



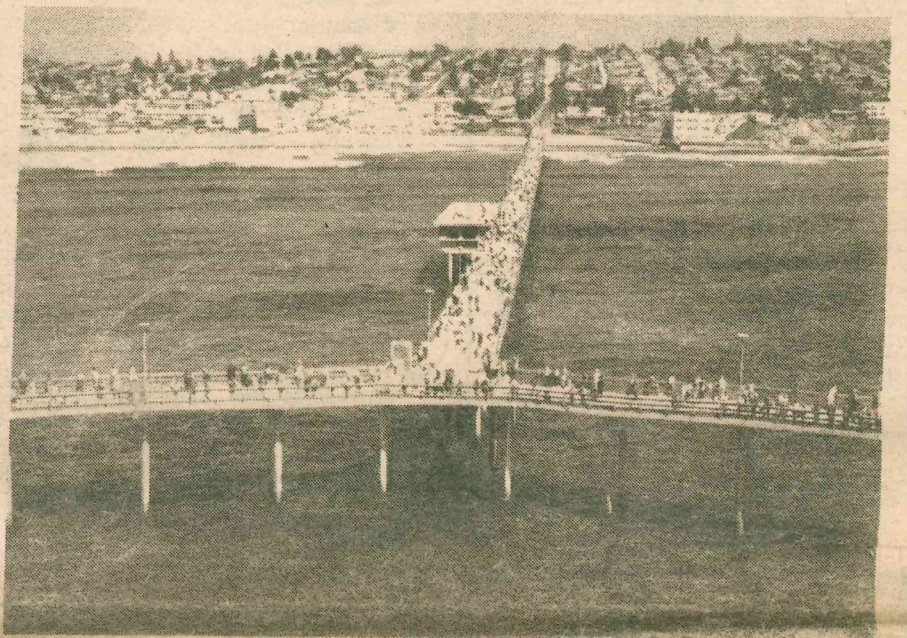
VOLUME 1, No. 5

July 1982



FIREWORKS FESTIVAL '82

☆ Fourth of July/Ocean Beach, California ☆



PIER OPENING

☆ Fourth of July, 1966 ☆

by: Dorette Jackson

The San Diego Municipal Pier at Ocean Beach, as indicated on the road-sign at the end of the Ocean Beach Freeway, leads recent Ocean Beach residents and tourists alike in believing that our city fathers have enhanced this beach community with a fishing pier. Not so. Dreams have ways of coming true. Karl Schroeder had such a dream: a fishing pier off our beach. An avid fisherman himself, he had many supporters of that idea.

In the early 60's, Ocean Beach had its Kiwanis and Moose, a Merchants Association, the Women's Club, the Friendly Club, the Garden Club and the Thursday Club. Nothing much controversial was then going on, but in unison the "pier fever" spread.

In late 1964, a strange yet constant noise could be heard at the foot of Niagara Avenue; pilons were being placed in the ocean floor. It was happening! Soon after, trucks loaded down with huge slabs of concrete came roaring into Ocean Beach. The parking lot at the foot of Newport Avenue was a beehive of activity. The \$855,000 project was to extend 2,000 feet offshore. 167 concrete pilings, 58

As I Remember, Sixteen Years Ago

feet in length were intended to support the deck with an extension of two 192 foot arms in the shape of a "Y" at the end of the main stem. (For structural reasons, the "Y" ended up in a "T".) Massive cranes put "roadbed slabs" of pre-stressed concrete 30 and 50 feet in length, on the pilings. The 50-foot slabs, 6 feet wide and 18 inches thick and the 30-foot slabs of 6 feet 8 inches wide and 8 inches thick altogether became the longest pier on the West Coast.

Fishing aficionados were promised top kelp fishing and under California State Law no fishing license was required (still true today).

While all this was going on, speculation was rampant that the fish were being driven away by the noise. "Experts" claimed that the noise was attracting the fish. The fact remained that enormous Black Sheephead were being caught or could be seen floating, killed by accident, around the pier construction site.

I remember the excitement when I took my cub-scout troop on the pier for the first time; no railings were yet in place, just the slabs on top of the pilings and the pounding surf below.

By Springtime of 1966, the grand opening of the pier was officially set for the upcoming Independence Day. What's a Fourth of July without fireworks? An all out effort was made to raise the necessary funds (less than \$600). Merchants agreed to have "donation cans" on their counters, organizations and individuals donated more substantial sums, but nickel and diming it worked.

A committee enthusiastically organized a week-long medley of activities preceding the Fourth. A surfing contest attracted many, but the Community Talent Show, musicians and comedy acts were the high points of the many performances held on a portable stage, set up right where the infamous "wall"

once was. The word got out somehow (we did not have two newspapers then), the fine weather helped, and the crowds kept coming. The ribbon-cutting was done by Governor "Pat" Brown, (then running for re-election) flanked by Mayor Dail and many other officials.

The fireworks, contracted with the San Diego Fireworks Display, were designed specially for the grand opening. The display was culminated with a "cascade" and large "O.B." looming over the western arm of the pier. The cascade that night in 1966, led some nervous spectators to believe that the pier had caught on fire.

Fireworks in Ocean Beach go back as far as 1913, at the opening of the

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