The Lunada Bay we never knew

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Special to the News

Anyone who has walked the bluffs of Lunada Bay
has met Gunther, the
laid-back tiger-striped tabby
who spends his days lying
in the sun, chasing ground
squirrels and watching
surfers scramble up and
down the narrow paths to
the shore below. Visited by
flocks of pelicans expertly
gliding by, residents walking
their dogs, and seals
sunning themselves on the
rocks, Gunther’s world is a
quiet one.

Things would have been
different had any of the
plans for Lunada Bay pro-
posed over the years ever
been realized.

The first plan was laid
out in 1927 by Frederick
Law Olmsted Jr., famed
landscape architect of the
Palos Verdes Project. Olm-
sted’s “pleasure basin” would
have created an area for
“bathing, boating and water-
side amusements.”

Olmsted’s plan included a
breakwater extending from
Resort Point across part of
the bay. A breakwater from
this end would be more
pleasing to the landscape,
provide shelter for boats,
and allow bathers to take
advantage of the sea
breezes, rocky shores, and
heavy surf in the neighbor-
ing cove.

On the inside of the break-
water, a water-tight pool
with controlled water intake
was planned. Such a pool
would prevent the dense
seaweed in the bay from
floating in. The plans called
for dressing areas, a loggia,
and even a restaurant near
the pool.

Since stairs from the bluff
top to the shore — equiva-
lent to the height of a 10-
story building — were out of
the question, Olmsted pro-
posed a road starting at
Avenida Mirola and continu-
ing down the canyon on the
southeast side. Ample park-
ing near the pool was also
proposed.

The total cost for the
project ranged between
$132,000 and $200,000; a
hefty sum in 1927. The eco-
nomic collapse of the late
1920s and the financial
difficulty faced by the Palos
Verdes Project and the Palos
Verdes Homes Association
are believed to have pre-
vented the project from
being realized.

The next plan for Lunada
Bay was the 1938 proposal
for the “Lunada Bay Park.”
The Homes Association and
Palos Verdes Estates Inc.,

by card survey was sent to
residents in the area.
With a close 76 to 76
vote, residents who disap-
proved won, thus ending
the boat marina plan for
Lunada Bay.

Ten years later, in
1969, the city of Palos
Verdes Estates estab-
lished the Palos Verdes
Estates Shoreline Pre-
servation, which includes
Lunada Bay, to comply
with the 1963 Tidelands
grant requiring coastal
cities to improve, restore
or preserve their t ide-
lands.

The Shoreline Preserve,
deed restrictions, city
zoning ordinances and
the requirements of the
Tidelands grant make
future projects like those
proposed over the years
highly unlikely. Gunther
can rest easy knowing his
favorite napping spots,
spectacular sunsets and
cool ocean breezes will
only be interrupted by
the sound of rocks tum-
bbling along the shore in
the waves below.

Dennis Piotrowski and Monique
Sugimoto are adult services
librarians for the Palos Verdes
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