

MEMORY FORM

Lorna McNeur © Thesis 1979-80

Topoanalysis

Virtues of shelter are so simple, so deeply rooted in our unconscious that they may be recaptured through mere mention . . . a poet's word, because it strikes true, moves the very depths of our being.

(*Poetics*, p. 12)

Gaston Bachelard's philosophical investigation in his book *Poetics of Space*, defines 'topoanalysis' as a "psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives".

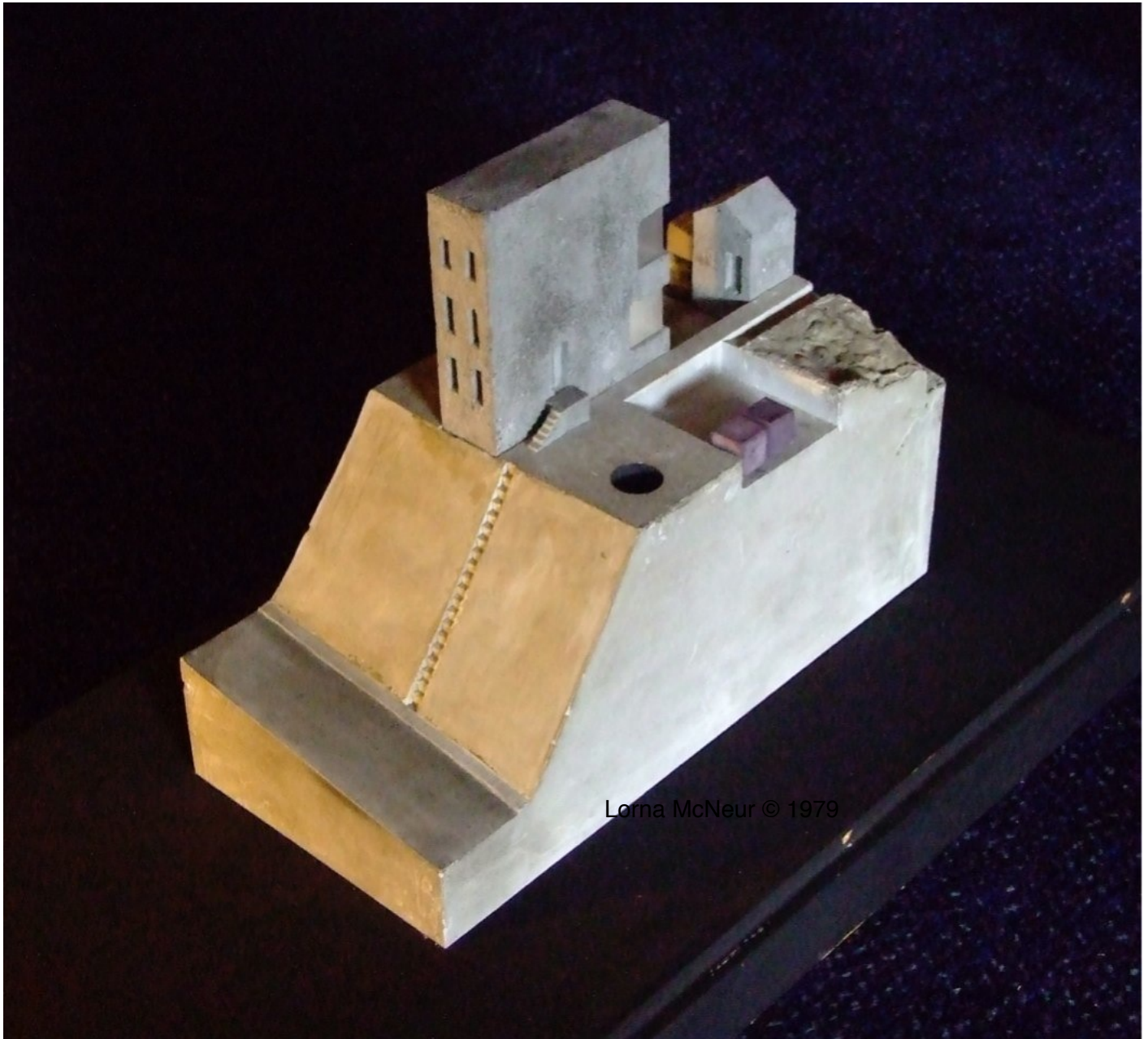
(*Poetics*, p. 8)

