

The Imperial Beach Lifeguard Service



The first lifeguard tower in Imperial Beach was built in 1943 at the end of Palm Avenue. This old tower was removed in 1963 and a new tower constructed in the same location. It was renovated in 1980 and finally demolished in 1997. (This 1956 photo is from Freda Elliot's book manuscript, 1976)



This closeup of a 1956 aerial photograph shows the old lifeguard tower at the end of Palm Avenue. The boardwalk that was built in 1909 and repaired many times runs north of this to left in this picture) past Citrus and Calla avenues to the end of Carnation Avenue. It was finally demolished after the storm in Feb. 1958. The "White House" where Dempsey Holder lived (to the right) between Palm and Dahlia Avenue, the middle house with six windows of the three buildings. Behind the tower, east on Palm Avenue where several cars are diagonally, is the Patio Cafe that became Ye Olde Plank Inn in 1968.



Lifeguards Chuck Quinn and Tom Carlin waiting for Dempsey Holder to drive down to the Tijuana Sloughs for a winter surf in 1952. The lifeguard truck is parked next to the old Lifeguard Station at the end of Palm Avenue. The Patio Cafe and Russo family store (now the location of Ye Olde Plank Inn) are in the background. (John Elwell photo courtesy of City of Imperial Beach Lifeguard Service.)

1915 - Historian Arthur Verge writes that George Freeth is "considered the father of modern ocean lifesaving." Born on November 9, 1883, on the Hawaiian Oahu, Freeth came to the mainland in the summer of 1907. He was instrumental in the formation of lifeguard services at Santa Monica and Redondo Beaches, then ventured south to San Diego County in 1915 and accepted a position with the San Diego Rowing Club as a swim instructor. He supplemented his income by working as a lifeguard on Coronado Island in the summer. (*Lifeguards of San Diego County*, 2007, p. 8.)

1918/05/08 - At Ocean beach, Sunday, May 5, 1918, a crowd of over 5,000 holiday makers, "almost entirely made up of World War I servicemen, were attending a celebration sponsored by the Benbough Bath House. Lifeguard Louis Chavard had his hands full. He was working with Frank B. Merritt, a motorcycle patrolman with the city police department. Merritt had been serving on the special lifeguard detail for a number of years due to his swimming and boat-handling abilities. Patrolmen Frank Gilroy and G. G. Freese rounded out the lifeguard crew for the day. Like Merritt, both men were assigned to the detail because of their skills in the ocean. When nearly two hours of intense and chaotic rescue work were over, 2 people were confirmed dead, 11 were missing and presumed dead, and over 60 had been rescued. By Wednesday morning, May 8, 1918, the city councilmen convened to interview experts who could advise them on how to avoid such a tragedy in the future. The principal man they summoned was George Freeth, who, referring to his experience on the beaches of Los Angeles County, recommended increased staffing, an ambulance equipped with a resuscitator, and a motorcycle patrol for faster response times to critical incidents. The council adopted many of Freeth's suggestions, including the rescue motorcycle, and soon Freeth was patrolling the beaches of the south county. (*Lifeguards of San Diego County*, 2007, p. 9.)

1931/07/20 - Lifeguard hired by county for Imperial Beach. (*The San Diego Union*, July 20, 1931)

1936/07/31 - Children's Home To Have Summer House At Beach. J. O. Smith Donates Imperial Beach Lot; Construction Being Rushed. Construction is being started on the new summer house for the San Diego Children's Home on a lot donated by J. O. Smith at Imperial Beach near the boardwalk on the ocean front. The building is expected to be ready for occupancy early in August. The building is to be approximately 60x100 and one story high, according to meager reports. This is expected to be large enough to comfortably house the entire group of 60 children and staff for a vacation each summer at the beach. Each year in the past the home has had a large house for a couple of months bringing the children out in two relays for a month each. Mr. Smith has endeavored to get the children's home built for several years. He has given the home several tons of fig jams which he furnished and prepared. He also made a swimming pool at his home on Eighth street at the beach due to certain regulations. It was not used the past season. (*San Ysidro Border Press*, July 31, 1936)



This photo looking north shows the "White House" in 1990 shortly before it was demolished. This house was built as a Children's Home in 1936 by Imperial Beach resident James O. Smith. During World War II it was a USO Canteen for servicemen. After the war Dempsey Holder lived in the house. According to the book *Lifeguards of San Diego County*, "The building was used as a crash pad for itinerant seasonal lifeguards and for the stray dogs that roamed the beaches of south county for years." One visiting Australian lifeguard exclaimed, "It's a flippin' surf hole!" (Photo courtesy of City of Imperial Beach Lifeguard Service.)

1937 - Just prior to World War II, a small number of pioneering California surfers began surfing south of Imperial Beach, off the mouth of the Tijuana River. They established the spot so solidly among Southern California surfers that after the war, the Slough became the testing ground for most mainlanders going on to surf in the Hawaiian Islands. Unquestionably, the Slough was home to the then-known biggest waves off the continental United States. The first person known to bodysurf the Tijuana Slough was Allan "Dempsey" Holder, who is now deceased. Before his death, Holder recalled, "In the summer of '37, I went down to the Sloughs and camped with my family. Well, I saw big waves breaking outside shore break and went bodysurfing. I never did get out to the outside of it. A big wave came and I was still inside of it. Well, I sort of made note of that - boy, you know, surf breaking out that far," said Holder. Other early riders, a small group of guys known as the "Dempsey" crew, were Towney Cromwell, John Elwell, and the Hughes brothers. In the 1930s, Holder rode the Sloughs on redwood planks. In the late 1940s, he rode a surfboard manufactured by Bob Simmons, the "Father of the Modern Surfboard." "Dempsey was the most respected big wave surfer on the Pacific Coast... riding the biggest waves with the longest rides in cold water with no wetsuits or leashes," said John Elwell. "Beginning in the 1940s, when north swells closed on the coast, surfers from all over Southern California made the journey to the remote and desolate beach within spitting distance of the Mexican border. Before the Malibu and Windansea gangs surfed Makaha and the Hawaiian North Shore, they experienced the thrill and the fear of the big waves at the Sloughs." The known surfers included Holder, Cromwell, Don Okey, John Blankenship, Jack "Woody" Ekstrom, Jim "Burrhead" Drever, Gard Chapin, Buddy Hull, Skeeter Malcom, "Black Mac" McClendon, Vern Dodds, Bob Campbell, Jim Lathers, and Dave Hafferly. "One of the first guys that surfed down here with me was Towney Cromwell."

Holder confirmed. "He was studying oceanography at Scripps." "Dempsey was the model of a great athlete: cool under pressure; always the same whether lost; always considerate of his opponents; always thinking of the other guys as much as himself. In kindness; recognizing everybody's qualities of greatness weaknesses and not making any judgment...", said Chuck Quinn. (Walke, *Imperial Beach*, pp. 115-123)

1939 ca - Just before World War II, a group of surfers, led by Allen "Dempsey" Holder, began charging the giant waves next to the Tijuana River mouth, called Sloughs, just south of Imperial Beach. Unquestionably, surfing has helped put this town on the map. The love of the sport runs deep in its salty, sun-kissed roots (also known as IBcians). Walking under the giant 20-foot arches (titled Surf Henge, by Malcolm Jones) across Pier Plaza en route to the new lifeguard tower, a series of benches made from surfboards in sunny colors. Their plaques (based on the 1993 Longboard Magazine article "Watermen: Tales of the Sloughs" by environmentalist, prolific author and surfer Serge Dedina) chronicle the local big-wave surf history from the 1930s through 1950s as the Sloughs became a hot ground for mainland surfers heading to Hawaii. At the striking wood-and-glass lifeguard station, built in 1999, I find Oscar Alvarez, who has patrolled this lifeguard station for 30-odd years. Inside the modern building, he shows me old black-and-white photographs of past guards, including the legendary Dempsey Holder. "I actually worked with Dempsey for 11 years," says Alvarez. "He was an inspiration for all the water guys. Real personable. He knew everybody, and he carried his legend with him but not in an arrogant way." Dempsey's eldest son, Peter, 56, a surfer and former lifeguard who now sells real estate at Spirit Realty, recalls, "My dad ran the lifeguard station everyone knew and respected him. All the people he had working for him as lifeguards were my heroes. He was absolutely fearless when it came to the ocean. He'd wake me up, drag me out of bed, and we'd go to the end of the pier, where they'd put us in a lifeguard skiff and drop us off way out there. . . . Present-day lifeguard captain Robert Stabenow further stokes the fires of this iconic waterman's mythology. "Legend has it that if you wanted to get hired by Dempsey, you had to go out and surf the big waves with him," he explains. "Inevitably, somebody would lose their board, so they'd have to swim all the way in - which could be half a mile or more, full mile, often in 55-degree water - and grab the board and paddle back out. If you could do that, you won the job. That was the hiring process - no interview. . . . Upstairs, a collection of longboards hangs on the wall, many donated by local surfer John Hanks, who's terminally ill and wants to leave a legacy at the station. Generations of IBcians have manned this station, like "Spiderman" Knox and his brother Jim, a longtime guard. Jim's son Kyle, the town's most notable professional lifeguard today. "There's also legend Verne Dodds, a former lifeguard and big-wave surfer who's now in his 70s," says Stabenow. "His son Kim uses the board for us, and now his grandson does." (Wycoff, Ann, "The Battle for IB," *The San Diego Magazine*, Aug. 2010.)

1940/02/20 - Lifeguard Requested For Imperial Beach. Another request that the county provide a lifeguard in the summer season at Imperial Beach was received yesterday by the county supervisors. It came from Bernice Cosgrove, president of the San Diego Children's home, who said the school maintains a cottage at the beach where 50 children enjoy vacations each year. (*San Diego Union*, Feb. 20, 1940)

1941/05/20 - In 1940, it was not one single event but an accumulation of events that convinced a previously unsympathetic group of county supervisors to approve funding for a county lifeguard service. After having failed approval by one vote in 1940, the measure came back to the county supervisors in 1941. A Mrs. Penwarden, whose husband was a San Diego city lifeguard, had been an unsuccessful advocate for a county lifeguard service, but after nearly 40 drowning deaths occurred along the county beaches of San Diego in 1940, the supervisors approved \$1,200 to start a new lifeguard service for the county beaches. Exactly 20 days after the Ocean Beach tragedy, San Diego lifeguard captain Charles Hardy oversaw the civil service lifeguard exam for candidates trying out to become the county's first lifeguards. The candidates performed resuscitation drills, swimming rescue drills, and boat rescue drills. When the May 5, 1941, tests were completed and the scores tabulated, longtime city lifeguard William Rumsey earned the rank of number one with a score of 94-8. By May 20, newly appointed Captain Rumsey had the \$1,200 dollars and the county supervisors' edict to create a lifeguard service by June 1. Rumsey had the seed money, and now he needed the lifeguards. San Diego County encompasses 73 miles of accessible oceanfront and 81 miles of bay-front. (*Lifeguards of San Diego County*, 2007, pp. 9-10.)



