

Monterey Fishing Ships "Requisitioned" Residents Relocated

In late December 1941, Italian Americans were informed they could not possess what the government called "contraband." The US government defined "contraband" as anything suggesting a link between Italian-born immigrants and Italy, which included weapons, shortwave radios, flashlights, cameras and maps. The US government arrested Italians possessing these items and those who violated other imposed restrictions.



Dux: owner Angelo Macorano. Under an act of congress, the Navy requisitioned some of the larger vessels from the Monterey purse-seine fleet for the war effort. The Dux was requisitioned and converted into a military vessel, shipped to the Philippines for service, and returned after the war. A promissory note signed by the U.S. Navy was never honored.

In addition, the US government set up what they called "Prohibition Zones" along the coast of California and the West Coast of the U.S. Some 10,000 "enemy aliens" were told that they could not longer stay in homes of businesses that were within "Prohibited Zones." This was added to the previous order which restricted the movement of more than 600,000 Italian Americans nation wide.

Many prominent Italians were affected. Joe DiMaggio's father was barred from fishing and couldn't visit the family restaurant in San Francisco. Famous opera singer Ezio Pinza was detained for months after a rival singer accused him of sending secret message to Mussolini by altering his singing tempo in Saturday morning radio broadcasts.

These restrictions affected a great many fishermen on the West Coast who, once declared "enemy aliens", were prohibited from sailing their boats or even going to the docks. Shortly after these new laws were put in place, the Navy began requisitioning privately owned fishing boats. Some of these boats measured up to 80 feet long and were previously used to catch sardines. In total, the Navy took well over 100 boats from fishermen of Italian descent.

The Navy kept these boats at great economic loss to Italian fisherman and most were returned damaged.



Diana: owner Peter Macorano. During WWII, the Diana and many other Monterey fishing boats were requisitioned and used by the U.S. Navy to patrol the Pacific Coast. The U.S. Navy gave the boat owners an agreed upon compensation. If no agreement was reached, the Navy would take vessels and give the owners whatever they decided.