the mail.

*Bravado slips through
the Walnut Grove
bridge*



DRAWBRIDGES OF THE DELTA

BRIDGE HISTORY, OPEN HOURS AND THEIR CLEARANCES



Fishing at the Rio Vista park.

You might say I am something of a bridge buff, especially when it comes to drawbridges. I stand there in awe every time I see one grind open. And I never tire of this form of entertainment. My favorite Delta photographs are of bridges. And if I had thought I could have stuffed this book with bridge photos and gotten away with it, I would have done so.

The cruising skipper in the Delta best know his bridges, what they'll clear and when you can toot 'em open. For often they will stand in the way of some very good cruising. I have known a number of bridge tenders in my time and invariably I have found them to be kindly beings. I sometimes wish there were more of them.

Most key Delta bridges are well manned during the summer months, but much less so after fall rolls around. Hopefully, the bridge chart at the end of this chapter will help you keep track of what opens when.

Basically, we cultivate three types of drawbridges in the Delta. First, there is the ubiquitous swing bridge, most of which look frail and almost homemade. These open by swinging sideways almost like a railroad turntable. In the process they groan and tremble, but they do their job in a workmanlike manner. They are relatively inexpensive to install and build. My favorite Delta swing bridge resides on Connection Slough. It is privately owned and operated. Purportedly it was purchased for a buck when it was retired from service over Grant Line Canal.

Bascule bridges are far more impressive. They open like the ancient drawbridges over castle moats. They have massive concrete counterweights that make opening power requirements little or nothing. The French word *bascule* means a child's seesaw, and that pretty much explains how this type of bridge works. The Tower of London bridge is perhaps the best known of this style. There are both single-leaf and

double-leaf bascule bridges.

The third type, the vertical lift drawbridge, is more scarce in the Delta. It can be recognized by its pair of high towers that house counterweights equal to the exact weight of the lift span. They are efficient and fast, only needing to open high enough to let a vessel pass under. The Rio Vista lift bridge will rise 138 feet above the water and has as many as 3,000 openings a year.

The Coast Guard publishes a booklet called, *California Drawbridge Regulations*, which contains opening information on the Delta drawbridges. You can get a free copy by writing Commander (oan), 12th Coast Guard District, Building 51 Government Island, Alameda, CA 94501. It is updated by the Notice To Mariners. A few bridges are Marine Band radio equipped (marked with an asterisk on our Bridge Chart) and can be reached on channel 9 or 16 (16 is not a "talk" channel). You and the bridge are also required to exchange opening signals. The new bridge opening signal for *all* Delta drawbridges is one long and one short toot of your horn. Wait a few minutes after signalling bridge to open, and if you see no action, try again. Be patient. Use good judgement.

Most of the information on our chart was taken from the Coast Guard booklet. The clearance figures for the most part were taken off the NOAA charts. Where these were not indicated, we obtained the information from the Coast Guard or made our own estimations. The chart reference is Mean Lower Low Water, which is the average level of the lower of the two low waters occurring daily. To find the actual vertical clearance at a bridge for a particular passage, calculate the height of the tide at the bridge site at the time of transit using tide tables and subtract the height of tide from the listed vertical clearance above Low Water. Of course, the clearance gauges or "measuring sticks" installed at some bridges will show you the exact clearance. If, when you make the tide calculation, the tide table shows a negative value, the height of the tide is below MLLW and clearance is more than indicated in our chart.

Because of space limitations, we have selected what we feel to be the key bridges over the waters covered by this book. The idea is for this chart to be a handy, easy-to-read reference. It is not meant to replace either your navigational charts or the Coast Guard bridge booklet. Use common sense. These references change from time to time. And *Dawdling On The Delta* has no *Notice to Mariners* to keep you apprised of such changes.



An Old River bascule-type railroad bridge.



The Threemile Slough lift bridge raises.



The busy swing bridge at Hwy 12 on the Mokelumne.

© BRIDGE CHART

BRIDGE	WHEN TENDED	HOURS	OTHER TIMES	LOW TIDE CLEAR- ANCE
* THREE MILE SL. BRIDGE	24 Hr.			16 Ft.
* SACRAMENTO RIVER AT RIO VISTA	24 Hr.			24 Ft.
* SACRAMENTO RIVER NEAR ISLETON	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	18 Ft.
* SACRAMENTO RIVER AT WALNUT GROVE	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	24 Ft.
DELTA CROSS CHANNEL NOTE: Gates Sometimes Closed			For Info. Call (916) 484-4585	10½ Ft.
STEAMBOAT SLOUGH	5/1 thru 10/31	6 a.m.—10 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	24 Ft.
SUTTER SLOUGH	Need Not Open			22 Ft.
MINER SLOUGH			12 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	22 Ft.
LINDSEY SLOUGH	Removable Span		72 Hr. Notice (707) 374-5722	22 Ft.
* SACRAMENTO RIVER AT PAINTERSVILLE	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	27 Ft.
* SACRAMENTO RIVER AT FREEPORT	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	32 Ft.
* SACRAMENTO RIVER AT LOCK (Jefferson Blvd.)	(Same Hours And Days As Lock Operation)			20 Ft.
SACRAMENTO RIVER—HIGHWAY 80	Fixed			84 Ft.
* SACRAMENTO RIVER—TOWER BRIDGE	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	37 Ft.
SACRAMENTO RIVER—I STREET BRIDGE	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	37 Ft.
AMERICAN RIVER BRIDGE (Jibboom St. Bridge)	Fixed			38 Ft.
AMERICAN RIVER I-5	Fixed			39 Ft.
* MOKELUMNE RIVER—HWY 12	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	11 Ft.
LITTLE POTATO—TOWER PARK (Terminus)	5/1 thru 10/31	6 a.m.—10 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	13 Ft.
SOUTH FORK MOKELUMNE AT WIMPY'S	Removable Span		By Coast Guard Direction Only	16 Ft.
MOKELUMNE RIVER—FRANKLIN RD. (Benson Ferry)	Need Not Open			21 Ft.
MOKELUMNE RIVER—RR BRIDGE	Need Not Open			19 Ft.
MOKELUMNE RIVER—I-5	Fixed			24 Ft.
NORTH FORK MOKELUMNE—DEADHORSE ISLAND	Removable Span		By Coast Guard Direction Only	14 Ft.
NORTH FORK MOKELUMNE AT GIUSTI'S (Miller's Ferry)	5/1 thru 10/31	9 a.m.—5 p.m.	12 Hr. Notice (209) 944-2281	15 Ft.
SNODGRASS SLOUGH RR BRIDGE AT MEADOWS	Has Been Removed			
SNODGRASS SLOUGH—TWIN CITIES ROAD			24 Hr. Notice (916) 366-2911	21 Ft.

(continued next page)

BRIDGE	WHEN TENDED	HOURS	OTHER TIMES	LOW TIDE CLEAR-ANCE
* GEORGIANA SLOUGH NEAR ISLETON (Tyler Island)	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	15 Ft.
GEORGIANA SLOUGH RR BRIDGE	Has Been Removed			
GEORGIANA SLOUGH NEAR SACRAMENTO RIVER	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	17 Ft.
DUTCH SLOUGH—JERSEY ISLAND BRIDGE	Fixed Bridge			19 Ft.
DUTCH SLOUGH—BETHEL ISLAND BRIDGE	Fixed Bridge			19 Ft.
* CONNECTION SLOUGH BRIDGE	24 Hr.			10 Ft.
MIDDLE RIVER—BACON ISLAND	5/15 thru 9/15 (Every day) 9/16 thru 5/14 (Thurs.—Mon.)	9 a.m.—5 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	12 Hr. Notice (209) 944-2281	12 Ft.
MIDDLE RIVER—RR BRIDGE			12 Hr. Notice (209) 944-2281	14 Ft.
MIDDLE RIVER AT HWY 4	Need Not Open			14 Ft.
MIDDLE RIVER AT TRACY BLVD. GRANT LINE CANAL— TRACY BLVD.	Fixed		12 Hr. Notice (209) 944-2281	18 Ft. 21 Ft.
OLD RIVER—RR BRIDGE	24 Hr.			14 Ft.
OLD RIVER—HWY 4	5/1 thru 10/31 11/1 thru 4/30	6 a.m.—10 p.m. 9 a.m.—5 p.m.	4 Hr. Notice (707) 374-2134	16 Ft.
OLD RIVER—TRACY BLVD.	Fixed			18 Ft.
DISAPPOINTMENT SLOUGH AT PARADISE POINT	Fixed			24 Ft.
BISHOP CUT AT 8-MILE RD.			12 Hr. Notice (209) 944-2281	10 Ft.
HONKER CUT AT 8-MILE RD.			12 Hr. Notice (209) 944-2281	10 Ft.
ANTIOCH BRIDGE	Fixed			143 Ft.
BURNS CUTOFF			48 Hr. Notice (209) 944-0284	15 Ft.
STOCKTON DEEPWATER CHANNEL AT I-5	Fixed			45 Ft.
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER— STOCKTON PORT RR BRIDGE			12 Hr. Notice (209) 466-6011	17 Ft.
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER— NAVY DRIVE BRIDGE	Need Not Open			18 Ft.
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER— SANTA FE RR BRIDGE	Need Not Open			16 Ft.
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER— HWY 4 (Borden Hwy)	Need Not Open			17 Ft.
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER— MATHEWS RD.	Fixed			36 Ft.
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER— MOSSDALE BRIDGES	Need Not Open			25 Ft.
MONTEZUMA SLOUGH	Removable Span			30 Ft.
CUTOFF SLOUGH	Removable Span			18 Ft.

Catching Crawdads

Gourmet Delta boatmen have been feasting on crawdads for years. And these delectable crustaceans, which are served in some of the best restaurants of the world, are to be found throughout the Delta.

Catching crawdads is the perfect lazy-man's sport. You first need a trap. They are made of wire mesh and are cylindrical in shape. They are sold in stores around the Delta for \$15 to \$20. You can make do with an inexpensive Gee minnow trap if you enlarge the hole.

Perforated cans of cheap dog food make excellent bait. Some crawdad seekers throw in chicken bones and other scraps from the galley. When you stop for the night, you put the can of dog food in the trap, then lower it over the side by a line letting it rest on the bottom. Next morning, if you are lucky, your trap might have a mess of from 20 to 50 crawdads. I have known traps to yield over 100 crawdads overnight. (But then, I have also seen empty traps).

Crawdads are nocturnal critters, preferring to feed at night. So when you trap during the day, try to find a shady spot. They like areas where the water moves swiftly. Crawdads hibernate in the cold weather and best trapping months are mid-May through

December. However, you may be able to catch some at all times of the year.

Some boatmen will leave a trap overboard at their boat berth. But if crawdads are left too long in the trap, they will either escape or eat one another. You need a fishing license to trap crawdads. There is a thriving commercial crawdad fishery in the Delta and at times there have been over 50 fishermen commercially licensed here. Hundreds-of-thousands of pounds of Delta crawdads have been shipped annually to Sweden. There a national festival revolves around the crawdad. And eating them is an excuse for the Swedes to do a lot of quaffing at the same time.

To clean and purge crawdads, place them in clean water then into heavily salted water for about five minutes. Then rinse in clean water. Bring a pot to boil and add a pound of salt, plus onions, garlic, Cayenne pepper and a pack of dry seafood boil.

Place crawdads in the pot and boil for about five minutes. With the fire off, let them soak for 20 minutes or so. To eat, cut off the tail portion, peel off the shell and dip in spicy tomato sauce, lemon juice or drawn butter.

You will find it takes a good mess of crawdads to make a filling meal. So get to trapping!



DINING OUT ON THE DELTA

While there are those who would question my credentials for doing a gourmet's guide to dining on the Delta, few would argue about my fitness for producing a gourmand's guide. For surely, one of the things I've gained from the Delta is girth.

There are few joys to compare with cruising your boat in to a waterside restaurant, to dine at your leisure. And then, if you so desire, to be able to retire to your own living quarters just outside in the "parking lot." Or to awake to a glorious morning aboard your boat, the pungent odors of cooking breakfast wafting through the air, and be able to walk a hundred feet or so for a breakfast repast at the marina restaurant. As much as the First Mate might enjoy cooking aboard, few will turn down the chance to dine out now and again.

The Delta boasts a surprising number of boat-in restaurants. While required attire is generally casual, most require that you wear shoes and shirts, especially for the evening meal. Many have weekend entertainment and dancing, where you can combine good food with a lively good time.

Presenting all these restaurants in a publication in a logical and helpful way has not proved to be easy. In the five printings of our *Guide To Cruising and Houseboating The Delta* book, we found the dining chapter is the most revised section of the book.

