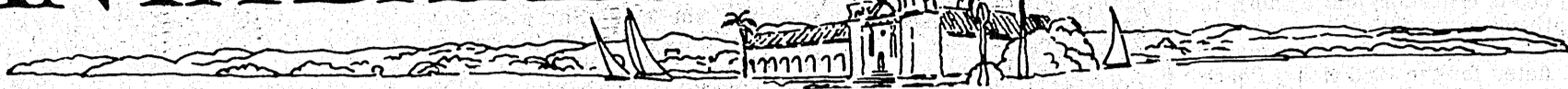


# SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



The oldest daily newspaper in Southern California

132nd Year—No. 87

Three sections

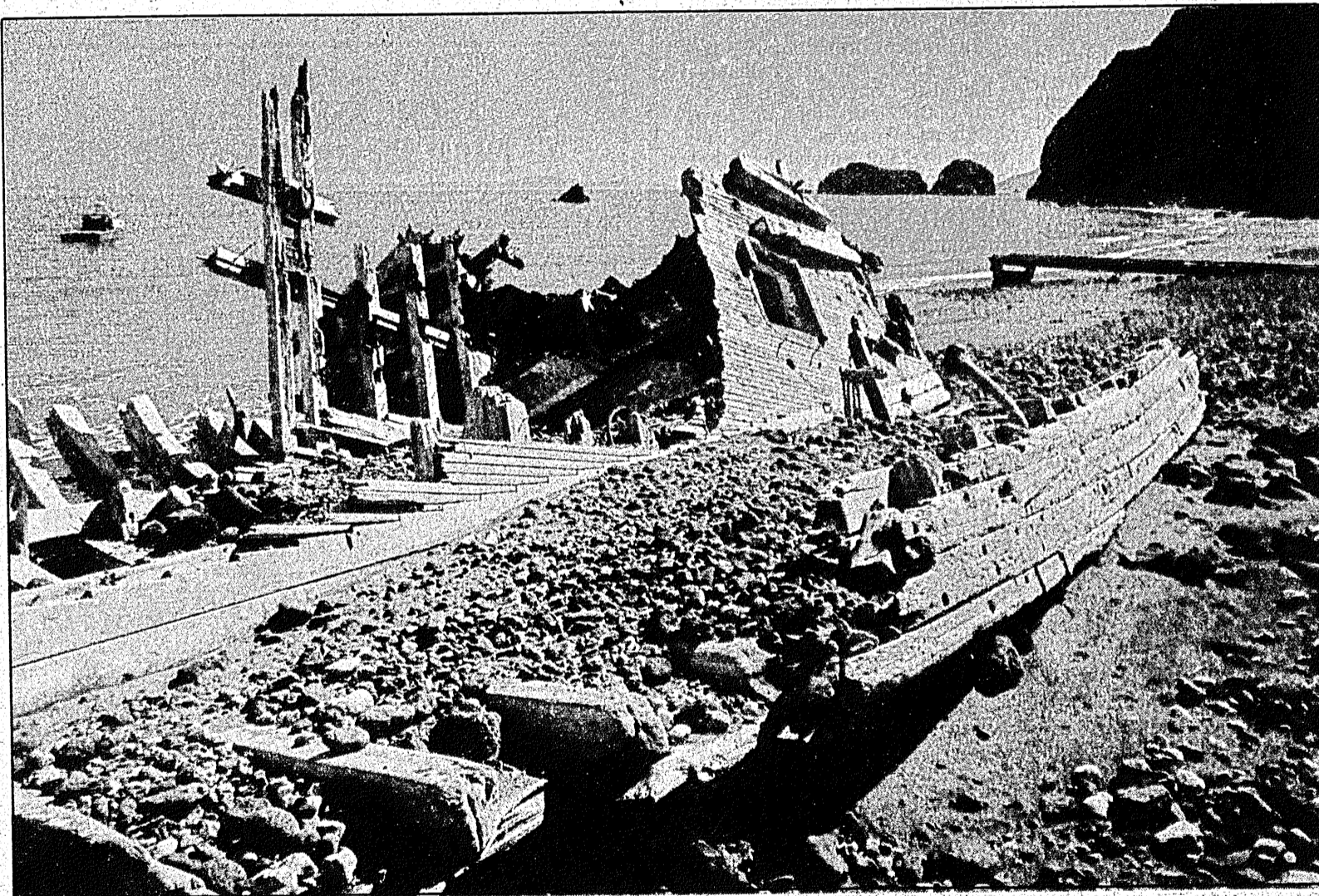
Santa Barbara, Calif., Monday, August 18, 1986

32 Pages

25 cents

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## Channel Islands: Like view of history



News-Press photo by STEVE MALONE

The Channel Islands are littered with shipwrecks, including one that washed up at Scorpion Anchorage on Santa Cruz. At right, scuba divers find adventure beneath the seas off the islands.

