

Dolphin Club Loses Bert

After over 25 years of membership at the Dolphin Club, Bert Arias died in March of 1986 following several months' illness and absence from the club. Bert left many friends and fond memories. "He cleaned the beach for 25 years, now it's our turn" said Lou Marcelli who helped organize a collection totalling \$1795; money which was sent to Bert's sister in Peru. The Club's new Avon rescue craft was named the ARIAS in honor of Bert.

The following eulogy was put together by Joe Schatz.

HUMBERT ARIAS

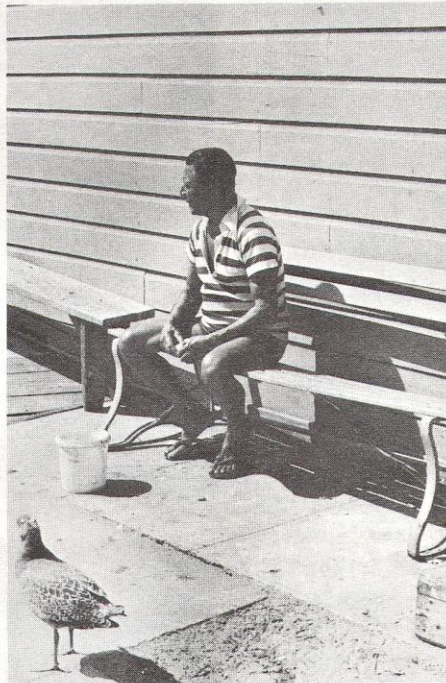
25 March 1905 - 26 March 1986

It is ironic that so little is known about someone who was so widely loved. We know that Humbert Arias was born in Peru on 25 March 1905. At that time, Peru was about the size of California and Texas combined and had about five people per square mile. Bert is believed to have come from a then-remote area about 300 miles north of Lima, the capital. He is widely believed to have been an Indian. About half the population of Peru was and is Indian, and there are many Indians in the area of his birth.

Bert told several friends that while a teenager he had worked as a merchant seaman and that he had gotten to the U.S. by jumping ship in Seattle when he was 17. That would have been 1922. What he did between then and 1943, when he was inducted into the U.S. Army, is a mystery. But his military records show that his civilian job at the time of his induction was "pick and shovel man".

He was assigned to the 1824th Combat Engineer Battalion and sailed from San Francisco to the Pacific Theater on 18 January 1943. Combat engineers build emergency airstrips, roads and bridges and it seems likely that Bert was a manual laborer on these wartime projects. He served with distinction in the Philippines

and New Guinea. He was awarded the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two bronze stars and the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Ribbon with one bronze star. Characteristically, he never mentioned these decorations. The army changed Bert profoundly. His induction papers show him to be a 5'3" South American Indian and a citizen of Peru. His discharge papers show him to be a 5' 5" white citizen of the United States! Bert promptly recorded this document at San Francisco City Hall upon his return from the war. He was then 40 years old.



Bert

Bert took a room in a hotel on Stockton Street in North Beach and got a civilian job with the Navy, probably working on the docks. He retired years later with a modest pension. He had at least two relatives in Peru. These were his sisters, Bertha and Adelaida, who lived in Chiclayo and Cheopen, respectively. He regularly sent them money and made them the beneficiaries of his government insurance policy and his will.

Coincidentally, while Bert was in a coma, a few days before he died, a

letter from Bertha reached his room at the Castro Hotel on Vallejo Street reporting the death of Adelaida.

Oddly, Bertha's letter sends greetings to Bert's "family". When informed of Bert's death, she was

surprised to learn that he had no family here. Apparently, she knew even less of Bert than we did. She asks that anyone with information about Bert send it to her. Those who are interested in doing so may contact Lou Marcelli at the Dolphin Club who will forward the information to her.

At the Dolphin Club, where Bert had been a member, his beach raking, bird feeding, tide keeping, laughter, friendliness, generosity, pride, independence and dignity will long be remembered.

He was loved by all who knew him.

TIDES BY ARIAS

And some were old and wise
Nodding the paragon of the plodding
In ancient furrows among their
Andean peaks. And misty and mystic,
Life was sacrifice. And the mountains'
Spiteful breeze blew cold upon the
altar

Of its promise.

Meagre were those days: All casting
Without faith upon the other side.
He, feeling his call urgent in
doubtful

Profit from the tumbling sea, saw a
New world old and wise full of
beggars

In old doorways nodding the paragon
of the necessary conflict!

And with his shovel and his medals
He shouted and clamored quietly in
A life unshackled; in the violence of
this choice.

And the ocean grew calm.

He rested and laughed

Was nodding and calm upon its

Quiet rim. And he was nodding old,

And calm and wise with the nodding

Strutting gulls that knew his voice.

Bewildered now they never hear him
more

Alan Mallic, Spring 1986