

THE U.S. NAVAL HOSPITAL AND BALBOA PARK

by Richard Amero

In the summer of 1914, after returning from duty in Mexican waters aboard the U.S.S. Dakota, Jupiter and West Virginia, the Fourth Regiment of the U.S. Marines, under the command of Colonel Joseph Pendleton, established a base on North Island just across the bay from San Diego. On December 9, the Second Battalion of the Fourth Regiment, along with the field hospital, manned by Navy Medical Department personnel, moved to Balboa Park, San Diego, where it remained until the spring of 1917 as part of the Panama-California Exposition.

Wishing to keep the marines in San Diego, voters, November 17, 1916, approved the transfer of submerged lands near Point Loma to the Navy Department for a marine base. The vote was 13,857 yes, 305 no.

Following the United States' entry into World War I, April 6, 1917, the Navy converted the exposition grounds in Balboa Park into a training center. The City offered buildings and grounds free. The Navy found the buildings to be too large and poorly ventilated, and the site too far from the bay and from facilities for nautical instruction. Over the objections of some citizens, trainers used the lily pond in the park for swimming lessons and boat drills. Navy personnel held dances in the Plaza de Panama to which they invited civilian women.

A war dispensary occupied the headquarters of the Park Police, south of the Plaza de Balboa. Several tents nearby served as wards. By the end of the war, November 11, 1918, the camp hospital had a bed capacity of more than 800.

Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, changed the title of the War Dispensary to Navy Hospital, May 20, 1919, so the Navy would be in a better position to apply for a land grant in Balboa Park to serve the soon-to-be 11th Naval District.

Congressional Representative William Kettner promised Daniels that San Diego would donate bay and park land if the Navy would transfer its training center from Goat Island, San Francisco, to San Diego.

The City deeded 17.35 acres of Inspiration Point, southeast from the camp hospital, to the federal government as a site for a Naval Hospital, September 3, 1919. As an afterthought, voters ratified the deed, August 3, 1920: yes 9,289, no. 137. At the same time the City awarded the Navy land at the foot of 22nd Street, land at the foot of Broadway, and tidelands on Point Loma for a training center.

The Navy commissioned the first administrative, surgical and hospital buildings and mess hall, August 22, 1922. Architects from the Bureau of Yards and Docks designed the compound. Buildings in exact alignment on each side flanked a central administration building. The three buildings faced the edge of a canyon across from

Park Boulevard. Terra cotta was used on the walls and red tile on the roofs. The style was splotchy Spanish-Revival with towers and triple-arched entry on the Administration Building and open-air patios inside each pavilion.

The government paid \$1,103,321 for building construction and for road paving. In addition, the Red Cross donated a \$47,000 recreation hall.

The hospital had a capacity of about 250 beds. It cared for the sick of the Navy, Marine Corps and Army and for veterans of all wars.

On March 24, 1925, voters approved giving the Navy another 5.46 acres of Inspiration Point to be used for the construction of a hospital annex. The vote was 16,374 yes, 1,281 no. The City deeded these acres to the federal government, February 27, 1926 along with land at 32nd Street which the Navy wanted for a repair station and dry dock.

The 1919 and 1926 deeds did not contain a reversionary clause.

A hospital corpsmen school, formerly at Mare Island, Vallejo, moved to the San Diego Naval Hospital, September 1, 1928.

In 1928-29 the Navy added an isolation building for contagious cases, hospital corps' quarters and school, nurses' garage, sick officers' quarters, and a disinfection and morgue building. In 1929 the hospital represented an investment of \$3.5 million and had a bed capacity of 1,035.

Voters approved a lease of 15.60 acres in front of the Administration Building for recreational use, April 27, 1937: yes 17,141, no 5,278. On August 24, the Navy officially leased the land.

Concurrently with the lease, the City traded land near the Navy Pier and Supply Depot, between Pacific Highway and Harbor Street, for federal property at Market Street and Kettner Boulevard, formerly the site of an army barracks.

The building of a \$275,000 hospital wing, December 16, 1937, completed the unified Spanish theme plans prepared by the Bureau of Yards and Docks.

