

A treasure close by

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| Scuttlebutt : Bob Kieding   |  | | --- | | http://64.29.230.54/Top/pictures/2191740.jpeg | | |  | | --- | | Bob Kieding | | |  |   January 1, 2014 6:18 AM  Recently, I took a short scenic drive down the coast just south of Ventura to Channel Islands Harbor to visit the Channel Islands Maritime Museum. It was a truly rewarding excursion.  Located at water's edge, the museum and its docks command a captivating view of the comings and goings of an array of power and sailing vessels as well as a myriad of other harbor activities. The museum's building is quite new and well-designed in both esthetics and purpose.  I received a cordial welcome upon acquainting the receptionist with my long interest in maritime museums. She notified museum director Julia Chambers, and I was soon on an inclusive tour of the facility, including its interesting behind-the-scenes working areas.  All were of great interest to me, having been one of the founders of Santa Barbara's maritime museum. But, the exhibits themselves captivated the most in their blending of historic artifacts with fine art.  Some of the key topics presented included:  \*the abalone fishing trade, past and present.  \*the last American-built clipper ship, Aryan, 1873.  \*the fine arts collection, including an arresting painting by world-famed maritime artist John Stobert of "Vallejo Street Wharf" depicting San Francisco's turbulent 1860s.  \*the story of the 466-foot cruise ship La Jenelle, which wrecked at Port Hueneme in 1970. Physical remnants of the calamity remain today as part of the harbor's protective breakwater.  \*a captivating presentation about the turbulent history of whaling off Central California's Coast.  \*the hustling Port of Hueneme during the 1940s.  \*the Flower Flag Nation.  Port Hueneme is the only designated deep-water port between Los Angeles and San Francisco, so its in-and-out ocean traffic is of particular interest. Add the local moored boats, concessions and institutions along with the Channel Islands Maritime Museum, and visiting the port is well worth the scenic drive from Santa Barbara.  The maritime museum is located at 3900 Bluefin Circle, Oxnard, CA 93035; Phone 805-984-6260. Hours of operation are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week  Californians are fortunate in the number of fine maritime museums along the coast that both preserve and display the long and fascinating sea history of our state. Santa Barbarans are additionally fortunate to have Santa Barbara Maritime Museum close-by at our harbor.  I hope to someday visit all 34 of the maritime museums in our state.  **Nautical time**  A ship underway needs officers and crew members at all essential operating stations 24 hours a day, but especially on the navigation bridge and in the engine room. To accomplish the ship's essential tasks, officers and crew members are divided into watches.  "On-watch" shifts generally are from four or six hours duration. During the sailing-ship era before the development of mechanical clocks, the passage of each watch was determined using an hour-glass through which slowly flowed fine particles of sand.  Every 30 minutes, the hour glass would be rotated in order to begin counting the elapsed time once again. Each time the glass was turned, the ship's bell was struck a specific number of rings. All aboard would instantly know the time by counting the number of bell rings sounded.  The following is an example of bell time: Beginning at noon is 8 bells; 12:30 p.m. is 1 bell; 1 p.m. is 2 bells; 1:30 p.m. is 3 bells; 2 p.m. is 4 bells; 2:30 p.m. is 5 bells; 3 p.m. is 6 bells; 3:30 p.m. is 7 bells; and 4 p.m. is 8 bells (the end of a four-hour watch).  The four-hour, eight-bell series is repeated six times throughout a 24-hour day. The watches are assigned specific names.  Beginning at noon, the sequential watches, in order, are: first watch, middle watch, morning watch, forenoon watch, afternoon watch, first dog watch, and last dog watch. Dog watches are so called because they occur during the often unpleasant, dark and frequently wet nighttime.  Unlike today, where almost every crew member possesses a space-age timepiece on his or her wrist, a crew member standing shipboard watch in earlier times could only know the time by listening to the ship's bells to learn how long he had been on watch and how long it would be before the next watch person would come up on-deck to relieve him or her.  If the strikes of the bell were an even number it was on-the-hour; if an odd number of strikes it was on-the-half-hour. But the crew member also needed to be aware whether the time was a.m. or p.m.  As maritime clocks developed over the years, the same bell pattern was incorporated into both mechanical as well as the later electric clocks, which were powered by battery or the ship's power electrical system.  I enjoy hearing the ship's-bell clock at our home, especially as it sounds its wistful chimes throughout the long night.  **Vanishing classics**  After visiting the Channel Islands Maritime Museum, I took a few minutes to drive around Channel Islands Harbor's surroundings. While so doing , I passed a home where a gentleman was working on an obviously new rowing dory.  Having built several wooden boats myself, I stopped and was pleasantly confronted with a classic wooden boat being built with fine, meticulous workmanship. Upon closer inspection, its quality was more appropriate to a living room setting than to immersion in callous salt water.  An interesting conversation commenced, and I quickly concluded that the dory's builder had a keen knowledge and understanding of classic maritime craftsmanship - quite unusual these days.  In this current age of synthetic materials, rushed schedules and commercial purchases, it is rewarding to relate back to the days when I too was involved in building wooden boats.  My first experience was at age 10 helping my father to build the first Sea Shell-class sailboat in Santa Barbara. It was 1947 and my father, Ray Kieding, had purchased an unassembled 8-foot-long Haggerty Sea Shell Sailboat.  I can still recall the dark, rainy afternoon when we took delivery at Bill Smart's small and barely stocked ship's chandlery at Santa Barbara Harbor and strapped the long cardboard box to the roof of the family's 1941 Chevy.  Upon completion of assembly and commencing sailing our Sea Shell at the harbor, my father convinced several of his friends to do the same. Soon, Santa Barbara had a successful and growing racing fleet.  Today, although the type of boats now being sailed has changed, the Santa Barbara Sea Shell Fleet has retained its historic name and is still strong and active 66 years later - especially for youngsters.  Over the years sailing designs come and go, but the sport and its many benefits remains strong and unchanged.  Bob Kieding began boating as a boy in Santa Barbara in 1948. He has been a sail racing skipper, yacht maintenance professional, professional yacht skipper, a ships chandler and is now a professional yacht broker. His column runs on Wednesdays. Opinions in the column are Mr. Kieding's and not necessarily those of the newspaper. Send news tips, questions or topics you would like covered to [bkieding@chandlery.com.](mailto:bkieding@chandlery.com.) |