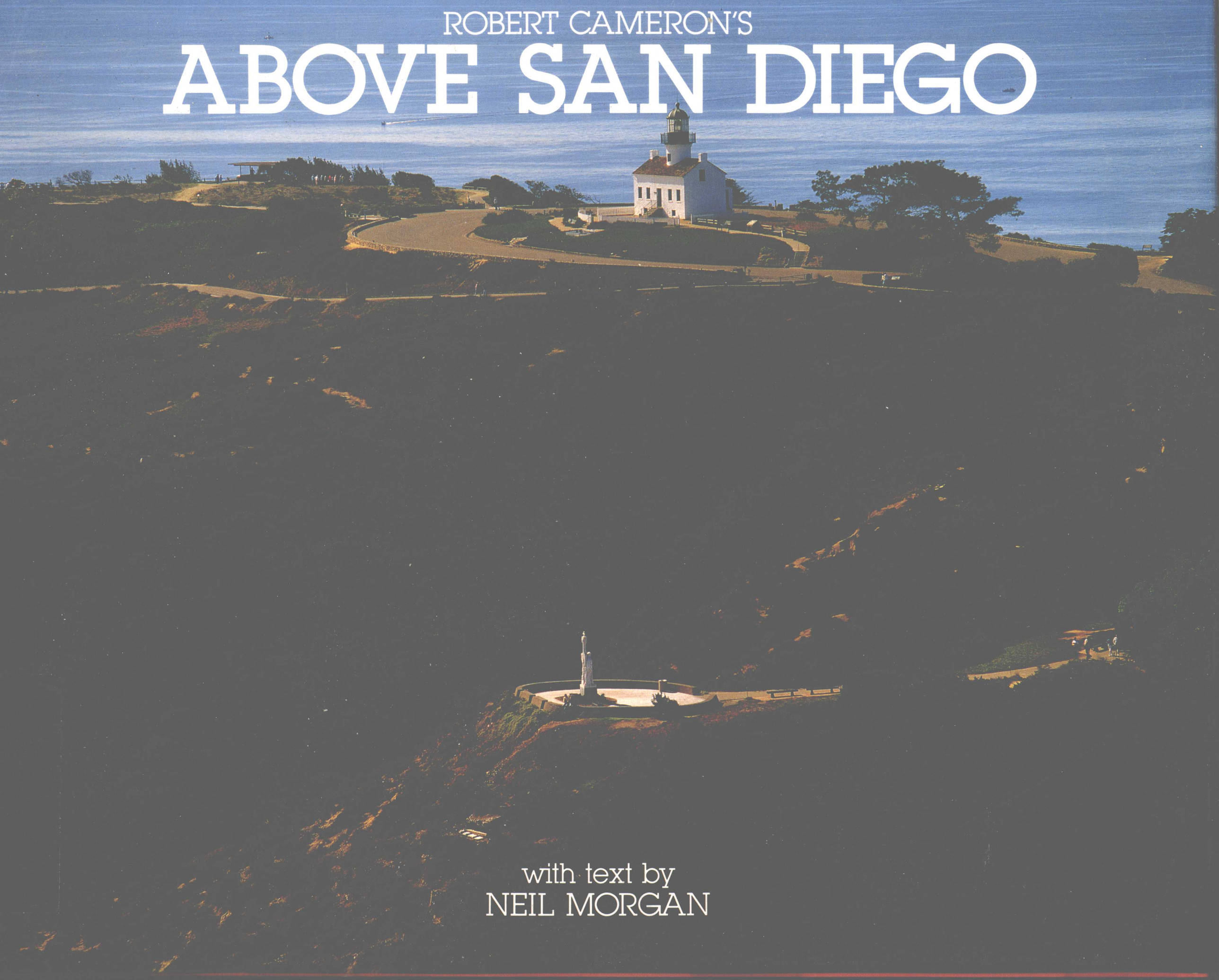
ROBERT CAMERON'S

ABOVE SAN DIEGO



with text by

NEIL MORGAN

ABOVE SAN DIEGO

by ROBERT CAMERON

A new collection of historical and original
aerial photographs of San Diego

CAMERON and COMPANY, San Francisco, California

The San Diego Aerospace Museum.

Captions on Page 160.

(opposite) The Children's Pool, a La Jolla beach.

Tourmaline Beach near Pacific Beach.

(opposite) Coronado Bridge over San Diego Harbor.

Captions on Page 160.