The "Red Dot" surfboard was made at the old County Lifeguard Station at the foot of Palm Avenue in the late 1950s. It was the personal board of Dempsey Holder. (On exhibit in the Museum of the Dempsey Holder Safety Center, donated by Shawn Holder)

1941/06 - In June 1941, lifeguard Allan "Dempsey" Holder was among the first group of nine lifeguards appointed under Capt. William Rumsey. Holder knew everyone as Dempsey, had camped along the local beaches when he and his family vacationed in the area years earlier. As a lifeguard, he became responsible for visitor safety on the beaches he loved. Holder became a Southern California surfing legend because of his knowledge and his experience surfing the Tijuana Sloughs, an area famous for its ability to produce large swells. The Tijuana Sloughs and Dempsey Holder were a must-see for anyone wanting to test their abilities in offshore surf. Holder earned the rank of lieutenant and was in charge of the county station at Imperial Beach. In 1956, when Imperial Beach became a city, I

was appointed the director of the city's parks and recreation department, and he also oversee the new city lifeguard operation. The new Imperial Beach lifeguard headquarters is named the Dempsey Holder Safety Center in his honor. (*Lifeguards of San Diego County*, 2007, p. 11.)

1942/05/15 - San Diego Children's Home at IB has been given over as a rec center for servicemen by Red Cross (*San Diego Union*, May 15, 1942)

1943/09/28 - Sheriff to erect lifeguard station and garage at west end of Palm Ave (*San Diego Union*, Sept. 28, 1943)

1945/02/16 - San Ysidro Boy Drowns Sunday In River Pit. Adolpho Bernal, 14-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. David Bernal of San Ysidro, was drowned late afternoon while swimming with three other boys in a pit of the Tijuana river. The drowning occurred about 5:30, the body being recovered that evening by C Bill Rumsey of the lifeguard service of the county sheriff's office. The pit where the drowning occurred is about 75 yards west of the road, one-quarter mile Schnell's dairy, the sheriff's office said. The three boys swimming with Adolpho were Lewis Doblblatto, Lewis Barrios and Maurice Yanez. The Doblblatto boy attempted to swim to his aid when he discovered Adolpho was in trouble, but was unable to effect a rescue. Services were held Tuesday at the Church of Our Carmel in San Ysidro. Interment was at Holy Cross. The Hubbard mortuary, Chula Vista, had charge of the services. (*The Chula Vista Star*, Feb 16, 1945, P

1945/09 - In fall 1945 a group of residents formed the Imperial Beach Civic Group. They met in a building on the beach known as "the Canteen" because it is used by the USO during the war. This group not only became the center of social activities but advocates for health and human safety, as they discussed ways to improve community services. And there was talk about becoming an incorporated city. (Walke, *Imperial Beach*, 2006, p. 28)

1949 - "It was the winter of '49 after a big epic perfect swell. I went to the IB (Imperial Beach) County LifeGuard Station early waiting for the others to hear Sloughs," recounted Coronado surfing historian John Elwell. "This figure strode by who had clothes of a laborer. His wool plaid jacket was full of fiberglass that sparkled, his long pants were well worn and stained with resin. He was going up on the boardwalk in front of the station to talk to the Master of the Slot Dempsey Holder." Elwell was talking about Bob Simmons, the eccentric genius who helped influence modern surfboard design. The Surfer's Journal published a description in Elwell's article, "The Enigma of Simmons" in 1994. Simmons died during a big swell in La Jolla at Windansea in 1954. His use of aerodynamic principles and incorporation of Naval architect Lindsey Lord's research on planing hulls to build short foam-based twin-keeled surfboards back in the early 1950s influenced the work of groundbreaking surfboard craftsmen such as George Greenough, Steve Lis, and Simon Anderson. I talked with Elwell at the opening of Kenvin's exhibit on Simmons, "Hydrodynamica: Remember the Future" at the Loft 9 Gallery and Space 4 Art last Saturday. Kenvin, the legendary San Diego surfer, has spent the past decade documenting the influence of Simmons. He collaborates with shapers such as Daniel Thomson and Carl Eckstrom, using Simmons' foundation to reinvent the modern surfboard. Kenvin wrote on this website that, "Accounts of Bob Simmons riding short foam and balsa boards at Windansea in the early '50s inspired us to build a series of short Simmons planing hulls for Hydrodynamica in 2006. Another stimulus was a 5'6" Simmons-inspired planing hull that Nelson built and rode at Windansea in 1956. Simmons was employed by Douglas Aircraft in 1952, as were famed California modern designers Ray and Charles Eames. Simmons' planing hulls are functional examples of aerodynamic form being used as a central element of mid century modern design." "Bob Simmons was a ping pong and researched waves at Scripps, and made surfboards in the station (IB Lifeguard) when the surf was down. Bob and Demps (Dempsey Holder) spent hours on end on wave and surfboard theory," Elwell said. According to Elwell, Simmons often said, "My surfboards are hydrodynamic planing hulls. You don't need much fin as they are for directional stabilization." Pioneering La Jolla surfer John Blankenship once told me that, "Simmons used to show up at Windansea at the Sloughs, everyone, 'If you guys had any guts you'd be out with us at the Sloughs.'" Simmons used the Sloughs, a winter big-wave spot down in Imperial Beach at the mouth of the Tijuana River, as a testing ground for his twin-keel design. "He lived in the parking lot of the IB Lifeguard station in his car and made boards at the station," Elwell said. Carl Eckstrom is a surfboard shaper and designer who helped pioneer asymmetrical surfboards. He was also there Saturday night. His unique boards were on display along with those of Aussie shaper Daniel Thomson of Tomo Surfboards. To Eckstrom, Simmons' boards were, "Designed for speed and not high performance. These things," he said, pointing to the Simmons boards on-display, "are beautiful pieces of sculpture." Former world surfing champ and shaper Ken "PT" Townend was on-hand at the exhibit. He was studying Kenvin's collection of twin-keeled surfboards including many by San Diego's own Steve Lis. "I rode by these back in the 1972 World Championship in OB," PT said. "Jimmy Blears and David Nuuhiwa won the event. I rode a traditional single fin along with Bertlemann, but on the day of the finals, the waves were tiny and Blears and Nuuhiwa had their fishes which worked perfectly in the lefts coming off the Thomson is originally from Lennox Head, Australia. He used Simmons' and Lord's ideas about planing hulls to make modern high performance surfboards. Some of his boards were on-display including an ultra-modern thruster, he calls the "Fractal Design." "The Simmons Planing hull has always made sense to me because of its scientific applications of low drag control and dynamic lift," wrote Thomson. "I have been gravitating more and more toward the parallel rail lines because it naturally allows the design to be ridden smaller without compromising stability and paddling ability, not to mention the performance potential is greatly increased." The 'Fractal Design' is an architectural or functional art piece, based on Simmons' platform with Fibonacci and Phi mathematics designed into eight unique measurements of the board. The relationships with 'Phi' proportions is not only very pleasing in theory, but is very close to my ideals of the perfect high performance surfboard." Kenvin worked on the exhibition with Mark Weiner. Both deserve to be commended for turning an interest about Simmons' historical legacy into an opportunity to provide greater understanding about the cultural and design influences of modern surfing. (by Serge Dedina, *IB Patch*, February 01, 2012)

1949/01/14 - A storm threatened foundations of some homes along the boardwalk at Imperial Beach. The boardwalk was constructed in 1909 and went for a mile north of Palm Avenue to where Carnation Street is today; it was carried away by high tides 1939 but rebuilt. (*The San Diego Union*, Jan. 14, 1949)

1950 - James Faulkner Lathers (Jim), their eldest son of James Fergus and Pauline Faulkner Lathers, married Gene Rice, daughter of Faye and Gilbert Rice. A graduate of Sweetwater High School, Jim found himself as an Army paratrooper in World War II where he earned a Purple Heart, and two Bronze Stars in Europe and the European theater. In 1950, he went to work for the San Diego County Lifeguards and has retired after thirty years of service. (*Chula Vista Historical Society, Family, Friends, and Homes*. San Diego CA: Tecolote Publications, 1991.)

1950 - From 1930 to 1950 the total number of California surfers grew from under 70 to over 1500. In the 1940's surfers from all over Southern California made their journey to what is now Imperial Beach to surf the then-known biggest waves off the continental United States. The Tijuana Sloughs became the testing ground for mainlanders going to Hawai'i. Before Malibu, San Onofre and Windansea groups surfed Makaha and the North Shore of O'ahu, they experienced the thrill of riding the big waves at the Sloughs. "Dean of the Sloughs" In 1937 the Sloughs were first surfed by the legendary waterman Dempsey Holder. Over the years surfers from all over California showed up at Dempsey's lifeguard station at the end of Palm Avenue. Most of California's finest surfers were lifeguards at some stage in their careers. Dempsey often hired guards that could surf the Sloughs. Regular Slough Surfers of the 1940's and 1950's: Lloyd Baker, John Blankenship, Tom Carlin, Tony Cromwell, Kim Daun, Vern Dodds, Jim "Burrhead" Drever, Jack "Woody" Ekstrom, Bob "Goldie" Goldsmith, Lorrin "Whitey" Harrison, Buddy Hull, Don "Chuck" "Gunker" Quinn and Jim Voit. Visiting Slough Surfers of the 1940's: Gard Chapin, Peter Cole, Richard Davis, Bill "Hadji" Hein, Matt Kivlin, Jack "Lounsberry", Harry "Buck" Millar, Skeeter Malcolm, Preston "Pete" Peterson, Joe Quigg, Dave Rochlen and Tommy Zahn. Visiting Slough Surfers of the 1950's: Buzzy Bent, Pat Curren, Phil Edwards, John Elwell, Walt Hoffman, Jeff "Spiderman" Knox, Rod Luscomb, "Black Mac" McClendon, Bill McKusick, Don "Buzzy" Trent and Les Williams. "Father of the Modern Surfboard" In the 1940's Bob Simmons applied the principles of hydrodynamics to surfboard design and forever changed the sport of surfing. In 1950 he moved to Imperial Beach. Surfhenge is a monument to the role played by Imperial Beach and these big waves.

pioneers in the history of surfing. (All text based on "Legendary Surfers" by Malcolm Gault-Williams) The plaques near each of the colorful Surfboard Benches at Imperial Beach's Portwood Pier Plaza tell the story of how IB's big waves had an impact on the big wave surfing pioneers from 1937 to the 1950's. The plaques and their corresponding benches are arranged in a clockwise order from # 1 to 10, starting at the bus stop shelter (near the child's play area - north east area of the plaza on Seacoast Drive) and run south along Seacoast Drive, west on Elder to the Dempsey Safety Center, along the seawall to the north, winding through the Plaza, over the curved walls and end just before the Tot Lot in the play area. There is one board / bench that is not yet on display (The Dempsey Board) as that area is still under construction. Enjoy your walk, and you can surf with your computer mouse as you review Imperial Beach's surfing heritage. We wish to thank Malcolm & Fred Jones, the Acrylic Artist for Surfhenge, and in particular Melanie Brainard, our Surfboard artist turned historian, who with Malcolm's assistance, designed and executed the work. (City of Imperial Beach)

