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"BLOCKADE"

SAN DIEGO BAY

SEPTEMBER...1917

The "Red Stack" steam tug "SEA ROVER," with Captain Michael Downey as Master, arrived off San Diego Bay one bright morning in September with a Benson log raft in tow, the raft ultimately designated to become a part of the wharves necessary for the rapidly expanding Naval activities.

The tow line was shortened up off Pt. Loma and speed reduced while Captain Downey smoked an evil smelling pipe and looked hopefully but in vain for another tug to assist in steering the unwieldy log raft up the narrow channel. The tide was almost at top flood and the raft needed every inch of water to make the channel and the turn around North Island.

The skipper waited impatiently for a second pipeful and then decided to go ahead under a 'slow bell' and meet the expected tug in the channel. There were no radio telephones on tugs in those days.

Everything went well until the tug had just about cleared the channel at Ballast Point, when the Mate decided to slack out a little on the towing wire. The tug surged ahead and then smelled bottom, the raft turned in toward the Point, grounded on the forward end, and the stern slowly swung across the channel toward North Island, and grounded.

Captain Downey jingled for all the power the "SEA ROVER" had, and the engineer, Mr. Healy, responded nobly but without effect. The raft was across the channel, the tide at high water, and no help in sight. The "SEA ROVER" whistle sounded loudly and long but there was no response.

The "Yale" was ready to sail at noon, the Pacific Coast Steamer "President" at four, the Navy had vessels inward and outward bound. The tide began to ebb and still no tug, but the Navy dispatched a launch with orders to clear the channel at once, - easier said than done!

Finally after the tide had ebbed and begun to flood again the Navy dispatched three of their biggest tugs and finally, with much pulling, whistle blowing, shouting and unneeded advice from stray craft, the raft was freed, the channel cleared, and the delayed steamers and Navy vessels filled the channel from bank to bank. The second log raft had adequate assistance from Pt. Loma to destination.

(To be abridged as you see fit. I believe the date, location and the vessels are correct, but fifty years is a long time ago)

cc: Harold Huycke

