

How Well Do You Know Your Town's History?



Pier extension prior to it being destroyed by high surf and strong winds. January 1940.

Abridged from *A Walk Beside the Sea*
By Jan Dennis

The 1940s started off with a roar! In the early hours of January 9, 1940, Manhattan Beach residents awoke to the new decade with the thrashing of a violent storm, with the high waves and winds. The storm signaled the beginning of the breakup of the municipal

wooden pier extension.

Approximately 90 feet of the extension, built in 1928, was carried away by the heavy surf shortly after 4 a.m. Several of the loosened pilings began swinging like battering rams, finally wiping out nearly half of the structure. The portion carried with it a boat landing, the City winch, a

gasoline station formerly owned by Standard Oil, a lifeguard dory, and numerous small items of fishing gear. The City street crews had tried to free the large timbers that had broken loose. However, the seas were too strong.

Another storm in February of 1941 swept away the remaining 40 feet of the extension. It was uprooted, turned over on its side, carried by heavy winds and strong current, and floated to shore almost intact. This event saved the City \$1,500 in demolition fees. To this day portions of the old extension remain on the sea bottom at the end of the present pier.

The landscape was changing rapidly. In 1930, the community had a population of 1,865 residents. By 1940, there were 6,386. Manhattan Beach was one of the fastest-growing cities in the state of California, with a gain of nearly 300 percent since 1920. After nearly 20 years of contracting off and on with the Engineering Services Corporation, it was now time to hire a city engineer and create a planning commission to oversee local development.

The State Planning Act was adopted in 1929, giving the Manhattan Beach City Council in 1939 the ability to adopt Ordinance No. 482, creating a City Planning Commission. The Commission originally consisted of nine members, all voting members. The City Engineer, Building Inspector and a Council

representative were also members. Later, the Council representative was replaced by a citizen-at-large.

The first major task was the preparation and adoption of a zoning ordinance and master plan of land use. In June of 1941, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 500 commonly referred to as the Zoning Ordinance. For many residents, the Planning Commission was the first arena in which they could express their views on a given land issue.

At this time the powers and duties of the Commission were to promote public interest and understanding of the Master Plan, as well as review use permits, code amendments, zone changes and house construction. Upon review, and in many cases a public hearing, a report and recommendations were then sent on to the City Council for approval or rejection, as is the case today.

In 1948, another change to the organization was the adoption of Ordinance No. 584, creating a seven-member-at-large Planning Commission. The City Engineer and Building Inspector no longer had a vote and served in an advisory capacity only.

The first large project for the Commission and the Works Progress Administration was the Sever-Fold Civic Improvement Plan, incorporating what is now Live Oak Park, Dorsey Field, and Joslyn Center. In 1938, the

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Dear Carol

Dear Carol,

I had to get a job in order to help pay for my college expenses. My Mom has been laid off and money is a lot tighter at home than it ever was before. I'm working in a store, I get minimum wage, which is hardly anything at all, and I get paid commission on everything I sell. And I hate it! The people I work with are stupid, the customers are idiots, and there are times I just stand around; it is so boring here! I hate getting up early in the morning and working on weekends. My boss is a jerk and I want to quit but I really need the money. If I don't make enough I won't be able to pay for my fees. I have to keep working but I don't want to. How can I get out of here and still go to school?

Hating Work

Dear Hating,

It is time for you to do a radical attitude adjustment or be fired. No one wants to work with, be waited on or employ someone with your negative attitude. You are fortunate to have a job and it is time for you to make a list of things at work to be thankful for. Start with getting paid for showing up, you are helping people find the things they want and need, you are working indoors, you have a bathroom at hand, etc. Force yourself to make a list of 20 things, no matter how small, to be grateful for and read it often. If you are bored, learn about the products you sell, find out interesting about your co-workers,

smile at the customers and make a genuine effort to be helpful. Your appreciation of your work experience and your commissions will increase. You are in control of your attitude. Will you choose to me upset or happy?

Dear Carol,

I love to dance. My husband and I used to go dancing all of the time but he was sick for a while and he died a few years ago. I see that the senior citizens center has dances on a regular basis. I'd like to go but I won't have a dancing partner and don't want to be embarrassed by going alone. I'm so afraid of making a fool of myself yet I want to dance again.


Twinkle Toes

Dear Twinkle,

Please take a deep breath and go to the dance. There are probably lots of unattached people your age there who have faced your fears. The leader of the dance is probably very welcoming to newcomers and will provide opportunities for everyone to move to the music. You have the opportunity to do something you love, do not let fear of the unknown hold you back. If you don't like it, you don't have to go again. You won't know until you try.

Send questions to askcarolnow@gmail.com.

Carol is a Life Coach available for private consultation in person or on the phone. •



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