1950/01/24 - James Oliver Smith died, age 82, in IB at home at 222 Daisy St, patron of Children's home and convalescent hospital. (*The San Diego Union*, 1950)



Lifeguard Station during storm, Jan. 20, 1953. (Freda Elliot's book manuscript, 1976)

1954/07/08 - Deaths Illustrate Danger. The tragic deaths by drowning of two swimmers over the Fourth of July holiday graphically illustrates the dangers of exertion while swimming or venturing into unguarded waters alone. The lifeguard service maintained by both San Diego city and county is an excellent one that has made a name for itself in the rescues of countless swimmers and boaters who failed to use their judgment and fell into jeopardy. Excellent as the lifeguards are, they are only as good as the cooperation given them by the swimming public. If swimmers insist on entering unguarded stretches of beach or in areas where riprap has been known, they are courting death. By using a little common sense in swimming and obeying the instructions of the lifeguards your Sunday at the beach will be nothing worse than a case of sunburn and sand in your shoes. Remember in this instance, the life you save is ALWAYS your own. (*The Chula Vista Star*, July 1954)

1958/01/30 - IB stone bulwarks Army Corps Engineers to build up to 5 concrete groins (Jan. 31) City, Land Owners Battle Erosion At Imperial Beach IMPERIAL BEACH - The city and owners of beach property yesterday erected emergency bulwarks against sea erosion while city officials sought aid from the Army Corps Engineers in Los Angeles. Ocean waves this week have surged across city streets and into the Tia Juana slough. Property owners have petitioned for action. City Council meeting Tuesday on beach erosion produced these results: 1. The council authorized City Mgr. Carnesciali to spend more than the city charter allows, \$2,000 on work done without bids. 2. The council ordered riprap bulwarks next to the lifeguard station at the foot of Palm avenues and at the foot of Beach avenue which is an ocean access from First street two blocks south of Coronado avenue. 3. Fifty per cent of the property owners present, about 75 percent of the total involved, said they would pay for rock and join in a bulwark program. 4. Carnesciali and Merrill Whitman of El Cajon, a consulting engineer, went to Los Angeles yesterday to ask aid from the Army engineers They want financing, a dredge or any other aid. Nine truck loads of rock, blasted Tuesday from the Nelson-Slack six miles east of Otay, yesterday was placed north of the lifeguard station rock ledge. Forrest Damron, an assistant engineer; said the 110 tons of rock costs \$15 an hour for equipment to place it. Sea water is washing under the old boardwalk. High tides are due next week and with wind could channel through into the ocean, Carnesciali said. Residents and engineers yesterday drew plans and started their bulwarks last night. One beach resident, Dr. E. Morris Hayes, had \$500 worth of riprap placed on the beach in front of his home last week. Bulwarking will continue today at the end of Beach avenue, Damron said. (*San Diego Union*, Jan. 30, 1958)

1959/11/26 - County Guard Service Ends at Imperial Beach IMPERIAL BEACH - The sale of equipment used in the county's care of Imperial Beach was announced yesterday.

Tuesday by the County Board of Supervisors, with the city to pay \$100 for the equipment. A jeep, boats, life saving equipment and similar items are in the Imperial Beach county property being turned over to the city. On the motion of Supervisor David Bird, supervisors Tuesday acted on the recommendation of T. M. Heggland, county's chief administrative officer. Heggland said the board should first "find" that the equipment is not needed, next declare it was going to convey the property to Imperial Beach for \$100 and then give public notice of its intentions. Heggland also revealed that negotiations with the city over the property had resulted in the difference between Imperial Beach and the county on \$1,000 spent to save Imperial Beach in 1958 from excessive beach damage. The city is to pay the \$100. Further, the county and the city have reached an agreement on the cancellation of an Imperial Beach-county contract by which the latter provides the city with lifeguard service. The contract is to terminate Jan. 1, with the city paying 50 per cent, or \$12,880, of the \$23,000 due between July 1, 1959, and June 10, 1960. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Nov. 26, 1959.)

1962/01/04 - The lifeguard station and offices for the park and Recreation Commission neared completion. It was decided at the present time not to build a structure to provide a meeting place for the City Council and other organizations, as the cost would have created a problem. ("Imperial Beach in 1961 Join Us in a Backward Glance," *Imperial Beach Star-News*, Jan. 4, 1962)



Mike Richardson, a city lifeguard, uses the new "desert rat" for beach patrol. Purchased from the Guy Urquhart Co., at a cost of \$1,314, the desert rat adds a second vehicle for beach patrol, with the beach jeep also in use. (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, Aug. 12, 1965)

1966/05/05 - Deana Hastings of Imperial Beach accepts her trophy for second place in the woman's division of the USSA contest. Her brother David Hastings took first place in the boy's competition. Mike Richardson took fifth place in the men's division. The first surfing contest in Imperial Beach sanctioned by the United States Surfing Assn. closed early last weekend. Carlos Andrade from Pacific Beach, a member of the San Diego Surfing Assn., took first place in the men's division. Walsh, from the Windandsea Surf Club of Point Loma, was awarded the first-place trophy in the women's division. First place for junior men went to Harry Mission Beach. The winner in the boys' division was David Hastings of Imperial Beach, a member of the San Diego association. Hastings' sister Deana, took second place in the women's competition. Ann Shimble of Point Loma won the third place trophy. Larry Gordon of the Windandsea Club was awarded the Best Spot trophy. The contest was sponsored locally by the Imperial Beach Chamber of Commerce and the Imperial Beach Teen Club, Inc. (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, 1966)

1966/06/19 - The Imperial Beach Police Department has asked the city to increase its budget by \$8,400 over last year's allotment. Jack D. Shelver, assistant manager, said Chief of Police Frank LeCount has pared down the rest of the department's budget request to make possible the creation of a lieutenant position and the hiring of an additional patrolman. The department is asking for funds for another public address system on the beach, a second lifeguard station and an improved method of cleaning the beach. (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, June 19, 1966)

1966/08/25 - NINE MEN WITH BIG JOB. Surfing Experience Boon to Lifeguards, by Kent Wages. To make your swimming activities as safe as possible at the city's beach is the main responsibility of nine young men under the direction of Parks and Recreation Director Allen Holde. Lifeguards Bill Gove, Bud McClure, Marv Humphrey, Jack Ogle, Mike Richardson, Sean Holder, Richard Abrams, Chip Wilder and Jim Barber were praised by Director Holder this week. And they certainly have the admiration of the many people they have assisted back to the safety of the shore when these persons have found themselves in trouble in the water. WITH THE exception of Senior Lifeguard Gove, the young men are all from Imperial Beach. "This would have been impossible a few years ago," said Holder. "But with the advent of surfing, there are more than enough young men from our own community who are familiar enough with the beach and the water conditions to qualify as lifeguards. They surf during the winter when the waves and currents are really tough, and this experience gives them the stamina to assist and oversee the many swimmers attracted to the city's beach." HOLDER SAID the average age of the beach's guards was around 21 or 22 years. "These young men carry a lot of responsibility on their shoulders when you consider the large amount of beach they're responsible for guarding," he added. Lifeguards are responsible for more than a mile of beach; starting just south of the Boca Rio apartments and continuing up the beach to the north jetty. On many occasions the guards have gone beyond these limits to assist persons in trouble in the water. One guard on duty at each of the two stations (on the pier and at the end of Palm avenue) must keep a constant vigilance on the swimmers in the water. This may sound easy to the layman, but if you go to the Boca Rio area and talk to the guard on duty at the pier station you'll notice he appears rather small and a long ways away. "You appear the same way to him, and when you're in the water you're even more difficult to see. However, if you need assistance, chances are he'll be the first to give it to you. BY CONSTANTLY watching the swimmers and regulating their activities, we can keep them out of dangerous areas and prevent trouble before it happens," said lifeguard McClure "This is nine-tenths of our job." According to Holder, use of the green flag system is the most successful means of protecting the beach's swimmers. Each day the guards select that part of the beach which has the smoothest bottom, weakest currents and rip tides and can be easily observed at all times by the lifeguards for swimmers and persons using surfboards. SURF BOARDS are kept out of this area, the water conditions are the safest for swimming and there are usually several people in the area to assist anyone in trouble in the event the lifeguard is called to another part of the beach to assist a swimmer in trouble. Holder cited the biggest hazard to swimmers is their unfamiliarity with the ocean in terms of surf, currents and tides. "Pay attention to the signs and the lifeguards," he said. "They're there to give you the

amount of protection and still allow you to enjoy the beach." PRIOR TO, during and following summer vacation the department has five guards on duty during the week and seven on the weekends. This policy is also in effect during vacations and exceptionally warm weather. They go on duty at 10am. and leave at 6 pm. One guard handles the beach during the winter through the week and two on the weekends. The lifeguards are selected by Holder after passing a written test and minimum physical test (swimming 560 meters in 10 minutes). "I base my final decision on the boy's knowledge of our particular beach, his alertness and his ability to handle himself in the water during any emergency," said Holder. All of the lifeguards employed at this time are year around surfers and know how to handle themselves in the water during any emergency. He has been in the business of water safety since 1939, summed it up this way: "Because of the large area of beach we're responsible for I'd naturally like to employ more lifeguards, but the young men working for me at the present are acquitting themselves excellently. "I can take off a weekend and feel comfortable in the knowledge that my boys are doing a fine job of protecting the lives of everyone using our beach." (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, Aug. 25, 1966)



Some members of Dempsey Holder's 1967 crew pose here in their jackets, but all other attire was personal taste. From left to right, Capt. Dempsey Holder, Jim Barber, Jack Ogle, Ward Ogle, Richard Abrams, Don Davis, Chip Wilder, Jerry Ellis, and on top is Shawn Holder with an unidentified canine mascot. (Courtesy of David Smith)

1966/08/25 - New Patrol at Beach Hailed as Successful. The city's beach area is perhaps a more pleasant place for family outings thanks to special reserve patrolmen Andrew Rodriguez and Frank Blickenstaff. The two officers, operating as a team, patrol the beach area seven days a week on foot with the purpose of holding juvenile drinking and disorder to a minimum. According to Police Chief Frank LeCount, there has never been an unusual amount of disorder on the beach. "This is one method of assuring that it never develops. Also, it allows family groups to use the beach in relative peace and quiet. "Our regular officers were as check the beach for disorderly conduct regularly, but the troublemakers would disappear the minute they spotted the patrol car, and reassemble as soon as it is said. "These officers assure law and order by patrolling right on the beach." LeCount instituted the patrol Aug. 13 and terms it successful. (*Imperial Beach Star-News* Aug. 25, 1966)

1971/04/04 - Saving money. To Imperial Beach City Manager Tom Parks and, ironically the man he fired, former City Recreation Director Alan Holder, for introducing on the beach the first dune buggy used by any public agency for lifeguard service in Southern California. It cost the city less than \$1,000, compared to the \$4,000 or \$5,000 cost of a jeep or landrover used by lifeguards on other beaches. And since it is an open vehicle, the buggy permits faster entry and exit to the beach and greater visibility - the latter a particular concern in Imperial Beach, where a lifeguard jeep last year accidentally ran over a beachbasker. Holder conceived the idea, planning to modify a production model. Parks, a dune buggy fan, thought it would be better to have the vehicle custom-built from scratch than what was done. This is an example of imaginative and creative thinking by public employees who were not content to keep doing things the same old way because they've always been done the old way. If you'll pardon the pun, Messrs. Parks and Holder were not ones to put their heads in the sand. (*Chula Vista News*, Apr 4, 1971, Page 24)

31st season starts Saturday

'Preventive lifeguarding' is intended role of service

Thirty years ago, William Rumsey became a one-man lifeguard service for San Diego County's beaches stretching from the Mexican border to the Orange County line.