Sensing voter resentment to a conveyance of 32.93 acres, south and east of the hospital, bordering Pershing Drive, Captain Fred E. Porter, commander of the hospital, warned, September 20, 1938, that Los Angeles and San Pedro were bringing pressure to bear on the Navy for construction of hospitals in their areas. Rear Admiral Sinclair Gannon added: "Every million or two dollars spent by the Navy here is good insurance the Navy will stay in San Diego."

Voters endorsed the conveyance, March 28, 1939: yes 27,393, no 8,111. At the same time the voters approved transferring 14.5 acres of land on the east side of 28th Street

and on the north of Chollas Creek to the government for destroyer base facilities. The City deeded the 32.93 acres to the Naval Hospital, July 2, 1940.

In December 1940 the Park Commission asked the Council to issue an occupancy permit for 21.32 acres to the east and fronting Florida Drive to the Naval Hospital for construction of two double-decked barracks. The Navy was to pay for moving the park nursery, already on the spot. Voters affirmed the grant, April 22, 1941: yes 24,278, no 5,854. The City deeded the land, May 6, 1941.

Deeds for the 1940 and 1941 parcels contained a clause causing the land to revert to the city if no longer used for hospital purposes.

After the May 6, 1941 vote, the entire 92.66 Inspiration Point was in U.S. Navy hands. The City maintained a reversionary interest in about 51 acres.

The greatest Naval Hospital expansion in Balboa Park began after the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The hospital went from 56 buildings with a bed capacity of 1,424 in 1941 to 241 buildings covering 247 acres with a bed capacity of 10,499 in 1945. The complex included 33 acres in the Prado and Palisades sections of Balboa Park and a convalescent branch at Rancho Santa Fe, located 30 miles from the main plant.

The Navy used the California Building, Fine Arts Gallery and Natural History Museum as hospital wards, the House of Hospitality as a nurses' dormitory, the Japanese tea garden as a Red Cross Servicemen's Center, the lily pond as a swimming pool, and the House of Pacific Relations as officers' quarters. A Hospital Corps School, known as Camp Kidd, occupied the Palisades.

The Naval Hospital interdenominational chapel was dedicated in January 1945 on land the Navy had leased from the city in 1937 for recreation. At that time, Captain Fred E. Porter, commandant of the hospital, had promised no buildings would be placed there.

During World War II, the hospital treated approximately 172,000 patients. On December 27, 1944, patient counts rose to more than 12,000.

In June 1946 the hospital corps vacated its quarters at Camp Kidd and moved back to the main hospital grounds. In 1945, during its peak wartime enrollment, it had 3,400 students. The Navy did not finally vacate the buildings along El Prado until 1948.

For its use of Balboa Park buildings and grounds, the Navy paid the City \$790,000 in cash. In addition, the City realized \$106,389 through the sale of surplus military buildings, plumbing fixtures, and other equipment. The City used the money to rehabilitate the badly-worn 1915 and 1935 exposition buildings.

The Balboa Park hospital treated about 90,000 patients during the Korean conflict,

from June 27, 1950 to July 26, 1953.

Because of harbor congestion, lack of housing in San Diego, and easier access for Navy families to commissary facilities in Long Beach, the Navy, in 1952, shifted 64 vessels from San Diego to Long Beach and two to San Francisco, with a payroll loss to San Diego in excess of \$41 million a year. The headquarters of the 11th Naval District and 72 ships stayed in San Diego.

In 1960 the Navy ceded 2.79 acres from its 32.93 acre 1940 parcel in Balboa Park to the State of California for a crosstown freeway.

W. E. Hayes, M.D., in 1961, stated the hospital had a total capacity of 1,650 beds. Rear Admiral Harold J. Cokely, in 1962, put the number of beds at about 2,500.

In 1962 the City converted part of the land in front of the Administration Building, leased to the Navy in 1937, into a paid parking lot for 823 cars.

In 1975, after Congress had increased its military appropriations for San Diego, 29 ships from Long Beach moved to San Diego. Navy officials expected the number of ships in San Diego from 1975 through 1978 to fluctuate between 120 and 130.

The Navy dedicated the nine-floor, 1,000 bed, \$7.2 million gray concrete surgical building, designed by Welton Beckett and Associates, May 15, 1957. This great drab building sticks out like the carcass of a stranded whale.

