

# **VIRAGO**

A Lady with Convictions

By *Ron Stahl*

**Our California sunshine had given way to June gloom with its overcast and occasional drizzle and here it was only the first week in May. I didn't relish the thought of having to go down to inspect an old tub that sank at its dock, but what the heck, it was my turn to be 'up' for the next assignment as a Marine Surveyor for The West Coast Marine Surveyors at our office in Long Beach.**

**I took a casual glance at the insurance company's referral sheet. It described the boat as being a "Trumpy" designed, 87-foot wooden boat, launched in 1929 on the East Coast in Chesapeake Bay.**

**The first thought that came to mind was, "Why would any insurance company insure a wooden boat, at this extremely high figure, so far past her prime?"**

**As I arrived at the slip on Anchorage Road off the main channel near the Henry Ford Bridge, I had to push my way through a throng of gawkers staring at a wheelhouse and smokestack; all**



**that could be seen above water of the sunken boat.**

**Some inner voice said to hold back and study the situation before committing to questioning people; it turned out to be a wise choice. I overheard someone say, "The rich bastard thought he owned the whole waterfront." Another said, "He (I took referring to the owner) deserved it."**

**There were cameramen with tripods snapping photos right and left.**

**Some fellow in a small boat was taking soundings every few feet**

around the derelict. I called out to him asking how deep the bottom was. I thought I said it loud enough, but he just ignored me.

A limousine drove up honking its horn, making its way through the crowd. The driver, a big burly type, got out and asked a group to clear aside. An elegant, light-haired woman stepped from the vehicle and people started forming a pathway. The lady walked to the edge of the dock and just stood there for several moments, tears flowing down her cheeks. The big burly guy gently draped a coat over her shoulders and led her back and into the limo; then drove off.

Meanwhile the guy in the boat climbed the ladder to the dock. I made my way towards him and asked the same question. This time in a more deliberate voice, "How deep is that water?"

He looked me up and down, "Who wants to know?"

"My name is Dean Westerly. I'm with West Coast Surveyors, representing the owner of the boat."

"She's not a damned boat...She's a yacht," he curtly replied.

"I need to ask a few questions..." I leafed through my papers, "I see on my information sheet that a Pete Petersen is the skipper, is that you?"

"Yeah...just call me Pete." He let out a big sigh and shook his head. "Let's get away from all these damned rubber-necks. I'll have my deckhand stay around and keep an eye on the place." He offered a half-apologetic grin. "Sorry about the attitude. I have a feeling we're gonna get to know each other pretty well before this is settled. We have a lot to go over...come with me...I'll drive...It's close by and we can talk in private."

He pulled up to a small grocery-sandwich shop within the marina. An enclosed patio offered tables and chairs. We ordered coffee, seated ourselves and within a half hour Pete told me a web of tales that had me wondering if he was trying to cover his own ass, afraid of being accused of not doing his job, or trying to protect the yard that had hauled the boat from any malfeasance...while at the same time putting partial blame on the nearby yacht and boat live-a-boards. All of his remarks sounded so plausible.

His name conjured up a recollection of several Pete Petersen's

**I've known or heard about in the past: a bunch of wily, crusty old farts seen hanging around the waterfront like wharf rats, all seemingly involved with some part of boating.**

**The man standing in front of me was in his mid to late 30's, short, skinny, and balding. He had a ruddy, rough looking face with a stubble that told me he might shave once a week...whether he needed it or not. And, like any other Pete I've known, when sober would give you the shirt off his back; but, that's only "If and when" he was sober.**

**I didn't want to debate Pete's opinions nor alienate the only person with first-hand knowledge of the events by asking what he was doing at the time of the sinking. Instead I suggested, "Our first course of action is to get the 'Yacht' re-floated, then we can determine the cause of the sinking... I'll order a dive team to inspect the hull."**

**Pete butted in, "I've already been down...she's laying in three to four feet of muck and slime...I felt the hull...no planks are buckled or out of place...most through-hull fittings are down in the slime area." He then added, "It's going to be a big job to get slings under her." The staccato rhythm of his deliverance suggested he hated to waste words or time.**

**Not wasting time was his motive at the moment, "I've already called Wilmington Salvage Divers...they should be here by noon... I've been told they're the best in the business...a group of ex-Navy salvage vets...."**

**While at the grocery shop I made a telephone call to the office informing them of the progress.**

**I also indicated that this was more than just some old boat sinking at a dock, but had been informed, in no uncertain terms, that it was a million-dollar Yacht owned by a multimillionaire. I warned them to be prepared for a complicated, expensive mess.**

**Pete dropped me off at his dock so I could pick up my car. I**



decided to go over to the boatyard in Fish Harbor where the million-dollar Yacht had been hauled out. I had to cross on the old lumpy Ford Avenue railroad bridge, because the new Commodore Heim Bridge that crossed over to Terminal Island was closed while being checked

out for some malfunction.

I knew the well-known and respected, harbor area family that had operated Harbor Boat for many years. Many of the large seiners that were still fishing had been built there by the yard's old-world craftsmen who had immigrated from Italy, Yugoslavia, Denmark and Sweden. During the war, the yard had also launched many vessels for the Army, Navy and Coast Guard and earned several 'E' pennants for Excellence.

I parked the car and walked towards the main gate where clusters of men were gathered around 55-gallon drums belching smoke, warming themselves while awaiting the morning call-out for men and crafts needed to finish up on the final Navy Minesweeper contract. Unemployment figures in the harbor area were creeping to their highest level in years due to the lack of new government contracts.

The guard recognized me and passed me through. On entering the office, I saw the manager, Ron Rados, at the receptionist desk and bid him a good morning.

He responded, "What's good about it?" then added, "Sorry, I didn't mean to say it that way...I have a good idea why you're here...Is there anything I can do to help clear up this mess?"

"I'd like to get a statement from your ways foreman. I won't take up too much of Mario's time. You're welcome to sit in while I talk to him."

**Ron told the receptionist to page for Mario to report to the office.**

**I'd known Mario ever since he came from Slovenia after escaping from the Nazis. He had settled in with the large Serb, Croat and Dalmatian community of San Pedro, where many old time Austrian-Slovenian boat builders took root.**

**The three of us sat around a lunchroom table surrounded by the odor of a 12-cup coffee urn brewing. Just what was needed on this chilly damp morning. Spread on the table was a work order, several pages covering material and labor break-downs and a large attached bill for work done assisting a French company that dealt with stabilizers.**

**The stabilizers were a recent and expensive development that were now being custom-built and installed on pleasure yachts to reduce the rolling of a vessel. The stabilizers were shaped and reacted very much like a rudder. However, the rudder changed the direction of the vessel, whereas the stabilizer, protruding about 45 degrees off the center-line and mid-length on the hull, would counteract the rolling motion while underway at about six knots.**



**Mario stated, in his heavy Slavic accent, that when launching any vessel, the procedure was to lower the cradles in the water until the vessel bounced at buoyancy then wait until the vessel's representative, crew or owner, along with a ways crewman, checked for leakage. Depending on the work done, such as replacing planks, adding through-hulls or removing and replacing propeller shafts, or in this case installing the stabilizers, the inspection could take considerable time.**

**This routine was noted on the haul-out setup diagram naming**

those in attendance, including the stabilizer people. I told the manager I'd be over in a day or so to go through the file and make my notes on procedure and the work done on the vessel, bemoaning the fact that it was a damned shame an extra carbon copy of everything wasn't available so I could take the file to my office and go over it at my leisure.

Mario and I walked out to the ways, where a tug was now sitting on the cradles that the Trumpy had been sitting on previously. Seeing all that I thought was important for the time being at the yard, I headed back to the dock where the 'Yacht' still sat on the bottom.

A tug with a small barge and crane was sitting in the channel just a few feet off the dock. Several divers were in the water, bubbles popping to the surface denoting their locations. I noticed the harbor police had roped off a large area, pushing the few remaining gawkers back.

Dave, the owner of the dive service, was standing on the opposite dock giving instructions to his dive team. I walked around and tried to get his attention and he held up his hand as if asking for a few moments. He knelt down pointing at something; his voice was being drowned out by the roar of the air-compressors and the engines driving them.

Dave made his point to whomever he was communicating with. He got up and came over to where I was standing, held out his hand and shouted over the noise, "Glad you're the surveyor on this job Westerly. It reminds me of the old Saint Florence sinking. It'll be a bitch but we'll get it done." We shook hands, he then added, "We got a hose under her to the other side, but the air is stirring up the mud and slime and we can only go by feel. It's a real nasty job. I should have a report on our headway sometime in the morning, OK?"

"Call my office if anything develops; otherwise I'll be here in the morning."

On arriving at my office, our receptionist handed me a message, asking that I meet with the owner of the Trumpy at the

**Villa Riviera on Ocean Boulevard, in Long Beach, after 5 PM. I tried calling the phone number listed but only got a busy signal.**

**It had been a long day and my plans had been to go home, take a long hot shower and eat a hearty dinner of “Dinty Moor” canned beef stew...chased with a Carling's Black Label Ale, read the paper and maybe watch a little news on my brand new 17 inch Hoffman television. But that was not to be. Instead I had to get gussied up, present myself to some irate rich boat owner who'd probably bend my ear for an hour with reasons why he should collect double his insurance amount because someone had sunk his precious ‘Yacht’. Why else would he call for a meeting? And why at this particular time in the evening?**

**This being Friday and not finding any parking spots on the streets, I decided to park my new 1950 Studebaker Land Cruiser in Victor Hugo's restaurant parking lot a couple of blocks or so from the Villa, thinking I might drop in later for a ‘few’ after the meeting.**

**Walking into the entrance of the palatial building (obviously reeking of money) on Ocean Boulevard, I headed towards the reception counter, passing rows of occupied leather chairs with ornate lamps on the side tables. I was greeted by a very courteous attendant. I presented my card, informing the clerk that I had an appointment with a Captain Morrison.**



**The clerk was already dialing as he glanced at my card, “One moment sir I'll see if they are available.” He read my name into the phone, paused, listened attentively and uttered, “Yes sir...Yes sir...” He hung up and then, addressing me, said, “Someone will be down to meet you in a moment. Please relax in our lounge area.”**

**About ten minutes later a spruced-up Pete Petersen appeared. He was even wearing a tie and jacket. Without thinking, I blurted**

out, "I almost didn't recognize you in all your finery."

He grinned, "You haven't seen anything yet. Shall we go up?" He bowed and gestured towards the elevator.

A bell chimed at every floor as the silent elevator whooshed to the sixteenth floor. We stopped. I had turned facing the door I had entered, expecting to step out from there. Pete tapped me on the shoulder as he withdrew his key from the slot and said, "We get out here."

I turned around. "I'll be damned, a private entrance," I muttered as we entered a foyer that led down a hall to a spacious living area.

Several people rose from their seats or turned as we entered and Pete gave me a blanket introduction.

Everyone was dressed casually, slacks, open neck shirt and blazer jackets. It appeared all had a drink in their hands or one left sitting on a table. Puzzled, I wondered, Is this a business meeting or a party?

I had never met, or knew any of the people here, other than Pete.

A comely woman with light-brown hair came up and stood by Pete. He beamed at her, "Miss Theresa, may I introduce Dean Westerly. Westerly, Mrs. Theresa Morrison."

She shook my hand; a nice firm grip, and offered to fix me a drink. I followed her to a credenza stocked with an array of bottles. Spotting a familiar bottle, I requested Johnny Walker Black on the rocks. Glass in hand, I took a seat next to Pete.

Mrs. Morrison picked up a spoon from the bar and lightly tapped her glass; the room quieted. She spoke in a soft voice, "I want to thank everyone for coming here on a late Friday evening and on such a short notice, but I am leaving early tomorrow morning for New York...It is very important that I be there to repair the damage done by that damned Dorsey when he tried to take over the company. Your task is to save '*Lady Theresa*'. She must be saved, whatever the cost."

She walked over to an elderly gentleman and patted his



shoulder, “Mr. Larson will handle all the finances. Submit expenses and he will honor them.” She then walked to an elderly tall gent and placed her hand on his shoulder “Mr. Bertrand is my father's and my personal attorney and will escort me to New York.” She then pointed to a short paunchy fellow, “Mr. Allen B. Lewis, our corporate attorney, will answer any legal questions that may arise. I don't think at this stage we have enough information to seek any legal action, but he will be available for any eventuality.”

Turning to Pete she stated, “Captain Petersen will be in charge of any minute by minute decisions concerning *Lady Theresa*.”

Turning to me she hesitated for a moment then said, “This is Mister Dean Westerly, a marine surveyor for our insurance company, investigating the sinking of *Lady Theresa*.” She smiled at me, “I was impressed with the dossier on your past investigations and settlements. You seem well qualified to render a determination on those responsible for such a foul up.”

I couldn't think of any quick response other than tipping my whiskey glass towards her, nodding my head and uttering, “Thank you.”

Evidently getting this job wasn't just a matter of my name being next up on the list of assignments; apparently, I was specifically requested after being investigated.

She addressed the remainder of the people standing around nursing their drinks, “You all will continue with your jobs as usual, but please be available to aid these gentlemen in any way they deem necessary. Thank you all for coming.”

A little embarrassed, I pulled Pete aside and asked in a low voice, “Where's the head?”

I must not have asked low enough because Mrs. Morrison overheard and beckoned, “Come with me I'll point you in the direction. It's down the hall from the next room.” She took off, leading the way.



We entered into a large room featuring an enormous stone fireplace. Above the mantel was a large portrait of a striking woman with flowing, almost golden, blonde hair. Her face was beautiful and somewhat familiar.

I paused, studied the portrait for a moment and noticed the name 'VIRAGO' etched on a metal plaque at the bottom of the portrait's frame. "She is so beautiful..." I said, "Isn't that the name of some Goddess of mythology?"

She smiled, "Yes and no...that is my 'alter ego'... my other life. My husband often implied I was his Virago and commissioned the portrait before he passed away."

She took a few steps towards a door leading to the hall on the other side of the room and pointed, "It's down two doors on the left." She then spun around, returning to her guests.



I returned just as the lady was announcing to the group, "I must leave now to prepare for my presentation to my clients in New York on Monday...Please remain and exchange thoughts. Captain Petersen will tend to your needs; he's a great host and has handled many functions for me aboard *Theresa*."

About a half hour later the group broke up. I told Pete that I was starving and was thinking of having dinner at the Victor Hugo where I had parked my car, and asked if he would like to join me.

"Sounds great, I'll only be a minute...need to straighten up...I

can come back later and detail the apartment...Miss Theresa offered to let me stay here until *Lady Theresa* is back in service...that lady is the most gracious person I've ever met.” Pete gathered up glasses and cleaned ash trays as he spoke. We picked up Pete's car in the basement garage and drove the few blocks to Victor Hugo's. On entering the restaurant, we were greeted by the owner, “Mr. C”, a name I remembered from the days I spent at the navy base at Port Hueneme where he managed the Officer's Club. He directed us to a comfortable booth and as we scooted in I informed Pete that the dinner was on me, as a business expense, “So order up.”

During our conversation over drinks I asked how he got involved with the *Lady Theresa*. Pete said that he had been assigned as a tail gunner, along with a make-up enlisted flight crew, to the owner's husband, Captain Morrison, who had just arrived from the states with his new B-17 named VIRAGO.



I interrupted saying, “Virago... that's an unusual name for a bomber...don't they normally name planes after girls?”

Pete chuckled, “That was the first thing I asked the Captain when we were introduced. The Captain explained his reasoning. Seems that in his college days he became fascinated with this gorgeous little gal he read about in European folk lore while studying English Lit. As this myth, or lore, told it, she must have been a hell of a woman...determined, challenging and more heroic than John Wayne. Kind of a Joan of Arc, Molly Pitcher and Eleanor Roosevelt

rolled into one...and sexier and prettier 'n Mae West and Carol Lombard combined. Guess the Brits were impressed by her too, 'cause they named a destroyer after her."



### ***H.M.S. VIRAGO***

*(VIRAGO was credited for torpedoing and sinking the German battleship **SCHARNHORST** on December 26, 1943 in "The Battle of the North Cape," Norway. Virago also supported the landings at Sword Beach 6th June 1944. She participated with her Flotilla in ambushing and sinking the Japanese cruiser Haguro in the Pacific off Sumatra 16 May 1945.)*

Pete continued, "After the war the Captain and I went our separate ways. About two years later I saw an announcement of our squadron's reunion in New York City and, being in town, thought I would attend...Theresa's father, a successful land developer, hosted a major portion of the affair to honor his son-in-law's war-time service. The open bar was in a separate room away from the social and family gathering area. I was on my third round with members of our group. Several guys were wearing their flight jackets; on the backs were their plane's nose-art and rows of bombs for each mission...what a sight! The Captain came up behind me and slapped me on the back, announcing to all, 'Here's the best damned stinger

**in the Army Air Forces, with two ME 109's confirmed.' He then added, 'How in hell are you doing Pete?'**

**I held up my glass, 'One more round and I'll be soaring up in the clouds.'**

**'Pete, tear yourself away from these yahoos and come with me. I want to introduce you to my wife, Theresa.' He grabbed my arm and took me in tow.**

**We made our way through the crowd and halted behind a lady holding a conversation with an elderly gent. The Captain tapped her on the shoulder, she turned around, hesitated, and then looking me straight in the eyes said, "Oh My God...you have to be Pete!"**

**From that moment on I became totally under her spell. I tried to respond, but all I could get out was, 'You're more beautiful than the painting on the nose of our plane!' She planted a great big kiss on my forehead and I stood there grinning like a tongue-tied schoolboy.**

**The Captain broke the spell by asking what I was up to now that I was out of the service. 'I stay fairly busy delivering boats down to Florida and back, as a Yacht-master. The pay is good and I'm my own boss.'**

**'We have a boat,' the Captain said. 'Theresa's dad bought it for her before the European conflict...thinking it would keep her busy and her mind off their war.**

**'She loves it, but it's too solitary a life for me; I like to stay active. I don't have the free time to use it much....besides she's starting to show her age.'**



**Theresa laughed, 'Who's starting to show her age? Are you talking about me?'**

**'No dear, I'm talking about the boat,' Captain Morrison said apologetically.**

**‘I keep telling you, *Lady Theresa* is not a boat she is a Yacht!!’**

**“And that...Mister Westerly...is how I got involved,” Pete said, smiling.**

**During the course of dinner, I asked about a name that Mrs. Morrison mentioned, “Damned Dorsey,” at the meeting earlier. “What did he do that was so damaging to the company?”**

**“Oh him...She inherited him when her dad and the Captain died in the plane crash. Dorsey was kind of a front guy; giving presentations to investors...he's an excellent artist...Dorsey thought that Mr. Sherman was prepping him to take over the reins of the company on his retirement or passing. Dorsey made one big mistake...after the old man died he attempted to exert that perceived authority without contacting Miss Theresa.”**

**After dinner, we walked out to our cars and, on parting, agreed to meet early the next morning at the dock.**

**On my way to the boat dock, Saturday morning, I stopped by Ramona Bakery and bought a large box of assorted doughnuts to offer the work crew. A roach-wagon had stopped at a small boat yard where a line of people was getting their morning jolt of coffee. I offered to make it worth his while, when he finished there, to go down to the dock and honk his horn where the men were working on the sunken boat.**

**Another cold and damp morning...**

**Pete came early to oversee the progress. The dive crew had worked throughout the night. From what Dave said, he had to fend off complaints about the noise from the nearby live-a-boards. His response was, “What if it was your boat?”**

**Much progress had been made during the night. Six stout lines were tied at several locations on the dock, with the other ends going under the yacht then coming out of the water and then tied off on the opposite side of the dock.**

**Dave had set up a picnic table with a large umbrella to shelter the paper work from the mist and a bit of drizzle. He preceded to layout the night's progress. Following Harbor Boat's haul-out sketches and dimensions, he was able to discern where to place bilge**

blocks and support to the hull. He said he figured that he could bring her up within a couple of feet of her waterline and recommended that we not try to re-float her but to raise her enough to move her to a yard. Once at the yard they could make a haul-out setup that they could modify as needed to prevent any further damage to the hull. Dave also mentioned that the 100-ton crane was now working on the Long Beach side of the Commodore Heim Bridge and the only other large crane available was a 50-ton floating crane with a two-day minimum surcharge.