As a child, my mother was an Abstract Expressionist painter, expressing both personal and archetypal concepts on canvas, whilst my father was a Mathematician, Philosopher and Theologian, having published a book entitled, *Space, Time, God*. Because of my mother's need for continual transformation, this family of two adults, five children and various pets, moved house *at least* every year of our family lives. By the time I was eighteen, I had lived in about twenty-two 'homes' that were either: houses, apartments, lofts, a boat, a trolley-car office, and various other imaginative interpretations of 'home'. While this was on the one hand, deeply unsettling, it also hugely informed our lives, especially our one-year trip around the world by ship, when I was nine years old. Seeing and experiencing the lives of people from many cultures, and visiting numerous museums, cathedrals, monuments, and architectural sites throughout childhood, clearly influenced future interests in my adult life; as an Artist, Architect and Educator.

These models are constructions of some of the many places in which I had lived or travelled during childhood. I call these models 'memory form', exploring both the *actual places* as well as the *memory spaces* sitting quietly and invisibly inside. This process of reconstructing (and making visible) houses, gardens, rooms, or monuments embodying potent memories, is richly rewarding.

The house shelters daydreaming
the house protects the dreamer
the house allows one to dream in peace

(*Poetics*, p. 6)



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House with Seven Gardens

Tall thin slab house. Stoney rubbly grey like the huge side of a whale. In this house, I used to ponder the seven distinctly different *garden rooms*. They included: the circular pond room, the twin purple plumb trees, the wilderness garden, the abandoned hut, the fire garden, the Japanese sunken garden, and the sharply sloped front lawn.