Open hours and days — and even months — seem to change with the tides. And I swear, there are restaurateurs who on whim, will padlock the doors to go fishing. And no hungry boatman wishes to play second fiddle to a striped bass. So with emphasis I suggest that if you are going on a lengthy cruise specifically to dine, call ahead to make sure the establishment of your choice is indeed open — and serving. I have been disappointed more than once because I did not heed my own advice.

THE BEST OF WHERE
TO BOAT-IN TO
DINE-OUT ON
THE DELTA



Spindrif's unusual billboard.

Because we want this book to have as long a useful life as possible, we publish open hours and days only if they are of long standing and well established. Our format is to list each restaurant in alphabetical order with its telephone number and location. Only those which can be reached by water are listed. The boldfaced letter-numeral combination at the end shows location on *Hal Schell's Delta Map*.

This edition also includes many of the smaller eateries that have limited menus and may serve food only part of the year. They are part of the Delta scene and can save the day when you are famished.

We make no effort to rate the food or service. What this gourmand feels is outstanding, you might feel only fit for the servants. Chefs come and go at some of the establishments, for after all there is a seasonal element to doing business in the Delta. Last season's chef might turn out food of the four-fork category, while this year's chef may be a single-fork fella hardly qualified to bait crawdad traps.

Dining is a personal thing and you must establish your own ratings. I find that almost no one ever agrees with me. Now bring on the food. And *bon appetit*.

A.J. Bump's Freeport Saloon, (916) 665-2251, in the town of Freeport on the Sacramento River. This historic restaurant was established in 1863 and is well worth the 700-yard trek from Freeport Marina. There of course, is both a saloon and restaurant in this venerable old two-story building and its walls are festooned with early-day photos of the Delta scene. Dress is casual and the food is excellent and reasonably priced.

Many of the entrees are named after previous owners of the saloon or after early Freeport residents — such as "Lee's Lobster" for Jim Lee, Freeport's bachelor dandy back in 1863. The menu is varied and there is daily service for both luncheon and dinner. Overnight guest docking at Freeport Marina. **C-2**

Al's Place, (916) 776-1800, in the Chinese hamlet of Locke, Called Al-The-Wops by everyone in the Delta, fare here is uncomplicated. You enter through the saloon and its high ceiling is festooned with tobacco-stained dollar bills thumbtacked there as if by magic. It'll cost you a buck to see how the bartender gets 'em on the 20-foot ceiling (I paid my dues). Every year or so they are taken down to finance a free males-only liver and onions feed.

Lunches are served daily 11:30 till 2 p.m., steak sandwiches only and they are invariably good. Tables are set with jars of peanut butter and marmalade, to be spread on Al's French bread. Dinner service includes steak with all the trimmings 5 to 10 p.m. weekdays, 5 to 11 p.m. Fridays, 3 to 11 p.m. Sundays. This is not a fancy place, but its fans are legion. Guest docking at a per-foot fee at the Boathouse In Locke, on the Sacramento adjacent to town, tel. (916) 776-1204. **B-6**

Andreas Cove, (916) 777-6409, is located on the San Joaquin River next to Spindrift, just down from the Mokelumne. A comfortable family-type atmosphere prevails here. Breakfast fare is hearty and three-egg omelettes are featured. Lunches include hot and cold sandwiches, soups and salads.

There is a special of the evening that changes from day to day on the dinner menu and is posted mo on a calendar. Included are such as BBQ spare ribs, sirloin tips, roast beef, Swiss steak, et cetera. You can also order spaghetti, steaks, or sandwiches. Char-broiled steaks are a specialty. Weather permitting, you can dine outside on the new deck overlooking the river. Beer and wine only. Children's plates, closed Wednesdays. Guest docking. **D-5**

Artist Table, (415) 684-3414, at Viking Harbor on Dutch Slough near Bethel Island. Jeff and Jackie Stuelke have built this tiny restaurant that is tucked under shade trees behind the levee bank into a true gourmet's retreat. Meals are unhurried and the atmosphere is casual. Here you get the feeling that dining is really something very special and that you are being served by people who want to please you. Reservations are recommended.

The veal Oscar is highly praised. You can feast on pork chops stuffed with the chef's special herb stuffing or on a fantastic Chateaubriand for two. And there are plenty of other enticing choices. Artist Table has no liquor license, but you'd not know it by the drinks — Margaritas, Mai Tais and even the favorite Dutch Slough Blue for Two. Dinners only are served year round, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday 5:30 to 9 p.m. and to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday, closed the other two days. Only about forty diners can be accommodated. Overnight guest docking by special arrangement only. Check ahead. **J-1**

Bean Pot Resort, (916) 777-6550, on Sherman Island at Horseshoe Bend, is a favorite of anglers and yachtsman of the area. Breakfasts are served daily to 11 a.m., luncheon till 5 p.m. Portions are hearty. A variety of omelettes are offered. Sandwiches vary from a club sandwich to a bacon-burger and all are served with a small dish of beans. Small guest dock. **D-3**

Calamity Jane's, (209) 944-5666, at the end of the Stockton Channel in the former Chili Pepper building, serves luncheon daily except Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Offerings include crab or shrimp Louies, hamburgers, B.L.T.s and other sandwiches. Dinners are served daily except Sunday from 5 to 10 p.m. with a complete line of steak and seafood. Scampi is a specialty and the chef brags about the stroganoff. Live entertainment and dancing. There is no formal guest dock, but boaters tie to the railings along the seawall. **F-9**

Captain C's Snack Barge, (916) 776-1421, at Walnut Grove Marina on Snodgrass Slough, serves breakfast and lunch through the winter, adding dinners May 1 through Labor day. Breakfasts include the Spanish omelette. Luncheon fare includes salads, hamburgers, fries, French dip and peta sandwiches. Dinner offerings include the 10 ounce sirloin steak and moderate-price fare such as lasagna, meatloaf and chicken. On Friday evenings there's the popular low-price do-it-yourself steak and lobster barbecues with the food provided. Guest docking. **B-6**

Castaway, (209) 466-2866, at the head of the Stockton Channel, overlooks the water and offers food in "a romantic Victorian atmosphere". This old favorite offers luncheon and dinner daily and a highly rated Sunday champagne brunch from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

You can enjoy fish, scampi, steaks or even calamari. From the wood-smoked barbecue, chicken, ribs and duck are offered. Dinners include a stop at the enticing salad bar. The bar offers an assortment of exotic drinks. Guest docking by arrangement at Waterfront Yacht Harbor next door. **F-9**

Chart Room, (916) 371-0471, on the Sacramento River at Broderick, is a funky floating bistro of immense popularity. Breakfasts vary from steak and eggs to bacon and eggs and



Courtland Docks, a good family restaurant.

are grand in size. Luncheon fare includes burgers, grilled sandwiches, patti-melts, and salads in the summer. Dinners are offered on Fridays and Saturdays — steak and catfish along with the salad bar, that is. Weather permitting, you can dine outside on the floating patio, shaded by old parachutes. Guest docking. **A-2**

Chez Zabeth, (209) 941-2204, situated in the Warehouse building at Waterfront Yacht Harbor in Stockton, is a classic French cafe. It offers a variety of crepes for breakfasts. Stuffed croissants are a favorite. You can get sandwiches, steaks and other interesting luncheon and dinner offerings. Weather permitting, there is dining at the outside patio. Its La Patisserie deli offers sandwiches and pastries to go. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday, to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday and to 3 p.m. on Sunday. Beer and wine only. Guest docking. **F-9**

Cliff House, (916) 777-6633, on the east side of the Sacramento River just above the Rio Vista bridge, is a little German stronghold on the Delta. As we go to press, construction is well along on a new restaurant and bar building scheduled to open in early 1984. The restaurant, serving lunch and dinner daily, will feature German food and seafood. A variety of German beer is stocked and this is a fun, casual place to visit. Guest docking. **C-4**

D J's Landing, (415) 684-2105, (formerly the Rusty Porthole) is located on Bethel Island at Boyd's Harbor on Piper Slough. This bright and comfortable place offers diners a great view of the slough and Franks Tract beyond. Service is breakfast through dinner every day but Tuesday summers and fewer days during the winter. Breakfast specialties include the Denver and ham and cheese omelettes.

Luncheon offerings such as the "Big Bertie", "Delta Decker" and "Shrimp Boat" are standard and are augmented by daily posted specials. Dinner fare is such as New York steaks, barbecued chicken, scampi and the captain's plate. There are regular dinner specials such as pot roasts, ham and clams. Beer and wine. Guest docking. **I-2**

Ernie's, (916) 777-6510, in the river town of Isleton, is a Delta institution. Good uncomplicated food is served in equally uncomplicated surroundings. Gordie and Marilyn Rule have a loyal following of customers here. You enter through the saloon in this old downtown building and it has take-out liquor. Luncheon is served weekdays 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and offers a different special each day, plus a variety of hot sandwiches varying from the French dip to hamburgers.

On the dinner menu you have a choice of sirloin steak or

roasted chicken. The chicken is also available for takeout and many boaters stop in for a bucketful to be enjoyed on the boat. Dinner service is 5 to 9 p.m. weekdays, to 10 p.m. Fridays and Sundays, and till 11 p.m. Saturdays. Overnight guest dock with 317 steps to Ernie's, as the sign says. **C-4**

The Fish Market, (209) 946-0991, is situated in the Warehouse building at Waterfront Yacht Harbor in Stockton. It features dining in its glass-enclosed atrium overlooking the harbor, outside on the "sidewalk" when weather permits, or in the main dining room which is accented with hand-carved oak work, fine waterfowl art and photographs of the historic Delta.

Fresh fish is sold over the counter. Luncheon starts daily at 11 a.m. and service is continuous through dinner. The cocktail lounge is lively. The Fish Market's clam chowder is widely acclaimed. The menu includes grilled fish, seafood sautees, calamari, steamed clams, crab and shrimp Louies, hot crab sandwiches and specials of the day. Sunday brunch is 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and there is entertainment some evenings. Guest docking. **F-9**

Four Seasons Marina, (916) 371-6685, on the west bank of the river below Sacramento, is an active spot favored by local river rats. It offers hearty breakfasts, chili, hamburgers, B.L.T.s, french fries and other good stuff the rest of the day. Open 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekends, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Guest docking. **B-2**

Frank's Cove, (415) 684-2886, is situated at Frank's Marina, Bethel Island, facing Franks Tract. Newly renovated, it serves breakfast, lunch and dinner in a comfortable atmosphere. Luncheon fare may include the Reuben sandwich, a French dip or even an Alaskan crab sandwich.

For dinner you can enjoy sauteed scallops, teriyaki kabob, veal scallopini, prime rib (Fridays and Saturdays), lobster tails and more. There are luncheon and dinner specials daily. The cocktail lounge is separated from the restaurant by a partition and there is music weekends. Restaurant closed Mondays. Guest docking. **I-3**

Giusti's, (916) 776-1808, is at the juncture of the Mokelumne's North Fork and Snodgrass Slough near Walnut Grove and is one of the Delta's oldest restaurants. Although the outside of the building appears somewhat ramshackle, inside you find the warmth and neatness you'd expect in an Italian restaurant. Food is good, priced right and in bountiful quantities. There is a palatable inexpensive house wine. Dinner fare includes everything from raviolis and veal cutlets to jumbo prawns.

A special daily luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (2 p.m. weekends) includes wine. The bar is adjacent to the restaurant and is an active place frequented by locals. Its walls are lined with autographed photos of well-known persons who have visited the place. Brunch is served summer Sundays outside on the new deck and includes such delicacies as bluepoint oysters. Giusti's is closed every Monday and the months of January and February. Dinner service is 5 to 10 p.m., to 11 p.m. Saturdays, and 4 to 10 p.m. Sundays. No dinners Tuesday and Wednesday October to Memorial Day. Guest docking. **B-6**

Grand Island Mansion, (916) 775-1705, is situated on Steamboat Slough. It is a stunning 58-room antebellum mansion that would be right at home in the deep south. This elegant edifice has hosted some grand parties. It is now open to the public for Saturday dinners, 6 to 9 p.m. with cocktails and dancing to live music till midnight. Sunday brunch is served 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Reservations are recommended, and "very casual attire not appropriate — no children's facilities." Guest docking. **A-5**

Happy Harbor, (916) 777-6575, on the San Joaquin River near Lt. #42, just below the Mokelumne River, sits up in a two-story building overlooking the river. This active place has live music weekends and offers luncheon and dinner daily. You can enjoy hamburgers, fish, steak, pizza, or giant prawns. The steak sandwich is a specialty as is the homemade clam chowder. Plans are in progress to build a floating "Showboat" restaurant here. Guest docking. **D-5**

Harbor Galley, (415) 634-1358, at the new Discovery Bay Yacht Harbor, in "Disco Bay" off Indian Slough. Chef Margo provides informal dining overlooking the water, including six tables on the deck outside for dining *al fresco*, weather permitting. The menu includes fresh mushroom, cheese, ham or combination omelettes, and sandwiches varying from turkey to B.L.T.s and steak. There are daily inexpensive luncheon specials such as veal scallopini, open-faced crab sandwiches, the super duper Hoggie-Burger, stuffed filet of sole and traditional German dishes like weiner Schnitzel.