Before making any commitments on the crane I wanted to go to Fellows and Stewart Boatyard to see if we could fit into their schedule. That yard being only a hop-skip and a jump across the channel from where *Lady Theresa* sat in the mud, and there'd be much less chance of any mishap getting the yacht from one point to another.

There's something almost mystical about the communication along the waterfront businesses. It's like a huge family with no secrets...word gets around so fast you'd swear they were sending messages by jungle drums. If the news is bad it'll make the rounds in a heartbeat. If it's something good, you might hear about it mañana.

It hadn't taken long for the Daily Breeze, a harbor area fish wrapper, to pounce on the incident. The morning after the sinking, their front page had photos of a stack and pilot house; all that was to be seen above water. Their story was short and didn't really say much, but promised more to come.

Back across the Ford Avenue railroad bridge, I drove to the guard gate at Fellows and Stewart. I was passed through to park in the office staff's parking area. As I got out of the car I was greeted by the yard foreman.

“When can we expect the Trumpy to come over? I checked



with Ron over at Harbor Boat and they sent me their haul-out schematic. I'm making the setup now...we'll set it aside until you say go." He added, "I went over to the boat last night and talked with Dave, the diver, who indicated that with luck they should be ready sometime this evening."

"Damn! Looks like you guys don't need a middle-man like me to handle this mess. I'd better make arrangements with the crane service...that is, if you haven't taken care of that already." I looked at the foreman expectantly and he shook his head. "Okay, then...I'd better do it now, so point me towards a phone."



I called Omega Crane to order the 50-ton crane barge to be delivered to the dock. What a fiasco. The dispatcher insisted that the two-day surcharge be paid in advance and on top of that, since the Commodore

Heim Bridge was temporarily closed, there would be a further charge for towing the crane and barge around Terminal Island. This additional charge was estimated to take four hours at the overtime rate, this being Saturday, for the four-man crew. I gave the dispatcher the telephone number of the financial guy that was paying all the bills. Money was his headache. Thank God I wasn't involved in that.

All of these roadblocks were noted in my time sheet; this being the second day and I hadn't yet had a chance to physically inspect the yacht.

Late that afternoon a representative of Omega Crane showed up and went over the hull plans with Dave and Pete. He said that the crane was on its way. That evening a tractor trailer with two large spreader-beams arrived. It had a forklift that was towed behind the trailer to off-load the beams. The truck driver laid out a large array of shackles and bridles.

The crane arrived late in the evening. It took about an hour to



rig the equipment and the hoisting process began; raising the yacht at the rate of approximately one foot an hour. By 6:00 AM with her boot stripe two to three feet below the water's surface, it was time to try to ease her out of the slip and move her up the Cerritos Channel to the Fellows & Stewart Boat yard. She left a muddy wake as the divers flushed her bottom with high pressure water nozzles to remove the muck and slime.

During the cleaning of the hull a diver reported that the port side stabilizer fin was missing

Luckily, because of the Heim Bridge closure, there was no ship traffic to hinder the convoy. The large barge crane rigged with spreader-bars nestling a large yacht, the diver crane barge with compressors, and the two tugs inched their way to the yard. The yard was ready and waiting; the haul-out cradles lowered in the water.

The transfer to the yard setup went off without a hitch. Within a couple of hours, water from the yacht was siphoned out and she was comfortably perched high and dry in the yard, ready for inspection.

I caught the Terminal Island Ferry first thing Monday morning; the yard was not far from their off-load site.



On approaching the yacht on the haul-out table you couldn't miss noting the gold leaf scroll signature of the Trumpy Yachts. The impression I got seeing her out of the water for the first time with her white hull with routed seams, and all topside wood, including hand rails, stained and varnished was, "Wow, she is indeed a Gold-Plated Yacht!" I was snapping pictures as fast as I could with my new Argus C3 35mm camera. I had four rolls of 36-exposure Kodachrome film along with me and hoped it'd be enough.

A group of Caterpillar mechanics was at the ready to climb aboard to flush the two recently rebuilt Cat engines. The electricians

were waiting to remove all motors and generators to their shop to clean and bake them.

Pete and I inspected the vessel from stem to stern. I was taking notes and flashing pictures at every turn. We inspected the engine room first, before the mechanics got in there to disturb things, and found possible evidence of the sinking.

The port-side retainer plate and cap screws for the top of the stabilizer stock and quadrant, lay scattered in the muck and slime on the engine room deck. I was definitely getting the feeling that this job was going to take a hell of a lot longer than I first thought...and it was certainly starting to look like it had been no simple 'accident' that had put *Lady Theresa* under water.

The interior of the vessel was a mess; all paneling was bulging and distorted, the overhead sagged, and the carpeting and flooring would need replacing. Furniture was destroyed and the obviously expensive art work was in dire need of professional cleaning.

I made my preliminary report to the insurance company. Pete did likewise to his legal group. I hired a security company to log all people going aboard.

Permission was given to the French stabilizer people to come aboard. Their lead mechanic and I inspected the starboard side assembly, which appeared to be in good order. I asked if he would remove a cap screw from the top of the unit and try screwing in one of the cap screws that I had found in the muck from the other side. It was a loose fit and wouldn't tighten. After close inspection, it was determined that an American fractional size cap screw was used instead of the French metric screw. The diameter and thread size of the bolts were just slightly different, but that alone should not have caused the vessel to sink.

The stabilizer representative said the shaft log assembly was intentionally designed to be several inches above the waterline so that repairs would not require the vessel to be dry-docked.

While settling up with Dave and his dive team I asked if he would send a diver down at Harbor Boat's haul-out ways and look for the stabilizer fin. Unfortunately, he had no success.

**A strained relationship was developing between all parties involved. Pete Petersen's legal group, the insurance company which had insured the yacht for the Morrison's, and Harbor Boat and the French company's insurance carriers became deeply concerned. They were all nervous, that one or some, of the others would blame them for the sinking.**

**The electrical company that I recommended did repair work on ships and generator plants and was qualified to work on US Navy mine sweepers. In their opinion all electronics RDF, Radar, Radio-telephone appeared to be a total loss. During their inspection of the electrical circuits they found an off-shoot panel with a rectifier indicating there was a need to change the polarity of the circuit (changing the electrical direction). Tracing the line, they found that it led to the stabilizer direct current operating system.**

**No one gave any concern to this find until later when I went over Pete's rendition of events. I thought at the time he was trying to cover his own butt because he'd been sleeping through the whole sinking. At the marina grocery and during our first discussion I had wanted to ask Pete just what he and his deckhand were doing that they hadn't any suspicion that the vessel was in trouble. I hadn't wanted to alienate the only witness to the whole event, so I passed on asking that question...at that time. It was, however, something I had to include in my report to the insurance company.**

**My final report was divided into three categories... facts...assumptions and extenuating circumstances...with my opinion offered at the end.**

**Harbor Boat did an all-around professional job regarding hull repairs.**

**The French stabilizer company also did a professional installation...excluding the questionable use of the US Standard thread as opposed to the French Metric system on the tube bolts.**



**The mix-up regarding land line electrical system and the third wire ground lead had been a constant trouble maker along the**

waterfront for many years and may have led to the change of polarity, causing the automatic bilge pump sensor and alarm system to be disabled.

Another factor involved was that many of the wooden-hulled vessel's seams had been reefed and caulked when first hauled. After three weeks out of the water, when launched, a wooden-hulled vessel would typically take on water until the seams swelled tight. Enough water could have seeped through the seams to lower her enough for water to come over the top of the stabilizer shaft log. But the alarm system failure, in my opinion, could possibly have been the reason for the yacht's sinking.

A week or so after I submitted the final report of my findings I received a subpoena, underwritten by a well-established Admiralty law attorney, to appear for a deposition. The summons requested all my findings, notes, and photos of the *Lady Theresa* sinking. This was expected and was the primary reason for a professional Marine Surveyor to make a detailed work sheet.

At the start of the first day of the deposition introductions to everyone in attendance were made, including legal representatives from every entity involved. Everything went well, everyone was courteous, what few questions asked created little debate; it was as if all the legal minds were wanting to see and hear all the evidence before conjuring up plans of attack and-or defending whatever fit the occasion.

The second day attitudes were reversed; everyone seemed to be ready to take on a tiger. Maybe it was the appearance of Theresa Morrison for the first time. The lead insurance attorney introduced her as, "Miss Theresa, (as Pete always referred to her) the widow of the deceased boat owner."

"Gentlemen, my name is Theresa...or Mrs. Morrison. Only close friends call me Miss Theresa. I am the owner of *Lady Theresa*. When she sat down, she sat next to her personal attorney, elderly, nattily dressed, and an Ascot tie around his neck. He projected the appearance of a successful gentleman. Mr. Bertrand stood and introduced himself as an "Adviser...Consultant only", representing

the vessel's owner.

Sensing the immediate tension in the room and their precarious position, the French stabilizer company representatives came alive. Most evidence presented in my deposition seemed to point in their direction and if it held up in court, along with the expense of the Theresa's rebuild and any loss of their stabilizer installations in the US, it could put their company in dire straits. They very vigorously defended their position and tried to put blame on the skipper, on the yard, and several other clouded scenarios.

The attorney requesting the deposition reminded everyone that this was not a trial but a hearing to determine if evidence warranted a trial before a judge and-or a jury in civil court. This announcement only added fuel to the raging debate. The court recorder picked up her transcriber stand and left the room...the session ended at the rap of the gavel.

It had been a long session and most of it centered on my report, so I was glad to escape the rancor. On my way down in the crowded elevator I felt a tapping on my shoulder from behind. I turned, only to come face to face with Theresa. "May we meet for a moment?"

I had dreaded the thought of having to come face to face with her after the report that Pete had been sleeping during the sinking, knowing that she had absolute confidence and trust in him. But, not to have mentioned it would have been an obvious omission and negate the credibility of my report.

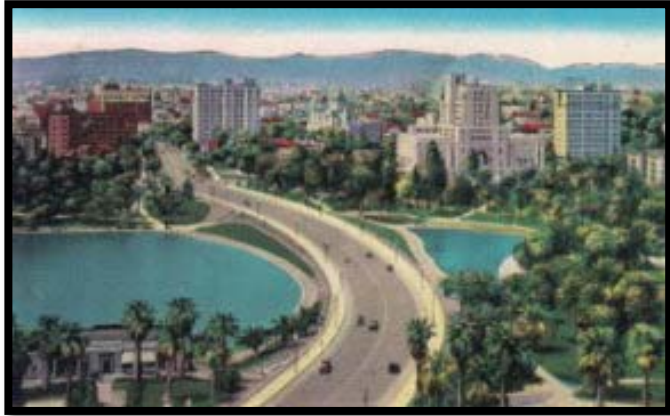
We exited the elevator in the lobby and I suggested we go to the cafe in the building to talk over a cup of coffee.

She countered with, "I was thinking of going to my offices to discuss an entirely different matter than *Theresa's* sinking. I will gladly make it worth your while if you would allow me to lay out a personal problem and have you make suggestions on how to engage and make the problems disappear."

That got my attention. I definitely wanted to hear more. "My car's in the parking structure. You want me to follow you?"

"I'll have my driver go with you."

**It was a long drive from Long Beach, past Westlake Park, the Wiltern Theater complex, then to the Sherman office building on Wilshire Boulevard. I probably would never have found the place on my own. The elevator took us to the top floor which opened to a spacious lobby where a receptionist at a large desk asked me to sign in. I did so and she escorted me through large doors to an equally large office.**



**Theresa was standing and offered me a chair opposite her desk. “Would you like something to drink?”**

**“A cold Coke would be perfect.” I strolled toward the massive window and gazed out over the neighborhoods of manicured lawns and red tile-roofed homes.**

**“Mr. Westerly, to put it bluntly, I’m having a bit of a problem with my insurance coverage...and not just regarding *Theresa*. It seems that my business is filing a rash of claims. At first, they were of the small nuisance variety, but now have graduated to very serious loss of property affecting the assets of my company. I would like to hire you to find out just what’s going on.”**

**She paused long enough to let me digest her statement, and then continued. “My reason for asking for your assistance is the exhaustive and thorough way you presented your investigative report on *Theresa*. I could hire insurance investigators...private detectives, but seeing the result of your work has given me the confidence in you that I need for this investigation. If there is a hint of foul play within the realm of my organization I want to know about it.”**

**After a few moments, as if trying to form a thought, she added, “I’d like to make this second investigation as private and quiet as possible...so possibly you could tie in your investigations to the**

**sinking. Would that be OK?”**

**After several moments of thought I responded, “Ma’am, doing an investigation, or what we would call a survey in marine parlance, gives the surveyor the right to explore all areas concerning an incident and then render a finding of facts to a higher authority that can assess the next action to take. What you're asking of me is to delve into unknown territory, without any authority...I have no private investigator license... collecting private information that could damage...say...your own reputation should it land in the wrong hands.”**

**“I fully understand the consequences,” she said, “and I am willing to deal with them. My concern is trust. I consider myself a good judge of people I can entrust with my privacy. Are we a go or not?”**

**I paced back and forth, thinking. Once I held up my hand to stop her when she started to say something. Finally, after a few minutes or so, I turned to her, “I have a feeling I might regret this, but yes, and we have a ‘go’. A few things first, just so we're in agreement. I'll need to take a leave of absence from West Coast Surveyors as I don't want them implicated in any way. I'll need start-up money and an expense account. Then, to begin my investigation, I'll need information on all claims: who filed, when, and what for. Also, I'll need a list of all your associates and their positions within the company. In the event I need to contact you and because of your trust in Pete Petersen, he would be a good liaison. One other thing, *Lady Theresa* is a good cover but when Virago is mentioned it becomes a more cautious exchange of information between just you and me.”**

**I walked to the large windows and looked upon the huge expanse laid out below, giving her time to digest my requests. The June gloom had finally cleared and the Hollywood foothills were proudly showing their green foliage after the recent rains. What a beautiful scene.**



**Her phone rang, breaking the spell. She answered and said that she would be down in just a minute or so. I took it to mean our session was over.**

**“You think things over and I'll contact Pete in a day or two for your decision,” I said, and took off for the garage and my car.**

**The next day I was glancing through The Evening Herald Express and their section on court schedules, as I had several cases pending. I came across a mention of a hearing before the County Supervisor Court and a large development contractor and I recognized the name of the contractor's attorney; Allen J. Lewis...the Sherman Corporation's attorney. Very interesting! I made a note of the building, room number, time of the hearing and decided to attend, incognito of course.**

**Having experienced the large attendance at cases of this sort, I decided to arrive early. Thankfully, I did, as the room was almost packed when I arrived. I noticed many young people, attributing their presence to several law colleges in the area. Huddled at a table up front, sat Mr. Lewis, two other men, and...Theresa Morrison.**

**The Clerk read the schedule of the proceedings and leading the list was the County versus the Sherman Development Corporation, with all redresses limited to five minutes...which I found unusual.**

**When the hearing began, the Chairman of the County panel bluntly stated, “The 350-home subdivision of Forest Oaks requires a provision for an elementary school and a fire substation. Unless**



these provisions are included the county will order a restraint on further construction.”

Mr. Lewis approached the podium, interrupting the Supervisor, waving a sheaf of papers and announced in a loud voice for all to hear, “I hold in my hand all of the permits required by the state, county and city for the development of Forest Oaks. All of them...I repeat, all of them...have the department head signatures required to proceed with the development as presented. We have no obligation to build a school or fire substation...only to provide land for city and county to develop. This we have done.” Finishing his statement, Lewis, a blank look on his face, started to turn back to his seat.

Theresa walked to the podium, politely edged her now silent attorney aside and stated, “Mr. Chairman my name is Theresa Morrison...to slow or stop work now to negotiate for these new or added provisions will force many contractors into possible bankruptcy. And another thing...I don’t see your name on any of these documents...why is that and where is the County representative who signed off on our documents?”

“Little lady please wait your turn to speak...don't interrupt these proceedings.”

Theresa's face hardened and before the Chairman could finish his admonishment, she countered, “Please address me as Mrs. Morrison...I am no one's *Little Lady*.”

The chairman smiled patronizingly, “Now, now Mrs. Morrison why don't you leave these proceedings to the gentlemen sitting here and go off and do a little shopping or plan dinner for tonight. No need to worry your pretty little head about these complicated matters.”

“Damn!” I thought, “It's evident this fellow doesn't know who he's talking to.”