That the U.S. Navy and the Department of Defense, were using a carrot and stick approach to San Diego is borne out by the following editorial remarks in the San Diego Union, April 13, 1957:

"Ray Harry Sheppard, chairman of a House subcommittee group in charge of naval appropriations warns that the situation in San Diego is 'favorable' to removal of activities because of the existing policy of the Defense Department toward consolidation of activities, specifically wherein there is controversy and incompatibility with local interest."

In January 1965 hospital officials objected to installing a 70-million electric volt synchrotron cancer research machine as the hospital's primary mission was healing, not research.

In 1968 Delawie and Macy designed the Thompson Medical Library as a contemporary structure in front of the hospital buildings. The library's hard lines are softened by dark-recessed windows and by trees. The building tried hard to be invisible but its clumpish massing and the closely-spaced trees which attempted to conceal it could not be ignored.

As if to show the architects of the library building where they went wrong, in 1969,

Paderewski, Dean and Associates designed a three-story, \$1.4 million outpatient clinic to harmonize with the Spanish-Revival style hospital buildings. The building lacked distinctive Spanish features and the pleated fins on its exterior made it look like an accordion. While not an architectural masterpiece, the Spanish-Revival style Naval Hospital demanded an open, terraced foreground to show off its soaring frontage and not a succession of quivering vertical lines.

In 1969 the hospital had more than 2,500 beds. Patients admitted annually exceeded 260,000, about 40 percent active duty personnel. Buildings put in parking lots reduced parking spaces to 1,480 and caused inconvenience and expense to the 1968 daily estimate of 2,100 inpatients, 2,000 outpatients, and 2,480 employees. About 300 of the inpatients were casualties from Vietnam.

Rear Admiral Horace D. Warden, commander of the hospital, attributed the expanding patient load to the increase in manpower at San Diego bases and shore units.

The San Diego Union described the hospital as the largest military hospital in the nation.

In May 1972 the federal government opened a new Veterans' Hospital, costing \$48 million for building and equipment, near the campus of the University of California in La Jolla. The Veterans Administration arranged for 100 patients occupying beds at the Naval Hospital to transfer to the new facility. Designed for a maximum of 811 beds, the most beds used through 1974 were 659.

In 1974 the Navy spent \$2 million to support its San Diego complex. Economic benefits of the Navy presence were felt throughout San Diego County. According to one estimate, the military accounted for a third of the jobs in the county and 40 percent of the area's population when dependents of individuals holding jobs were taken into consideration. This total included Navy ships and shore bases at San Diego, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, and Camp Pendleton.

Early in 1972 the Navy Public Works Center approved replacing part of the Naval Hospital buildings in Balboa Park at an estimated cost of \$120 million. The replacement would take from 10 to 15 years to complete.

San Diego's two congressmen, Representatives Bob Wilson, Republican, and Lionel Van Deerlin, Democrat, first mentioned the idea of building a new hospital outside the park in public at a meeting with the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, September 15, 1972.

Navy officials indicated buildings in the existing compound did not meet current patient-care and earthquake standards, circulation was chaotic, and airplane landing flights overhead were noisy and hazardous.

City officials wanted to get back Balboa Park land and buildings occupied by the

hospital. In January 1973 the architectural firm of Neptune and Thomas recommended hospital sites near the Veterans' Administration Hospital in La Jolla, near the Scripps' Clinic in Torrey Pines, in Murphy Canyon Heights, and in Balboa Park.

In May 1973 the Navy settled for a 103-acre site in Murphy Canyon Heights.

On May 31, 1974, Lieutenant Commander Richard Slayton, hospital planning director, said plans called for a 1,100 bed hospital in one large building at Murphy Canyon Heights to replace facilities scattered over 77 acres at Inspiration Point in Balboa Park, with additional buildings for a corpsmen school, enlisted staff housing, a gymnasium, theater, parking structures, and other support facilities. The new hospital would be on the southern tip of a mesa containing a 1,825 unit Navy housing development.

In 1975, Balboa Park Naval Hospital had an authorized bed capacity of 1,181. Press reports indicated the hospital had from 1,800 to 2,000 beds.