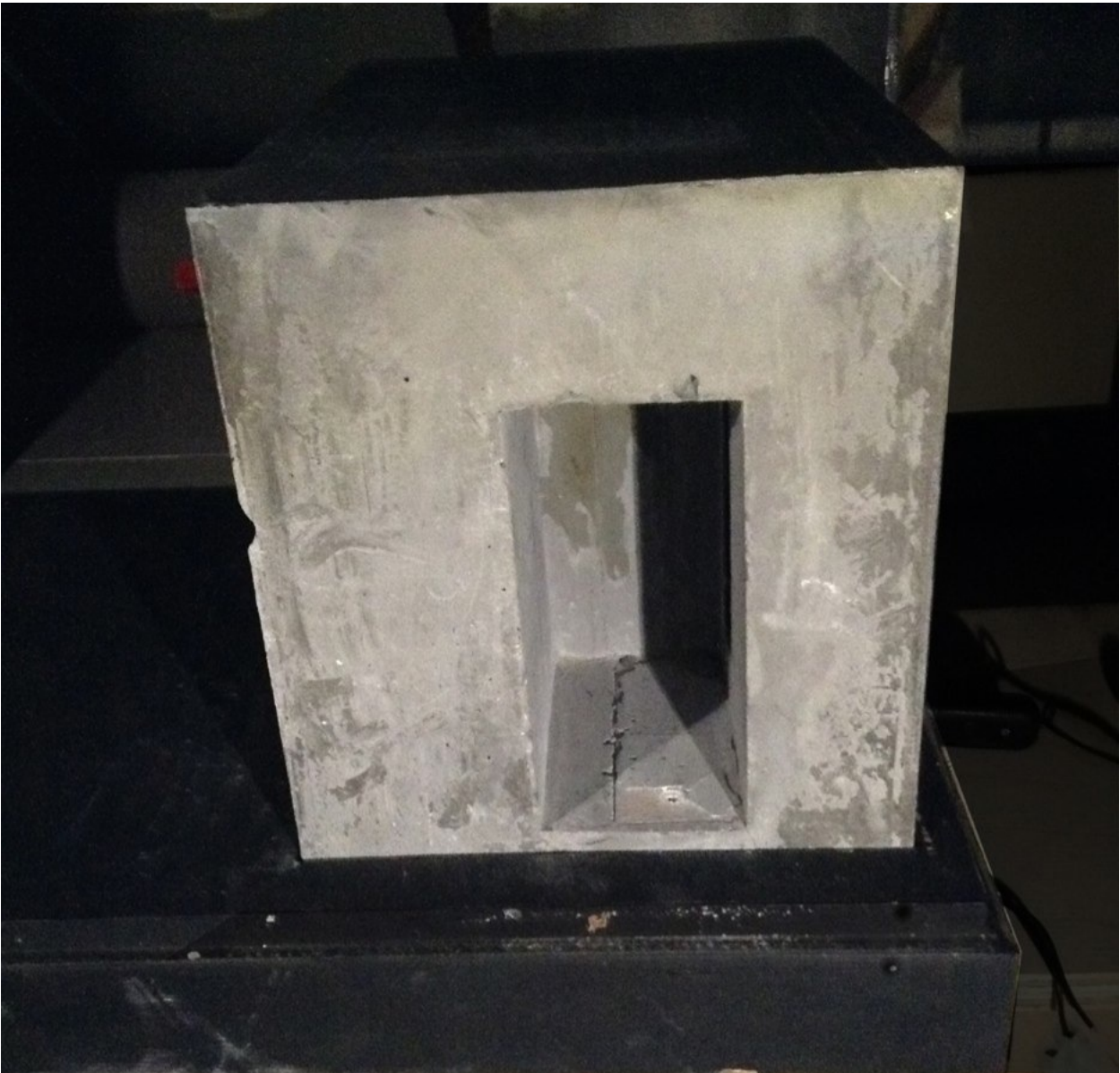


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Telephone Room

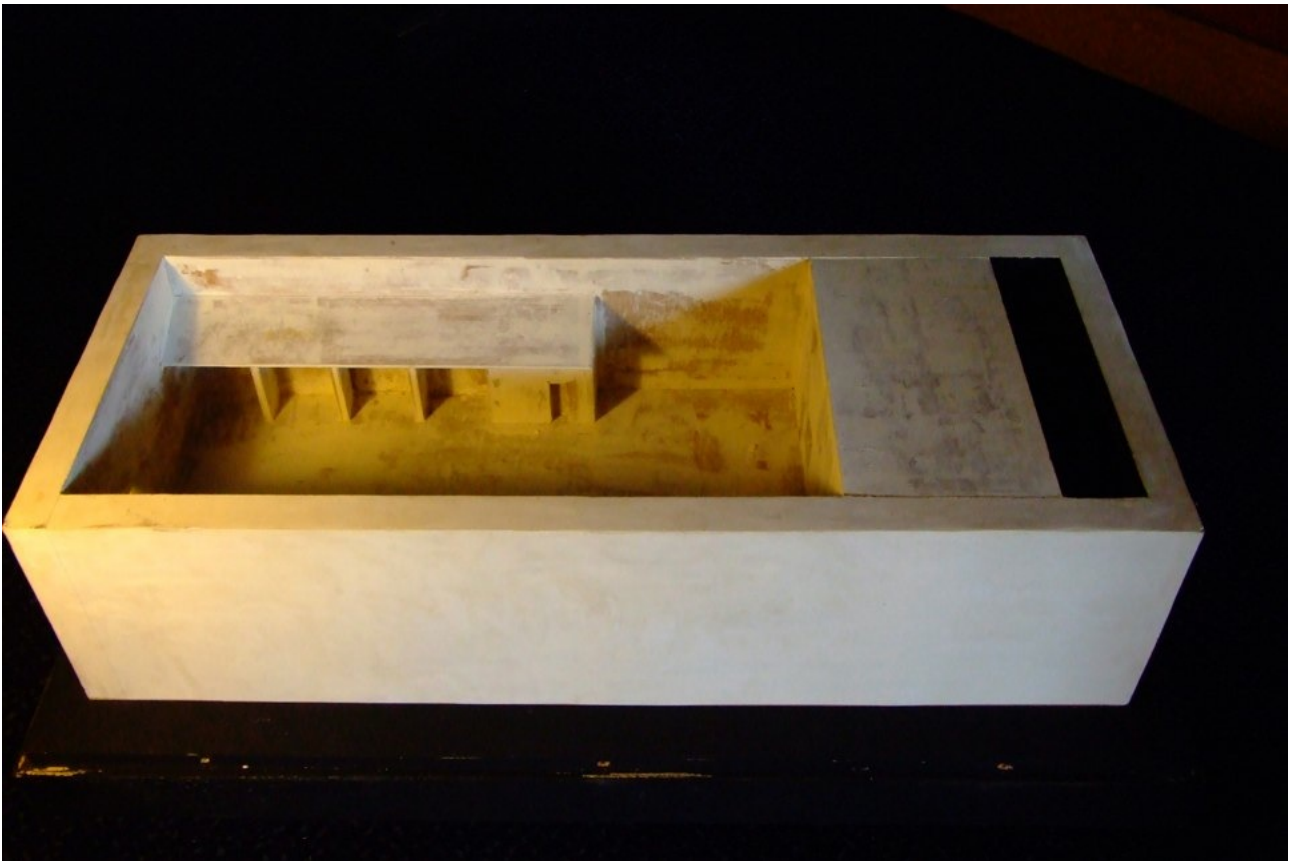
The Slab House had a telephone closet under the stairs where I learned to use the telephone, communicating with the world outside my 'family home'. Here was a small wooden panelled interior space with one hardwood shelf on which stood a heavy black telephone and an antique clock. Sitting on the stool whilst the tiny light warmly drew an arch over the telephone and clock on the counter, I would dial the number to hear the exact time being given by a recorded woman's voice, speaking the minutes and seconds passing whilst the clock would rhythmically tick the increments, chiming richly on every quarter hour. It felt both simple and hugely monumental, to be sitting in this tiny warm room and 'connecting' with the outside world through this long thin telephone wire; experiencing the movement of each moment of time.

Our house is our corner of the world
it is our first universe
a real cosmos in every sense of the word
(Poetics, p. 4)