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ABOVE SAN DIEGO INTRODUCTION
by Neil Morgan

I first saw the book *Above London* during Christmas week of 1980 as I reveled, earthbound, in the sidewalks and streets of that city. At Foyle's, that creaky warren of books, the jacket photograph reached out and grabbed me. There was the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, as I always imagine it but never quite find it: austere and romantic, symmetric, alone, set apart in time, just as Palladio and Inigo Jones and Sir Christopher Wren must have intended.

I had not yet met Bob Cameron then, nor heard of his way with Pentax, gyroscope, and helicopter. But the words of the book were from Alistair Cooke, a man of impeccable alliances. I bought it instantly as though it were my only chance, and lugged it home to California.

Since then Bob Cameron's books have reversed my long aversion to aerial photography. I have been taking pictures, sometimes seriously, since I was a boy, and to me, aerials were faceless maps. But Bob confirms the caveat we learn from travel, from all of life: our rewards rise as we invest more of ourselves. He is a clever and indefatigable photographer, but much more: a literate, thinking man who uses his camera to share his own prejudices and perceptions. It seems extraordinary to me that he can show us how he feels about the world's great cities in portfolios of photographs that are essentially without people. His cities are dazzling, sometimes damning evidence of who their people are, what their priorities have been, and how they have chosen to live.

In the case of San Diego, Bob Cameron's vision is an astonishment even to a writer who has spent much of forty years in chronicling the city. For me, part of the pleasure of our collaboration was in seeking out visuals that tell even more than they show: insights on the minds and hearts of the people of San Diego, their passions and eccentricities, their styles and standards or lack of them, and the devious ways in which they have sought to manage their environment. That final revelation is crucial evidence. San Diego is a city of migrants who have adopted the setting. There are few large cities so dominated by those who have voluntarily moved from another place. Many came to San Diego because they admired its space and pace. Yet by coming they altered both, and created the political issue that has become dominant: the control of growth.

Just as we study Rome through its roads and viaducts, we draw a hint of what San Diegans are thinking from their water pipelines, snaking for hundreds of miles across desert and mountains, and from the intricate web of freeways that bisects mesa and canyon, divides cities, and creates a mobile, restless, and often rootless society. We understand more by seeing what San Diegans have done with their harbors and beaches. There is a natural harbor from which cargo is strangely absent, its shores diverted to marinas, lagoons, beaches, yacht clubs, resorts, restaurants, research laboratories and new towns. We see a conglomerate of communities that fronts on the Pacific Ocean and tails back to coastal mountains: the tiered scale of status in the leisure worship that is fancied to be inherent in America's sunset shore.

We find malls rising like little downtowns, a Californian version of community centers for shopping, dining, entertainment, and public forum.

We look down on bulldozers leveling dusty suburban hillsides for new towns, and the fields of outdoor nurseries that provide instant landscaping for those towns. We trace some of the canyons around which San Diego has grown, arteries of natural open space that pump airiness into older residential neighborhoods.

Gazing down into spacious estates in the privileged enclaves of San Diego, and into neighborhoods blighted by drugs and crime, we ponder the great divides of our cities, accentuated in San Diego by its natural beauty and acquired prosperity.

A photograph taken along the international border between Tijuana and San Diego, the two largest cities of the long border between our two nations, explains a collision of cultures and economics that is at once San Diego's agony and its window of opportunity We see a boundary between two societies that is almost painful in its contrasts, as clear and sharp as if it were a line drawn by an artist.

It is possible through these photographs to track the beginnings of San Diego, which were also the beginnings of modern California, and to follow the city's meandering evolution from a Spanish pueblo to an insular, transplanted Midwestern town by the sea, to a Navy city, and on to its present rich diversity. The migrants of this generation have been a refreshing new breed, and they have superimposed on old San Diego their demanding visions of present and future. It remains a hugely livable city. But San Diego has become more: a threshold city that has not yet passed its point of no return. It is a magnet for innovators in science and technology, and for those who envision America's future in the Pacific basin.

I have written books about San Diego, and edited others, and I am somewhat startled to conclude that Bob Cameron's beautiful volume may come to serve as the most useful single book about this fluid and complex city. From the altitudes at which Bob Cameron works his spell, above the human hubbub, issues and answers seem clearer. It seems easier to decide just what is going right or wrong.