The Navy asked Congress for \$100 million to spend on military construction in San Diego during the 1974-75 fiscal year. This amount included \$3.81 million to acquire the Murphy Canyon site. Planners estimated the total cost for building a new hospital at \$200 million.

After Congress balked at appropriating such a large sum for building a hospital in Murphy Canyon, Representative Bob Wilson, in January 1975, came out for modernization of the Balboa Park complex.

On February 18, 1975, Senator Mike Mansfield, chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Construction, asked the General Accounting Office to look into the need for a new military hospital in San Diego of the size requested by the Navy.

Welton Beckett and Associates, Hugh Gibbs and Donald Gibbs, and Syska and Hennessy, in collaboration with the Western Division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, completed, in November 1975, a comparative analysis for building an on-site hospital in Balboa Park and a new hospital in Murphy Canyon. The study showed it would cost \$221.9 million to build a 1,200-bed hospital ((900 acute and 300 light-care patients) in Murphy Canyon and \$259.5 million to build an on-site hospital in Balboa Park. It pointed out the Murphy Canyon site contained 64 more acres than the Balboa Park site, allowing room for expansion. The entire complex with surrounding facilities could be completed in three years at Murphy Canyon rather than the five required for an on-site hospital in Balboa Park.

The General Accounting Office Report, April 7, 1976, questioned the need for a 1,200-bed hospital. It cited inaccuracies in patient-load statistics and excesses in the average length of patient stays in the present hospital. The Report indicated that services to dependent and active-duty personnel could be transferred to other military, veterans' and community hospitals in the San Diego area. By so doing, the Naval Hospital could reduce its bed requirements to a maximum of 875 (575 acute and 300 light-care

patients) Balboa Park would be the proper site for a hospital of less than 600 acute-care beds as use could be made of existing structures. For a hospital of 700 to 900 acute-care beds either Balboa Park or Murphy Canyon would be suitable.

The Navy was not happy with a report that would reduce the size of its hospital and staff. To recruit doctors seeking certification in a number of specialties, the Navy had to have a large teaching facility with a wide mix of patients.

To get around Congressional resistance to hospital construction, the Navy scrapped its Murphy Canyon plan and chose to build on 39 undeveloped acres north of its plant in Balboa Park if city officials would agree to a swap of land parcels. Land sought by the Navy was part of the Florida Canyon Nature Trail and Natural Preserve for which the City Council had approved a Development Plan by Stephen Halsey and Associates in 1976.

At first City of San Diego reaction to the swap was negative. The Balboa Park Committee and the Park and Recreation Board rejected the proposal. The Public Facilities and Recreation Committee referred the matter to the City Council. After defeating six to three a motion of unconditional support for the trade, the Council, January 19, 1977, voted unanimously to put the issue on the September primary election ballot.

At the urging of the San Diego Union, the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, and Representative Bob Wilson, the Council, on June 21, 1977, reversed its January 19 position. By a vote of six to two, Council members supported a "friendly condemnation" suit of the Florida Canyon land provided that land occupied by the Navy along Park Boulevard would be returned to the City and that the Navy would lease the new site from the City for 50 years instead of owning it outright. In agreement with these terms, Navy officials offered to surrender ownership rights to all the land it occupied or would occupy in Balboa Park to the City and to pay for demolition of buildings and for landscaping of the land it intended to vacate.

By a vote of five to four, the Council reaffirmed its June 21 vote on August 31

In September 1977, the Navy announced it would seek authorization from the U.S. Congress to acquire Balboa Park land through condemnation.

On March 13, 1978, the City Council rescinded its June 21, 1977 understanding with the Navy supporting the exchange of a 50-year lease of about 36 acres in Florida Canyon for the return of about 39 acres of Navy-occupied land along Park Boulevard and north of Interstate 5. Representatives Bob Wilson and Lionel Van Deerlin said the Council's action was meaningless as the federal government could take the land anyway.

The use of Murphy Canyon as an alternate Naval Hospital site became impossible, May 31, 1979, when Shappel Industries acquired a large portion of the land for the

construction of new homes.

