

Mary Florence Horta was born Sept. 22, 1919, in Sao Vicente on the Madeira Islands in Portugal to Jose and Candida Garcia. The family's name was originally Gracia, but was changed when they arrived in the U.S. at Ellis Island.

At age 15, she married Manuel Gonsalves Horta at the old Mary Star of the Sea Church on Nov. 28, 1925. They went on to have two sons, Manuel John Horta and Joseph John Horta, both

techniques with others.

A party hosted by her daughter and husband, Irene and Art Almeida, was held in her honor at their home in San Pedro and was attended by friends and family members as well as the Rev. Edward Benioff, who gave her a special blessing.

LOCAL

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Coastal cleanup to be big on the small

SOUTH BAY: Heal the Bay targets foam, plastic after making gains elsewhere.

By Nick Green Staff Writer

A quarter century after a South Bay environmental issue prompted the creation of nonprofit group Heal the Bay, its largest annual event will be held today — Coastal Cleanup Day.

Last year more than 14,000 volunteers in the county picked up more than 300,000 pounds of trash.

This year's 21st annual version offers more than 60 different cleanup events throughout the county. They are listed at the organization's website at www.healthebay.org.

But just as important as actually

cleaning up beaches and waterways is the public awareness the event creates, said Heal the Bay spokesman Matthew King.

"Hopefully that has a residual effect throughout the whole year," he said. "We know we're not going to cure all the ills in a single day and we know we're not going to make the beaches immaculate."

Heal the Bay was formed in 1985 after a series of sewage spills at the city of Los Angeles' Hyperion Treatment Plant near El Segundo. In the wake of those spills, swimmers began contracting mysterious rashes believed to come from contact with ocean water.

Heal the Bay successfully worked to modernize the sewage treatment plant originally built in the 19th cen-

tury and began monitoring bacterial levels in Santa Monica Bay.

Today, while there are still "pockets" of such pollution the group keeps an eye on, it is trash pouring into the ocean that is the bigger problem, King said.

Anti-littering efforts over the years have reduced the number of large pieces of garbage volunteers see.

Instead, the three most common items are pieces of plastic and plastic foam, as well as cigarette butts. These not only last for decades, but break down into smaller and smaller pieces that create environmental havoc.

About 60 to 80 percent of all marine debris is plastic, King said.

And there are 267 species of animals worldwide that die from this stuff either by ingesting it or becom-

ing entangled in it, he added.

"It's easy to become pessimistic," King said. "Our philosophy is to take things one step at a time. ... We know we can't change the world, but we can change the streets, we can change neighborhoods."

In the South Bay, where most beaches are cleaned fairly regularly, volunteers are urged to sift through sand to find tiny items.

What may seem small and relatively innocuous to us is a matter of life and death for a fish or bird that mistakes the junk for food. Plastic accumulates in the stomach of animals and slowly kills them, often through starvation.

Small items are a major issue at Torrance beach, said Lee Myers, a resident of the city and a data man-

ager for Heal the Bay. He has given volunteers a brief lecture at the outset of the day for the past several years.

"Even though there isn't a lot of large trash down there, the small trash has a huge impact on animal life," he said. "People have to understand that most of the trash on the beach comes from storm drains and (that water) does not go through our sewer systems."

A new tool on the Heal the Bay website illustrates the depth of the problem.

What's called the Marine Debris Database shows that at Torrance beach since 1999, volunteers have prevented almost 9,000 pieces of plastic, more than 3,000 plastic foam items

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Dead sailor is ID'd as Hermosa

CLEANUP

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and more than 2,000 cigarette butts from entering the ocean — and the food chain.

Last year more than 700 volunteers — believed to be the largest number of volunteers ever at Torrance beach — showed up to clean the half-mile section of sand, said Cynthia Rosell, a Torrance city employee and volunteer beach captain.

The cleanup there, co-sponsored by the city and American Honda, is among the county's largest in terms of the number of participants. (The cleanup goes from 9 a.m. to noon, with registration at Miramar Park, 201 Paseo de la Playa.)

This year, in recognition that plastic — and specifically plastic shopping bags — are a growing environmental issue, orga-

nizers are trying a slightly different approach.

"Usually we provide a trash bag and recycle bag for collecting items on the beach," Rosell said. "This year, to reduce us creating our own waste, we're going to give out buckets in lieu of bags to the first 250 people."

Volunteers will be able to take them home for use around the house.

Youth soccer teams, children in school buses, Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce members and municipal employees are among the regulars organizers see year after year, Myers said.

"Everybody knows each other, it's like a great big party," he said. "Sometimes you go down there and dolphins (swimming close to the beach) give us a shout-out. They know."

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