

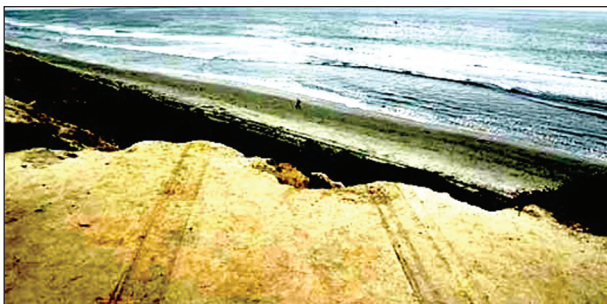


Walter Mencken's

SD ON THE QT

Almost factual news

Chargers Bye-Week Report, Part 1:



He survived!

Junior Seau speaks: "Yes, I drove off a cliff, but I never intended to take my own life. I also never intended to serve as a metaphor for my former team, the San Diego Chargers. C'mon, guys, get it together. I changed the headline by avoiding charges and living large in Vegas with a hot blonde; what have you got for a second act?"

Chargers Bye-Week Report, Part 2:



SPECIAL TEAMS

Some Teams Are More Special Than Others

We'd still need to keep Kaeding, probably.

Coach Norv Turner hangs controversial poster in Special Teams locker room, denies seeing anything controversial about it. "Motivational? Yes. Controversial? Hardly. Controversial would have been actually signing this crew and sending them out onto the field for the kickoff at Indianapolis."

Chargers Bye-Week Report, Part 3:



"Play it again."

Chargers head coach and chief aesthete Norv Turner spends bye week encamped in his private folly, wrapped in his meditation kimono and obsessively rewatching Jean Renoir's *The Rules of the Game*. "It always comes back to Renoir. Sometimes, when I turn off the subtitles and just marinate in the French, I can almost hear what it is I'm struggling against. The dark violence at the very heart of convention. We need to become evanescent, mercurial — in a word, unpredictable. I find myself thinking of the '85 Bears, wondering, 'Who will serve as our Refrigerator Perry, somehow catching a pass and lumbering into the end zone?' Alas, so far, it's a mystery."

Upstairs, Downstairs

Employees on disabled cruise ship, faced with fast-thawing delicacies, hold massive staff party while passengers munch Spam and sandwiches.

"An all-night lobster orgy."

THE NATIONAL CITY MOTEL 6 WHERE CARNIVAL CRUISE LINES PUT UP ITS EMPLOYEES FROM THE *SPLENDOR* AFTER THE CRIPPLED SHIP WAS HAULED INTO SAN DIEGO:

"God, but it was awesome," said Javier Bustamante, who has spent the past ten years washing dishes for rotund Americans fond of eating their own weight in canapés during weeklong excursions in a boat outfitted with more amenities than your average



You get the picture. Get it? You "get" the picture? Ha ha!

tropical island nation. He was recalling the first night of the mostly horrible 17-day (well, it felt like 17, anyway) ordeal faced by the passengers and crew of the *Splendor* after a fire left the ship without electricity, propulsion, or toilet paper.

Mostly horrible, but not entirely so. "When the power cut out, we stood in the dark for all of ten seconds before Ernesto the line cook lit a pot of Sterno and warned the kitchen crew about the dangers of unrefrigerated shellfish. We had laid in something like 600 pounds of frozen lobster tails, and they all had to be taken care of within a few hours. Fortunately, we had enough Sterno to get the water boiling and enough crushed ice to keep the ship's Champagne supply cold while we boiled up the lobster and melted about 40 pounds of butter. I can't even describe what followed."

Of course, the passengers were hungry as well. And even amid all that lavish indulgence, said Bustamante, the crew sought to remain professional. "We drew straws, and poor Elena from housekeeping got put on dinner detail for the ship's first seating. I don't think she's cooked a meal since she came onboard six years ago — certainly never in a ship's galley in near-darkness. Eventually, somebody suggested she just make sandwiches, and from the look on her face, you could tell it was a mercy. To this day, we haven't figured out what it was she put on them. One thing is certain, however: it wasn't lobster."

Bustamante rubbed his belly fondly and took a sip of his Corona. "Damn," he said, smiling.

WHO PLAYS WHO

CHARGER TROUBLE EDITION



Walter Matthau coached *The Bad News Bears*.



Steve Crosby coaches the Chargers' Special Teams.



In *13 Rue Madeleine*, James Cagney plays a spy chief whose slip in judgement costs him dearly.



Nate Kaeding had a slip against the Rams that cost him dearly.



In *A Beautiful Mind*, Russell Crowe played a genius mathematician whose talents were nevertheless blocked by schizophrenia.



Mike Scifres is a genius punter whose kicks are nevertheless blocked by opposing teams.



Football are sometimes referred to as pigskins.



Many Chargers have been treating them like greased pigs.