The San Diego Chamber of Commerce, the San Diego Urban League, the Navy League, the San Diego Union, and a Committee of Citizens for Balboa Park Naval Hospital, headed by Mrs. Bea Evenson, lined up in support of a new Naval Hospital in Balboa Park while environmental groups, such as Citizens' Coordinate for Century 3, a Committee for Charter Protection of City Parks, and a Save Balboa Park Committee, expressed their opposition. As founder and head of the Committee of 100, an organization dedicated to the preservation of former exposition buildings in Balboa Park, Mrs. Evenson had already fought skirmishes with landscape protectionists. Her advocacy of more buildings in the park was in keeping with her previous commitments and may have been a payback arrangement for support the Committee of 100 had received from the U.S. Navy command.

After a bitter campaign, 61.2 percent of San Diego voters, September 18, 1979, approved giving the U.S. Navy a lease to 38.9 acres of Florida Canyon in exchange for an even number of acres of park land occupied by the Navy. The vote was 89,042 yes, 56,232 no, or 5.5 percent short of the two-thirds margin required by the City Charter

Secretary of the Navy, Edward Hidalgo responded to the defeat of the land swap by asking the Justice Department, December 26, to condemn the land in Florida Canyon.

On March 20, 1980, U.S. Judge William Enright awarded possession of about 36 acres of Florida Canyon to the Navy but left unresolved what compensation the City was to get for giving up the land.

By a vote of six to one, the City Council, June 16, 1980, offered 57-acres of city-owned land on Helix Heights to the Navy as an alternative site for the hospital. For a while, it appeared the U.S. Navy would accept the new site. A study found there was plenty of room to grow, no airplanes overhead, and good freeway access from all directions.

Secretary of the Navy Hidalgo squelched the bid to shift the hospital to Helix Heights, on December 5, when he declared his decision to locate the hospital in Florida Canyon was final.

A disgruntled Mayor Pete Wilson said: The decision "makes absolutely no sense based on the recommendations made to me by (the author of the U.S. Navy study)."

Clarence Pendleton, a member of a Coalition in favor of putting the hospital in Florida Canyon may have put his finger on the reason for the U.S. Navy's last-minute reluctance to locate the hospital on Helix Heights when he told a reporter for the Los Angeles Times:

"(Helix Heights) is worth \$8 million. It could accommodate between 700 and 800 houses. We're not hurting for park space. . . . You can't put houses in

Florida Canyon."

By a vote of six to three, the City Council, December 16, adopted a resolution calling on the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to reverse Hidalgo's decision.

On July 15, 1981, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger reaffirmed former Secretary of the Navy Hidalgo's decision. In exchange for 35.9 acres of Florida Canyon, the Navy agreed to give the City 39 acres of Balboa Park, to reimburse the City for costs of moving a city-owned nursery from the canyon, to remove any buildings on the old site requested by the City, and to landscape the vacated land. The Navy would retain 35.6 acres of the old site and surgical building, number 26, built in 1957.

Superior Judge Edwin Butler March 25, 1982, decided the Balboa Park land exchange between the federal government and the City of San Diego was proper and need not be approved by the voters of the city.

As approved by the City Council, March 7, 1983, the City would receive 34.34 acres and \$6.86 million from the federal government to cover demolition of buildings and planting of the old hospital site and to make up the 1.4 acre difference in the swapped parcels. The Navy would acquire 35.935 acres of Florida Canyon and would retain 39.995 acres of land, or a total of 75.93 acres, an increase of 1.4 acres over the proposal submitted to the voters, September 18, 1979. The increase was supposedly necessary so that boundaries could conform to contours.

Ground was broken for the new hospital, October 3, 1983. The compound includes two clinic buildings, three-stories tall, two clinic buildings, four-stories tall, a central energy plant, ancillary medical buildings, three nursing towers with 565 acute-care and 200 light-care beds, a chapel, a recreational service building, and barracks for enlisted men. Plans called for between 4,000 and 5,000 parking spaces for automobiles. Principal designers were Louis Naidorf of Welton Beckett Associates, Los Angeles, and Graeme Morland of Hugh Gibbs and Donald Gibbs, Architects, Long Beach.

