

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

The joys of houseboating on the inland waterways of the Sacramento Delta

Drifting down the Delta



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Drifting Down The Delta



Flotilla of River Queens

Drifting Down The Delta

By
Erle Stanley Gardner

First published by *William Morrow and Company, Inc.*, 1969.

Other Books of Travel and Adventure

by ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

MEXICO'S MAGIC SQUARE
OFF THE BEATEN TRACK IN BAJA
GYPSY DAYS ON THE DELTA
HUNTING LOST MINES BY HELICOPTER
THE WORLD OF WATER
THE DESERT IS YOURS
THE HIDDEN HEART OF BAJA
HOVERING OVER BAJA
HUNTING THE DESERT WHALE
NEIGHBORHOOD FRONTIERS
THE LAND OF SHORTER SHADOWS

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Stanford King.

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New berths under construction at Remsburg’s Harbor.

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Rio Vista, a city of beautiful homes.

A modern home peers over the levee in Dutch Slough.

Private berths along Dutch Slough.

At Rio Vista, the Point Restaurant nestles between a beautiful marina and the Sacramento River.

“Mom” and “Pop” Kenyon and poodles visit with the Author.

Mrs. Kenyon holds her smoke-lapping poodle.

Captain Holm tells the Author an interesting sea story.

Captain Holm and the Author at Bethel Harbor.

The Author visits Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Free aboard their River Queen.

The Frees take their Siamese cat whenever they go on a cruise.

The old River Mansion of Steamboat Slough, now a restaurant and hotel.

Trophies from all over the world . . .

. . . adorn the walls of Big Horn Restaurant.

Big-game heads from America are interspersed with African trophies.

The Point Restaurant viewed from the Sacramento River.

In Antioch, the Riverview Lodge can be reached by either boat or car.

Manuel Morais can be serious . . .

. . . but he is usually a laughing, happy “Mo.”

Irene Giusti.

A cozy camp at Brannan Island State Park.

Boats have excellent protection in sheltered Vieira’s Harbor.



Cruising down the San Joaquin from Stockton.

1.

Welcome Aboard

The reader is warned right at the start that this is not a book of breath-taking adventure. It is a book of leisure, of drifting, of how one's blood pressure can drop fifty points under the benign influence of nature's healing hand.

You, who are a little tired of trying to keep up with the hectic pace at which we are rushing toward "progress," may wish to join me in an interval of restful contemplation, of drifting down the inland waterways of the Delta region where the Sacramento, the San Joaquin, the North and South Forks of the Mokelumne River all come together to form what has been referred to as a thousand miles of inland waterways.

If so, all you need to do is settle back and relax and I will try to use the printed page to welcome you aboard my River Queen houseboats which will be our homes for the next couple of months.

We will explore some of the inland waterways of the Delta and get acquainted with some of our neighbors. At the end of our cruise you should have a fair picture of an interesting portion of the Delta region. To really know all the ins and outs of this part of the country would require months of exploration. However, a relatively short time will introduce you to the principal places, the fine restaurants, the best fishing, the uninhabited islands with their overhanging shade trees, the spots where you can relax at your leisure.



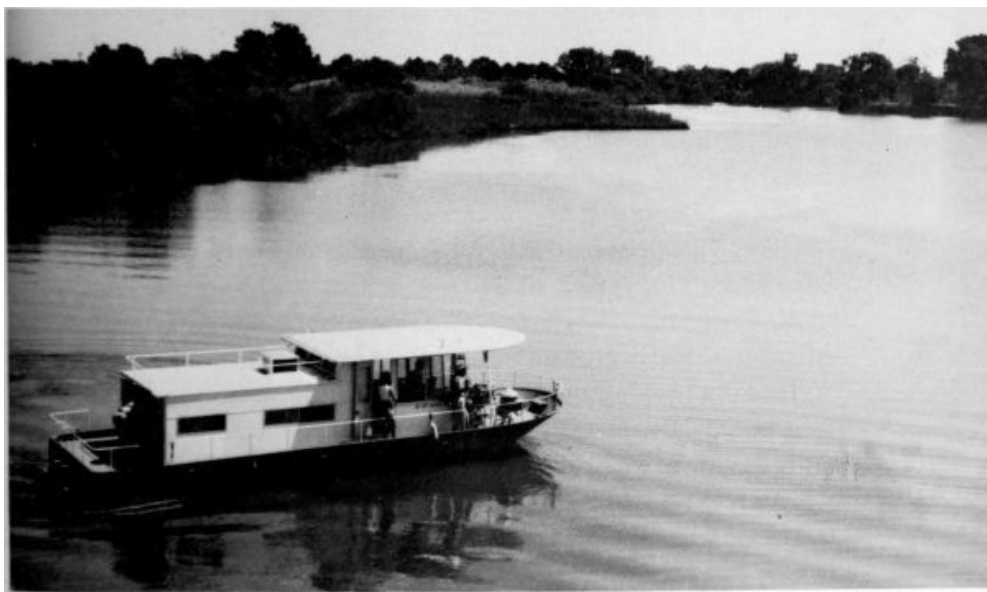
Our River Queens tied up in a restful camp.



The shady banks of Snodgrass Slough.

Since I have reached a point in life where I want to enjoy the creature comforts, I offer you a deluxe cruise.

Our house cruisers are of heavy-gauge steel with just about all the modern refinements which can be found in any compact apartment. Of course, we have to make allowances for the fact that our living luxuries are compressed into a relatively small space. First of all there is safety. The steel hull is reinforced until it resembles a landing craft. Below the water line the hull is divided into watertight compartments. This is no fragile shell composed of a thin skin of light wood designed for speed, but a hull of sturdy steel which makes our house cruiser a miniature battleship.



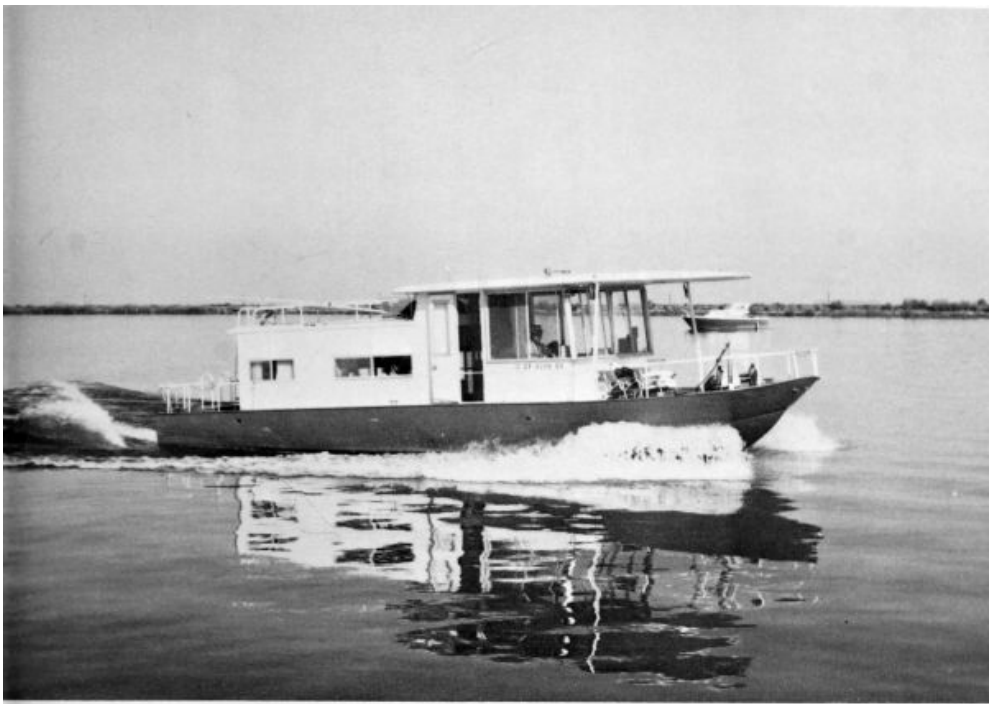
Drifting down the Delta.

We have an electric generator which furnishes ample current for our needs. We can turn on television and watch a ball game if we wish. We can press a button and the air-conditioning unit will regulate the interior of the boat to the temperature we desire. We can turn on faucets in the sink, in the washbowl, or in the shower and instantly have hot or cold running water. We have spacious refrigerators with freezing compartments and storage space. We have an electric range. We have plenty of reading lights, comfortable chairs, and a soft davenport with an abundance of cushions. We have closets in which we can hang our surplus clothes. And, above all, we have what I refer to as a “nature-conditioned storage space” where we can keep suitcases, films, supplies, fishing equipment, provisions, boxes, surplus liquor, canned goods—anything.

This storage space is reached by a hatch in the front deck or through a trap door in the cabin. It is deep and dark, air-conditioned by the waters of the rivers which are ever flowing past the steel hull, giving the interior a remarkably even temperature. It is easily accessible. We can reach in and pull out whatever is required, or if one wants to get at its more remote parts, it is only necessary to drop down into the cool interior, switch on a light, and find whatever is needed.

These are modern house cruisers and they are unbelievably comfortable, powered by twin motors with fingertip controls. They are capable of gliding through the water at speeds of around thirty miles an hour or loafing along at four or five miles an hour. Or when docking, they can be slowed to a bare crawl and easily handled by means of the convenient controls in the cabin.

At night there are plenty of luxurious beds and pillows. One can lie out in silence broken only by the faint purl of the water, or perhaps the occasional “*Who-o-o-o, who-o-o-o, who-o-o-o*” of an owl in one of the overhanging trees.



River Queens are also designed for fast cruising.

One can sleep in the morning as late as he desires. He can press a button and turn on the coffee percolator. He can dress or not as he pleases. If he chooses to lie around in pajamas, after having his coffee, he can again stretch out on one of the beds, prop pillows behind his head, and look out over the sun-kissed, shimmering waters, watching the fish arching up to slap the water with their tails before again descending into the depths. Or he can step out on deck, draw up a chair, and be fishing in a matter of seconds.

He also has complete privacy.

If he wants news, he can turn on the radio or the television. If an emergency occurs, he can pick up a telephone and instantly call the Coast Guard.



Relaxing in a shady camp.

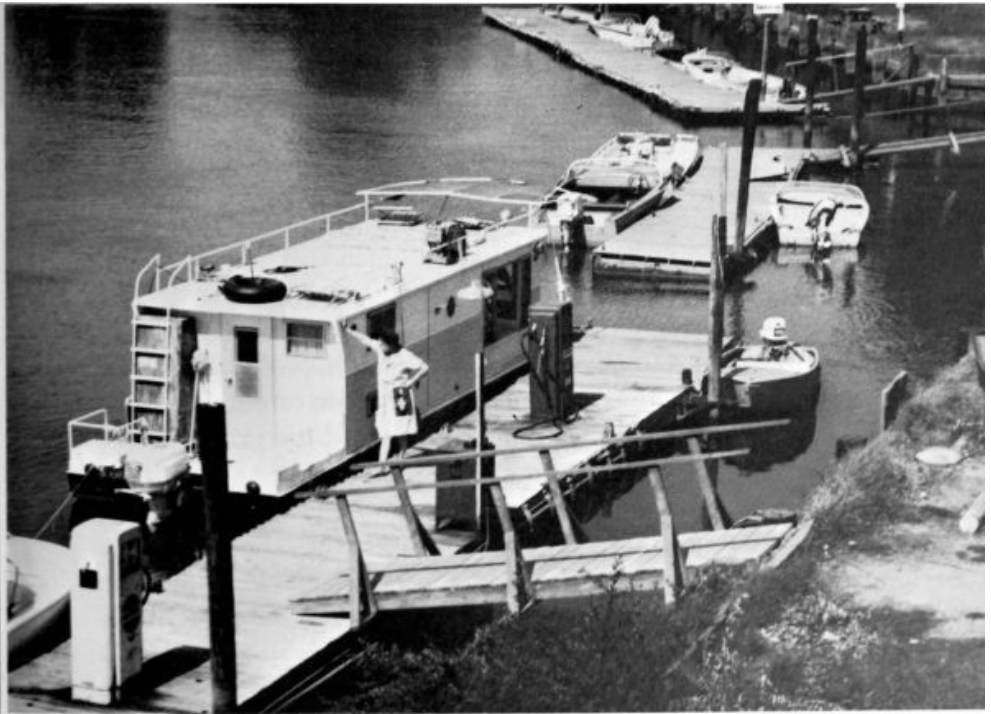
Under circumstances such as this, the blood pressure in human beings tends to drop to normal limits without the use of drugs, and there is the added benefit of a deep, natural slumber.

And the nice thing is that one doesn't need to go to some distant point in order to achieve this privacy and luxury. Everything is built in. There is no necessity for breathless pursuit of any objective. The only thing that is necessary is to get aboard and cast off the lines, start the motors, and move slowly along the surface of the river.

The minute you have left the dock you have arrived at your destination, which is the luxurious privacy of camping so delightfully deluxe that it is as if you had moved into a modern apartment out in the wilds.

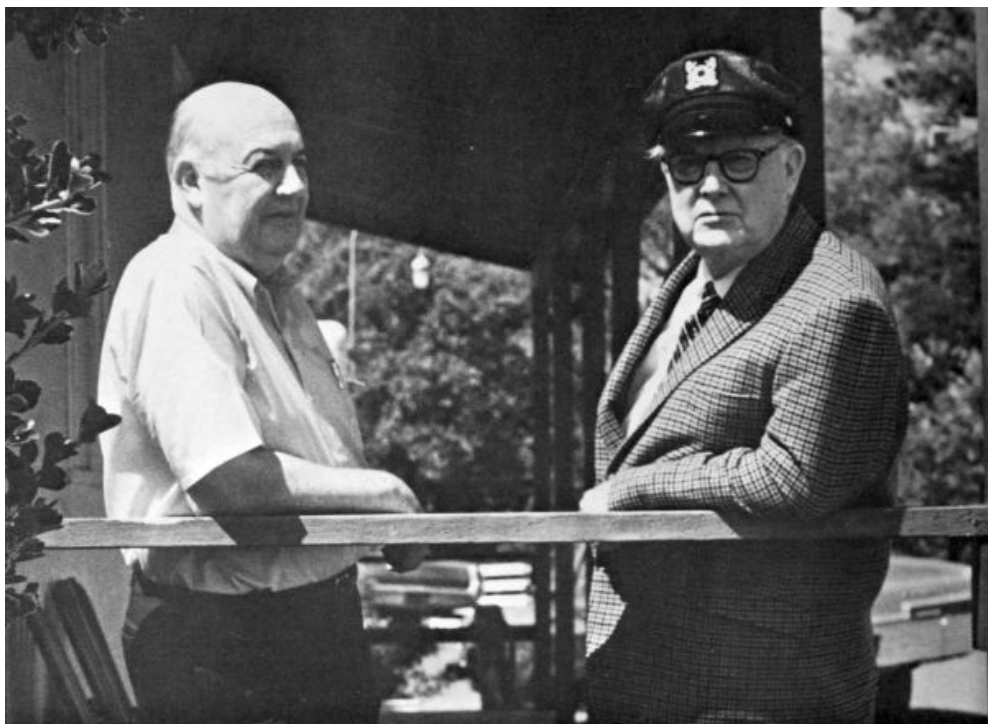
You are surrounded with the close friends invited to accompany you and there is no necessity to meet other people unless you care to.

On the other hand, because of past trips, there are warm friends scattered here and there along the banks and in the various marinas. When feeling so inclined, pilot your boat to the guest dock at Giusti's, for instance, receive a warm welcome from "Mo," the proprietor, or "Lo" Giannetti at the bar, and meet Irene Giusti and Dolores Morais, Mo's wife, with all the thrill of renewing old acquaintanceships.



An exploring houseboat puts in for gas at New Hope Landing.

In the air-conditioned bar, drinks are made by Lo, who is one of the best bartenders in the world. Afterward, saunter into the dining room and have a lunch that can't be duplicated by even the most expensive restaurants in the Bay area—the vegetables are garden fresh, the crisp salad greens are only minutes from gathering, and the cooking is home cooking, carefully supervised and delightfully flavored.



“Lo” Giannetti enjoys telling of his boyhood days in the Delta.

After lunch, walk a couple of hundred feet to your boat at the guest dock, climb aboard, and take a siesta. Or, if you wish, go to Locke and have the sensation of turning back the clock a full seventy-five years to a time when the work that is now done by giant diesel-powered earth-moving equipment was done by Chinese coolies.

Locke is an old, old river city. It has mercifully been spared from fire. It was built according to the Chinese style of architecture of generations ago and it is still peopled largely by Chinese. There you will find a supermarket which features all the up-to-the-minute foods and, in addition, has rare exotic Chinese foods that one cannot find elsewhere.



The Chinese town of Locke, California.

Here are available canned pickled leeks, canned lichee nuts, coconut candy, preserved ginger, dried bean noodles, candied watermelon, and many other delicacies.

Here is Constance King, one of the most beautiful and charming Chinese women I have ever met. She, her brother-in-law, Stanford King, and George Marr, a big-bodied, genial Chinese with ready laughter, a quick wit, and a remarkably friendly disposition, own and operate the Yuen Chong Market and make it a pleasure to trade there.

We make it a point to buy as many of our supplies as possible at the Yuen Chong Market at Locke and the Big Store in Walnut Grove, a mile or so to the south, a store which is also run by Chinese who, I believe, are related to the Kings. While there we also stop in at the Steiners' hardware store to visit and admire their fine stock of marine supplies.



George Marr sees the happy side of everything.



The Big Store in Walnut Grove.



The Steiners outside their hardware store in Walnut Grove.

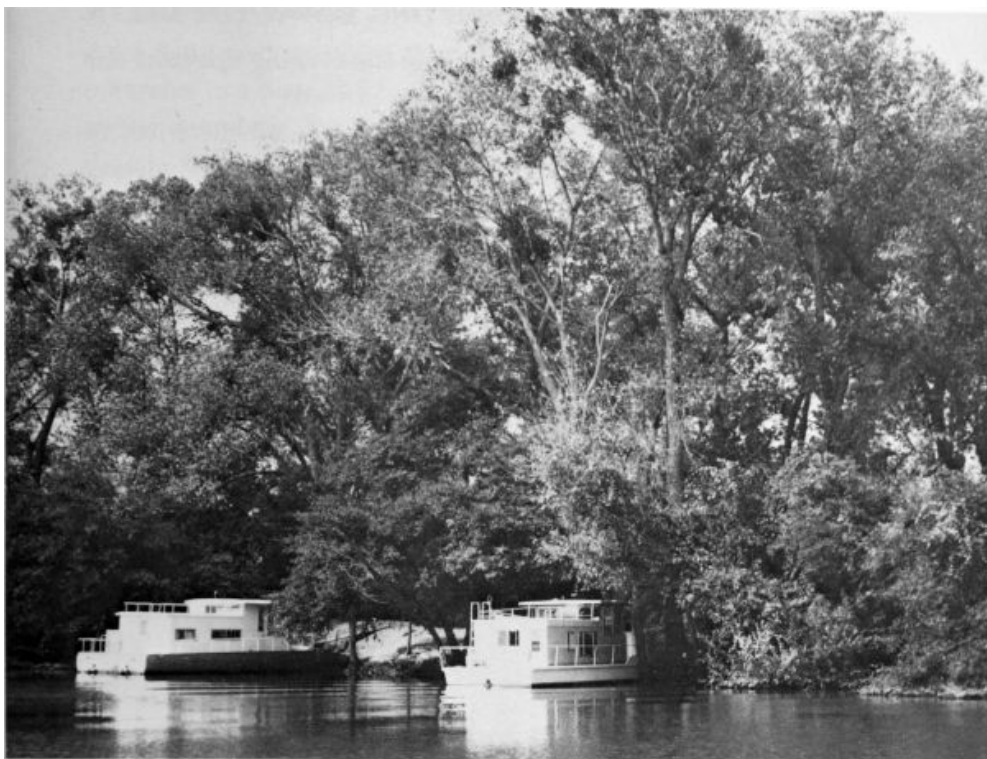
Those of you who already have yachts have doubtless discovered the advantages of buying provisions at the local markets. Those who are going to rent houseboats for a vacation will find it adds much to the pleasure of your cruise if you patronize the markets at Locke, Walnut Grove, Rio Vista, and some of the other towns along the Delta.



The Public Dock in Stockton, adjacent to the new Holiday Inn Convention Center.

And be sure to remember the hospitality of Stockton, where it is possible for the yachtsman to go up the river to a point well inside the city and there find guest docks maintained for his convenience.

I can take my business with me when I cruise, which is a blessing, but I also am confronted with the fact that I can get entirely away from that business for only limited periods, which is a curse. In any event, because of it, I need a more elaborate set of equipment than would otherwise be the case.



The peace of quiet waters and stately trees.

I usually need one and sometimes two secretaries with me. I need to make brief trips to a telephone every other day or so.

Rather than have the problems of privacy which go with mixed company, I have two house cruisers. We tie them up some fifty to a hundred feet apart when we are camping. One of them is for the women and the other for the men.

On our stag house cruiser we live just as we damn please. We play penny ante in the evening for as late as we wish. We make coffee when we want it. We have drinks when we want them. We sit up until midnight or one o'clock in the morning if we wish, or we go to bed at nine in the evening if it suits our fancy. We swap anecdotes, tell stories, or read.

Over on the other boat, my secretaries and the wives of whomever may be along with us have equal independence. They watch television, discuss clothes, dress and undress as they please, take sun baths on the sun deck when they want to, go swimming when they feel like it, and are usually in bed long before we turn out the lights on the boat devoted to "masculine supremacy."



Our Valco cruiser is exceptionally fast if speed is required.

In addition to my house cruisers I have a Valco twenty-three-foot speed cruiser, a boat that will get up and scoot over the water in a hurry without my having to pack up the things on the houseboat. We also usually tow other light boats, sometimes a Smith Craft aluminum nineteen-foot boat—a boat designed to carry a lot of cargo and to fight its way through rough water—a Ken Craft, which is a type of unsinkable sea scooter, powered with an outboard motor, which we use in the exploration of shallow channels, and a light fourteen-foot Valco runabout.



A Kayot pontoon houseboat on a trailer at Bethel Island.

In other words, whenever we want to go out on a little exploring expedition, take certain pictures, or when I have to get to a telephone, it takes only a relatively short time. We skim over the surface of the water to the place where we want to go and are back by the time we want to get back.

It is necessary for me to have all these conveniences. On the other hand, the man who doesn't have the responsibilities I have to face doesn't need anywhere near the equipment I have in order to enjoy a leisurely vacation in the Delta.

The Delta is there, waiting. Take what you want and, for the most part, at whatever price you want to pay.

2.

Rent a Vacation

Anyone who would like to explore the Delta country, but doesn't want to tie up the money necessary to own a house cruiser, need not hesitate for a moment. All he needs to do is to pick up a telephone and act fast. There are an increasing number of firms that are renting houseboats for vacation purposes. Even so, they can't possibly keep up with the demand, so it is necessary to ask for reservations well in advance unless one should be fortunate enough to secure a cancellation.

This houseboat rental system has been reduced to a science and it is perhaps the most wonderful way of spending a family vacation that the mind of man can devise.

The cost?

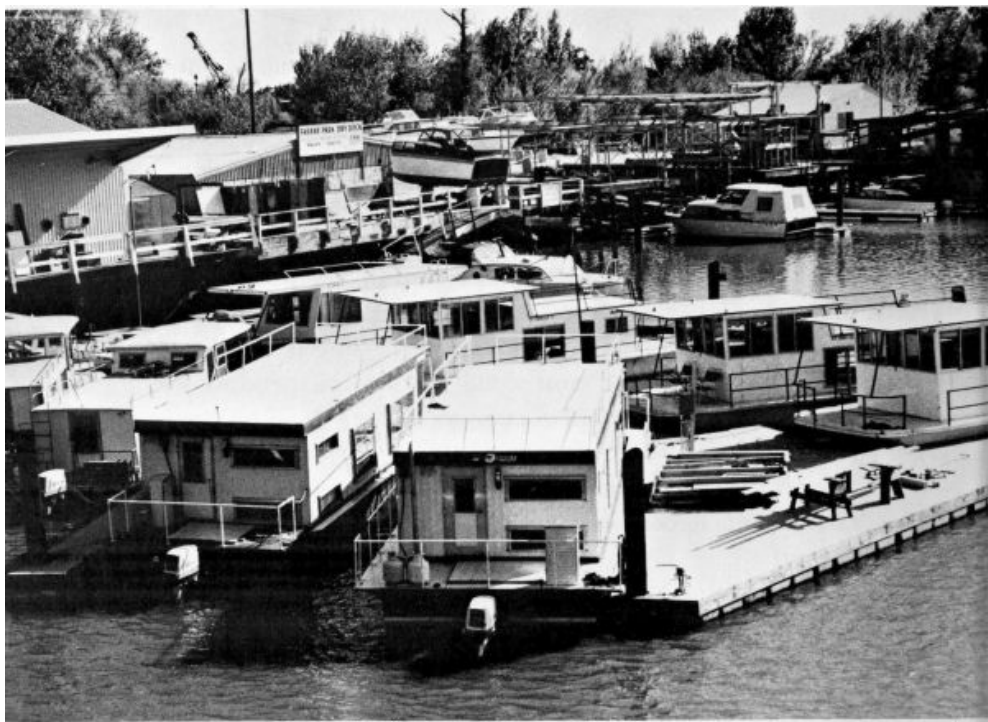
Twenty-five to fifty, perhaps sixty dollars a day.

That sounds expensive until you stop to think what you are getting.

When you rent a houseboat, it is a family vacation. You don't have to pay out money for motels, possibly sleeping like sardines in a can in order to save money on rooms for the children.

You eat *when* you want to, and you eat *what* you want to. You don't have to pay fancy prices for restaurant foods. You don't have to sit around, waiting for someone to serve you. You don't have to negotiate for a child's plate for the kids.

You have your own stove with oven, and refrigerator, and if you want to live off the country, you can put the children to work catching catfish off the rear deck. The kids will love it and the catfish will make a delicious meal.



Rental houseboats ready for vacation cruising.

You can cook family style, just as you would at home, or camp style, if you prefer. At the end of a week, you will have spent less than you would have spent on the road, and you will have had a vacation that is restful, varied, and photogenic. The family will have been together as a unit. Everyone will have had enough of his own particular vacation enjoyment to feel thoroughly satisfied and relaxed.

There will have been plenty of swimming and your wife will have a coat of suntan that will be the envy of her friends when she returns home. The kids will have tales to tell that will make their companions in school listen in bug-eyed concentration. And if you are inclined to like to play around with cameras, either "still" or "movie," or both, you can have some remarkably interesting photographs, a story of a vacation in the Delta that will keep your neighbors sitting on the edges of their chairs as they watch.

If you have a group of close friends who are congenial, two or even more families can pool their resources on a boat-rental deal. Some of these rented house cruisers sleep eight people.

This is a very convenient answer to the problem of a two-week vacation.

For instance, a couple in Los Angeles with one child might never think of buying a houseboat and keeping it moored in the Delta. But if they have close friends with a child about the same age, they can start talking about sharing the expense of vacation and send for literature on houseboat rentals. If they decide to go ahead, they have only to make their reservations, decide whose car they are going to take, and the day before they want to start boating, pile into the automobile and drive to Oakland or Stockton. From there it's only an

hour by automobile to the Delta. From most starting points in California they will be in the Delta region in the early evening.

They will put up two hundred and fifty dollars apiece to defray rental on the houseboat. They will put in fifty or sixty dollars' worth of provisions and the next morning be started on a remarkable vacation.



A rental houseboat gets under way.

There are hundreds of nice spots in the Delta where a boat can tie up and, if people are considerate and leave clean camps, it is usually possible to go ashore, put up folding chairs in the shade of an overhanging tree, or perhaps build a fire and have a barbecue.

