

Navy protesters giving sleepy town of Clyde a real rude awakening

By Howard Mintz
SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

CLYDE — At one time, this two-block town in Contra Costa County was affectionately known as the "Rainbow Village" because its eclectic blend of old houses reflected such an array of colors.

Clyde is made up of nothing more than those houses and roughly 450 residents. There is no convenience store, no town hall, not even a single gas pump. There once was a luxury hotel, but that was demolished long ago.

Plunked in the imposing shadow of the Concord Naval Weapons Station, Clyde always has been the type of place where, as one resident puts it, "You sit around in the summertime and hear the owls and listen to the bats flapping in your neighbor's attic."

But since June, Clyde has lost its sense of benign isolation. Anti-war protesters have camped out daily at the doorstep of both the town and the weapons station, and if Clyde had a rallying cry of its own now, it might be, "You've had your say — it's time to leave."

"We had blocked them out of our sight, but every now and then they get a new shipment of idiots," said Alice Davis as she strolled her baby in Clyde Park the other day.

'We're just tired of looking at them'

— Alice Davis

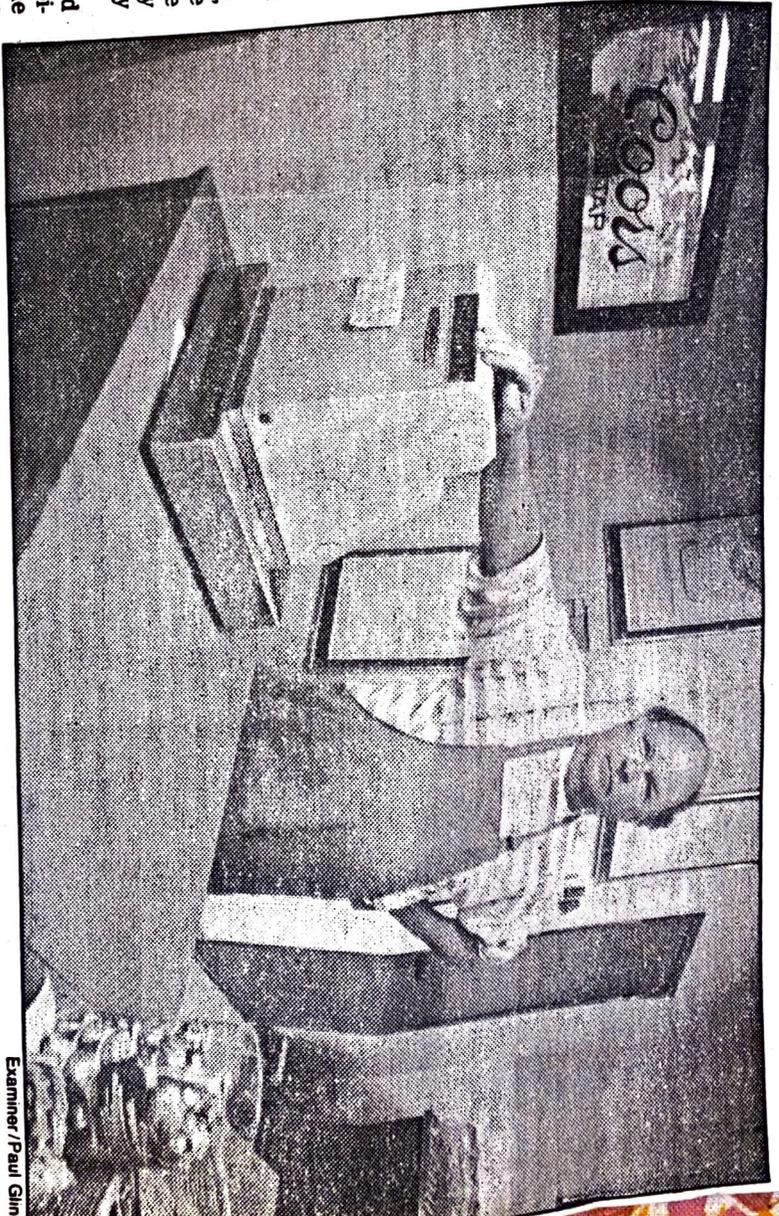
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Over the past eight months, Clyde residents have not been able to ignore the protesters because they are entrenched along the only road that leads to their community — Port Chicago Highway.