Dinners include steak and lobster, prime rib, New York steaks, jumbo prawns and specials. Desserts feature ice cream and Margo's homemade pies and cheesecake. Sunday brunch features eggs Benedict, usually till 3 p.m. Hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekends. Winter hours 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekends. Guest docking. Catering for special parties. **G-4**

Hatch Cover, (209) 478-4341, at Stockton's Village West Marina on Fourteenmile Slough, is a modern structure overlooking the water. Its active bar (weekday happy hours) includes a patio deck and is decorated with seafaring photos and artifacts. The restaurant has a reputation for consistently good food, with dinner service only starting at 6 p.m. nightly, 5 p.m. Sundays.

Selection at the salad bar is outstanding, and includes soup and French bread. The menu features filet mignon, teriyaki, beef kabobs, Hawaiian chicken and even a vegetable casserole. You can have rack of lamb, prime rib while it lasts, swordfish, scampi and Alaskan king crabs that look to be critters formidable enough to crawl away with the table. Desserts include cheesecake, turtle pie and ice cream. Entertainment some evenings, guest dock. Adjacent to the restaurant is a cafe called **Bob's At The Marina** serving breakfasts and sandwiches daily. **F-8**

Herman & Helen's, (209) 951-4634, on Little Connection Slough, serves home-cooked food in its floating cafe. The atmosphere is unpretentious. Breakfasts and luncheon sandwiches are served, with dinners in the summer. A busy place in the season. Guest docking. **E-6**

Holiday Inn, (209) 466-3993, on the waterfront at the head of the Stockton Channel, now has new guest docks and provides continuous food service from 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. in its Grocer's restaurant. For breakfast, it offers Lito's famous omelettes in nearly a dozen varieties. There is a daily luncheon buffet from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Or perhaps you'd like to try the soup and croissant sandwich combination.

For dinner there is steak, prime rib, fish, seafood cardinale and other offerings. If you are in the South-of-the-Border mood, there's the complete Mexican dinner. For the dessert, you can try the Amaretto mousscake, but there are no claims that it is not fattening. There is entertainment and dancing in the intimate cocktail lounge. Guest docking. **F-9**

Islands Marina, (916) 775-1137, on Miner Slough, is in a beautiful setting. Breakfast and lunch is served daily all year, with dinner service nightly in the summer but on weekends only in the winter. Big breakfasts include ham and eggs and all the rest. Luncheon fare includes salads, hamburgers, chili, and a variety of sandwiches. For dinner you can have

barbecued ribs or chicken, prawns, New York steak and other offerings. Beer and wine only, Guest docking. **A-4**

Josiah Wing's, (707) 429-2828, is a fine restaurant located at 627 Main Street in Suisun City, a comfortable walk from the marinas. The restaurant is named after Josiah Wing, a crusty old sea captain who sailed round the Horn in 1849, then in 1851 brought his vessel *The Ann Sophia*, up Montezuma Slough to establish a warehouse at the island which was soon to become Suisun City.

Luncheon is served daily (except Saturday) in this comfortable place 11:30 to 2 p.m. Offerings include lemon veal, fresh red snapper, the omelette of the day, luncheon steak and a variety of sandwiches varying from crab to a "Wingburger". Josiah's Special is soup of the day, salad and a dinner roll. Dinners start at 5:30 daily and you can enjoy chicken cordon bleu, prime rib, veal Oscar, coquille St. Jacques, lobster flambe, a variety of steaks and many other good things. Cocktails and evening entertainment. Surely, old Captain Wing would approve. A sort of sister place next door is the **First National Bank Bar & Cafe**, (707) 429-2235, an art-deco sort of place with plenty of fun and food at modest prices.

King Island Cafe, (209) 957-8692, is located at King Island Resort at the juncture of Honker Cut and Disappointment Slough. The locals enjoy eating here and it is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. There is an assortment of breakfast fare, chili, hamburgers and other sandwiches and specials such as meatloaf, spaghetti and other delectables. Homemade pie. Beer and wine. Guest docking. **E-7**

Locke Garden Restaurant, (916) 776-1444, in the hamlet of Locke in the old "Tules" building. It seems only appropriate that this Chinese river town should have a Chinese restaurant. You can dine quite well here at modest prices. Hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, closed Monday. Fee docking by arrangement at the Boathouse. **B-6**

Lost Isle, (209) 948-4135, is situated on the Stockton Channel at Lt. #24. This active place can only be reached by boat. Food is served during the summer months with hamburgers, french fries, hot dogs and perhaps specials for lunch. Steak and chicken comprise the dinner menu. The atmosphere is casual and you dine inside or outside on the covered patios. Guest docking. **F-7**

Moore's Riverboat, (916) 777-6545, on the Mokelumne, just up river from the San Joaquin, Cap'n John Moore reigns over this 156-foot floating restaurant that for 20 years hauled freight in and around the Delta as the *Sutter*. Built in Antioch's Fulton Shipyards in 1931, this dowdy old freighter was retired in 1951 and languished at a Sacramento wharf before John purchased it in 1961. There followed 5 years of back-breaking work converting it into the fine floating bistro it is today.

"They called it John's Folly all those years I was working on it," says John. But few will argue about the outstanding conversion job he did. And on summer weekends it is loaded to the gunwales with fun lovers. There is dancing, music weekends, car parking on the starboard side and boat docks on the port side. The old freighter's engines are still below, sharing space with carbonated beverage bottles with hoses leading up to the bar. An icemaker sits up topside, with a gravity feed to get ice to the bar. The overheads are festooned with, er . . . ladies' panties.

Moore's is dependable. The bar opens every morning at 6 a.m. with breakfasts by 8 o'clock. There is a complete luncheon menu including sandwiches. Dinner fare varies from lobster to fresh-caught Delta crawdads, a Riverboat specialty. You can get something to eat here any hour of the day till

11 p.m. Closed December through February, overnight guest dock. **D-5**

New Mecca Cafe, (415) 432-7433, is located in downtown Pittsburg on Railroad Ave. just a stroll from the marina. Long popular with boaters and landlubbers alike, this simple cafe offers fast service and excellent Mexican food at modest prices. When the place fills, customers draw a number and wait their turn. It is not unusual to see the line trailing a long way down the sidewalk. But there are good times in the line, and customers feel the wait is worth it.

You can enjoy burritos, a full line of enchiladas, eggs rancheros, flautas and even steaks and chops. Hours are 11 a.m. till about 3 a.m. daily, closed Wednesdays. How long has New Mecca been a mecca? "I don't know for sure," said our petite waitress Julia. "I've been here for 19 years and it was here for a long time before I came." Guest docking by arrangement with the marina harbormaster. **E-1**

Orwood Resort, (415) 634-2550, on Indian Slough, offers a surprising variety of food in its modest-size cafe. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served daily and biscuits and gravy are offered Sunday mornings. Luncheon includes hamburgers, hot dogs, sandwiches and specials some days. The dinner menu includes prawns, scallops, steak, hamburger steak and even homemade burritos. Homemade pies on weekends. Summer hours are 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., winter 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Guest docking. **G-4**

Outrigger, (916) 777-6480, located on bustling Threemile Slough, builds its breakfasts around the omelette. Weekday fare for the remainder of the day includes hamburgers, homemade pizza, clam chowder and sandwiches from the deli. And it is a fact that the clam chowder with French bread and plenty of fresh butter constitutes a meal in itself.

Dinners are served Friday and Saturday during the winter and also on Sunday during the summer. A 12 ounce New York steak is featured. There is also chicken as well as a fish dish. Weather permitting, it's fun to dine out on the Super Deck under brightly colored umbrellaed tables. Entertainment most weekends. Cocktails, now with a full-year license, guest docking. **D-3**

Paradise Point Snack Bar, (209) 952-1000, at Paradise Point Marina at the juncture of Disappointment Slough and Bishop Cut, serves food to be enjoyed inside at tables or outside at picnic tables overlooking the water. Breakfast and luncheon only and closed during the winter. Hot dogs, hamburgers, french fries, chili beans and other good things. Guest docking. **E-7**

Petas, (209) 941-8605, is situated in the Warehouse building at Waterfront Yacht Harbor in Stockton. Cuisine here is German and features such favorites as Schnitzel, bratwurst, Swedish meatballs with hot potato salad and red cabbage, beef rouladen, sauerbraten and more.

You can top it off with apple strudel or Black Forest chocolate cake. There are luncheon and dinner specials every day. In summer you can dine outdoors in the biergarten. Luncheon service is 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., then dinner service to 11 p.m. Cocktails, music some evenings. Guest docking. **F-9**

Pirates Lair Cafe, (916) 777-6715, at Korth's Pirates Lair Marina, has been a favorite breakfast stop for boaters and anglers for years. Breakfasts include ham and eggs, French toast, omelettes and more. For lunch its hamburgers, hot dogs and sandwiches. Beer, wine, ice cream, groceries. Closed Monday and Tuesday (but open for groceries). **D-5**

P. J.'s At Courtland Docks, (916) 775-2141, is located in the pear town of Courtland on the east bank of the Sacramento. Sunday brunch is a favorite here, served 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on



The boating crowd gathers on Steamboaters' beach.

Dining at Ryde Hotel can be a fun experience.



the tree-shaded deck in good weather, inside the rest of the time. Includes champagne, choice of five kinds of omelettes, eggs Benedict, waffles, a fruit salad bar and more.

For lunch you have a choice of five kinds of hamburgers, assorted sandwiches, daily weekday specials such as corned beef and cabbage and other selections. Dinners include steaks, chicken, scampi, prime rib on weekends and always some kind of fish. Continuous daily service. Closed Sundays during the winter, open seven days summers. Beer and wine, guest docking. **A-5**

The Point, (707) 374-5400, on the Sacramento River on the lower edge of Rio Vista. Inside, all is done in pale blue and it looks bright and inviting. In the entry a schedule is posted of the freighters due to pass. And when one passes, details of its flag, port of origin, destination, cargo and tonnage are broadcast over the public address system. Diners have an excellent view of the river traffic outside. Owner Jack Baumann has made this a valuable addition to his fine marina and many meetings and banquets are held in the restaurant's rooms.

At the bar, nifty drinks like the fresh strawberry daiquiri are enticing. A number of sauteed dishes have recently been added to the already full menu, such as oysters, shrimp and lobster. The menu is heavy on seafoods. But there is a wide choice of other foods also, like Hawaiian chicken and bacon-wrapped filet mignon. The fresh breaded veal cutlet is always a favorite. Luncheon is served daily from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sundays there is the special buffet brunch from 10 a.m. to 12:30. Dinner service is from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays, till 11 p.m. Saturdays and noon to 10 p.m. Sun-

days. Closed every Monday. Entertainment some weekends. Guest docking both in front of the restaurant and at the marina. **C-3.**

River Galley, (916) 372-0300, across the river from Sacramento in Broderick, is newly built on a strong old rock barge. It features dining and cocktails overlooking the water. It has a bright and happy ambiance. Daily luncheon from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. includes everything from clams on the half shell and shrimp salad to the Galleyburger.

The dinner menu is heavy on seafood and includes salmon, scallops, baked stuffed trout and broiled lobster tail. For the meat eater there's New York Steak, prime rib (Fri.-Sun.) and the surf & turf. Sunday brunch is popular, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Guest docking. **A-2**

Riverview Lodge, (415) 757-2272, on the Sacramento River at Antioch. This is easily the most complete seafood restaurant in the Delta. There are endless selections on the menu featuring everything from Ciopino to sturgeon (not Delta caught). Steaks and other beef selections are included. Prices are moderate and this is a favorite stop for families. You can order breakfast, lunch or dinner. Sandwiches are available also and light shrimp and crab salads are featured.