Theresa bowed her head for a few seconds, then slowly raised her chin. Her eyes were blazing, “Don't you dare pull that chauvinistic crap on me, I'll turn you into a gelding...I negotiated these agreements! They all have my signature. Once again, where

does your name appear? And, just who in hell are you? It's quite evident you weren't around when the permits were approved...and now...you enter the picture with new provisions that could stop work. It seems to me....” Before Theresa could finish, the room exploded into bedlam.

I could see this session was over, so I eased my way out of the County building, picked up my car and drove back to the harbor area, stopping to have lunch before crashing at my bungalow in the Miraleste area overlooking San Pedro.

I turned on KTLA's channel 5 news, just in time to see Theresa in action, taking on the whole county board of Supervisors and holding her own. The cameraman got a good view of a lady with fire in her eyes, dishing out far more than they were able to counter. I watched for a few moments as the news anchor gave her name and described her association with the development company and went on about the sub-division worth nearly three and a half million dollars. He also tried to explain the mix-up that had caused all the excitement. From what he said, the chairman of today's hearing had been appointed as a temporary supervisor to replace the long-time head supervisor, recently deceased, who had approved the contract. It was evident that his interpretation of the agreement differed from that of his predecessor.

There was certainly something odd going on, but I was having a hard time putting my finger on it. I noticed that quite a few newsmen had attended the hearing, which was a little unusual for that type of proceeding...and how did that TV news crew get wind of things so soon...and get set up in time to catch everyone in action?

I had to chuckle when I thought of Theresa Morrison. What had happened to that soft-spoken, quiet, proper lady I had been introduced to? That was a true Virago who had taken on the chairman-supervisor this afternoon. I think I saw a bit of what her husband must have seen in her. There was no doubt in my mind, whatsoever, that she could run that multimillion dollar corporation she had inherited.

I contacted Pete Petersen the next day. Theresa Morrison had

**accepted all my terms. My new investigation began.**

**As a rule, a marine surveyor does not intrude into the privacy of an individual, but my curiosity about Theresa got the better of me. I looked her up in “Who's Who”; I talked to business associates, and had long talks with Pete...he seemed to know her best. I found out she was a woman of great wealth, unexpectedly thrust into a powerful position of finalizing several heavily invested projects after her father and husband were killed in a plane accident.**

**Theresa's mother, a devout Scot-Irish Catholic, died along with a baby son in childbirth when Theresa was 12 years old, thus cementing the close bond that had always been between her and her father. He tried sending her to prestigious boarding schools but she lasted only a few weeks at most before she demanded to come home and eventually finish her education close to her father.**

**Her father had English-Austrian roots. He treated his daughter like the son he'd always wanted. He was fascinated with anything fast, be it cars, horses, boats or airplanes. He was tremendously aggressive in business. All these traits he passed on to his daughter. At 16 she was frequently under the hood of her dad's “JN Duesenberg.” She called the car her “Duessy” a play on the word “doozy” a popular slang term indicating “The very Best.” He taught her to hunt...she was a better shot than he...she expertly fished...both ocean and fresh water. Her intelligence was such that her father often forgot she was still a youngster and he often discussed business situations with her or sought her opinion; posing such questions as, “What would you do if it were up to you?”**

**Theresa and her father, along with their crew, spent the early part of June 1938 preparing their 40-foot sloop for the new start location of the Newport to Bermuda Yacht Race. Then at the last minute her father considered canceling because of a business crisis at which his presence was required.**

**Theresa convinced her father that even though she was only 17, she was a yacht club member, was quite capable of skippering, and that with such a highly-trained crew they would perform excellently...which they did. A side incident was her meeting the young man who was later to become her husband. Kurt Morrison, at age 20, was skipper of a college-crewed racing yacht, also entered in the same class in the race.**



**The race was a 635-mile sleigh ride for the 43 entrants with the new Sparkman-Stephens 72-foot yawl, *'Baruna'*, taking all line honors and setting records.**

**At the trophy presentations, the boats of Kurt and Theresa took first and second place silver urns for their Cruiser Class. The crews of both boats mingled and tipped a few after the event, thus cementing Theresa and Kurt's new-found relationship.**

**Theresa was home-schooled; her tutors were the top of their profession and often traveled with the family on business or pleasure trips. She immersed herself in the business, tackling the challenges of several departments...and held her own. Her father's long-time associates welcomed her participation for the most part, but as usual there were those that felt insecure in her presence and refused to acknowledge that this beautiful young woman could possibly have any but frivolous thoughts.**

**Her father had taken a liking to the young Kurt Morrison and had put him to work in his company part-time while he finished his schooling. He was especially taken with Kurt's ability to fine-tune business procedures as a result of his education in business and economics and his ability as a negotiator. Kurt also filled Mr. Sherman's desire to have a son...something that had always been lacking in the older man's life.**

Theresa's time in the business waned somewhat after her marriage to Kurt as she deliberately stayed in the background and allowed him to take over most of her responsibilities. As in anything she decided to do, she seemed to thrive in becoming the perfect wife. Her soft-spoken manner at home with her husband, her ability to throw the perfect dinner party (be it 30 or an intimate dinner for four), her dealings with trades people or household help, and her general knack for getting along with their social set made her the ideal mate for an up and coming corporate executive.

During the depression of the early thirty's, open land was available in Southern California at ridiculously low prices, encouraging her father to move his operations to the West Coast to be on the scene and take advantage of any opportunities that might arise.

Theresa always resisted moving west. She was comfortable in the more sophisticated cities on the east coast and didn't want to leave close relatives of her mother nor the many friends in her life. In 1939, the Long Island family estate was sold. In addition to the new dwelling in Los Angeles, Theresa maintained an apartment in New York City where she and her new husband took up residence. She often joked that she and Kurt kept the Santa Fe's Super Chief and N.Y. Central Railroad in business commuting between coasts...although Kurt, if by himself, preferred airplane travel.

As a symbolic gesture of his love, her father, knowing she always admired a certain Trumpy yacht docked in Newport, Rhode Island, presented it to her as a gift; renaming the yacht '*Lady Theresa*'.

Late 1939, war broke out in Europe. Kurt graduated from college in the spring of 1941. Having served in the ROTC, he sensed it wouldn't be long before he would be activated. He decided to join the Army Air Corps after being offered the opportunity of attending flight school.

While her husband was away Theresa often spent long weekends maintaining the yacht. She became very accomplished in sanding, varnishing and painting the woodwork. The engine

compartment could pass a white glove inspection.

Pearl Harbor changed everything. Theresa's father needed help at the West Coast office. He appointed her head of the Limited Liabilities Partnership Division, which was an innovative association of contractors. Every new project became a separate entity with a new list of contractors and when the project was signed off and all expenses were paid, that partnership no longer existed.

Military training camps, boat construction yards, flying fields, coastal defense, manufacturing complexes; all came through her office. Leasing or buying undeveloped land, then designing a layout for its use and procuring labor and materials, all required so many talented people to oversee and keep timetables for the progress of each stage of the operation that Theresa was soon overwhelmed with the workload. Seeking advice from her father, he offered his long-time Chief Architectural Engineer, Donald Dorsey, to help smooth the edges.

“Dorkey Don”, as he was often referred to behind his back by his underlings in the office, was rather short, had a round face,



slicked down hair, sported a pencil-thin mustache and was always impeccably dressed. With tie and a fresh carnation in the lapel of his tailor-made suit jackets, he flitted about the offices like a bee in heat, darting from one desk to another. He made quick perusals of the work in progress without saying a word...that is until sometime later he would present selected individuals letters with suggestions for improving or disapproving their progress on the

project they were working on.

Often, when confronted with an opposing idea or solution to a problem, he would throw up his hands and in a voice that became increasingly shrill, would exclaim, “I won’t have it...I won’t have it!”

**It was also rumored that on occasion a particularly brilliant project idea he had observed would be presented to Mr. Sherman as Dorsey's own idea...much to the dismay and chagrin of the originator.**

**Donald Dorsey had thus impressed Mr. Sherman with two important talents. He had the gift of communicating with people, whether on an individual basis or a large audience. The man was so articulate and convincing that he could persuade an audience to invest in Florida swamp lands and cultivate the alligators as family pets. Also, he was a master at creating visionary concepts. In one example, he took one basic floor plan of a two-bedroom bungalow and redesigned it into six artfully rendered showcase models, with mirrored images, landscaping and all.**

**The melding of his talents into visual presentations sold many customers on investing with the Sherman Group. But...the gentleman had one gigantic fault which was recognized by everyone who came into contact with him: his gargantuan ego. He had convinced himself that the company was only profitable because of his contributions.**

**Mr. Sherman was well acquainted with Dorsey's ego and ably fed it to get the most out of the man by attaching titles to Dorsey's name or creating positions for him that reflected a high position in the corporation. At one point, he was "Vice President" of no less than three different divisions operating within the organization.**

**From the beginning Theresa saw through his façade. Some thought it was a cover to gain control, like the alpha male domineering the rest of the pack, but she recognized his pacifist, ingratiating attitude as an attempt to instill in others a confidence in his abilities that they otherwise might not have. Many were taken in by his fatherly, patronizing approach. She, however, resisted all his efforts to gain her alliance and only tolerated him to please her father.**

**Working nearly two years with each other was almost intolerable for her. Many a time her father had to step in to separate them, often defining boundaries for their cooperation. Luckily, they**

each frequently traveled to oversee their own projects.

Meanwhile, as the war progressed, the allies in Europe were advancing towards the heart of Germany...whose surrender seemed certain.

Theresa received a call from her husband announcing that he was back in the states and that as soon he was allowed to leave the hospital he would hole up in their apartment in the city.

She went ballistic. "Hospital? Are you injured? How bad is it? Why haven't you told me before now? Where are you now? Can I see you?" The questions were rapid fire, not giving Kurt a chance to answer any of them.

He finally calmed her down and said he couldn't talk about it at the moment as his time was limited. He assured her that his injuries were minor: a broken forearm and just some minor cuts and scrapes, he was up and walking, and that he would call her tomorrow. He called the next day explaining that he was only allotted three minutes on the phone as so many men wanted to call home. He told her that he had crashed the airplane while landing after his hydraulic system was shot away. The crew had safely bailed out, except for him and his co-pilot, and as they tried to land and save the plane both were injured...but not seriously.

America was slugging it out on Okinawa, hoping to gain air bases they could use to raid on Japan proper.

Business at the Sherman Group was softening, as wartime projects had reached their peak and many were in the final stages of completion. Theresa decided it was a good time to return to her life with Kurt and asked to be put on hiatus in active participation with the company. Her father agreed, with one proviso, that when Kurt was well enough he would return and fill her vacancy.

Kurt was so enraptured with flying that after his recovery and departure from the Army Air Corps he began taking courses for a multi-engine commercial aviator's license through the Civil Aeronautical Authority. This was not so much to make it his vocation but as an asset to the company by flying Sherman officers and customers to locations about the country.



**He found a Lockheed 10 Electra as war surplus and convinced his father-in-law to buy it and register it as a charter flight airline.**



**The plane carried 10 passengers plus two crewmen and had a flying range of 750 miles at 200 miles an hour. Thus, the Sherman Company could lease it and deduct its use as a business expense. After two years of operating for a**

**tour group, plus the extensive use of the aircraft by the Sherman executives, the plane came due for its government inspection and re-certification. Plus, it needed several upgrade installations that were required to keep its certificate current.**

**The inspection was lengthy; the engines had exceeded their run time and needed to be opened up. New electronics were installed per Civil Aeronautics Board's requirements. In the end the plane was given an AAA rating.**

**Two months later the plane crashed, killing Theresa's father, Kurt and his co-pilot.**

**Six months later, the C.A.B. inspectors determined that weather was the probable cause of the crash. There was no mention or hint of foul play.**

**It was a very rough time for Theresa; mourning the tragic loss of the two most important men in her life, planning for their funerals plus being concerned for the operation of the company after the loss of its leaders.**

**Most of this information I was able to glean through interviews with Pete Petersen, some "close friends" and associates who didn't mind gossiping, and a lot was volunteered in conversations with people who were familiar with the family. The balance was gathered from what was sensationally printed in the newspapers.**

**I had accumulated many pages of information during my research into people close to the family and created a chronicle of**

events. In doing so, I felt like a useless bystander watching all these negative events happen, but unable to assist this woman in her time of need.

I later learned from Pete that more problems had developed at the Sherman headquarters. Soon after the plane crash was emblazoned across the newspaper headlines, Donald Dorsey had sent out a directive to all associates and department heads announcing that he was taking over as Operations Manager to relieve Theresa from the “burden” of actively participating in the daily functions of the company. That directive was short, impersonal and according to Mr. Bertrand, the Morrison's family attorney, was judged to be “illegal and insupportable”.

Someone had wired the contents of the directive to Theresa in New York (Dorsey hadn't wanted to “bother” her with such details while she was going through a mourning period). That got her blood boiling and when Mr. Bertrand called for her to make a counter statement negating Dorsey's directive and explained how serious the situation could become, she put her feelings aside and took action.

In hindsight, this might have been the best tonic to break Theresa out of her jumble of emotions. The woman came alive with a determination not to yield one inch of her right to assume the leadership of the company.

Within an hour, she was aboard a charter flight to California.

Her first official order was to fire Dorsey, but that wasn't as easy as hoped. It seems her father had fed Dorsey's ego with a letter guaranteeing him a salaried position as long as a Sherman owned the company. Dorsey also countered that he had a vested interest in the company. He produced many pages of complimentary evaluations, personally penned by Mr. Sherman which, he said, would prove in any court that Mr. Sherman had intended Dorsey to succeed him. Two weeks after taking over the reins at the home office she was finally able to unclog several projects that had been put on hold awaiting signatures due to the dispute, allowing them to proceed.

Not wanting to make personal contact, Theresa had Dorsey

evicted from the premises. Mr. Bertrand advised her to continue his salary until a determination was made in court.

In the meantime, the *Lady Theresa* was on her way up the coast along the Baja Peninsula of Mexico. She was starting to show signs of hard use, the engines were smoking, and a vibration developed on the port shaft. Petersen radioed friends at the L.A. Yacht Club requesting their recommendation of a good boatyard that could correct the many problems that were developing. Harbor Boat seemed to be the consensus of their approval. The yard was booked solid for nearly a month before they could haul the boat so it was suggested that *Lady Theresa* could stay at a slip near Wilmington, as the owner of the slip had just left for a gunk-hole cruise up the West Coast and the San Juan's area near Seattle for the summer. Along with the needed repairs, Theresa had decided to install the stabilizers. After all work was done at the yard and launched she was returned to the slip in Wilmington.

Here is where I entered the picture, thought Dean to himself. To some, prying is another word for investigating...but I've always thought of prying as being a negative characterization, like snooping. Now here I was snooping and prying into personalities and private affairs. I hadn't realized how much different this second investigation would be from my usual line of work in the maritime industry.

With Theresa's prior approval for me to interview people on her list of associates, I invited her very attractive secretary, Matilda Mathews, to lunch...with the understanding that my only interest was in finding employees who had knowledge of the *Lady Theresa*.

I have to admit the thought of asking her on a date had crossed my mind, but not wanting to deviate from my task I had hoped that in a relaxed environment of a casual lunch she would be more prone to remember and talk to me about comments and conversations or people that might have knowledge of the vessel. The wine relaxed the mood and lunch lasted longer than intended.

Matilda let me know that she preferred to be called Tillie by her friends and offered during the first moments of our lunch that

**Theresa had mentioned I may want to interview her and that she was instructed to answer any question that I might ask because I was on Theresa's side. After a couple of glasses of wine her outpouring of incidental information would have been the foundation for a great novel.**



**Matilda grew up on a rural north-east Kansas farm, graduated high school with honors and received a scholarship to a teacher's college in Emporia, Kansas. While there she became interested in a dance class that offered more than just the usual ballroom dancing; it included instructions in poise and grace, lessons she took very seriously.**

**While assisting her elderly aunt after surgery in Southern California during the summer break, she saw an ad asking young ladies to submit resumes to fill office positions for a business relocating to the Los Angeles area. The ad mentioned extremely good pay and work environment. As a lark, she decided to apply. She listed her aunt's phone number and got a response to appear for an interview early on a Monday morning. Arriving at 8 am, she was surprised to be among a throng of 30 young women. It was obvious many were aspiring starlets vying for the same opening. Some had expensive hair styling and professional facial makeup, plus most all were very fashionably attired. Her name was the fifth to be called. Remembering her training on poise, posture and grace, she stood with as much poise as a Kansas gal could muster and walked to the interviewing room. She sat, modestly adjusted her skirt and riveted her eyes on the interviewer's face. She responded to all questions with just a polite hesitance of dignity. The meeting was brief; she was excused without comment and led to the door.**

**A Special Delivery letter arrived the next day with a twenty-**

dollar bill enclosed and a note asking her to come prepared to spend a day for further interviews. At that point, she was hired and had been employed with the company for 14 years.

I noticed that she wore a wedding band on her right hand and asked if she was married. She replied that she lost her husband during the war, but didn't elaborate any further.

Sensing from her conversation that she might be prone to gossip, I thought of asking questions about people from the top down. Her thoughts on Mr. Sherman were that he had no faults and that he only saw the best in everyone. His clients were the elite of their fields. "He was a 'gentleman' in every respect. I should know, I was his personal secretary for years until Theresa came to work and he asked me to work for her until she got the feel of the client list."

"What about this Mr. Dorsey, what did you think of him?"

"I found him to be secretive and egotistical; I resented the way he pranced around, putting his nose and uninvited comments into everything! He acted as if he owned the business." She added, "Mr. Sherman tolerated him because he had certain talents that were extremely useful."

"How well did you know Theresa's husband Kurt?"

"I had a high regard for him because of his war record. He once made a pass at me when his wife was back east. I became so flustered that he shied away and never attempted again. I remember while at a company dinner he latched onto an attractive secretary and took her home. Mr. Sherman heard about it and asked me information on her employment. I never heard of her again."

"Back to Mr. Sherman; I know he was a widower, was he...popular with women? To your knowledge did he have any problem affairs, say like jealous husbands or boyfriends?"

"Heavens no! Mr. Sherman treated all women with the utmost respect. He had a mystical aura about him that enraptured all people, both men and women. That's what made him so successful. He could bring adversaries together and they would soon become partners in a business deal." She smiled brightly, then after a few

moments, as if a dark cloud interrupted her thought, added, "Though...Mister Sherman did make enemies..."

"Finally, where there's smoke there's fire," I thought.

