

Rabid Bat Bites Torrance Teener On Summer Outing



SPACE WORKER . . . Torrance resident Captain William R. Sommer (right) receives the United States Air Force Commendation Medal in Los Angeles for his "Exceptionally meritorious service in support of the nation's man in space efforts." Lieutenant General H. M. Estes Jr. makes the presentation to the Air Force Systems Command's Mercury project officer. A graduate of Duquesne University, Captain Sommer has been in the service since July 1951.

By K. H. SUTHERLAND, M.D.
County Health Officer

Rabies from the bite of an infected bat is now recognized as a danger to human beings in many parts of the United States, including California. This was emphasized by an episode that recently occurred in the mountainous recreation area of San Bernardino County, when a vacationing teen-ager from Torrance was bitten on the finger by a bat. Upon examination at the State Laboratory, the bat was found to be rabid.

As long ago as 1911, it was discovered in Brazil that the blood feeding or vampire bat was a rabies carrier and was transmitting the disease to livestock. Through the years that followed, bat rabies was thought to be confined to cer-

tain tropical and subtropical countries in South America and to Mexico.

Bat rabies was not suspected in the United States until 1951, when health officials noted that a Texas resident died of rabies following the bite of a bat.

A SIMILAR incident occurred in Florida in 1953, and on this occasion the bat was caught and the first identification of bat rabies in this country was made. Since then, approximately 350 rabid bats have been found in 36 states. None are blood feeding.

The first rabid bat in California was discovered in Sonoma County in 1954, and, through May 1961, some 53 rabid bats of 10 different spe-

cies had been found in 23 of the state's 58 counties. No one type of area is favored. Rabid bats inhabit mountain, valley, desert, and coastal regions of the state.

IN ALL, 13 persons (3 adults and 10 children) in California are known to have been bitten by rabid bats, which has resulted in the death of one adult. All but one of these individuals exposed themselves to the disease by handling bats which showed signs of illness or erratic behavior. Bats may make unprovoked attacks, however, and three such incidents have occurred in three different California counties (Santa Clara, Madera, and Ventura).

Bats are small creatures with bodies no more than two

to three inches in length. The membrane that enables them to fly is attached to elongated fingers and shorter hind limbs and tail, and these act something like the ribs of an umbrella.

They are active only at night unless disturbed or sick, and their natural radar equipment enables them to navigate in the dark and to catch their food without running into obstacles. They live in trees, caves, old barns, hollow walls, deserted buildings, attics and the like.

THERE ARE millions of bats in the United States and most of them are insect eaters, though some eat fruits and other foods. Until this time at least, bats have been considered beneficial to man because

they consume many harmful insects. The vampire bat of South America has never been found on the North American continent, apparently preferring the warmth of the tropics.

Scientists now affirm that many bats, apparently healthy, are carriers of the rabies virus. Between 1955 and 1961, there were 38 human deaths from rabies in this county, and four of them were caused by rabid bats. The possibility that two of these four cases resulted from aerosol or droplet exposure in Texas caves, where there was a dense bat population, is presently under consideration.

It is known that the incubation period of rabies in man (the time from infection to the appearance of symptoms) is

much shorter when the rabies virus is transmitted by wildlife than when the infection is incurred from domestic animals.

SINCE ANTI-RABIES vaccine is slow in developing an active immunity to the disease, a much higher risk is therefore associated with exposure to rabid wildlife than to rabid domestic pets.

However, the administration of hyperimmune rabies antiserum has been found useful in prolonging the incubation period, thereby permitting time for the anti-rabies vaccine from an aerosol or droplet.

Individuals can best protect themselves against the bite of a rabid bat by leaving them alone.

Redondo City-to-City Program Takes Award

Redondo Beach has won national honors as one of four cities in the United States conducting the finest sister city program. Redondo's sister city is La Paz, Baja California, Mexico.

The award was presented this year for the first time by the American Municipal Assn., composed of over 13,000 American cities, according to Director Patrick J. Healey in a communique from Washington, D.C.

The award is similar to the National Municipal League's "All-America" City Award, excepting only four American cities can win the AMA's International Award whereas the National Municipal League presents 11 All-America City awards annually.

MAYOR WILLIAM F. Czuleger will accept the award for Redondo Beach at the Annual Conference of the American Municipal Assn. in Philadelphia on Aug. 29 before an estimated 1,700 delegates.

The Redondo Beach sister city program, while only a little over one and one-half years old, has rapidly bloomed into an internationally recognized and tremendously effective project — it has been used as a model by many other California communities.

Mayor Czuleger praised many individuals for leadership in the program but pointed out that the project is one of people-to-people and credited the city's success to the many citizens of Redondo Beach and La Paz who have donated so much of their time and resources.

The People-to-People program was instigated by former President Dwight D. Eisenhower and was designed to improve international understanding. It enjoys the full support and cooperation of the United States Information

Agency and the United States State Department.

THE REDONDO BEACH program, although supported strongly by the city government and coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce, is principally a "grass roots" organization, Chairman LeRoy L. Center said. Center, a prominent South Bay attorney, is former mayor of Redondo Beach and was responsible for the program's start in Redondo Beach. City Councilman Norman W. Ruestow was the first chairman.

The other prize-winner in the cities under 100,000 population was Hollywood, Fla., whose sister city is San Salvador, El Salvador.

The winning cities in the over 100,000 category were Norfolk, Va., and Tacoma, Wash., both of whom have affiliations with Japanese cities — Kokura and Moji, respectively.

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