Riverview is open every day from at least 11 a.m. till 11:30 p.m., later weekends and its cocktail lounge is a favorite stop off. The place is handy to town where you will find liquor stores, groceries, marine supplies et cetera. Overnight guest dock. **E-2**

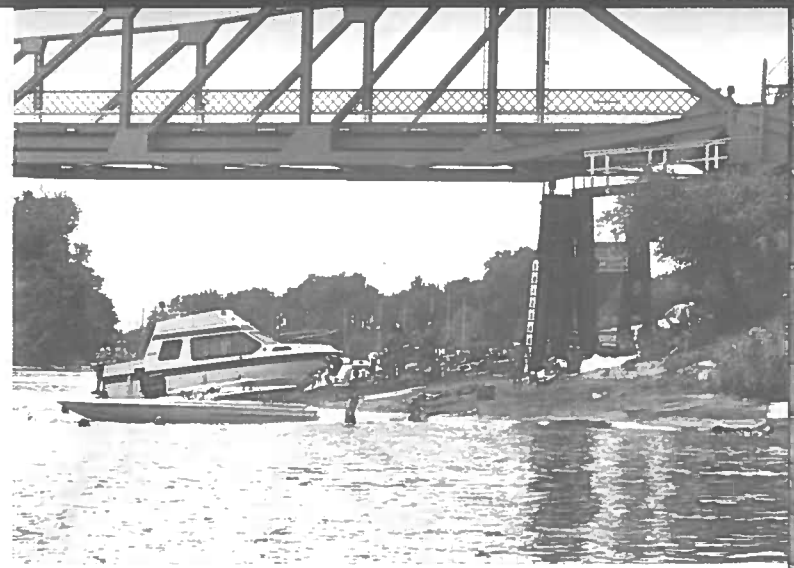
Ryde Hotel, (916) 776-1908, graces the banks of the Sacramento River in the hamlet of Ryde between Isleton and Walnut Grove. The old hotel has 50 rooms and downstairs in the Speakeasy there is a separate rock and roll extravaganza Friday and Saturday nights. Upstairs on the main floor, there is softer music for dining and dancing. Continental cuisine is featured and the menu leans toward seafood, but also features steaks and prime rib.

You can enjoy veal Oscar, Alaskan king crab, scampi and more. For breakfast there is a variety of omelettes and other good things. There's breakfast through dinner service Saturday and Sunday, dinners only on Friday. Closed January through March. Guest dock. **B-5**

Snug Harbor Inn, (916) 775-1191, on lower Steamboat Slough, is a cozy little place frequented by the locals and boaters alike. Breakfast, lunch and dinner is served and you can get something to eat up till 9 p.m. There's a modest price Sunday morning breakfast that includes a bloody Mary along with plenty to eat. Luncheon includes a variety of sandwiches, hamburgers, homemade soup and chili. Dinner offerings include veal, chicken-fried steak, T-bones, chicken and more. There's a modest price dinner special every Friday. Cocktails, guest docking. **C-4**

Spindrift, (916) 777-6654, on the lower Stockton Deepwater Channel just above Sevenmile Slough, is the province of Gay Forstrom, who doubles as chef. With his wife Carol, he has built this into one of the most consistently excellent restaurants in the Delta. When you dine here, you seldom leave without a doggie bag under your arm. Gay tries to always have fresh fish on the menu and the clams Bordelaise are popular. Veal Oscar is a favorite as is the teriyaki steak. The Sunday chicken and dumplings (also served Wednesdays and Thursdays when open) are known to boatmen all over the Delta.

Luncheon is served Saturday and Sunday only, noon to 3 p.m., live music weekends. Dinner service is Wednesday through Sunday May 1 through Labor Day, then Friday through Sunday the rest of the year. Cocktails, guest docking. **D-4**



All the action is at the Steamboat Landing beach.

Steamboat Landing, (916) 775-1121, is located on the Sacramento River at the Steamboat Slough bridge. This lively place has cocktails and is a favorite of locals. Food is served Tuesday through Sunday, closed Mondays during the winter. Luncheon features a special every day, such as roast turkey and dressing, beef stew, and Mexican dishes on Fridays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. There are also sandwiches and other offerings. From 6 to 10 p.m. the "mini-menu" is in effect, with hamburgers, the super duper steak sandwich and other good things. Pizza is also served then. Cocktails, guest docking. **A-5**

The Store, (916) 777-6562, at Vieira's Resort on the Sacramento River just below Isleton. Atmosphere is informal and brothers Mike and Ron Forthun slant the menu toward seafood with such as mahi mahi, red snapper, lobster and fish and chips. Dinners include teriyaki steak, beef kabobs, veal and more. There are also dinner specials such as fried chicken, scampi and veal dishes. Lunches include 15 offerings of hamburgers, sandwiches and daily specials such as Swiss steak and meatloaf. There's clam chowder and a soup of the day. Breakfasts are hearty and include omelettes as well as the usual fare. Open all year with continuous service from 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., closed Mondays. Beer and wine only, guest docking. **C-4.**

Terminus Tavern and Restaurant, (209) 369-1041, at Tower Park Marina on Little Potato Slough at Hwy 12. A fine restaurant situated in one of the rugged old produce sheds that line the slough. Includes one of the prettiest cocktail lounges on the Delta, and you can dine overlooking the water. Breakfasts include seven kinds of omelettes, French toast, hot cakes, fresh fruit in season and other "Individual Dawdlings".

Luncheon fare is such as a variety of hamburgers, a French dip, soup of the day, chef's salad, the "asparagus shed delight" salad and more. Ice cream here. Dinner service starts at 5 p.m. and runs to 11 p.m. summers, 10 p.m. winters, maybe 9 p.m. winter weekdays. Food includes prime rib weekends, beef & chicken kabob combo, steak, top 'n bottom and fresh fish every night. Bar specializes in bloody Marys with a secret ingredient and fetching fizzes. Summer weekend entertainment. Roomy guest dock. **D-6**

Tiki Lagoon, (209) 943-9367, on Turner Cut, is a bustling little cafe with a bar serving cocktails. The cafe serves breakfast and sandwiches in the summer and on a limited schedule in the winter. There are weekend summer barbecue dinners on the patio. Changes may be in the works, so check ahead here. Cocktails, guest docking. **F-6**



Tony's across the levee and near the bridge at Walnut Grove.

Tony's, (916) 776-1317, in Walnut Grove across the street from the drawbridge, down behind the levee. Tony and his wife Mary have been operating this fine place since 1956. And their chef Smokey has been with them since the beginning. With gusto, Tony addresses the task of cutting the 325 New York steaks that will be consumed there on a typical weekend in the summer. They dish out about 2,000 pounds of their special Portuguese beans in a year.

No dinner menu to fret over here, the dinner fare consists solely of New Yorks or veal, served Saturdays and Sundays only. Hours are 6 to 11 p.m. Saturdays, 4 to 9 p.m. Sundays. There are weekday luncheon specials, service 11 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Try the stew. You'll meet everyone from cropdusters to dredgemen at the bar. For interesting drinks, the "streaker" is recommended. Overnight guest docking at the merchants dock. Cocktails. **B-6**

Tracy Oasis Marina, (209) 835-3182, on Grant Line Canal in the South Delta, has a comfortable cafe overlooking the water. Breakfasts, hamburgers and sandwiches are served throughout the day during the summer. A deli is being considered. **H-6**

Turner Cut Resort, (209) 946-9409, on Turner Cut, is a comfortable resort serving breakfasts, hamburgers, B.L.T.s and other sandwiches, fried chicken and other enticements Wednesday through Sunday. It is open till 5 p.m. weekdays, till midnight Saturdays and Sundays. Beer and wine only, guest docking. **F-6**

Union Point Resort, (209) 948-4294, on Middle River at Highway 4, serves breakfasts and a variety of luncheon sandwiches. Every day there is a luncheon special such as hot turkey sandwiches or roast beef. Cocktails, outside patio deck. Guest dock. **G-6**

Village Marina, (916) 922-7548, on the Sacramento River above Sacramento, cures local boaters' hunger pangs with hearty breakfasts and luncheon fare that includes hamburgers, tuna sandwiches, B.L.T.s and the like. It opens at 7:30 a.m. and the grill is turned off at 2 p.m. weekdays, 5 p.m. weekends. The cocktail lounge remains open till the wee hours. Guest docking. **A-2**

Warehouse Restaurant, (209) 941-0197, is situated in the Warehouse building at the Waterfront Yacht Harbor in Stockton. Occupying 12,000 square feet on two floors, the Warehouse offers fine food in a sort of funky waterfront atmosphere. "Cargo" is stacked around the place and there are shipping crates and cargo nets. From its two bars you can enjoy such drinks as a warf wrat or beers from around the world. There's regular entertainment.

The "Inventory" consists of such as ribs Rangoon, steak Neptune, chicken Colombia and shrimp Malaysia. You can make a meal of soup and salad, try a "split cargo" or venture beef Maui. There are "stolen goods" (daily specials) and fresh fish nightly. There's dinner service nightly, luncheon on weekdays and a champagne buffet brunch Saturdays and Sundays 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Guest docking. **F-9**

Wheel House & Inn Tent, (916) 371-7700, at Raley's Landing on the Sacramento River across from Old Sacramento, is a part of the Marina Inn motel. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served daily year round. For breakfast you have a choice of ten omelettes, eggs Benedict and even Canadian bacon and eggs. Luncheon fare includes a selection of hot sandwiches from the French dip to hot roast beef, plus cold sandwiches, crab or shrimp Louies and the avocado royal. There are also daily buffet luncheons on the patio.

Dinner fare includes Coquille Saint Jacques, stuffed river trout, halibut veronique, cioppino, plus filet mignon bear-naise and the Marina Duet — broiled Australian lobster and petit filet. There's clam chowder, escargot and other good things, including daily specials. The popular Sunday brunch is served 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. outside in the stunning circus-style Inn Tent, which is also available for special banquets. The busy cocktail lounge has weekday happy hours 4 to 6 p.m. with free hors d'oeuvres that includes the likes of steamed clams. Guest docking. **A-2**

Whiskey Slough Harbor, (209) 464-3931, is located at the end of Whiskey Slough and it is fun to dine at the long counter overlooking the water and chat with the owners. Breakfasts include, ham and eggs, pancakes and even omelettes. Hamburgers, B.L.T.s, grilled cheese sandwiches and the like are served here. Atmosphere is casual, and if the chef's in the mood, she might cook up something special for you. Open seven days, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. winters, 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. summers. **G-7**

Wimpy's, (209) 794-2544, on the Mokelumne's South Fork just east of Walnut Grove, is a warm friendly establishment with a family atmosphere and good food priced right. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served daily during the summer and on a curtailed winter schedule. Luncheon offerings include hamburgers, a hot crab sandwich and other sandwiches, plus specials. The dinner menu includes New York steak, prawns, spaghetti, veal cutlets and prime rib on Fridays. There's homemade pies, ice cream and shakes, homemade biscuits. The all-you-can-eat Sunday brunch from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. enjoys great popularity. You dine overlooking the water. Cocktails, guest docking. **B-6**

Windmill Cove, (209) 948-6995, on the Stockton Channel between lights #34 and #36, has a lively cocktail lounge, a patio and a new second-story deck up on pilings. A luncheon favorite is the Windmill Cove special. Dinners include New York and ribeye steaks. Breakfasts (usually served weekends and holidays during the summer) include outstanding omelettes. Restaurant open hours and days are not consistent here, so check ahead. Cocktails, guest dock. **F-7**

Bethel Island's Downtown

This book does not normally cover the "downtown" Bethel Island restaurants, not because they are without merit, but because there is no designated or reliable guest docking provided for the boating public. However, boaters do at times dock at marinas around the bridge, and for PICYA club members there is docking at the San Joaquin Yacht Club. So, we offer a brief listing of those Bethel Island Rd. eateries within hoofing distance of the bridge (everything at Bethel Island is measured from the bridge).

Bel Isle Club, (415) 684-3223, bills itself as a "prime rib & steak house" and is justly proud of its super salad bar. It offers entertainment weekends and summer dancing outside on the patio. **I-2**

Boathouse Restaurant, (415) 684-2702, offers luncheon and dinner daily, with both Mexican and Italian fare. **I-2**

Delta Bell, (415) 684-2806, offers dinner daily with a complete line of steaks and seafood, including canaloni, sauteed dishes, cordon bleu and much more. **I-2**.

Flippo's Pizza, (415) 684-2880, featuring pizza, salads and beer, and lasagne special on Wednesdays. Open daily to 9 p.m. **I-2**

The Gangplank, (415) 684-2414, hearty breakfast and luncheon daily, dinners from 2 p.m. on Wednesday through Sunday. All-you-can-eat specials, ice cream, shakes and sundaes. Closed Tuesday. **J-2**

Hatoba Restaurant, (415) 684-9890, a touch of old Japan, with tempura, sukiyaki, teriyaki and even sake. Dinners daily except closed Monday and Tuesday. **I-2**.

Wally's Wrecking Yard, (415) 684-3777, restaurant and deli featuring homemade pies. Breakfast, luncheon and dinner daily, except closed on Wednesday. **I-2**



Dining at Al's Place in Locke is a neat experience.



The Tiny K Four entertain at many Delta bistros.



Dining on Giusti's deck.



You can dine at the Point in Rio Vista.

YACHT & BOAT CLUBS —PRIDE OF THE DELTA

When you consider the logistical difficulties of maintaining a facility in this vast and often remote Delta, it is surprising that there exist here so many yacht and boat clubs. For many, the struggle was long and hard and often expensive. Carving a facility out of island tule marshes and tenacious blackberry brambles was not often a simple task. Later came the hurdles of red tape. Obtaining permits for dredging and building and digging in the Delta these days is a near-impossible task.