Bethel Island is a landmark in the Delta country. From Antioch one drives east to Oakley, then east from Oakley along Cypress Road to the place where the road makes a sharp left turn at a ninety-degree angle and becomes Bethel Island Road.

A mile or so from this ninety-degree turn one comes to Dutch Slough over which is the bridge to Bethel Island.

Where the road comes to Dutch Slough there are several buildings: a bait shop on the west, a launching ramp and equipment store on the east.



A happy family begins their vacation cruise.



Jim's Bait and Tackle Shop atop the levee on the approach to Bethel Island.



Richard's Yacht Center displays a variety of boats for sale.

A hundred yards or so on the road along the top of the levee to the west is Richard's Yacht Center where "Dick" DeShazer has his home, office, and a long string of boats—which are all for sale. He does no rental business.

A couple of hundred yards or less along the Dutch Slough levee road to the east is Bud Rensburg's Marine Gasoline Station and the beginning of his long line of covered docks.

Bud Rensburg's parking lot is over on the right, down from the levee road, and is a huge space with ample room for boat trailers and automobiles. It is not open to the public, but is for the benefit of Rensburg's tenants.

The road along the south side of Dutch Slough from DeShazer's place on the west, across the highway to Rensburg's place on the east, is built along the top of the levee and is typical of the area.

Dutch Slough is perhaps ten to fifteen feet below this levee on the waterside and, on the landside, the parking lots are again fifteen or more feet below the top of the levee. In other words, the levee serves the purpose of being a barrier between the water and the low ground and also furnishes a roadbed for travel.

There are several houses built on stilts to the level of the levee and, down on the parking lot below, at the foot of a flight of stairs, Bud Rensburg and his wife, Helen, have provided a restroom for the convenience of people whose boats are berthed in his marina. The restroom is comfortable and spacious with spotlessly clean basins, toilets, and showers—one side for men and the other for women.

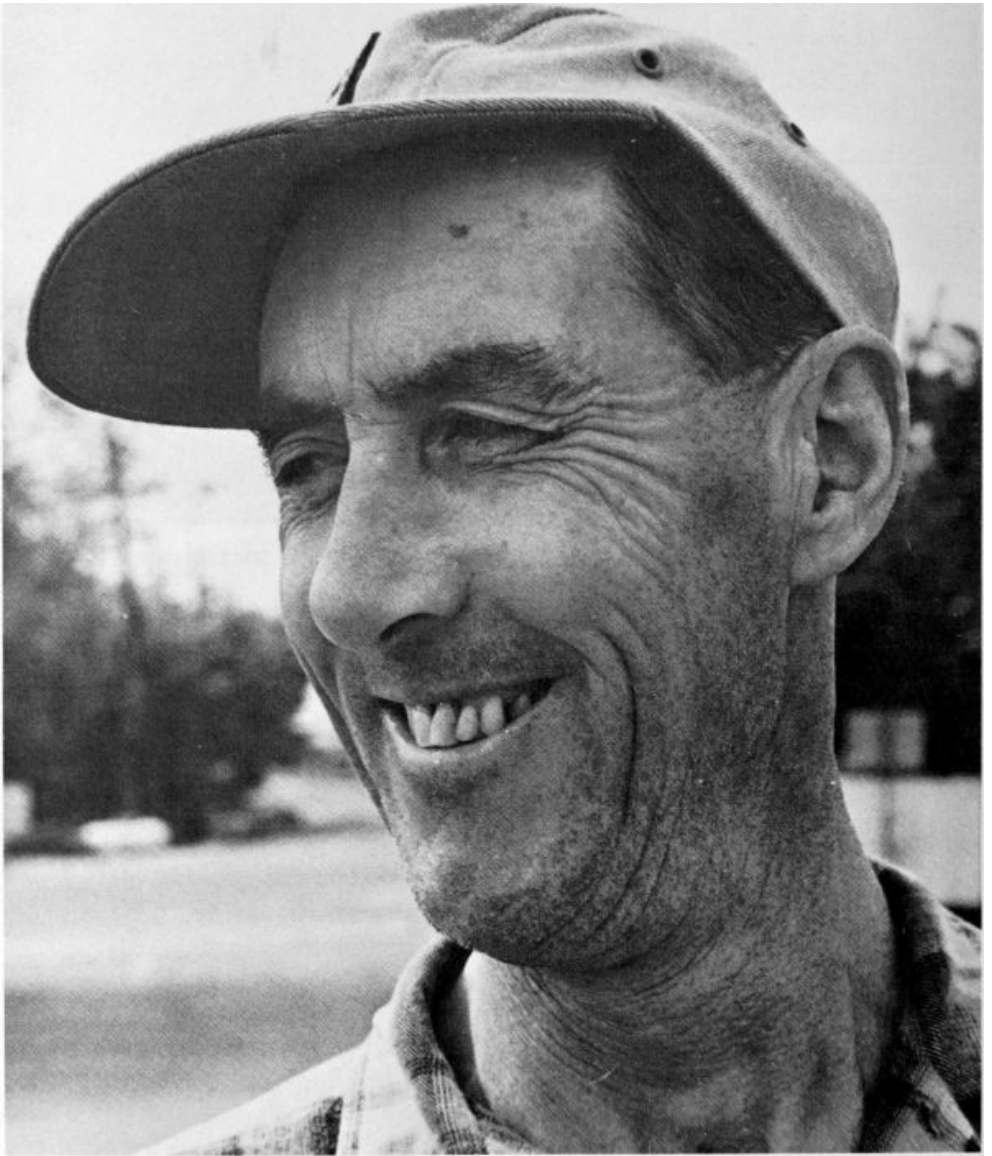
Both sides of Dutch Slough are lined with docks and houseboat rentals. Over the bridge, on Bethel Island, there is a little town which is fully prepared to serve the needs of the

community. There are two first-class markets featuring fresh meat, vegetables, fruits, canned goods; several places where party ice can be obtained, and block ice for portable ice boxes.

There are equipment stores where the motorist and the boatman can buy just about anything; fishing licenses, bait, portable iceboxes, bathing suits, bathing caps, yachting caps—you name it, they have it.

Here also Irving Podris has his Bel-Isle Club on the east, a fine place to eat, about which we will hear more later. And on the west is Wanda's Restaurant, a communal eating place where nearly all the old-time residents gather.

The food is good. Her breakfasts are designed to give a yachtsman a running start on the day's activities. "Sausage and eggs" consists of a large helping of sausage, three fried eggs, fried potatoes, toast, jelly, and coffee which Wanda somehow manages to have always fresh, always flavorful, and always piping hot.



Bud Remsburg . . .

Irving Podris' place over on the east is a dinner place, and on weekends the huge room is packed, jammed, crowded. He has a bar opening off the dining room where at times several bartenders are busily engaged in serving the wants of the customers.



. . . and his wife, Helen.



Boats of all sizes and descriptions at Bethel Island.



The Author receives change at Wanda's Cafe.

On the north side of Dutch Slough the road runs along a levee flanked by a marina, a boat club, a boat sales business, and many private homes that have a view out over the water and steps leading down to private boat landings.

In short, the minute one gets to the Bethel Island Bridge he not only is suddenly aware that he is in a boating community but he realizes something of the economic importance of boating to the community.

I keep my boats at Bud Remsburg's marina right across from Bethel Island.

This large, covered mooring space is so delightful that many boat owners who come up for only a weekend never even bother to untie their boats. There is fresh water and electricity available and they only have to plug in a wire to be served with an abundance of 125-volt current.

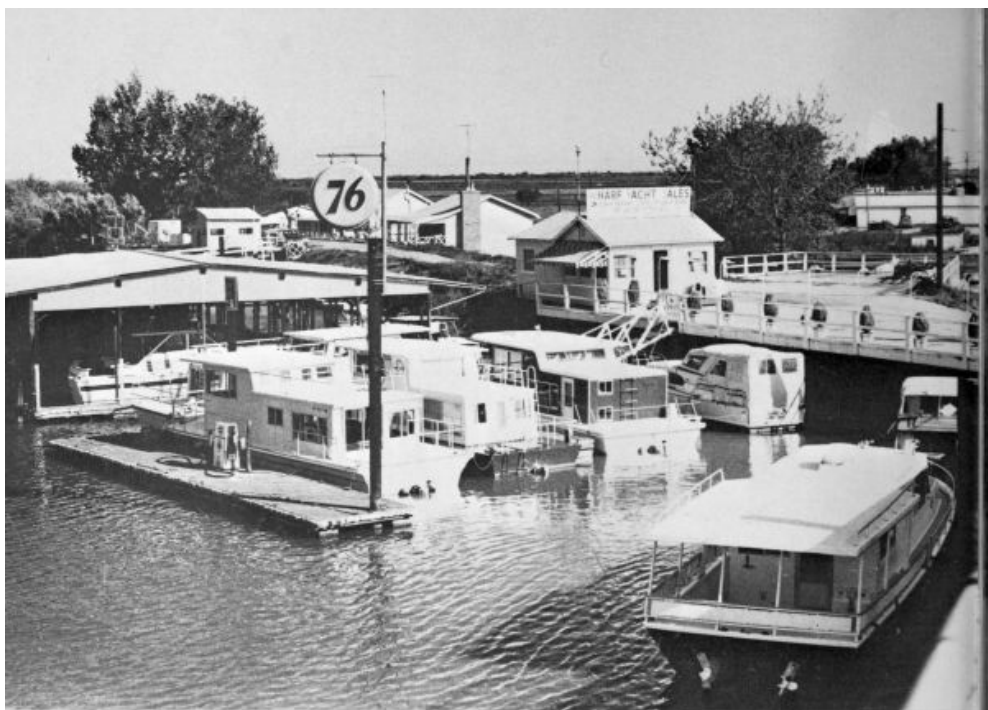
If a boat owner leaves Friday night after office hours in the Bay area, and stops off perhaps for a wonderful meal at the famous Riverview Restaurant in Antioch, he will arrive at Remsburg's at eight-thirty or nine o'clock.

Then all he has to do is park his car, cross the levee to the mooring space, unlock the door of his boat, climb in—and he's in his home-away-from-home.

He and his family may stretch out in the lounge, or if it is a warm night, they may prefer to sit for a while on deck. Then they go to bed, sleep as late Saturday morning as they desire, get up, make breakfast, and decide what they want to do. They may sit out on the deck and relax for a while, or get in their car and drive the half-dozen or so blocks to one of the markets on Bethel Island to pick up choice steaks for dinner or any kind of groceries they want.

Back on their boat, they perhaps break out fishing tackle and catch a few catfish from the rear deck, or just read and take life easy.

They go to bed early Saturday night, sleep late Sunday morning, then loaf around on the deck reading the Sunday papers.



New house cruisers for sale at Bethel Island.

Remsburg's moorings for the larger boats are covered so that there is always deep shade under them. The waters of the river keep the boats relatively cool and comfortable. If the yachtsman desires to be friendly, he knows all the people whose yachts are tied alongside him and he can visit back and forth. If he wants privacy, he simply sits back and waves his hand at his neighbors as they go by. They understand, wave back, and leave him alone.

Around five or six o'clock, he loads his family in the car and drives back to the Bay area—only a matter of an hour or an hour and a half.

They have had a wonderful, restful weekend away from frantic city life in a paradise an unbelievably short driving time from home.



Rose and Larry Hughes enjoy the quiet and cool of Remsburg's Harbor.

3.

Thumb-Nail Sketch of the Delta

I have said that the houseboat rental business in the Delta is growing by leaps and bounds and even this is a conservative statement.

Rentals have been completely systematized by some of the big operators who have quite a few houseboats and have them booked solid during the season.

We'll suppose that our theoretical families, who are driving up to the Delta country from Los Angeles, are going to rent a houseboat on the fifth of the month. They will leave home on the fourth, stay at a motel, and come down to the place where they are going to pick up the houseboat at the time agreed upon, perhaps at noon on the fifth.

The persons who have been renting the houseboat up to the fifth are obligated to turn it in by perhaps nine o'clock that morning.

The owner of the houseboat rentals will have his crew in readiness. This crew consists of experts in the jobs they are trained to do. One man will clean the deck, check the motors and all mechanical appliances, seeing that the motors are supplied with oil, the tanks with gasoline, and the drinking water supply filled to the brim.



“Rafting” houseboats facilitates visiting while cruising.

Others will do the housekeeping—vacuuming the cabin from top to bottom, dusting, polishing, and cleaning everything including cupboards and closets.

At noon the houseboat will be ready for delivery to the new renters.

If, as frequently happens, the new tenants are relatively inexperienced in matters pertaining to the water, the management will educate them about the various controls, take them out and have them “shoot a few landings,” and in general show them how to handle the boat.

For the most part, handling the boat is a relatively simple matter. In approaching a landing, whether it is a mooring space or a guest dock, the first thing to do is to ascertain the direction of the tide.

Secondly, be sure to come into the landing with the bow headed into the tide, then slow the boat to an absolute crawl so it is doing little better than holding its own against the tide. Steer the boat so that there is a distance of some two or three feet between the boat and the guest dock, then turn the wheel gently so that the nose of the boat swings into the mooring dock. Perform this maneuver so that the bow rests lightly against the dock, then straighten the helm. The current will swing the stern of the boat into the guest dock and all that is necessary thereafter is to secure lines.

Quite naturally, one wonders how it is that there are tides up in the fresh water of the Delta region. The answer is simple, yet difficult to explain.

When tides sweep into San Francisco Bay from the ocean, a great volume of salt water comes surging up to the higher reaches of the Bay. This wall of salt water encounters the fresh water of the rivers and forces the fresh water back up the river so that miles away from the tidal activity itself the river will follow the direction of the prevailing tides.

Then when the tide goes out, removing this salt-water barrier, the river naturally has an opportunity to resume its accustomed flow downhill toward the ocean.

The operation of a houseboat can be learned in a short time by a person who has a natural aptitude for machinery. Or, putting it in another way, any person who can drive an automobile through traffic can readily learn how to operate a houseboat.

Some houseboats are for rent at Bethel Island and Walnut Grove, some in various other places in the Delta such as Tiki Lagoon, and Stockton.

Yachtsmen are highly cooperative and, if a person ever gets in trouble, it is only necessary to flag down some passing boat and have aid furnished or a message delivered.

Many houseboats, moreover, are equipped with a Citizen's Band radio so that it is only necessary to pick up a transmitter and say, "I am John Doe, in your rental houseboat number nineteen. I'm up in Snodgrass Slough and I've been having trouble. I'm tied up to a tree and will wait until you come."

The cheery answer will come back: "Just sit there. We'll have a speed cruiser up to get you straightened out inside of an hour."



House cruisers snug in their berths.



Houseboat traffic on the way to The Meadows.



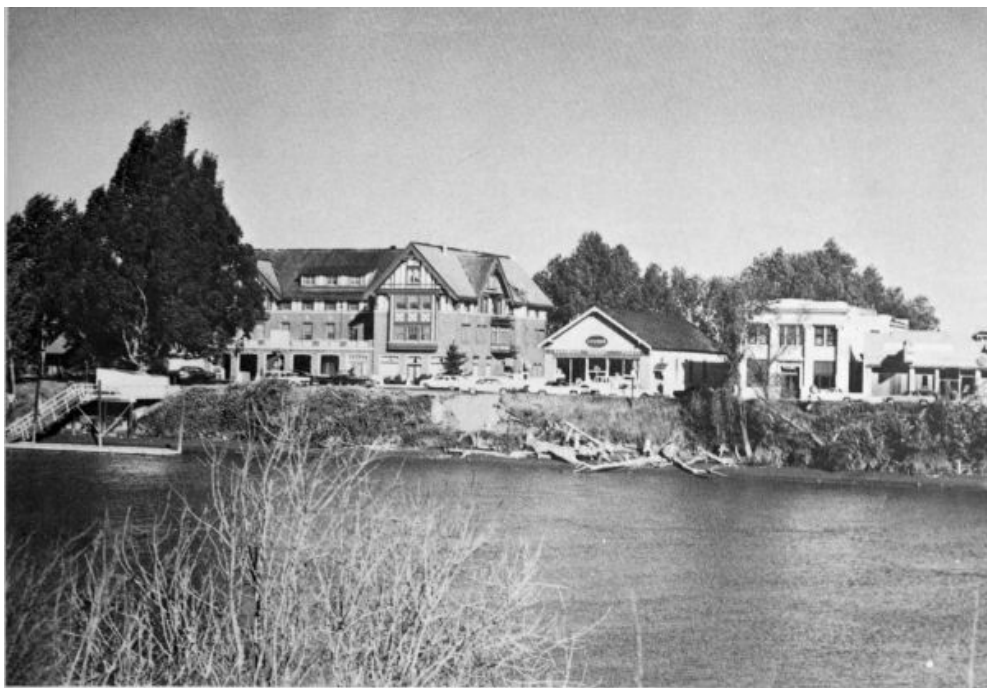
New berths going up at Tiki Lagoon.

But for the most part, the marine motors in these craft are just about troubleproof; and any houseboat renter who follows directions can have a perfect outing without any worries.

I have a word of advice. Park an automobile near the section of the inland waterways where you intend to be cruising so that when you want to get into town for supplies it is relatively easy.

If you are, for instance, up in the section of the Delta country which is referred to as “The Meadows” and you want to get provisions, you can walk into nearby Walnut Grove or Locke—if you want the exercise—or you can take your boat down to Giusti’s, pick up your car, drive to Walnut Grove or Locke, and have everything you need—ice-cold milk, cream, a fifty-pound chunk of block ice if you’re running short on ice cubes, thick steaks for barbecuing and ice cream for dessert.

Bud Rensburg’s marina, where we usually berth, is centrally located for general cruising. But, when we go on a vacation cruise, one of our party drives a car up as far as Giusti’s and leaves it—joining us when we arrive with the boats.



Part of Walnut Grove's business district from the Sacramento River.

If I put a lot of emphasis upon Giusti's, on Locke and Walnut Grove, it is because these places are particularly important to the yachtsman.

Stopping in at Giusti's is an experience. It is a habit-forming experience. Whenever I get to the Delta country I head there.

Giusti's has been in existence for many, many decades. During the days of the old river traffic, when transportation was exclusively by boat and by horse and buggy, Giusti's served the traveling public. They are located at the old Miller's Ferry—now a swing bridge—and the place has been maintained in its original form. Descendants of the original Giusti family still operate it and at Giusti's one is never a customer. One is always a guest.

The architecture of Locke goes back to the bygone days when the main road was along the levee. Most of the buildings have stores on the ground floor and living quarters up above. As I have said earlier, there is still a strong Chinese influence in Locke, and it is an interesting place to pick up supplies.



The rear of Giusti's bar and restaurant.

Walnut Grove is somewhat similar and a Chinese family operates the market there, the Big Store, but Locke remains the typical, picturesque Chinese river city.

These places also become important because of the part of the Delta known as The Meadows.

Originally the Delta country was a vast wasteland. Then levees were built, the land reclaimed, and it now has some of the most fertile soil in the world. A large percentage of all the white asparagus grown in the country comes from the Delta; and great, luscious, vine-ripened tomatoes thrive there. It is an inspiring sight to drive along the elevated levee roads and look down on the tomato fields at harvest time.

For a long while huge trees grew along the levees and these trees were encouraged because their roots, intertwining in the soil, furnished a barrier against erosion.

Then the Army engineers who control the district decided that the trees were bad for the levees and it would be better if the levees were faced with rock.

Huge dredges, with great cranes and clamshell buckets, were towed up to the levees and started smashing down trees right and left. The big bucket, weighing many tons, was sent swinging and crashing into the limbs. The trees were either knocked to the ground or pulled up by the roots. Then the bucket dipped down into the soft soil of the waterway and came up with tons of mud which were piled on top of the tangled mass of tree limbs.

Later on, barges filled with rock were hauled in by tug-boats and rock was dumped over the face of the levees.



The Meadows seen from the air.

I suppose there must have been some element of efficiency involved. Otherwise, even the government, which seems at times to consist largely of bureaucratic entities functioning to perpetuate themselves, would hesitate before knocking down shade trees over fifty feet high, which have been growing for seventy-five years, reduce them to a mass of tangled limbs, pile mud on them, and then put rocks on top of the mud.



Recently reinforced levee on Steamboat Slough.



A lonely reminder of the levee's past glory.

It was a wonderful example of man's ingenuity in ruining natural beauty and a lot of country for recreational purposes.

According to hearsay, when the Army engineers came to The Meadows they ran into concerted opposition.

There are stories around of irate inhabitants with rifles threatening to shoot the dredge operators. I don't know if these are true.

I do know that The Meadows was saved from destruction and at some point the state government decided to make it a park.

In addition, the government, going to the other extreme, is condemning the ranch properties around this part of the slough country, opening it up for houseboat camping and picnic grounds. Soon it will probably be a state crime to whittle a toothpick out of a piece of growing timber with a penknife.

Starting at Bethel Island, Dutch Slough becomes Sand Mound Slough within a relatively short distance, and Sand Mound Slough leads to Frank's Tract.

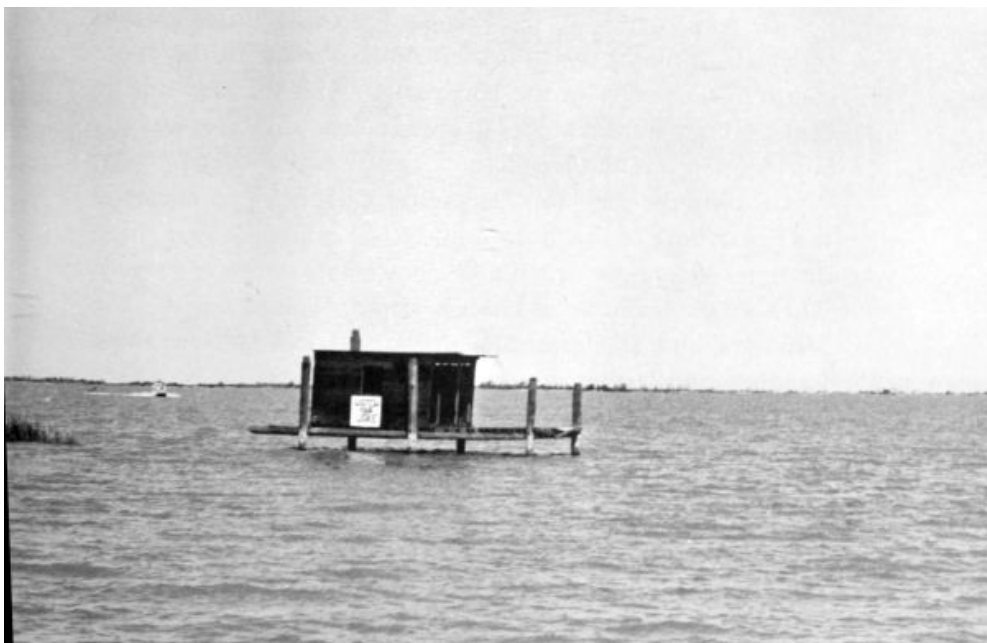
Frank's Tract is a vast body of water approximately three or four miles across in each direction. Originally it was a prosperous ranch, but a break in the levee allowed the waters to sweep in and, almost overnight, the land became flooded.

The story goes that when this happened the owners of Frank's Tract said to the government, "All right, you Army engineers have taken over the supervision of the levees and have the entire matter under your jurisdiction, so get *your water* off of *our farm*."

Evidently there is some truth to the story because, after a period of dispute lasting many years, apparently the government has decided to make a state park out of Frank's Tract.



Frank's Tract, the time we first saw it.



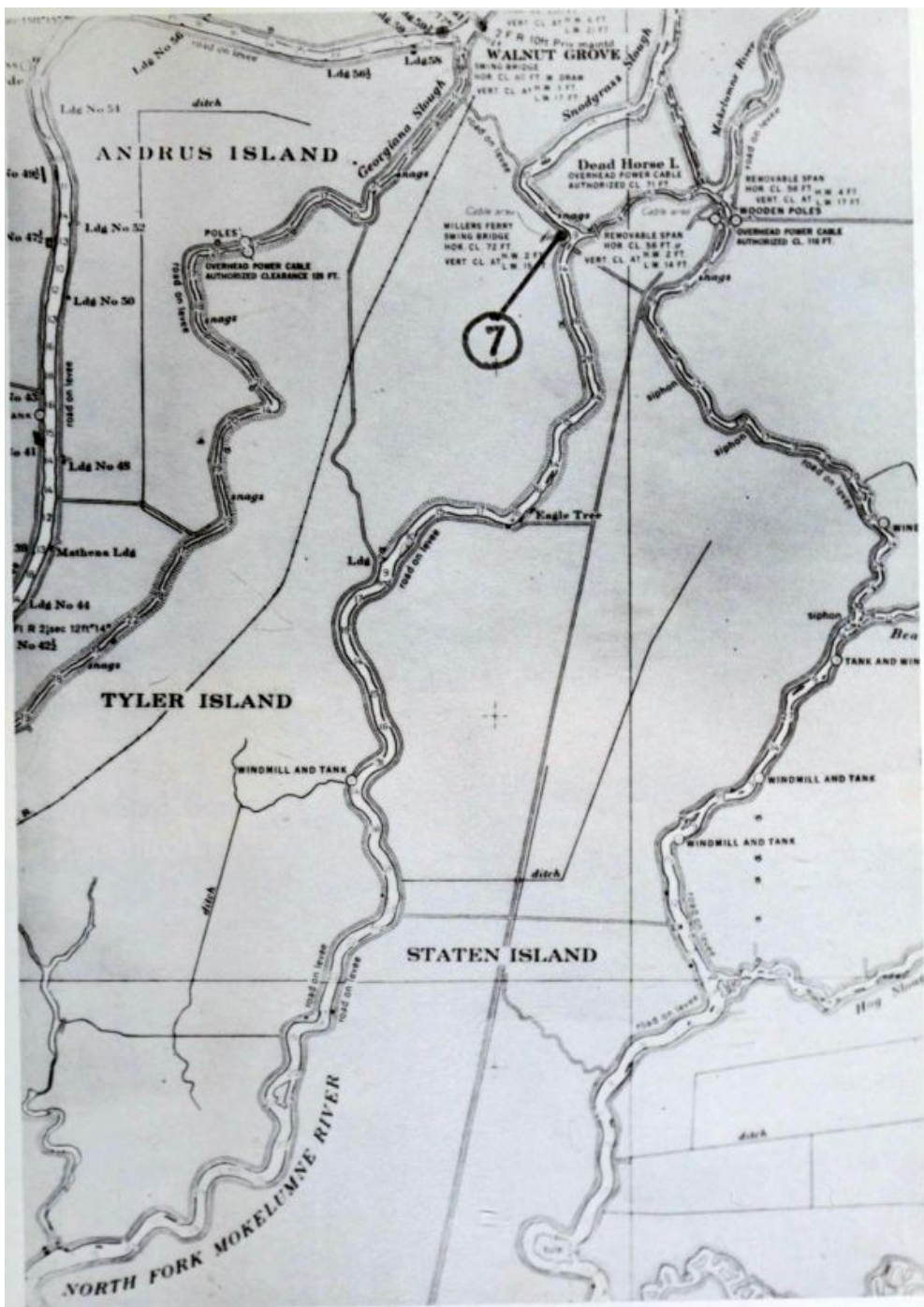
Fishermen paid at this tollgate when entering Frank's Tract.

Be that as it may, Frank's Tract now is a huge lake, albeit a shallow one. I have heard of fishing lines being snagged on submerged tractors and propellers bent by contact with farming machinery only a few feet under the surface of the water. For the most part, boats use Frank's Tract as a fishing ground which has some of the best striped-bass fishing in the Delta country. A channel to the north goes along the east side of Frank's Tract until it comes to the San Joaquin River and the Stockton Deepwater Channel.



Delta resort on the edge of Frank's Tract.