The Crypt

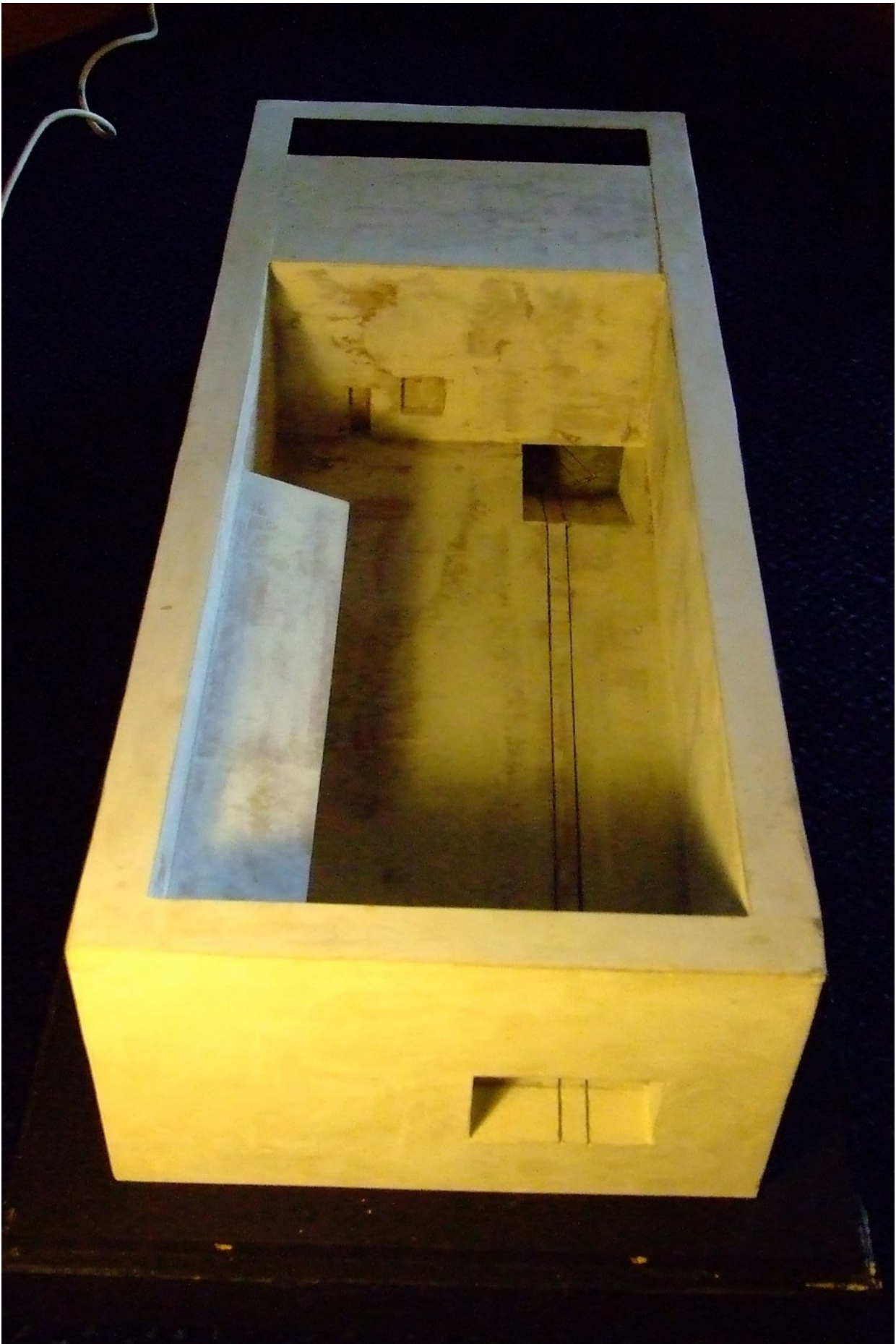
Recalling the telephone room reminded me of the crypt at the heart of the Egyptian Pyramid that we explored during our family trip around the world. The small room in the heart of the pyramidal mountain, had one tiny hole cut through the entire depth of the stone, connecting the inhabitant to the unattainable blue skies beyond. Both of these spaces, the closet and the crypt, were deep spaces, held within the body of the building, with umbilical connections to the outside world. From the womb we begin the journey and to the tomb one day we return.



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Trolley car turn-around house

One of the 'houses' we lived in was a disused trolley-car turn-around office in the San Francisco, North Beach area; home of the 1950's Bohemian culture described in books by authors like Anias Nin, Jack Kerouac, Alan Ginsberg, et al. Our front yard was the old trolley-car yard filled with dusty machines hidden away in stoa like barns. Below the office was the forbidden cellar. Stealthily, we five children would tip-toe down the steep ramp, and sneak through the groaning garage doors, to view our prize. Here was the huge horizontal turning disc with a diameter the length of a trolley car. Our challenge of pushing the disc into movement from its long-time sleep would each time be achieved by our five-strong strenuous force, after which we would rush back up into the outside world, naughtily triumphant !



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