Often just maintaining the status quo can be difficult. Floating clubhouses sink. Terminal dry rot sets in. The evils of fire and vandalism are always lurking. Then there is the high cost of everything. Getting good help is not simple in these remote regions. Why in the world would anyone want to go to all the trouble of organizing a club in the Delta?

Well, there is little doubt that club membership can enrich the boatman's enjoyment of the Delta waters. There is a camaraderie among members wherever they meet, whether it be passing each other in the water or over the marine-band radio waves. There is the enjoyment of club activities — cruises, raftups, parades, races or whatever. And if a club has facilities, then the boatman member always has a place to hang his hat, a place to sip a libation with friends. From a practical standpoint, membership in a Pacific Inter-Club Yacht Association can provide you with another dozen or more on-the-water places to stop at. There are over two dozen PICYA members clubs in the Delta.

Although clubs are not for everyone, you can't deny the impact they have and the enjoyment they offer. This chapter deals with some of the more visible of these clubs. By its nature, it is incomplete. We have probably missed some very good ones. If we missed yours, please forgive us.

LOCATIONS, CLUBHOUSES, HISTORIES AND OTHER INTERESTING INFO



An obscure view of the Little Venice Y.C. headquarters.

Andreas Cove Yacht Club has been gracing the Delta scene for about eight years. Primarily a sailing club, it boasts over 100 members and has always been based out of Andreas Cove Marina where it has a modest downstairs headquarters. It is a PICYA member and was originally formed because "there was no other sailboat club in the Delta other than Stockton". It is dedicated to family sailing and is an inexpensive club to belong to. It has a very strong racing program throughout the year. Its summer Franks Tract Regatta is a two-day event that takes competitors for a long run across the Tract and around Mandeville Island. "Then, of course, there's our ignominious appearance in the Rio Vista Bass Derby parade," notes 1983 commodore Jack Heath. Truly, the club has the best kazoo band in the Delta, maybe even in the world.

Berkeley Water Ski Club began life around 1953 as the Richmond Water Ski Club and very quickly obtained its Delta site off Middle River. The club name was changed when the club was able to do competition skiing in Berkeley's Aquatic Park. The club is one of the largest and most competitive water ski clubs in the nation. It sponsors regional and national championships and each year stages its California International Cup competition with \$10,000 to \$15,000 in prizes.

The club has about 95 member-families and in the Delta maintains both a jump and a slalom course. Members come to the Delta more for fun than for serious skiing. Hanging around the jump in the summer can be a regular floor show.

Bridge Marina Yacht Club formed in 1953, mostly because of the persistence of Les Irish who just plain thought there ought to be a club in that amiable spot near the Antioch bridge. In the early days, members met in a drafty old shed, but when the city fathers condemned it in 1966, the members decided to build their own clubhouse. They took a year to fight their way through the bureaucratic bramble patch of obtaining permits.

And the members personally came up with the required \$100,000 without resorting to bank loans or mortgages. Then, through good leadership, and perhaps a bit of pennypinching, the club was able to pay off its indebtedness in 1976, some 7½ years ahead of schedule.

The club has a beautiful facility out over the water and its dining room will seat 200. The bar has a splendid view of the San Joaquin and the new bridge. "Sitting at the bar, our members practically built that bridge," quipped 1979 Commodore Don Bass. The club has an active social calendar, centered around



The island digs of Caliente Isle Y.C.

the clubhouse, plus an assortment of summer cruises. It has a decorated yacht parade in the spring. A number of members are involved in over-the-bottom racing. The club has 120 members and is a PICYA member.

Caliente Isle Yacht Club sits on a comfortable little island in Taylor Slough just off Bethel Island. And for years its members have commuted to their clubhouse and berths aboard the club's private ferry. But in more recent times, the club managed to build a footbridge to the island, which may not be as glamorous as the ferry, but sure is more convenient. The late Doc Lawson was the club's first Commodore back in 1967. It has thrived ever since.

The club is a strong cruising club and fields some championship over-the-bottom racers. It also sponsors races. There is always plenty of social activity at the beautiful clubhouse. Its annual luau is the big event of the year. The club is a PICYA member and an asset to the Delta's strongest boating area.

Cruiser Haven Yacht Club was incorporated in 1959. The club began at Cruiser Haven Marina and in earlier times only those with boats berthed at the marina were accepted as members. But these days, the member boats are scattered. Membership is limited to 45 members. The club maintains a jewel of an island at the juncture of Honker Cut and Disappointment Slough. It has docks, rocked water edges and picnic areas. It is kept beautifully landscaped. I asked club secretary William Laine how this was accomplished.

"We have a professional landscaper who comes out by boat to do it," he replied. And I had always thought the members did it. The club has no clubhouse and does not extend reciprocal privileges, although members may bring guests or guest boats. The club owns its island, called Carousel Island, and a portion of the island facing it. Activities consist of monthly



An entrant in Bridge Marina Y.C.'s Opening Day parade cruises by the clubhouse.

cruises to the island for feeds and parties and sometimes costume parties. They have a gala Opening Day crab feed every year in late April. Most every time I pass Carousel Island, I see some sort of activity there.

Delta Marina Yacht Club, which makes its home in the Rio Vista marina of the same name, was formed in about 1963. And its present 58 members are scattered all over the Delta. It considers itself a social club, with no clubhouse or other complications. "You could maybe call us a bit chauvinistic, too," said 1979 Commodore, Joe Douma. "All our club members are male."

The club has seven cruises per year, including one to the Bay in October. Others take them to Solano, Stockton and other Delta ports. Also included are four land outings. The club is a PICYA member and limits general meetings to four per year, plus quarterly board meetings. Members "enjoy cruising and each other's company".

Delta Yacht Club was formed about 1941 and later was able to acquire land on Tule Island, part of which was formed from spoils from dredging for the Stockton Deepwater Channel. The facilities sort of evolved over the years. A lagoon was dug in the back portion of the island with docking and slips for more boats. The tall poplar trees that are almost a club landmark were planted some 30 years ago. The club is limited to 60 members and there is always a waiting list.

Members have mostly large power cruisers berthed at Willow Berm, Stephens Anchorage and Ox Bow. There are four "rather elaborate" parties at the club each year. Cruises have sort of petered out in recent years and members are content to limit cruises to in and out of their amiable facility. "It's like a small city," said 1979 Vice Commodore William Trudeau. "We're living by ourselves out there on that island and we have to keep everything working—lights, water

and sewage."

The club is a PICYA member and has fulltime caretakers. Members use the facility year-round and it is in an area of excellent fishing.

Devil's Isle consists of a group of yachtsmen, each of whom is a member of the Diablo Power Squadron. They have a fine facility on an island on White Slough near Little Potato. Each member owns a share of the island, and if they leave the Power Squadron, they must sell the share back to the club.

It provides a nice hideout for members and numerous Power Squadron training activities are also held at the island. The idea for this island came from Ted Clark back in the early sixties when he was searching for an island where he and his family could spend time with their boat. He found others in his Power Squadron interested in the same thing. And Devil's Isle was the result. Although all members are Power Squadron members, U.S.P.S. itself has no official interest in the island.

Diablo Yacht Club calls Bethel Island its home, although it is primarily a cruising club and not desirous of a clubhouse or other facilities. The club has traveled a lot of Delta water since it was formed in 1961. The club has a 45-member-boat limit and is full at the present time. Turnouts for its cruises are excellent. Thirty-one boats attended a recent cruise to Delta Marina. Over the years, members' boats have kept getting larger and finding a marina that can accommodate the big club turnouts is not easy.

Several of the club's more popular cruises are to the Stockton Y.C., Delta Marina, Islands Marina and to Village West Marina. Members like each other and they like cruising together.

Discovery Bay Yacht Club was formed in 1975 primarily to bring together boating enthusiasts who live in the Discovery Bay waterside residential development near Byron. It quickly grew to 77 family memberships and boasts such members as Fred Leichtfus who sailed his Cal 40 in the 1979 Trans Pac and then back again to his dock at Discovery Bay. Former PICYA Commodore T. Grant Maple is also a member.

The club has an active events calendar that includes poker runs and cruises around the Delta and to the Bay. It has a summer program of local racing. Its annual lighted Christmas boat parade is stunning. The club now has a clubhouse in the new Discovery Bay Yacht Harbor, and regular social activities are held there. The club hosts many visiting yacht clubs. It is a PICYA member.

El Camino Boat Club's beginnings date back to over 20 years ago in San Mateo when it was primarily a water skiing group. The group wanted to save Seal Slough, which flows into Redwood City, for water skiers and formed a club to promote this. With the city's blessings, they had a patrol boat that cruised the slough emphasizing safe boating.

The club then began searching for a base in the Delta. They found it in the form of a tiny island on Little Potato Slough next to Grindstone Joe's. An old river rat named Sam raised a herd of about 15 goats on the island, which, in the way things on the Delta are named, was called Goat Island. Sam was a caretaker for Grindstone's and he had squatter's rights to Goat Island. The club negotiated an \$800 purchase of the island in 1959 and has been improving it ever since. It has electricity, a septic tank system and hot and cold running water. It has an inner harbor protected by tall stands of poplar trees.

Club membership is limited to 20, with each member owning a part of the island, with buy-back provisions. It is primarily a small-boat club, but the boats are getting bigger. Many feeds and social events are held at the island. The club also has summer raft-ups on White Slough they call "Gorgies". Needless to say, they involve plenty of food. The club is family-oriented. There are still charter members such as Don Welton, who participated in the club's original quest for a Delta base. Sam and his goats would no doubt approve of what the group has done to his old island.

Fort Sutter Yacht Club came into being in 1952 as a spinoff from the Sacramento Yacht Club. The new club wanted to focus on cruising with no clubhouse or other property or activities to muddy up the waters and consume time. "We're just one big happy family," said 1979 Commodore Dick Lee. It is a low-profile club and calls Willow Berm Boat Harbor on the Mokelumne its home. Membership is limited to 28 members, who must have a boat of "suitable" size. Primarily a cruising group, the club has nine cruises annually. Big event of the year is the club's annual 5-day Bay Cruise. Members hail from as far away as Fresno and Reno. There are some good-sized boats in this club, averaging perhaps 35 to 40 feet.

Golden Gate Water Ski Club, formed in 1946, is the oldest water ski club on the West Coast. In its formative years, members voted they would prefer to ski in Delta waters rather than in the Oakland estuary. The club acquired a six-acre Delta isle off Old River it calls Golden Isle. On the island, it leases out 22 plots to members, most of whom keep trailers or summer cabins on them. A portion of the island is kept in lawns with picnic areas and other facilities for the

general membership.

Over the years the club has bred champion skiers such as Chris and Bobby La Point who were national jump and slalom champs and went abroad to compete in world competitions. The 100-member club sets up practice slalom courses on the Delta. It has traditionally held its meetings at Lake Merritt where it also puts on a 4th of July water ski show. Annual events include a canoe trip and an overnight boat run to Colusa.

Grindstone Joe's Association is an unusual sort of yachting organization that is perhaps more steeped in Delta lore than most. It is now PICYA-affiliated and has a beautiful headquarters on Little Potato Slough. In the lean years of the '30s, it seems a grizzled old Chile-born fisherman named Joe Attello rowed his fishing boat from Vallejo to the Delta and staked out a spot on this island. With his partner, he built a cabin and began clearing the land. He was typical of many river rats who somehow managed to eke a living out of the Delta.

However, Joe was more industrious than most and his projects were many. His prized possession was his grindstone, for there were so many of his tools that needed constant sharpening. Joe one day went off for supplies and when he returned, he found his partner had broken his grindstone. End of partnership. Joe was so incensed over the incident that he raised the broken grindstone to the roof of his cabin for all to see.

There were not so many boats in the Delta in those days, and Joe was known to most yachtsmen who cruised his territory. His nickname evolved naturally. And slowly a group of avid yachtsmen began to stop off to see Joe and a sort of informal association began. When Joe died, the association lived on in his memory. The island facility is marked by tall stands of poplars and it is a credit to Joe's memory.

And when the barbecues are sizzling and the stars are flickering in the summer sky, the story of Grindstone Joe is many times retold on the island.

Little Venice Yacht Club was established in 1972 and is considered by its members to be "a little piece of paradise". Situated on Little Venice Island at the juncture of Little Connection Slough and the Stockton Deepwater Channel, the club has 10 acres, "including the water". It has a 25-member limit and is one of the smallest of the PICYA member clubs. John A. Williamson has been the club's Commodore since its beginnings. Its purpose is to enjoy tranquility on the Delta—no television or dogs allowed.

The clubhouse is a fine old two-story structure that was a Stockton doctor's home and was built in 1904. It was barged to its present location by Dan Nomellini.

It has overnight rooms for 12 members or guests. The club also maintains a small dock across Connection on Empire Tract where members and guests may be picked up. They are restoring a launch for this pickup and delivery service. There are barbecue facilities for 150 persons. The club has four major events per year, plus its stag cruise. There is a fulltime caretaker on the premises.