I had to encourage her to continue because she had paused for the longest time, as if wondering if she was going beyond confidentiality.

"Mr. Sherman was capable of being very harsh when dealing with adversaries if he thought they were out to extract excessive profits beyond the norm, or try to short change a situation at his expense. He couldn't stand an incompetent person. She added, "A case in point...A contractor added several thousand feet of lumber beyond what was needed for the project in order to line his own pockets at Mr. Sherman's expense. That contractor never built another house in the area again."

She closed her eyes, as if in deep thought. "And...I can't say for sure, but there was one time Mr. Dorsey gave him a look as if he'd like to kill him. Dorsey, as usual, had stuck his nose into something that was none of his business and Mr. Sherman...politely, I thought, reminded him that it wasn't really anything that he...Dorsey, had to worry about. When Mr. Sherman turned to leave Dorsey shot him a look that was so full of venom it was a wonder he couldn't feel it as he walked away! I recall another incident where a high-ranking Army Officer, thinking he could wedge his way into Mr. Sherman's circle, offered him some inside information on a large upcoming project that could make a profit of millions of dollars. Not only did Mr. Sherman reject the implied offer outright...but warned the officer he could be dishonorably discharged if word of what he was up to got around."

I could tell that the wine was having an effect on her when she suddenly gazed directly into my eyes, put her hand on mine and whispered softly, "Dean...I better go home. My tongue is wagging at both ends...and you, sir, are beginning to look too damned good to me!"

Having enjoyed a most wonderful weekend, I was beset with the thought of how to bill for my investigative services. I had accumulated a trove of information that might have been impossible

to attain under routine questioning and I certainly didn't wish to reveal the circumstances under which said information was gathered.

Always at my fingertips was my leather-bound folder which held a tablet of lined paper under a top clamp, allowing me to make notes, then move them around as in a timeline order, with names, places dates, time, or high interest events. This was a method of correlating information well learned and most convenient when investigating cargo damage or gear failure as a Marine Surveyor.

I decided to review what information I had accumulated, putting all questionable or suspicious events in order of importance. My first impression of the plane crash which killed Theresa's father and husband sounded as if serious investigating was lacking in great detail and I wanted to pursue it further. I thought I should go to the scene.

I left a message at Fellows and Stewart for Pete to call me. The yard said he now had a direct phone line to the vessel and passed on his number. I called and told Pete to tell Mrs. Morison that I was leaving for Terre Haute, Indiana to do a little snooping and should be back in a couple of days.

I was curious as to why the plane bypassed Cincinnati and Indianapolis, both major communities, and was re-directed to proceed to Hulman Field in Terre Haute. Hulman had recently added a traffic control tower and a long concrete runway, but was not yet considered normal routing. The plane went down only a few minutes after receiving orders over the radio to proceed to Terre Haute.

On landing at Indianapolis, I searched the Meteorologist records for the date of the crash and satisfied my curiosity. Their reports showed that a heavy weather front had covered the surrounding area and that much of the airborne traffic had been rerouted to Terre Haute.

I then went to the Civil Aeronautical Board's offices in Cincinnati to search for the crash report. After answering a long list of questions regarding my interest in the event, I was allowed to look

at the investigator's conclusions.

"Radio reports of lightning strikes were received and confirmed from several planes North and East of Cincinnati. After extensive investigation, it was concluded that lightning was a major factor in the crash of the Lockheed 10 Electra in-route to Terre Haute."

There were several photographs of the crash scene taken from above, showing a large view of the area, along with several shots of the wreckage.



One other factor mentioned was that the fuel must have been dangerously

low, as the plane was at the extreme of its 750-mile flying range.

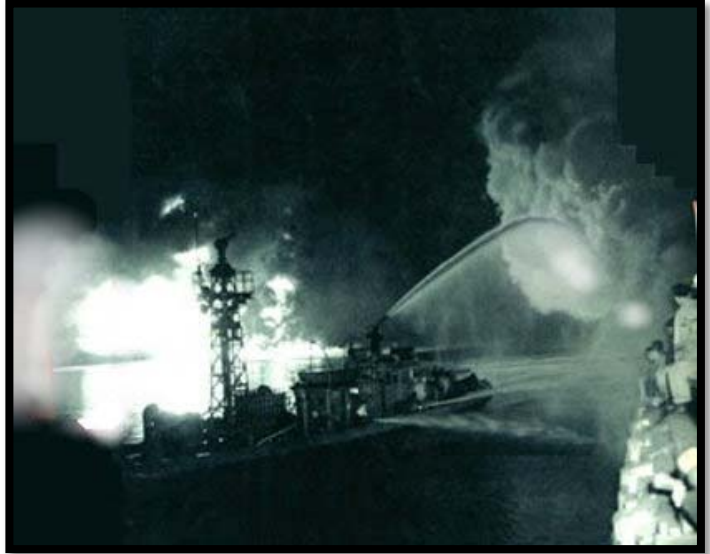
Too many facts dispelled any thought of sabotage. Two suspicious issues now appeared to be resolved...the sinking of *Lady Theresa* and now the plane crash. Time to go home.

After a good night's rest in my own bed and several cups of coffee, I went over my spreadsheet of information and zeroed in on the County Court House fiasco. I thought at the time that it appeared to have been staged as too many things happened coincidentally: "Why was the Channel 5 news crew on the scene with their cameras at the ready? Was there previous knowledge that something was going to happen? And what the hell happened to that glib lawyer, Lewis, that he suddenly drew a blank?" A lot of questions were in need of answers.

I called a friend, Paul Pierson, who had his start as a radio station news reporter covering the Los Angeles Harbor area for KMPC. We worked together and shared information when the **MARKEY**, a Keystone Tanker, exploded in Los Angeles in June 1947. It did multi-millions of dollars damage, with 4 crewmen killed, 12 missing and 24 injured.



**His articles earned him several awards for his insights surrounding the worst disaster the harbor had ever seen. The story hit the headlines with his description of the Los Angeles Fireboat No.2 Ralph J. Scott, braving the fiery waters to put forth a heavy stream of water with its powerful monitor nozzles, the crew risking further explosions as they heroically fought the inferno.**



**I, along with many other Marine Surveyors, was engaged to seek out the cause of the explosion. Our investigations represented a large conglomeration of many different businesses that had suffered catastrophic damages.**



**One of the strangest events to come out of the explosion was of a Southern California import broker that had not completed the inventory of several hundred cases of imported liquor from Great Briton that had recently arrived in his bonded warehouse which was one half to nearly three quarters of a mile from the conflagration.**

**A mass of flaming steel (later determined to be a part of the Markey's deck pump house) tore through the roof of his warehouse. The resulting fires caused a total loss of everything in the building, much of the contents, besides liquor, were of dairy products, jams and jellies, German Beers, gallons of olive oil and special sausages.**

**Much of the inventory was to resupply foreign flagged ships on their voyages.**

Several weeks later, I heard a story so ironic and hard to believe from the Broker himself that I had to share it with Paul Pierson. He grabbed the story, changed a few details so it wouldn't reflect back on the broker and it made the headlines.

The US Customs must collect Duty on any product entering the country. Because of the fire, the insurance was willing to cover the cost (not resale profit) just the cost for his loss. The kicker was that to claim his loss he would have to acknowledge that the products entered the country and pay the duty fees. Imported liquor had the highest duty fees on record. The insurance offered only twenty cents on the dollar. Our broker decided to forgo filing for the insurance settlement and deny any reference to the import. He had to eat many thousands of dollars plus the earnest money sent to the shippers but he still came out better than if he had to pay the high duty fees and accept the low insurance money.

And we think we have it bad.

After waiting on hold for the longest time, my friend Paul came on the line, we tossed the usual pleasantries back and forth and reminisced about our last contact which involved a cargo ship plowing into a yacht marina and damaging several boats. Strong winds were the cause.

He laughed remarking, "I still owe you for contacting me on that one...I got a damned good story out of it."

I described what went on at the County Supervisor's Court....and the surprise appearance of Channel 5 news cameras at the Sherman Developers hearing and gave him the date.

I also asked if he could do a little snooping and find out how they got the heads-up to appear just in time to record a session regarding the Sherman Development Corporation.

A few days later Pierson called with the information I requested. It was the temporary appointed supervisor, a Mister Oliver Bowman, who had made the request...

Paul said requests like that are not uncommon if a politician thinks he can gain a bit of free exposure for bragging rights on his ability to take down the "big money pockets". Although, in this case

**I don't think he planned on getting a royal reaming out by Mrs. Theresa Morrison!**

**Our supervisor in question had evidently hoped to show his power so that he could become the permanent County Supervisor. I sure would've liked to know what he was thinking after he was blindsided by Mrs. Morrison.**

**I thanked my friend and promised him a story if one evolved. I was almost on the edge of accepting Paul's information without question, but my gut feeling wouldn't accept that this Bozo had demonstrated enough intelligence to carry out such a scheme. There had to be something more or someone with a scheming mind involved.**

**I decided to set aside the raucous at the courthouse for the time being and concentrate on the rash of arson fires that had plagued Sherman Development during the last three months. I dug into a thick file of pictures, reports, and insurance claims.**

**Twelve framed structures of Sherman Meadows' sixty-house subdivision had gone up in flames. The County, apparently engulfed in red tape and bureaucracy, had been dragging their feet in completing the main water supply. They had offered one excuse after another and promised to have a tank truck standing by in case of emergencies. The fire erupted...no water...no water truck...a total loss.**

**In a Los Angeles City canyon, just off Mulholland Drive Sherman Development had a site with six expensive estates under development. A hillside fire went out of control and destroyed the houses. Arson was suspected but never proved.**

**I could understand Theresa's concern about the insurance losses, but my problem was, just where in blazes (no pun intended) does one start to investigate? I went to the subdivision sites. The project was cleaned up and the houses appeared to be nearing their completion stage.**

**The canyon fire was just the opposite; charred remains everywhere. Foundations and fireplaces were all that stood out in the wreckages.**

I spent a whole day at the LA City Clerk's office. I stood in one line for twenty minutes and then I was directed to another line. Talking and venting to other people in the line, I found out that people are actually hired to do this task; wait for copies, get names and addresses or to find out what other line to get into.

I was referred to the Los Angeles Fire Department where permits and inspections were processed. The fire department named one fire "High Side Mulholland Fire". A gag order was in place because of on-going investigation. The only information available to the public on what they called "The Subdivision Fire" was sealed, due to litigation. After wasting my whole day, I headed home.

Just as I was getting ready to shower, Matilda...excuse me..."Tillie" called. "I...uh...oh...Gee, I was wondering if a bit of information that I just remembered was worth considering. I...um...would be happy to share it with you over dinner at my place...that is, if you haven't any other plans."

"Hot damn in the morning!" I almost said aloud. I had wondered how to see her again without appearing to be too forward, thinking she may have had some reservations regarding our last meeting. Without hesitation, I blurted, "Just name a time and I'll come carrying gifts."

"This is Thursday, how about early tomorrow evening. You can bring a bottle of that wonderful wine we had at lunch the other evening."

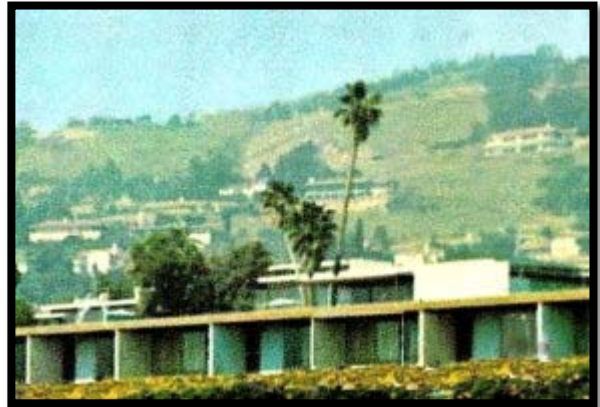
I hesitantly asked, if she could give me a hint about her information, and she replied that it was a complicated and wasn't certain that it had any real merits to consider.

The next day I went over my notes and prepared a detailed summary of everything I had gathered up to this point. I was about to stuff it into an envelope and send to Theresa, but hesitated. I had tried to call Mr. Lewis, the corporate attorney, to see if he had any connections at LA City Hall that could look into the sealed information regarding the fires. His secretary said he was out of town and wouldn't be back until next Monday.

I went through my usual Friday afternoon obligations of

responding to the mail, laundry and cleaners, tidying up my apartment, washing the car and doing a bit of grocery shopping...which today, included two bottles of "Blue Nun" Liebfraumilch Wine. It was a mid-price white that was gaining popularity again and was especially popular with the ladies.

These days my Friday nights usually meant dropping in at Olsen's for a few drinks with my shipping and waterfront business friends and associates, maybe having dinner there or at the Hacienda Motel and Restaurant above Western Avenue on the hill overlooking the harbor. Pretty unexciting night out for a middle-aged 'almost' single guy.



I'm not proud to admit having been burned twice and still paying a healthy price to gain the divorce from the last marriage...therefor, I'm a little gun-shy.

On the other hand, Tillie sparked something in me that I didn't quite understand. Something I'd never felt before. When I thought of her, it wasn't just an urge to get her in bed like others I'd known (and married). I actually like her...I enjoyed talking to her and I had this crazy feeling that I wanted to be her hero. Right then, thinking about her...I got a feeling in the pit of my stomach that almost made me scared. I looked forward to the evening, I didn't want to go too early but yet...what the hell, it was 3:30.

Tillie opened the door on the first rap. I got the feeling she must have heard me drive up, or saw me through the windows of her large Craftsman house. She kissed me on the cheek, grabbed my hand and led me through the living room to the dining area, the table set with sparkling silver and wine glasses.

She invited me to sit while she took the wine to the refrigerator. On her return, I couldn't help noticing her very chic dress which exposed just enough cleavage to turn a man's head. The length ended just below her knees. The well-tailored dress was fit to show

off a most beautiful figure. This Kansas farm girl would put all the so-called starlets to shame...but then I may have been a bit prejudice.

She caught me staring and blushed; I don't know who turned the reddest, her or me. She smiled, "Can I fix you a Martini? My girl friends say I make the best in town." I just smiled and nodded.

"This being Friday, I do hope you like baked salmon. It's a bit early; I was hoping we could talk for a while before I put it in the oven." She talked while she prepared the Martini and when finished poured the drinks into long-stemmed glasses. Then, as she presented my glass she bent over. I don't know if her move was intentional or not. Whatever the intention, it worked for me...I thought I had died and gone to heaven.

The dinner was perfection. The salmon with lemon butter sauce, rice pilaf, cold asparagus spears with a mayonnaise dressing, and hot sourdough rolls...topped off with chocolate mousse for dessert. All that plus the Blue Nun almost made me forget the reason for being there.

My mind was trying to phrase a compliment to fit my feelings but all I could come up with was, "Sweetheart, you can cook for me anytime. That was the best ever." I helped her clear the table, taking the dishes to the sink.

"I don't often get the opportunity to entertain like this. I thoroughly enjoy cooking but unfortunately it's a chore to do it for just one."

Grabbing my hand, she led me back to the living room. "How is your investigation coming along? Theresa said that you've cleared up a few areas that were suspicious."

"Yes, I have cleared up a few areas. I've been trying to make contact with her corporate attorney, Mr. Lewis, without any success. It's like he's trying to avoid me."

"This might be just a coincidence, but Mr. Lewis is the reason I called you. Two weeks ago his secretary asked if I had Dorsey's new phone listing. At first I passed it off as nothing unusual, and then I remembered seeing the two of them joking and holding a quiet and

seemingly friendly conversation while Dorsey was clearing his personal items out of his office. Lewis even patted Dorsey on the back and shook his hand when he left Dorsey's office. I also recalled that they both put on such an angry shouting match when Lewis told him his services were no longer needed at the company that the whole place thought they were going to kill each other. Last night while trying to go to sleep I got to wondering about the inconsistency of their actions and thought maybe you'd be interested."

"Damn...that's certainly something to think about. I wanted to ask Lewis for his assistance to check into a document, temporally withheld from the public, regarding an arson fire. I thought that maybe he could pull a few strings and see why it was withheld. But getting cozy with old Dorsey makes me think I shouldn't trust either one of them until I find out more about them both. You just might have saved me from an embarrassing situation."

"Thanks Sweetheart." I leaned over, gave her a hug and started to give her a peck on the cheek. Immediately, with both hands, she grasped my head and gave me a long and sensuous kiss. At that point, all thoughts of Sherman Corporation, arson, Allen Lewis, insurance fraud, or Theresa Morrison left my mind and I concentrated on the situation at hand.

At home the next day...not wanting to stir up interest on my investigation or involvement concerning the fire...I called my friend Paul Pierson at KMPC. I asked if he might dig into what I thought might be a political cover up regarding the secrecy surrounding the fire and suggested that it might turn into another good story for him.

I tried calling Pete at the boat, there was no answer. For the first time, I called Tillie at her office. We chatted awhile then I heard her other phone ring; she asked if she could call back.

A few seconds later my phone rang. Expecting it to be Tillie, I answered, "Hello Sweetheart," in my best 'Bogart' imitation. To my surprise, a different female voice responded, "why Dean...this is so sudden."

"Is that you Mrs. Morrison?" I fumbled with the phone and almost dropped it. "I uh...I was just trying to reach you to inquire

if you or the business had any close friends in the political arena. It seems that an investigation into your fires shows they might be arson, not accidents, and that a suspect is being sought. However, a gag order has been placed by the County Supervisor and I can't get any further information. If I might suggest...please do not discuss this with Mr. Lewis or any other director until I find out more. Oh yeah...I'm sorry for my stupid response to your phone call. I don't know what got into me."

"Tillie and I have few secrets. Don't worry; I think it's great for the two of you." She then added, "My father had many friends in the political arena. Maybe my personal attorney, Mr. Bertrand, can reach out to someone. I'll have him call you. Oh, by the way, I went aboard *Theresa* the other day. She's coming along beautifully. They're getting down to the final details. Pete is happy with the improvements and upgrades; so much so that he's making everyone wear slippers or shoe coverings when they come aboard."

Before saying goodbye, Mrs., Morrison told me that a few friends were being invited to *Lady Theresa's* launch party in a week or two, and that Tillie and I were expected to be there.

A couple of days later I received a call from the Marine Surveyor's office. We had made it a habit to make contact every couple of days to see if there were any messages or anything of importance going on. Our receptionist mentioned a message left by a Mr. Bertrand with a number I could call at any time. She thought that it sounded important.

