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*Ed Ricketts Covers the Waterfront for 20 Years*

*By Edward F. Ricketts*

*Challenged by a sentry the other night as I drove back in the laboratory I was recalling similar encounters with puzzled officials nearly two decades ago, and remembering how things had changed.*

*I must regard myself now as an old-timer on the peninsula waterfront. When I first came here 19 years ago my profession was regarded as even odder than it is now. When we lived in the woods, it was rumored that I must be a gambler, (this was in Pacific Grove which was more strictly religious than now), as I kept such queer hours.*

*After working nearly all night before dawn one morning I drove rapidly through town in an old noisy car .....*

*When I first started studying the animals along the rich waterfront the breakwater and the big wharf were still to be built. Things have so changed now its hard for me to remember how they were. Sardine fishing was done from small lampera boats. Most of the canneries were still to be built. Loeb Laboratory was non-existent; Hopkins Marine Station consisted of thee present old building only. Few, if any of the streets were paved. When our car broke down, which was often, we used Monterey's near relative of the Toonerville trolley. The manager of the local electric company, since merged with the P. G. & E., lived, I understand, a house on 2<sup>nd</sup> street which I subsequently got to know. The ceiling and the living room had more than a hundred electric light sockets. It must have been a strange site all lit up. It was his son, so I heard, who operated the single trolley car that was always getting off the track*

*Many Fires*

*At that time none of the big office buildings and hotels had been built, the Professional Building, Forest Hill and San Carlos Hotels, the Ocean View Hotel on*

*Cannery Row.....which I lost everything including, literally, my shorts. The old Del Monte Hotel, on the site of the present modern structure, burned almost to the ground in one night and within a few weeks one of the canneries was entirely destroyed.....was a threatening forest fire at Pebble Beach, and the Associated Oil tanks burned in New Monterey. A great steamship ran on the beach in Pacific Grove. In those days most of the old adobes were unused ruins: the Custom House, the old whaling station and the First Theatre had still to be renovated. Pop Ernest's and Booth's Cannery were landmarks even then.*

### *A Buck To A Dime*

*The fresh fish market was supplied mostly by the Chinese, whose squid drying activities were olfactory horrors on the road to Salinas. Even then, the Italians controlled the sardine fishing; I cannot recall any Jug-Slavs, now important in the industry. I was eager to get specimens of hagfish (appropriately called slime eels by the fishermen) from deep water offshore, and was referred to a Chinese who became afterwards a good friend. He wanted a scandalous price, one dollar apiece. Finally we settled on the more sensible rate of 10c each, and he got me quickly all he could. Years later I pieced together the answer. In the late 90s, when the Chinese village was located where Hopkins Marine Station now stands, a wealthy scientist from Columbia University visited here. He had offered the Chinese fishermen one dollar each for hagfish, and a man named Otac had supplied him, first having to devise suitable gear. Some twenty years later when I came along I encountered Otac's nephew who, then a boy, had helped to fish for specimens of this sort. In all those years, that shining price stuck in his mind. Later, a British biologist, hoping that I might procure eggs of this hagfish for him, ransacked the European second-hand bookstores to find and send Dr. Dean's paper on the development of these animals, then out of print. There Otac was mentioned, and there were illustrations of the equipment he devised for this purpose – equipment used again probably for the first time since to supply my similar needs.*

### *Sharks By The Ton*

*I wanted sharks, Mr. Hovden told me how to go about it. They had then no commercial value except as fertilizer. Now some species are among the most valued of fish, the livers bring fabulous prices from the vitamin concentrate industry, and soon these animals too will be depleted. Later on Vito Bruno, who operated a drag-boat, brought sharks in to me by the ton, along with many queer beasts from the deep sea bottom. I went out myself on the boats occasionally (often with the results not encouraging to delicate stomachs), scoured the bay in a row boat for jellyfish and other floating organisms; got curious animals even from the San Francisco dragboats –again very much troubled by that famous indisposition related to small boats and bad weather; collected in the then-wilderness down the coast and made long trips into Mexico, Canada and Alaska, coming back each time to a larger town.*

*Monterey had become one of the chief fishing ports of the country, of the world. Canneries fought for space along the limited waterfront. There was some talk of utilizing the beach of Seaside, Schaeffer moved his reduction plant out there, only to have it burn up. The specter of sardine depletion arose; was argued about and is having or will have to be faced.*

*So these twenty years have passed for me kaleidoscopically. An old man could be expected to record such changes, but I am forty-five; things happened very rapidly during these times everywhere, but particularly here. I wonder what great changes will have taken place in 1962. In any case, we can be sure that 1941-422 marks, for better or worse, the start of a new period.*