

Good ol' pier remains the same

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She's not too bad lookin' for 65 years old.

Of course, a facelift helped a little, but that was some time ago.

Tabbed one of the smartest decisions the founding fathers of the City of Huntington Beach made, the Huntington Beach pier remains the prime spot of activity here. Not only does "she" provide the city a most visible landmark, and recreational outlet, but she gives the beach "stability."

And that's something that no one ever thinks about, according to Harbors and Beaches Director Vincent Moorhouse.

"People don't understand where beaches come from," Moorhouse says.

A phenomenon of nature ties in the explanation of drifting sands from mountain stream deposits to the beach, and the pier, well, she slows the sand current and stabilizes the beach, he says.

As the land develops, more than 10,000 persons per day are counted walking on the pier during any peak hot dog, Moorhouse proudly points out.

The pier is probably the only chunk left from the Old Town image, which the downtown area has lost over the years.

"The pier is kinda like our Eiffel Tower — a drawing point, a focus on the way life used to be," says Moorhouse.

She sure hasn't changed much, but there are plans — big plans that Moorhouse has been dreaming about for many, many moons — to renovate the few restaurants and upgrade the aura of the pier, and draw more folks and more money into downtown.

An "experience of nature at its worst or best" is one commodity the pier offers those, who, in this modern society of competition, need time to relax.

Here, one can seek the refreshment of feeling really good, fresh air, "even if it's stormy," Moorhouse smiles. "We can get away from all the pressures we live with, and kinda recharge our batteries at the pier."

In painting a complete picture, Moorhouse brings into view the nine miles of ocean frontage protected for public use by his maintenance staff of eight now, and about 45 in the summertime.

And the beaches are used to a heavy degree — more and more avid beachgoers flock to Huntington from afar — even though water quality has deteriorated and the beach is slowly sinking.

Sinking? Well, Moorhouse says the rumors of the subsidence are "fact, in geological terms. The seaward side of the San Andreas fault is moving north...and some sandstone reefs that I used to be able to stand on at the Huntington Beach bluffs are lower, and now under water."

A "key" to providing cost-effective services to users of the beach is the good ol' pier — and Moorhouse should know. He began his Harbors and Beaches career as a lifeguard in 1949.

"If I had to build it today, the pier would cost \$3 million," he says.

Built in 1914, she cost the city \$100,000. Since then, \$460,000 has been spent to reinforce her structure — including a complete new "rear end" in 1940, which was destroyed in 1939 by the "great wind" Chubasco typhoon from Mexico, which usually turns seaward.

Grand swells from the Chubasco from the south, at a 90-degree angle up the Southern California coast, caused 208 feet of Huntington Beach to be lost within eight hours, according to the records.

Only two feet of the pilings which once stretched 28 feet into the sand at the end of the pier was left after the wretched storm. Sand was eroded past the pilings, and the end of the pier just "floated off," Moorhouse says. Cost of rebuilding about 400 feet of the pier was \$125,000, he adds. And that's why, when you walk to the end, the

concrete ramp slopes about five feet down from the rest.

Beside people who are rescued from drowning off the pier, police and other citizens have found stolen jewelry and a military rifle tossed into the waters from the pier, as an outlet for burglars.

For instance, in 1962, Red Tide, a plankton, temporarily halted an attempt by police to locate about \$3,500 worth of stolen jewelry a burglar said he had thrown into the sea.

This surfboard capital of the Western United States has had many a famel person walk its pier, such as the great Duke Kahanamoku, who died several years ago, and has his bust adorn the foot of the pier.

