

# RANCHO BODEGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Memories of Bodega Bay

by *Glenice Carpenter - 2006*

Note: Our May event was very special when Glenice Carpenter and Harold Ames drew on memory to recall 'homeland security' during of WWII --which they experienced as children. As a coastal community, the area was a busy place then for the Army, Coast Guard, Red Cross, and civilians in service to defend this part of the coast. Glenice was kind enough commit her reflections to paper for this article.

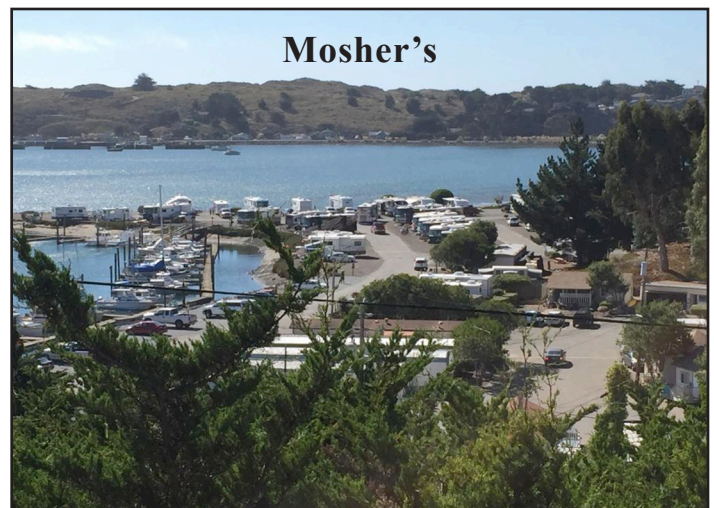
Bodega Bay was such a sleepy village up to 1939. The Bay Hotel and Bar that our parents Harold and Frieda operated was a center of social gatherings. The women would gather around the old oil stove in the lobby with their knitting etc, and the men would pull up chairs from the dining room and play pinochle. The dance hall just to the north would have dances and the patrons would walk down to the bar for refreshments. The "juke box" would be playing and dancing was allowed in the lobby. Ted and Pansy Ichtertz and their son, Clair, operated the Bay Store that was in the same building.

Tress and Ernie Aiken owned the store that is now called Candy and Kites. They had some groceries, but they also had an ice cream counter that sold milk shakes, sundaes and cones. She also had a remarkable cactus garden. Mack and Evelyn McAdams ran the gas station and sandwich shop, along with a beer bar and auto repair garage. Louie Asman had bought the Coast Camp (now The Tides). He started building cabins and built a wharf that was operated by A. Paladini Fish Co. He later would build a small restaurant called Dusty's.

Al and "Ma" Mosher owned what is now Porto Bodega. It was a family camp that had cabins, rowing skiffs, shovels, crab nets, etc. for rent by the day. At night there was a campfire for everyone to sit around. Ma Mosher had a menagerie of birds and animals, which included "Ba Ba" the sheep and "Jimmy" the pigeon. An aviary filled with lovebirds and a couple of dogs and cats. They also had a "mystery spot" built on the hill above the cabins under the large trees.

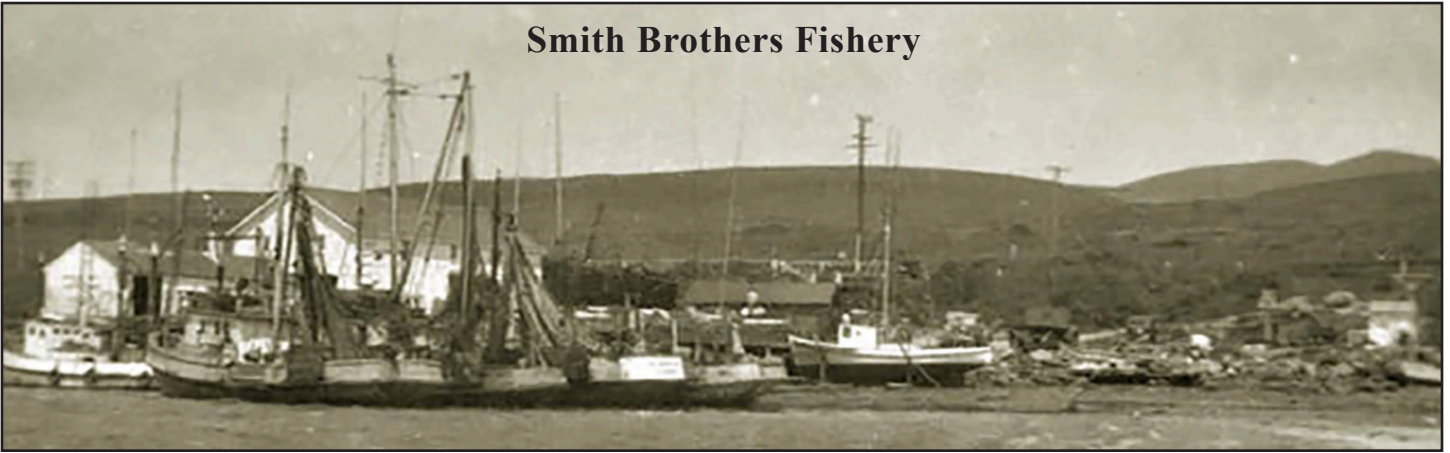
Rose and John Caniff owned Ro-Jo Cottages. The cabins look much the same as they kept the same style when they were remodeled. Rose was also a beautician. On the waterfront where the Wine Tasting Shop now is was an old building that was, yes, another bar, and a fish market owned by Hank and Isabel Ross along with their daughter Lila. Hank had a boat named "De Martinet". He caught fish, crab, etc. and cooked crab, sold fish cocktails from his establishment, but lived in the back rooms. What I remember about that place were the corrugated tin sheets of metal he had hanging from wires from the ceiling to catch the rainwater -- instead of fixing the roof.