The Little Venice Y.C. facility is one that blends beautifully into the Delta.

Livermore Yacht Club was formed in 1939 by Al Bohne and the club arranged a 99-year lease on land along the cut that flows into Del's Boat Harbor. On the sites members constructed cabins. Membership transfers with the cabins and each member also pays annual dues for general maintenance. "It started out



Lined up at the Delta Y.C.'s commodious docks.

as a card-playing, booze-drinking bunch of guys on the river," says member Bill Grose. A few of the cabins are full-year residences, but most serve as weekend and vacation abodes. Most all members have one or more boats and keep them in the water. The club has a 4th of July and a Halloween party. And at one time it had its own decorated boat parade. Original club dues were \$10 per year but now are \$300. Members have a good time and there is plenty of family activity. Some tidy profits are realized when memberships are sold.

Marina West Yacht Club is headquartered at Village West Marina on Fourteenmile Slough in north Stockton. It now leases clubhouse facilities at the marina's tennis club, but there are plans to build a clubhouse.

The club has grown in recent years under able leadership and it has a strong cruising and social calendar. It cruises near and far in the Delta and also has an annual cruise to the Bay. And when it cruises, it cruises in style. In a recent Delta raftup, the club rented a pair of Camp-A-Floats and put them in tandem for a dance floor. Many of the members keep their boats at Village West Marina, and on the weekends there is an air of festivity around the berths. The club is an active PICYA member.

Its "Delta Reflections" lighted Christmas boat parade is a stunning event that attracts many hundreds of spectators and wins the appreciation of the community. It is a thing of beauty. Clearly, Marina West Y.C. is a club that has arrived.

Mokelumne Yacht Club was formed in 1962 by a group out of Bridge Marina, spearheaded by Claude Christie. It blossomed from an informal group that called itself the "No No Club" (no dues, no rules, no nothing) that did a lot of cruising on the Mokelumne and tired of the long run back to the marina each weekend. So they picked up anchors and moved to B & W Resort Marina, with 31 charter members including wives. The club now has 112 boat-members with a total membership of perhaps 225.

Its big event is its decorated Opening Day Parade the third Sunday in May each year. Members only in the parade, it runs from B & W past Moore's Riverboat, to Spindrift and back if the wind isn't blowing too hard. They have summer cruises once per month or more often, June through September. The big cruise is to Stockton Yacht Club where Bill Scott has for years done the chicken barbecue. He has a great number of chicken awards such as a rubber chicken, chicken ashtrays, chicken appliance covers, et cetera. Winters, the club has monthly theme parties at the Veterans Hall in Rio Vista. Mokelumne is the first Delta yacht club to have a lady Commodore, Mary Musgrave in 1979. Mary also went through the chairs to this exalted post. Also in 1979, the club arranged for reciprocal facilities use privileges with other clubs by picking up the tab for any visiting PICYA club member overnighing at B & W.

Pittsburg Yacht Club began life in 1934 as the Pittsburg Hunting & Fishing Club. It became a yacht club around 1949 and over the years the emphasis has changed. At one time it had a very strong over-the-bottom racing contingent. But now members are content to have social activities at the clubhouse along with about eight club cruises each year. Membership has grown to over 100 since the new marina was opened. In this club, women are voting members.

"After all, they do a lot of the work." says 1979 Commodore Joe Landry.

The clubhouse was moved here years ago from the foot of Black Diamond Street where it served some purpose by the net-drying racks of the commercial fishermen. The club is negotiating with the city for property on which to build a new clubhouse. One charter member remains in the club. Angelo Compozio, who was also once its Commodore. There is an air of excitement around the Pittsburg waterfront these days. And the club is a part of it.

Port Stockton Boaters was formed in August of 1956 when Ed Laskey gathered a group of boating people at his old laundry. Ed and several of the others were racers who competed in the runs from Stockton to Redding and Colusa. They thought there was the need for a club for just the regular boat owner. Apparently, others felt the same, for quickly the club had over 150 members. Rules of the club say no one with a boat over 25 feet may join, although members who move up to bigger boats may stay.

For some time, the club maintained a picnic ground with barbecues and other facilities on Morrison Island, through a verbal agreement with owner Jim Stone. Then they leased land on Tule Island from the State Lands Commission and built their present very good facility. Membership these days is limited to 50 persons. The club has activities at Stockton's Rod and Gun Club. Its annual Bass Derby is a big event and they have poker runs, dances and other activities. Ed Laskey is the only charter member left in the club. And he still feels the club is a good idea.

River View Yacht Club was formed in 1955 taking over the incorporation papers of the Army-Navy club. For a number of years it made its comfortable quarters in the old sternwheeler *Cherokee*, a 179 footer built in 1911. But the old paddlewheeler was part of an involved purchase of the Shelter Cove Marina where it was berthed and the club sold their interest in it—at a tidy profit. The Broderick Fire Department later used it for a practice burn. For five years, the club was homeless, then bought the old Elkhorn ferry for \$3,200. Steel-hulled and 64 feet by 29 feet, it had plenty of possibilities.

Members went to work on it with gusto, transforming it into a beautiful clubhouse. For awhile it was parked near a member's waterside place near Sacramento. Then it was moved to Islands Marina for a couple of years. Now it is just up river from Freeport Marina on shoreside property owned by Dock Holiday. Members find it convenient here. And the club has stayed put for over three years. Most members are from the Sacramento area and the club has a good

program of social activities at the clubhouse. The club has 44 members with a 50 member limit. The treasury is in good shape and everything is paid for. Who could ask for anything more?



Opening Day at San Joaquin Y.C. clubhouse.

Sacramento Yacht Club is proud of being the oldest yacht club in the Delta. Formed in 1929 as the Capital City Boat Club, it was changed to the present name the following year. Yet the club likes to feel it has ties to the first boat club in the Sacramento area, the Undine Boat Club organized April 19, 1870. It started (Undine) with fifteen members, two four-oared boats, a six-oared barge, a racing shell and a boat house. Just after WWII, the club acquired a surplus barge and on it built a clubhouse. Home was at the city's Miller Park. But eventually members thought they would be comfortable owning their own land.

So the barge was floated over to a new site in Yolo County, where it became a familiar sight over the years. The club was lucky enough to have three architects among its members. A building trust fund was set up, and plans were drawn. Many struggles later, the splendid new clubhouse graced the riverbank. The old clubhouse was sold, then sank, then was resold (for \$1), then refloated and hauled off to become the Virgin Sturgeon. It burned, and that was the end.

The club now has 200 members and floats perhaps 40 good-sized boats to its outings. Each year it sponsors the State Fair over-the-bottom race which is well attended. The club's most popular cruise is the 4-S Cruise in conjunction with San Joaquin, Stockton and Sportsmen, Inc. Yacht Clubs. Each year the clubs alternate the cruise site, with the fourth club taking its turn hosting the other three.

The club is now applying for permits to build more guest docking, so that it may better live up to its motto—Your Up-River Host.

St. Francis Yacht Club is a grand San Francisco club with a magnificent Delta hideaway. Its facilities are on Tinsley Island with an inner lagoon and nearly hidden from view. However, when the fleet is in you can see a forest of masts protruding up through the greenery. The clubhouse is a splendid old Bay lighthouse, barged in, and its light tower is still intact. There are numerous floating homes on the back portion of the lagoon and the club plans to install more of these.

The island geography was altered considerably when the Stockton Deepwater Channel was dug. And there are two accesses to the lagoon off the quiet waters of the old course of the San Joaquin. A string of mooring buoys are placed outside the lagoon and you see some grand yachts anchored there. The island was purchased by the club in 1959. Probably the most noted affair at Tinsley is the fall Stag Cruise which has the harbor spilling over with boats. One year, a fleet of rental houseboats was hauled in to complement the quarters.

St. Francis Y.C. does things in style and is a welcome addition to the Delta scene.

San Joaquin Yacht Club got its start about 1946 when a few boatmen of mutual interest decided to form a club in the Antioch area. By 1948 the club was going strong and was a PICYA member. Meetings were held at the San Joaquin Yacht Harbor. By 1949 members decided to move the club to Bethel Island, land on Taylor Road was purchased and plans were made to build a clubhouse there. But many members wanted to be closer to "town" and the present site at Farrar Park was purchased.

In 1954 the club purchased its barge and had it towed over from Vallejo. It was in rough shape and required plenty of work, but the members eventually transformed it into a beautiful facility. In 1962, thanks to the help of the able people at Lauritzen's the barge was placed high and dry on pilings, where it rests quite comfortably to this day. Membership in the club numbers around 200 and it is one of the most active cruising clubs in the Delta. I continue to see small groups from this club everywhere.

The club sponsors an over-the-bottom race. Its big public event is the Opening Day of Yachting Season parade at Bethel Island, which is a gala affair pictured elsewhere in this book. Cruises are many as are the social events. The women of the club have their own organization called The Joaquinettes, and they do their share to help keep the club functioning smoothly.

The club's location near the Bethel Island bridge is ideal and it has plenty of docking space for visiting

club members. An amiable setting for an amiable group.

Solano Yacht Club (nee Solano Boat Club) was formed in August of 1954 when 25 boating enthusiasts met at Paul's Boat Harbor in Suisun City. In 1959 it arranged a land lease near the end of Suisun Slough and paid \$414 for a surplus building from Camp Stoneman. But it was nearly a year before the building was barged in in two sections. Its early name was changed to the present name in 1962 and in 1964 the club became a PICYA member. The mortgage was retired in 1967.

Solano is an active club with 190 members and is involved in both racing and cruising. Many visiting yacht clubs use its comfortable facilities, which boast a number of covered berths. The club bar is a busy one and breakfasts are served on Sunday mornings. This is a friendly group.

Spindrift Yacht Club was founded in 1965 and calls Spindrift Marina on the San Joaquin its home. It has the dubious distinction of having its clubhouse, which was formerly beneath the marina restaurant, washed away by the flood of 1972. Likewise, some 15 member boats were damaged, wrecked or lost due to the flood. Thereafter, the club was known as the "Over-the-Levee Gang". A double mobilhome down in the Spindrift park now serves as club headquarters. The club is primarily a cruising club with boats averaging perhaps 35 to 38 feet. Membership is limited to 50 members and at this writing, the roster numbers 42 members. Club member Al Larson was the 1979 PICYA president. The flood spread the membership, literally and figuratively, to various marinas around the Delta. The club has an annual nautical flea market. I remember Spindrift Yacht Club perhaps best for the time I got it and the Spinnaker Yacht Club mixed in my column. I heard about it—quickly!

Sportsmen, Inc. Yacht Club got its humble beginnings on a sultry September evening in 1930 when a group of sportsmen gathered in a basement of an Oakland sporting goods store. In 1932 the club leased a plot of ground on the San Joaquin in Antioch and by 1934 found itself purchasing the retired 256-foot ferry boat *Sausalito*. The stout old vessel had been built in 1884 by Fulton Iron Works in San Francisco and had faithfully done Bay duty until 1931. It could handle 1,500 passengers. In 1901 the old girl had collided on the fog-shrouded Bay with the smaller *San Rafael* and sent her to the bottom. Jack London picked up this tale, altered it a bit, and used it in *The Sea Wolf*.

Some dredging was done, and *Sausalito* was towed to the Antioch site. During the night it got loose and

nearly drifted to the Antioch bridge. Later members chopped holes in the hull to stabilize it. When they bought land at a new Antioch site, they moved the ferry boat, holes and all.

Actually, it is a marvelous clubhouse. It has 60 inside cabins for members, a dance floor and a wet bar that was used in the "Ladies' Lounge" at the Treasure Island World's Fair in 1939. The club also has 50 covered berths. Membership is at its charter limit of 150. It has an auxiliary called Lady Sailors for the wives. The club has an annual decorated yacht parade and other activities. It is a PICYA member.

No argument at all—it has the most interesting clubhouse on the Delta.

Ox Bow Yacht Club is headquartered at Ox Bow Marina, one of the finest new marinas on the Delta. The club developed sort of naturally because of friendships formed at the marina. It is a strong cruising club in and around the Delta. A high point of its cruise calendar is an annual cruise to the Bay.

The club has numerous raftups during the summer months and plenty of social activities both at the marina facilities and away. You might say the club has developed the potluck feed into a fine art. Many other clubs visit Ox Bow Marina and the club is always happy to greet them. It is a PICYA member club.

Ox Bow Yacht Club feels it is situated in a ideal location for getting around the Delta waterways. Friendly people, cruising friendly waters.

Walnut Grove Yacht Club is a comfortable little club based out of Walnut Grove Marina, where most member boats are berthed. A mobile home there serves as clubhouse. This congenial group has a very active calendar that includes Bay cruises as well as cruises to Vallejo and other Delta spots. The club has an event at least every month of the year. In 1984 they will have an entry in the Krazy River Raft Race. Then there's a barbecue in The Meadows and a "land cruise" to Pollardville in Stockton.