I called the number our receptionist gave me. An operator asked for my name, a short recap of the purpose of the call, and my phone number, then told me they would get back to me. Less than five minutes later the phone rang with Mr. Bertrand on the other end. He began describing the secretive circumstances of the arson investigation.

According to his investigators a suspect was in custody and was being held as a person abetting or acting as a co-conspirator in an unlawful act. Mr. Bertrand thought it to be very ambiguous terminology. His source had the name of the suspect but was unsure



of the spelling. However, he was thought to be an employee of the Sherman Development Corporation. What puzzled him was the appearance of an attorney, a partner of a very influential and expensive law firm, representing the suspect. Also, why was it a newly appointed County Supervisor who put a gag order on the investigation?

"It's all very interesting and certainly deserves more investigation," Bertrand muttered, "I'll get back to you later."

The next day around noontime Tillie called saying she had just gotten off the phone with Mr. Bertrand. He was asking if she knew of a Dan Sicorovich or someone with a similar Slavic last name that might be employed by the Sherman Company. "I told him I didn't recall the name but I would check the payroll lists and get back to him as soon as I found something."

After scrutinizing several pages and lists of employees, she said she came across the name of Daniel Svicarovich, a long-time company security guard, whose primary function was to guard against off-hour intruders at the main offices or, on occasion, at high sensitive locations. Tillie further offered that Sherman Corp had a contract with a large security firm to provide around-the-clock guards and fire-watchers at development locations.

"I knew you were searching for the name of the guy in jail and thought this name might tie into that. I'll call Mr. Bertrand now and inform him of what I found. Things are getting very busy right now; I'll call later, Love."

With this new information, my mind started spinning with all sorts of scenarios. Svicarovich had nothing to gain by setting the fires, unless it could've been as a revenge factor. Maybe he was passed over for a promotion on the job. Could it be he did on orders from some Union organizing faction or was paid by someone at odds with Sherman Development? Could the fires have been set as a distraction to a much larger criminal activity? Did he act alone? Who does he share duties with? Did he need or have help? How were the fires set? The phone broke my concentration.

"Hello this is Bertrand; I have some news, both good and bad,

which may help with your investigation. The culprit being held is a Daniel Svicarovich. The arson experts from both the Fire and police Departments are reviewing a large inventory of evidence gathered at several arson events. The high-figured attorney representing Svicarovich is using every ploy at his command to quash the city's investigation, plus demanding that he be released. I've talked with experts involved and they feel confident in their efforts."

"Does the city have any thoughts of others being involved? Can they tie him to both fires? Does this 'high-falutin' attorney have any ties with people that we know? I'm sorry...I'm getting carried away. I certainly appreciate the information; at least we're making headway. Thanks again for your help Mr. Bertrand."

Not just wanting to sit around while drawing a pay check, I thought I would revisit the High Mullholland fire scene. The last time I was there nothing had been touched. It was if the investigators wanted to preserve the crime scene. I was wondering if it was still so.

I filled my briefcase with a fresh notebook, camera with several rolls of film and a glossary of information on the fire as reported in the Harold Express newspaper, then headed for Mulholland Drive. I forgot that parking was almost nonexistent because of the narrow streets and that many of the locals parked on the road in front of their houses, so I was forced to park several hundred feet down the winding road.

While trekking up the road I snapped pictures of the approach to the still undisturbed fire area. A chain link fence had been erected at the entrance to the property, but crudely pulled aside...no doubt by would-be looters or lookie-loos. I entered, walked towards the first set of concrete foundations and was studying the layout when a big burly uniformed man came out of nowhere, challenging me as to who I was and what I was doing there.

I was taken by surprise and not wanting to divulge my true reason for being on the scene before I knew who this guy represented, I hemmed and hawed trying to think of a quick response to his challenge. Unfortunately, I couldn't come up with one.

**"You're trespassing on private property," he shouted, reaching for my briefcase. I jerked it out of his clutch and we began to struggle. I always considered myself a lover...not a fighter...and this bozo proved me right. The next thing I recall he had me in a hold with my arm behind me and had my hand twisted in a way that any effort on my part created a great deal of pain. As discretion is the better part of valor, I submitted to his powerful grasp...that is, until I saw what I thought was my golden opportunity. He stepped forward and I lifted my foot and ground my heel down on his instep. He let out a loud grunt and the next thing I knew, a fist the size of a cannon ball came crashing into my right temple. The last thing I remembered was hearing him radioing in requesting backup...but why he thought he needed backup was beyond me.**

**When I woke up, I found myself in an approximately 8 x 8 windowless room...where I was held incommunicado for what I found out later was almost three days. During those three days, I underwent extreme questioning...almost to the verge of torture...by a couple of gorillas in plain clothes who claimed they were with the sheriff's office. Water and bathroom privileges were granted only after begging and food was almost unrecognizable as such...whenever they thought I deserved it. All I needed is for some SOB to come in with a rubber hose persuader. When they allowed me to sleep I curled up in a corner and tried to ignore the bright light that was on the whole time I was there.**

**Their repetitive questions were, "Which one of you is responsible for setting the fires?" "Who do you represent?" "Who's paying you?" "Why?"**

**I learned later that my saving grace was an irate resident who called the LA Police Department to move or tow away my car.**

**When LA's Traffic Police checked out my car's contents they found the title in the holder attached to the steering wheel, and a Sherman Development Company business card clipped to a page inside my work folder with Matilda's work telephone number on it. When they couldn't reach me at home or work they called Tillie and that started the ball rolling. First to Tillie then to Theresa then Mr.**

**Bernard then to Lincoln Heights, the LA City's lockup, where criminal suspects were usually held until officially charged. The Turnkey commander had never heard of my name and suggested they try the County Court House**

**All this confusion existed from some archaic rule of cooperation between the LA City Fire Department and the LA County Fire Department: that the first responder should be the Station closest to the event.**

**Unfortunately for me, the lower echelons of both the city Police and county Sheriff's Departments were equally confused as to why a constant surveillance was ordered for such a lengthy investigation in a case of arson. The county won and it was just my luck that the bruiser they had guarding the place had a misplaced idea of just how important his job was. Add to the confusion, the Sheriff's department had hauled me out to some holding area in the North County.**

**Mr. Bertrand, Theresa and Tillie all drove out to the Thousand Oaks area to rescue me. It was a damned good thing I had powerful friends on my side or I might still be held captive out in 'Siberia'.**

**It wasn't just the fact that I hadn't brushed my teeth in a couple of days that left me with a bad taste in my mouth...it was this whole investigation. I no longer felt I was just an investigator on a job as I had during a survey. With this blasted mess, I had no legal authority to ask questions or do anything. I was getting a sinking feeling that some damned powerful people were pulling strings in a situation that was far beyond my job description and way over my head. I was even beginning to consider myself a victim...with bad treatment, bruises, and memories to prove it.**

**The Deputy tried to get me to shave and shower before my rescue party arrived but I refused. I wanted Mr. Bertrand and the others to witness the way I looked after three days of beard growth, filthy clothes and an attitude to go along with it.**

**Mr. Bertrand took care of the red tape involved in springing me from that dungeon while Theresa stood back, seething, doing her best to control her temper. Tillie kept patting my shoulder and**

whispering little encouraging sounds.

As we walked out to Theresa's car I could tell the three of them were silently debating just who would sit next to me on the ride back. Tillie finally bit the bullet, opened the back door, ushered me in, and then climbed in beside me.

On the drive back to the Sherman building Tillie asked to stop at a men's clothing shop. She went in and after 20 minutes or so came out carrying a large bundle under one arm and hangers with clothes over her shoulder.

After parking the car in the basement garage, Theresa and Mr. Bertrand headed for Theresa's office and Tillie escorted me to the men's employee locker room where she piled the packages in my arms, pointed at the door and said, "Go!!"

I stood under a hot shower for about 15 minutes, shaved, and was beginning to feel like my old self again...except for a few aches and pains. The amazing thing was that all the clothes fit like they had been tailored just for me. The gal has a good eye.

Mr. Bertrand offered to take us to lunch at his club so we could discuss the events of the last several days and give him a chance to catch us up to date on what had come to light regarding his inquiries.

"It seems," he said, "that Oliver Bowman, the man who was appointed temporary County Supervisor and had been taken to task by our very own Virago, Theresa, has taken an unusual interest in anything the Sherman Development Corporation is involved in. We have yet to discover just what his motives are, but the rest of the County Commissioners are very embarrassed by all the notoriety being printed in the newspapers...especially by a reporter who seems to have a good deal of inside information."

I asked Mr. Bertrand if by chance the reporter's name was Pierson and he indicated that the name was familiar.

"He's one of the good guys. I've worked with him on several major events," I said.

As an after-thought, I suggested that we call him to join us if he was available. I tried the newspaper first, but was told he was on assignment. When I dialed his home number I let it ring for the

longest time, but got no answer.

After lunch Mr. Bertrand suggested we go to back to Theresa's office and record all the events of the past week into her new "magnetic reel to reel tape recorder". He said it was something new they were trying out that might prove a boon to record keeping. He figured that, along with the chronological list his investigators had compiled, we might find a pattern to work from. The advantage of the recorder was that it could be edited, passages could be transferred, inserted, deleted and or modified by splicing; thus creating a timeline. What will they think of next?

It became obvious that Mr. Bertrand was becoming totally immersed in this investigation. I really wasn't too surprised when he recommended that I step back from being actively involved. He explained that these later events showed a need of a more professional investigative team that had experience in undercover procedures and whose faces weren't so recognizable to the local law enforcement's office. He added, "You've done one hell of a job gathering as much information as you have, plus you've eliminated many suspicious side issues. Unfortunately, it's starting to look like a lot of important people are involved and you don't have the resources to investigate with the finesse needed."

I turned to Theresa and half-jokingly asked, "Is Mr. Bertrand trying to get rid of me? Have I just been fired?"

"Heavens no!" she said, smiling, "Anything he's doing is for your own good. You and Tillie were cast from the same mold; I consider Tillie and you family. We have a yacht party to tend to next week. Can I count on the two of you to assist Pete with the formalities?"

After a pause she added, "Pete found a slip in Balboa at a yacht club that has just completed adding new slips for larger yachts. He says *Theresa* stands out in all her glory...a real show stopper. He's so proud of the restoration and updates. Also, there may be a problem with parking. The Club recommends that we have our guests park across the bridge and the club will provide a water taxi to and from our slip."

It was now nearing four o'clock and it had been a full day for me. I was tired and needed to get home and relax. I remembered that, unfortunately, I had no car; it was sitting in some sheriff impound lot. I told Theresa I needed transportation and asked if it would be OK for Tillie to give me a lift home. I asked before clearing it first with Tillie but she gave me a nod and a little wink.

“Go on, the both of you take the weekend off and have a good time.”

On the way home Tillie wanted to stop at her place and pick up a few things...no doubt remembering the informal bachelor pad I resided in. I stayed in the car while she went in. About 20 minutes later she came out with packages and a suitcase, deposited them in the trunk, then went back in and returned with grocery sacks loaded with everything but the kitchen sink.

I teased her, “Are you planning to move in?” She just smiled.

Western Avenue and Figueroa Street are the two main thoroughfares from Los Angeles to the Harbor area and on Friday afternoons they become the heaviest traveled routes in Southern California. It took two hours and we were worn to a frazzle by the time we reached my place. This had to be the most testing time in our relationship. She is, without a doubt, the most courteous driver of all time. She would give way and allow others to barge in our lane without them even signaling. I was so embarrassed after giving one driver a good cursing out that I couldn't even look at her. She saw me at my worst. I hope the planned freeway gets completed in my lifetime.

My bungalow was originally the guest house of an estate built near the end of the roaring 20's. It wasn't legally rental permitted but if local administrators enforced the code, half of Palos Verdes would be vacant properties. Even after living in the house close to five years I had never given a thought to redecorating, as all the rooms were functional. I never felt the need to entertain in my retreat when so many fine restaurants were nearby. The place was never messy except for my desk in the corner of the bedroom.

Tillie drove up the driveway, marveling at the spectacular



harbor view below; early evening in all its glory. After we unloaded her car she begged for a few moments to change clothes. I went to check the pile up of mail. It was the

usual stack of bills, a subpoena to appear for a deposition in two weeks and a note from Paul Pierson saying that he had been trying to reach me on the phone but got no answer.

I dumped the mail and dialed Paul. When he heard my voice, he let out a big sigh of relief. “Thank God! Where the hell have you been? I’ve gotta see you as soon as possible. I’m onto some hot info you might find interesting and I’m not sure just what to do with it. It sure seems it’s put me in the crosshairs...’cause the other side knows I’ve got it.”

I sighed...there went my quiet evening with Tillie. “Why not come on over to my place and we’ll discuss things.”

“Thanks, Dean, I’m on my way. If all goes well I’ll see ya in a half hour.”

I called out to Tillie, “Paul’s on his way over. You might want to put any plans you had for this evening on hold for a while...he seemed a little stressed.”

I heard her in the other room mumbling, “Damn, Damn, Damn, just when I thought we’d have a quiet relaxing evening.”

She came out of the bedroom wearing a soft, quilted lounging outfit of pale lavender; her long black hair was tied with a purple bow and draped over her shoulder. I sat back admiring her, “How in hell did you last so long without getting hooked up with some guy?”

She just smiled. “I brought three small lamb chops and planned to bake two potatoes. I guess we can share the three chops and extend the potatoes by stuffing the four halves with a little cheese and green onions. I only brought one bottle of wine; I guess that’ll have to do



unless you've got some hidden around here some place."

I had a little time to kill so called Captain Jorgensen, the owner of the Marine Survey Company, to fill me in on the unexpected deposition. "I tried all week to get hold of you," he said, "Jeff (a fellow Surveyor) was killed in a traffic accident last Monday. I need your expertise in this case as it could be a huge insurance payout. Can I count on you coming in tomorrow morning to pick up the file? Hey, better yet, I'll drop it by your place tonight, OK?"

"Yeah, sure," was all I could think of to say to him before hanging up and turning towards the kitchen to shout, "Hey Till, put on another chop and 'tater...we have more company coming."

"Maybe I should change back to my street clothes and just send out for 'Chinese'."

"Hell no, you're beautiful just the way you are and if they want to eat, they can eat what we've got."

"Do you have anything other than Dinty Moore Stew in your cupboards?" she asked...only half joking.

"I eat out a lot." I replied.

The doorbell chimed. On opening the door, Paul rushed in, pushing me aside and shoved the door closed behind him, saying, "I think I made it here without a tail."

The doorbell chimed again. Paul ducked behind the door as I pulled it open. "Captain! Welcome, come on in."

I pulled Paul forward, "You remember my boss, Captain Jorgensen, from the Markey explosion investigation? Come and say hello. You too Tillie; put dinner on hold and join the party. Can I fix us a drink? I know I could sure use one."

I brought out the Black Label and splashed a little in four glasses. Then, offering a toast to the memory of my good friend, Jeff, I swallowed mine and poured another.

Downing his shot, the Captain announced, "I must get on my way; my wife expects to go to the club for dinner and I'm already late." He then added as he headed for the door, "Here are Jeff's files. Dean, I hope you can de-cypher all his little side notes, they about drove me nuts."

After the captain left I took a good look at Paul. “God, you look ragged and stressed out. I know you said you had something important to tell me, but why don’t you go in and take a hot shower.”

I sniffed...I think I’d better lay out a change of clothes for you too...then we’ll have dinner, a glass of wine, relax and we’ll all be in a better mood to hear your news.”

“I really need that. Thanks Dean. You got me into this damned mess and, believe it or not, it’s getting more and more interesting and I’m enjoying the hell out of it.”

He turned towards Tillie, “If you don’t mind, please introduce me to your lovely lady friend.”

“Matilda Mathews, meet Paul Pearson. Tillie, Paul’s a highly-regarded news reporter, who just happens to be working on our case. He was the one I tried to get to come to our luncheon with Mr. Bertrand.”

“Paul...pleased to meet you; call me Tillie. Dean has mentioned you many times. Why don’t you go shower and I’ll have dinner ready by the time you come out.”

I sipped my drink and continued going through the mail, which was mostly nothing but bills, magazines and political letters asking for donations. I glanced over Jeff’s file, found nothing unusual, so let it be for the time being.

Tillie set the table, somehow finding tablecloths, napkins and wine glasses I never knew I had...the whole shebang. If this was any indication of Tillie being a good homemaker, I’d buy into it in a flash.

“Supper’s ready, come and get it,” she announced.



Paul came out wearing my favorite red short sleeved, ‘Palaka’, a true Hawaiian shirt. When I bought it, I was told the red check was now a symbol for being a Caucasian and an employed Island resident,

not a tourist. The material was originally worn by native Hawaiian workers before the blue and grey check, long-sleeved shirts became the uniform worn only by the true Hawaiians. Now, of course, the tourists had discovered them and everybody was wearing 'em.

Paul, after shaving and combing his hair, looked like a different person than we had seen 45 minutes previously. He even had a smile, saying "Something sure smells good, I'm starving."

During dinner, we tried to discuss mundane topics but I could tell Paul was getting antsy and anxious to spill whatever he had discovered.

When I saw him put the last bite of chop into his mouth, I shoved my chair back and stood, "OK, enough of this...Paul, let's move into the living room. Tillie, you too; let the table go and I'll help you later"

As we settled down, I turned to Paul, "You indicated that you uncovered some sort of suspicious activities by highly placed people. Care to share that information with us?"

Paul smiled, "I thought you'd never ask. The last time we talked I mentioned that the courtroom blowup and the pre-arranged filmed episode seemed to be only a hot-shot politician, namely the temporary county supervisor, Oliver Bowman, trying to look good to his constituency, the 'common folk', by exposing and tearing down big money enterprises...in this case, a bunch of garbage about the Sherman Company. Someone in Bowman's group questioned me after they had read the article I wrote for the paper as to where I got my information and who tipped me off. They were quite nasty and threatening and implied I was using my reporting to besmirch a noble citizen doing his elected job."

Paul paused long enough to take another hardy swig of wine and stretch back on the sofa. Suddenly he sat erect and looking at Tillie, said, "What are you doing pretty lady? Are you taking notes?"

Before she could respond I interrupted, "Paul! Take it easy. Tillie has been the private secretary for Sherman Development since its beginning on the West Coast. There is nothing secret with her."

