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## SCENE

# 31

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### 12<sup>TH</sup> CG DISTRICT HQ, SAN FRANCISCO—1967-1969 (CHIEF-OF-STAFF / RETIREMENT)

**C**oast Guard officers are required to retire on the completion of thirty commissioned years, unless selected for Admiral. That left me just two more years for active duty.

Accommodating my desire to leave Headquarters, the Personnel Office found two billets appropriate for my rank that would be available and offered me a choice. One was to San Francisco as District Operations Officer, the other to Cleveland as Chief-of-Staff. Which would you choose?

My principal responsibility as **Operations Officer** was the functioning of the **Rescue Coordination Center (RCC)**. I found it well equipped for handling rescue cases and coordinating joint efforts with other agencies. The officers and men assigned to the RCC were well trained. There were many little cases but no major ones. That left me lots of time for working on inter-agency plans for coping with a major oil spill within the harbor, should one occur. Fortunately, none occurred.

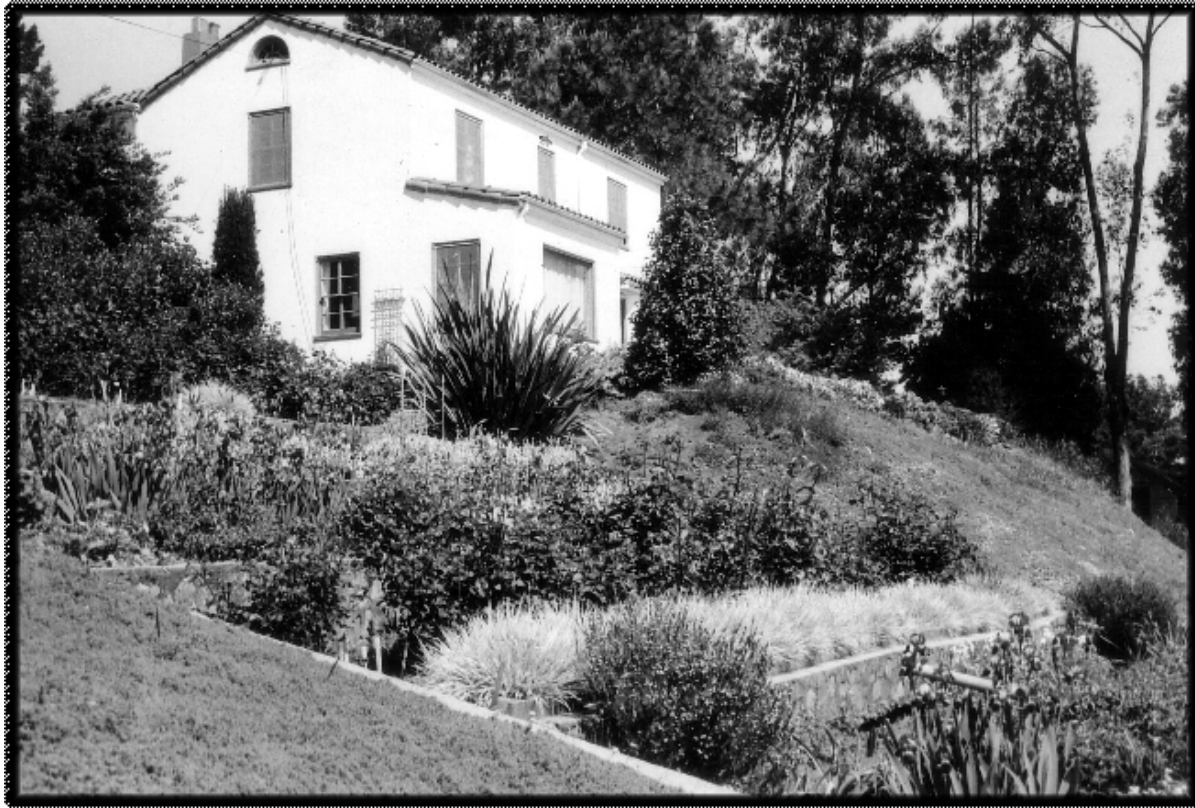
In the corner of my little office, next to my desk, was a locked filing cabinet. I asked around but no one knew the combination or what was in it. I thought it might contain readiness plans, which were another officer's responsibility, and I forgot about it. It never was opened on my watch. My relief told me later that he never opened it either. Apparently it didn't smell???

The **Chief-of-Staff** retired and I moved up to fill that billet. The only noticeable change was that I now had to wear the aiguillette on my uniform. That is the gilt cord hung in

loops from the left shoulder. It gave me prestige as next in seniority to the District Commander...or was I just the Admiral's "go-fer"?

Since the department heads knew vastly more about their jobs than I did, my duty was to keep order at staff meetings and, with the assistance of my secretary, keep the coffee urn filled.

**Living conditions** for my family were unusual yet excellent. Long before the Lighthouse Service joined the Coast Guard, they built two large houses high on Yerba Buena Island for their two most senior officers. That is the little islet on which the San Francisco Bay Bridge touches down between San Francisco and Oakland. Our Admiral



**Coast Guard Quarters B, Yerba Buena Island**

occupied the Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters (the light and fog signal having been automated). My family and I were assigned one of the houses.

For the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, the bay was dredged to form Treasure Island abutting Yerba Buena. On it, the Navy established a base with all the usual facilities—Exchange, Commissary, Officers' Club, and sailboat club. Also a sickbay, but no schools. The Navy bussed school children to San Francisco where they were a minority race among the Chinese-Americans. There was an academic high school to which Karen and Scott qualified. (Terry was moving about on CG orders. Christy was in college.)

Scott's bus took him down the row of North Beach nightclubs just at the time topless dancing was the latest attraction. He (a junior high kid) liked to report to me on the latest: "Hey, Dad. They now have topless shoeshine girls in North Beach!"

I had several relatives from my mother's side of my family living in the Bay Area, which also added to the pleasure of this assignment.



Captain Lynn Parker, a classmate of mine, was also on our district staff and also subject to retirement on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Admiral Bender, the District Commander, with whom we got along very well, arranged for us a joint Retirement Ceremony at the CG Base Alameda, with Rifle Drill Team, Base Band, and a Pass-in-Review to make us feel big. It was very nice of him.

So now I am retired, and have been for thirty-six years at this writing (2005), which tops my thirty-four years as a cadet and Commissioned Officer. **It was truly a GREAT LIFE!**