Residents have complained about unsightliness, a portable toilet that until recently stood in the tall grass of Clyde Park, and a transient motel for protesters. Some say they won't allow their children to play in the park.

And when protesters block the railroad tracks to keep trains from reaching the weapons station, residents must sit and wait to reach their homes only a few hundred yards away. One said he once had driven around to Pittsburg and looped back to Clyde after sitting for an hour at the tracks, unable to get to his house.

"It's a real pain in the rear end," said Charles King, owner of the



Charles King owns the Port Chicago Grocery, which is just 800 yards from the naval station gate.

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"Every time they cause a disturbance at the base, they don't let the Navy personnel off the base, and I lose a couple hundred dollars a day in business. Then there's some living in our parking lot. (One man) was out there for four months. In the middle of the night he'd use my building as his bathroom. Then in the morning they come in and use the paper towels.

"They're just always using everything, and they don't contribute any money. I couldn't say that all of them combined down there have spent \$100 since they've been here."

As a result of such complaints, many residents have signed a petition to force protesters to leave. They plan to present the petition to the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors Tuesday.

"We are not denying them their First Amendment rights," said Clyde resident Don Eam, who initia-

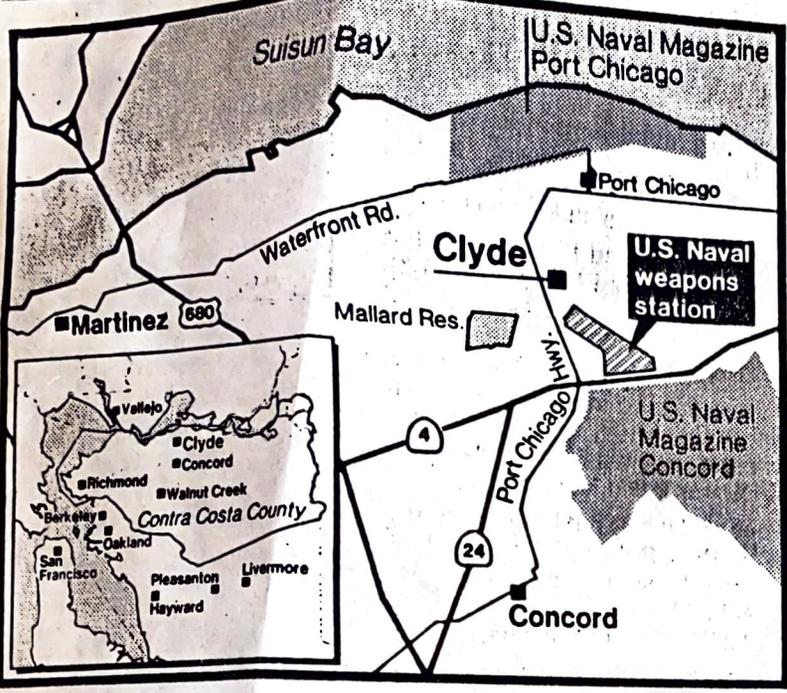
ated the petition drive. "They've made their point. Now, they've become a nuisance."

The protesters arrived in June to demonstrate against U.S. military aid to Central America and munitions shipments from the naval station. The protest escalated in September when protester Brian Wilkenson was run over by a train as he knelt on the railroad tracks.

By that time, Clyde residents knelt on the railroad tracks.

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CLYDE
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...ready realized their coexistence with the Navy was being tested in a new way.

Clyde was established around World War I with the Navy in mind, and it served as a housing community for workers at shipyards in Port Chicago.

The town, with backyard wooden toolsheds and pickup trucks in almost every driveway, over the years has become insulated from change.

As a result of the protest, though, change has been thrust on Clyde. Many residents would rather have demonstrators remain than see the Navy do something drastic to keep them out.

The Navy recently suggested putting up a fence to block off Port Chicago Highway to all but Clyde residents, an idea that has not been well-received.

"It would make it like a prison," said resident Kimberly Gomez. Clyde is special, and to do that to them away would be against everything Clyde stands for."

Edward Klim, whose corner

house is nearest to the protest site, said, "I'm not interested in people putting me under martial law. (The protesters) are a big pain in the neck, but I've lived near worse."