He was soon joined by 10 additional lifeguards, three surf dories, and three 1936 pickup trucks, all under the supervision of the Sheriff's Department.

BILL RUMSEY retired in 1960, but the service he founded continues to protect county beaches and respond to water oriented emergencies throughout the county.

"We guard the unincorporated beaches at Solana Beach and Encinitas, and we cooperate with city and state lifeguards in rescues at sea and help with land searches for various other agencies," explains Capt. James Lathers, 1113 7th St., Imperial Beach, chief lifeguard since 1964.

The service now has four year-round guards, all special sheriff's deputies, and nine seasonal guards. At its peak in 1957, when it protected 194 miles of beaches, there were 32 guards.

AS THE CITIES of Imperial Beach, Carlsbad, and Del Mar incorporated and formed their own services, and the state assumed control of other areas, the county service declined in number but not in excellence, as its record shows.

Headquartered at Solana Beach, the county operates the only rescue boats between San Diego and Oceanside. With two outboard powered skiffs and one of its original 1941 surf dories, the service has made 95 ocean surf runs since 1957, usually in conjunction with the U.S. Coast Guard or related agencies.



LIFEGUARD SERVICES PROTECTS SUMMER FUN
Capt. James Lathers of Imperial Beach

Capt. James Lathers of Imperial Beach (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, June 17, 1971)

1971/06/17 - 31st season starts Saturday. 'Preventive lifeguarding' is intended role of service. Thirty years ago, William Rumsey became a one-man lifeguard for San Diego County's beaches stretching from the Mexican border to the Orange County line. He was soon joined by 10 additional lifeguards, three surf dories, and three 1936 pickup trucks, all under the supervision of the Sheriff's Department. BILL RUMSEY retired in 1960, but the service he founded continues to protect county beaches and respond to water oriented emergencies throughout the county. "We guard the unincorporated beaches at Solana Beach and Encinitas, and we cooperate with city and state lifeguards in rescues at sea and help with land searches for various other agencies," explains Capt. James Lathers, 1113 7th St., Imperial Beach, chief lifeguard since 1964. The service now has four year-round guards, all special sheriff's deputies, and nine seasonal guards. At its peak in 1957, when it protected 194 miles of beaches, there were 32 guards. AS THE CITIES of Imperial Beach, Carlsbad, and Del Mar incorporated and formed their own services, and the state assumed control of other areas, the county service declined in number but not in excellence, as its record shows. Headquartered at Solana Beach, the county operates the only rescue boats between San Diego and Oceanside. With two outboard powered skiffs and one of its original 1941 surf dories, the service has made 95 ocean surf runs since 1957, usually in conjunction with the U.S. Coast Guard or related agencies. Nearly a million people use the county beaches every summer. In 30 years of its existence, the service has made 2400 rescues; there has been only one drowning at guarded County beaches. "OUR NUMBER of rescues in recent years is very low," Captain Lathers states. "But it's intended to be. We practice preventive lifeguarding - keeping people out of trouble, not sitting back waiting for trouble to arrive." "We were one of the first services to use a public address system to warn swimmers of holes and riptides and other dangers; I believe we're the first to use loud speakers which can be turned completely "around to warn climbers on the cliffs back of the beaches," Lathers adds. This philosophy of prevention has been developed and expanded since 1948 when the service came under the control of the County Department of Parks and Recreation. As District Chief Cletus W. Gardner puts it, "We're there to protect life. If the guard is doing a good job in the chair, he could wear a tuxedo all day." GUARDS HAVE answered thousands of first aid and emergency calls, including several unlikely trips rappelling down cliffs to rescue stranded hikers. Emergency gear includes complex climbing and scuba equipment. Grapples are also available for body recovery from lagoons and lakes in the county. The San Diego County lifeguard service established with such high standards that during the war years, beginning in 1942, it trained Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard personnel in ocean swimming' in the lively surf off the old Del Mar pier. The program put 52,000 men through the course in the first year alone. ONE UNUSUAL side activity is the rescue of sick sea animals such as seals and sea lions. Until recently, there was an acute problem in caring for these animals. "Now we can count on help from Rancho Coastal Humane Society, Sea World, and the San Diego Zoo," Lathers explained. The start of the 31st year of service at county beaches, and rescue operations which span an area from Lake Henshaw to Otay to Imperial Beach to San Onofre, will be marked by no special observances. "It will be business as usual at county-guarded beaches. The 31st season officially starts Saturday. We hope San Diego Countians will continue to enjoy their beaches, safely," Lathers concludes. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Jun 17, 1971.)

1971/07/08 - Lifeguards record 60 rescues. Imperial Beach lifeguards, confronted with three to six-foot surf, dangerous rip tides, and holiday crowds, made 60 rescues over the weekend. Lifeguard service tallies indicate 36 rescues were made Sunday, 18 Monday, and only 6 on Saturday. Lifeguard Richard Abraham credited with going into the water to assist bathers 12 times and Don Davis is on record for having made 11 assists. Lifeguard Ben Holt said most of the swimmers who got into trouble were in the 13-15 age bracket. Holt said that the city's lifeguard dune-buggy, commissioned this spring, proved very useful in effecting 1

especially those which had to be made near the southern portion of 1st St. There were no beach injuries requiring hospitalization, he said. (*Chula Vista Star*, 8, 1971.)

1972/04/02 - article on Alan "Dempsey" Holder on IB beach 34 years. A professional beach bum. His affair with the beach has lasted over 34 years. You might call Dempsey Holder a professional beach bum. He has been tied to beach life for 34 years. "I guess I've had closer and more continuous contact with the beach itself than anyone else," he admitted candidly. "I'm sort of wedded to the ocean. I get panicky if I get east of Palm City." Holder began his affair with the beach when he first arrived in California in 1938. He began as a lifeguard with San Diego County, and after Imperial Beach was incorporated in 1957 he became the city's Park and Recreation superintendent. Back then, Holder grinned, "The city didn't even own a lawn mower." so his job consisted of supervising the three-mile long stretch of beach. "We ran what is inherently a dangerous beach in an efficient way," he explained "It was a long, dangerous beach and we had a good safety record." During Holder's employment as park director, the city built the municipal fishing pier, which has been "a real asset in town," he said, and In 1967 the Parks Department built a swimming pool at Mar Vista High School. "The swimming level of our youngsters has greatly improved," Holder observed. "That means a lot. It means more people are enjoying the beach more." The 32-year-old man is presently working as temporary aquatics director for the city, and he wouldn't trade his life on the beach for the humdrum every day 9 to 5 jobs most people have. "It's been a very satisfying life," Holder asserted. One of the main benefits he cited was the opportunity he had to raise his four children near the ocean. "We didn't get rich," he grinned, "but it's a wholesome atmosphere. I was fortunate to raise my children near the beach," he added, "because I could remain near them." The beach life has kept him young, he contended "It's conducive to health," he noted. "At 52 I'm still doing a lot of the things I did when I was 26." Holder also values his association with the younger lifeguards on the beach that he says "has kept him young and open-minded to change." Lifeguarding is "a young man's gaffe," Holder remarked, but rubbing elbows with the young men has been "a blessing," he admitted. "It's hard to think old when you're among young people." The lifeguards are "interesting people to be around." Holder added. Locally, we've been able to employ the cream of the crop." former lifeguards include a bank vice president, an engineer and several high school teachers. "A lot of them are simply college bums," he said. "They graduate and come back and work some more." In his 34 years as a beach dweller, Holder has seen a lot of changes, from surfing styles to the beach itself. When he began surfing in 1938, he used a 20-foot board weighing 140 pounds. Now Holder said an average surfboard is six feet long and a mere 30 pounds. "But like all people who are reactionary," he joked, "I really can't do a flip-flop like that. I'm down to a nine-foot board that weighs 30 pounds." Holder admits that the lighter boards are better, they are less dangerous, more versatile and it takes more skill to ride them. The only reason that he hasn't made the switch, Holder acknowledged, "is that I'm pretty much locked into my surf style. I can't handle the smaller boards." Over the years, the beach has suffered sand erosion. Holder said. "The ocean is encroaching on developed land," he explained. "We just have less sandy beach to come out and lie on." As the summer goes on, the beach will accumulate more sand, but it is suffering from a "long term loss" that is gradually "diminishing and narrowing the beach." For example, he said the beach at the end of Palm Ave. is too narrow to support a volleyball court, but in 1929 "at any time of year you could organize a full game of touch football." The beach is at its best near the end of the summer, Holder noted, "but by that time people have had their go at the beach." Most people flock to the beach in early summer, he observed, because they haven't been there for a long time. The diminishing beach has also caused some safety problems for swimmers. Beaches are less safe because people build private sea walls to protect their property from the ocean. Holder said. Irregular beaches create hollows, rip tide holes and generally bad swimming conditions. "The beach is more dangerous," he explained, "and coupled with more people, lifeguarding is more difficult." There are "ways of remedying" to improve the beach," Holder said, but they are "extremely expensive. It's beyond the capability of local government." Land values aren't high enough to warrant state or federal action, he explained, "but it will have to be done someday." But the beach, narrow or wide, still holds the same attraction for Holder. "It's overall exciting," he remarked. "It has an energy and vitality in the surf that I couldn't find anywhere else. I couldn't tolerate a body of water that didn't have waves breaking on shore." The beach life is in constant contact with the life and death forces of the ocean. Holder noted. "It calls for quick decision and quick action. If you don't stay quick, strong and healthy," he added "you're out of it." (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, Apr. 2, 1972.)



Dempsey Holder compares his 9-foot board to the newer style. At 52, I can't adopt style to suit lighter



Pictures taken in 1973 show Juanita and David Smith north of the boarding house that Dempsey Holder and the lifeguards lived in for so many years.