Smith Bros. Dock, which is now the Yacht Club, was the first and oldest establishment probably in Bodega Bay. The Smith Family, who were Native American Miwok Indians are Bodega Bay's First Family. The Smith's Bill, Steve, Angelo, Eli, Eddie and Young Ernest, and girls, Rosalie, Margaret, and Eileen were the



## MEMORIES OF BODEGA BAY

### Smith Brothers Fishery



children of Stephen Smith (a direct relation of Captain Stephen Smith). Their mother Margaret, a Miwok, was a widow when I knew her and she took care of the whole Smith clan, always cooking and helping the boys. They had two large 50 foot drag boats built in 1919. The Smith Bros. I and II. Bill ran one boat, Young Ernest the other. Eddie ran a small salmon troller, the Three Sisters, and Eli was the bookkeeper. Fishing was a hard life with little income at that time.

Where the telephone office is now at the corner of Hwy #1 and was a butcher shop run by the Charoni's. In 1939 George and Helen Hellwig bought the Bay Store. Helen became Postmaster when they purchased the store. Mail would get mixed up with another Bay, so Helen had the Post office officially changed to Bodega Bay. They had one teacher, Helen Lonergan. There were eleven children when I started school in the one room school house. She taught all eight grades.

In 1939 the Department of Engineers started their project to dredge the Bay and build jetties at the entrance. Before that time, the Bay was very shallow and fishing boats could only enter the bay during high tide. The end of Campbell Cove, where the entrance met the ocean, fluctuated with the current and made the natural channel difficult to navigate.

Piombo Brothers Construction firm got the contract to build the jetties. Their first concern was finding the proper rock, hard enough to withstand the constant erosion from the ocean. They made several test areas before they found the rock they were looking for just east of Cheney Gulch. There was no road, so they just started to fill up the creek with rock and started the roadway. The road certainly changed how one got there. The only access we had was by rowboat, or a long walk. To stabilize the area where the jetty rock was to be put, a pile driving crew started about where the Coast Guard Station is now and drove pile in a semi-circle out into the ocean. Then the rock was placed over the piling. This built the North Jetty. A bridge was then put up to construct the South Jetty. Boats had only a limited time to enter and leave the harbor. When this project was finished the Dredge arrived to dredge the channel into the harbor. This construction became a boom to the residents.

Our hotel was filled with workers -- the men had to have bag lunches packed for lunch and of course they were there for breakfast and dinner also. It was a busy time. The enrollment at the school rose to more than 50 students. Miss Lonergan the teacher had an overflowing school. Two students to desk, and a picnic table in the front row.

On Sunday December 7, 1941 when the war broke out many changes came to Bodega Bay. It was only a short time before the Army was sent in and stationed in the old ranch house on Bodega Head. They built a dugout type watch center on the highest hill on the headland. The Army was also stationed at Dillon Beach.

The Army men came around the bay in a jeep at low tide to eat at our Hotel. We were put in blackout status -- all windows were to be covered with dark flannel curtains. No night driving unless absolutely necessary and then with only special black-out lights. An airplane lookout was placed where the old firehouse was and was manned by local volunteers. The women organized and made bandages, gathered cots and turned the dance hall into a disaster center for the Red Cross. Everyone that came in listened to the old Emerson Radio that was in the lobby of the Hotel. The crew from the dredge was still staying at the hotel. Most of the construction crew had left by this time.

It was only perhaps two months or so when the Army left and was replaced by the Coast Guard. They stayed the remainder of the war. They at first took over the dance hall building, then they needed more room for barracks and cooking facilities, so our parents were told to leave "now". This was in the early summer of 1942. The Coast Guard had beach patrols with dogs. They had telephone lines put down and for communications. The dog kennels were located across the street from the old dance hall just north of Diekmann's Store. When you walked on the beach the sand was covered with crude oil, Japanese type sandals, rice bowls, and wreckage from ships that had been sunk in the Pacific and had followed the currents to shore here.

One night there was a terrible rumble of guns and gun flashes would flare over the headlands. The old hotel just shook. We all left the building and stood in the middle of the road, wondering what would happen next. We heard other rumbles during the war, but many thought it was our own troops doing maneuvers. Ken Sherwood Roe has written about submarines off the coast in his booklet. He wrote about the war years from Dillon Beach.