Crossing the Stockton Deepwater Channel, one comes to the North Fork of the Mokelumne River and, following this a matter of some eight or ten miles, one comes to Giusti's resort. Then within a couple of miles is Locke, Walnut Grove, The Meadows, and Snodgrass Slough. To the east is New Hope Landing, and farther on, the Cosumnes River.



North Fork of Mokolumne River.



Huge vessels ply the inland waterways.



The Boon Dox Hotel, plush relic of a bygone era.

There is a gate control between the Sacramento River and the North Fork of the Mokelumne, and when the gates are open small boats can go from the North Fork of the Mokelumne into the Sacramento River and then tie up at Locke or Walnut Grove.



Walnut Grove Marina.

This is only possible for small boats and only when the gates are open. Houseboats can tie up in The Meadows or at the Walnut Grove Marina and it is only a short distance by car from there to Locke and Walnut Grove.

However, it is a long walk on a hot day, and for this reason I advocate keeping a car near the place where the house cruisers are going to be located.

There is no trick at all in having one person drive an automobile on the levee road while the others come along in the houseboats. And experience has taught us that, what with the sometimes relatively narrow roads along the levees, there is not too much of a time difference.

Here again I like to go deluxe. We have Citizen's Band radios on our houseboats and also on the automobile which we intend to drive up and leave near the place where we are going to make our houseboating headquarters.

In this way we can keep in touch with the progress of the automobile and, occasionally when someone takes the car to go shopping after we are camped, those on the houseboat can pick up the Citizen's Band radio and communicate last-minute instructions. Or, after the mail has been picked up at the Walnut Grove Post Office, matters requiring prompt attention can be relayed to the houseboats.

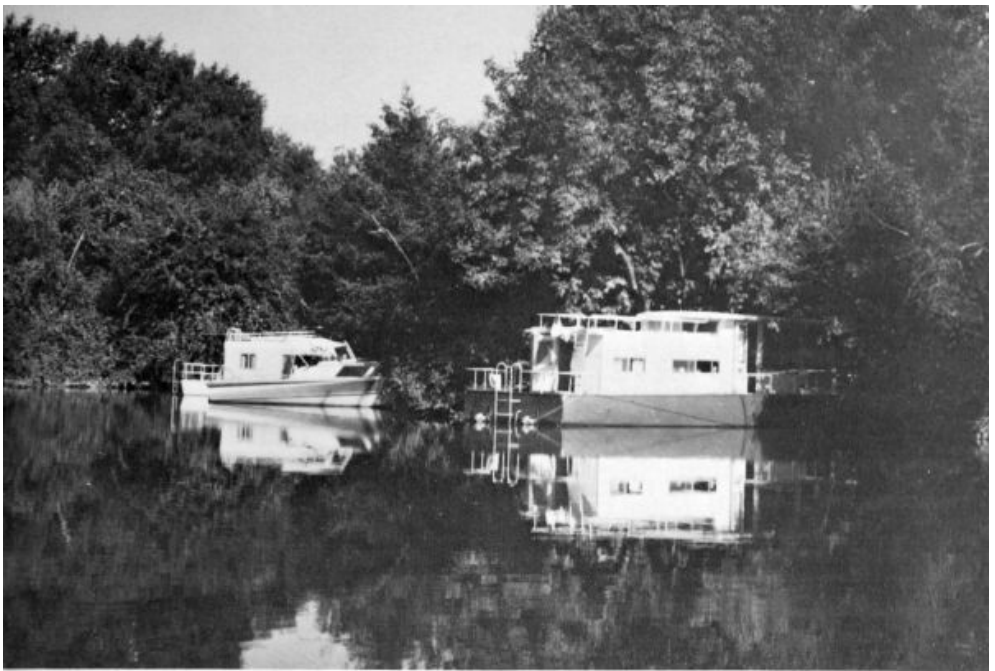
In this part of the Delta country, most of the trees along the levees have been spared. I have heard that someone in a position of power who recognizes aesthetic values has intervened. I have also heard that indignant property owners have organized to put up a fight.

The trouble is that the government is so vast and so impersonal that it is difficult to organize opposition. Many of the people who own the land along the levees object strenuously to having their trees smashed to the ground. But it's the same old story. The governmental octopus moves in and the employee who is running the big dredge merely shrugs his shoulders and goes on with his tree smashing because he has "orders" to do so.

I have never yet talked with an irate citizen who admitted putting a .30-.30 rifle into position and threatening to pull the trigger with the next smash of a tree. But I have heard that citizens did arm themselves and did threaten to shoot.

Somehow I doubt these stories, but they persist, and at least trees remain in The Meadows and places along Snodgrass Slough.

If things follow in logical sequence we may well find that the government engineers suddenly decide that trees along the levees are greatly to be desired and an expensive program of reforestation will be inaugurated. In that event, fifty or seventy-five years from now we can be back where we started.



Still waters, house cruisers, and shade.

The Meadows is a vast and beautiful part of the slough and is generally given over to swimming, houseboating, and camping in houseboats and cruisers; water skiing is frowned upon in The Meadows.

Snodgrass Slough to the north is, by custom, open territory for water skiing, and while houseboats can be moored under the trees there, they are subject to more or less violent rocking when some water skier comes roaring by at thirty to fifty miles an hour.

A boat, any boat, traveling at speed makes a wake, and a wake will sometimes prove disastrous if the owner of a houseboat is just getting a meal ready on the stove, or has,

perhaps, just put soup on the table.

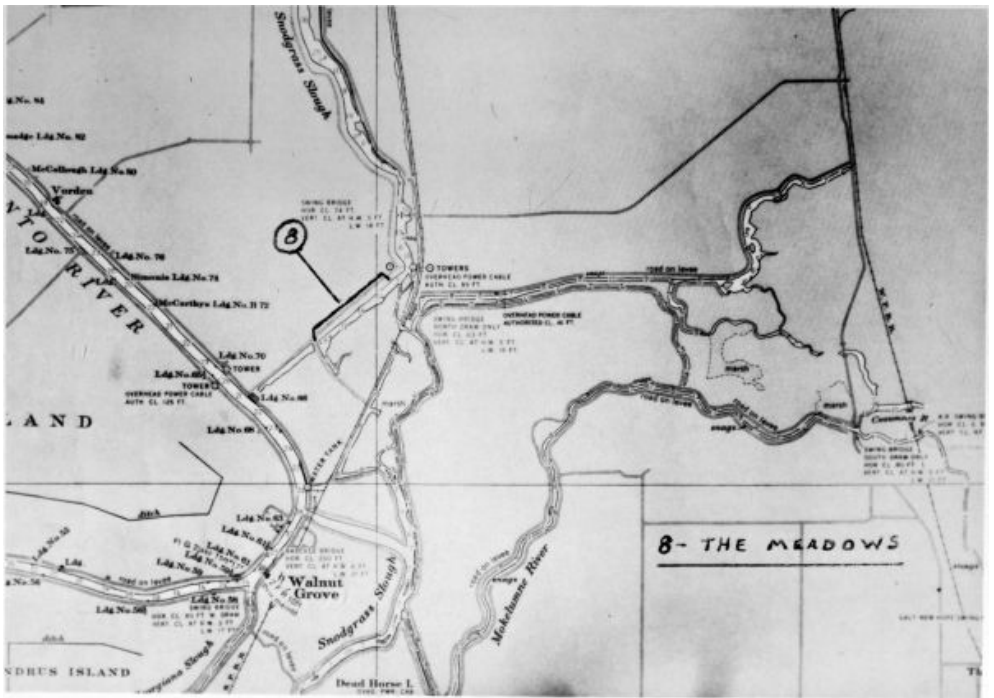
As I have pointed out, the pleasure of houseboating is the houseboating itself, the living in a mobile, floating, electrically controlled apartment where one has all the joys of camping, all the comforts of luxurious living.

It is inevitable that one will find certain sections of the Delta which appeal to him and return there from time to time. It is also inevitable that in so doing he will get to know people in the various resorts, marinas, and other facilities in the area and, in the course of time, form enduring friendships.

Once friends are made the yachtsmen will return at intervals for a brief visit, to check up on what is new in the community and, generally, keep posted on all the various activities of the place.



The Delta offers a variety of activity.



Walnut Grove and the Meadows.



Cheery greeting from a cruising family.

This is the pattern of life from which we make friends out of acquaintances, then weld the friendships into closely knit companionships which affect the entire course of our lives. And this is one of the pleasures of cruising in a houseboat.

You have your own home. You are not intruding upon anyone. You can accept the friendship of people without imposing upon them in any way. You get in the habit of eating in certain restaurants, of trading at certain markets, and almost before you realize it, the friendships that ensue become some of the most valued assets of your life.

To my mind this is part of the charm of houseboating, a part of the rewards of life in the Delta country.



Mrs. Marge Ramey and the Author have a cool drink.



Enthusiastic water skier.

Plans for a Gala

Fifty to seventy-five years ago the waterways were the channels of commerce. Riverboats probed their way up the various sloughs and rivers. The hoarse sound of the steamboat whistles was as familiar to the ears of the river residents as the sound of heavy wheels when the six-, eight-, and ten-horse “freighters” went by.

Then came trucks, paved roads, and a decline in the importance of the waterways.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, fishermen, boating enthusiasts, and water skiers began to appear, and stores selling sporting goods and outboard motors began to make a modest appearance.

Strangely enough, the cities in a position to profit most from the recreational aspects of the Delta country were for the most part asleep at the switch.

During the past decade recreational activities have begun to come to the front as an important economic factor throughout California. Along the shores of the various lakes, waterfront property has soared to astronomical value. Water skiing has become one of the most popular of sports.

At first the cities on the Delta took a rather vague notice of what was happening. Cities that were located on lakes began to advertise like mad. Millionaires put up fine buildings with boathouses on the waterfronts.

Then the economic changes began to affect the cities on the Delta—such places as Sacramento, Stockton, Antioch, Rio Vista, and the smaller towns along the water began to realize its value as a playground.



Joseph's, a converted riverboat on Frank's Tract.

However, those first changes had been too slow and gradual for many of the citizens to become aware of their significance. Even some of the stores regarded this innovation by sportsmen boaters with an amused curiosity.

Then gradually progressive individuals began to build marinas along the waterway. New developments in plastic materials resulted in better boats. The recreational dollars began to multiply from a trickle into a golden stream. People began to retire from active work at an earlier age and live a life of leisure. Residents of Oakland, San Francisco, and Berkeley began to look for some means of relaxation and recreation that wasn't a nightmare of crowded freeways.



The Author looking over various boats.



Bob de Roos enjoys a soda at the Stockton Public Dock.

Stockton took an early lead and put in a Municipal Guest Dock right near the heart of the city. People can come up in boats, register as guests of the city, leave their boats, then go shopping or to some of the fine restaurants.

But most of the cities didn't know what they had. The idea is only gathering real force at the present time.

The idea that Delta cities all enjoy a thousand miles of water frontage along an inland waterway was something the Chambers of Commerce could use as a slogan but nothing that the cities themselves had actually translated into dollars and cents.

Now the era of awakening is at hand. The Delta is beginning to come into its own and the cities along the Delta can reap an annual harvest of millions of dollars by capitalizing on the recreational facilities which nature has given them.



Roland Ayo of Richard's Yacht Center.

I love boating, but I am a poor mechanic.

I can't tell the front end of a spark plug from the differential of a steering wheel. I have never been mechanically minded.

My specialty is human nature. I love people, and, while I have been fooled about them from time to time, it is a rather exceptional experience.

Therefore, when I want to do anything involving mechanics or machinery, I find some person who knows all about the subject, in whom I can have confidence, and then I put myself in his hands.

When I first came to the Delta country I met Bill Abell. I told him I wanted a houseboat. He put me in touch with Roland Ayo, who was a salesman for Dick DeShazer, and after I had had a preliminary talk or two with Ayo, I met Dick DeShazer.

I bought a houseboat and promptly became a houseboat enthusiast.



Richard DeShazer.

Since these people are experts in the field of boating, it is only natural that I have relied on their judgment ever since, a confidence which has never caused me any regret. Dick DeShazer and his wife, Moyne, go out with us when we cruise the Delta country on a vacation from time to time. And Roland Ayo and his wife are always on the job to see that we can get in touch with Dick DeShazer at any time. The result has been a wonderful combination.

I mention this because of the gradual growth of this friendship. Dick DeShazer sold me my first house cruiser, and that led to my writing my first book on the Delta, *The World of Water*.^[1]

[1] William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1965.

Dick liked the book and started to promote it. He got the Chamber of Commerce at Bethel Island interested in buying a large quantity of these books.

For my part, as my needs became greater and I realized more and more the joys of house cruising, I wanted the latest, the best, and the largest, and, as a result, I would trade in a single-motored houseboat in order to get a twin-motored houseboat, and if a later model came out, I'd want that.

So, before we realized it, Dick DeShazer and I were united in a lot of similar interests.

In fact, one observer, noticing our friendship, spread the word that I was financing DeShazer's business. When I heard that I sent this guy a message: "If you can't tell an Angel from a Pigeon," I said, "you'd better give up bird watching."

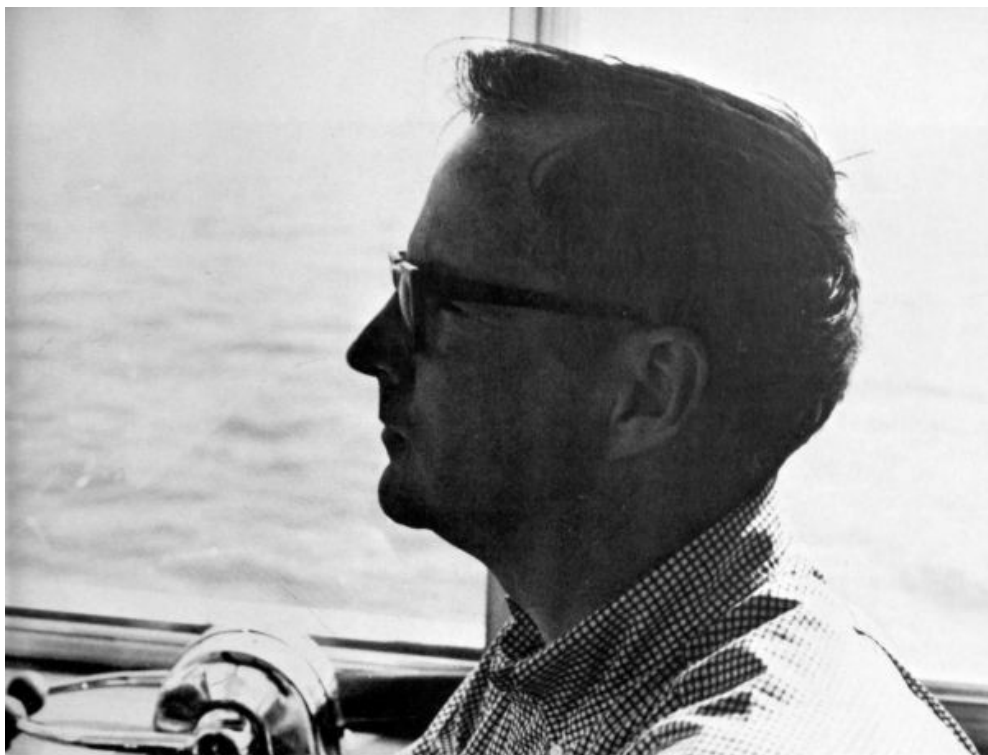
Dick and I have a wonderful friendship, and the real key to that friendship is the Delta with its inland waterways and Dick's desire to see that I always get the breaks in enjoying the recreational opportunities they afford.

The cumulative effects have been far-reaching.

For instance, a couple in Los Angeles buys one of my books and learns about the carefree life of houseboating in the Delta. They also learn that houseboats can be rented for a reasonable fee; so they come up to the Delta country, make inquiries, and wind up renting a boat. They have such a good time they decide to buy a boat. And what better place to buy one than Dick DeShazer's?



Moyne DeShazer.



Larry Hughes, President of William Morrow & Company, Inc.

The president of William Morrow & Company, Larry Hughes, traveling in Greece, ran into a congenial American couple who wanted to know what he did. He told them he was a publisher. They asked him what authors he published. He mentioned Erle Stanley Gardner. Their faces lit up. They had, it seemed, purchased my books on the Delta, gone to Dick DeShazer, purchased a houseboat from him, and regarded it as one of the greatest investments they had ever made.

A couple in New Jersey were given my books on the Delta (by this time there were two of them: *The World of Water* and *Gypsy Days on the Delta*^[2]) by a relative.

[2] William Morrow & Company, 1967.

The man, who had retired and was at loose ends, decided that this was the life for him. He came to California, hunted up Dick DeShazer, and bought a house cruiser.



The Author and Dick DeShazer plan the Stockton cruise.

When Dick and I cruise along the river we are frequently hailed by people on boats anchored nearby who shout, "I certainly enjoy your books, Erle," or, "We rented this houseboat because of your books."

So, what with one thing and another, Dick DeShazer decided to do some promoting on his own. His idea was to get a caravan of River Queens (the house cruiser for which he is distributor) and make a parade up the waterway to Stockton which would be an eye-opener.

An eye-opener is right!

As I pointed out earlier, Stockton was one of the first cities to realize the potential asset of a thousand miles of inland waterways at its door. It began to advertise itself as the home port of the sportsman and to reach out for the recreational dollar.

DeShazer began to count up the number of boats he had sold which were located in and around Bethel Island in the Delta and found a surprising total.



A flotilla of River Queens.



Marty Kofod, of Rio Vista, talks with Dick DeShazer.

Roland Ayo had suggested earlier that some of the River Queen owners should have a picnic, and early in December, 1967, arrangements were made for a small group of some ten or twelve River Queen owners to form a procession along the waterways for a potluck supper, stay overnight, and return the next day.

The operation was a success, so Dick began to wonder what would happen if the same thing were done on a larger scale.

DeShazer approached the CMH Insurance Company which carried insurance on most of his boats. He had recently appointed River Queen dealers in Stockton and Sacramento. He talked to them. He approached the Bridgehead Dry Dock in Antioch which had done the bottom-repainting work on most of the local River Queens. Then this group approached the city of Stockton.

The idea was a novel one, but Stockton was willing to do its share, so the picnic was arranged for the purpose of showing persons who had purchased boats from DeShazer that their patronage was appreciated, of showing that Stockton was keenly aware of its position as a Queen City in the Delta, and, in general, of having a rip-roaring good time.

Since I had purchased two River Queens from DeShazer, I received a double invitation and decided to make it a point to be there.

It was a wonderful experience.

Everybody and everything pulled together, and what had started out to be a simple cruise picnic became a major event.

Departure time was scheduled at noon sharp, leaving from Richard's Yacht Center on Dutch Slough near Bethel Island—the idea being to cruise entirely around Bethel Island, then to pick up more boats at various points along the route, traveling on schedule so that there would be no delay at the points of rendezvous.

I had a distinguished group of wonderfully fine people who came up to join in the cruise and, since one of the rewards of house cruising is the opportunity to meet our friends in the snug intimacy of a floating apartment, it may be well to give a thumbnail sketch of the various persons in my party.

First, there was Cornwell Jackson.



Dick DeShazer struggles over writing a newspaper story.



Cornwell Jackson.

Jackson has been my dramatic agent for something over thirty years. He and his wife, Gail Patrick Jackson, have been the mainspring of Paisano Productions, which produced Perry Mason on television, a production which is generally conceded to be one of the all-time highs from a standpoint of a successful long run and subsequent syndication. (Gail Patrick Jackson was the executive producer.)



Heather and Fred Parisi, Doug Allen, Corney Jackson, Toni (Mrs. Doug) Allen, Bob and Marge McCann enjoy Stockton's hospitality.

Prior to his debut on television Perry Mason had had a twelve-year run on radio in what the sponsors referred to as "daytime drama," but what the general public facetiously labeled "soap opera"—due to its being sponsored by Proctor & Gamble.

I have come to the conclusion there are very few really natural actors in the world, but Corney Jackson is one.

What is it that makes a natural actor?

It is the ability to put on a part in just *exactly* the right manner, without the slightest shade of overtone, without the slightest stumbling in the part.

For my money, Willie (the Actor) Sutton was one of the world's great natural actors.

Willie (the Actor) Sutton, of course, used his talent to confuse the police and rob banks.

When they asked Willie why he always concentrated on banks, he looked at the interrogator in surprise and said, "Because that's where the money is."

You can't beat logic of that sort.

Willie (the Actor) Sutton had a talent amounting to genius.

When Arnold Schuster recognized Willie Sutton on the subway, he followed him to a service station, then went to the police. The police drove up and found Willie sitting there as large as life changing the battery in his car. When asked if he wasn't Willie Sutton, Willie grinned in just the right way, took out his wallet with his fake identification cards, tossed it over with just the right air of indifference, and went on changing the battery.

The police reportedly took a look at the spurious identification cards, were convinced by Sutton's acting the part of an innocent, somewhat amused citizen, and failed to take Sutton into custody.

Just what happened afterward is somewhat contradictory as far as the daily press is concerned. One newspaper has it that the officers actually kept Sutton under surveillance, but at least one other paper states flatly that the officers both returned to the station house, and "only after recounting their experience to a brother officer, decided to go back and take another look at the man who bore a striking resemblance to Willie Sutton."

And there they found Sutton, breezily unconcerned, still engaged in changing the battery. At least, that's the gist of the story as reported in the press.



The Author shaking hands with Willie (the Actor) Sutton, whose attorneys, George Herz and James McArdle, stand by. (Charlotte Brooks, LOOK Magazine photo. Copyright 1952 by Cowles Communications, Inc.)

Now that's what I call acting!

Cornwell Jackson has something of the same ability, the same knack of giving a situation just the right amount of assurance, just the right amount of sang-froid or whatever you want to call it. Not a shade too much, not a tittle too little.

My favorite story about Corney Jackson is when he went to the Olympic Games in Los Angeles and suddenly realized he had left his ticket in his other suit.

He approached one of the men at the gate and explained the situation. He could give them the number of his box, the number of his seat. He could guarantee that no one else would show up with the ticket because his ticket with the seat and box number was in his other suit of clothes.

The man at the gate brushed him aside.

Corney didn't give up as most people would have done. He stood there, thinking the situation over.

Suddenly he saw a cab draw up and A. P. Giannini, the famous banker, got out, started for another gate, reached in his pocket, looked blank, reached in his other pocket, then suddenly went through the motions of panic.

Corney Jackson walked up to the gate just in time to hear Mr. Giannini explaining the situation. He had left his ticket in his other suit of clothes. He could give them the seat and box number, etc., etc., etc.

The young man at the gate turned him down brusquely.

Jackson stepped up. He showed just *exactly* the right amount of importance, just *exactly* the right amount of authority. He wasn't too eager. He wasn't too officious. He wasn't too anything. He was just right.

"Look here, young man," he said, "when I made that rule about not letting *anyone* in without a ticket, I certainly didn't intend that it would apply to distinguished citizens like Mr. A. P. Giannini."

Corney pushed the young ticket-taker to one side and turned to Mr. Giannini. "With your permission, sir," he said "it will give me great pleasure to escort you in *personally*."



Chief Henry R. Morton.

So Jackson and Giannini walked past the dazed ticket-taker into the enclosure.

“Now then,” Corney said, “you know where your box is, Mr. Giannini, and I hope you enjoy the games.”

Giannini was overwhelmed.

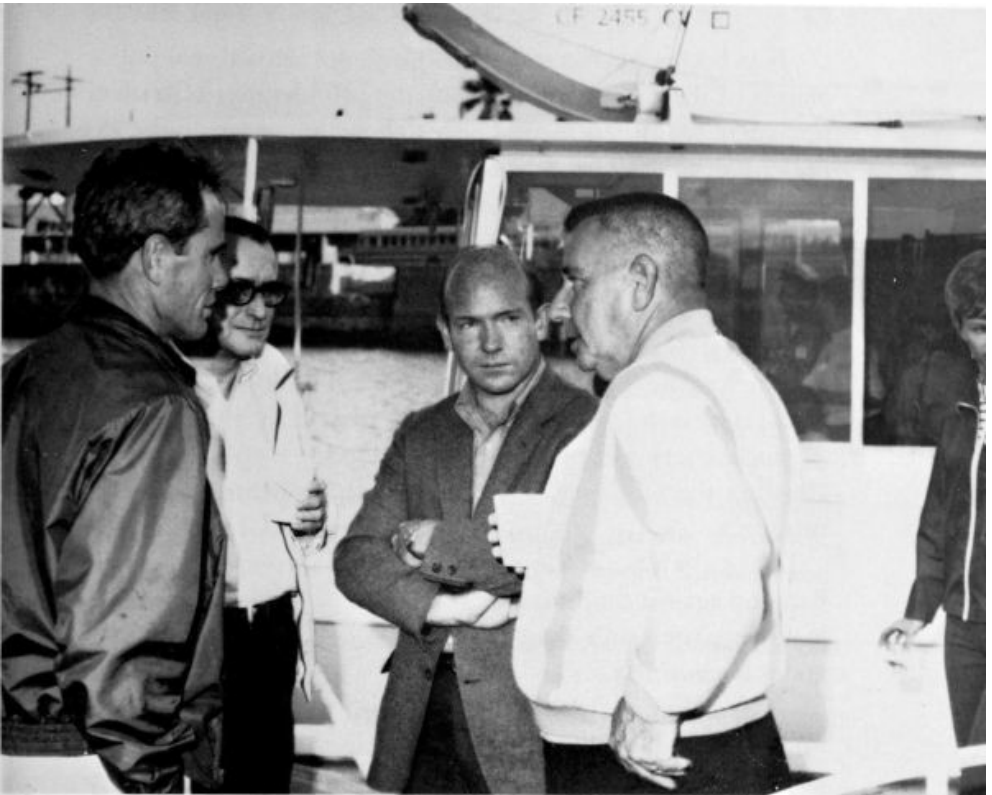
“To what official do I owe this extreme consideration, this great courtesy?” he asked.

Corney grinned at him and said, “Just another guy who forgot his ticket, Mr. Giannini,” and walked away.

That’s Corney Jackson.

On our trip, in addition to Cornwell Jackson, Henry Morton, the Chief of Police of Fresno, joined us.

This was during a time of tense crisis following the assassination of Martin Luther King, and in order to get away over Saturday and Sunday nights Morton had had to relieve his assistants by staying on duty personally all Friday night. He had, as he explained, been able to get about an hour’s sleep at his desk.



Bob McCann, Bob de Roos, Doug Allen listen to Chief H. R. Morton, of Fresno Police Department.

“Hank” Morton is an old-time and a long-time friend. He has been Chief of Police of Fresno for some eighteen years, a job of tremendous responsibility.

Few people realize what the police have to put up with these days.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit new police officers of the caliber required for the complexities of law enforcement. And it is increasingly difficult to persuade the experienced police officer to stay on. Usually he does so only because he has built up so much seniority that he virtually can't afford to quit.

Yet problems calling for police action have never been as numerous. Crime is steadily mounting. Violence is on the increase. Racial and minority tensions are building. All of these require a vastly superior, greatly enhanced police force.

And what are we getting? Just the reverse.

Society seems to be deliberately adopting a policy which is allowing the efficiency of the police departments to deteriorate.

Take the case of rioting by some minority group which flares up against conditions in general.

The citizen tells the police to quell the riot and goes on about his business.

The police are the ones who have to go down into the midst of the shouting, the racial hatred, the throwing of bottles, the bullets of snipers, the looting, the smashing, the burning; and usually their hands are tied. They don't dare draw their weapons until after someone has taken the first shot at the police. They have to use diplomacy and an enormous amount of forbearance.

Is the average citizen grateful?

On the contrary, the average citizen has a generally ingrained antagonism for the officers of the law who protect him and safeguard his interests.

In case after case when an officer has tried to arrest two drunks and the drunks have turned on the officer, a crowd forms, cheers the drunks and jeers the officer—and sometimes takes an active part in preventing the arrest.

Nor is this all. The courts unfortunately have a great ignorance of the *practical* aspects of crime.