1973/06/17 - IB lifeguard fund cuts may endanger swimmers. By ROBIN STROLL. The safety of swimmers at Imperial Beach may be jeopardized if funds for lifeguarding are cut as proposed in the 1973-74 budget. Aquatics supervisor Allan Holder says lifeguards are understaffed and under equipped now and that further cuts will make the situation much worse. "I UNDERSTAND the financial situation that the city is in. and if we have to make the cuts, we'll do the best we

said "But it will mean fewer lifeguards on the beach at one time or fewer hours of lifeguard protection " Holder said that Imperial Beach is one of the most d beaches in San Diego County, but the lifeguard station does not have enough money .to properly staff the beach. As an example he mentioned that Coronado has approximately the same lifeguard service as Imperial Beach and it only had one rescue last summer while Imperial Beach had 500 And that was a quiet : for Imperial Beach compared to the summer before when the lifeguards made 1,000 rescues MULDER said erosion on the beach has created holes in the oc and rip currents become worse every year. He said some days the holes fill up and it is relatively quiet, but other days it is so bad that "anyone who steps in t in danger " And the bad days are the days that they really feel the pinch of being under staffed. For instance. Holder said that although he doesn't have enoug guard the area south of Coronado Avenue, rescues must be made there because swimmers use the area. Everytime a lifeguard must make a rescue there, he l area less protected Holder said he had asked for a 10 percent increase in funds this year in hopes that he could station a lifeguard in the area, but said it will l impossible if the current budget is decreased as proposed. ANOTHER PROBLEM is that the lifeguards have no radio equipment for their Jeep or rescue bo Jeep goes south of Coronado and trouble arises elsewhere along the beach, the only way to signal the Jeep is for someone to stand on the pier, waving his ba hopes that the driver will see him. Holder said there were provisions made in the 1972-73 budget for f 1,800 for radio equipment and 1900 for a surf dory, b station has not yet received them. " I ' m expecting to gel them by July 1 € the last day of the 1972-73 fiscal year," said Holder, "and I'll be very grateful to g equipment " But a lifeguard who is less optimistic about the responsiveness of the city to their needs, added " B u i our expectations are pining away." ANO lifeguard, who did not wish to be identified, described their current communications system as a combination of "sign language and mental telepathy." He s are able to communicate because they've been working together for so many years, but added, i f the pool lifeguards came down here for a day and tried to v the equipment we've got, you'd need a detail to pick up the bodies" Holder had nothing but praise for the beach lifeguards, explaining that the one good thing wurking on a dangerous beach is that they have become very skilled He added, "It's a matter of men rising to the occasion " Bui he said they are the lowest r lifeguards in the county, even though they make more rescues per lifeguard than on any other beach. Most of the lifeguards are teachers and college students work during the summer, ONE OF the lifeguards, who has worked (here seven years, explained, "We can't complain about these things because were part-ti employes. We can be fired any time " Holder said the lifeguard station was well equipped when it was. first established, but has suffered in the past years wl departments in the city have grown "I think we've lost our place on the list of priorities," He said, "I recognize that departments have to scramble around for money, but since we're ail part-time we don't have any way of doing t h a i " He said they have "really suffered in the past three or four years while the beach become progressively more dangerous " He said the growth of the area surrounding Imperial Beach has added to the problems since inlanders are "less skill water than the locals." One lifeguard who has worked at Imperial Beach for nine years said the only way for someone to really understand the problems is tc to the beach on a "bad day" and watch. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Jun 17, 1973.)

1974ca - Poorly equipped, staffed and paid, lifeguards claim. By DENNIS BAKER Reminder Editor. Imperial Beach city lifeguards this week sent a letter to Holder, director of the city Aquatics Dept., charging they are underpaid, undermanned and poorly equipped. The letter, signed by all sine city lifeguards, als recommendations to alleviate the cited problems. Those recommendations, however were not disclosed. Meanwhile, in a related matter, the City Council, M night in another of a series of special budget sessions, postponed until Tuesday night's regular council meeting budget; action which would affect lifeguard f At the Monday session, the councilmen asked City Manager Jack Shelver to submit detailed reasons to justify his projection in the preliminary city budget tl lifeguard salary costs would increase \$5,000 to \$24,000 for the 1974-75 fiscal year. Shelver noted that projected total lifeguard manhours at an amiuifl rate v increase to 7,100, up 420 hours over last year. The increased hours, Shelver noted, are mainly because of larger beach crowds attracted by nicer weather. He that the lifeguards also are slated for a 6 and 1/4 per cent pay hike along with other "miscellaneous" city employees. But the lifeguards, who talked with the Monday night "as a group," said "as lifeguards within a population that is increased, we feel that increased service is justified and warranted. Our top pay sc said, "is below the starting salary for some other lifeguard agencies." The lifeguards expressed concern about the department's future, saying that experience lifeguards are taking better paying positions in other aquatics agencies. This, they claimed, reduces protection, "No placements," they said, "could maintain of protection we provide with the limited manpower we have now." The lifeguards said the majority of the nine have been with department for several years that they take pride in their work. "People seem to think," they said, "that we are recurrent college students here just for the summer. "But," they said, "there one student among us. The rest of us stay with the department year round." The lifeguards said they work full-time only during the peak season, while durin season they work part-time, just 10 hours a week. "We're lucky if we take home \$30 a week during the winter," they said. Lifeguards earn an average \$3.20 : 'However, the lifeguards said they intend to pursue theft grievances "through proper channels." "Proper channels," according to City Manager Shelver, mean lifeguard's memo has been referred to City Parks and Recreation Director Bob Swanson for study with recommendations to be submitted to Shelver "within of days." The lifeguards said they will wait for those recommendations. Meanwhile, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) at its Monday night meeting h report from chairman Basel Bailey who said that the Aquatics department needs better equipment and more manpower, including six year-round lifeguards t In a five year period. She said that beginning San Diego county lifeguards start at \$3.30 an hour with a top scale of \$6.96 an hour achievable over a 3-year p Diego city lifeguards, she said, start at \$3.26 going as high as \$3.92 an hour. In a related matter, the CAS voted to donate to the IB lifeguards two walkie-talk which, according to lifeguards, are badly needed. Mrs. Bailey donated \$100 towards buying the radios, saying "it was me who brought up the idea two mon- and I feel responsible for getting this project going." (*The Reminder*, ca. 1974, clipping in Bilbray collection)



Mrs. Hazel Bailey and lifeguard Brian Bilbray smile as they enjoy quiet at Imperial Beach. Both have worked to

develop better communications between young people and adults and bring an end to vandalism and drug problems.

Mrs. Hazel Bailey and lifeguard Brian Bilbray (clipping from the Bilbray collection)

1977/09/18 - IB shifts to slower, quieter winter pace. The city's playgrounds are vacant now, save for a few women's and girls' softball teams and the early S morning games at Sports Park by limbering-up firemen. And the pool has become Mar Vista High School territory again. Even the streets are quieter and w does go on ends earlier in the evening, facts which allow policemen to take vacations or statemandated or school courses postponed by summer activity in a town, THE SLOUGHS are no longer visited daily by youths exploring the muck and mire, leaving space for casual walkers or kayaks to ply a twisting strea the fish and fowl to relax in. "This summer we averaged 60,000 to 70,000 (bathers) a month at the beach," said Bob Swanson, director of the parks and recre department "We will probably have 20,000 to 25,000 this month, and by October, we will be lucky to have 5,000 on a weekend," Lifeguards, who numbered each of two daily shifts through the summer, number only three these days and will soon drop to one full and one part-time, he said. Swanson noted with rel drowning or other tragedies occurred despite one of the busiest years on record for the beach. Charles Evans, manager of the pier concession, estimated pier: fishermen averaged 500 to 1,000 daily on the peak summer days; the average now is 50 to 100. (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, Sept. 18, 1977)

1978/03/23 - Lifeguard takeover ok'd. County supervisors this week approved a takeover of lifeguard services on all city beaches in the county, a move that increase county costs \$1.5 million and raise property taxes 2.1 cents. Coastal cities, however would be spared the lifeguard costs, and smaller cities would p receive better service in the form of newer equipment. Costs would be shifted to taxpayers countywide and increased efficiency could save about \$68,000 pe according to Lloyd Lowery, county park and recreation department director. THE IMPERIAL BEACH City Council has approved the consolidation, but fin approval would come during supervisor hearings on the 1978-1979 county budget. The merger also hinges on approval by the San Diego City Council. San lifeguards would merge with the county park and recreation department June 1, if the plan is approved. Imperial Beach and other cities interested in consolio Oceanside, Del Mar and Coronado - would be brought in by June 1, 1979. The inclusion of the smaller cities would cost the county an additional {450,000. county also would need to spend money to bring up to date outmoded facilities and equipment used by the smaller cities. Byron Wear, spokesman for the Sa Surf Lifesaving Assn., proposed creation of a separate marine safety department that would include the Harbor Patrol. A COUNTY report warned the addit beaches would increase the insurance risk faced by the county. Lawsuits against the governments are increasing, and the additional beaches would increase t chances of a suit against the edunity, accordingtothereport. Supervisor Roger Hedgecock amended the motion passed by the supervisors to include a suggesti cities reduce their tax rates by amounts equal to their savings under the consolidation plan. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Mar 23, 1978.)

1979 - Benny Holt was a lifeguard; was a coach at Mar Vista HS 1979-2007.

1979/06/07 - The Imperial Beach City Council voted to join forces with the county for lifeguard services in a move expected to save the city \$80,000 the fir: The cities of Imperial Beach, Coronado, San Diego, Del Mar and Oceanside must vote for the plan before it can be implemented. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, J 1979.)

1980/02/17 - Veteran lifeguard recalls 40 years of sun 'n' sea. The time was 1951, and Alan "Dempsey" Holder was well into his 12th year as an Imperial Be Lifeguard. Today, Holder is 60. Years of sun and wind nave etched deep furrows across his suntanned face, but his keen eyesight and wiry muscular body m seem much younger. In the past 40 years, Holder, now Imperial Beach aquatics director, has seen numerous changes along the VA miles of shoreline he patr the lifeguard service as well. "Today, there is less oil coming into the beach than there was in 1939," Holder said. "That's because the Coast Guard has tighte restrictions on large ships." Holder said the most graphic thing he has noticed over the years is the ever widening band of smog. "Right after World War II, tl gray colored bank on the horizon," he said. "Now it is predominantly brown in color." Holder believes the Imperial Beach beachfront is more dangerous nov was earlier. "It's due to the massive erosion we have seen in recent years," he said. "The sandy bottom shifts radically, causing a variety of strong currents an northerly drift." Holder added that because of the unusually treacherous conditions occurring periodically, "we have more rescues here - per lifeguard - than beach in the county." RESCUE METHODS have not really changed all that much, according to Holder. "From 1939 to the present," he said, "rescues are sti manpower. The method still involves a guard, roped to a floating swimming buoy," The greatest aid to beach rescues came with the introduction of swim fin said. "With them, a guard could handle just about any strong current and increase his effectiveness 100%." The number of guards on the beach during peak t concern of Holder's. In the late 1930s five were assigned to the beach during the week and six on weekends. Today, during the busy times, there are seven to the weekdays and eight or nine on weekends. "WITH MORE and more people using the beach now, it has created some serious understaffing problems at pe times." One of the more difficult problems, he said, is getting down the beach fast enough on crowded summer days. "Our vehicles are severely impacted by

along 1st St.," he explained. "And it's almost impossible to motor along the beachfront for fear of running over someone." Holder said he has had fantasies a to deal with that problem. "It may sound a bit far-fetched," he said, "but if we had mounted guards, that is, on horseback, we could move down the beach rapidly cut way down on rescue time. "Of course, there is the maintenance factor. You couldn't just park them in the off season." IN THE 1940s and '50s, Imperial E lifeguards were part of the county service. Later, Imperial Beach established its own organization. Rumbblings have come from local politicians in recent years county may once again take over the service. Holder said that might be a good idea. "I wouldn't mind working for the county," he said. "It could provide better coverage of the beachfront." Holder is the only full-time, year-round lifeguard in Imperial Beach these days. "With beach conditions here, our guards learn how to handle a great variety of rescues. It's a tough job working on this beach, and you soon find out whether or not you can handle yourself." Holder doesn't personally handle as many rescues as he used to. "Every now and then, I'm called on to swim out and get someone," he says. "But with the buoy, it's really easy." ALL IMPERIAL BEACH guards are required to pass a stringent swimming test, Holder said. "All our guards must be able to swim 500 meters in under 10 minutes," he said. What does he do to stay in shape for ocean rescues? "I swim regularly and play a lot of basketball," he said with a chuckle. At 60, Holder has set records for longevity in the lifeguard service. "I think Bill Shea, who works in the Del Mar-Solana Beach area, is probably about my age," he said. "There is a general opinion that you should get out of this type of work by the time you are 48 years old." Holder is proud of his tenure with the service. "It's been a good job, all things considered. It has afforded me opportunities to enjoy a lot of different activities. I have raised four kids here. They all enjoy excellent health, and so do I." (*Imperial Beach News*, Feb. 17, 1980.)

