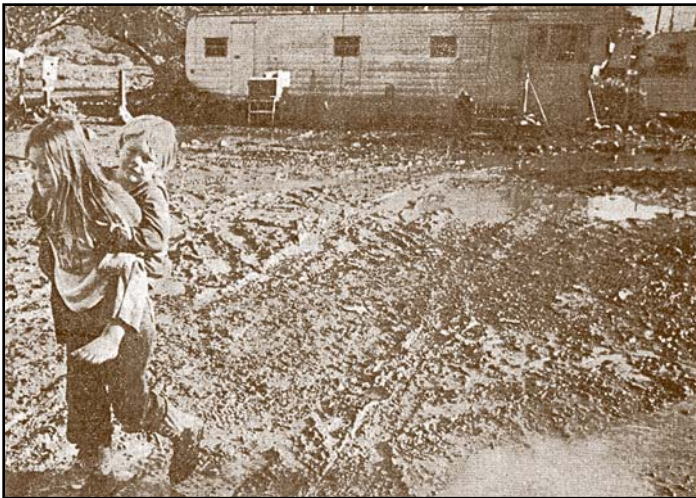


FROM THE ARCHIVES

Porto Bodega Then and Now

In January 1982, a flood wreaked havoc throughout Rancho Bodega, from the Russian River south to Coleman Valley Road, Bodega Bay, all the way to Valley Ford and the Estero Americano, east to the western edge of Occidental and to the hamlet in Bodega on Salmon Creek Road. People lost homes, residents were stranded, and others risked their lives to rescue people and livestock. Local people, ranchers and the Volunteer Fire Departments rallied to aide and clean-up the mess immediately after the flood.



- Fishermen couldn't moor at the mud-filled docks causing extreme hardship, affecting the viability of the fishing fleet.
- Businesses remained closed, after the creek became a raging river washing out the bridge. The Sandpiper Restaurant, cut off and without power, gave away its food supplies before it spoiled.
- Residents suffered with cars, their homes and their storage sheds mired in mud. Sewer lines broke letting raw sewage run over the mud.

But unfortunately, two weeks after the January 4th flood, Porto Bodega looked much as it did the day after the disaster. Mired in three to four feet of mud, long-lasting damage affected its businesses,

marina, and residents. In Porto Bodega mud flowed downhill destroying the main road to and from Hwy One. The "dismal mess" left broken sewer lines and demolished the small bridge that leads to Ginochio's and Gourmet au Bay today. Mud filled the marina and silted in the boat slips. Two injuries were reported due to the conditions.

As privately owned property, responsibilities for flood control and repairs were vastly unclear. Clean-up, dredging, bridge and sewer repairs stalled. Were residents, the absentee landlord or the government responsible? A shortage of contractors for bridge and road repairs led to even longer timelines. After almost a month of quibbling with Federal, State, County, and local agencies, Porto Bodega's owner, Hans Schroeder, met critical deadlines for the County Health Orders. He began repairs but not without threats and hassles. After building a temporary bridge, Bodega Bay Utility District served notice to remove the bridge due to vulnerable electric and sewer lines. Fish & Game filed charges claiming that Schroeder illegally dumped mud into the bay. Schroeder retaliated, blocking County officials from his property saying,

"I'll get a bulldozer to block them and put fishermen with guns behind them."

Disgruntled fishermen replied, "If Schroeder sees fishermen with guns he'd better check where they're aiming."

By mid-March, most of the mud had been cleared, plumbing, sewer and electrical issues were fixed but the bridge still needed repairs and the Marina required dredging to accommodate the fishing fleet. Adding insult to injury, after receiving an extension from Bodega Bay's PUC the temporary bridge collapsed on April Fool's Day. Luckily

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Schroeder's permits and materials were ready. All that was needed was better weather.

The Marina's dredging permit finally arrived mid-summer. By winter, Fish & Games' charges against Schroeder were dropped. But arguments and lawsuits covering residents' expenses dragged on through at least 1989. Eventually Hans Schroeder sold the 15 acres to Robert Higa of Los Angeles who envisioned a Fishermen's Village. But subject to Tidelands Restrictions, Coastal Commission oversight, The County's General Plans and Zoning, improvements lagged. Moreover, an earthquake fault slices within 70 feet of the restaurant, introducing its own set of building restrictions.

Today, we are happy to report a much-improved Porto Bodega. In 2007, Rich Battaglia bought the property along with the eventual Harbor View development across Route One. The Press Democrat described the sale of a "weather beaten property with a funky trailer park and marina that housed visiting sport fishermen and local workers."

Now, the RV Park is a cozy place for RVers. Kelly Martin, Porto Bodega's Manager, explains steady, ongoing improvements are the plan. Happily, much needed affordable housing remains available for local workers. For permanent residents, new "RV Park Models" offer small but handsome, affordable housing that is larger than "Tiny Homes" and smaller than conventional Mobile Homes.

The road and parking lot are re-paved. The bridge is in good repair. Ginocchio's replaced The Sandpiper. Gourmet au Bay moved into an old office building. There is a nice looking white and blue trimmed house with a turret. Cool-looking carved wood whale sculptures dot the parking lot. The docks were upgraded in 2020.

The laundromat has been remodeled and is cleaned daily. It's a good place now thanks to management. "A great place to live with good neighbors and diverse families. They've done a lot of work. The maintenance is good. It's close to stores. The neighbors share fresh fish. It's the way life should be." ■

A River Runs Through Porto Bodega

