

*Sounds of the
Day & Night*

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Most of us have special memories, gathered during our lifetime, such as people, places, favorite foods, etc. How about sounds, both pleasant and unpleasant? Remember some of those sounds? I sure do. I remember, as a kid in the thirties, the ferry trips from Sausalito to the Ferry building in San Francisco, the deep pounding of the ferry's engines, the boat whistles and the grinding and groaning of the vessel's hull against the pier as it slid into the dock. I remember waking up in a San Francisco hotel room to all the noises of a city preparing for the day. Many of the delivery trucks were propelled by chain drives, had solid rubber tires and stiff springs, hitting bumps, crossing street car tracks with loads of shifting cargo, lots of noise and vibration. Add the street cars and cable cars rumbling down the tracks with bells clanging. I would rush to the window to see, as well as hear, all this wonderment. In later years, during World War Two, when visiting my sister in San Francisco, I would listen to the distinct sound of the twin Allison aircraft engines of the P-38 fighter planes flying over the city day and night. Locally, I remember the fog horns, one at Table Bluff and one at the entrance to Humboldt Bay. On a foggy night, you could hear the one horn, followed by the lower pitch of the other horn a few seconds later. Staying in the hills near Eel Rock, on a clear night, I could hear the wailing, lonely whistle of the N.W.P. steam locomotive echo up and down the canyon. Living on the west side of Eureka, on a quiet night, I could hear the steam locomotives huffing and chuffing as they would position their flat cars to dump Redwood logs into the ponds fronting the bay; followed by the sound of logs crashing into one another combined with a huge splash as they hit the water. The steam whistles of the lumber mills signaled work shift endings, with the huge saws whirring and the clank of conveyors. Ships, entering and leaving the bay, whistled signals and tugboat horns tooted in reply. World War Two brought air raid siren testing and the building of dry docks, a twenty four hour operation, complete with the sound of pneumatic chipping hammers, with the deep banging of heavy metal against hollow steel. The fire horn, at city hall, summoning fire fighters and signaling the noon hour, had a pleading sound and was unnerving when it blew in the middle of the night. All those sounds are of days gone by, never to be duplicated. A recent Letter to the Editor complained of the pile driver noise from the construction of the Holiday Inn Express Hotel. Yes, it was noisy, but I kind of liked it. Now the noise is gone, just another memory, one that triggered this reminiscing.

Fred Nelson for Community Comment