

4/28/71
the reactor

By Paul Azevedo



It was in the early months of 1974. Pacifica have been no neighborhood mothers diapered babies. busybodies who provide the cohesion of small towns. Some husbands waxed cars.

Teens hung around the Abode corner. The fanatics came and went. They tortured their

Council meetings took too much time. A few fish were caught at the pier. In other words, things were about as usual. Around them on Northridge drive the neighbors watched the story of the kidnap on TV, read about it in the newspapers, and blankly ignored their neighbors in word broke of the kidnapping. The great-front.

As Pacificans did the things that needed doing, ignored their neighbors in word broke of the kidnapping. The great-front. A martyr is a victim granddaughter of gold miner-millionaire George who reacts heroically. The Hearst had been seized at victim showed she was no her Berkeley apartment. heroine. Snatched from a standard Berkeley living "arrangement" half way to marriage, she was bent, until she broke. She gave in. She was no martyr.

Some 10,300 feet south of the Tribune offices in Pacific Manor, golfers were hitting into sandtraps. Some 10,300 feet north, give or take 200 feet, the young kidnapped woman was living in fear. For 57 days she was kept locked in a closet. She was degraded, humiliated, abused. Her abductors had an uncommon combination of skill and luck. They programmed events. Avoid arrest? Done. Humiliate the capitalist parents? Done. Create a caricature of Christian concern for the poor? Done. Get their weird propaganda dispersed around the world? Done. The last and strangest part of the programmed their victim into becoming something like themselves. They skillfully maneuvered her so that the world, the courts, the police came to think of her as the prime culprit.

Malvina Reynolds had immortalized Doelger homes as "ticky tacky," places where white suburbanites raised "beautiful children" to go to the "yoo-na-vers-i-tie." The hideout had been cleverly chosen. Windy, foggy, not far east of a coastal bluff, it was a kind of semi-cul-de-sac, where few who didn't have business or homes would go. Yet it was not a neighborhood where people spent time outdoors. The neighbors seem to have been she would be arrested,

treated as a criminal.

Grotesquely, they were right. When the victim was captured for the second time, this time by the FBI, she was put on trial, convicted, and given a preliminary sentence.

only then was her own kidnapping brought up and her kidnappers charged, almost as an afterthought.

Repelled by her lack of heroic stature, the public's original sympathy was refocused into condemnation.

The jury was carefully chosen. No one on the panel had ever been kidnapped, none had been locked in a closet fearing for his life. If one had been, he would have been immediately dismissed, "for bias."

Even so, one juror would have voted for acquittal, and the jury would have been hung. But ironically, he was the 13th juror. His opinion and judgment did not count.

The cunning pressures had done their work. The descendant of the gold miner had buckled under the threats and the abuse. Wouldn't you have? I assume that I would. Compassion is called for in the final sentencing. The punishment this young woman has received for carrying her family name is already beyond all understanding. First from the fanatics, then from the authorities supposed to protect her, she has been grossly abused.

If she was to be turned loose today, she would never be free of that February day in 1974. In many respects she is already dead. To further destroy her is almost superfluous.