1980/02/17 - Retire at 48? Not on your life Veteran lifeguard By Joe Cabaniss It was late in September and strong southerly swells rolled in from the Pacific Beach - lifeguard Allan "Dempsey" Holder and two friends paddled surfboards out between bonecrunching 12-foot peaks at the Tia Juana estuary. THE EARLY turning sun was warm and a gentle south wind rippled the ocean's surface. One of the three lost his board after a thick, abnormally large wave rolled over him as he swam toward shore, something hit his leg hard. The water behind him churned as the shark struck again - turning the water a bright crimson. it was over. Hearing the man's cries, Holder paddled toward his friend. Positioning the man on the front of the surfboard, Holder made his way toward the shore. The time was 1951, and Holder already was well into his 12th year as an Imperial Beach Lifeguard. Today, Holder is 60. Years of sun and wind have deep furrows across his suntanned face, but his keen eyesight and wiry muscular body make him seem much younger. in the past 40 years, holder, now imperial beach aquatics director, has seen numerous changes along the 1/2 miles of shoreline he patrols, and in the lifeguard service as well. "Today, there is less oil coming ashore than there was in 1939," Holder said. "that's because the coast guard has tightened up its restrictions on large ships." holder said the most dramatic change noticed over the years is the ever widening band of smog. "right after world war ii, there was a gray colored bank on the horizon," he said. "now it is predominantly brown in color." Holder believes the imperial beach beachfront is more dangerous now than it was earlier. "it's due to the massive erosion we have seen in recent years," he said. "the sandy bottom shifts radically, causing a variety of strong currents and a strong northerly drift" holder added, that 'blow-off' waves are treacherous and occur periodically, "we have more rescues here - per lifeguard - than any other beach in the county." rescue methods have not really changed all that much, according to Holder. "from 1939 to the present," he said, "rescues are still 99% manpower. the method still involves a guard, roped to a floating swimming buoy," the greatest aid to beach rescues came with the introduction of swim fins, holder said. "with them, a guard could handle just about any strong current and increase his effectiveness 100%." the number of guards on the beach during peak times is a concern of holder's. in the late 1930s five were on the beach during the week and six on weekends. today, during the busy times, there are seven to eight on the weekdays and eight or nine on weekends. "with all the people using the beach now, it has created some serious understaffing problems at peak times." one of the more difficult problems, he said, is getting the beach fast enough on crowded summer days. "our vehicles are severely impacted by traffic along 1st st.," he explained. "and it's almost impossible to motor along the beachfront for fear of running over someone." holder said he has had fantasies about how to deal with that problem. "it may sound a bit far-fetched," he said, "if we had mounted guards, that is, on horseback, we could move down the beach rapidly and cut way down on rescue time. "of course, there is the maintenance factor. you couldn't just park them in the off season." in the 1940s and '50s, imperial beach lifeguards were part of the county service. later, imperial beach established its own organization. rumbblings have come from local politicians in recent years that the county may once again take over the service. holder said that might be a good idea. 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1980/02/21 - Dempsey Holder cited repeatedly for operating kennel without a permit (*Star-News*, Feb. 21, 1980)

1980/02/24 - FRIENDS WORK TOGETHER TO SAVE ITEMS FROM STORM-WRECKED PIER This speed boat acted as a shuttle between the pier and boat anchored nearby. Goods recovered from pier. As muddy, brown waves continued to rock what's left of the Imperial Beach Pier, a rescue operation was in progress Friday. At stake - over \$1,500 worth of goods and equipment from the concession stand owned by Councilwoman Hazel Bailey and the personal possessions of Sylvia Barrett, the caretakers of the pier who lived atop the concession stand until their hasty departure Wednesday. IT WAS late Wednesday night that heavy waves lashed the pier, breaking off a 50-foot section of the south tee and ripping a 150-foot chunk from the main stem of the pier. The rescue operation, dubbed "IB. self-reliance enterprise" by one of the crew, involved a 65-foot cruiser called the Kona Princess, a 17-foot speed boat and a crew of 15. Under sunny skies the Princess left a Point Loma dock just after noon, and made its way to the crippled pier. THE EXCITEMENT and chaos of previous days had died down. For people aboard the boat, the task was simple - retrieve the goods. Aboard the Princess were Bailey, Councilman Tom Stark, the Barretts, several other friends and boat's owner, Dave Kane. When they arrived, they were met by the speed boat, with its crew of three. Two off-duty lifeguards, Jim Barber and Allan Holder, braved the contaminated surf and already from pier climbed the island that was once a pier. WITH THE speed boat acting as a shuttle between the pier and the anchored Kona Princess nearby, the tedious process began. Using a rope ladder, two of the Princess crew members joined the lifeguards atop the pier. From there they set about stuffing gunny sacks and plastic bags with whatever was to be sent down. The bags were dropped into the water or lowered by the speedboat below and carried to the rest of the crew aboard the waiting Kona Princess. Everything from food, bins of bait and cases of beer to a bicycle, television and typewriter was removed. (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, Feb. 24, 1980)

1980/11/16 - Renovation of the city lifeguard tower at the foot of Palm Ave. is under way and is expected to be completed by the end of the year. ("Signs point to beachfront development," *Imperial Beach Star-News*, Nov. 16, 1980)



New look

Renovation of Imperial Beach's lifeguard station at the foot of Palm Ave. is completed. The work cost

the city \$16,395. The station now blends into the English seacoast

theme for the beachfront commercial tourist zone.

Renovated Lifeguard Station. (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, Feb. 5, 1981)

1980/12/18 - Fire delays pier repair plans. IMPERIAL BEACH LIFEGUARDS AND FIREFIGHTERS PULL DEBRIS FROM PIER Ftf destroyed the pier concession stand, delayed plans for pier repairs. An early morning fire that swept through the pier concession stand has left Imperial Beach with little feape reconstruction of the pier by summer. And It may have destroyed Councilwoman Hazel Bailey's hopes of ever selling or even operating the business she and husband have owned for seven years. THE CITY council this week postponed awarding a \$4SS.0lt contract for reconstructing the pier soastrngOty Manager Field can discuss the matter with the federal agency that had allotted SSS0.0W for its reconstruction. Before pier reconstruction begins. Field said he wants 1 wtesjuw the Federal Emergency Management Agency will fund the additional wotfc made necessary by the fire. The entire process Is expected to delay cost for some time. On the advice of acting City Attorney Cliff Reed, the council postponed until Jan, S its decision on the question of buying the concessionleas the fire, it had been expected to approve the purchase. IN A hastily written saemorandum to the council Reed said it Is his opinion "that the operator has not sell the city hs say sgjsalssy the cslf may, but is not required to rebuild the concession stand. It is also sn? opinion that as of now. the agreement {between and the city) Is effectively terminated.TM Reed advised the council to postpone action on the matter until he can review the legal ramifications of the fire an council a more aa> tensive opinion. "I'm not saying at this point that the city should not buy the lease," Read said, "Frankly, I'm not prepared to give you an tonight. I think there Is significant question as to whether (Bailey) has anything to say to the city." THE FIRE, which began about 2 a.m. Sunday and contin smoulder Monday, was caused by an arsonist* Imperial Beach Fire Chief DaveEngetman said. While the fire department has begun an investigation. Fire M John Holsenback said there is little evidence and no witnesses have come forth. "What makes this so very difficult," Holsenback said, "Is that the remains of building are on the bottom of the sea. There's nothing for me to work with," In hopes of aiding the investigation, Councilman J.B. Bennett this week asked f resolution to offer a \$1,000 reward for any information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person or persons involved in the fire. All information wil confidential. (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, Dec. 18, 1980)



IB lifeguards face budget cuts. Jim Francis, 34, a three-year veteran of the Imperial Beach lifeguard service, directs swimmers away from dangerous riptides. The service faces budget 50% beginning July 1. That means signs may be posted south of the pier warning that no lifeguard will be on duty there. (*Imperial Beach Star-News*, June 10, 1982)

1982/07/25 - Beach calls, but be careful Although threatened by budget cutbacks earlier this month, the Imperial Beach Lifeguard service is once again oper

full strength. Beach Lifeguard Captain Jim Barber said guards will be on duty from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day from the city's northern limit at Carnation Ave. to Imperial Beach Blvd. Emergency service is also available, he said, from the north jetty (north of the Palm Ave. lifeguard station) to the Tia Juana rivermouth summer days drawing record numbers to the shore, Barber emphasized the need to swim in guarded areas only. "WE HAVE SOME standing advice that we give to kids, but it applies to adults as well," Barber said. "Swim where you can see a lifeguard; that way he can see you." Beach visitors will notice flags posted on the beach for safety. Barber said red flags are used to denote buffer zones between permanent obstacles on the beach. For example, he said, red flags are posted 150 feet north and south of the pier to keep swimmers and surfers away from the structure. Riptides usually run along both sides of the pier. Pairs of green flags are used to mark safe swimming zones and are only used on days when riptides are numerous. ACCORDING TO Barber, there are prevailing riptides near the north jetty and the pier the year-round. Swimmers, he warned, should stay away from the structures to avoid both riptides and sharp barnacles attached to pier pilings and rocks. At Imperial Beach, unlike other beaches in the county, swimmers and surfers are not confined to separate areas. So far, Barber says, there have been few problems. "On the small days they usually mix," he said. "When the surf is big the swimmers usually don't get out very far, anyway." BOTTOM CONDITIONS along Imperial Beach can be treacherous. Barber said there are holes in certain areas along the beach caused by swirling currents during big swells. The beach is generally safer for bathers in the early part of the summer, he said, when the surf is small. On rip currents, Barber offers this advice: "If caught in a rip don't struggle, just try and relax and stay afloat. Eventually the current will dissipate, beyond the surf line in deeper water." Barber said he hesitates to recommend that poor swimmers try and swim parallel to the beach to escape a rip tide. "If you are a strong swimmer then, yes, you can probably get out that way," he said. "If not, you should save your energy until the rip releases you." (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Jul 25, 1982.)

