

TIBURON AND THE NAVY IN WW II

By Susan Cluff

During World War II, much of the deep-water coastline north of Tiburon along Paradise Drive was occupied by the U.S. Navy. From 1940-45, the Tiburon Naval Net Depot, where the S. F. State Romberg Campus is now, produced over 100,000 tons of anti submarine netting designed to defend West Coast harbors against attack. The base employed both enlisted men and civilians to assemble, rig, handle and maintain the nets, booms and buoys. Seven miles of netting was stretched from Sausalito across the opening to San Francisco Bay. Finished by 1942, the 600 ton net had gates at each end that allowed vessels access to the Bay. As the workload increased, ads in the San Anselmo Herald solicited trained civilians, "husky boys just out of high school... and men capable of working with heavy wire" offering \$288 monthly.

In 1942, the Navy opened the Tiburon Floating Dry Dock Training Center just north of the Net Depot to train naval mechanics to repair damaged ships at sea. Mobile dry docks were built in sections then barged into combat areas and reassembled. About 4,000 officers and men trained in Tiburon for ship repair duty in the Pacific, including 1,000 deep-sea divers. In 1943, the Navy acquired the "Annex" site in Paradise Cove, constructing barracks, storage and support buildings in about six weeks. Trainees had to move in before the heating plant was complete so heat was provided by the U.S.S. Crockett troop ship moored at the dock. Some seamen had to bunk aboard the old stern-wheel paddleboat Delta King, which was later used to ferry sailors on shore leave to San Francisco.

Sailors from the base entered the spirit of the community, playing baseball against local teams, attending services at Old St. Hilary's and flocking to Tiburon on weekends where impromptu dances were held on Main Street. In 1945-46, the "Annex" property was used to repatriate returning servicemen from the Pacific Theater and after the war, to store and recycle old nets, anchors and floats.

In 1978, San Francisco State University started a field station and marine laboratory on the Net Depot site. Today the Estuary & Ocean Science Center is a research and teaching campus dedicated to studying the ecosystems of San Francisco Bay.

In 1959, Marin County purchased the 19-acre "Annex Parcel" to create Paradise Park. Building pads at the top of the site became parking lots, storage areas for net floats and anchors became picnic areas, and the 330-foot naval pier renovated for recreational fishing. If you look carefully, you can see net anchors still holding up the break wall near the beach and a rusty old net float by the waterfront, once part of Tiburon's naval history.



1. The Net Depot logo. (Bill Keener)

2. Steel ball floats attached to the anti-sub netting on the concrete pad ready to be dragged into the bay. (USN photo)

3. Barracks under construction in 1943 at the "Annex"; now Paradise Park. The Delta King is at the end of the dock. (USN photo)

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