Many judges fail to realize that bail-bond companies will cheerfully furnish bond for anyone who can put up a premium. A judge fixes bail at three thousand dollars. The defendant pays a bail-bond company a three-hundred-dollar premium and is out on the street in time to commit five more crimes before he is again arrested for one of them.

Instead of recognizing a habitual criminal the judge automatically fixes bail at three thousand dollars and the defendant promptly pays his three-hundred-dollar premium and is out again.

Theoretically all these crimes will someday catch up with the culprit. In practice the D.A. usually lets the defendant "cop a plea" on one count of the indictment and dismisses the other counts.

After that first crime, all the others are, so to speak, "on the house."

As I have repeatedly said, you can't buy good law enforcement in the bargain basement.

Someday society is going to wake up with a terrific jolt.

The citizen who hears a prowler breaking into his house can call the police and he may call in vain simply because the overworked, understaffed police force has more than it can do and not enough facilities at its command to do even a normal job, let alone a job where its responsibilities have been greatly magnified and its personnel has deteriorated.

Hank Morton is a conscientious, able Chief of Police.

Hank Morton doesn't play favorites. He believes he is paid to give Fresno the best possible law enforcement, and he tries to do just that.

When the politically powerful announcer of one of the television stations was given a citation for jaywalking and wanted Morton to censure the officer who had committed the unpardonable transgression against his authority, Morton didn't even turn a hair. He told the important political figure exactly where to get off and told him that laws were made to be obeyed.

This started quite a feud.

Hank couldn't have cared less.

When an officious city manager decided that Hank had been in office too long and got the job of City Manager of Fresno with the avowed intention of firing the Chief of Police, and then advanced charges that Morton was doing everything from falsifying records to various malfeasances in office, Hank didn't hesitate for a moment. He is reported to have called the manager a cheap, two-bit jackass.

This resulted in a list of charges including everything from insubordination to lack of respect and cooperation.

Some of the citizens of Fresno decided Hank needed a little help.

My telephone rang. A voice said, "Is this Erle Stanley Gardner?"

"Right."

"I'm a friend of Hank Morton's. Hank needs you. He needs all his friends."

"When does he need me?"

The voice gave me a date.

I didn't even take the time to look at my calendar to see if I'd have to cancel out on something else.

"I'll be there," I said. "Jean Bethell, my executive secretary, will be there, and Sam Hicks, my ranch manager, will be there."

We were there.

So was just about every important figure in that section of California. Hundreds of citizens crowded into the biggest hall in Fresno. There was standing room only.



Art and Naomi Bernard.

Never had there been a meeting of endorsement like that. The hall was simply overflowing with people.

There weren't many speeches. There didn't have to be. The overwhelming endorsement of numbers did the job. After that meeting no one said anything about turning Hank Morton out of office.

Two more of my friends showed up to make the Stockton trip, Art and Naomi Bernard from Carson City.

To say that Art Bernard is a colorful character is quite an understatement. He had a checkered career as a youth. He worked on all sorts of jobs. He was a prize fighter and a good one. He became the State Mining Inspector of Nevada and has acquired a vast knowledge of mines, minerals, and mineralogy. Then he became warden of the state prison at Carson City and, while he is too modest to admit it, is an outstanding authority in the field of penology.



Archie Moore supervises a steak barbecue at the Gardner ranch.

Art's ideas of penology do not represent the type of conventional thinking which comes from books, but the rugged, two-fisted ideas which work in actual practice. He has been in a position where he has had to make them work, and so he makes them work.

Art is about six feet two or three. He has no spare flesh on his frame, and he can probably go four or five fast rounds right now with just about anyone in the business.

As a matter of fact, he is a great friend of Archie Moore, and he and Archie have had several sessions with the gloves.

Needless to say, Art Bernard considers Archie Moore not only a formidable antagonist but a first-class fighter and first-class citizen to boot.

It is one of the tragedies of our minority problems that when some outstanding Negro has sense enough and perspective enough to see things in the proper light, he is promptly tabbed by the extremist members of his own race as an Uncle Tom.

As long as people continue to have their perspectives warped and distorted we are going to have troubles which are always on the increase.

I have corresponded with Archie Moore for years. He has been a visitor at my ranch and I respect him as a thinker, as a citizen, and a big-caliber man.

Art Bernard is not only quite a hunter, he is an outstanding dog trainer.

How he trains dogs he doesn't know, and no one else has ever been able to find out, but Bernard will take a hunting dog that has been sent to all the training schools in the country without effect and inside of a few weeks will have that dog doing everything except higher

mathematics, and he does it without a fanfare of trumpets. He simply manages to reach the dog and make the dog want to do what Art Bernard wants him to do.

There is one incident in Bernard's career which is so typical it furnishes a key to the man's character.

When Art first took over the running of the penitentiary at Carson City he was only a political appointee. He had had virtually no experience in the field of penology and, of course, the inmates knew it.

They decided to "test his air."

Shortly after he had been appointed, the captain of the guard came to him.

"Warden," he said, "we have ways of getting information out of the prison that are highly confidential because any inmate who gave information to the guards would be killed if the others knew about it. So I'm not going to try to tell you the source of my information, but I *am* going to tip you off to what's going to happen."

"What's going to happen?" Bernard asked.

"The men are going to stage a riot at mealtime this evening," the captain said. "They're going to smash up the benches and tables. They're going to smash up everything that's breakable. They're going to throw the plates out of the windows. They're going to take the cooking range to pieces and throw it out into the warden's yard."

It may be noted parenthetically that at this time the prison dining room was on the second floor, and while, of course, the windows were barred, there were places in between the bars where smashed things could be thrown, and the warden's residence was set back some distance but was within plain sight of the dining-room windows.

"So what do I do?" Bernard asked.

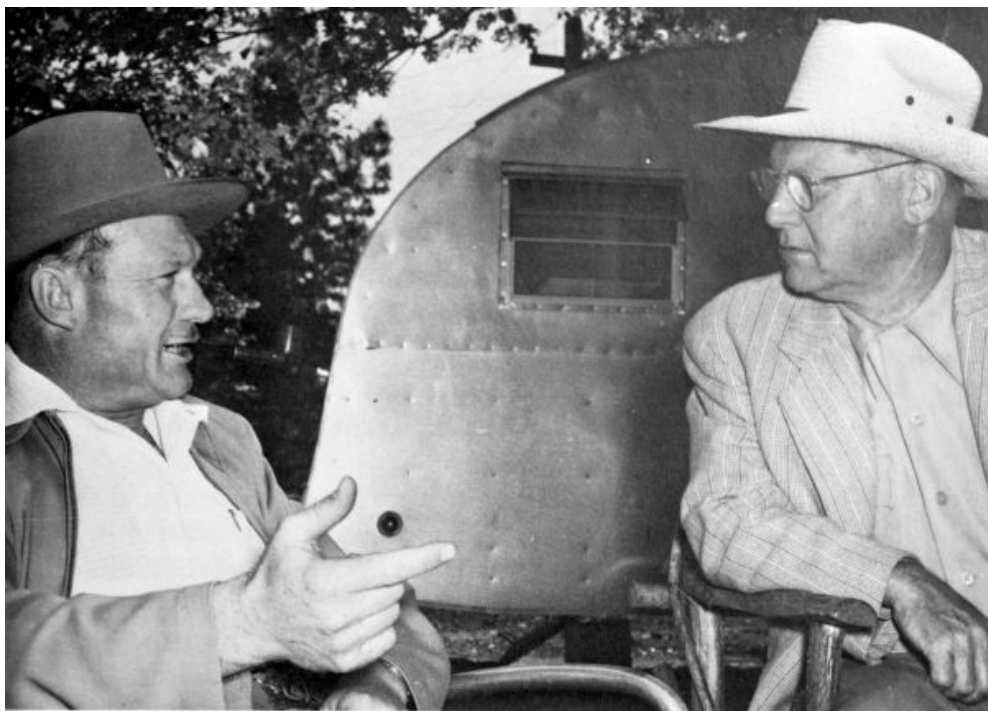
"Just keep out of the way," the captain said. "There's not much you can do when a riot starts. You've got to let them work off the hysteria which always generates in a mass demonstration of that sort. Then when the time is ripe you can come in and control it. But don't be where they can grab you and hold you as a hostage. Otherwise they may hurt you or they may make an issue out of having you as a hostage and demand that the Governor come down to hear their complaints and all that sort of thing."

Art thought that over.

If he was going to run the prison, he saw no reason to keep out of any part of it.

That afternoon when the inmates assembled for their last meal of the day, Art waited until they were seated, then went in and stood in front of the men.

"It's come to my attention," he said, "that you want to know what kind of a warden you have. You want to test his air. You're planning on having a little riot. You're going to smash up the tables and you're going to smash up the benches. You're going to throw the dishes out of the window. You're going to take the cooking range to pieces and throw it out of the window.



Art Bernard tells the Author about a threatened prison riot.

“That’s okay by me.

“If you want to do it, go ahead. No one’s going to stop you. I’ll tell the guards not to interfere.

“When we get all the things smashed and all of the wreckage scattered around, you fellows can start cleaning it up. You can clean it up just as scrupulously as you want to. This floor is cement and I’ll give you soapsuds. I’ll give you antiseptics. I’ll give you absolutely anything you need to make that floor spotless.

“If you don’t want to eat sitting at tables and on benches, you don’t have to. If you don’t want to use plates when you eat, I’m not going to force you to eat off plates. And, by the same sign, if you smash this stuff up, I’m not going to ask the taxpayers to replace it with new stuff.

“So in the long run it’s up to you. We’ll have that cement floor cleaned up and I mean it’ll be clean. It’ll be just as clean as any plate you ever ate off of. I’ll see that you have all the cleaning materials in the world, because that’s where you’re going to eat. We’ll put the food in piles on the floor. Each man will have his individual pile and he can get down on his hands and knees and eat it off the floor.

“If that’s the way you want it, just let me know, because that the way it’s going to be.”

Something about Art’s speech carried conviction—which it damn well should have because he meant every word of it. He might not have lasted long as a warden, but while he lasted the inmates would have been eating off the cement floor.

Then Art turned toward the door, leaving the thunder-struck inmates watching him with open-mouthed consternation.

At the door he turned and walked back. "I don't know about you fellows," he said, "but with me when I make a damn good speech I'm accustomed to having somebody applaud."

Art stood there for a minute with a half-smile on his face and then one of the inmates applauded, and the first thing anyone knew the whole room was resounding with applause and the men were laughing.

Art walked out.

They didn't have any riot.

The story of my first encounter with Art Bernard and, incidentally, with his wife, Naomi, is a story in itself.

I had gone to Reno on a Saturday noon to make a speech. It was, I believe, before a luncheon club. And, while I was there, I was killing two birds with one stone. I was going to talk to the Reno Bar Association in the evening.

I had finished my talk to the luncheon club and stood around briefly, shaking hands, visiting with people, and mentally counting the minutes until I could gracefully withdraw to my room in the hotel and get a good long siesta.

Art Bernard, whom I had never seen before, came bearing down on me with grim purpose sticking out all over him.

After you have made so many appearances before luncheon clubs you can spot his type a mile away. I knew as soon as I saw him that the guy had something he wanted me to do and I stiffened my resistance.

Art came up with a disarming smile. He introduced himself.

Those were the days when I was active in the so-called Court of Last Resort, a voluntary organization of men who contributed their time to improving the administration of justice, investigating cases of penniless individuals who had been wrongfully convicted of murder, sentenced to life imprisonment, who had exhausted all their legal remedies.

That work took us all over the country, into all sorts of penitentiaries, and brought us into contact with all sorts of prisoners and, incidentally, with all sorts of wardens.

Art was the warden of the Nevada State Penitentiary at Carson City at the time, but I didn't know this until after he introduced himself. He was expansive and hospitable, apparently as wide open and innocent as a baby.

"I want to invite you to take a ride with me," he said, "down to Carson City. I want to show you my penitentiary."

"Thank you very much," I told him, "but I'm afraid I don't have time to look at the penitentiary this afternoon. I have other plans."

"This," he said, "will be a remarkable experience. A man in your line of work should grasp every opportunity to learn about penology and inmates."

"Thank you," I said, "I have studied the subject from many angles."

"My penitentiary is small," he persisted, "and in a small penitentiary run by one man you have opportunities you wouldn't have in the bigger penitentiaries. For instance, you can move casually along death row and chat with the people who are awaiting execution. You can talk with anyone you want in the institution and I'll see that they open up and talk with you. And then, of course, we have something that you could never get in the larger institutions; that is, the penitentiary has a feminine side that's separated by just a barrier from the men's side, and my wife, Mrs. Bernard, is the matron in charge of the prison. She—"

“Mr. Bernard,” I interrupted firmly and positively, “I have other plans for this afternoon. I appreciate your invitation. I appreciate the opportunities that you could offer me, but I am *not* going out to Carson City to visit your penitentiary.”

I turned away.

Art Bernard stepped a little back and to one side, somewhat nonplused at my vehemence, but not by any means giving up. He was just regrouping his forces, looking for another angle of attack. I recognized it in his facial expression and the way he stood, in the fact that he didn't turn on his heel and get the hell out of there.

It made me mad.

Then a bevy of women came bearing down on me.

The woman who was evidently the spokesman was pushed forward until her bosom seemed about to touch my more than ample chest. Her earnest, purposeful eyes bored into mine.

“Mr. Gardner,” she said, “you have an opportunity to convey a priceless boon on our writers' club. We have been looking forward to this for a long time.

“We have investigated your schedule and find you have the afternoon free. We girls are looking forward to a talk from you. We also have a few stories that the members have written and which have been selected by our group of judges as outstanding stories.

“We want your opinion on those stories, and perhaps, with your editorial connections, you can do something about marketing them. It's so hopeless, you know, for people who are out here in Nevada to try to crash the big Eastern editorial market without *some* connections.

“I'm sure you won't say ‘No,’ Mr. Gardner. After all, a man in your public position has a corresponding duty to the public and . . .”

Art Bernard stepped determinedly forward.

“I'm very sorry, madam,” he said. “I know that Mr. Gardner would like very much indeed to attend the meeting of your club, but unfortunately you are in error in assuming that he has his time open this afternoon. As a matter of fact, he has the entire time taken up with a visit to the penitentiary at Carson City, and he is scheduled to talk to some of the inmates.

“For your information, Mr. Gardner is pretty much idolized by the inmates and they know he has their best interests at heart. They listen to what he has to say, and his inspirational talks have resulted in their rehabilitation in various other jurisdictions. I know you wouldn't want to deprive these men of an inspirational talk.

“Come on, Mr. Gardner.”

And Art reached out and took me by the arm.

I meekly went along.

The dirty so-and-so.

During that drive to Carson City I began to realize that I had been jobbed by experts and that there was somewhere in the background some game that someone was playing for big stakes.

I sized Art Bernard up. I listened to his elaborately casual conversation, his views about the death penalty, the death cell, prison inmates; and then the tragedy of the young women who were sentenced to life imprisonment, who had to spend their entire lives within the crowded, cramped confines of the women's quarters at his little prison, watching their youth evaporate, confronted only with menial routine tasks, devoid of inspiration, their lives curtailed by the fact that in a small state and in a small prison there were no inspirational opportunities.

When we arrived at the prison, it was quite apparent that it had been elaborately prepared for my visit.

Coming out of Art's office with a very casual air was Emma Jo Johnson.

She gave him some papers and then walked away.

I watched her walk.

Men are not particularly smart about women's clothes. At the moment I was very dumb. I watched Emma Jo walk because it was easy to watch her walk. And Emma Jo's back indicated that she knew I was watching.

If I had been more astute, I would have wondered what in hell any female inmate was doing with a prison uniform of that type.

Prison uniforms for female convicts are not particularly stylish. They are drab and fashioned for utility rather than sex appeal. Naomi Bernard, Art's wife, and Emma Jo Johnson must have sat up nights designing that uniform.

It was a dilly. The fit across the hips was something out of this world.

Also, old prison dog that I was, it never occurred to me to question why a female inmate from the women's side of the penitentiary would be coming out of Art Bernard's office, handing him papers and then heading on a long walk away from me toward the feminine side of the prison.

"Who's the woman?" I asked.

"A female inmate," Art said, his manner still elaborately casual.

"What's she in for?"



Emma Jo Johnson.

“Life.”

“What for?”

“Murder.”

There was a moment’s silence.

“A murder committed with a can opener,” Art went on to explain.

“A can opener!”

“That’s right.”

“How can one person murder another with a can opener? What was it, some newfangled . . .”

“No, just an old-fashioned fifteen-cent can opener,” Art Bernard said. “Some doctor down in Las Vegas testified that it caused a subdural hematoma.”

“A subdural hematoma with a can opener—how long before death?”

Art yawned. “I don’t remember the details.”

“Any preliminary symptoms?” I asked. “Any indication of the pupil of one eye being enlarged and fixed?”

“Don’t ask me,” Art said, yawning again. “The doctors testified. The jury believed them. Emma Jo was convicted of murder with a can opener and she’s up here doing life. Too bad, too, she’s a nice kid.”

“How did she hold the can opener?” I asked.

“I don’t know. No one knows. They found the can opener on the floor under a chair somewhere, and one of the doctors figured it was a murder weapon.”

That’s how easy I was hooked.

Within hours I was in a long-distance telephone conversation with Dr. LeMoyné Snyder, the world famous medicolegal expert who was a member of the Court of Last Resort, finding out all about subdural hematomas.



Kay Witt (Miss Stockton) presents a Commodore's Certificate to the Author.



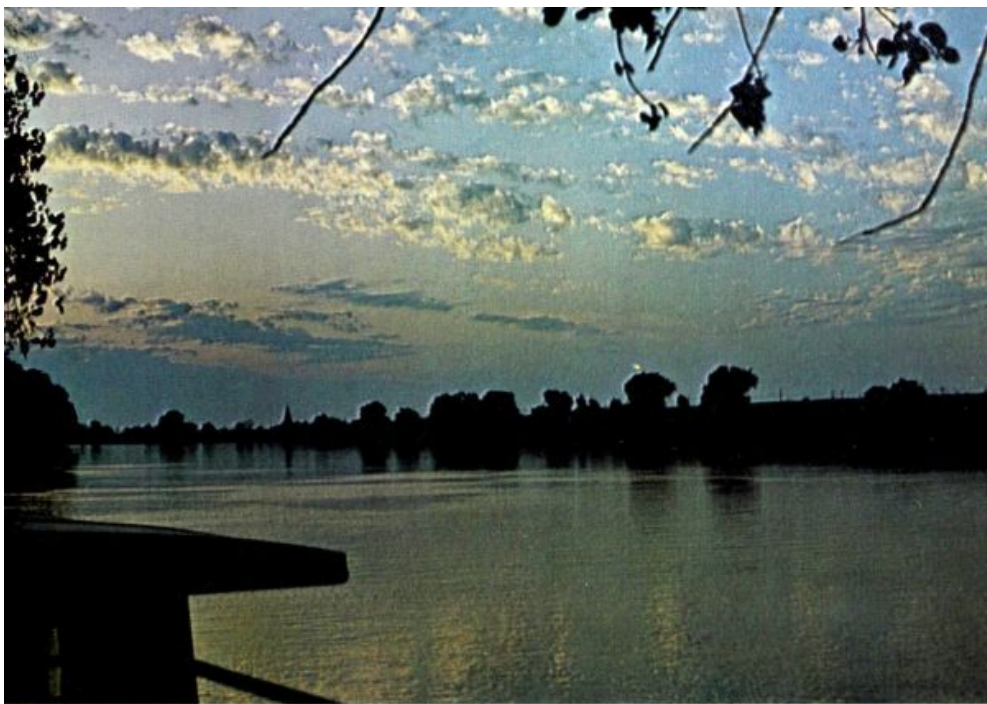
River Queen owners and their guests at Stockton.



Dick DeShazer piloting the Ken Craft.



Sam Hicks fishing from the Smith Craft.



Delta sunset.



One of the many water skiers.



The cat and the quail.



“Mo” Morais, the Author, Mark Morais, and Sam Hicks.

That was one of the craziest cases the Court of Last Resort ever investigated. For months I was running all over the country. Dr. Snyder came down from Paradise. We went to Las Vegas. We took tape recorders and got statements. We hunted up Bud Bodell, the famous private detective in Las Vegas. I incurred the personal wrath of the judge who had sentenced Emma Jo Johnson. We had hearings and meetings and meetings and hearings. We finally went before the Governor and the Board of Parole. We presented expert medical testimony. We uncovered evidence that, while the victim had indeed died of a subdural hematoma, it was the result of natural causes. We got Emma Jo Johnson pardoned. We had half the officials of the state of Nevada enraged to a point of incoherence.

Then the producer of the television show, “This Is Your Life,” learned about the case and inveigled Emma Jo Johnson into the studio on some pretext, and the next thing anybody knew we were all on national television, women were emoting all over the stage, and Emma Jo was receiving a deluge of congratulations and gifts.

And, of course, somewhere along the line, I learned that it had all worked out just as Art Bernard and Naomi had hoped. In fact, they had baited the trap so elaborately that I had been brought into it a step at a time. It couldn’t even be said that I was enticed into it. I waded in.

That’s my friend, Art Bernard.

And his wife, Naomi.

I could tell other stories, but this will suffice to show the sort of man I was dealing with.

And as far as Naomi was concerned, she should have been a Parisian dress designer. That “uniform” Emma Jo was wearing when I met her had anything beat that Paris ever turned out.

When Emma Jo turned away from me and started the long walk down the corridor toward the women's quarters . . . oh, well, that's all over, and I'm older now than I was then.



Emma Jo Johnson and Naomi Bernard.



Bob de Roos, nationally known writer.

Of course, I realize that Art Bernard was only a cog in the machine. He was acting out a script which had been carefully planned for him. His job was to get me down to the prison in the first place. And I have to admit he used considerable ingenuity in carrying out that part of the task.

The moral of this is, don't ever underestimate the power of a woman, and, particularly, don't ever underestimate the power of two women.

To return to the Delta, in addition to the others in the group, we had Robert de Roos coming up to cover the trip.

Bob de Roos is a famous writer. When I first knew him he was a newspaper reporter on the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He and Pierre Salinger, who later became famous as President Kennedy's press secretary, were working together trying to free a convict who had been found guilty of setting fire to one of the cheaper San Francisco hotels. As I remember it, twenty-one persons had perished in the conflagration and this unfortunate man had been given twenty-one life sentences *to be served consecutively*—the idea was that they had put him in and thrown the key away and never intended to let him get out.

The *Chronicle* dug down through the mass hysteria and came to the conclusion that this man, a Negro, had been convicted wrongfully. They felt that undue pressure had been brought to bear upon one of the witnesses and that the story this witness told on the stand might well have been concocted to please the authorities rather than have been an actual account of what happened.

This was prior to the time Harry Steeger of *Argosy* magazine and I had organized the so-called Court of Last Resort.

Some years later, after the Court of Last Resort had been organized, I remembered the case and hunted up Bob de Roos, who by that time, as I remember it, was one of the editors of *Collier's* magazine; and I looked up Pierre Salinger, who had not as yet gone into politics but was either still with the *Chronicle* or was a free-lance writer, I have forgotten which.

In any event, using the work they had done, starting where they had left off and digging into some stuff on our own, the Court of Last Resort was able to present a very convincing case indicating a miscarriage of justice, and the inmate was released. For several years now he has been in the free world, writing me a letter from time to time to let me know that he is grateful for our efforts.

Bob de Roos has written for all the big magazines and, at the time of our trip, was engaged in writing a documentary film on my life and background.

The photography was being done by Douglas Allen who is generally conceded to be one of the best rough-and-tumble outdoor photographers in the world.

There are, of course, excellent photographers who make a study of a subject before they photograph it, watching the lights and shadows, selecting the best time of day to take the picture, and so on.

Doug Allen has no time for any of this.

In the first place, many of Doug Allen's pictures are shot from the air at a speed of two or three hundred miles an hour, with Doug piloting the plane with one hand and working the camera with the other. Doug is an expert flyer.

There are only a few really topflight people who can work on this rough-and-tumble, catch-as-catch-can basis and emerge with consistently good photographs. In fact, as far as I know, the profession considers there are only two in the really top rank and Doug Allen is one of these two.

Doug was accompanied by his associate, Bob McCann, who handles the sound effects, running the tape recorder and then arranging to coordinate sound and picture into final print.



Doug Allen, flying photographer.



Doug Allen and Bob McCann, sound engineer and film editor.

These two had just returned from a trip to Mexico with us where we had been the guests of the Mexican Government. At the suggestion of my close friend, Wulfrano Ruiz, we went to Mexico City on the railroads to receive an audience with ex-President Lic. Miguel Alemán, who not only gave us a long interview, but followed it up by giving a luncheon in our honor.

After that we had taken the train to Mazatlán, the new ferry boat to La Paz, and then had flown home from La Paz.

On this trip we had been accompanied most of the time by Cornwell Jackson, who I've mentioned earlier, and all of the time by my inseparable associates, Jean Bethell, who has been with me for many, many years, and Sam Hicks, my right hand in all matters pertaining to adventure in the outdoors. Sam has been with me for only twenty-odd years, but during that time has seen more travel and adventure than most people see in a lifetime.

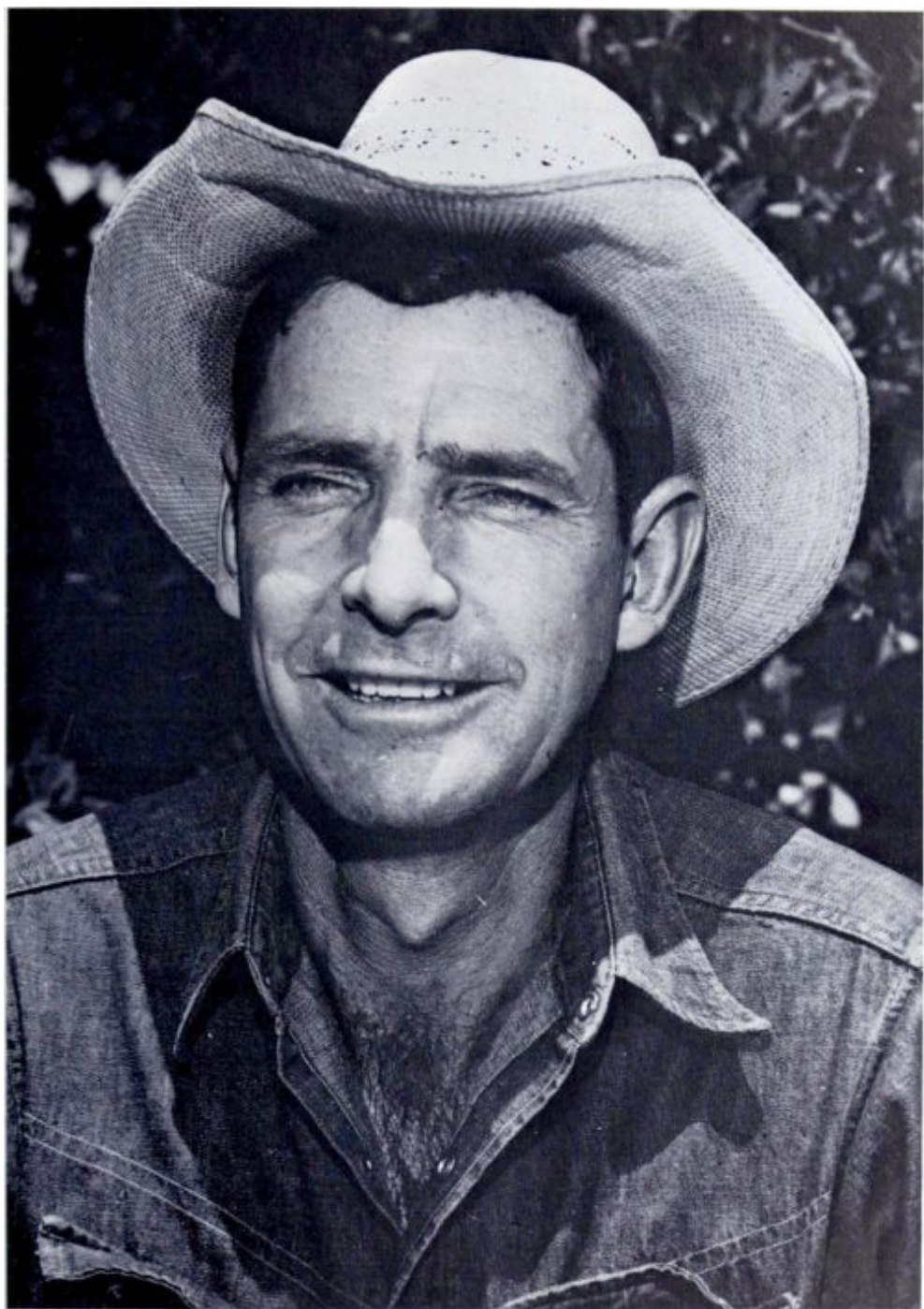
Jean Bethell was one of my secretaries when I was practicing law many years ago and before I ever thought of writing anything. She and her two sisters, Ruth Moore and Peggy Downs, were secretaries in the law office. They have made my success their life's work, know everything about the business, about the people I know, the contacts I have, and are so thoroughly familiar with the characters I have created that their advice in connection with the television presentation of those characters has been invaluable.