The sand dunes north of Bodega Bay were used for military practice with airplanes from Hamilton Field and the Naval Base. They constructed the outline of a plane in the then barren dunes and would practice hitting it with shells. They constructed a high tower on the dunes where an observer would watch to see if the planes hit their targets. After the practice the town's boys would go into the dunes and gather the empty cartridges and put the empty shells into the clips that they left behind. The airplanes would also practice covering our town in a smoke screen. Down they would come low and lay out a smoke screen.

At the other side of Freestone at the old CCC Camp. where the Army stored its tanks. They would come in a convoy of about 20 or 30 and travel the regular roadway. When they passed the schoolhouse, Miss Lonergan would let us look out the window and watch or go outside and watch from the fence. They used the dunes to practice on. One day during Christmastime, three Canadian Seaplanes landed in the Bay. One had engine trouble. Since they were here over Christmas, the men attended our Christmas holiday school program. It took quite awhile before they could get the parts to repair the plane.

The planes from Hamilton Field would also train their pilots out over the ocean. There were quite a few that crashed. The Coast Guard had a Crash Boat rescue unit that would watch for the planes. Sometimes a fisherman would pick up an injured pilot or even one that did not survive. The drag fishermen picked up parts of the wrecked planes for years after in their dragnets. One plane crashed in the sand dunes just off Mosher's Camp; that pilot did survive.

Just south of Goat Rock road the planes would practice shooting a towed target. It was like a large inflated sock towed behind a plane, the other planes would practice shooting at the sock. Commercial fishing in the bay at that time demanded that all the men on the boats have photo ID's. There was a Coast Guard boat stationed off of the old Harbor Dock at the north turning basin. They would monitor the leaving and return of each fisherman. With the dredging of the bay and because of the war, demand for fish increased.

Many fishermen - most fished for crab - had boats in ports to the north. When they heard about with a new entrance jetty, safe from the open ocean and not a river opening, they came with crab pots and all. Until



the war crab fishing was only allowed with ring nets. The crab was so plentiful that they sold for \$1.50 to \$2 a dozen. There was also a demand for soup fin shark livers. They are rich in Vitamin A. Many of the fishermen made big money in shark. Smith Bros shared in this bonanza and were able to construct their new fish plant that is now the Yacht Club. This fishery, however, was short lived as the synthetic vitamins put the need for the livers out of business.

It is strange that in the 40's we fished the shark for the livers and threw the carcass away, and now we throw the livers away and eat the meat as a delicacy. Diving for abalone during the war was also allowed. Dusty operated a dock at Louie's Wharf that was used to process the abalone for market to the military. Dusty had about 30 women pounding the abalone and packing them in boxes for the military. As soon as the war was over, so was the season. Meredith Fish Company built their new state of the art fish plant at this time. It had cold rooms, freezers, room for up to 100 women picking crab meat and freezing them in 5 pound cans, and filleting fish from the bottom fish boats. This was truly the boom for the fishing industry. Everything that is except a marina. The boats as you can see in the old pictures, either tied to the docks or had mooring buoys in the turning basins.



When our parents had to leave the hotel they purchased the Shell Gasoline Station at a location now owned by the Tides (shore buildings were later torn down). It was the only station that sold marine gasoline. At that time most of the small boats had gasoline engines. All of the gasoline was rationed and it was necessary to obtain gasoline ration coupons from the boat owners before you could fuel their boats. It was one of our jobs to glue all the stamps on sheets that we had to give to the gasoline deliveryman before he filled our storage tanks. We also serviced road gasoline. It was a busy station.

What I remember most about that adventure in our lives was walking out on the long dock in the wind and standing in the cold while boats were fueled. At that time we did not have electric pumps and all the fuel had to be fueled by hand pumping. Thank goodness the tanks that held boat fuel were above ground and had gravity flow. There were many boat fires with gasoline engines. The San Francisco fleet of little clipper-bow boats would come up for the salmon runs and fuel up, and then tie at the wharfs for the night. If they got too close to the mud, they would lay over onto their side and the fuel would leak out into the bilge and when they tried to start the engine it would explode. It was so frightening to watch and see the boats burn. I'm very sentimental about boats, as they have meant so much to the men in our family. Boats seem to have a personality of their own, so when one is lost it a very sad affair. There was no Fire Department in until 1953.

Another thing I remember during this period of time in was the lack of fresh water for the town. There were about three little systems that supplied water to the houses. Many of the houses up in old town did not have indoor plumbing. The sewers for the houses on the bay side of the road leached into the bay. It was with great joy when the Bodega Bay Public Utilities was voted in and water was found at Salmon Creek and everyone had water. Many times the people that slept late didn't have water to brush their teeth or flush toilets! I still do not leave our faucet running.

The people that lived on the coast during the war and were not citizens were asked to move inland. I remember our friend Dorothy Albini, who was in my class. Her mother was a widow and had two sons in the service, but she was asked to move for the duration of the war. Then of course the Japanese ranchers in Sebastopol were sent to the camps at or inland in other areas.