Syska and Hennessy, Inc. of Los Angeles supplied mechanical and engineering services and John Martin and Associates of Los Angeles supplied structural engineering. Williamson and Watts of San Diego designed a three-story Naval School of Health Services. Robert E. McKee, Inc. of San Diego built the clinic buildings, Blake Construction Co., Inc. of Washington, D.C., the main hospital buildings, and C. E. Wylie Construction Co. of San Diego a 750-car parking structure as well as the Naval School of Health Services. Navy Captain W. J. O'Donnell supervised the construction.

The hospital was completed, January 23, 1988. Moving of nearly 300 patients from the old hospital to the new began a week later. Construction costs came to \$257 million, \$36 million less than the \$293 million authorized by Congress. An additional \$100

million was spent for equipment and supplies, including 25 robots that delivered meals.

Despite its projection of parking needs, the Navy provided for only 2,730 stalls. This diminution of the original plan for 4,000 to 5,000 parking spaces accounts for some of the \$36 million cost savings on construction and leaves the Navy with a shortage of approximately 2,300 parking spaces. The building of another 750-car garage in 1990 did little to alleviate the problem.

Simultaneously with its January 23, 1988 opening, frustrated staff and patients began parking along Park Boulevard and in Balboa Park parking lots outside the hospital compound. Active-duty personnel, speaking without authorization, fired off letters to newspapers threatening another condemnation. A U.S. Naval Hospital Draft Master Plan, mistakenly released to reporters in September 1994, indicated Navy officials would like to acquire land on Inspiration Point it had surrendered to the City of San Diego in 1983 and a chunk south of the new hospital for a second entrance, for parking for staff and visitors, and for a second west-side access road to the hospital from Park Boulevard, in addition to the east-side road off Florida Drive. If these requests are not granted, the U.S. Naval Hospital may build a huge parking garage in their Florida Canyon enclosure.

Since no architecture critic in San Diego has described the effect of the new hospital on its surroundings, the designs of the buildings have not received penetrating scrutiny. Such public relations comments as have been made list specifications or repeat the opinions of designing architects. Even a novice can see that the buildings are massive and intrusive from whatever side of the park they may be seen. They have the elegance, grace, and manners of sea elephants during mating season.

To satisfy requirements ordered by a federal district court in 1983 to determine if the former Naval Hospital might be eligible for the National Register of Historic Buildings, the Navy commissioned a historic buildings' survey of the old hospital for the National Park Service. The survey, prepared by Woodruff Minor, an architectural historian, and William Rutledge, an employee of Western Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, San Bruno, California, printed in July 1987, went unnoticed in San Diego newspapers. One wonders how many similar studies published annually by the federal government at considerable expense go unread in the national archives. Be this as it may, the study researched the architectural background of the buildings. Its main conclusion is that the group is eligible for the National Register, but individual buildings are not. Since this sweeping conclusion is the closest thing to a positive statement in the survey, any attempt by the San Diego Historic Sites Board to put the surviving 1920 Administration Building on the National Register would appear to be unwarranted.

One year after the new hospital opened in Florida Canyon, its commander, Captain Carl Weslowski, admitted it could not meet the needs of 400,000 San Diego County military and retired personnel and their dependents. To take up the slack, the Navy began using clinics in Tierrasanta and South Bay and transferring to county hospitals

patients accepted by the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS).

Soon after the City reached its March 7, 1983 agreement with the Navy, skirmishes began over the use of soon-to-be-vacated buildings. City Councilman William Cleator wanted to put a Naval Museum in one of the buildings. Ron Pekarek, landscape architect hired by the City in 1981 to produce a Balboa Park Master Plan, proposed keeping the buildings for use as meeting halls, restaurants, headquarters for the Park and Recreation Department, and shops. He advocated constructing a 250-stall parking garage behind existing buildings and either a park maintenance yard or a picnic facility at the south end of Inspiration Point. Pekarek claimed the buildings represented improvements worth over \$40,000,000, they had historic value, they could produce revenue, and the cost of landscaping the grounds would be too high.

Donald Graham, January 12, 1987, asked the Council to use the old hospital buildings as a shelter for the homeless. The Grand Jury of San Diego, in a report released in October, recommended using one of the buildings as a temporary jail. These proposals and others received a flurry of media attention after which they were forgotten.

Anticipating squabbles over use of vacated land and buildings, the City Council resolved, seven to one, March 7, 1983, that the 34.54 acres it was to receive from the Navy be dedicated as perpetual parkland.