Sam Hicks is a complex character. He is a writer who has published a book of his own. He is part owner of a magazine that is attracting a lot of attention. He is an expert in anything pertaining to the outdoors, camping, hunting, riding, breaking broncos, handling a string of packhorses—you name it, he does it.

When I first knew Sam he was an outfitter and a rancher in Wyoming. He was conceded even by his rivals to be just about the most efficient elk hunter in the state.



Jean Bethell and Doug Allen.



Sam Hicks.

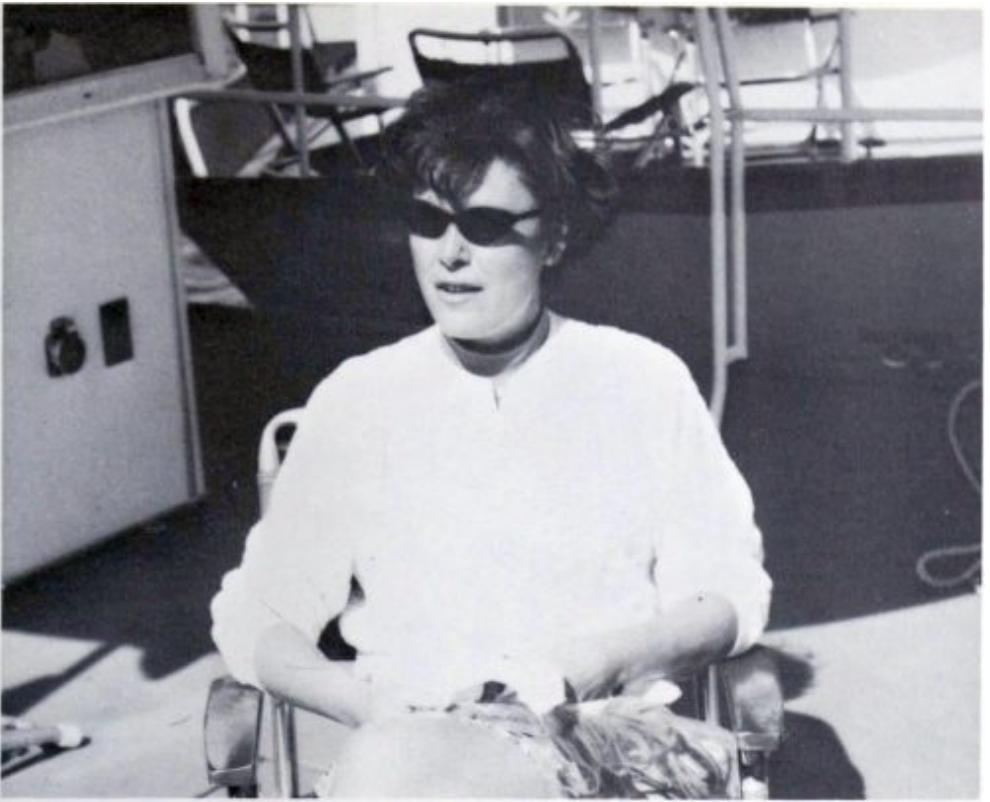
Lawrence Hughes, President of William Morrow & Company, and his wife, Rose, flew out from New York to participate in the cruise up to Stockton. Having published both of my books on the Delta country and having made one cruise with me, Hughes wanted to participate in the Stockton activities so he could enlarge his firsthand knowledge of the area.

Larry's wife, Rose, is a woman who fits in and that's about the best way of describing her that I know.

If there's a social gathering, she fits. If she's doing a job as a housewife and mother, she does it. If she's on a houseboat and anybody needs a helping hand, Rose is there and she has the helping hand.



Rose and Larry Hughes at Korth's.



Rose Hughes.

My brother, Dr. Kenneth D. Gardner, who is a doctor in San Francisco, also came up. He was accompanied by his wife, Dorothy.

I have a pardonable pride in my brother, Kenneth.

Our father was a very wonderful man. He was a little short on formal education, but he was one of the most able men I have ever known. He had wonderful judgment and an accurate perspective. I don't think, in all of his long career as a mining expert and engineer, he ever made a real mistake in judgment.

My brother, inherited a lot of our father's ability, acumen, and perspective.

Kenneth took up medicine as a career but doesn't do any surgery. He specializes in internal medicine and diagnosis, but when Kenneth gets on the track of some abnormal condition, he follows through with the relentless determination of a bloodhound on the trail.



Dr. K. D. Gardner, Dorothy Gardner, and Mrs. Jo Cheney boating with J. W. Black, Jr.

When his patients need surgery and Kenneth has to refer them to a team of surgeons, he doesn't pick out the ones who have prominent social standing or who are lodge brothers; he picks out the most efficient team of surgeons in that particular field in the whole city of San Francisco, and that team of surgeons knows mighty well that they are being put to a test, that Kenneth is watching every move they make and is going to camp at the bedside of the patient, checking on every development.



Dr. K. D. Gardner, Art Bernard, and Jean Bethell in the new Holiday Inn Convention Center at Stockton.

These doctors who specialize in internal medicine don't get the fees that the surgeons do. They have to work long hours. They have to make far too many night calls. They have far too little family life, but they represent the cream of the crop as far as I'm concerned. They are the ones who do the worrying; they have to reach an opinion as to what is to be done, and their opinion has to be right.

As he gets older, Kenneth reminds me so much of my father in appearance and mannerisms that it gives my heart-strings a tug to see him at work.

My father was a diagnostician in the field of mineralogy. If he had been a doctor, he would have been an equally good diagnostician.

We don't know all there is to know about heredity, and sometimes, as I look at Kenneth puzzling over a patient's chart, I wonder just how much of my father is incorporated in what Kenneth is doing and whether my father is, perhaps, standing in the background giving a nod of approval.

With the exception of Hank Morton, all these men were accompanied by their wives. The ladies took over one River Queen, the men the other, and at the appointed hour we were ready for the cruise to Stockton.



Dorothy Gardner and Dr. K. D. Gardner.

Flotilla of River Queens

Richard DeShazer and his associates had been forced to do a terrific amount of planning in order to get their cruise under way. And, by the same token, the city of Stockton had had to pitch in and do a tremendous amount of teamwork.

The plan was to have the cruise start from Richard's Yacht Center, which is on Dutch Slough a few hundred feet to the west of the bridge which connects the highway to Bethel Island. The cruise would turn almost immediately into Taylor Slough, follow around the north end of Bethel Island to a point below Bethel Harbor, then cut across the body of water known as Frank's Tract around the north end of Mandeville Island until the Stockton Deepwater Channel was encountered. From that point the long run would be made into Stockton.

In various places along the route other River Queens were to be standing by, ready to join in the procession. The whole thing had been worked out carefully on a time schedule so that things would proceed like clockwork.

April fifth had been somewhat overcast and threatening, but, fortunately, the morning of the sixth dawned warm and clear, and by eleven o'clock there was an atmosphere of excitement around DeShazer's dock as people made last-minute preparations.



Sam Hicks, Bob de Roos, and Paul Vincent eating a hearty lunch on the River Queen.

Paul Vincent, representing the River Queen Company, had flown out from Gary, Indiana, to be present. Representatives of KJOY, the Stockton television channel, were there, and also representatives of KCRA, the Sacramento television station, were on hand.

Joe Cecchini, the CMH representative from Stockton, came down to make sure everything was in order; and, as a pulchritudinous eyeful, Kay Witt, who enjoys the title of "*Miss Stockton*," was on hand to distribute literature, place name tags and, in general, act as hostess and see that people understood Stockton was proud of its position as Queen City of the Delta waterways.

The television channels set up their cameras, interviewed various individuals, and then, with a blare of whistles, the caravan got under way.



Joe Cecchini of Stockton and the Author.

The channels along the waterways are undergoing a continual change with improvements constantly being made, so that up Taylor Slough there are miles of docks, one marina after another.

It is not only a matter of courtesy but of law to keep the speed down when passing these docks because a high speed can leave a wake which will start the boats banging against each other or against the sides of the dock, whereas a speed of five miles an hour or less makes only a negligible wake.



The cruise moves along to tunes of merry banjo music.

There have been times, when I was possessed of the curse of hurry, hurry, hurry, that these restrictions were somewhat irksome, but gradually I am getting to a point where the philosophy of the river has penetrated my thinking and now it is a pleasure to cruise slowly along at five miles an hour, watching the different boats, enjoying the ever-changing scenery, and, in general, simply relaxing.



Covered berths at Bethel Island.

I have frequently said that one of the great advantages of houseboating is that you don't necessarily have any fixed destination. The minute you untie the lines and get out in the channel, you are there, isolated from the outside world, in a luxurious, floating apartment that is all your own and offers all the creature comforts.

I have never had a better illustration than on that trip to Stockton.



Our newest River Queen can be controlled from either the wheelhouse or the flying bridge.

We hadn't been away from the dock more than fifteen minutes when a group got together in the main cabin and began having the time of their lives.

Moyne DeShazer had gone along on our boat to supervise the culinary facilities because her husband was up on the flying bridge, piloting the boat.

On the other hand, my other River Queen, with Sam Hicks as pilot, had Jean Bethell acting as hostess.

On that boat the wives got together and had woman-talk. Sam, at the controls, missed the jam session on the other boat, but was surrounded by a bevy of good-looking women.

On our boat men started shooting the breeze and began to reminisce.

Corney Jackson had been the head of J. Walter Thompson in Hollywood for years. As such he had dealt with all of Hollywood's outstanding personalities and had bought dozens of shows for advertisers. He was full of anecdotes.

Art Bernard is a great outdoorsman, a hunter and fisherman, and Hank Morton had stories of police problems and public apathy which were absorbing.

We had iceboxes filled with chopped ice, beer, and soft drinks. We also had a stock of hard liquor and our hosts had seen to it that the boats were well supplied with chilled champagne.

The crowd on our boat was composed of the sort of men who will take just enough liquor to be sociable and then quit, and this served to keep the conversational ball rolling.



Toni Allen, Rose Hughes, Sam Hicks, and Margo McCann.



A part of the River Queen flotilla on the Stockton cruise.

That was a memorable experience, that cruise up the sloughs and up the Stockton Channel.

I wanted to take pictures, but I just couldn't tear myself away from the conversation long enough to get out on deck with a camera. It was one of the most interesting jam sessions I have ever experienced.

From time to time we'd look out of the wide windows and see the scenery drifting past. Moyne had plenty of hot coffee on the stove and a sumptuous lunch on the table—salad, sandwiches, cold ham and beef, a hot casserole dish, cakes, cookies, and a big pie.

We had started out on what promised to be a long trip, but all of a sudden the afternoon evaporated into nothing.

Before we knew it other River Queen cruisers were joining in the procession with shouts of welcome; and then we were approaching the head of the Stockton Channel with a hostess boat packed with prominent citizens of Stockton coming out to meet us.

A fireboat appeared, and great streams of water were sent up in the air, billowing out into mist to form beautiful rainbows.



The Author enjoying the banjo band.

A banjo band, which had accompanied us all the way, was playing like mad on a River Queen which moved up and down the procession of boats, introducing a cheerful note into a party which was already welded into a group of yachting enthusiasts having one hell of a good time.



Flotilla of River Queens tied up at the Public Dock in Stockton.

The guest docking space at Stockton had been reserved for us and boat after boat pulled into the docks and moored against each other.

The welcoming committee had fixed up a carpeted speaker's stand with a public address system, and we found ourselves gathering onto a well-groomed patch of land bordered on one side by the river, the guest docks, and the tables and chairs which had been set up, and, on the other side, across from a big parking space, a new and, as it turned out, sumptuously furnished motel.

I didn't learn until afterward that much of this was due to one individual, Bill Carlisle, Jr., Assistant City Manager, who had taken the bit in his teeth and cleaned up the reception ground.

I was told that for some time the place where we held our reception had been composed of mounds of earth topped with a tangle of weeds.



Prizes were awarded to lucky winners after the cruise.



Picnic for participants in the River Queen cruise included champagne.

The mounds of earth had been hauled away. Gravel and blacktop had been substituted. At the time our boats arrived there was a spacious parking space and an outdoor dining room along the water. There were tables and chairs for the whole crowd.

Stockton is known as a hospitable city and it certainly did itself proud that day, greeting the River Queen owners.

I also learned later that DeShazer and his cohorts had invested in twenty cases of champagne and that they served three hundred and twenty-seven dinners there in the open-air dining room.

And those were some dinners! Joe Cecchini had his father as the chief cook, and the food had that inimitable flavor which comes with good Italian cooking.



Kay Witt—"Miss Stockton."

There were a few speeches and I was asked to get up on the speaker's stand and respond to some of the addresses of welcome and receive a framed plaque appointing me as an Honorary Commodore of Stockton. This was presented to me by none other than Miss Stockton herself, who implanted a kiss on my cheek as a part of the ceremony.



The Author greeted warmly by a host of friends in Stockton.

For a while I was able to convince her that first this photographer and then the other photographer had missed out on the scene. After I collected some half-dozen kisses, she got wise to the racket, pouted her resentment, and left me to my own resources.

I was particularly impressed by the nature of that crowd. No one was boisterous or loud-mouthed. They were a quiet, orderly group of people, getting acquainted, cementing past friendships, laying the foundation for future friendships.

After the welcoming ceremonies had been completed and the dinner was over, it was a pleasure to stroll along the dock and look in on the River Queens, where groups of people were sitting in friendly conversation.



Bob de Roos, the Author, and Chief Morton visit on the newest River Queen.



Forty-foot River Queen under way in the San Joaquin River.

One of the big features of the house cruiser is that it can be fixed up the way you want it. You can serve hors d'oeuvres and drinks if you want them. You have comfortable chairs and big picture windows through which it is possible to see all of the surrounding scenery, yet there are drapes for privacy whenever you want it. The temperature can be controlled just about any way you want. And it is all compact enough and cozy enough so that your friends sit in a group and are not scattered around a big living room.

It needed only a glance at the expressions on the faces of the people who were sitting talking in those cozy, well-lit living rooms on the houseboats to make one realize what a delightful way this is to get acquainted and have a sociable evening.

In addition to the houseboats, there were rooms in the motel across from the parking lot. The River Queen dealers from Stockton and Sacramento circulated around, including Paul Vincent from the factory and half a dozen others who were interested parties and made it a point to see that everyone was happy.

Then at eleven o'clock one of the television stations started running a newscast, reporting the River Queen cruise to Stockton with films that had been taken early in the afternoon. That gave the adventurers an opportunity to see themselves as the camera saw them.

A good many people sat up to watch these broadcasts, and then the lights began to go out as weary yachtsmen sought their bedrooms.



House cruisers tied up overnight.

Dick DeShazer and I slept on the new River Queen I had purchased and which had been delivered only a few days before the cruise. Some of my guests slept in motel rooms since this

motel was so comfortable and so close to the boats. As far as I am concerned, I love to sleep on the water, and Dick DeShazer feels the same way.

One of my most interesting experiences of the evening was a chance to chat with Duane Newcomb, a skillful and prolific article writer.

Article writing is entirely different from fiction writing.



Rearview mirrors on house cruisers are essential to safety. Old Riverboat, *Delta King* in background.

When a man writes a story dealing with some central character, Perry Mason, for instance, he has, if the story is successful and arouses reader interest, paved the way for another story dealing with Perry Mason. But when a man writes an article about how to dock a rented houseboat in wind and tide, he has exhausted his supply of material on the subject and has to go out and collect new material.

These professional article writers are really a remarkable group of individuals. They have quick eyes and they can see an article in almost everything that is brought to their attention.

Duane Newcomb is one of the best. He at times uses several pen names because he will have several articles in one issue of a magazine. He is a comparatively young man with an alert mind, and it is a pleasure to talk with him.

Dick DeShazer and I had a nice visit with him before I went down to crawl into bed and drift off to sleep, lulled by the faint lapping sound of water against the hull.

It was a comfortable bed, and I had a deep sleep and didn't want to get up in the morning; so being on a houseboat where one does as he darn pleases, I didn't get up in the morning—at least, not until I got good and ready.

It seemed hard to believe that such a variegated chapter of experiences had been crowded into a twenty-four-hour capsule and that it was time to start the return journey. But, one by one, the boats left their moorings and, with many a quip and waving of hands, the occupants started back to pick up their regular lives, enjoying in the meantime the scenery down the Stockton Channel which is a kaleidoscope of boats, ships, beautiful residences on the water, and well-kept marinas.

This is houseboating!

Our Delta Friends

Larry Hughes, the President of William Morrow & Company, which has published all of my books over a period of thirty-six years, has been interested in the story of Tennessee Red which appeared in *Gypsy Days on the Delta*.

Tennessee Red is a quail who tried to teach his master quail talk.

The relation between this bird and B. F. Perry was remarkable.

Tennessee Red would keep up a continual chatter of conversation, apparently in a determined effort to teach Perry how to talk or at least how to understand quail talk.

Perry, on the other hand, had learned enough quail talk so that he had at least learned the word for "come."

In any event, he could call Tennessee Red from any place in the yard and Red would come a-running.

Red would sit up on Perry's shoulder during the evening while Perry was reading a magazine or a newspaper. He would, from time to time, carefully groom the hairs over Perry's ears so that he had his master thoroughly presentable at all times.



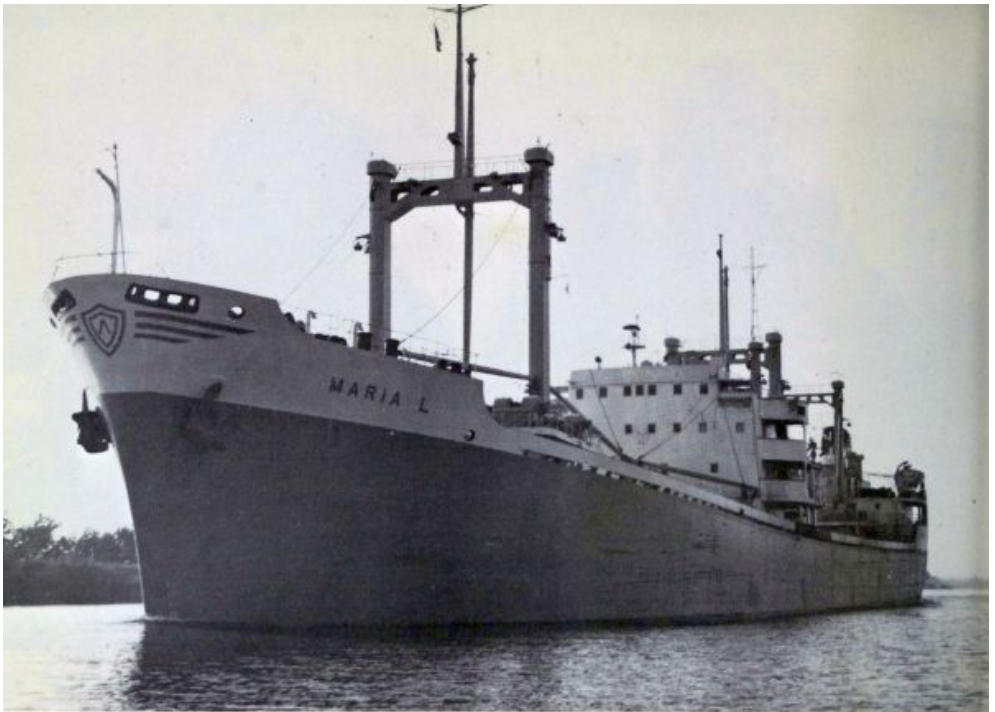
Doug Allen and Larry Hughes.

If Perry would get up to go to the bathroom, Red would flutter down to the floor and gravely follow him into the bathroom and back.

Larry Hughes wanted to see Tennessee Red for himself. So we had an early breakfast at Wanda's Restaurant (breakfast at Wanda's is something of a ritual with the yachtsmen there in the Delta who want to "eat out") and then took off for Perry's, going up Dutch Slough, then across the east end of Frank's Tract, across the Stockton Channel, and on toward Korth's Pirate's Lair.

This was the first time Larry and Rose Hughes had had a chance to travel on the house cruiser without any fixed schedule.

At other times we had been intent upon making rendezvous with other boats in the Stockton Channel, or on getting out to the fishing grounds in time to catch our quota of catfish, or running down to Captain Salisbury's—quite a considerable distance—and trying to get down and back on a schedule.



A loaded freighter drifts down the river from Stockton.

This time we had no schedule. We had all the time in the world and we were virtually drifting.

This River Queen with its powerful Chrysler engines and its big propellers is capable of getting up and fairly skimming along the surface of the water at high speed. But on this day no one wanted high speed.

Larry and I had some things to discuss in connection with the sale of Perry Mason books in some of the foreign countries, and we also had some resting to do.

So Sam Hicks put the engines at what amounted to an idling speed and we just drifted along, perfectly content, sitting there in the comfortable living room of the River Queen, the

generator on, the electric coffee percolator keeping the coffee hot, the warm sunshine flooding in through the picture windows, the scenery of the Delta drifting slowly by.

It was an ideal morning. Stretched out in a comfortable chair, I would try to talk business, but the attempt was a failure. I would become interested in the variegated scenery along the shoreline, in the houses, the people, the passing boats. Then I would yawn and I'm afraid I would doze for a while.

Everybody was completely, thoroughly relaxed.

We moved slowly along Dutch Slough into Sand Mound Slough, across the entrance to Holland's Cut, then started up the east side of Frank's Tract.

We read the morning newspapers in a leisurely way, sipped our coffee, talked a little, slept a little, and finally came to the place where we were to cross the San Joaquin Channel.

Sam decided it would be a good plan to put a little more speed on the engines here in order to get more prompt response to the steering, for there were quite a few yachts either trolling or anchored near the channel, fishing for the huge striped bass which are so plentiful in the Delta and which are reputed to be about the best eating in the world.

The girls started to get lunch, cold baked ham and roast beef, salami, cheese, various types of bread, coffee, beer, milk, three kinds of cake, and a pie which "Johnny" Johnson, the Catfish Kid, had made for me with his own two hands.

I hadn't known that Johnny Johnson was such a cook, but he was proud of this pie and, as it turned out, he had good reason to be.

Larry Hughes was looking longingly at the various gauges and throttles and Sam said, "Want to run it for a while, Larry?"

Larry did.



The Author and Hubert "Catfish" Johnson.

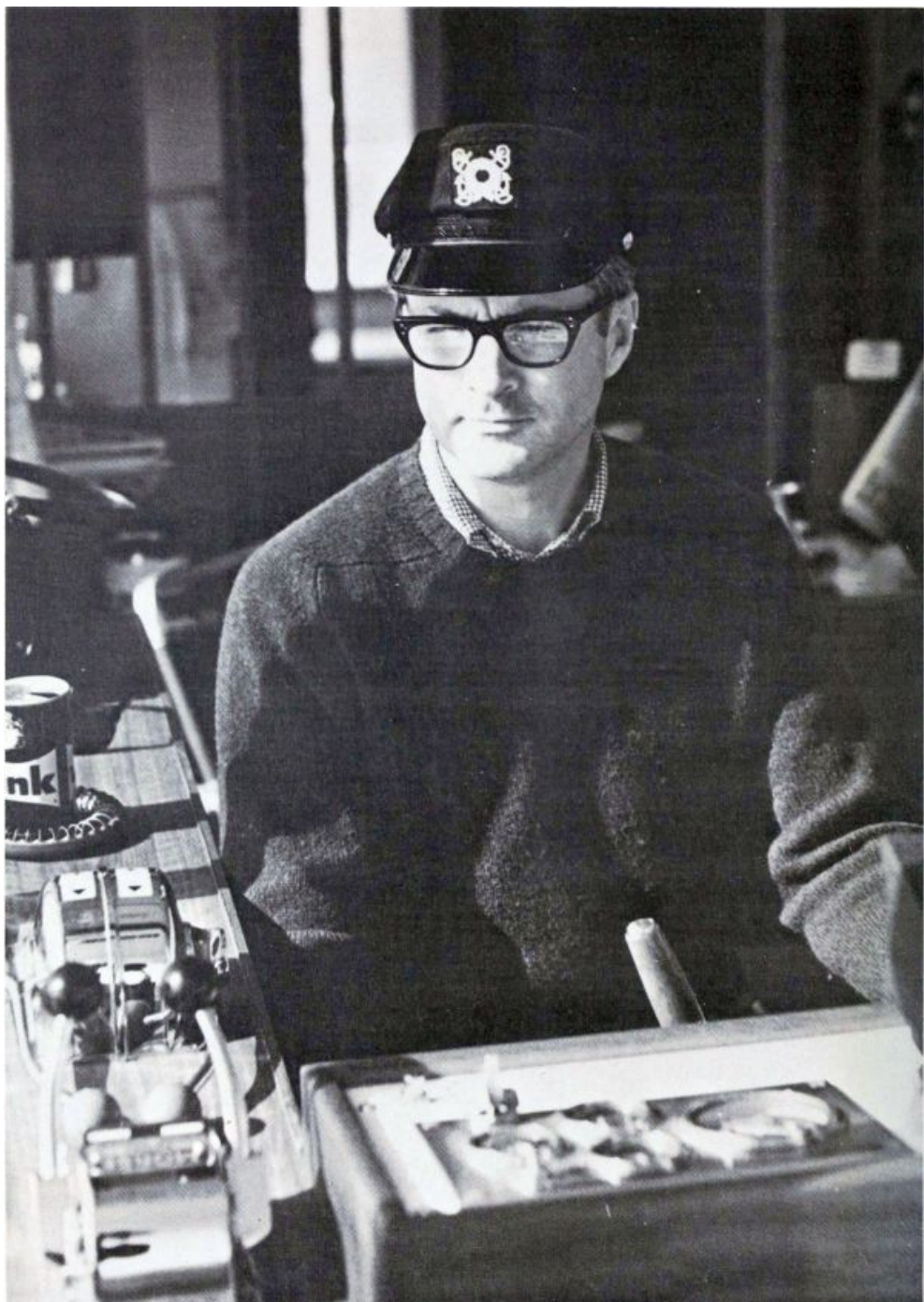
So Sam put Larry at the steering wheel, set the speed so the twin motors were synchronized, and went about his business.

Some ten or fifteen minutes later Sam called out, "Erle, do you want to get a picture of an ocean-going freighter as it comes past?"

I did, and he did.



"Catfish" Johnson.



Larry Hughes at the helm of the River Queen.