The club was formed in 1979, mostly as an alternative to hanging around the marina. Most member boats are in the cruiser class and for many this is their first larger boat. Membership is open and dues and initiation fees are modest. Its just an example of good boating people getting together for the benefit of all.

Stockton Sailing Club, 300-family-memberships strong, got its humble beginnings back about 1934 when a few lads from the Stockton High School formed a club called the Ionic Sailing Club and moored their boats around the old Stephens Boat Works. Later



A young lad studies the boats at Stockton Water Ski Club's island retreat.

they moored their boats at Dad's Point, and bought an ark in Whiskey Slough and towed it over for a clubhouse. Then they all went off to war, and when they returned, the ark was gone.

They bought a Navy Fire Barge in San Francisco, and made a nice clubhouse of it, keeping it at the fledgling Ladd's Marina. They eventually arranged for space in South Buckley Cove. And the barge served them well till they built their new clubhouse about 1968. Then it was sold to Oyster Point Y.C.

In the beginning, the lads wanted a club name of Greek origin and Ionic was supposed to refer to seamen who sailed the Ionic Sea — so they thought. Years later they looked it up in a fancy dictionary and learned the Ionic people were farmers! Anyway, the name had little identity when they were off racing, and in about 1948 the new name was adopted.

The club, sitting on the Stockton Channel at South Buckley Cove, is a model facility and will soon grow to 325 slips with an investment of nearly \$1 million. This is both a social and a busy racing club with 9 regular races on the calendar and four long distance races, including the South Tower race. They have a co-ed cruise to Tinsley Island and the annual Grindstone Joe's stag. There is a strong ladies racing program with big fields of participants. There is also a strong Juniors program to perpetuate an interest in sailing.

Over the years, the club has had members who are top racers. Member Paul Yost was the National Junior Single-Handed champ in 1978. Member Bill Chapman sailed in the 1979 Transpac.

Mostly though, the club is thought of as a valuable asset to the Delta, where not so many boats under sail are seen. It is a PICYA member and its facilities have grown in recent years. Visitors are always welcome. The Stockton Sailing Club is clearly here to stay.

Stockton Water Ski Club in its infancy was little more than a group of water-ski aficionados who used to gather on what they called "the ski beach" around the corner from Delta Yacht Club. The club was officially formed in 1949, and in 1960 it leased a beach area on Ward Island from an old river rat by the name of Pack Frazier. Pack was the true river rat—dirty, he lied a lot and he detested honest labor. He had lived on the island for years in the remains of an old boat. A friendly lawyer named Gilbert Jones came along and discovered the island didn't exist as far as any records were concerned. He filed in Pack's behalf and Pack became an island owner. But that also put the island on the tax rolls and old Pack had no money to pay taxes. So Gilbert and a farmer named Frank Marquetti entered into a deal with him. They would pay the taxes and Pack could live on and own the island for the rest of his life. When he died, the island became theirs.

For 12 years the club paid rent to Pack. After he died, they bought a portion of the island, built docks, a clubhouse, barbecues and other facilities. The club has 50 proprietary members, each of whom owns one-fiftieth of the spread. Recreational members number about 35 and pay regular dues but own no part of the property. The club has outstanding fizz parties, poker runs, slalom races, boat crosses and other activities. It is family-oriented and some very good times are had there. I can attest to the quality of their fizzes, which I found habit-forming.

Stockton Yacht Club was formed in 1930 to promote yachting, boating, fishing and marine recreation. Its clubhouse is in a country-club setting on the Calaveras River a short distance off the San Joaquin and it includes 55 covered berths, a commodious clubhouse and living quarters for its harbormaster. It boasts 157 members at this writing and has a strong yearly event and cruise calendar. Its big cruise each year is the October one-week Bay Cruise and the cruise included 57 boats in 1979.

Many of the club's members are also Power Squadron members. The club annually sponsors the Miss San Joaquin Regatta with a good parade and plenty of attendant publicity. The club's Fishing Cruise ends at Moore's Riverboat where fisherman then receive prizes for what they caught and sometimes for what they did not catch. There are many club feeds (most often cooked by members) and dances. The club is a PICYA member and hosts many other clubs at its fine facility. Stockton calls itself The Delta City, and this active club fits right into that theme.

Super Secret Ship Club was formed in the summer of 1973 by an avid bunch of boatmen at Lost Isle. Members do not need to own a ship, but they must desire to possess one. The club has no dues or meetings, and the identity of its Commodore and other officers (if any) is secret. Each member has a silly, sometimes risqué nickname embroidered on his purple jacket.

This is a strong cruising group with over 100 members. Each summer, it has a well-attended Meadows raftup over nine days in July. Its February S.O.S. Feed at Grogan's Isle is attended by close to 100 and finances the club's irregular newsletter. It annually has two well-attended poker runs. The SSSC is probably the least-kept secret on the Delta. These days, the club hangs its (purple) burgee at Windmill Cove.

Tower Park Yacht Club is an example of people who like each other and like to do the same things, getting together to form a club. The club was formed in 1974 by Ed Peck and soon applied for PICYA membership. Initially, members had to be berthed at Tower Park Marina, but that is no longer a requirement, although most members call Tower Park home. Clubhouse facilities are leased from the marina.

The club has potlucks and parties at its recently enlarged clubhouse and it hosts guests there. It has a comfortable cruise calendar. Recently the club rented a Camp-A-Float sans RV but with a portable toilet aboard, and toured the local waterside bistros. The club usually takes part in the annual Tower Park Deltafest in May. A few of the club members are liveaboards at the marina, helping establish a spirit of camaraderie. It is a PICYA member.

Weber Point Yacht Club was formed about 1963 and has a comfortable facility on the back side of North Spud Island, one of those islands sliced in two when dredges dug the Stockton Deepwater Channel. The club has a limit of 35 members and is in the enviable position of always having a waiting list.

The club was originally formed by a Fresno group spearheaded by Jack Morgan, but now members are from scattered areas. It was formerly based on an island off King Island in Disappointment Slough, but was able to purchase its present facility a few years ago from Stockton's Gus Marengo who used it as sort of a weekend place out on the Delta. They altered it to suit their own needs, installed a sewage system acceptable to the county. The place is comfortable, yet not ostentatious. It has 100 feet of dock and up to 40 boats have been accommodated there. The club has a number of parties each year and an occasional cruise. It is a PICYA member.

RESORTS AND BOAT HARBORS	MAP LOCATION	TELEPHONE NUMBERS	RENTALS		SERVICES			CAMPING			GUEST DOCKS		FUEL	SUPPLIES			FOOD																					
			SKI-BOATS	HOUSEBOATS	FISHING BOATS	BOAT LAUNCHING	BOAT & MOTOR REPAIR	DRY DOCK	PUMP-OUT STATION	CAMP & RV SITES, #	SITES W/ELECT., #	SITES W/WATER, #	SITES W/SEWER, #	SHOWERS	RESTROOMS	LARGE CRAFT	SMALL CRAFT	ELECTRICITY	OVERNIGHT	RESTROOMS	SHOWERS	GAS & OIL	DIESEL	LAUNDROMAT	ICE	PROPANE	BAIT & TACKLE	MARINE SUPPLIES	GROCERIES	SNACK BAR	RESTAURANT	TAKE-OUT LIQUOR	COCKTAIL LOUNGE	BEER BAR	DAY CLOSED			
MOSSDALE MARINA	I-9	(209) 982-0512						14																														
MOSSDALE TRAILER PARK	I-9	(209) 982-0358						11	6	11																												
MOZZETTI MARINE	I-2	(415) 684-3216																																				
NEW BRIDGE MARINA	E-2	(415) 757-1500																																				
NEW HOPE LANDING	B-6	(209) 794-2627																																				
ORWOOD RESORT	G-4	(415) 634-2550																																				
OUTRIGGER MARINA	D-3	(916) 777-6480																																				
OX BOW MARINA	C-5	(916) 777-6060																																				
PARADISE POINT MARINA	E-7	(209) 952-1000																																				
PERRY'S BOAT HARBOR	D-5	(916) 777-6461																																				
PILOT HOUSE BOAT HARBOR	B-2																																					
POINT RESTAURANT	C-3	(707) 374-5400																																			M	
RALEY'S LANDING	A-2	(916) 371-7700																																				
RANCHO MARINA	D-5	(916) 777-6135						50	50	50	25																										M	
RICHARD'S YACHT SALES	J-2	(415) 684-0150																																			M	
RIVER GALLEY	A-2	(916) 372-0300																																				
RIVERSIDE INN & MARINA	C-5	(916) 777-6796																																				
RIVERVIEW LODGE	E-2	(415) 757-2272																																				
RIVER VIEW MARINA	A-2	(916) 925-4100																																				
RIVER VIEW RESORT	I-3	(415) 684-2395						2	2	2	2																											
RODGERS POINT MARINA	E-2	(415) 757-0270																																			M	
RUSSO'S MARINA	I-2	(415) 684-2024						20	12	12																											M	
RYDE HOTEL	B-5	(916) 776-1318																																				
S & H BOAT YARD	E-3	(415) 757-3621																																				
SACRAMENTO BOAT HARBOR	B-2	(916) 449-5712																																				
SAM'S HARBOR	J-2	(415) 684-2115						6																														
SAN JOAQUIN YACHT HARBOR	E-2	(415) 757-9883																																				
SHERWOOD HARBOR	B-2	(916) 371-3471						50																														
SID'S HOLIDAY HARBOR	C-4	(916) 777-6351																																			M	
SNUG HARBOR	C-4	(916) 775-1455						65	5	5																												
SPINDRIFT MARINA	D-4	(916) 777-6041																																				
SPOT, THE	D-3	(916) 777-6602						18	10	10	10																											
STEAMBOAT LANDING	A-5	(916) 775-1121																																				
STEPHENS ANCHORAGE	F-8	(209) 951-4144																																				
SUGAR BARGE MARINA	I-2	(415) 684-3652						15	5																													
SYCAMORE PARK (Under Construction)	D-5																																					
TIKI LAGUN RESORT	F-6	(209) 941-8975						60	14	14																												
TOLLIVER'S MOORING	J-2	(415) 684-2950																																				
TOWER PARK MARINA	D-6	(209) 369-1041						25	15	15	15																											
TRACY OASIS MARINA	H-6	(209) 835-3182						35																														
TUNNEL TRAILER PARK	B-5	(916) 776-1859						15	15	15	15																											
TURNER CUT RESORT	F-6	(209) 946-9409						30	10	30	10																											
TURTLE BEACH RESORT (PRIVATE)	I-9	(209) 239-2034																																				
UNCLE BOBBIE'S	E-7	(209) 477-4145																																				
UNION POINT RESORT	G-6	(209) 948-4294																																				
VIEIRA'S RESORT	C-4	(916) 777-6661						65	47	47	24																											
VIEW POINT MARINA	A-2	(916) 372-3720																																				
VIKING HARBOR	J-1	(415) 684-2020																																				
VILLAGE MARINA	A-2	(916) 922-7548																																				
VILLAGE WEST MARINA	F-8	(209) 951-1551																																				
WALNUT GROVE MARINA	B-6	(916) 776-1181																																				
WALNUT GROVE MERCH. DOCK	B-6	NO PHONE																																				
WATERFRONT YACHT HARBOR	F-9	(209) 943-1848																																				
WHISKEY SLOUGH HARBOR	G-7	(209) 464-3931						30	3	10																												
WILLOW BERM BOAT HARBOR	D-5	(916) 777-6313																																				
WIMPY'S MARINA	B-6	(209) 794-2544																																				
WINDMILL COVE	F-7	(209) 948-6995						40	6																													
PITTSBURG-SUISUN AREA MARINAS																																						
HARRIS YACHT HARBOR		(415) 687-8400																																				
MCAVOY YACHT HARBOR		(415) 458-2568																																				
PAUL'S BOAT HARBOR		(707) 427-2248																																				
PIERCE HARBOR		(707) 745-3222																																			M	
PITTSBURG MARINA		(415) 439-4958																																				
THE SCHOONER		(707) 425-5775																																				
WHISPERING BAY MARINA		(707) 427-1300																																				

Retrospection & Acknowledgements

Where does one begin this task of writing the end? Although a solitary person may sit at the typewriter and squeeze from it the contents of a book, the real meat of things comes from a thousand sources. First off, there are the readers to thank—those who have suffered through my “Dawdling on the Delta” columns over the years.

There are publishers to thank, for if a writer does not see his stuff in print, it is difficult to go on. The publishers of the now-defunct *Family Houseboating Magazine* gave me an early platform for “Dawdling”. *Bay & Delta Yachtsman* picked me up after that and it was the beginning of a long, friendly relationship that has lived through to the present. *SEA Magazine* has given me the opportunity to break out of the regional confines and they have always displayed my work well. Although I have written for many dozens of national publications, it is these three publications that I think of with much warmth.