A San Diego Evening Tribune editorial, December 22, 1987, declared the new hospital buildings displayed "one of the most architecturally insensitive facades this side of the Mississippi" and castigated the Navy for its failure to screen the buildings with landscaping. Rear Admiral B. T. Hacker, commander of the San Diego Naval Base, January 14, 1988, admitted the justification for this accusation and promised the Navy would take corrective action.

Typical of the irrational zeal of U.S. Navy supporters in San Diego was a letter published in the San Diego Union, October 16, 1994, in which the writer claimed, "The Naval Hospital is a consummate work when placed alongside the desecration of (San Diego's) Santa Fe Depot by 'artists.'" Two wrongs do indeed make a right!

The Navy turned the old Naval Hospital site, including 42 buildings, over to the City, June 30, 1988. The City Council, February 23, 1988, had prepared for the reacquisition by voting to demolish all but three of the buildings: the 30,000 sq. ft. Administration Building, the chapel, and the 9,100 sq. ft. library.

To facilitate its plans for demolition and conversion the City barred people from entering the property. Plans called for using the Administration Building for Park and Recreation Department staff offices, the chapel (in a proposal backed by Councilman Ed Struikma) as a War Memorial headquarters for veterans' organizations, and the library for use by the San Diego Opera Association (changed in 1995 to use by an Indian Human Resources Center). A 15-acre parking lot to the south and west of the

Administration Building, on land owned by the City, would continue to provide spaces. A pedestrian and bicycle path would span Pershing Drive, connecting the south slopes of Inspiration Point with the Golden Hill section of Balboa Park. Whatever land was not occupied by buildings and parking lots would be used for passive recreation.

In February 1989, James G. Ashcroft, a city consultant, indicated he was leaning toward putting a water reclamation plant on five acres of Inspiration Point in a remote, little-used area.

Section 55 of the City Charter of San Diego, adopted by the voters at a general election, April 15, 1931, reads in part:

"All real property owned in fee by the City heretofore formally dedicated in perpetuity by ordinance of the Council or by statute of the State Legislature for park, recreation or cemetery purposes shall not be used for any other but park, recreation or cemetery purposes without such changed use of purpose having been first authorized or later ratified by a vote of two-thirds of the qualified electors of the City voting at an election for such purpose."

Whether any of the proposed uses for buildings and land at Inspiration Point fall under the exclusion given in the City Charter is a question for the courts, not elected officials, to decide. Since special interests, the Planning Department, and members of the City Council have arrogated to themselves the right of determining what are legitimate park uses, their decisions seem at times to be "curiouser and curiouser." Balboa Park is used for any purpose Council members authorize for they possess power to override laws to the contrary.

In the past many people have expressed dissatisfaction with the location of the Naval Hospital in Balboa Park, including H. C. Hopkins, George W. Marston, John Nolen, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and the 1960 Bartholomew Planners. Even the Pekarek Landscape Group, which has indicated its desire to keep as many of the former Naval Hospital buildings as possible, has admitted: "Potential uses for interim or permanent reuse of these structures are not necessarily compatible with traditional park use, depending on the perspective of the individual, group or official making the definition."

One of the strongest criticisms of the U.S. Naval Hospital location in Balboa Park came from a Citizens' Report signed in February 1926 by Josephine Seaman, Mrs. A. Muehleisen, Mrs. Walter Austin, G. A. Davidson, M. L. Ward, and E. L. Hardy.

The report read in part as follows:

"What are the fundamental principles that should control in the allocation of functions and institutions in Balboa Park? Clearly they are: First, that the functions and institutions should be city functions and institutions; therefore, they should not be state and they should not be federal. Because of this

principle, the placing in Balboa Park of the U.S. Naval Hospital undoubtedly was a mistake, not so much a mistake as the placing there of the marine base and naval training center would have been . . . but a mistake nevertheless.

"The park belongs to the City of San Diego. The land was dedicated 'to be for a park' for the people of San Diego and their children forever. . . . Functionally speaking, there is no doubt what the park is for. There it lies midway between the commercial and industrial San Diego and the San Diego of homes, schools, and churches - - - its manifest destiny that of being itself a mediating home of the recreational and cultural soul of San Diego."

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