These freighters come up the channel to Stockton apparently loafing along, but the speed is deceptive. Actually they are really making knots per hour, and because they slip so quietly through the water one is inclined to forget the fact that they throw up a perfectly huge wake.



A freighter in the Deepwater Channel to Stockton.

So Sam got his camera, Jean got her camera, I got my camera, and we went out on deck to take the pictures.

It wasn't until after I had the picture that I suddenly realized we were pretty close to that freighter and something had better be done about it.

I looked back over my shoulder and saw Sam making a run for the cabin and assumed he was going to take charge of the motors. Actually, however, he was running toward the stern of the boat in order to get a picture of the freighter as it went past.

The first thing anybody knew, we were in the midst of turmoil.

The wave from the freighter's wake hit the boat and all but threw me overboard. I grabbed the rail with one hand and held my camera with the other.

But there was no one to grab the coffeepot, no one to grab the platter which was being heated on the stove, no one to grab the dishes which were stacked on the side of the table.



Ocean vessel leaving Stockton rides low in the water.



"No one showed me how to slow it down!"

There is no sound which can quite compare with the crash of disaster when a small boat suddenly rolls violently from side to side while a meal is being prepared in the galley. Dishes smash, coffee percolators fall and roll, women scream, men yell orders interspersed with sulfurous comments.

I gained the cabin after I got my balance and said to Larry “You blankety-blank blank landlubber, why didn’t you slow her down?”

Larry looked up at me with that humorous grin of his and said, “Because no blankety-blank blank seaman showed me how to slow the blankety-blank thing down.”

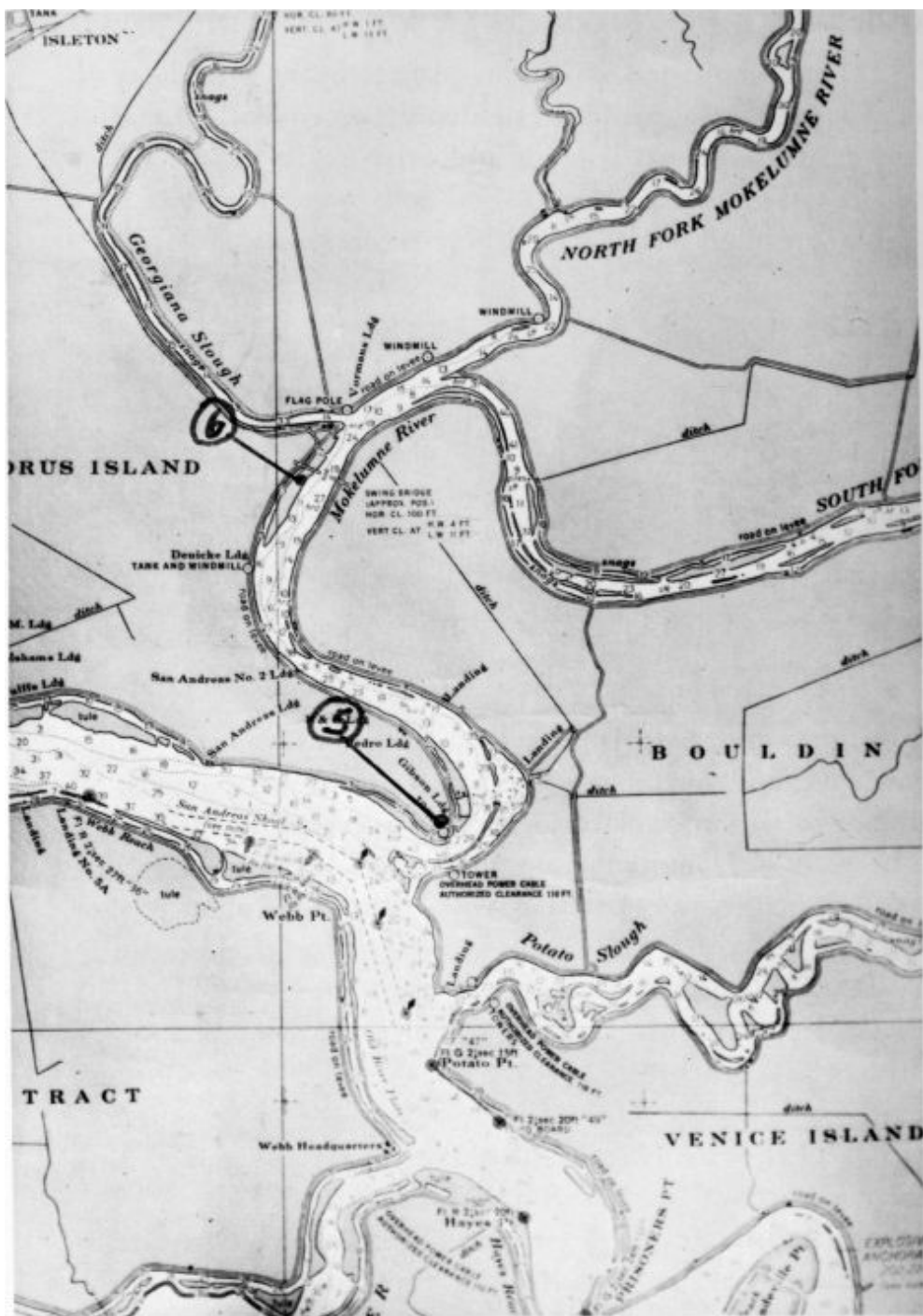
And he was right. Sam had neglected to explain the fact that on this boat the throttles and the clutches were in two different segments.

However, it turned out that only the empty plates had been smashed. The plates with the food had stayed on the table, the coffee percolator was a disaster, but we had another coffeepot, and fortunately we had a crowd with a sense of humor so within a matter of seconds everyone was laughing. The girls were mopping up the spilled coffee and getting more started on the stove. Larry had been shown how to slow the thing down and we were ready for another freighter.

However, no other freighter materialized and within a short time we had crossed the Stockton Deepwater Channel of the San Joaquin River and were approaching Korth’s Pirate’s Lair.

Of all the marinas along the Delta country I don’t think there is any more beautiful than Korth’s Pirate’s Lair.

Situated in a natural harbor with a southern exposure, it has grassy lawns shaded with palm trees running down to the water’s edge. There is a long guest dock, a very good little restaurant and store, a motel, comfortable, clean rest rooms and, in general, an air of warm hospitality about the place that makes it a pleasure to be there.



The Mokelumne River Junction and Georgiana Slough.



Korth's marina at the mouth of the Mokelumne River.

We eased our cruiser alongside a guest dock, shut off the motor, and had a long, leisurely lunch while watching the activities of the harbor.

Rented houseboats came in droves for supplies, some of them literally swarming with kids who were having the time of their lives. Others were manned by perhaps only a couple with one or two children, but, for the most part, these rented houseboats gave evidence that at least two families had combined to take a family vacation in the Delta and it was turning out to be *some* vacation. And that went double for the kids who were all over the boats, up and down the ladders, over the sun decks, around the runways, out on the guest dock, scampering, shouting, laughing.

The women were, for the most part, out on the sun decks, which is perhaps about the best place in the world to get a suntan.



The harbor and grounds at Korth's.

After lunch Rose Hughes and Jean Bethell went up on our sun deck and stretched out for a while. Larry, Sam, and I sat and talked; and then drowsiness overcame me.

It is an easy habit to acquire on a houseboat—that of the afternoon siesta.

All one needs to do is to take a few steps, stretch out on one of the bunks, draw the curtains, and sink into blissful oblivion.

The boat pulled out while I was still asleep. I woke up enough to recognize the steady throb of the motors. Then when we left Korth's marina I could hear the gurgle of the water as we turned up the main channel.

I knew I was in good hands and drifted back into the warmth of sound slumber.

There is some interesting marine scenery between Korth's and Perry's Marina, but I didn't see any of it. I was still wrapped in sleep when Jean came to awaken me and tell me that Mrs. Perry was coming aboard.

It was then we learned the tragic news that Burton Perry had passed away at the age of seventy-three only a little over a month earlier.



Mrs. Burton Perry and tame quail.

Mrs. Perry and her son were running the place, a huge marina with covered berths holding something like a hundred and twenty-five boats, with the unique elevator dry dock which Perry had designed, and with the cages of game birds which they were raising primarily as a hobby.



Mrs. Perry tells about her two pet quail.



Tennessee Red.

Burton Perry had been an inventive genius and very much of a philosopher. Moreover, he had something about him when it came to training animals that enabled him to establish a rapport that was uncanny.

He had a pointer trained to hunt birds, to point and retrieve. Yet when the tame quail, Tennessee Red, would strut his stuff the pointer was completely indifferent. He knew that Tennessee Red was a privileged character.

Mrs. Perry likes cats. She has two huge cats which come into the house. And then she introduced Tennessee Red and a companion.

The story of Red's companion is interesting.

This was just an ordinary quail of the same breed as Tennessee Red who lived the normal life of a caged game bird, raised for reproductive purposes, but when he saw Tennessee Red talking an incessant stream of quail talk to the couple who ran the place and, as a result, getting special attention, Red's companion decided that this was also for him, so he, in turn, started talking quail talk. And, as soon as he was taken from the cage, he emulated Tennessee Red by running around, letting himself be handled and, in general, becoming a pet.

There was one interesting thing about Red. How he had known that Burton Perry had died we will never know, but he knew it.

From the time his master passed away, Tennessee Red quit coming when he was called. Perhaps only Burton Perry knew the exact inflection of voice to say "Come" in quail talk, but, regardless of the reason, Tennessee Red simply quit coming when he was called and, while he still kept up that incessant chatter, it was more as though he were talking to himself.

Now Red was talking querulously to himself.

When we had been there before I had the distinct feeling that he was trying to communicate with Burton Perry. And I think he did communicate with him, because Perry

could tell when Red wanted something and he could come pretty close to telling what it was Red wanted.

We probably underestimate the intelligence of animals.

Cats have a certain extrasensory perception.

I know of one cat who slept in a bedroom with his mistress and, whenever he wanted to sleep, would go in and curl up on that bed during the daytime. And, of course, he always spent the night there.

One night the woman was seized with a heart attack, taken to a hospital, and died.

From that moment it was impossible to get the cat to enter that bedroom or sleep on that bed. He chose another bedroom and another bed to sleep on.

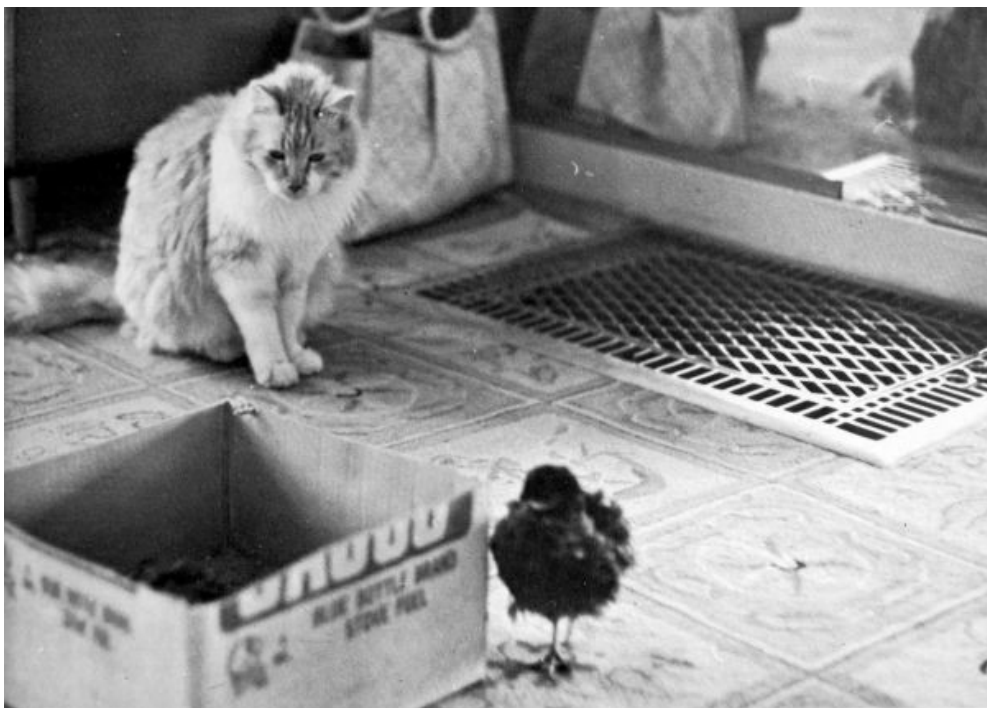
These cats of Mrs. Perry certainly have some sort of an understanding of their status in life.

I sat and watched the two quail run around the floor while the big cats sat there and watched them. Once or twice I saw one of the cats curl a paw as though about to make a swipe at the quail as it went by. Then the cat would glance at Mrs. Perry and put the paw back on the floor.

Red and his companion skirmished around the floor and when Mrs. Perry put out a box of dry dirt, they jumped in, fluffed their feathers, and had a dust bath. But somehow I feel definitely that they were talking to themselves and weren't talking to Mrs. Perry. Certainly not the way Tennessee Red had talked to Burton Perry when I had seen him some months earlier.

After we had visited with the quail for a while, we went out with Mrs. Perry and looked at the cages where the different birds were being raised.

There were quite a number of white-winged doves, and



Tennessee Red and friend.



The Perrys keep many exotic birds on display.

their call, so reminiscent of days spent in Baja California, brought back nostalgic memories.

We visited with the Perrys and with their birds for a while and then returned to our house cruiser and started back.

Because Rose Hughes had to catch a noon plane for New York the next day, we decided that we would not spend the night aboard the houseboat but would go back to Bethel Island. And, because we had spent such a leisurely day, it became necessary to gear up a bit as we cruised down the Mokelumne River, across the Stockton Deepwater Channel into Frank's Tract, then into Sand Mound Slough and Dutch Slough.

We weren't speeding. We simply opened up the engines a few more revolutions.

As I have mentioned, these new River Queens with their Chrysler motors and big propellers are capable of more speed than I have any use for except in cases of emergency. It is nice, however, to have all that reserve power in case one ever needs it.

There was a beautiful sunset on the water. Mount Diablo was reflected in the placid water of Frank's Tract, and the colors in the west remained vivid for what seemed to be almost an hour.

Because of the very fine peat dust in the West, there are some of the most beautiful sunsets in the world up there on Sand Mound Slough and Dutch Slough. In fact, quite frequently I like to take a camera and walk out on the Bethel Island Bridge just to try and imprison on film the vivid colors of the setting sun.

That evening we picked up Dick and Moyne DeShazer and went to Irving Podris' bar and restaurant on Bethel Island, the Bel-Isle Club.

Irv Podris is a character—one who has quick-witted humor and is full of salty sayings.

At one time, not knowing that Irv was happily married, I mentioned to him that I never saw him eating in the restaurant.

"Good heavens, no, I *never* eat here," he said.

"Why?" I asked.

"It's too expensive," he said.

At another time, when I saw Irv really stretching out the red carpet for a customer, I surmised that he must be someone very important and asked Podris who he was.

"He's my competitor who runs the bar across the street," Irv said.

"You're making all that fuss over a competitor?" I asked.

"Certainly," he said.

"Why?" I asked him.

"When my own bartender thinks I've had one too many and won't serve me," Irv said, "I can go across the street and my competitor is glad to see me come in as a customer."

Occasionally when Irv isn't too busy he'll come and sit at the table with customers who are old friends, and on such occasions it is, as the saying goes, as good as a circus.

Irv's restaurant has some of the best Chinese food one can find in the Delta country and also specializes in rib-eye steaks. All the food is excellent, but these two specialties of the house are exceptional. His chief cook, Alfred Wong, has been with him for years, and Alfred has one and sometimes two Chinese assistants. They love to have two, three, or four persons at a table order the whole Chinese dinner. (The menu lists Chinese dinners for one, for two, for three, or for four. The more orders, the greater variety of food.)

When the Chinese in the kitchen have orders for four Chinese dinners the food starts coming and keeps on coming. It seems there is no end to it.



A China street scene thirty-five years ago.



The old, interesting China.

Thirty-five years ago when I was in China I could get along in Cantonese, but in recent years my Chinese has fallen into disuse, although I remember enough to pass the time of day with Alfred Wong. His face always lights up when he hears my brand of Chinese coming from behind him when he is busily engaged in cooking on the big stove.

Chinese is a remarkable language and the Chinese are a remarkable people. I regret so very, very much that the cordial relations which we had with China in 1931 have been turned into hostility because we don't like the Chinese rulers.

Communism in China probably is a bad thing for the United States, but in 1931 the United States was respected in China and citizens of the United States were friends of the Chinese. Now, of course, the situation is different. I never hear from my friends who are in Peiping. I have entirely lost track of people in Canton who were as close to me as members of my own family.

But it is always a pleasure to walk into the kitchen at Irv's Bel-Isle Club, say, "*Hoh shai kai mah*," and see Alfred jump six inches, then turn around with an extended hand and a smile of greeting on his face.

Hoh shai kai mah is the Chinese greeting. Literally it means, "Is the whole world good?" And the Chinese will answer, "*Hoh shai kai*"—"The whole world is good."

My Chinese friends in the Delta mean a lot to me. I know enough of their habits of thought and their national background so that it is indeed a pleasure to visit with them.

While I have made several trips to Japan, I don't know the Japanese as well as the Chinese, but we have a Japanese family living on Mandeville Island—the Fujimotos—whom we are privileged to call our friends, and I have several very close friends in Japan, men whose love of the beauties of nature is inspiring. A Japanese can pick a water-worn rock from the bed of a stream and see in that rock a veritable poem, the rushing of water, the irresistible force of erosion, the inherent beauty of natural forces.

And all this blends into a background of life in house cruisers where we can have an evening with Chinese friends, then a few days later drop in on the Fujimotos and have a visit with them.



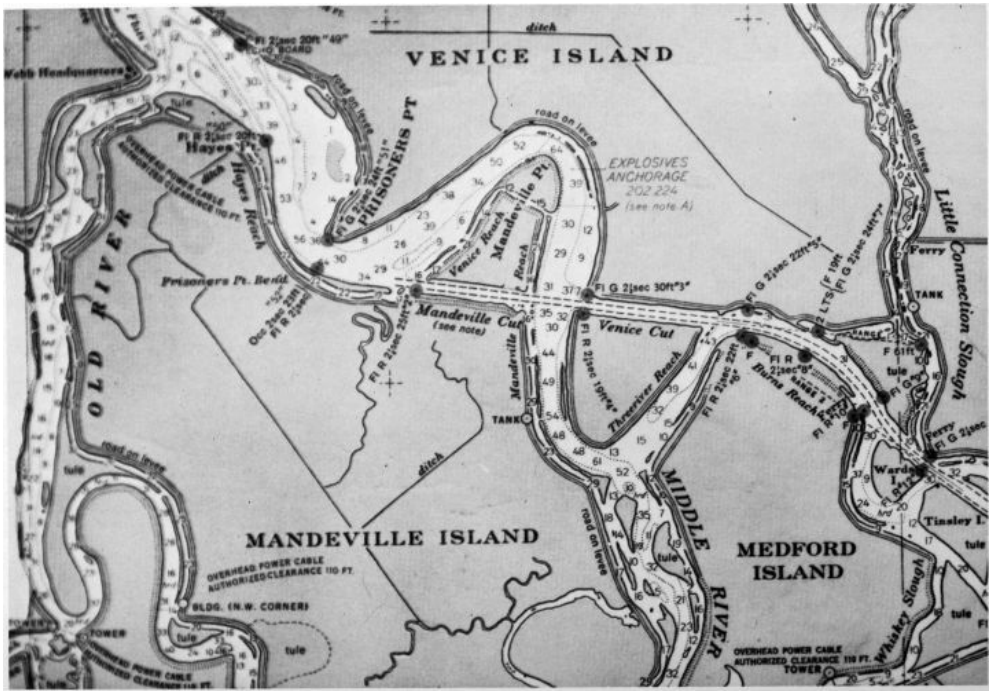
The Author and Connie King in the Yuen Chong Market.

Our various Chinese and Japanese friends are very special and are well worth a complete chapter. Whenever we go to the Delta country we make it a point to spend some time with them. Our visits are worth the price of the houseboats ten times over.

It is not easy to make friends with the Chinese. They are courteous, considerate, and charming as they wait on you; but getting to know them at all well and getting their personal friendship is a different matter.



The Fujimoto family of Mandeville Island.



Mandeville Island.

When I was a young attorney, I represented the organized Chinatown in the city where I was practicing law. I acquired the friendship of some of the influential Chinese and picked up a few words of their language.



Stanford King, the Author, Connie King, and George Marr.

Some years later, due to a fortuitous series of events which have no place in this book, my wife and I had an opportunity to go to China, where it was promised we would see things that no Occidental had ever seen.

We went. We lived with the Chinese in their homes. We lived as they lived. We ate exclusively with chopsticks, we ate Chinese food, we slept in Chinese beds.

Unfortunately, the younger members of the family where we spent most of the time could speak English so that we weren't forced to use their language. But the older members of the family could speak no English, and the only way to communicate with them was to call on my knowledge of Cantonese.

I have forgotten much of this language at the moment; and, most unfortunately, political developments have interposed a solid wall between my Chinese friends and myself. I think of them with feelings of affection, but I don't dare try to communicate with them because that might be dangerous for them. And then, of course, there is always the possibility that due to political developments, and the United States of America carefully and persistently doing everything it can to "contain" China, the people who were at one time my warm friends may now regard me with suspicion or even hatred.

I do not know and there is no way to find out.

All I do know is that I acquired some knowledge of the complex workings of the Chinese mind. Or, to express it in another way, I know enough Oriental psychology to realize that our ways of thought differ materially from their ways of thinking. We approach problems in one way; the Chinese approach them in an entirely different way. And I know that I have

developed a tremendous respect for the Chinese philosophy, for the Chinese thinking, for the Chinese industry and the indomitable Chinese desire to accomplish things.

Long years of disuse have caused me to forget a great deal of Cantonese; but, on the other hand, I remember enough so I can usually communicate with the Chinese who would like to be friendly and let them know that I am interested in them and have had many Chinese friends in the span of my lifetime.

It was in this way that I became acquainted with the people at the Yuen Chong Market in Locke.

A lot of water has run under the bridge since my earlier books were published. The bonds of friendship have been strengthened.

Stanford King has purchased a beat-up typewriter and from time to time writes me wonderfully humorous letters. His humor is of the whimsical type. I sometimes tell him that he is a Chinese Will Rogers.



Stanford King.

Stanford King is a poker player. I am not a poker player, although I love to play penny ante with a two-bit limit.

Now I know as well as anyone else that penny ante with a two-bit limit is *not* playing poker. The real poker player is, of necessity, a gambler and a shrewd one.

Stanford King will not play poker where there's any limit on the game. He claims that this cramps a man's style and prevents him from really playing poker.

On one occasion, talking about poker, I was able to rib Stanford King—and ribbing a Chinese is very, very difficult indeed!

Stanford King told me that playing poker with a limit was foolish, that there was no opportunity to bluff.

“What are you talking about?” I asked, putting on an air of complete assurance. “Stakes become only relative. The game assumes a perspective in the light of competition, not necessarily measured according to the money that is in the game.

“For instance,” I went on, “I could be playing poker with you with a two-bit limit and, when I wanted to, I could be bluffing and throw in two bits and you wouldn’t know I was bluffing.”

The smile faded from Stanford King’s face. Suddenly he was deadly serious. His eyes—dark and inscrutable—were searching mine. Then he said in a firm, level voice, “I would *know* when you were bluffing.”

And the guy would.

I think it was Bret Harte who originally pointed out that any Occidental who plays poker with the Chinese is courting disaster.

When I was in China, I was privileged to see many things which, at that time at least, the Occidental couldn’t see.

The China of those pre-World War II days was the China of the warlords, the China of rebellion, the China of seething politics.

I knew too much and not enough. At one time I was marked for assassination. I stuck my nose into places where I had no business being. And, because I didn’t want people to know I was a writer, I went as an attorney, which was a fatal mistake, because they found out soon enough that I actually was a writer; and the fact that I was trying to cover this up made it a suspicious circumstance.

A suspicious circumstance to the Oriental is like a red flag to a bull.

The American consul at Canton told me, “You are in danger. You stay here on the island at Shameen and I will try to protect you, but you get out there and live with the Chinese in the city of Canton and I wash my hands of you.”

I thanked him and told him I hadn’t come all the way from the United States to study Chinese from the barbed-wire protection of a fortified island.

So I plunged into the seething life of Canton, lived with the Chinese who were my friends, and, as a result, inherited their friends and their enemies. And because their enemies couldn’t understand how I could be living under those circumstances, I attracted more adverse attention than would otherwise have been the case.

However, what I am getting at is that during my expeditions into the underground I was taken to meet a woman who was a political power.

She was engaged in some espionage, the details of which I have forgotten. But it was a situation where her life was in constant danger, and it was necessary for her to live with her wits constantly about her.

I was told that the only way she could get recreation, the only way she could relax from the tension of thinking about the dangers which beset her, was to play poker for high stakes. And I also learned that she was very, very good at playing poker for high stakes.

After I had been in her company for a while, someone suggested a poker game.

I was smart. I went home.

Many of my friends like to play no-limit poker, but it scares me to death!

Stanford King, on the other hand, is a gambler. He has an interesting theory of life and luck. He believes that a man is allotted so much good luck in his life, and apparently he also believes that a man has to play his luck when it starts coming his way.

Stanford King went to Reno and started playing the variety of bingo which is actually an adaptation of the Chinese lottery ticket.

This ticket is simply an assortment of characters arranged in squares. The player blocks out a certain number of squares, and if he guesses right on the minimum number, he gets his money back. If he gets one more than the minimum, he makes a substantial increase and so on up the line until the man who gets all ten numbers right draws a whopping cash prize.

The average Caucasian gambler will mark isolated numbers, but the shrewd Chinese gambler knows that, for some occult reason which has never been satisfactorily explained, the drawings usually form into patterns and the Chinese player will block out his numbers in patterns, hoping that in this way he stands more chance of duplicating the numbers in the drawing.

Stanford King was in Reno and was consistently playing one standard pattern which, because of a subconscious hunch, seemed to him to be the pattern which would pay off.

Time after time after time he missed it. And when he came to the last ticket he had marked, he said to himself, "You are playing a sucker's game. Your hunch wasn't any good. Why not change the combination on this last ticket and perhaps recoup some of your losses?"

So Stanford King did just that.

The drawing took place, and to King's horror the pattern came out just as he had been seeing it in his subconscious mind all day.

If he hadn't changed the combination on that last ticket, he would have won around eighteen thousand dollars.

While Stanford King is a part-owner of the very prosperous Yuen Chong market, he is not eager to throw \$18,000 over his shoulder. The experience created a lasting impression, and if it is possible to win his friendship to such a point that he is willing to talk about it, it opens up a very interesting subject of conversation—the Chinese idea of the distribution of an individual's good and bad luck and the Chinese theories of gambling.

Stanford King is quite a philosopher. And, although he hides his deep philosophic convictions beneath a façade of humor, when one penetrates to the real man he finds a very interesting character.

There are stores in Locke which sell Chinese canned goods and delicacies. I have never found any Chinese deerhorn for sale, nor even a piece of choice ginseng, but I wouldn't be too surprised if I did find them.

And don't dismiss the Chinese drugs too lightly. Many are for the purpose of intensifying the life surge in the bloodstream.

For instance, in the spring when the deerhorns reach just a certain stage of growth, the Chinese cut off these horns and, with a micrometer, slice them into infinitesimally thin wafers. In proper dosage, these deerhorns are supposed to intensify the life force.

A few years ago I read an article in which a learned Occidental chemist reported he had analyzed the content of the deerhorn and found there were organic substances in it that were highly beneficial to human beings.

At one time a very conservative doctor made me a proposition. I was to use my Chinese contacts to find out something about the various Chinese remedies used by a local herb doctor.