## Divers told they can look, but don't touch

By Hillary Hauser  
News-Press Staff Writer

"Look, but don't touch!" These are the words of a familiar mental tune that runs through Jerry Bastian's mind every time he swims inside a sunken shipwreck off the Channel Islands.

Bastian, a local dentist and avid diver, keeps his hands to himself these days when he's on a wreck — because he's not interested in stiff fines and jail sentences.

That is what a diver receives if he is caught removing or even disturbing artifacts from a shipwreck in the Channel Is-

lands Marine Sanctuary, which extends six nautical miles around the islands. (In other California waters, the prohibition extends to three miles offshore.)

Even though the state Antiquities Act has long forbidden divers to remove artifacts from shipwrecks, the establishment

of the Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary in 1981 brought the law home.

One of the mandates of the

Marine Sanctuaries Act is to preserve the historical and cultural resources within the



Photo courtesy of Chuck Davis

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# Divers warned: Look, but don't touch

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sanctuary, and sea-going rangers dispatched from the National Park Service headquarters are nabbing underwater looters.

In the early days of diving in the Channel Islands, items from many wrecks were brought ashore and no one thought much of it. "Getting the brass" was as expected as "getting the bass."

The late Glenn Miller, who owned the dive boat Emerald and later, the Coral Sea, certainly didn't think of permits when he brought up the anchor from the Aggi, a Norwegian squarerigger that sank off Santa Rosa in 1915 — because he marched it right over to the Santa Barbara Historical Society Museum and proudly presented it to them.

There is something about a shipwreck that gets into a diver's blood.

Part of it is the something-for-nothing "Treasure of Sierra Madre" syndrome, and the other part is the thrill of being on the spot where a historical calamity took place years before

"It is diving into history — a big adventure — and you never know what you're going to find," said Bastian, who began diving in 1947 but didn't take up wreck diving until 1979.

Like most wreck divers, Bastian is avid about the history of the vessel he is diving on. In describing the first wreck he'd ever dived on, Bastian talked about the Cuba, a mail steamship that sank off San Miguel in 1923.

The ship was 307 feet long and originally called the Coblenz when built in Hamburg in 1897, Bastian said. It was acquired by the United States during World War I, reconditioned in San Francisco in 1920, and sunk off San Miguel Island just about the same day the seven destroyers went down off Point Pedernales, on Sept. 8, 1923.

In the Channel Islands, there are plenty of wrecks for history-loving wreck divers.

Off Santa Rosa Island, there is the Golden Horn, which sank in 1892, and the Crown of England, which went down in 1894.

Off Anacapa, there is the Equator, a tuna clipper that sank in 1949, the South Coast

(1916), James S. Higgins (1916), and Annie M. Ralph (1942).

The most famous wreck of Anacapa may be the Winfield Scott, a 225-foot steam paddlewheeler that went down off the middle island at midnight Dec. 1, 1853.

En route from San Francisco to Panama, many of the 450 passengers aboard the Winfield Scott had struck it rich in the California gold fields, and the purser's safe was stuffed with \$864,861.50 in gold bullion, dust, currency and nuggets. There was also an undisclosed amount of gold that some miners carried themselves.

Over the years, divers have found a gold coin or two in the copper-sheathed bones of the Winfield Scott, now pounded into the sand and rubble to such an extent that nothing but the paddlewheel can be seen.

Today's diver, however, had best not think of looking for coins, or of taking from the wreck even the smallest copper scrap or nail.

In 1985, two divers surfaced from the Winfield Scott to greet the waiting citation pad

of a National Park Ranger, who caught them red-handed as they removed artifacts from the wreck.

Their fine: \$2,000 each and 30-day sentences suspended for three years.

Don Morris, an archeologist with the Park Service, said shipwrecks are an important part of the park resource, because they provide information about the beginnings of modern society in the channel and the impact of modern man on the Chumash.

"They tell us something about man, how we've interacted with each other and the environment," Morris said. "The ship that wrecked in the late 19th or early 20th century gets studied as much as the old wrecks."

In 1985, Park Service divers mapped the Golden Horn and the Aggi. Morris said he is glad to see recreational divers exploring the wrecks of the islands.

"I'd be happy if boats lined up to dive the Winfield Scott," Morris said. "But visiting the wreck is like visiting the Louvre. You don't run out with the paintings."