

# Shipwreck Is Headache to Palos Verdes People

## Sightseers Swarm Over Fences, Through Yards of Residents to Look at Vessel

BY CHARLES HILLINGER weather-beaten Dominator.

For more than a year the grounded Greek freighter Dominator has been decaying off Rocky Point at Palos Verdes Estates, plaguing the peninsula city with the biggest headache in its 23-year history.

"It's a terrible nuisance. Wish we never heard about it," declared Mrs. Adele Stiehl, Palos Verdes city clerk.

Palos Verdes boasts the dubious distinction of being the only California community with a ghost ship in its back yard.

"The way things are going, we wonder if we're ever going to give up the ghost," allowed L. M. Eckert, a Rocky Point resident.

**Privacy Invaded**  
Rocky Point homeowners have had little privacy since Capt. Charitos Papanikolopoulos and his crew of 29 became lost in a dense fog the evening of March 13, 1961, when the 441-ft. Dominator came to a screeching stop in 12 ft. of water, hopelessly stuck on Seven Fingers Reef.

Since then thousands of Southlanders and out-of-state visitors have tramped through Rocky Point yards, squashed flowers and shrubbery, climbed fences and swarmed into backyards to peer down the 100-ft. cliff at the ship.

The Dominator has become one of the leading tourist attractions in Southern California.

**Plenty of Publicity**  
"Every paper in the country carried pictures and stories about the ship. And ever since all highways have led to our doorsteps," observed D. L. McCleskey, resident of one of the 75 expensive homes perched high on the point.

It's been quite a year for Rocky Pointers, a year dominated by what residents woefully refer to as their "monster," the rusting,

For several weeks following the day the Greeks lost their way, there was little sleep or quiet for those living near the ghost ship.

Today NO PARKING signs are posted throughout the area. Police plaster tickets in wholesale fashion to windshields of those who persist in parking where they're unwanted.

**Spoiled-Meat Odor**  
A few weeks after the Dominator arrived a nasty odor permeated the entire peninsula. Fifty sides of beef and three tons of fish aboard the wreck started to spoil.

A fire was finally set last Nov. 15 by salvage man Al Kidman, with Coast Guard approval, to burn the meat and fish.

Nearly all of the 10,000 tons of grain were removed by other salvage crews last summer.

**Pest Control Sought**  
Winter rains drenched the four or five tons of wheat still aboard the ship, causing heavy fly breeding the past couple of weeks.

"The flies are not a health menace but have been a nuisance to home owners on the point," Stanley Martin, director of the county bureau of sanitation, reported.

Entomologist William Waldron of the sanitation department boarded the ship, sprayed and dusted the grain with insecticides to control the pests.

"It looks like we will have to board the ship every so often to keep the flies in check," Martin disclosed.

There have been requests to the Coast Guard, to the Army Corps of Engineers and others by the people of the peninsula to get rid of the hulk.

But because the Dominator is not an obstruction or menace to navigation—just a nuisance—Kidman, a 32-year-old Idaho logger who



**BACK-YARD NUISANCE**—Looking over the wreck of Greek freighter off Rocky Point are, left to right,

Mrs. L. M. Eckert, D. L. McCleskey and L. M. Eckert. They are standing in the Eckerts' back yard.

bought the remains for \$35,000, is legally entitled to salvage it now or in the year 2000 if he so desires.

"When the time is right, I'll resume salvage. But not now. The seas are too heavy, the surf too rough," Kidman maintains, adding:

"The people on the hill can relax, because I'm going to remove their eyesore soon. I've got to, to come out money ahead."

Kidman, now of Terminal Island, has a lot of money sunk in the Dominator. He's lost a \$10,000 barge with a \$1,500 crane and a 50-ft. LCM since starting his salvage.

The barge washed ashore in a storm. The boat is sunk. Kidman said he expects to bring in another barge and cut the ship apart piece by piece.

**Valuable Metal**  
"There's 3,000 tons of brass and iron on the ship. I expect to take away every last ton. Should bring me about \$100,000. I hope to complete the salvage job within a year," Kidman said.

Kidman isn't the only person who lost a boat because of the Dominator. A cabin cruised was wrecked at the point Oct. 22. Its five passengers made it ashore safely.

Three skindivers in the past year haven't been as

lucky. They lost their lives in the swirling eddies that churn the surf about the hull.

"The sea around the Dominator is as treacherous as any along the coast, the worst place imaginable for swimmers or divers," reports Bill Stidham, skipper of the lifeguard rescue boat Bay Watch.

**59 Rescues Made**  
The Bay Watch has made 59 separate rescues off the Dominator since it went aground.

Off Rocky Point today the ghost ship creaks and groans. It appears to be in three sections, but actually is split in two, separated by 150 ft. Breakers crash against its

rusted seams, swirl inside the engine room. Doors in-and torn, beaten into submission by the sea, home crews quarters bang open for hundreds of gulls that roost on its rusting rails.