Those remedies were, my doctor friend assured me confidentially, making cures which he considered quite remarkable. I turned the proposition down cold, but I cite it to show that some of the orthodox medical men are aware of the beneficial nature of Chinese herbs.

The Chinese people are wonderful friends. They are loyal, devoted, and rarely seem to be irritable. Perhaps it is because in their native land they have had to live in such crowded conditions that they have learned to live and let live.

But I remember one morning in China when I woke to voices shrill with anger. We were living in a typical Chinese house. The passageway, if one could call it that, between adjoining houses was so narrow that there was room for only one rickshaw at a time in it; two coolies, wearing broad-brimmed hats, had to tilt their heads in order to pass each other.

We had been up quite late the night before and, early in the morning, the woman in the house across the narrow alleyway started splitting kindling wood with a butcher cleaver, preparatory to starting a little fire in the cooking stove.

Because we were separated by only a distance of a few feet, and in that hot, humid climate doors and windows were open, the sound of the cleaver hitting the wood on the tile floor was magnified.

Our hostess started screaming at the top of her voice, "Be quiet over there. My white ghosts have been up past midnight and need to sleep."

It is to be noted that the Chinese consider themselves the only real people. All foreigners are the equivalent of ghosts and the Americans are the white ghosts, referred to sometimes more disparagingly by the coolie class as *bak gwie loe* (white devil ghosts).

The woman across the street raised her own voice, "I don't care if your white ghosts have been up all night, my children have to eat. The rice has to be cooked."

The sound of the argument being engaged in with all the vehemence at the command of each speaker was infinitely louder than the sound of the splitting kindling, and by this time the argument was at fever pitch. The two women were screaming at each other at the tops of their voices. It seemed as if half of Canton must have been listening. The slave girl who was making a bed down the corridor stopped her work and listened with open-mouthed admiration.

Perhaps in parenthesis a word should be said about slavery in China. A poor family, living perhaps in a small sampan on the crowded waterfront, with a young girl whom they couldn't possibly clothe and feed, "sold" her into slavery, endeavoring to pick as good a family as possible.

The family took the girl as a slave. She received no compensation in the ordinary meaning of the word. She had to perform menial and household tasks.

When she arrived at the age of puberty the family started to find a husband for her.

They called in a matrimonial broker who specialized in such things. They listed her physical and mental attractions.

The marriage broker secured several possible matrimonial candidates.

The family looked them all over and finally picked the one they believed would make the girl the best husband. They dressed her well and also paid the fee of the marriage broker. Then the girl was married, given a sum of money as a dowry by the family, and her days of slavery were over. She became a housewife and raised a family. And perhaps, if she were affluent enough, she bought a slave of her own.

It was a system which would work only in China. Doubtless it was barbarian and probably has long since been outlawed, but when I was there, living in this house, the slave had arrived at marriageable age and the family was much concerned to see that she secured a proper husband who could support her and make her happy.

I was fascinated by the Chinese customs.

At weddings, for instance, the organized beggars became a part of the ceremony, so to speak.

The local “king of the beggars” came to call with all the formality of a visiting diplomat presenting his credentials.

How big was the wedding going to be? How many guests were going to be invited? How much was being spent on the wedding feast?

There was some haggling and much deliberation and then the king of the beggars and the family agreed on how many beggars were to be given alms and how much the alms would be.

Everything was handled on a high-class basis. The family presented the king of the beggars with the alms. The beggars were there at the wedding to wish everyone happiness.

If, however, the family didn't get together with the king of the beggars, if there was a dispute over the amount of alms, then the beggars were there in great force. But this time they wished the couple every unhappiness. They told the husband that he had made an inappropriate choice. They pointed out defects in the appearance and character of the bride. They told her that she was never going to be happy.

When a quarrel wages in China—that is, the China that I knew—there is never any violence, or virtually never any violence. There is shouting and vituperation, and one side tries to make the other side “lose face.” When that is done, the triumphant antagonist is completely satisfied.

After a quarrel reaches a certain point, there is an attempt on the part of both contestants to settle the matter in such a way that both sides can “save face,” and this is a settlement calling for remarkable diplomacy, considerable ingenuity, and great skill.

In the argument over the kindling on that hot, humid morning in Canton it was evident that our hostess had acted unwisely and was trying to uphold the losing side of the controversy.

On the one hand were two white ghosts who had been up well past midnight and wanted to sleep. On the other hand was the housewife who must cook rice so that her children could be nourished. Within a matter of minutes neighbors would start taking part in the discussion and our hostess would indeed lose face.

That was when she showed the remarkable agility of the Chinese mind.

“I do not wish to deprive your children of rice,” she screamed, “only to have my white ghosts rest. I suggest that you go ahead and chop your kindling, but chop only the straight pieces of wood. Do not chop those pieces of wood which have knots in them. Leave those until after my white ghosts have wakened. In that way your children can have rice and my white ghosts can sleep.”

It was an irrefutable piece of logic. The neighborhood quieted down to murmurs of approval. Both parties saved face. The woman in the adjoining house proceeded to chop the kindling which had only straight grain, and the white ghosts presumably slept on—if it had been even remotely possible for anyone to have slept on in the midst of all that hubbub.

Life in China as I knew it, living there with the Chinese and sharing in their lives, was never particularly simple, but it held great fascination for me.

I love the Chinese. “Connie” King, who is in charge of the Yuen Chong Market, is one of the nicest friends we have. And George Marr, who runs the meat department, is always happy and smiling. The Kings and George Marr own the market and it is a pleasure to shop there.

These people are always glad to see us, and we find it a refreshing experience to visit with them.

Whenever we get to this part of the Delta country I look forward to getting up to visit with my Chinese friends there and, of course, to a visit at Giusti’s.

Friendships are improved with contact, and one of the reasons I love the Delta is because of the friends I have made there.

It is impossible to describe the feeling one gets at Giusti’s. It has to be experienced. It is something that warms the heart.



Connie King, maker of the world’s finest orange chiffon pies.

I recently had a touching example of the depth of the friendship of Mo and Dolores.

Wulfrano Ruiz and his wife, Alicia, Mexican friends of mine, were taking a six weeks’ cruise to the South Sea Islands, to New Zealand and Australia, and they insisted that I should come along.

I was working on several books at the time and couldn’t possibly take any such leave of absence without keeping up my work, so it would necessitate taking along dictating and transcribing machines, typewriters, at least one secretary, and preferably two; and even then my writing schedule was bound to suffer.

So I told them that I couldn't possibly even consider the matter. But my friends kept after me as only Mexican friends can, and at the last minute I weakened and Jean Bethell, accompanied by her friend, Anita Haskell Jones, and I decided to go to the South Seas.

We were up in the Delta a week or two before the ship was scheduled to sail and I told Dick and Moyne DeShazer about our plans. We stopped in at Giusti's and told Mo and Dolores Morais. We said good-bye and they wished us a happy trip and that was that.

What I didn't know was that they all had decided to see us off.

Now I was taking the ship at San Francisco where we were joining my Mexican friends. And the DeShazers and the Moraises could have made a trip down to see me off at San Francisco with only an hour and a half or two hours of driving time. But because Jean wasn't going to join the ship until Los Angeles, they got together and decided to drive all the way down and see us off at Los Angeles.

That meant four hundred odd miles of added driving just in order to pay their respects to their friend, Jean Bethell, as well as to me.

In addition to the driving, this meant that Mo, in order to arrange for a substitute to take one of his shifts, had to agree to work a double shift on his return.

I had no inkling of any of this.

We were on the ship greeting a few other friends who had come to see us off. There were Marshall Houts and his wife, Mary; Sam and Ruby Hicks, and Ricardo Castillo, my friend from Tijuana.

Marshall Houts is the editor of *Trauma* and the author of several books, the latest of which is *Where Death Delights*, a biography of Dr. Milton Helpner, the famous New York City Medical Examiner; in addition, he worked intimately and diligently with us for twenty years on the Court of Last Resort, investigating murder cases and calling on all his skill as an ex-FBI agent.

The party in my stateroom was coordinated with a huge one in the bar where our Mexican friends, Wulfrano and Alicia Ruiz, were being given a send-off by some forty of their close friends.

In the midst of this happy confusion, through the door of my stateroom burst Dick and Moyne DeShazer and Mo and Dolores Morais, bringing with them presents and their special brand of friendly warmth.

I was flabbergasted. Knowing something of the demands on their time, I was deeply moved by the sacrifices they had made to come see us off.

It was quite a party. Thanks to the excellent room service on the ship, we kept champagne corks popping until it sounded like the Fourth of July.

When the ship sailed at eleven o'clock that night, my friends had to drive a hundred and twenty miles to my ranch to spend what was left of the night, then next morning take Ricardo home to Tijuana.

They drove back to the Delta the next night, taking turns driving all night. Then Mo, who arrived at nine o'clock in the morning, had to go into the bar and work a double shift of sixteen consecutive hours.

These are the things that make so much difference to an individual and are so indicative of the type of friendship one forms in the Delta country.

In that same section of the Delta country there were two very close friends, Jerry and Doris Waterworth.

Jerry Waterworth has the Shell Service Station at Walnut Grove and, I believe, one or two other service stations. He owns a piece of property on Snodgrass Slough, and we got acquainted with him and his wife in a peculiar manner.

We tied our boats to an island in Snodgrass Slough when I first started houseboating some years ago.



The Author and Jerry Waterworth.



We tied up our house cruisers across the slough from Waterworth's and went fishing.

Because the waterways are navigable streams, the property owner has no control over them. But, of course, he owns his property to the line of the tide.

Far too many yachtsmen have no consideration for the rights of the property owner. They tie up their yachts, drink beer, toss the beer cans helter-skelter up onto the adjacent property. Then when they leave, they dump their garbage, throw out trash, and generally leave an unsavory mess behind.

Although this carelessness is not true of a majority of the yachtsmen, it is prevalent enough for property owners to be something less than cordial to the boating fraternity.

As it happened, we tied our house cruisers to an uninhabited island directly opposite the property owned by the Waterworths. It was a good place to camp and we stayed there for almost two weeks.

Occasionally we would see Jerry Waterworth out at dusk, catching catfish, and we swapped a few words with him.

Then came the day when it was absolutely necessary for someone to communicate with our boats, and this was before we had our Citizen's Band radio. This person knew there was a road down to Waterworth's and that he could stand on the levee at the Waterworth property and shout loud enough to attract our attention.

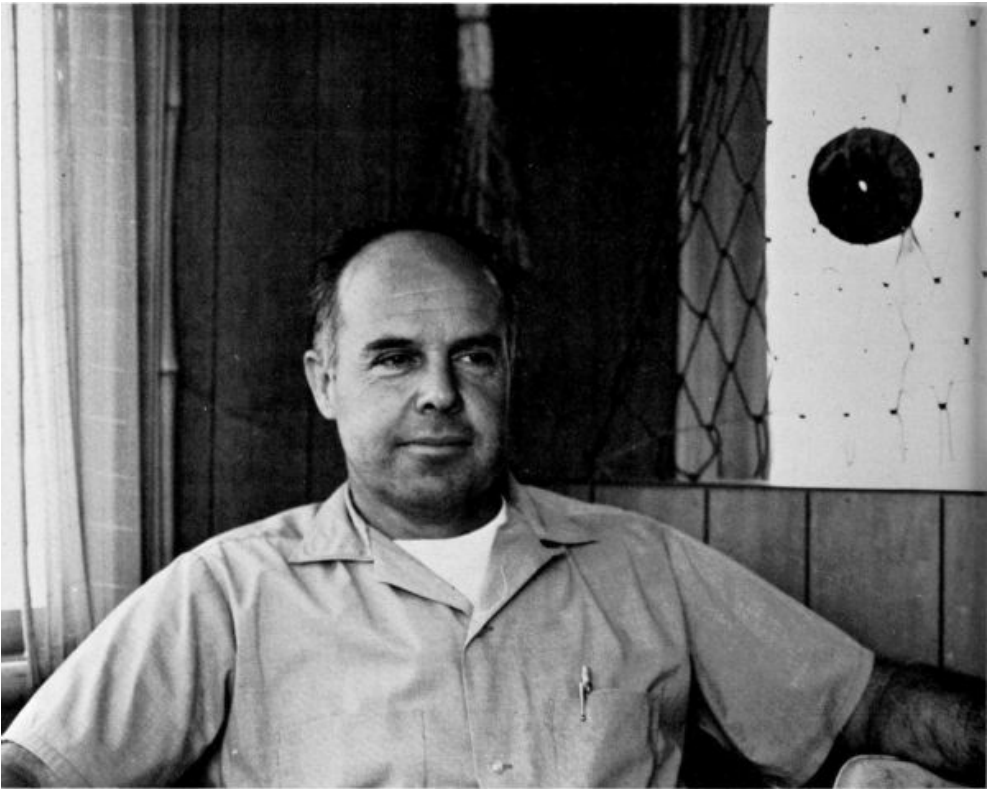
He drove to the Waterworth house and asked permission to drive down to the levee. The permission was granted, although somewhat reluctantly.

Then, gradually, as we stopped in at Waterworth's station for gasoline and chatted with him, we became friendly, and soon they told us that there was no need for taking a boat and going all the way back to Giusti's when we wanted to make a telephone call to the office because we could just cross the slough in a matter of a minute or two and use their phone.

We got some steaks and had the Waterworths over for a barbecue. It was the start of very interesting friendship and now we make it a point to see them whenever we are up in the Delta country.

To my mind, this is one of the things that make houseboating a deluxe enjoyment.

It isn't only a question of piloting boats up and down the Delta, of fishing and taking pictures, of camping and enjoying life, but it is an opportunity to form friendships and, from time to time, to renew those friendships.



Harold Taylor of Tiki Lagun.

Down in the other direction, off Stockton Channel, at the McDonald Island Ferry, is Tiki Lagun, operated by Harold and Carol Taylor.

These people are some of the most industrious, good American exponents of individual initiative that I have ever met.

When Harold took over Tiki Lagun, he found an old ranch with a barn and a waterfront which was nothing more than a big junk pile, cluttered with debris of every description.

Getting that place cleaned up was a Herculean task, but, after he got it cleaned up, Harold started the staggering job of putting up a restaurant, then a marina, then showers, then toilets, and coming full circle, expanded the marina.

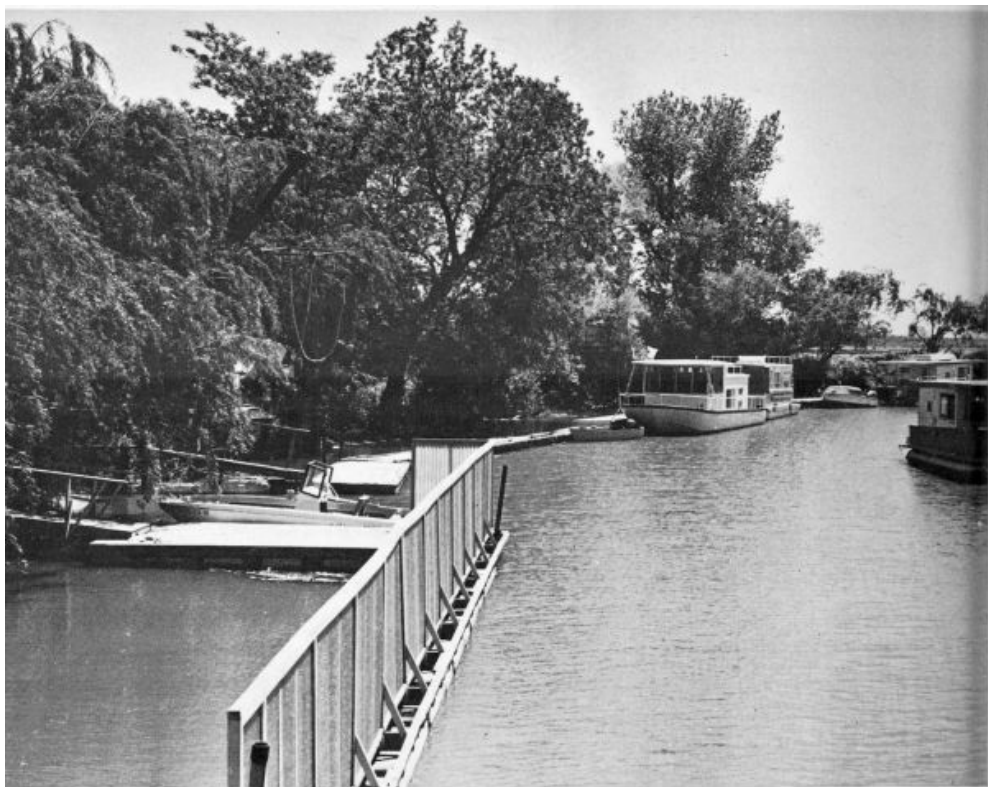
Always one would find Harold Taylor working his head off, and his wife, Carol, in the restaurant, working fourteen or fifteen hours a day.



This ferry crosses Turner Cut from Tiki Lagun to McDonald Island.

They have built up one of the most attractive places on the river and are always cordial and hospitable.

From time to time we take our boats up there just to spend an hour or two, basking in the warmth of their friendship. And when we are only on a short trip and don't have time to navigate the boats up the waterways, we jump in the car and drive up, stopping long enough to say hello.



Plastic wall separating the swimming area at Tiki Lagoon from the harbor.

The Taylors have an unusual way with animals. In my book, *Gypsy Days On the Delta*, I told about their dog, Piper, and the story of the cat and the pigeon that grew up together and had periods of mock warfare in which they seemingly engaged in life-and-death struggles.



“Piper,” Taylor’s collie, plays tag with the pet pigeon.

Just as Art Bernard has a knack with dogs, the Taylors seem to have a knack with pigeons.

On my last trip to Tiki Lagun I found they had another pigeon that had built up a species of companionship with Piper by which the bird and the dog engaged in mutual play.

The pigeon would fly back and forth just over Piper’s head. The dog would run and bark until the pigeon would alight on the roof of the restaurant building and seem to smile down at the dog. Then, as the dog would settle down, the pigeon would come swooping down at a point just over the dog’s head and the chase would go at a breakneck pace back for another hundred yards to where it started.

The pigeon, however, doesn’t sacrifice convenience for exercise. When it wants to go anyplace, if it sees Harold Taylor headed in that direction, the pigeon will come and light on his shoulder, get a free ride on a boat out over the water to where it wants to go, then say, “Thank you,” in pigeon talk, and take off, flying to the roof of that boat shed. There he waits for an opportunity to get a ride back on Harold’s shoulder.



The Author, Jean Bethell, Captain Lester Salisbury, and Red.

The Delta is filled with interesting people and, as we move our house cruiser from one anchorage to another renewing old friendships, life somehow takes on a new meaning.

Captain Lester Salisbury and his dog, Red, were far down to the south from Tiki Lagun, but we would get down there to visit with them from time to time and, there again, we had a home away from home.

The place was, however, too lonely and Captain Salisbury was living too isolated a life, so his daughter finally prevailed on him to move into town, which gave the dog, Red, a brand new experience.

Red had never been off the island in all his life, and when it came time for him to get in a boat and go over to the mainland, it was quite an event.

It took all Captain Salisbury's ingenuity to get Red to accompany him. Red knew that his place was on the island, that he was supposed to guard it while his master was away, and he didn't intend to be inveigled into leaving the island.

However, eventually he was enticed into the boat and then into the automobile.

That ushered in a change in Red's life.

Once the automobile started to move, Red became completely fascinated. And by the time they arrived at their destination, Red knew all about automobiles. He thought that was a wonderful way to travel. In fact, it was his first experience with travel and he liked it. More than that, he ate it up.

From then on, whenever Captain Salisbury would start toward an automobile, Red would begin to whimper eagerly. He likes nothing better than to climb into the car and watch the country going by.

When one stops to think about it, it must have been quite an experience for Red.

A person who has to spend his entire life in narrow confines, even in one small town, wonders instinctively about what lies beyond the horizon.

Many of us know how bored one gets in a hospital room and how eagerly the doctor's visit is awaited on the morning one has been promised he can go home "if everything is all right."

Although Red undoubtedly knew that his duty was on the island, he also had intelligence enough to know there was a vast world beyond the island which his master explored from time to time. And when Red was given an opportunity to get acquainted with that world he welcomed the experience with canine enthusiasm.

The interesting thing is that Red adjusted immediately to automobile traffic and learned not only to avoid the oncoming cars but to keep out of roads where there is heavy traffic.

He is a remarkably intelligent and loyal dog.

Expansion on the Delta

Numerous changes are taking place in the Delta. For one thing, the marinas and the potential marinas are running out of space, and yet I doubt very much if the full significance of this has been realized by the communities affected.

Take, for instance, Bethel Harbor, which is operated by our friends, Harold “Jiggs” and Estelle Thrush.

A few years ago Thrush, who was in the building business, decided to retire. He came up to the Delta country, looking for the right kind of property, and decided to buy a marina which was pretty well run down. It had about sixty-five old, badly dilapidated berths. After Jiggs bought the place he started modernizing, and now he has a total of eighty-five new berths.

This was a far more ambitious program than he had contemplated when he started, but, as he expresses it, it was a challenge and he is by nature a builder. He likes to have things in good order and, as a shrewd businessman, he is aware of the possibilities.

Now he finds himself with a rapidly growing demand for more berths for houseboats and no waterfront on which he can construct them.



Harold “Jiggs” Thrush, Estelle Thrush, and the Author.

The same is true all along the line.

At the Walnut Grove Marina, for instance, the place has expanded out of all recognition, and at that point the river is wide enough for the construction of several rows of berths.

Bud Remsburg has been pushing construction rapidly. He is putting in a whole new sequence of covered berths. Across the slough from his Marina, another double row of covered berths has been erected.

One of the big recent developments in California real estate is the skyrocketing value of waterfront property. Apparently it has never occurred to anyone that this property in the Delta country is limited.

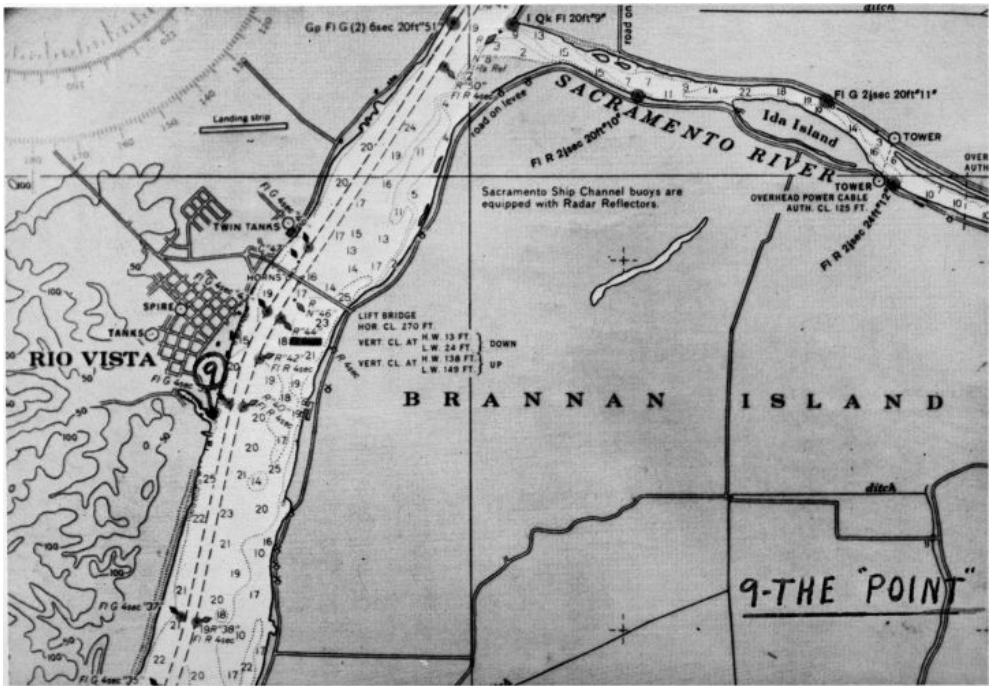
We speak of a thousand miles of inland waterways as though we were talking about unlimited credit in the bank.

Each city along the waterways feels that its land runs to its city limits and beyond that is an area of more or less terra incognita.



New berths under construction at Remsburg's Harbor.

I doubt if anyone in the Delta country really realizes how



Brannan Island.

fast this country is filling up or what it is going to mean economically after it does fill up.



Rio Vista, a city of beautiful homes.

Stockton is one of the most progressive cities of the whole Delta when it comes to a realization of potential possibilities.

The city advertises itself as the sportsmen's center of the West and, as we've seen, has been remarkably far-sighted in keeping a group of docks for visiting boats so that boatmen can come in and tie up and enjoy the facilities of the city while they are shopping.

Rio Vista, as another example, is a quiet, exclusive residential city of extreme wealth. It is the Beverly Hills of Northern California. It has the greatest per capita wealth of any city in Northern California.



A modern home peers over the levee in Dutch Slough.

Along the river at Rio Vista there is a stretch of houses, sometimes referred to as “millionaire row.”

These houses are facing on a street which runs north and south, and the property runs back to the river, which also runs north and south.

Each house has a very fine sheltered patio with green velvety lawns, shade trees, outdoor furniture, enclosed porches, and everything connected with gracious living.

I asked what one of these houses was worth and my companion simply laughed at me.

There is absolutely nothing for sale, I was told.

The relatively small amount of land which was available along the banks of the river where each house could have access to the water and a landing for a boat was limited. It had long since been bought up and the people who lived in this modern paradise were not foolish enough to give it up at *any* price.

In fact, most of the people who live here have reached a point where money has little meaning to them.

This is an extreme example, but it is, nevertheless, what is going to happen all along the Delta.

A thousand miles of waterfront property means a lot of waterfront. But we must remember that some of this property is on islands and that it is not possible to get roads across to all of these islands. A house and a boat landing have to be serviced by a good road.



Private berths along Dutch Slough.

This accounts for the fact that in cruising along a slough the yachtsman may well see one side composed simply of a bank covered with tules (bulrushes), while the other side will be covered with houses and boat landings with just enough space between houses to furnish a distinct boundary.



At Rio Vista, the Point Restaurant nestles between a beautiful marina and the Sacramento River.

To the south of Rio Vista is a place known as The Point, where a restaurant has been built on the tip of a scenic point.

Stretching back from this scenic point is a marina crowded with covered berths, each one of which is occupied by a boat owned by an individual who has cultivated tastes and has the money to pay for gratifying those tastes.

Multiply all this by the thousand, and one begins to realize the economic importance of the Delta country and the importance to the Delta country of the weekend, the yacht owner, and the fisherman.

Our Marina Neighbors

From time to time real estate programs have been designed to keep selected communities occupied more or less by people of the same tastes and social position.

Almost invariably these restrictions or so-called safeguards, or whatever a person wants to term them, have not only proven inadequate but have generally been declared unconstitutional.

Actually whether a person is a good neighbor depends not upon his race, his color, his wealth, or his social position but upon the man himself and primarily whether he has the same tastes that you do.

That's where houseboating really does the job. A person who will spend fifteen to twenty-five thousand dollars on a house cruiser simply because he loves having a floating home-away-from-home, a little outdoor adventure, including some catfishing now and then, cruising in isolated waters, camping, preparing barbecued steaks, and enjoying his leisure to the fullest extent, is a darned good neighbor.

I know because I have been houseboating now for some five years and during that time we have had all sorts of people living next to us and they have all been mighty good people.

What interests me is the fact that the people who have reached an age in life when they are still young enough to enjoy adventure and yet have made enough of a success to purchase a houseboat are not always the people you think you are going to meet.

In general, one would assume that he was going to meet doctors, lawyers, bankers, stockbrokers, or other professional people.

Actually it is surprising how many boat owners are ones who have forged their way from humble beginnings and many times have made a rather comfortable fortune out of some type of activity which simply developed as they went along.