"I'm sorry...I guess I'm getting a little paranoid. In my line of

work seeing someone putting things on paper kills my inclination to be open, especially when divulging sensitive material.”

Paul smiled at Tillie and continued, “Being confronted with an accusation like that got my dander up and lit the fuse of my insatiable curiosity. I totally immersed myself in finding out why someone would go to the trouble of hunting me down and questioning my reason for a simple observation in an innocuous article. My God, any other politician I’ve ever heard of has been so damned thick-skinned you could accuse him of murder and mayhem and it wouldn’t faze him as long as he thought he could get your vote or his name in the paper.

“I was curious as to who was around backing up Bowman so my friends at the television station loaned me copies of the courtroom films. I sat and watched them for a whole evening, every once in a while, taking screen shots with my film camera. I was trying to identify active persons in the audience. I came up with a list of City and County officials and their political affiliations. Most identified as Democrats or Republicans and some had familiar faces that I just couldn’t put my finger on. The next morning I returned the films to my friends and dropped off three 32-exposure rolls to our photo lab. On the way to my desk my Managing Editor called me into his office, closed the door and introduced me to two ‘gentlemen’...and I use the term loosely.

“They stood up and took out their wallets showed me a badge and ID card, indicating some kind US government agency. My editor got up and left, as though it was prearranged.

“The elder gent asked if I was aware of the House on Un-American Activities Committee or HUAC. I told him, ‘only what I read in the papers.’ He then asked why I was interested in the affairs at the court house that day and I replied that I was just checking out why cameras and so many spectators were on the scene of a minor legal event that turned into a major uproar.

“The younger G-man rudely butted in, ‘Did someone tell or order you to look into it? Just what made you so interested in that particular day at the court house?’

**“My answer didn’t please him at all. First, I said that maybe, if he’d be more polite and tell me just why HUAC was interested in me and my activities, that I might feel more inclined to talk to him.**

**“Evidently this clown was having a bad day and wasn’t used to anyone talking back to him. He put his hands on the arms of my chair, leaned right in my face and shouted that HE was asking the questions here and I was doing the explaining. I just smiled and told him that the information he wanted was private and that I never revealed any of my sources.**

**At that, he got all red in the face. “Are you refusing to cooperate?” he shouted. I shoved my chair back and started to get up, ‘You got it, Buster! I’m outta here.’ That’s when the proverbial shit, pardon my French Tillie, hit the fan and they took me to the Federal building downtown for three days and put me through the wringer. They kept repeating questions, did I know this or that guy, and showing me pictures and names. The only name that I recognized was Svicarovich, the night watchman at Sherman’s. What...is he a Russian spy or something?”**

**Tillie broke in, “Didn’t they question you about him also, Dean?”**

**“I can’t believe we both went through almost the same nightmare by two different agencies. Something’s not making sense.” I broke out the Black Label, splashed the three glasses and turned the radio to a soft music station to see if I could set a more relaxed mood. I was getting tired but wanted to hear more of Paul’s experiences. I asked Tillie if she minded if Paul spent the night on the sofa. All I got was a deep sigh. She didn’t answer...just took a deep breath and rolled her eyes.**

**“They let you go, Paul...why are you so hyper now?”**

**“Maybe it was just those three days of questions, but after they let me go I got the feeling that someone was following me or watching me. You should see what they did to my apartment. I feel pretty safe and comfortable now...probably because I’ve got a full belly and a couple of drinks in me. Maybe I should go on home; it’s getting late.”**

**“There’s no reason for you to leave, I’ve slept many nights on**

the couch...it's really very comfortable. I want to hash things over with you; but only if they can wait 'til morning. These last three days with hardly any sleep are really taking a toll on me. I can't seem to think straight."

I left the room to get sheets and blankets. I met Tillie in the bedroom where she questioned if I thought his being here was safe for us. I had trouble finding a response that would satisfy her comfort so, returning to the living room, I made Paul an offer.

"If it would make you more comfortable, I have some pull with the Hacienda Resort which is only a few blocks down the street. They have comfortable rooms and serve a delicious breakfast in the morning. Also, I'm sure Sherman will pick up the tab. It's your choice...here or there?"

Paul stretched and yawned, "I think I'll take you up on your offer. The Hacienda sounds great...I haven't had a good night's rest in days either."

I slapped him on the back, "Call us in the morning and we'll come over and have breakfast with you; I'm kinda low on groceries here."

I called the Hacienda and made the arrangements, including reservations for a ten o'clock brunch.

Paul thanked me, grabbed his things, made a cursory check of the outside surroundings, and left.

While I was straightening up Tillie emerged from the bedroom dressed in a beautiful sheer gown. I couldn't resist and grabbed her in a lengthy caress.

"See what you almost missed out on?" she purred. This is the reason I was upset with Paul staying. I've been planning this evening all week."

For some reason I wasn't sleepy anymore.

The next morning the phone started ringing early. First the Captain inquiring if I had a chance to go over Jeff's files. Next Theresa called, asking if I heard from Mr. Bertrand. I turned the phone over to Tillie; they talked, forever. Then, of all people, Pete called wondering when we were coming down to the boat to help out.

Finally Paul called, letting me know my phone was busy all morning. When I asked him how his night went, he laughed and said that after a couple more drinks at the bar he felt no pain or apprehension and slept like a baby. He added that the room was great. I told him we would see him in the dining room at ten; the reservation was in my name.

They say, "Clothes make the man". That goes for women also...but Tillie does it one better. The way she carries herself makes people take notice...and to think I'm with this lovely woman.

We wound our way to Paul's table. He was still wearing my red-check Palaka shirt and had a tall Bloody Mary sitting in front of him.

He stood and grinned at Tillie, "And Good Morning to you pretty lady." He pulled out a chair for her then turned and shook my hand.

After we sat, a hovering waiter took Tillie's order for a Mimosa and mine for a Bloody Mary. The brunch involved a trip to the preparation tables, placing your order, and then returning to your table; a server brought your selections.

"I remember this place when the Markey exploded," Paul said as he took a sip of his drink, "My radio station had one of the suites. When we weren't working we partied. Ah, what memories!"

Tillie shook her head, "You guys are as bad as a bunch of drunken sailors on shore leave. And I should know...I married one. You guys will party at the drop of a hat."

I had to defend our side. "When people are on assignment, away from home, working their butts off in less than desirable conditions...well, when they do get a chance to unwind they tend to get together with a few beers or drinks and rehash the day's events...just what Paul and I are doing now. I call it therapeutic."

The waiter or someone stopping by the table to say "Hello" seemed to interrupt every time we started to talk over our situation so we didn't really get a chance to discuss HUAC, government men, or our days in captivity.

"I saw some beers in fridge...why don't we go to the house and I'll go and do a little grocery shopping." Tillie pushed back her

empty plate. “You guys can relax with a beer and get your... ‘therapy,’” she added sarcastically.

I saw a side of Tillie I hadn’t seen before...but, giving it a little thought, I guess I deserved her rebuke.

After we returned to my place, Tillie checked the cupboards and refrigerator, and then left, indicating she’d be gone a couple of hours. As Tillie went out the door she asked if there was anything special we’d like for dinner.

“Nothing fancy,” I suggested, “maybe sandwich makings or fried chicken and roasted potatoes from Slavko’s,” a popular take-out delicatessen down on Pacific.

We were on our second beer when I asked Paul to continue where he’d left off the night before.

“When they finally turned me loose, I took a taxi back to the station to pick up my car,” he said. “Our Managing Editor was in the garage when I came in. He looked me up and down then suggested that I leave the bottle alone. I told him to kiss my ass. ‘Hell,’ I said, ‘I just spent three days in the lock-up doing your damned business and this is the thanks you give me?’”

“He got all defensive then, ‘Hey, don’t jump on me. I didn’t have any idea that you were on assignment...let alone in jail. All I knew was that some US Agents were trying to talk to you. What’s this all about?’”

“I asked him if he remembered my article on the courthouse blowup and the follow-up story where I mentioned the possibility of a much greater picture with many prominent figure heads involved. ‘Well it’s coming to fruition,’ I said, ‘the Feds are interested and the other side has let it be known that whoever is spreading dangerous accusations, will be silenced.’”

“He got all concerned then and asked why I hadn’t confided in him, and that he hadn’t been aware of any problems or he would have stepped in to help.

“I explained that I didn’t want the station to be a target in case it all backfired. I still have a few prominent names to investigate and am beginning to get a bad feeling of something serious on a much



higher level. I have most of the information in an envelope down in the archives under the name of MARKEY, just in case...you know.

“My editor said he’d put me on special assignment, that I was to report only to him, and that he’d order accounting to cover my expenses. He also assured me that he and the station had my back.

“I got in my car and started to insert the ignition key when I saw a note taped to the dash, ‘Beware...Be careful...Stay alive’ it said in big bold letters. It was evident someone was trying to stop my investigation. I felt like I was in a damned spy movie.

“I drove home and found my apartment in a mess. Someone ransacked the place...drawers pulled out, papers all over the floor...they even ripped up the cushions on my sofa and favorite chair. Damn, I loved that chair! I was looking around to see if anything of value was missing when the phone rang. It was sure a relief to hear your voice and not someone out to get me. So now you’re up to date, except for the names I’ve come across. That’s the reason I questioned your lady friend about taking notes. I had no idea that she was in the Sherman hierarchy.”

“What about these names, you mentioned, are they involved in some kind of criminal activity?”

“I’d call it a conspiracy of some sort. More like a group of people trying to influence the public and make ‘em think that our most prominent citizens are actually profiting on the charitable donations they make. This came to light, when they said that the money donated by the Sherman Development group, \$100,000 to a Civic Light Opera production and a similar amount to a local theater house, to put on charity affairs, was nothing but a ruse to fool the people. They claimed that the \$200,000 the company used as a tax write-off was really payola to gain political support for Sherman’s housing developments. It’s funny, the IRS saw nothing wrong with the charitable donation, but these jerks were intent on spreading the rumor anyway. That was the real bases for that episode in the court house.”

“I’m not questioning your theory but, is there anything you can point to that can convince anyone to support your thought?”

**“I came across a call list of some thirty names; I’ve mentioned a few in my article. I think that’s why someone is out to silence me. You’d be surprised at the names on the list; entertainment heads, labor leaders and politicians of every stripe. When I saw it I couldn’t believe it. Either the Government wants to suppress it being made public, or the list is part of their investigation. There has to be some explanation for them hauling me in for three days.”**

**“So, where do you go with your investigation now?”**

**I heard a horn honking outside and went to the door. There was Tillie, standing by her car with a bag full of groceries. “Can someone come out and help carry in these bags? Make it snappy if you want to eat tonight!”**

**I could tell, she wasn’t quite over her little snit from earlier. While carrying in a couple of bags I mentioned that Paul had some amazing news, “He’s uncovered information about why the two of us were picked up by the law. Since he now knows you’re active in the Sherman family business, he hopes that through you, he might talk to someone from their side...the sooner the better.”**

**Tillie said, “Let me think on it a bit.”**

**All the groceries were put away and the fridge was restocked. Tillie opened a bottle of Ginger Ale, sat on the sofa, put her legs up on the coffee table then, looking at Paul asked, “Do you have enough information that’s important enough to pass on to our attorney? I’d hate to have him come all the way down here if it could be handled with a phone call. If so, give me a short synopsis that will perk his interest and I’ll call him on his private line.”**

**“A group of politicians have accused Sherman Development of raping the public by profiting on donations to charitable organizations.”**

**Tillie, with pencil and paper at hand, copied Paul’s statement in shorthand and dialed a number on the phone. She waited for an answer; there was a click and then a tone. Tillie read Paul’s message into the phone then added my telephone number at the end of the message and hung up. “Mr. Bertrand has a new phone message recorder. He calls it his private secretary.”**

**Tillie called Theresa and passed on the message she recorded to Mr. Bertrand. To her surprise, Teresa said that Bertrand was with her at the Villa Riviera in Long Beach going over her insurance presentations for Monday morning. When the attorney heard of the accusations, he dropped everything and asked where Pierson was. Tillie gave him my address. He said he and Theresa would be over within the hour and hung up.**

**Paul and I, knowing we had a little time, turned on the TV and were just starting to watch Cliffie Stone's Hometown Jamboree when Tillie came in and announced, "All right you guys get off your butts and get this place presentable. Where's the vacuum? I'll do the bathroom and bedroom. Paul, here's a rag, you dust everything. Dean, you take out the trash and sweep off the porch...and it wouldn't hurt to sweep the gravel from the step-stones. Open up the windows, the cigarette smoke makes the place smell like a cheap barroom.**

**"Yes Sir," was all I could think to say. This was another side of her I hadn't seen. But...what the hell...you had to give it to her, she was right, we're slob. As an afterthought, I think I sensed a hint of the VIRAGO trait in her.**

**Even Paul made a comment, "I guess a guy always needs the woman's touch around the house."**

**About 20 minutes later I saw headlights coming up the drive and went outside to welcome our guests. "Hi there! It didn't take you long to get over here."**

**Mr. Bertrand replied, "I'm most anxious to hear all the details. I want to meet this reporter you've talked so much about." I went to help Theresa maneuver over the stepping stones.**

**Tillie and Paul were waiting on the porch to welcome them in. Once inside we all found a seat and, remembering Theresa's fully stocked credenza, I had set up an array of glasses and a container of ice. I asked if anyone wished a drink; the ladies had wine, the attorney and I had Black Label and ice and Paul asked for a beer.**

**While I served the refreshments, Tillie introduced Paul to our guests, including a brief history of his achievements.**

Bertrand wasted no time, “Mr. Pierson, why don’t you start from the beginning; I’d like to hear every bit of detail. Tillie, would you please take notes...if that meets with your approval, Mr. Pierson?”

“Not a problem...and please call me Paul.”

I’ve always considered Paul to be one of the best story tellers ever. I guess it’s because of his penchant for digging deep into his public acclaimed investigations. He held everyone captive for almost two hours. There were only a few interruptions during his commentary; a question or two and one time when Paul mentioned the donations for profit charges. I thought Theresa was going to have a hissy fit. Mr. Bertrand turned to me and asked if I had any additional information on my experience. I just shook my head, no.

Tillie spoke up and apologized for not fixing dinner. “Since it’s so late, why don’t we go out someplace to eat? Dean, do you have any suggestions?”

“They’re partying now at the Hacienda, and Olsen’s dining room is about to close.”

Paul interrupted, “If you like Italian food, Trani’s Majestic is the very best.”



“Why don’t we give it a try,” Theresa offered. “We can all fit in my car.”

As we stepped down into the lower level of the restaurant under a ceiling of hanging wine bottles, the odor of onions, garlic, oregano and pesto coming from the kitchen smacked us in the face. Paul went over to Phil, son of the

owner, and asked if we could still order his fine Cioppino ‘Family style’. Phil spread his arms, hunched his right shoulder, looked around and nodded his head. Italians often speak mostly with hands,

facial or body languages. Paul then suggested a platter of focaccia, and meatballs with spaghetti.

Phil saw his head waiter walk up, mumbled a few words to him in Italian, and then announced that Cosmo would be taking care of us that night. Cosmo, dressed in a long sleeved white shirt with a black bowtie, short open vest, and a white apron, led us to a table that was set up with six cushioned Captain's chairs and a typical red-checked tablecloth which almost matched my Hawaiian Palaka shirt. After seating the ladies, he withdrew the sixth chair. A short time later he returned with a cart; its top loaded with the spaghetti, meatballs, large flat focaccia bread, two cruets containing olive oil and balsamic vinegar and a dish of minced garlic. On the table, in the space of the sixth chair, he proceeded to lay out five saucers. In each he put a splash of oil, balsamic and garlic.

Paul, always the entertainer, couldn't resist the opportunity to demonstrate the traditional way to partake of the bread. He tore off a piece of the seasoned flat bread, dipped it in the olive oil garlic mix and stuffed it in his mouth...much to the delight of all; even the stoic Mr. Bertrand's reserved persona melted.

As we finished off our spaghetti, Cosmo returned with another cart loaded with a large tureen of Trani's special recipe for Cioppino. Since Paul had asked for the dinner 'family style', it meant that the waiter would serve each portion in a pasta dish, similar to a flat soup bowl. Cosmo ladled out the semi-light tomato broth, fragrant with garlic and onions. Then, with tongs, selected crab legs, lobster, clams, shrimp, scallops, choice pieces of fish, mussels and whatever else might be available from the fish market.

Paul remarked, "Cioppino is a traditional Mediterranean dish of the fisherman families. Seafood left over from a previous meal, or catch that didn't sell at the market was taken home, put in a pot and...Voila! Fish stew! Paul asked Cosmo if the ladies could have finger bowls and bibs. Paul then proceeded to show them how to dig in and really enjoy the 'stew'. He reached in his bowl with his fingers, picked up a tidbit and proceeded to suck the crabmeat from the leg. He grabbed a clam and dug out the meat with a tiny fork.

Next came the focaccia; he tore off a chunk and dipped it into the light Cioppino marinara sauce, then placed the dripping treat in his mouth and smacked his lips. He grinned, "I was told once, by a Cioppino contest winner that he could tell if a man was really enjoying his Cioppino by the amount of sauce that was dripping from his fingers down to his elbows!" By that time everyone was digging in and enjoying every morsel.

I commented to Paul that I had no idea he was so familiar with Italian cuisine, let alone knowing of Trani's

"I was stationed in Naples, doing investigative work on the Isle of Ischia, during my stint in the Army, clearing relatives for relocation to their families in America. I found Trani's during the Markey event."

As we were finishing, Phil, pulled up a chair and sat with us. He ordered espresso and cannoli. His treat. A meal we'd not soon forget.

Theresa drove us back to my place. A very interesting situation developed between Theresa and Paul. It came about when Paul said he needed to make arrangements for the night and wondered if I still had pull enough at the Hacienda. I called and talked with the night manager, but no luck...they were booked solid.

Out of the blue, Theresa offered, "I have several empty suites at my place, pack up and come with us."

Mr. Bertrand said he had to go on home; he had to prepare a curriculum for his law class students before Monday.

"Paul...the offer remains; I'd like to hear more of your investigation. Will you accept?"

"I don't need to be asked twice. Of course...I'll be glad to take you up on your offer."

I flippantly said, "Hey Paul, watch out for Virago."

Theresa made a face and stuck her tongue out at me.

Finally, alone at last, I asked Tillie if she thought it strange for Theresa to invite Paul to stay at her place, after only meeting him for the first time tonight.

