

Photos courtesy of the Local History Room

This photo, circa 1939, looks at Lunada Bay Regional Park from the southeast.

The Lunada Bay we never knew

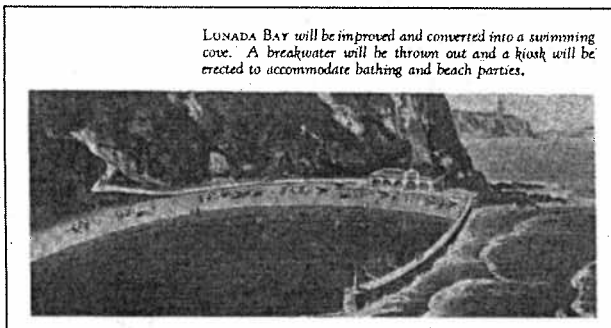
By Monique Sugimoto and Dennis Piotrowski
Special to the News

Anyone who has walked the bluffs of Lunada Bay has met Gunther, the laid-back tiger-striped tabby who spends his days lying in the sun, chasing ground squirrels and watching surfers scramble up and down the narrow paths to the shore below. Visited by flocks of pelicans expertly gliding by, residents walking their dogs, and seals sunning themselves on the rocks, Gunther's world is a quiet one.

Things would have been different had any of the plans for Lunada Bay proposed over the years ever been realized.

The first plan was laid out in 1927 by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., famed landscape architect of the Palos Verdes Project. Olmsted's "pleasure basin" would have created an area for "bathing, boating and water-side amusements."

Olmsted's plan included a breakwater extending from Resort Point across part of the bay. A breakwater from this end would be more pleasing to the landscape,



LUNADA BAY will be improved and converted into a swimming cove. A breakwater will be thrown out and a kiosk will be erected to accommodate bathing and beach parties.

This is a 1927 drawing of the Pleasure Basin that was never built.

provide shelter for boats, and allow bathers to take advantage of the sea breezes, rocky shores, and heavy surf in the neighboring cove.

On the inside of the breakwater, a water-tight pool with controlled water intake was planned. Such a pool would prevent the dense seaweed in the bay from floating in. The plans called for dressing areas, a loggia, and even a restaurant near the pool.

Since stairs from the bluff top to the shore — equivalent to the height of a 10 story building — were out of the question, Olmsted proposed a road starting at Avenida Mirola and continu-

ing down the canyon on the southeast side. Ample parking near the pool was also proposed.

The total cost for the project ranged between \$132,000 and \$200,000; a hefty sum in 1927. The economic collapse of the late 1920s and the financial difficulty faced by the Palos Verdes Project and the Palos Verdes Homes Association are believed to have prevented the project from being realized.

The next plan for Lunada Bay was the 1938 proposal for the "Lunada Bay Park." The Homes Association and Palos Verdes Estates Inc.,

PAST

FROM PAGE A1

who owned the relevant parklands, proposed that all of the grounds be given to Los Angeles County in lieu of \$250,000 in delinquent taxes owed to the County.

The proposed 124-acre county regional park would start at Palos Verdes Drive West and extend to Resort Point, and then end approximately two thirds of a mile south. The proposal included tennis courts, playgrounds, fireplaces, tables, toilets, shelters — even donkey rides. A museum for the study of Indian civilizations and natural history was also proposed.

Los Angeles County rejected the offer. With a moratorium on tax collection declared by the California State Assembly in 1939, the Homes Association and Palos Verdes Estates Inc. had until August of 1940 to find alternate plans to remedy their tax problems. The vote for city incorporation in December 1939 resolved

the tax burdens and saved Lunada Bay and other parkland areas in the process.

In 1959, a much larger and grander plan for Lunada Bay was proposed by local resident and boating enthusiast Eric Schiff. Schiff's "boat marina" would accommodate 1,500 small boats from 20 to 100 feet long. At a cost of \$3.5 million, Schiff envisioned a recreational base for sports fishermen and skin divers.

Schiff's plans included a breakwater where boats could be moored, a clubhouse, offices, snack bars, engine maintenance areas, restaurants, a swimming pool, showers, tennis and badminton courts — all built along the shore so as not to obstruct the ocean view from the bluff.

Access to the marina would be via the southeast canyon from either Via Anacapa or Paseo Del Mar with parking along the shore to accommodate up to 2500 cars.

While Schiff's plan was welcomed by some residents, many opposed it. At the request of the Palos Verdes City Council, a post-

card survey was sent to residents in the area. With a close 78 to 76 vote, residents who disapproved won, thus ending the boat marina plan for Lunada Bay.

Ten years later, in 1969, the city of Palos Verdes Estates established the Palos Verdes Estates Shoreline Preserve, which includes Lunada Bay, to comply with the 1963 Tidelands grant requiring coastal cities to improve, restore or preserve their tidelands.

The Shoreline Preserve, deed restrictions, city zoning ordinances and the requirements of the Tidelands grant make future projects like those proposed over the years highly unlikely. Gunther can rest easy knowing his favorite napping spots, spectacular sunsets and cool ocean breezes will only be interrupted by the sound of rocks tumbling along the shore in the waves below.

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