The cruise to Stockton was in the nature of an eye-opener to me because, out of thirty-odd boatloads, there wasn't a sour note in the crowd. I began to wonder about it and made up my mind to talk with some of my neighbors intimately, personally, and see if they minded being dissected, so to speak.

Using Dick DeShazer as an intermediary, I got in touch with three families and each one was perfectly willing to be interviewed and quoted. This was a 100 percent batting average—three out of three, I could probably have had a hundred out of a hundred, but I told Dick space permitted only a brief thumbnail sketch of three families.

The first family, the Kenyons, are affectionately known in the boating crowd as "Pop" and "Mom" Kenyon.

They have a River Queen and they have two black toy poodles.

I have often marveled at the intelligence of dogs, how they come to understand their masters.

Here are two dogs who have adjusted themselves to life on a houseboat. One of the dogs loves to walk on his hind feet and he is very good at it. He gets up and walks around, keeping his balance as well as a two-legged human being.

They have learned that when their owners sit out on deck with a fishing rod they are accomplishing something, and, by observation, the dogs have connected the fishing rod with

the fish and the fish with the bending of the tip of the fishing pole.
Therefore the dogs sit and watch the ends of the fishing rods.



“Mom” and “Pop” Kenyon and poodles visit with the Author.



Mrs. Kenyon holds her smoke-lapping poodle.

When there is a bite and the rod dips slightly, one of the dogs whimpers. When there is a little significant double tug, the walking dog is up on his hind feet giving canine directions. "Bring him in. Bring him in. Bring him in."

The fisherman sets the hook and brings in the catfish.

The dog runs around in an ecstasy of excitement and has to go up to the catfish and lick it. Just one swipe with his tongue and that's all. The dog has shown the whole world that this fish belongs to his master, and, having contributed his canine token of ownership which is probably similar to a cattle baron branding a calf, he goes back and sits down, watching with interest the rebaiting of the hook and the casting of the line. Then he sits patiently waiting for the next bite.

One of the Kenyon's poodles has developed a great taste for cigarette smoke.

Every morning he has to have his cigarette. He will jump up on any person who is smoking and eagerly lap the smoke which is perhaps eighteen inches away from the end of the cigarette and has lost its heat but retains its flavor.

There is nothing of the smoker about the dog. He can't inhale. All he can do is get the flavor of the tobacco. But he knows that his master likes cigarettes, and therefore the dog has cultivated a taste for tobacco smoke so that he can share in his master's pleasure.

If there is anything about the Kenyons that impresses a person who is interested in character reading and analysis it is the fact that they are so well adjusted.

When they sit down and relax their faces unconsciously register enjoyment of life. Their mouths turn up at the corners. Smiling with these people isn't a conscious effort, it is a natural reflex.

Visiting them aboard their boat, one gets a distinct impression of harmony. They show it and their dogs show it.

The next neighbors we visited were Captain John H. Holm, USCG (Ret.), and his wife, Harriet.

Captain Holm is a character. He started life as a seaman aboard a bark at the age of seventeen. The masts of this bark were over a hundred and fifty feet tall. He had to swarm up the rigging in all sorts of weather to work along a ratline, often when the boat was pitching like a bucking bronco. He knows the sea intimately. He has sailed everywhere and lived the rough, tough life of a sailor.

After some sixteen or eighteen years, during the war, he took a job with an agency which was eventually taken over by the Coast Guard. He continued in the Coast Guard until he had a record of many years of service and was entitled to retirement.

On his boat, Captain Holm seems like an old seadog who has pulled into a safe harbor.

Powerful hands, which were once heavily calloused from pulling and hauling on ropes, are now relaxed. Eyes that have been accustomed to sizing up dangerous situations have now softened, but there is about the man an air of command, an ability to reach decisions, a sparse use of words which goes with authority and the necessity of having assumed tremendous responsibilities.

While we were visiting, Dick DeShazer asked him a question about some boating maneuver in the open sea during a time of running seas. It was something on which Dick, himself an old seadog, wanted the captain's thinking.

Captain Holm sat perfectly wooden-faced for a matter of seconds. Then he said quietly, "I wouldn't recommend it."

That quiet restraint, that air of decision spoke volumes.

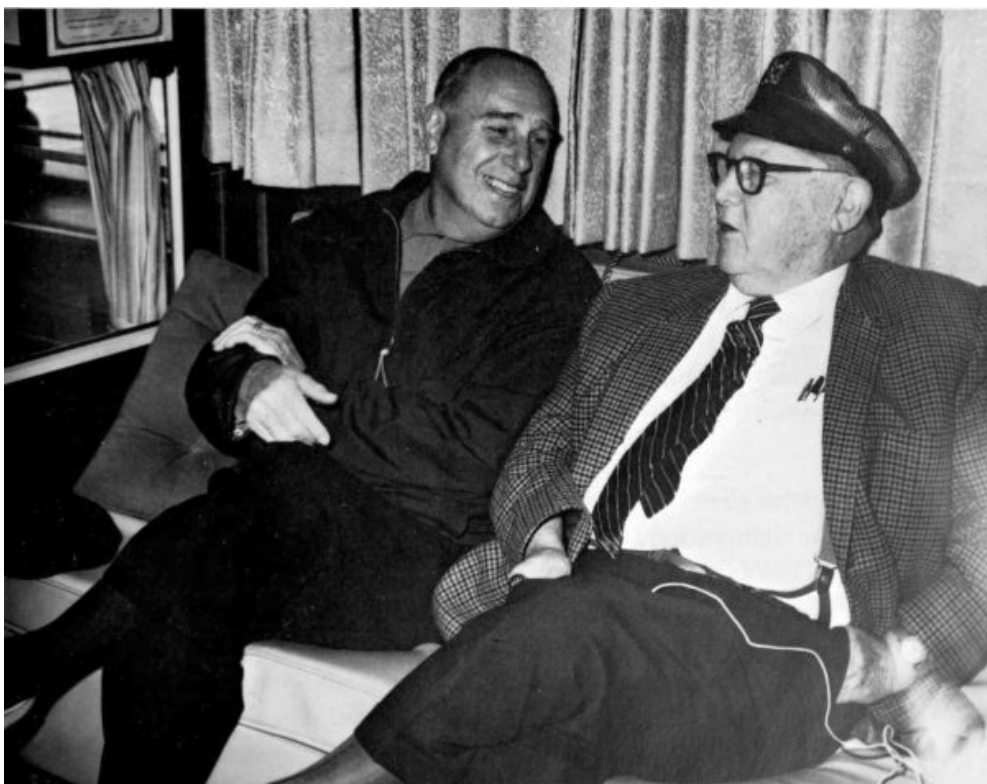
It is a pleasure to be aboard Captain Holm's boat. Everything is shipshape. Everything is in its place and yet the man isn't a slave to his possessions or a slave to his habits.

Captain Holm is probably a good disciplinarian. I wouldn't doubt that he ran a pretty tight ship, but, by the same token, if you were going to have to go out on a stormy ocean in the middle of a black night, off a lee shore with a few reefs scattered around, you wouldn't want anyone except Captain Holm on the bridge.

The nice part about real discipline is that the disciplinarian has to first learn to command himself before he can command others.

We see lots of phonies, blustering individuals who shout and rant and throw their weight around, but Captain Holm, with his quiet voice, is given to studying all aspects of a situation, then, when he has catalogued them, reaching an instant decision. You instinctively feel it is the right decision.

I have an idea that in maritime matters the captain has a computer mind.



Captain Holm tells the Author an interesting sea story.

He will have at his fingertips all the data on wind, tide, width of channel, length of ship, the amount of water the ship draws, whether the glass is rising or falling, and, as each new matter comes up, he will feed this into his mind and click out the right answer.



Captain Holm and the Author at Bethel Harbor.

The fact that he has an unlimited license, that he also has a pilot's license in just about every worthwhile port on the Pacific Coast, indicates that the man certainly knows his way around.

It is not only a pleasure to have a brief visit with him, but you could be berthed next to him for twenty years and never get tired of him. Here is a man who would wear well.

Next we went to call on Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Free and their cat, Tuppy.



The Author visits Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Free aboard their River Queen.

I had a particular interest in the Frees because, as it happened, they had bought the last River Queen I had owned.

As I have mentioned, I like to keep “trading up.” When a new boat comes out with new features, more powerful motors, bigger propellers, a better design, and perhaps a little more room, I like to sell the old and buy the new.

Ordinarily this could be an expensive habit, but, because we keep our boats in first-class shape, and use care in selecting only the very best of boats, we have been quite successful in indulging ourselves without too great a financial sacrifice.

I am becoming somewhat “hipped” on the subject of people being well adjusted, and the more I think about it the more I realize that every houseboat owner I have ever known has been what I would consider well adjusted.



The Frees take their Siamese cat whenever they go on a cruise.

I doubt if the answer lies in the houseboat's contribution to their adjustment, rather in the fact that people who choose to go out to the Delta country and spend their spare time in houseboats are pretty well adjusted in the first place.

In any event, this is true of Mr. and Mrs. Free.

The Frees come from the East where his business required him to attend many of the boat shows. As a result, he became a boating enthusiast long before retirement. He and his wife made up their minds that when that time came they would have a boat of some kind. He was partial to the Atlantic Coast.

Then their son presented Free with one of my books. He learned about the Delta, purchased the other book, and decided to come to California.

Because of my books, he looked up Dick DeShazer at Richard's Yacht Center, and when he found that I had just placed the boat in which I wrote *Gypsy Days on the Delta* on the market, Free and his wife bought the boat and rechristened it *Gypsy Queen*. They are starting on a new phase of their lives with all the anticipation of a couple of kids going on a picnic, and Tuppy, their Siamese cat, also a retired landlubber, has adjusted to life on a houseboat with ease.

The list of neighbors we have at Remsburg's Marina is a long one filled with interesting personalities, but these three couples who have kindly consented to let us publish a thumbnail commentary on their lives of retirement furnish a pretty good cross section of the type of neighbors one has in houseboating.

Gourmet's Paradise

I have previously mentioned that when a community has good restaurants the chance of choosing a poor one is lessened. The poor ones simply can't survive.

The Delta is a place of good eating.

One of the restaurants that I haven't commented on before is the Big Horn Restaurant in the town of Rio Vista.

This restaurant is historic and is known among yachtsmen up and down the coast and among sportsmen all over the world. It was owned for many years by William "Bill" Foster, a remarkable big-game hunter. Foster traveled all over the world, killing game of all species, and then mounted the heads for display in his restaurant.

It is almost inconceivable that one man in the course of a lifetime could have done this amount of hunting in all the different countries of the world, but the trophies are there to prove it.

In addition to the trophies are photographs taken in the field showing the bagging of the game.

Bill Foster passed away a few years ago and the place has been taken over by a new management, but the distinctive decorations still remain.



The old River Mansion of Steamboat Slough, now a restaurant and hotel.

I wanted to try to get some pictures which would give at least a faint idea of the trophies in this restaurant, and Sam Hicks and I went in at what we hoped would be a slack hour. However, there just aren't any slack hours in a restaurant that is as popular and as well known as this one. We finally had to ask a couple of patrons if we could take pictures that included them or would they mind moving so they would be out of the frame of the picture.

Even so, our photographs give only a sketchy idea of the nature of the place.

The restaurant as it now exists is a remarkable tribute to Foster's ambition and to his status as a sportsman. He must have spent thousands upon thousands of dollars traveling around the world hunting big game.



Trophies from all over the world . . .

According to information we have obtained, Foster worked as an apprentice in a foundry at Newark, California, under Henry Snow, who was the first African hunter to bring movies of wildlife to the United States. That was in 1918.

Foster became inspired with the ambition of becoming a big-game hunter, and in 1919 he shipped as a cabin boy to visit Africa. On his return, he began saving his money with the ultimate objective of first an African safari and then big-game hunting in all parts of the world.

According to the information on the menu put out by the restaurant, there are heads of over two hundred and fifty wild animals in the collection and this includes one of the few mounted heads in existence of a full-grown African elephant. From the base to the tip of the trunk, it extends thirteen feet from the wall. Its tusks are five feet long.



. . . adorn the walls of Big Horn Restaurant.

As would be expected, this restaurant keeps high standards. The food is tastefully prepared and offered at reasonable prices.

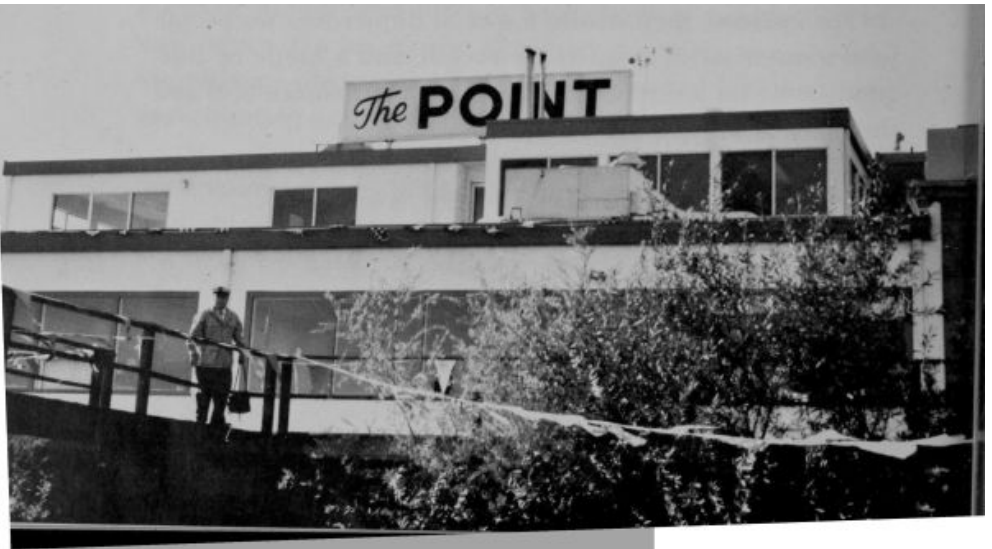
For instance, they feature a special dinner for two people with soup or salad, spaghetti or ravioli, and a bottle of Burgundy wine for a very modest sum, and their choice beef and succulent turkey are memorable.

In addition it is really an experience to sit in a trophy room of this sort, which, as far as I know, is unique.

One of the most scenic restaurants anywhere in the Delta is The Point at Rio Vista.



Big-game heads from America are interspersed with African trophies.



The Point Restaurant viewed from the Sacramento River.



In Antioch, the Riverview Lodge can be reached by either boat or car.

As previously mentioned, this restaurant occupies a commanding view on a point on the north side of a marina. It is a great favorite with boat owners as well as with tourists.

The atmosphere of comfortable, luxurious living which goes with this place is something which needs to be experienced to be appreciated. One can sit and look out of picture windows over the marina with its various boats, or out over the river and watch the river traffic going by. The food is good and, here again, the prices are reasonable.

Another place where one gets the true atmosphere of the river is the Riverview Restaurant in Antioch.

This restaurant is very, very popular. The parking place for cars is on a wharf in front of the restaurant, and the restaurant itself is built on the backside of the wharf so that big picture windows give a view of the river. Quite frequently, as one is dining one sees a huge freighter glide silently by, seemingly within a "biscuit toss" of his table.

This restaurant specializes in seafood, although their extra-thick prime ribs of beef and charcoal-broiled New York cut steak are first rate.

Its specialties are deviled lobster, fresh deviled crab, and jumbo frog's legs pan fried in butter.

There is an excellent bar in connection with the restaurant and, despite the huge parking space available, it is sometimes necessary to keep driving around, waiting for someone to pull out in order to find a place to park the car.

Food is kept up to standard, with quite reasonable prices and fine service. It is a pleasure to sit here at night and have a leisurely dinner.

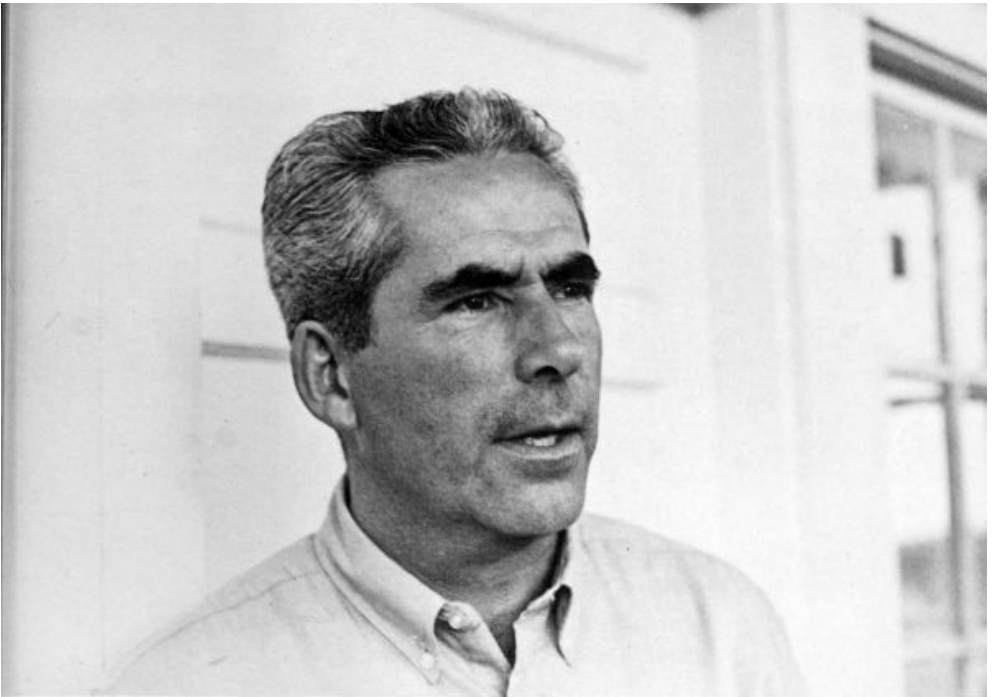
There are other places in the Delta where one can find good food and many of these places also have tables in front of picture windows, looking out over the river or over a slough. It would be impossible to list them all.

However, as I have said before, my favorite of all is Giusti's.

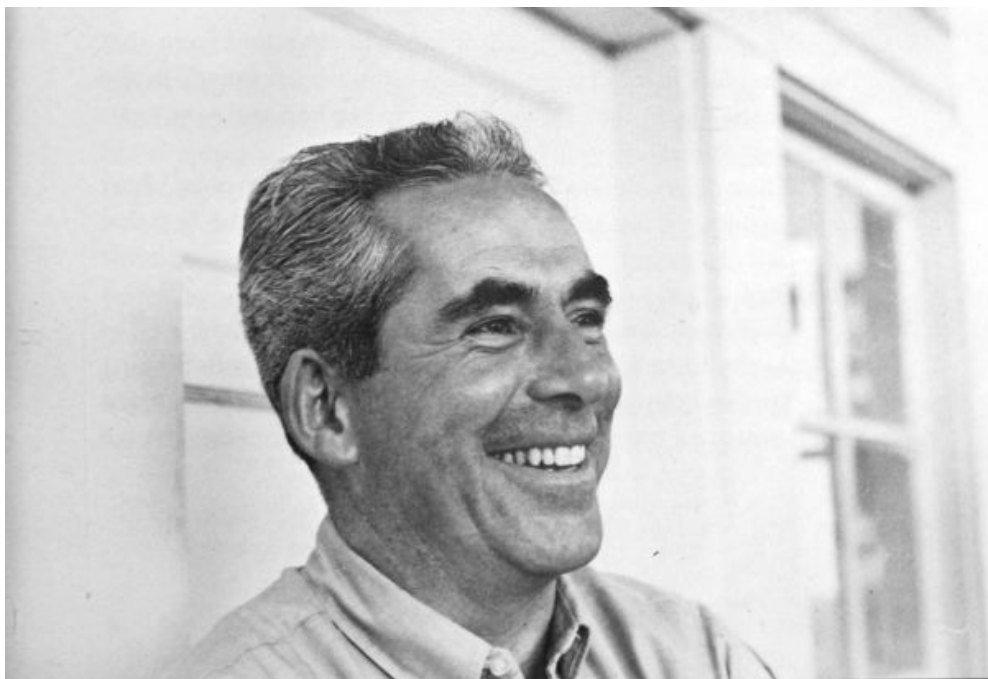
There is no view from the dining room, but the surroundings are so colorful that one is transported back several generations.

I don't know how much of the building as it stands today is a part of the original structure, but I rather imagine that a good part of it is the old Giusti's which was an eating place and a resort place on the river long before highways were known and when transportation on the river was by boat and on the road by horse and buggy. In fact, as I understand it, the place was in operation during the last of the Gold Rush Days and it has been in the same family for years and years.

One enters a bar with dim lights and air conditioning, and immediately encounters either Lo or Mo, whom I have previously mentioned.



Manuel Morais can be serious . . .



... but he is usually a laughing, happy "Mo."

Irene Giusti, one of the original Giustis, presides over the dining room, and Mo, who married her daughter, Dolores, furnishes the management necessary in a place of this sort.

How they do it, heaven knows, but they know where lettuce is grown probably within a couple of hours of the time it reaches the table; where luscious vine-ripened tomatoes are to be had; where the native asparagus is picked in the field and rushed to the kitchen.

The diner goes from the bar down a long passageway built along the levee, still twisting slightly from the uneven construction of thick wood, heavy nails, and warped boards which go back to the old hammer-and-saw days. He comes at length to a small dining room with six or eight tables. Reservations are necessary but can usually be made by telephone from the bar, and within fifteen or twenty minutes a table is available.

First you are served a big family-style bowl of minestrone soup, a loaf of fresh sourdough French bread, lots of butter, and a bottle of red wine.

It is almost impossible to keep from making a whole meal from the first course, the minestrone is so flavorful and blends so well with the sourdough bread and wine.

Then comes a great bowl of salad so crisp and fresh that one wonders if the lettuce perhaps hadn't been grown in the backyard. I even took a look to see if they had their own garden, but there is not one near the house.

Then comes the dish of the day, whatever it may be, short ribs, steak, or roast with vegetables, and, despite the fact that this is a restaurant, the food has the marvelous flavor of home cooking.

Over and above all, however, is the atmosphere of the place—the friendly, homelike sense of belonging it imparts.

You feel that the clock has been turned back fifty years; that you are a traveler who has come by horse and buggy on a dusty road; that you have managed to arrive at a place where refreshment is available and people are glad to see you.



Irene Giusti.

And they *are* glad to see you at Giusti's. Their business is not simply a commercial proposition with them, it is a matter of pride.

And not only is the food home-cooked and the atmosphere that of two or three generations ago, but the prices are those of yesterday as compared with those of similar food in city restaurants. I say "similar" food; actually there isn't such a thing. I have never tasted cooking which surpassed that of Giusti's. You don't have a selection from a menu. You take what is put on the table, but you just can't beat it.

Enjoying the Delta

This book has been about houseboating because I am a houseboat enthusiast and because that is the phase of life in the Delta which I understand.

I don't want to give the impression, however, that houseboating is the only way to enjoy the Delta country—far from it.

Literally hundreds of people trail boats into the Delta. That is, they have light boats, powered with outboard motors, which fit on a two-wheel trailer. They drive up for a weekend and launch these boats at one of the numerous ramps which are designed for that purpose. There is one on Dutch Slough just to the right of the road before it comes to the Bethel Island Bridge. There are many launching ramps all through the Delta country.

These trail boaters bring their lunch or obtain it with fishing rods. They have water skis. They park their trailers, take their boats out into the Delta country, and either come back at night or, at times, camp out overnight.

On a pleasant Sunday dozens of these water-skiing enthusiasts will get together, launch their boats from trailers, go up to some favorite spot on the water, and establish a camp where they will have congenial company and a day of sport.

Coming back, they can either put their boat on the trailer and spend the night in one of the motels in the Delta country, or they can camp overnight if they pick the right place.

It is to be remembered that the waterways are public but that the land is privately owned, and there are many of the islands which object to campers—and with good cause. However, much of the country is open to camping, and the courteous, careful camper is welcome in many isolated places if he leaves a clean camp behind him.

One thing must be kept in mind, and that is that this peat land will burn.

It seems incredible, but the fact remains that even a carelessly tossed cigarette into a peat field may start a smoldering conflagration which will seep down in the peat for many feet.

There may be no clue at all to the underground activity except perhaps a faint wisp of smoke, but woe betide any animal, man, dog, steer, or sheep that walks over the top of this seething inferno.

For the most part, the owners of the land can detect burning peat and, by persistent flooding, can control the fire, but the boater-camper must remember that in this country one has to be very, very careful. Never build a fire except on sand. Always see that a fire is fully extinguished with water. Never toss a cigarette or build a fire anywhere near the peat land.

There are also state-owned parks in the Delta where a person can establish a camp.

On Brannan Island, the state of California has a beautiful public camp with sandy beaches and deep shade where trailers or campers can be parked, kids can swim, and all the facilities for camping are at hand.

At times it is necessary to have reservations and, of course, it is necessary to check in and pay a small fee.

Here a family can have a restful vacation with a chance to camp out and go swimming, and, if they go down to Three-Mile Slough a short distance below camp, they can water ski and go boating.

This is part of the simple life. It is not for me because I have too complex a life. But I recently went through the state park at Brannan Island and I will admit I was filled with nostalgia for earlier days before I became a writer, when I could set up a camp by a stream, live in a tent, and enjoy life.

Here were campers, trailers and, occasionally, people living in tents. Their surrounding accessories—a bicycle, a pair of water skis, a car, a boat trailer, a light boat with an outboard motor, all parked in the deep shade—showed exactly how the family was enjoying life.

At the other extreme, there are, of course, exclusive yacht clubs to which a yachtsman can belong or to which he can obtain a guest card.

Some of these yacht clubs have bought up the smaller islands on which to establish club facilities.

This is the case at Tinsley Island which was purchased by the St. Francis Yacht Club of San Francisco and set up as an exclusive yachting center for its members and their families. These people have wonderful times.

One of the advantages is that the members are brilliant men, most of whom have learned the secret of holding an audience whether it be one man or a thousand. This means that one who is fortunate enough to be in the club is certain of an intellectually stimulating experience as well as having exclusive yachting headquarters.

Once each year they throw a stag party at which they put on skits which are written, directed, and acted by the members. The results are highly hilarious.

Rumor has it that, while women are excluded, the mermaids in the Delta country keep track of the annual date and make a nocturnal journey to stand in awe-struck amazement where they can see and hear what is going on, but not sufficiently close to violate the taboos against the presence of the fair sex.



A cozy camp at Brannan Island State Park.

In the Delta there are resorts which have small fishing boats with outboard motors that are rented by the day.

A person needs only to drive up, park his car, pay a fee, pick up a bag of bait, get in one of these rented boats, and go fishing.

It is impossible to estimate the influx of people who come pouring into the Delta over the weekends during the summer season. And, I suppose by the same token, it is impossible to estimate the amount of money they leave in the region or determine how much of it sooner or later gets into the cities along the Delta.

If the facts were known, if there were any way of determining just how much the sloughs and waterways mean in dollars and cents, the total would be staggering.



Boats have excellent protection in sheltered Vieira's Harbor.

I know that my associates and I spend a great deal of money in the Delta country every season. I know that the people who own the long lines of covered berths take in a great deal of money and pay out a great deal of money in the form of taxes and expenses. I know that every time I go to the Delta I see the marinas are being extended and I know that on weekends thousands upon thousands of people come pouring into the Delta, staying at the motels, eating at the restaurants, drinking at the bars, buying provisions at the markets.

The number of cruisers and houseboats on which the people can spend the night or the weekend is tremendous and is constantly increasing.

And people who have a houseboat never hesitate about what they are going to do with a two weeks' vacation. They count the days until they can get to the houseboat, untie it, and start out in the Delta.

And those who have reached the age of retirement regard their houseboat with deep affection.

More and more the Delta country is coming into its own. More and more the people who have houseboats are learning how to enjoy a life of leisure and pleasure.

[The end of *Drifting Down the Delta* by Erle Stanley Gardner]