Tillie grinned, "She did mention that she thought he was kinda

handsome. And, she did enjoy his bubbly performance at dinner. Hey, maybe there's hope for her yet!"

Tillie pulled down the shades, dimmed the lights and retired to the bedroom, while I perused Jeff's survey report. I could see why the Captain couldn't decipher them; they weren't in any chronological order. I was about half way through sorting them when I saw someone beckoning from the bedroom.

At 9:00 am the next morning I was awakened by the crash of banging pots and pans from the kitchen. Tillie must have gotten up early. She yelled, "Are you awake yet? Why don't you get up and go do your thing in the bathroom and I'll have French toast ready in twenty minutes. I'll bring in coffee now."

I had almost forgotten what it was like to have a woman in the house. For the past ten years I had felt like something was missing. Another thing I had missed was a smiling pretty face to greet me in the morning. French toast fried in tempura batter, butter and maple syrup and bacon on the side...it can't be beat.

"What's on the schedule for today?" I asked.

"Last night Theresa suggested we should make an appearance on *Lady Theresa*. I called Pete to confirm that we have passes to get into the Club. He said it had all been arranged. Just show up. Besides, it would be a nice drive down to Balboa. Does that sound alright with you?"

"Why don't you call Theresa and suggest that we pick her and Paul up on our way down? We can take my car, I'll drive."

"I don't think so...you guys will get together, have a few drinks and get smashed. I'll drive, just to be on the safe side."

"Till, my dear, I think the world of you, but sometimes I think you are a bit too practical. Maybe it's because I've been a bachelor far too long."

"Are you suggesting that we cool our relationship?"

"Oh, God no! It's that I haven't had anyone in years take me to task like you have the last two days. Like your drunken sailor bit, and fussing because there were no staples in the house, ordering us to clean the house. Please, ease up a bit, I'll come around."

**“I didn’t realize I was that brazen, maybe it’s me.”**

**“Of course it’s not you! Let’s not bicker; the day is too beautiful, let’s enjoy it.”**

**After picking up Theresa and Paul, we had a beautiful drive along the coast on PCH. We entered the gates at the club, following behind several cars. The barrier arm came down and a guard asked for our pass. We informed him that they were supposed to be available for us when we arrived. He directed us to drive up to the entrance of a huge building where a valet would park our car. Then we were to go to the reservations desk inside to receive our passes.**

**A large crowd was waiting in the reservation line. Theresa walked over to the Concierge desk. I don’t know what she said but after a few moments she motioned to us to follow her. We went out on a broad deck or patio with deck chairs, tables and umbrellas everywhere. There was a huge swimming pool below the deck and more furniture as on our deck. As we gazed over the scene, we saw our beauty. She stood out like the Queen she was. There were groups of people walking along the dock admiring her.**

**As we approached *Lady Theresa* Pete, all decked out in his Captain’s uniform, saw us approaching and lowered the side boarding ladder and greeted us like monarchs from a foreign country.**

**Pete couldn’t wait to show us all the new details on the yacht. The electronics, new décor in the salon...everything looked so luxurious. I jokingly asked if he wanted us to put on slippers.**

**He responded, “Only you.”**

**I asked, “How did the sea trials go? How did the stabilizers workout? Did they help control the rolling?”**

**Theresa broke in, “Only a Marine Surveyor would ask so many questions.” Then she asked Pete, “Why the big crowd?”**

**“Next weekend is their opening day. That’s why they want our guests to park on that point across the bridge,” he said, pointing to a spit of land on the other side, “and take their water taxi to our dock.”**

**Tillie questioned Pete on what and where he needed help when**



the guests came aboard.

“Theresa sent out the invitations, having narrowed the guest list down to 30 or so. I thought you and Dean could familiarize yourselves with the details of the *Lady* so when guests ask questions you can show and describe her features. Pete then lowered his head and looked up, grinning, “I’ve met a very friendly lady here at the club who just happens to work as an event planner. She came by to see if *Lady Theresa* was available for very exclusive events such as business meetings. I invited her aboard; she was awestruck with the beautiful décor. We kinda hit it off, we’re dating and she’s volunteered to come for the day and see to our guests needs. She thinks the *Lady Theresa* is the most beautiful yacht she has ever seen.”

Pete went up to the pilot house and started the engines. He returned and secured the boarding ladder, then dropped several fenders over the side to temporarily protect the hull as he maneuvered away from the dock. He told me how to cast off the forward lines to the dock with a boat hook so we could pick them up when we returned. We manned the rails as Pete backed us out of the slip. There must have been a hundred spectators on the nearby docks waving goodbye.

Paul and I joined Pete in the pilothouse as he maneuvered the *Lady* past several islands and down the entrance channel to the open sea.

Once clear of the entrance, Pete asked if I could relieve him on the helm while he tended to the ladies. I shot back, “Let’s put it on autopilot...then we can all go party!” He just shook his head and left.

Theresa came in and stood silent for a moment searching the horizon, which was filled with boats of every description in every direction. Such a beautiful warm day, with a light breeze and just enough swell to test the stabilizers. All it took was her flipping a switch, an adjustment on a dial and you could feel the effects.

Pete came rushing in thinking Paul or I was tinkering with his toy. When he saw Theresa at the Marine Radio he cautioned, “Miss

Theresa...maybe I should go over a few changes and updates with you.”

Before he could say another word, she responded, “Pete, I read all the operating procedures. I’m quite familiar with all the new gadgets, I picked them out.”

Tillie came in, “Are we going have lunch here or in the salon? I’ve fixed hors d’oeuvre and sandwiches.”

Pete told them, “You people go have your lunch and enjoy. Let me do my thing, that’s why Miss Theresa keeps me around.”

I stayed with Pete for a while, letting him in on the developments that had occurred since we last met. I then went down and joined the group.

Theresa took us on a tour of the vessel, pointing out all the improvements. She forced Paul into the engine room with her as she described the functions of the machinery. We could tell that it all went over his head. But, he sensed how very proud she was of the *Lady*, so he wisely kept his mouth shut.

Back at the dock Pete eased *Lady* in as if he had done it a hundred times. It was easy to hook onto the mooring lines with the boathook, haul them aboard then loop them on the cleats without any panic whatsoever.

The rest of the afternoon was spent leisurely overlooking the bay and doing a little people watching. Every so often the subject of our ‘mystery in progress’ came up. Paul suggested a few scenarios that needed further scrutinizing, but for the now, he wanted to enjoy this moment before having to worry about going back to his apartment and not knowing what to find there.

Theresa announced that she had a busy week ahead and asked Tillie what her schedule was like. Tillie said they would have to get my car out of the police compound lot so I could go back to my surveyor job now that I’d been put on hiatus by Mr. Bertrand. Mr. Bertrand requested that she research and organize all written agreements and correspondence between the city and Sherman Development concerning the fire at the subdivision.

On our way up the dock we were met by Pete’s lady friend on

her way to the *Lady* and introductions were made. I thought Pete was lucky to have met as lovely a lady as Janice. She had just finished up a planned, large birthday party in one of the club's many ballrooms.

Tillie dropped Theresa off at the 'Villa', and then drove us to my place so Paul could pick up his car and go home.

Because she'd had a long day, I mentioned to Tillie that I wasn't that hungry after munching on snacks all day; a can of tomato soup and a melted cheese sandwich would be enough. She agreed and told me to fix dinner while she went to take a shower. That answer wasn't exactly what I expected...but, what the hell. I obediently said, "I can handle that."

I turned on the TV to catch up on the news. Same stuff: Looked like war in Korea...Sen. Joe McCarthy searching for Communists...General MacArthur and President Truman squabbling. I turned it off and put on some soft music. I finished fixing dinner just as Tillie came out with her hair up in curlers and a turban wrapped around her head...but still looking attractive as ever. We sat and chatted regarding our relationship, but never reached a conclusion on the future. She didn't want to give up her house. I didn't want to give up my guest house. So, we were at a stalemate.

In the morning we picked up my car after paying \$135 in towing fees and fines. The car looked dirty and trashy so I searched all the way down Western to Lomita before I found a gas station that did washing and waxing...wasting another two hours.

I finally made it home. I was at my desk, deep into Jeff's final report when the phone rang. "Can you come and get me NOW!" I recognized Paul's distressed voice.

"What's happening, where are you?"

"I'm at the grocery store on Atlantic near Artesia, two blocks from my apartment. Several guys are staking out my place and they don't look to be the friendly types. I don't want to drive my car as I'm sure they've spotted it. Please, you're the only one I can trust."

"OK Paul, settle down. I'll drive around slowly as if I'm

shopping or looking for a place to park. When you spot me give me a high sign, I'll get as close as I can and you get in. I should be there within 30 minutes or so." I called Tillie to pass on Paul's panic-like outburst, just so someone was aware of the situation. I remembered how the both of us wound up in custody at the same time.

Our ruse seemed to have worked. We made to my house without being followed. Poor Paul seemed really worried and upset, claiming he had never been in a situation like this, where people were out to get him all because he mentioned a few names that might be tied up with a group of self-seeking politicians.

I later found out that Tillie called Mr. Bertrand's hot line. He immediately put his investigative team in action. The mysterious sleuths were being sleuthed.

In the meantime I drove Paul to Sam Martin's men's store in downtown San Pedro to purchase a large range of garments, from casual to dressy; he bragged that his managing editor said he would cover any and all bills presented. My Palaka shirt had finally seen its day.

We returned home just as Theresa called. "Is Paul OK? Is he there? Can I talk to him?" I passed the phone over and left the room so they could chat in private.

I engrossed myself in the Jeff deposition. I couldn't believe how complicated the insurance claim became. The incident happened on an Asian flagged ship, loaded with heavy machinery, loaded in Long Beach bound for Australia. Heavy weather caused the cargo to break lose, causing a chain reaction of events...and of course they went after the deep pocket insured; the terminal operators of the port. Jeff spent two weeks in Hawaii surveying the damages to the cargo. The foreign flagged ship at the last moment entered a claim for damages to the ship, claiming she could not sail without repairs but had little surety to cover the costs. After several weeks of negotiations, a hearing was scheduled for the Admiralty Court in Long Beach.

I heard Paul rummaging around in the kitchen and decided to take a break and join him. "How was Theresa taking the latest development?"

**“I’ve never had anyone show me as much concern as she has. She’s one hell of a woman. I wish she wasn’t so damned well off. Wealthy women scare me...there’s no way I can afford to travel in her circle.” He paused for a moment, and then added, “After 10 years, I’m still paying support for a 16-year-old daughter.”**

**“I didn’t know you were married and had children.”**

**“I’ve never been married, thank God.”**

**The phone rang, we both reached for it, he beat me, said Hello, then passed it on to me, saying, “It’s Tillie.”**

**“Hello, sweetheart. This Paul guy is causing too much excitement. I took him to a clothing store to buy some new duds and now he looks sharp as hell. How’s it going at your end? When will I see you again?”**

**“I was planning to drive down early this evening, but, if Paul is staying, I can put it off until tomorrow.”**

**“Come on down now, we can kick him out after you get here.”**

**“Kick who out?” Paul shot back.**

**“Tillie had planned a special dinner and a quiet evening on your first visit. I think that was why she was a little pouty.”**

**“Don’t worry; Theresa should be here within the hour. She said she would come by, pick me up and that I could stay at her place until I can make my plans for the future.”**

**“I know that Tillie is delighted for the two of you. There’s only one person that you must pass muster with, and that’s Pete. He worships the ground that Theresa walks on. She, in turn, confides in him to no end, because she can trust him.”**

**“Thanks for the heads-up. What’s your take on Theresa’s and my relationship?”**

**“That’s strictly between the two of you. I wouldn’t ask you to judge on my relationship with Tillie. What are your plans from this point on?”**

**“I sent a carbon copy of the list of names and their affiliations, to you, Mr. Bertrand and my Editor, without my name or return address. What I’ve found out is that they are Titans in their fields, are politically active with unlimited funds and seem bent towards a**

socialistic form of management, be it government, labor, crafts and trades, entertainment, education. They are active in legislative agendas. Take my incursion into their affairs, even your own involvement. They'll challenge anyone standing in their way. Draw your own conclusions."

"I know, you mentioned their remarks about 'taking down the money pockets' but that's just bravado talk. Do you think it goes beyond that?" I asked.

"That temporary Supervisor has more money than he knows what to do with and several law degrees. Ask yourself why he would seek a committee level position with his qualifications, unless it could lead to a state or national political appointment?"

"Good point. So, what must we do now?"

"Wait for Mr. Bertrand and his investigators do their jobs."

Theresa drove up in her new Cadillac and honked. Paul beckoned for her to come in and saw that Mr. Bertrand, carrying his valise, was also getting out. I told them that Tillie was expected to arrive at any minute. Theresa and Paul pecked each other on the cheeks. They walked out to the patio. Theresa just stood looking over the spectacular view below.

"Dean, you have the most interesting view of the harbor...you can even see far into the inland areas. I like this panorama better than the views from my place at the Villa."

"I'll swap you even up. I'll even throw in the furniture at no cost." We all chuckled. "It's good to see you again Mr. Bertrand, we missed you at *Lady Theresa's* party. I noticed that you have your valise, must be something important."

Directing his remarks to Paul he said, "My detectives went to your place and questioned some suspicious looking guys loitering nearby. Come to find out they were Feds waiting to serve a subpoena for you to appear at their committee's hearing. I contacted my 'in the know' friend. All he could offer was that they must be interested in your list of names which appears to include some of the same names as the infamous House of Representative's 'Hollywood Ten' list. I've come here to hoping to wring as much information as I can

out of you. When Tillie arrives, I'd like her to sit in and take a few notes."

Trying to be a good host, I brought out several bottles of dark Mexican beer and glasses, dishes of lime wedges and a few munchies.

No one said a word as we stood out on the patio, everyone deep in their own thoughts. We watched the late afternoon turn to dusk; the sun having just set below the horizon, leaving an eerie sense of uncertainty and a slight chill in the air. Mount Palos Verdes cast its shadow over the area and lights started twinkling in the harbor;

Angel's Gate light flashing her popular rotating green light and if you listened closely you could hear her foghorn groan. So much to take in.



Our spell was suddenly broken by the sound of a car coming up the gravelly driveway.

Tillie, still in her high heels, cautiously made her way up the stepping stones. When she saw everyone with glasses in their hands she exclaimed, "Are we gathered for another party tonight?"

Mr. Bertrand responded. "This is a working party, I'd like you to get your steno pad and take dictation. Paul has agreed to let me grill him on what's led up to his problems with the Federal Government."

"I was wondering why the Feds keep after me, maybe they think I was one of those on the list...or how, why and if I was the one who created that damned list," Paul bemoaned.

I asked Paul, "What were the initials of the agency you mentioned? HUAK, no, I think it was HUAC...House on Un-American Activities Committee...or something like that. I watched an investigative news episode on TV in which Representative Richard Nixon put the screws to a one-time big shot in The State

**Department.**

**“They also spoke of the notorious Alger Hiss, who was convicted of being a Soviet spy after being exposed by a fellow communist, Whittaker Chambers, also a Soviet spy. It looks like they’re finally going to put Hiss in prison. They said nothing about this Chamber’s guy though.”**

**“I’m beginning to believe,” Paul said, “that after several inquiries, the people on this particular list appear to have one thing in common...a form of their own twisted take on the old ‘States-Righters’, where each state makes its own rules and laws without any interference from the Federal Government. It makes me think they intend to stack the Legislature so they can appoint their socialistic cohorts to leadership roles on important departmental committees, thus influencing their ideology on the general public. And, as a tie-in to Sherman Development...wouldn’t it be a fortuitous advantage if they could gain control of some of the state’s larger corporations to back their spurious candidates to public office?”**

**Paul shook his head, “I’ll concede that Joe McCarthy’s, Communist inquiries, for the most part, are a bunch of nonsense, but there is a grain of truth buried there somewhere. And now the ‘Berlin Airlift’ with Russia building their Berlin Wall...well, all I can say is, General Patton had it right, ‘we should’ve kept on going all the way to Moscow’.**

**“You asked where I got the list. Sometimes I receive untraceable mail at the office. Whoever sends it must know that I’ll do a rudimentary search and if anything develops, I’ll most likely mention it on the air or in my column. What disturbs me is that I got this list at my home address. So, I know they know where I live. That bothers me.”**

**Bertrand rose from his chair and started pacing, “Whatever is said here must not be repeated outside this room. What you’ve found in your investigation, Paul, makes a lot of sense and seems to explain much of what’s been going on and why all these different entities are involved. I’ve made several contacts...Paul, to your editor; I have no**



doubt that he's with you 100% on continuing your investigation.

Theresa, for your own information, I have to believe that Mr. Dorsey is involved in this up to his neck. He and Lewis, the company lawyer, are too cozy for my taste and I feel that Dorsey would stoop to any low to gain control of Sherman Development. If Dorsey and Lewis can make enough things go wrong with the corporation they can convince the stockholders that you're incompetent and unable to run the business. If you remember, I once mentioned that a very influential lawyer's group was somehow involved with this Svicarovich fellow they're accusing of arson. I found out that the Sherman Development's own attorney, Mr. A. B. Lewis, is a low-level associate of that group. In my opinion, we must concentrate on finding if Lewis and Dorsey have done anything in the past to harm the company. I'm sure, knowing what we know now, you won't have any problems with your research. You, Theresa, and you, Tillie, must review your files to search for any suspicious situations regarding Mr. Lewis. I've got to leave now and get together with my team of investigators and compare Paul's report with their information. Theresa, do you mind?"

He started filling his brief case and headed for the door, with Theresa close behind. She turned and asked, "Aren't you coming Paul?"

"I've got a lot to pack, have we got time?"

"Come on, I can help." Less than five minutes later they were gone.

I turned to Tillie, "Caught...hook, line and sinker." We both smiled.

While Tillie was in fixing a light dinner, I went over my stack of mail. I found the letter from Paul with no return address. I hesitated in opening it...I had the odd feeling I was engaging in some unlawful act. The letter contained a one-page list of 30 names, their titles and addresses. I was astonished by the people mentioned. Civic leaders, very popular actors and writers...but what was disturbing, the names of politicians and even judges.

This list, if made public, could destroy their livelihoods, if not

their lives in total. I took the letter to the kitchen to let Tillie look it over. She was every bit as astounded as I was but for a different reason. Tillie personally knew some of the people mentioned. She rushed to the phone and called Theresa. After a long wait, Theresa answered.