THE OUTER SHORELINE

Beside the beach where San Diego and Orange counties meet, about sixty miles northwest of San Diego Harbor, Southern California Edison Co. operates San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station. It's a veteran: Its first generator went into service in 1968. Three reactors can produce 2,625 megawatts of electricity, one-fifth of the company's electrical load for the 50,000-square-mile Southern California region that ranges from Kern County to San Diego. To many San Diegans, Southern California Edison, based at Rosemead near Los Angeles, has become a symbol of the dreaded megalopolis at their north. San Diego-born businesses have often sold out in mergers, with corporate headquarters leaving the city, sometimes for Los Angeles. In a bitter merger battle that climaxed in 1991, Southern California Edison failed in its bid to acquire San Diego Gas & Electric Co.

(opposite) Man-made harbors like these two at Oceanside have become pivotal in Southern California's development: navigable havens along a desert coast. San Diego is built around a natural harbor; but most others, including giant Los Angeles Harbor, are man-made. So is Oceanside Harbor, center, which was dedicated in 1963, when pleasure boating was becoming as common as golfing among San Diegans. Much of the harbor site was deeded by the Marine Corps, which operates the adjacent Camp Pendleton, including its own boat basin, at bottom. The base, still mostly rangeland, provides a 17-mile-long buffer along San Diego County's north coast. It is the whimsy of San Diegans that Camp Pendleton holds back the overflowing tide of Los Angeles growth and maintains San Diego as a snug cul-de-sac.

Few oceanfront homesites remain empty along the San Diego County coast, and their prices are discussed in awed whispers. Early migrants tended to avoid the oceanfront and to build homes on drier, sunnier sites, away from mildew and coastal fogs. But with later migrants from middle America and Europe, oceanfront living acquired the cachet of the ultimate. There are drawbacks. At Solana Beach, left, waves and wind have caused cliff erosion that encroaches on front yards and finally undermines house foundations. At Encinitas, right, sea walls are used to diminish tidal impact, and steep stairways are built on the face of nearly vertical sandstone cliffs between home and beach.

At Del Mar, cliffside estates overlook both the ocean and the sandy delta of the San Dieguito River, one of the San Diego rivers that, for most of each year, are sand beds. Thoroughbred trainers, fond of the racetrack "where the turf meets the surf," claim therapeutic powers for this confluence of riverbed and beach. During the track meeting, from July to just past Labor Day, Del Mar exercise boys walk horses from stables through the sand to strengthen their ankles in shallow seawater. Bing Crosby and Pat O'Brien launched the track in 1937; providing a site for the county fair was their cover story, and it was all done in the name of California's 22nd Agricultural District. In time Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz became familiar faces at the racetrack, and kept a beach home nearby. Their friend Jimmy Durante was a neighbor and a track regular too. J. Edgar Hoover and Clyde Tolson had their box during vacation weeks while old-boy Texas millionaires Sid Richardson and Clint Murchison owned the track in the name of Boys Clubs. Opening day in July, along the corridors and behind the glass walls of the directors' box at the Turf Club, remains a startling parade of movieland fashion and chutzpah, with huddled talk of deals. The track's general manager is Joe Harper, with his own showbiz connection: he's a grandson of Cecil B. DeMille. But at Del Mar political talk can override showbiz; one of the more devoted of track regulars is Robert Strauss, who interrupted his 1991 stay at Del Mar to become U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union at the time of the coup.

The annual San Diego Open is played over two municipal golf courses, built beside the site of Camp Callan, an army base in World War II. These courses are part of a startling profusion: more than fifty public and private golf courses in San Diego County. This cliffside had been city-owned land since the Mexican era. Much of it has been zoned for science research, such as that going on in the ivory-hued buildings of Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation, designed by Edward Durrell Stone (mid-right). Just beyond is the Sheraton Grande Torrey Pines Hotel.

(opposite) La Jolla Shores is part of a seventy-mile system of public ocean beaches that attracts visitors to San Diego from all over the country and the world. Kellogg Park, the grassy area above the beach, is an outpost of public access. Many of the homes along the terraces above sell, if offered, well into seven figures. But student oceanographers from nearby Scripps Institution still take advantage of their lunch breaks to dart from laboratories and plunge with their surfboards into the sea.

Scientists from this campus of Scripps Institution of Oceanography roam the world defining currents and tides, pursuing warming trends and greenhouse effects. It became a part of the University of California in 1912 with the benevolence of Ellen Browning Scripps, the maiden half-sister of newspaper publisher E. W. Scripps, who settled on a ranch at nearby Miramar. In 1960 this graduate school, the world's oldest and largest center of marine science research, became the core of the newborn University of California at San Diego. The oceanographers' long pier, a La Jolla landmark, begins at lower left. Scripps's fleet of four oceanographic research vessels and two floating platforms makes up the largest component of the U.S. academic fleet.