1982/07/25 - Beach calls, but be careful. (photo) Lifeguard Dave Springer watches for swimmers in trouble. Although threatened by budget cutbacks earlier this month, the Imperial Beach Lifeguard service is once again operating at full strength. Beach Lifeguard Captain Jim Barber said guards will be on duty from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day from the city's northern limit at Carnation Ave. to Imperial Beach Blvd. Emergency service is also available, he said, from the north jetty (north of the Palm Ave. lifeguard station) to the Tia Juana rivermouth. With hot summer days drawing record numbers to the shore, Barber emphasized the need to swim in guarded areas only. # "WE HAVE SOME standing advice that we always give to kids, but it applies to adults as well," Barber said. "Swim where you can see a lifeguard; that way he can see you." Beach visitors will notice flags posted on the beach for safety. Barber said red flags are used to denote buffer zones between permanent obstacles on the beach. For example, he said, red flags are posted 150 feet north and south of the pier to keep swimmers and surfers away from the structure. Riptides usually run along both sides of the pier. Pairs of green flags are used to mark safe swimming zones and are only used on days when riptides are numerous. ACCORDING TO Barber, there are prevailing riptides near the north and south jetty and the pier the year-round. Swimmers, he warned, should stay away from the structures to avoid both riptides and sharp barnacles attached to pier pilings and rocks. At Imperial Beach, unlike other beaches in the county, swimmers and surfers are not confined to separate areas. So far, Barber says/there have been few problems. "On the small days they usually mix," he said. "When the surf is big the swimmers usually don't get out very far, anyway." BOTTOM CONDITIONS along Imperial Beach can be treacherous. Barber said there are holes in certain areas along the beach caused by swirling currents during big swells. The beach is generally safer for bathers in the early part of the summer, he said, when the surf is small. On rip currents, Barber offers this advice: "If caught in a rip don't struggle, just try and relax and stay afloat. Eventually the current will dissipate, beyond surf line in deeper water." Barber said he hesitates to recommend that poor swimmers try and swim parallel to the beach to escape a rip tide. "If you are a strong swimmer then, yes, you can probably get out that way," he said. "If not, you should save your energy until the rip releases you." (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Jul 1982.)



Lifeguard Dave Springer

1983 - Clearly, these multigenerational locals take pride in Imperial Beach, repeating the same descriptors of the town - laid-back, friendly, low-key, down-town, uncrowded - like a mantra. But it wasn't always this way. "The town had a well-deserved reputation in the old days for its rowdy bars along the beach," says Holder, talking about the 1970s, '80s and early '90s. "There were lots of bikers and pretty unsavory people, but it's changed slowly." Lifeguard Alvarez lends thoughts on the transformation of the town once nicknamed Whiskey Flats. "We were the first beach to eliminate drinking [in 1995]. Once they closed speakeasies and got the bikers out, things really cleaned up." "It used to be a drunkfest at the beach, so tough around here," Captain Stabenow adds. "My wife and I debated whether to stay when we had kids. But now they go to a good school and can walk to the beach. Just the other day, cheerleaders were practicing in Pier Plaza; would have never happened 10 years ago. You'd have a bunch of weirdos yelling things at them. You really gotta give credit to the sheriff's department." (The San Diego County Sheriff's Department has been policing Imperial Beach ever since 1983, when the city was in financial distress and did away with its own force.) (*The San Diego Magazine*, Aug. 2010.)

1983/01/27 - Lifeguards leaving Imperial Beach. Lifeguard service at Imperial Beach will be eliminated beginning Feb. 1, due to the city's budget crunch, F. John Holsenback announced. Holsenback said revenues for the recreation fund, which pays for lifeguard service, have not been coming in, so expenditures are frozen. City Manager Sherman Stenberg said the city's midyear budget review shows revenues collected by the county and state for the city are lagging about 34% below anticipated levels. Instead of half of the anticipated revenues being available half-way through the fiscal year, only about 34% has been collected, he said. CITY ATTORNEY Cliff Reed said the city has no legal obligation to provide lifeguard service. But if the city does provide that service, it is liable for providing adequate service. Holsenback said the decision to drop the service was based, in part, on that advice, because revenues would not allow for adequate lifeguard protection. Jim Barber, head lifeguard, said normally during the winter he is on duty alone weekdays, with the ability to call in backup lifeguards if good weather brings more swimmers to the beach. BECAUSE BARBER is responsible for beach maintenance, too, he also has called in additional lifeguards to cover the while his other duties make him unavailable. Weekends, two lifeguards are generally on duty in wintertime, with others brought in as needed. Barber said two lifeguards were made last Thursday. In one incident, an 8-year-old boy stepped into a rip tide near the Palm Ave. Jetty, he said. The youth was just about to go under when Barber reached him and pulled him out. "Nobody else saw it or was looking for it," he said, adding that a third of the children normally on the beach are under 10 years old. HOLSENBACK ALSO said he will ask Barber to attempt to put together a volunteer lifeguard service in time for schools' spring vacation break. Holsenback, Barber and Mayor Brian Bilbray were all skeptical, however, about the feasibility of a volunteer program. "I don't know what kind of luck he's had," Holsenback said. Barber estimated it would take up to three years to recruit a viable volunteer lifeguard force. "You don't go out and learn to be a lifeguard in an 8-hour class." He said he already has trouble finding qualified lifeguards for pay. "IT'S GOING TO be difficult at best," he said, adding that the available people to work for free during the day is generally limited to retired persons and those not yet in high school. Bilbray, who served as a lifeguard at the beach for many years, was equally gloomy. And as for lifeguard service during the summer, "We haven't looked that far down the road yet" said Holsenback. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Jan 27, 1983.)

1983/02/10 - Last week, the desperate City Council ratified, 3-2, a pact to fire the entire local police force in favor of contracting with the sheriff - a betrayal by a substantial majority of voters who last November even agreed to pay extra taxes so safety and law enforcement in Imperial Beach wouldn't be in the hands of impersonal, constantly-shifting outsiders. Two weeks ago, the fire chief announced that lifeguard service at the often treacherous beach would be completely eliminated. It was a sort of Catch 22 situation; the city legally doesn't have to provide lifeguard service, but if it does, it is liable if the service is not adequate.

the city can't afford adequate service. So it will provide none. Ironically, the lone remaining lifeguard had saved the life of an 8-year-old boy, just a few days ago. And recently, too, the City Council took perhaps the most desperate step of all. It voted to open up the city to what would be this county's most enormous casino, with 20 tables, accommodating close to 200 people, operating round-the-clock seven days a week (except for 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays), offering liquor and even a wild fleece-the-suckers game, where patrons can bet \$200 on the turn of a card. No card room in the county, I'm told, offers such action hours or such stakes, and San Diego, in fact, is moving to phase out card rooms altogether in the wake of revelations that even more modest operations cause more police problems and problems for decent citizens than they're worth. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Feb 10, 1983.)

1983/02/27 - No lifeguards; so they rally. A rally to call attention to the need for lifeguards in Imperial Beach will be held at 1 p.m. today at the municipal pier. Beachfront resident Collette Holt said she and other residents organized the rally to protest the elimination of the lifeguard service this week. Holt said she expects about 100 people from the South Bay to attend. The lifeguard service was axed this week. City Manager Sherman Stenberg said funds are not available to provide adequate service. He was advised by City Attorney Cliff Reed that the city is not obligated to provide the service, but if it is provided the city could be held liable. The service is not adequate. Holt, who has lived at the beach for 36 years, said the elimination of the service means "someone's going to drown. That's a treacherous beach. I remembered an incident 15 years ago when a child was knocked by a wave from a jetty, and was discovered dead at the river mouth several days later. "And they don't need a lifeguard service." Holt also has reason, personally, to work to reinstate the service. Several of her grandchildren have been rescued. She said she is a local teacher and has been a lifeguard for 13 years. "In the summer, they haul out 12 people an hour. People get caught in a rip tide and they panic." Holt blames the City Council and the city manager for the termination of the service. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Feb 27, 1983.)

1983/03/27 - Lifeguards back, at least for Easter. Lifeguards are on duty in Imperial Beach this weekend through Easter Sunday, city officials announced. City Councilman Bill Russell said nearly \$6,000 was "found" in the lifeguard account this week, to pay for service during the school spring break. At the end of the week, City Manager Sherman Stenberg announced not enough funds were available to provide adequate lifeguard service. Stenberg said, at the time, that because of the city's liability for inadequate service the lifeguards would have to go. But head lifeguard Jim Barber said this week that \$6,000 was enough to maintain unintermittent service through at least mid-June, based on past year's spending patterns. Stenberg said the decision to terminate the service was based on spending for the first months of the fiscal year. He said a total lifeguard budget of about \$60,000 was set up for this fiscal year, and most of it was spent between July and December. On projections, he said, the remaining funds would not last past February. Barber, who has been dealing with the lifeguard budget for three years, said the plan for the service is to spend 75% of its funds during the summer months when the beach is the busiest, with about \$1,200 per month spent during the winter. (*The Beach Star-News*, Mar. 27, 1983)

1983/05/26 - In new IB budget, Lifeguards for beach may start July. Lifeguard service (or Imperial Beach has been reduced to spring and summer vacations from its traditional year-round status, in the city's preliminary budget for the 1983-84 fiscal year. City Manager Sherman Stenberg said in an interview this week that a 200-page preliminary budget has been distributed to City Council members and will be available to the public this week. Stenberg said he was glad to be able to find any funds at all in the budget for the service, which was effectively eliminated in February due to a shortage of funds. LIFEGUARDS were reinstated, temporarily for spring vacation in April, but will not come on line again until the onset of the new budget year July 1. A fund-raising effort by local teachers was slated this week to generate funds to pay for the service for the month of June. Results of the effort are not yet available. Public workshops on the \$6.4 million budget will begin this week, Stenberg said, and a schedule is expected to be set by the council at its meeting June 7. Copies of the document will be available for review by the public, in the public library and at City Hall, he said. For information on buying a copy contact the finance office at 421-8300. Stenberg said over \$4 million in the budget is earned from the state and federal governments, as well as by the council, for such items as the capital improvement fund, the beach erosion control fund and the gas tax and utility funds. Approximately \$2 million is left over for the city's general fund, to pay for police and fire services, among other items. STENBERG said about 47% of the general fund is slated in next year's budget to pay for law enforcement services from the county sheriff, \$28,000 over last year's operating budget figure for the county's own police department, that was abolished in February. Another 21% of the general fund is allocated for the fire department. The third largest item in the general fund, Stenberg identified as unencumbered reserves, listed at \$170,954 or 7.65% of the fund. That figure is a substantial increase over this fiscal year's reserve, which was estimated at \$98,478 or 4.8% of the general fund. THE OVERALL \$6.4 million budget is a little more than 5% over this year's budget, which was about \$6.1 million. Stenberg said there was less than a 2% increase for department operating funds. Stenberg said this is the third year of a cost accounting system initiated when he first appointed city manager in 1981. This year's budget was severely slashed, with cutbacks in personnel and services that affected every department. The department for parks and recreation was laid off and the program became self-supporting. Recently it was contracted out to the Imperial Beach Boys and Girls Club. Firefighting services were also laid off and a volunteer firefighters program was reinstated. Senior services were also cut back and planning department and street sweeping services were contracted out. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, May 26, 1983.)