“Tessa, Dean just let me read Paul’s list of names. Guess whose name is on it? Raymond Davies, the Manager of a major network television studio. You know...the guy who had us build the expensive house that burnt down in that fire in our project in the canyon.”

Theresa responded, “Good God, I went to dinner with him last month. I just sent him an invitation for the party. I hope I’m not caught up in some scandalous scheme! As much as I hate to, I’ll have to tell Paul.”

Tillie wished her good luck, and hung up.

“What was that all about?” I asked.

“Tessa had dinner with that Raymond Davies guy who’s on that list; she also sent him an invitation to the party. She said she’s going to have to tell Paul.

We ate in the living room so we could watch the news on TV. There was a new investigation going on. This time it graduated to a Senate hearing called “Internal Security Act.” It was headed by Senator McCarran with a new group of people involved. They announced that they had a list of thirty people that would be served to appear before them.

“I’ll bet Paul will be the first to appear.”

“Only if they can locate and serve him,” Tillie replied.

I got up and turned off the TV. “Getting back to our relationship...where do you see it going? I think we have the makings for a great future. What about you? Come on be honest,” I pleaded.

Tillie smiled and looked down modestly, “I’ve never been in an affair of this sort. Never have I thrown myself at a man before and certainly I have never searched for one. I always thought that when the right time or man came along, it would come about on its own, without seeking it. I find you to be a very interesting and sensible

person, I enjoy being with you. There are just so many things we have to consider. Where do we live? Do we get married? Do you earn enough for me to give up the best job anyone could wish for? I know you've been married before, are your divorces legal? Do you have alimony payments or outstanding debts? See my concerns? I guess I'm too practical."

"Whew...that's a lot to decide on, I've never considered it from your end. Would you rather not discuss it for now?"

"Well, Dean, you know I've never officially been asked. I'm certainly not going to propose to you." We both laughed.

I countered with, "Do you want me to propose on my knee while I offer the ring? I'll do it."

"Now you're being silly." She snuggled up closer.

"What am I getting in to?" I thought to myself.

The spell was broken when the phone rang at my desk.

Tillie said she'd get it, remarking, "If it's a woman I'll tell her, you're busy." But it turned out to be Theresa. The two women talked forever. When Tillie finally hung up, I was almost asleep on the sofa, my mind trying to sort through our deep conversation regarding our future.

"What was that all about? I'll bet you told her we were discussing our future."

"That too, but what is astonishing, all those on the list have been served. Mr. Bertrand has suggested that Paul make himself available to the Senate Committee and let the worms crawl out of the can. Paul has an edge because he is a recognized news-reporter. His Editor whole-heartedly agrees. The papers even decided to release a few names a day, thinking it might make the culprits try to cover up or even challenge the subpoena...thus opening them up for further scrutiny. Tessa's still worried about that party invitation she sent to this Davies guy and doesn't know what to do to keep him away."

"If he's been outed, I doubt he'll even show up."

Sunday morning we were up by seven and ready to head down to the Bay Club. We called Theresa but got no answer. We figured

they must already be on their way down. Thankfully, Theresa got us a car pass to the club. I knew that she belonged to a most prestigious Yacht Club on the East Coast and the club where *Lady* was now docked allowed reciprocal membership rights. That's the reason we gained special entry to the club the first day.

Tillie and I arrived at 11 am, in time to help dress the *Lady* with all the bunting in the signal locker, plus what Theresa brought down; American flags everywhere.

The club was well into their opening day rituals. So many members...all dressed in their blue uniform jackets with white pants and shoes. Within the hour there must have been no less than 75 boats and yachts parading in the nearby waters, also dressed in colorful bunting.

Our party was scheduled to begin at two; late enough we hoped to escape the boisterous activities of the partying club members. We guessed wrong...they were still at it way past midnight, and how well we knew it. The taxi to the opposite point, where the cars were parked, loaded and unloaded their people close to our dock.

Theresa's party was a great success, except for two incidents. Captain Pete recommended that *Lady Theresa* not leave the dock, what with all the drinking Yacht Club members out in their vessels. Everyone agreed. The second incident almost brought the party to a halt.

A young man came up the boarding ladder and showed his invitation to Janice, who directed him to the salon to meet with Theresa. Theresa, eyes blazing, grabbed his hand, pulled him close and said in a low menacing voice, "How dare you show up, after your name was blazoned all over the news!"

The man froze not understanding at first what was happening. "Hold on, Theresa, I'm not the one in the news. That's my father; the paper only printed the name, not if it was senior or junior. I'm junior and I go with the Jr. tag after my name...Honestly, I don't know why my dad is being accused." He paused, "I'm terribly sorry if I've embarrassed you. I think it better if I leave." He walked out of the salon and down the ladder.

Theresa started to call him back, then thought better of it. She turned to me with a rueful little smile, "I almost did it again, didn't I? Someday this temper of mine is really going to get me in trouble..."

I looked around for Paul and saw that he and Pete seemed to be in a deep discussion over Paul's new-found relationship with Theresa. I backed away quickly...whatever was said, only they would ever know. The two of them came in the salon as Davies was leaving down the ladder.

Theresa begged Pete to take the *Lady* out for her guests. The once crowded Bay was returning to normal and he agreed, much to everyone's pleasure. A six o'clock evening cruise has to be the best time to see the sights. There was still enough light to make out the estates on the islands in the harbor, then up the channel to the open ocean, then heading towards the setting sun; ah, what a beautiful setting. Even I, who'd been around one waterfront or another all my life and who earned his living from the sea, was awestruck at the beauty of a night like this. I put my arm around Tillie, as we stood at the rail, and hugged her tight.

It was close to midnight and all the *Lady's* guests were on their way home except for Theresa and Paul, Tillie and I, and Pete and Janice. We sat around in the cabin munching on hors d'oeuvres, sipping wine, and rehashing the day's events while the caterers and maids Theresa had hired for the event cleaned up. I had a strange feeling that it was previously planned by the women for us all to spend the night aboard, and I'm sure not one to complain.

Early Monday morning, after stripping the beds, and vacuuming the carpets, we helped Pete hose down the topsides and had our first coffee break. Theresa, being extremely pleased with the yesterday's party, suggested that we all go up to the club for breakfast. Janice, being familiar with the club's procedures, phoned and made reservations for a table with an overlook of the bay.

By 10:30 we were on our way home.

Each of us had busy schedules; me, with my appearance later in the week in Admiralty Court regarding the cargo damage, Tillie

had to go to her office and try to create a timeline on the fires and of their invested losses, and Theresa and Paul, trying to sort out and review Mr. Bertrand's suggestions for their scheduled Senate hearing next week.

I took the phone off the cradle, so I wouldn't be interrupted, worked all day and stayed up half the night going over Jeff's report. Thankfully we'd worked together on several cases, so I had a good idea as to where he was going in his breakdowns. But, I had to arrange the report as I thought the attorneys would question me. Good thing Jeff took many photos showing the damage to the equipment and of the ship's frames and hull.

At one am, I replaced the phone on the cradle and it started ringing. The first call was Tillie checking up on me. We talked for a while and I convinced her I hadn't been out chasing butterflies. No sooner than I put the phone down did Captain Jorgensen call, wanting to know how Jeff's report was coming. I assured him I was ready to present our findings.

Captain Jorgensen said Lloyd's was concerned over Jeff's death and how it might affect the court proceedings. He said, "I told 'em I had my 'ace surveyor' on the job and not to worry...now don't make a liar out of me."

For the rest of the week I made appearances at the office in Long Beach...thank God, the rest of the workload was slow. I went over the assignment list; the three other surveyors were handling things quite well, so I decided to take some personal time off.

In the afternoon, I called Tillie at her office. She said she was leaving early and heading home to her house. I asked if she would like some company, no formal affair, just a visit. She said that she was about to call me and beg out of driving to my place. I countered with, "I was planning to drive to your house. Will your neighbors frown on a male visitor spending the night?"

"Dean, you're always welcome to my house. I'd love for you to come on over. I hope you don't mind watching a little TV while I catch up on some of my house chores. I'll even stop by the store and pick up something for dinner."

**“I must be honest; I had an ulterior motive for wanting to come over. But your offer of dinner sounds fantastic, there’s no rush on the other thing. I’ll be there within the hour.”**

**Tillie must have just gotten home when I arrived. I parked in her driveway and entered through the backdoor as she was putting away the groceries. “What’s for dinner?”**

**“We’re having my Grandma’s recipe for Hungarian goulash made with ground-round. It’s quick and simple and I think you’ll like it. We’ll have a salad, biscuits and, if you’re a good boy, apple pie ala mode for dessert.”**

**“And what does it take to make a boy good?” I teased back.**

**“Why don’t you go in the living-room and watch TV while I change clothes and get started on my house chores, unless you want to help by vacuuming.”**

**“I have some news that I’d like to discuss with you, it might have a bearing on our relationship.”**

**Tillie spun around, glared at me for the longest moment, then blurted, “OK, let’s hear it...the house work can wait another day.” She pulled up a chair, planted it directly in front of me, sat then said, smiling, “Out with it, do you want a divorce?”**

**“Never...you’re the best thing that ever happened to me... I’ve received orders from the Navy to report for a physical next week. What scares me is that I’m in excellent health.”**

**“Oh no! I never, in my wildest imagination thought that damned fighting, way over there, would affect us. It was supposed to be just a police action.”**

**She came over to where I was sitting on the couch and put her arm on my shoulder and in a low voice, almost a whisper, offered. “I’m for doing anything that will keep us together.”**

**“Did I just hear you propose? You did...I accept...call Theresa and Paul...we should get married tomorrow morning, by a Judge, at the courthouse in Long Beach. Ask if they can make it.”**

**It wasn’t that I was overly excited, but so many things kept coming to mind; my appearance at the deposition, tomorrow afternoon, no time to think of a honeymoon, even the thought of**

having some sort of written agreement as to what's hers, mine and ours, where do we live... The list was overwhelming.

She broke my spell, stressing that she really didn't propose, she just didn't want our relationship to taper off or end. "But," she said, "if you think you're ready, then let's plan it out and not dive into it without a thought of the consequences."

"Thank God," I thought to myself. Once again she'd rescued me from my overblown imagination. I had made up my mind, long ago, that Tillie was the woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with and I was happy that she had similar thoughts regarding me. I thanked her profusely for not letting me blunder off, blindly making spur-of-the-moment decisions we'd both regret later on. We decided to put the subject on the back burner for the time being and I gratefully changed the subject.

"Till...I was hoping you could help me go over Jeff's briefs, Captain Jorgensen called again. I think he's a little concerned that the consortium at Lloyds might drop us if we don't make a good showing at the hearing tomorrow. All of a sudden I feel like there's a lot of pressure being put on my presentation."

"How do you go over your own notes when you're alone?"

"I debate, argue and plea in front of a portrait hanging on the wall of my dad, when he was a young Naval Officer. It's worked down through the years for me."

"So, pretend I'm your dad, now...start your debating."

We worked through the evening, going over every note and picture in the packet. I was so pissed at myself for leaving the slide projector and screen at home. We had a late supper and with so much on my mind I begged to go home to align the slides for presentation at the hearing.

It was a damned good thing I took the time to set up the slide trays. It turned out to be the highlight of the session. It must have been the first use of slide projection at an Admiralty hearing, where all participants could view a scene at the same time on a large screen. I thought back on how Jeff and I bought the Cameras and slide projector for practically nothing at a promotional sale...they're



worth their weight in gold now. Needless to say, Captain Jorgensen was very pleased and as a result of the successful showing, offered me a partnership in the company.

What a dilemma I was in; faced with a possible recall by the Navy because of my service with the Navy Reserves, an offer of promotion into management level of a most prestigious company, the turmoil of Theresa's investigation...not to mention a possible wedding to prepare for.

Tillie, on the other hand, was saddled with work far beyond the norm, cataloging the losses attributed to the fires and summarizing the whole situation for Theresa and Bertrand.

I thought I'd give a call to Theresa and Paul to see what they were up to. I let the phone ring a long time but got no answer. They were probably getting ready for his big appearance at the Senate hearing which happened to be on the same day as my medical examination at the Long Beach Navy Station's Medical Center on Terminal Island.

All of a sudden I felt like I was in a vacuum, not knowing what to do next. Well, I thought, when all else fails, open a bottle of beer, heat up a can of Dinty Moor Stew, turn on the TV and watch Hometown Jamboree! Getting back into my old comfort zone should do the trick.

Tillie called, asking what I was up to and would I like some company for the weekend. She suggested we could go over some things, if we still intend to get married. My response was that she never had to ask permission for anything. She laughed when I told her I was reverting back to my single man days.

We spent most of the weekend going over our desires for a perfect marriage, grading the importance of each step for the two of us.

I called Captain Jorgensen, asking for details of the offered partnership and at the same time informing him of my Naval recall physical this coming week. He indicated that with me being a company manager and essential for its operation, he might be able to persuade them to defer any immediate appointments until a later

time...if I chose for him to do so.

Tillie informed me she had to attend Paul's Tuesday hearing with Theresa and Mr. Bertrand, at the same time as my physical.

Early Monday morning I reported in at the Surveyors office to check schedules and assignments. Captain Jorgensen suggested we go for breakfast so we could go over the finer details of my new position. Because of the conflict in Korea the Captain expressed the need to expand the company and was most generous in his proposals. I accepted everything he offered.

Tuesday morning at the Naval Station medical center the corpsmen prodded everything and everywhere, took samples, checked my ears, lungs, teeth and eyes. I had to run on a powered treadmill until I was about to fall from exhaustion. Finally, I was told to get dressed and go to room so-n-so for an interview. Two hours later, after lunch, I was paged over the PA system, for further consultations and was informed that I should prepare for "Orders" as my Classification as Engineer Duty Officer, Main Propulsion was one of the most highly needed for reactivating ships from, ready reserve fleet at Suisun Bay.

The Navy didn't finish with me until three in the afternoon. On my way home I heard all about the commotion at the Senate hearing on the car radio.

I couldn't wait to get home and turn on the TV. I even turned on the national news channels. There it was for the whole world to see, a petite, blonde lady being physically escorted out of the chamber filled with politicians, lawyers and news cameramen. What a sight!

I tried calling Tillie but got no answer. I made another call, hoping to talk to Paul at Theresa's; no answer there either.

I decided to call the Captain to inform him how my Navy physical turned out and their remark that I could expect my recall notice within a week. He assured me that I would have a deferral before the 'Orders' from the Navy reached me. He said he expected to see me bright and early in the morning.

I straightened up the place when Tillie came charging in, she

turned on the TV without even saying Hi.

**“You should have seen her; she took on the whole committee defending Paul. It was as if they were out to hang him because he couldn’t identify who sent the list of names. They even threatened him with imprisonment for withholding evidence and not cooperating. Even Mr. Bertrand tried to restrain Theresa. Her blow up at the County Commissioner’s was like a kiss in comparison.”** A sudden news flash came on the TV screen, they were showing Theresa standing on the curb outside the government building railing like a salty seaman to a gathering crowd.

Movie, television people, and news reporters were all tripping over each other trying to get closer to, in a sense, urge her on and asking an array of questions. She wasn’t slowing down a bit, the fire in her eyes and the pitch in her voice, was reaching a crescendo, captivating all within her range. She was taking on both sides of the Senators. Those who wanted to know who leaked their secret list and those who should be exposed for being on that list, shaming them for threatening a patriotic and highly esteemed reporter. She even took them to task for leaking incorrect and incomplete names, such as Raymond Davies Jr., a patriotic Army veteran and not his father, Raymond Davies Sr.

The crowd increased and was playing havoc with the traffic, the police were losing control of the crowd and when they tried to take a tougher stance, the crowd began to riot. The news item ended with the police taking Theresa off to jail in handcuffs.

We were up by six the next morning, as we both had early appointments. The newspaper arrived in time for us to glance at the front-page headlines; they were ablaze with Theresa standing before a crowd at the curb and a banner **SENATE RETREATS** back to Washington.

**All I could think is...VIRAGO has come alive again.**

**It is said: All good stories and tales have a moral to them. If there is one here, let it be...BEWARE of wakening a beautiful sleeping Muse. You may arouse a dragon.**

**EPILOGUE:** It was almost as Paul had explained to us. The Socialist/Communist group, influenced and controlled by the men on Paul's list, was out to get control of the state. They hoped that by controlling some of the largest corporations in the state that they could get the money to finance their plan and get their hand-picked men elected to vital positions.

Dorsey and the company lawyer, Lewis, were only too happy to go along with them to gain control of Sherman Development. They hired Svicarovich to set the fires to the Sherman properties in hopes of discrediting Theresa's managing abilities. He was also implicated in starting fires that ruined other companies. They had others infiltrated within Theresa's personnel that were causing discontent and problems in all departments. It was hinted, through some of the information gathered, that Dorsey and Lewis had something to do with the plane crash that killed Theresa's father and husband...but nothing was ever proved.

HUAC and the FBI were behind the arresting and interrogation of Dean and Paul. It was part of their investigative procedures. No apologies were ever offered to the two men.

Tillie and Dean were married.

Theresa and Paul weren't married...but the romance goes on.

## **Timeline: Early 1950's**

<b>Dean Westerly</b>	<b>Marine Surveyor</b>
<b>Pete Petersen</b>	<b>Skipper-"Lady Theresa"</b>
<b>Theresa Morrison</b>	<b>"Virago" Heiress</b>
<b>Capt. Kurt Morrison</b>	<b>Theresa's Husband</b>
<b>Donald Dorsey</b>	<b>Chief Architectural Engineer</b>
<b>Mr. Sherman</b>	<b>Developer, Company CEO</b>
<b>Mr. Allen B. Lewis</b>	<b>Company Attorney</b>
<b>Matilda "Tillie" Mathews</b>	<b>Theresa's Secretary</b>
<b>Paul Pierson</b>	<b>KMPC News Reporter</b>
<b>Mr. Bernard Bertrand</b>	<b>Theresa's personal Attorney</b>
<b>Daniel Svicarovich</b>	<b>Suspect arson/Security Guard</b>
<b>Jeff</b>	<b>Dead Surveyor</b>
<b>Janice</b>	<b>Pete's lady friend</b>
<b>Captain Jorgensen</b>	<b>Owner of Surveyor Service</b>
<b>Raymond Davies,</b>	<b>Jr.-Sr. on List</b>