But the Navy, though tired of the protest, said the town wouldn't be fenced off without the approval of residents and county supervisors. And regarding fears that the Navy might try to take over the town, the service said a takeover of the town would be too costly, rancorous and complicated to make it worthwhile.

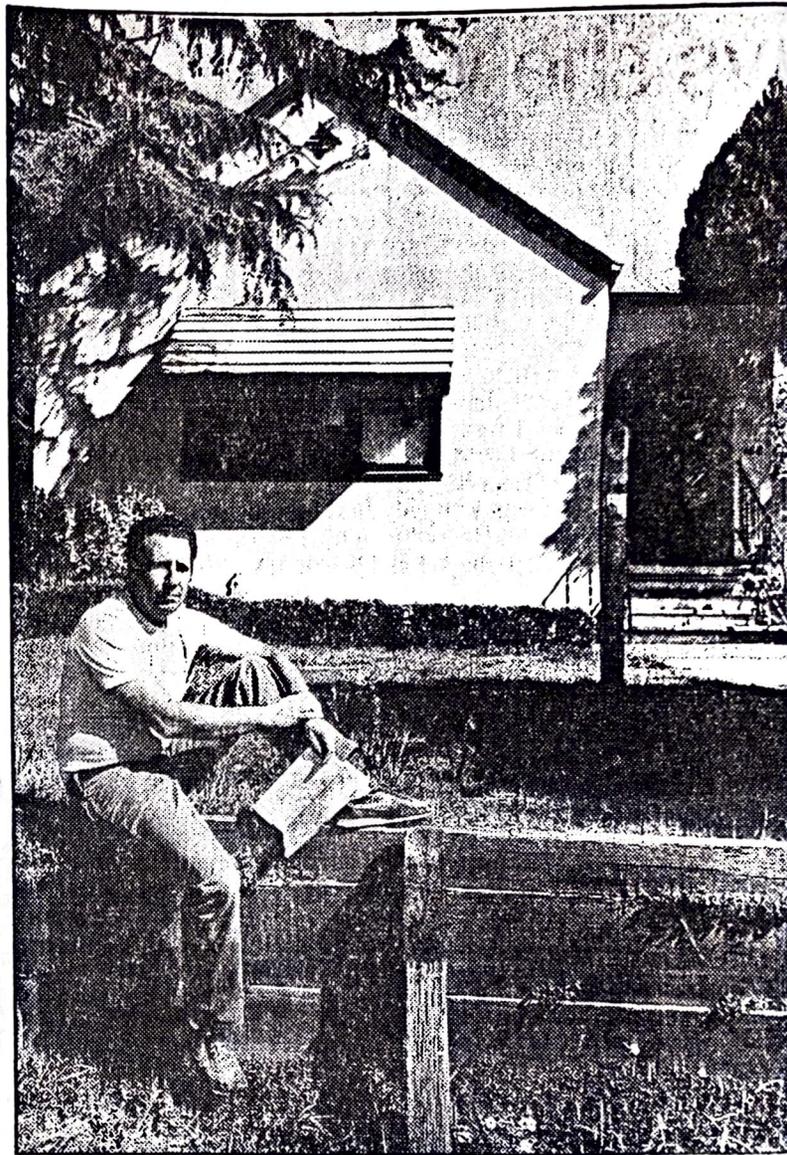
Protesters say their vigil on the fringe of the town will go on indefinitely. They insist they have made every effort to accommodate residents' concerns without compromising their political fight.

"They'd be asking us to completely give up on our beliefs if we were to just pack up and leave," said Chuck Goodmacher, a spokesman for the Nuremberg Action Group, which coordinates the protest.

Clyde residents, more interested in peace and quiet than political activism, take a different view.

"Who are they getting to?" says Howard Ward, who has lived in Clyde since 1938. "We've seen all their signs. We know what they have to say. All they have now out there is a lot of nuisance value."

from the Zellerbach Family Fund.



Examiner/Paul Gil

CLYDE RESIDENT DON ELAM, WHO BEGAN PETITION DRIVE 'They've made their point. Now, they've become a nuisance'

AUCTION OF UNCLAIMED PROPERTY
By order of Mr. Gray Davis,
Controller of the State of California
property removed from safe deposit boxes
throughout the State
February 24 & 25, 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.
Featuring over 1600 lots including watches, brooches,
rings, cufflinks, precious metals and foreign currency