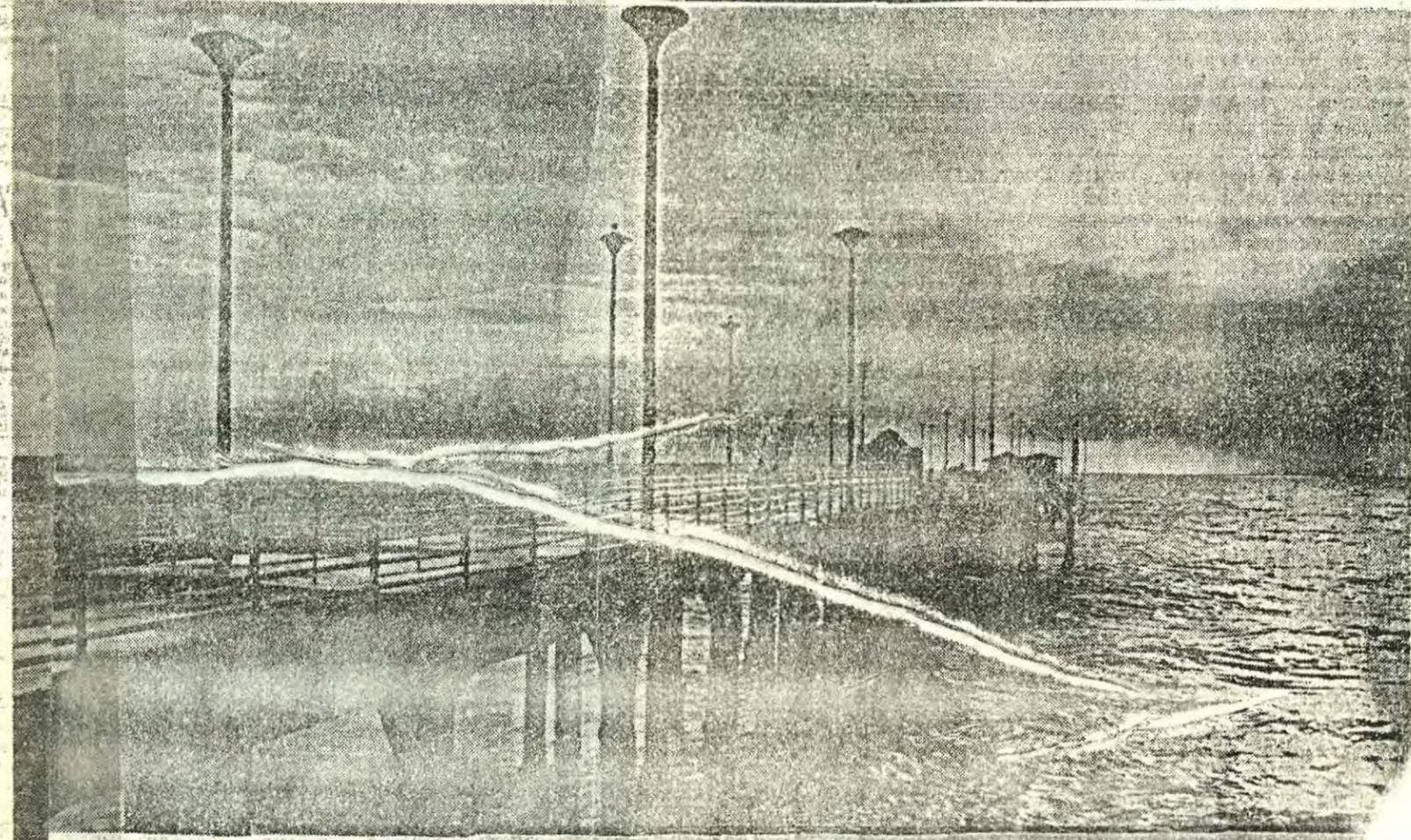
In 1958, 5,756,361 persons were counted on its beaches — more than a million more than in past years. The total population of Orange County was then 652,608.

In 1948, attendance was noted at 2,516,200. and now there's only enough usable sand for less than one percent of the population 10 years ago, says Moorhouse, with a twinkle in his eye.

Future plans for development on the pier include the construction of a cawalk made of wood around the end of the pier for fishing use, although Moorhouse says the waters ain't what she used to be.

When there was opal eye perch and other good catch, now there's a virtual desert, "because you're polluting the waters of the world...the ocean is the womb of life on this planet. We dump in it, we crap in it, we pollute it. There's been 1 1/2 million gallons of industrial waste dumped in it in recent years," and fishing just isn't the same.

But the pier, in general, remains the same.



Good old pier — Venerable Huntington Beach pier shown as storm blown together at sunset