1984/04/26 - Imperial Beach Studies By Ellen B. Holzman. Imperial Beach officials are studying two proposals to provide year-round lifeguard services on the beach for the upcoming fiscal year. City management is studying a proposal from city lifeguards and from an Orange County firm to return year-round lifeguard service to the beach. Until two years ago lifeguards were on the beach all year, but budget austerities for the 1983-84 fiscal year forced a cutback of services to spring and summer vacations only. In mid-July last year Lifeguard International Beach Services, Inc. proposed the city contract for year-round services, but the council is now dropping the city's lifeguards in the middle of the summer. Lifeguard International at the time provided contract services to several Orange County beaches and private communities. A representative of the firm could not be reached this week for comment. Last year the council directed Stenberg to solicit proposals from possible contracting agencies and from the city's lifeguards and to bring the issue back in November. The contracting issue, however, was apparently dropped recently when Stenberg began preparing the city's preliminary budget for the next fiscal year. The fiscal year begins in July. This week Stenberg said the proposal from Lifeguard International is being considered as well as a proposal from the city's lifeguards. Stenberg said he recently spoke with a representative of Lifeguard International who said the firm's proposal to contract services hasn't changed. The firm's representatives said the city could save up to \$25,000 as compared to its own guards. Public Safety Director John Holsenback is reviewing the proposal by the city's lifeguards and Stenberg will make a recommendation on lifeguard services to the council soon, possibly as early as next week, he said. Jim Barber, beach lifeguard captain, said the city's lifeguards have proposed year-round service with a minimum savings of \$8,000 compared to the budget for this fiscal year. Under the proposal, the beach's swim area, as designated by the council, would be guarded for four hours-a-day during the winter and eight hours-a-day during the summer, Barber said. The swim area includes the beach from approximately 10th Avenue to Imperial Beach Boulevard. In the past, Barber said, lifeguards would go beyond the swim area warning people away from dangerous spots to avoid rescues. Under the new proposal, which would use fewer guards, lifeguards would only go to those areas to respond to an emergency, he said. (*Chula Vista News*, Apr 26, 1984.)

1984/04/26 - Lifeguard proposals The proposal for four-hour winter guarding in a day is not much different from the way the beach was guarded in the past. Barber said. He said in the past a lifeguard was on duty six hours during the winter and fewer hours on rainy or cloudy days. Overall, Barber said, the proposal would save the total hours worked per week by lifeguards. Another money-saving recommendation in the proposal would include the hiring of new lifeguards at lower wages. Last year, Public Safety Director Holsenback said one of the reasons Lifeguard International could save the city money was because it used younger, less experienced guards who were paid lower wages. Many of the city's lifeguards had been guarding the beach long enough to reach the top of the pay scale, he said. Barber said last week that many of the most experienced guards would be able to work weekends; but most have other winter jobs and many, since the service cutback, have

taken jobs during the summer. The proposal recommends hiring some new guards at a lower wage rate, Barber said. In addition, the proposal recommends that he give up his position as a lifeguard and take on beach clean-up and maintenance, a job he already does during the winter months. The current clean-up work can be used as needed on a part-time basis and continue to be available as a back-up lifeguard during his regular workday on the beach. Vice-Mayor Bill Russell, who had not seen the lifeguards' proposal at the time of the interview, said he would prefer to retain the city's lifeguards. "I feel comfortable switching services unless we can realize a tremendous savings." (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Apr 26, 1984.)

1987/01/18 - South Bay Supervisor Brian Bilbray, who seized public attention in 1979 by using a bulldozer to keep Mexican sewage from flowing into Imperial Beach, has moved up to the most visible position of his political career: chairman of the Board of Supervisors. His first public-policy statement, his State of San Diego County address scheduled for Jan. 28, will be both speech and slide show. His mother, Mavis Clute, an early and still important influence on his political career, is 35, Bilbray is a veteran politician. He grew up in Imperial Beach, graduated from Mar Vista High School and attended Southwestern College. The Bilbray family has always considered Imperial Beach home, but until his father retired from the Navy, the family lived in Australia, New Jersey, Philadelphia and San Francisco. Bilbray was in high school when his father died. His mother, an Australian war bride, is a retired tax accountant who remarried in 1971 and lives now in La Costa. The first of four sons, Bilbray was brought up in a political atmosphere. Bilbray had been a lifeguard for seven years when his political career began with election to the Imperial Beach City Council in 1976 at age 25. In 1978 he ran for mayor when the mayor and deputy mayor were recalled by the voters for trying to condemn private property to allow high-rise development along the waterfront. He was elected over fellow Councilman Elvin Ogle. He made headlines two months later when he rejected a proposal to hire a commercial diving firm to inspect the Imperial Beach pier. Instead, he drove his sports car to the end of the pier, donned his scuba gear and conducted his own inspection. In 1979, frustrated because he had been unable to stop Mexican sewage from flowing onto the beach, Bilbray and three council members tried to divert the Tijuana River by bulldozing mud into the river's mouth. Bilbray again captured countywide attention in 1980 when vandals set fire to the pier -- the former lifeguard paddled out to sea on his surfboard to douse the flames, as television cameras rolled. The next day he blasted the Coast Guard, Navy and Harbor Patrol for not helping. His campaigns focused on the cleaning up the town's waterfront property, but the area remains largely undeveloped and Bilbray was never able to convince the Coastal Commission to allow the city to build a 200-acre marine complex along the southern end of First Avenue. In 1982 Bilbray changed his political affiliation from independent to Republican and announced that he would run in the newly created 75th State Assembly district, a long, thin strip of coastline along the coast last month approved his plan to close the Otay Mesa landfill once it reaches its capacity of liquid sludge. He has called for a presidential commission to study the effects of the new immigration reform bill on border communities like San Diego. His office worked behind the scenes to see that community health clinics received malpractice insurance so that a perinatal clinic for low-income women would survive. In his year as chairman, Bilbray will focus on a countywide lifeguard program and development of the county's portion of Otay Mesa. A preliminary plan for the area still lacks details on sewage disposal, water, lighting and other services, but Bilbray dismisses the suggestion that such issues need to be addressed before planning can continue. (*San Diego Union*, Jan. 18, 1987.)

1991/07/13 - Port gives IB \$132,000 boost in revenues By Tom Dougherty. IMPERIAL BEACH San Diego Unified Port District officials have agreed to a \$132,000 increase in the amount it will pay the city for providing services in the tidelands area this fiscal year. Port commissioners voted Tuesday to approve the \$972,000 contract renewing the previous agreement, which had expired on June 30. Since it surrendered the tide lands and pier to the port district last June, the city has continued to provide law enforcement, lifeguards, beach and pier maintenance and animal control service for the area under contract with the port. Most of the increase is due to an expansion of lifeguard service, Dick Jung, city administrative services director, said. The city has agreed to provide 12,795 hours of lifeguard service during 1991-92. More than half of the city's revenue for tidelands services will be spent on law enforcement for \$486,689. The San Diego county sheriff's department patrols the beach area with two four-wheel drive units seven days a week. The pact has yet to be approved by Imperial Beach, a matter that has been "a mere formality." (*The Chula Vista Star-News*, July 13, 1991.)

1997/09/22 - Public and private projects in the works include: € A \$2.2 million renovation of Pier Plaza on Seacoast Drive at the base of the Imperial Beach Port District project will begin today with the removal of the existing parking lot. The new plaza will include commercial buildings, a restroom, a children's playground, landscaping, picnic facilities and a performance area. € A new public safety/lifeguard tower, planned for a vacant parcel at the foot of Elder Street recently purchased by the Port District for \$360,000. The Port District envisions a public safety building that will accommodate lifeguards, a sheriff's storefront and a community room. Conceptual plans are on the drawing board. "The project is still young," said Urtasun, who hopes construction of the \$950,000 project will begin in March. € Demolition of the city's old lifeguard building at the foot of Palm Avenue. "It's old, it's outdated, and it's not very central to where most of the activity is taking place," said City Manager Barry Johnson, adding that the building will be razed after the new public safety tower is built. The site will remain open, making the ocean visible from the Palm Avenue corridor. ("Imperial Beach overhaul," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, Sept. 22, 1997)

1999/07/18 - In 1992 the City of Imperial Beach negotiated a thirty-year land lease with the Port District of San Diego, embarking on the most significant seacoast improvements in the town's history. As a result, the Port invested more than \$8.6 million in Portwood Pier Plaza and other capital improvements in the tidelands. That a true coastal renaissance has taken hold of this quiet beach town can be seen along Seacoast Drive. Under construction for two years, Portwood Pier Plaza featured improved beach access, expanded open space and parkland, retail facilities, and modern restrooms. Portwood Pier Plaza, named for former Imperial Beach Port Commissioner Mel Portwood, opened on July 18, 1999, in time to celebrate the city's forty-third birthday and to usher in a new wave of pride. Still tall in the center of the Plaza is "Surfhenge," four giant translucent surfboard arches, among the largest colored acrylic moldings ever cast, at sixteen to twenty feet high, each weighing up to three-quarters of a ton. Set against a crimson arch emblazoned with the city's name, they suggest surfboards stuck in the sand. In the evening, at night, the shapes also cast colored light-shadows on the plaza surface during the day. "Surfhenge" is the creation of La Jolla artist Malcolm Jones. Complete the arches are ten benches, resembling surfboards popular through the decades, that are spread throughout, transforming Pier Plaza into a surfing museum with walls. Plaques placed next to each surfboard bench explain the historic role played by Imperial Beach in the development of big-wave surfing from the 1940s. Subtly surrounding all of this on the plaza's low concrete berms is the glass tilework of artist Mary Lynn Dominguez called "Illuminations." The Dempsey Field Safety Center opened in November 1999, offering the beach town the most modern state-of-the-art lifeguard facility in California with an upper-level community room and sheriff substation. The Safety Center was named for Allan "Dempsey" Holder, the first official lifeguard working for the County of San Diego in 1940. (Walke, *Imperial Beach*, pp. 76-78.)

1999/11 - The Dempsey Holder Safety Center opened in November 1999, offering the beach town the most modern state-of-the-art lifeguard facility in California with an upper-level community room and sheriff substation. The Safety Center was named for Allan "Dempsey" Holder, the first official lifeguard working for the County of San Diego in 1940. (Walke, *Imperial Beach*, p. 81.)



An 18-foot-tall sculpture honoring Imperial Beach's surf culture was installed Nov. 25, 2008 in the new plaza at the end of Palm Avenue. The piece, dubbed "The Spirit of Imperial Beach," created by the late James A. Wasil, honors the birthplace of lifeguards and its surfing history. Funding for the \$150,000 sculpture came from the Port of San Diego's public art program. Wasil said, "The port commissioner said that he didn't want a wimpy guy. They made it clear it had to be almost heroic. So I used photos of Arnold Schwarzenegger in his prime as a model." (*Imperial Beach Eagle & Times*, Aug. 7, 2008)

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