Lou Sparrenburger, the River Route postman, taught me a lot about the Delta. He took me on many of his mail runs. He introduced me to people. He patiently answered my questions.

Bill Conner, who knows more about the river than many people believe—Bill let me share his island.

The skipper of the trawler *Sea Jay* patiently helped me shoot the book's cover. Bob Gromm and John Honneger shared their secrets of Bethel Island with me.

Old-timer Leo Fallman enlightened me considerably with tales of work on the early Delta farms. Chris Lauritzen III told me about his wonderful grandfather. Marvin Powell and Jim Frazier got me interested in the Stockton-to-Redding-and-Colusa races.

Delbert Hansen Jr. and his father took time to tell me about and show me their South Delta. Dan Nomellini was always helpful and introduced me to Barron Hilton.

Bob Johnson, a yachtsman who knows more about the Delta than anyone I know, took the time to struggle through much of my manuscript, helping me stave off disaster.

Then there was the printer, the gang at Vanguard Press in Stockton. Almost like family, they suffered through my daily visits. (Often there were more.) Together we worried and fretted and somehow got the job done.

Jody set type, but even more, corrected spelling and sometimes grammar. Cynthia performed feats of magic on my grubby output, making it legible to the inside people. Art had the worst job of all, stripping the work and making plates for the press. Mary labored long hours in the darkroom, making halftones of my photos. John ran the presses, keeping an eagle eye out for light copies. Jack made deliveries when things got tight. Mary Ellen gave the book the benefit of her art on the map drawing in front and the other drawing. There were others at the print shop. Thanks.

The decision to run four-color in part of the book was a momentous one, for the four-color transparencies are very expensive and difficult to justify in a regional book. Several publications that originally ran some of my color work on the Delta let me use their separations gratis or for nominal fees. To these I added many new photos, but their kind offers made it possible. They are:

Motorland Magazine, publication of the California Automobile Association. Special thanks to AAA's Al Davidson and Don Martin.

SEA Magazine, founded in 1908. Thanks to Elyse Mintey and Harry Monahan.

Aloft Magazine, the in-flight publication of National Airlines. Special thanks to Karl Wickstrom and Pat Pinkerton.

Lincoln Village Chronicle, publication of North Stockton's Lincoln Center. Special thanks to Frank Chandler.

Two photos used in this book were provided by Leonard Covello. Many photos from his extensive collection appear in the book he co-authored, *Stockton Memories*.

All your efforts were appreciated.



Commentary

This is the first up-dated reprinting of this book. And it is surprising the number of changes, large and small, that have occurred in the little more than two years since the initial printing.

Dear friends have died, resorts have folded, stunning new marinas have been built. Levees have broken, the pesky water hyacinth has visited. Yet the Delta perseveres. The hyacinth battle is being won. There's a workable plan for secure levees.

In truth, the Delta boating scene is better than ever. Resort facilities are more numerous and continually improving. For the gourmet, there's a greater choice of boat-in restaurants.

Of course, the other ingredients are still here. The quiet anchorages. The dazzling sunsets. The easy cruises down meandering rivers and sloughs. The tules . . . **Hal Schell.**

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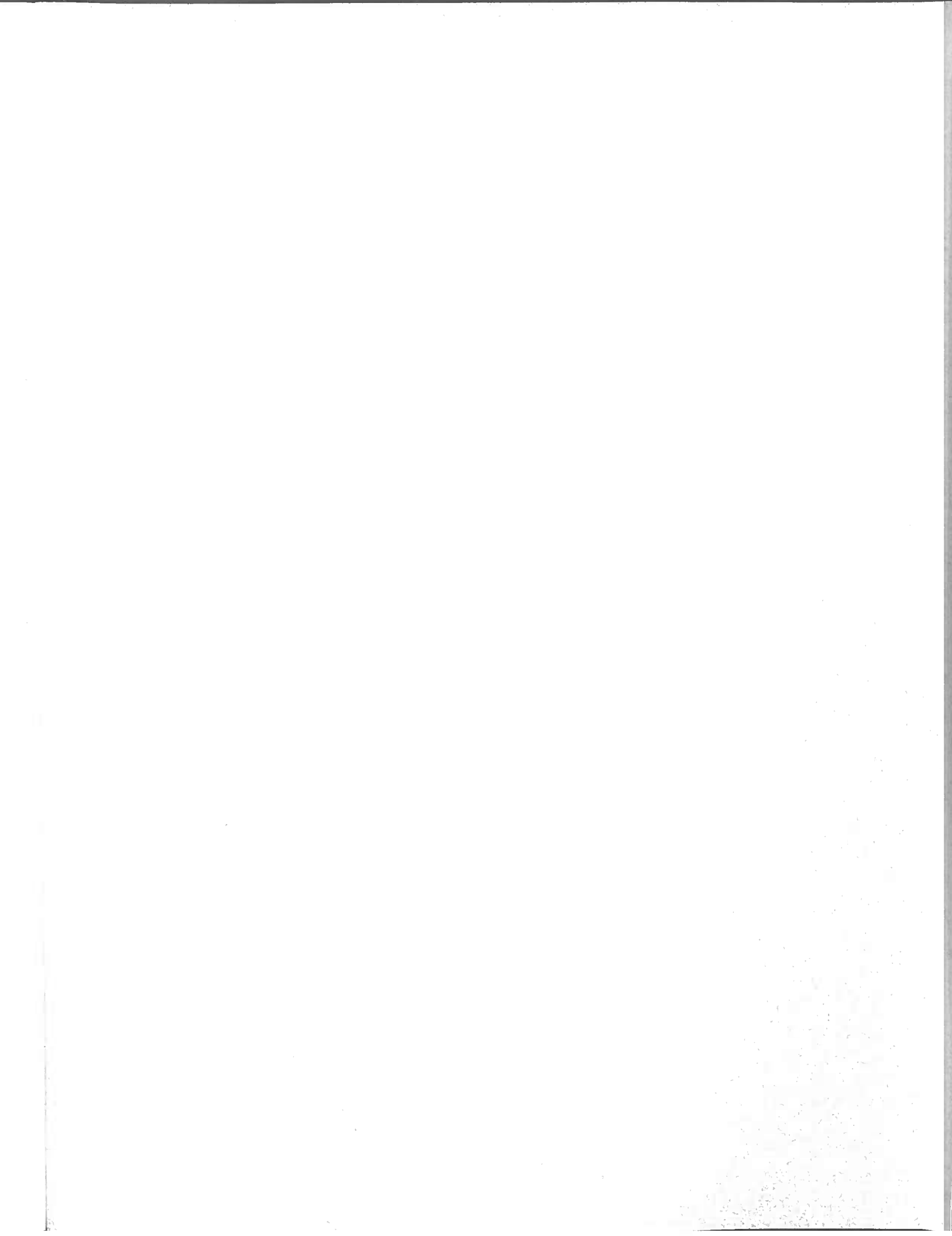
Cruising & Houseboating The Delta — This compact guide book, now in its 5th printing, packs an amazing amount of vital Delta information between its soft covers. It has cruise itineraries, anchorages, fishing information, boat handling and much more. Ideal for grizzled pro or beginning skippers. 5½ in. x 8½ in size, 132 pages, 122 b & w photos, updated. Price — \$4.95 plus 75 cents shipping (Calif. residents add 30 cents tax).

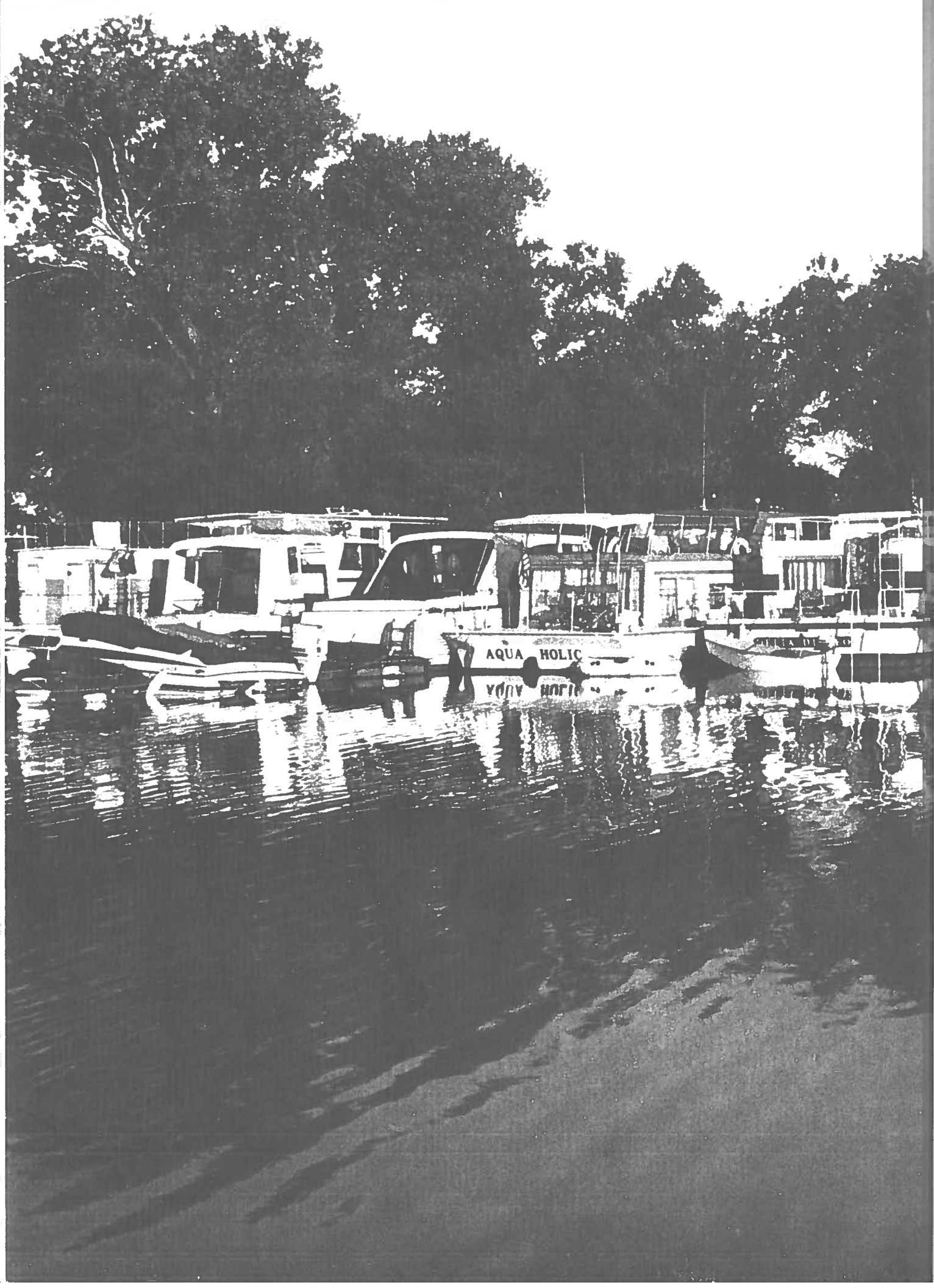
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Dawdling On The Delta — Additional copies of this book are available at \$24.95, plus \$1.50 UPS shipping (Calif. residents add \$1.50 tax).

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The Super Secret Ship



Hal Schell is a self-described river rat who has been prowling the Delta for the past decade or so. In that time he has written hundreds of illustrated articles and columns on the Delta, and he is now considered the area's most prolific writer-photographer.

His popular column, *Dawdling on the Delta*, appears monthly in *Bay & Delta Yachtsman Magazine* and he is a regular contributor to *SEA Magazine* and other national publications. He commonly appears on radio and television, espousing the attributes of his beloved 1,000-mile waterway.

Although for a time he was a Delta liveaboard, he now lives in Stockton only a few minutes from one of the two boats he keeps in the water. His work and play take him out on the water every week of the year. He has explored the four corners of the Delta and beyond. From Suisun City to Weatherbee Lake. From San Francisco to Colusa. Gunkholing and river-joint hopping are his favorite pastimes—not necessarily in that order.

Although Schell has a habit of playing reveille in the morning for fellow boatmen and can see the humor in most any experience, from going aground to running out of fuel, no one can ever say he doesn't take his Delta seriously.

"This is my kind of place," he says. "And I expect to spend the rest of my life dawdling here and writing about it."

Jacket Photos: front—Typical summer day at the Steamboat Slough drawbridge; **rear**—The Stockton Sailing Club rafted up at Five Fingers.



**Intimate Coverage of the Fabulous Delta,
from Suisun to Sacramento, from Pittsburg
to above Stockton—and Everything in between**

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- **BRIDGE CHARTS**
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