



Rendering courtesy of Gafcon

Rendering shows tentative plans for Seaport, the \$1.2 billion redevelopment of a portion of the downtown San Diego waterfront that includes Seaport Village.

## Co. Saw Opportunity in Struggling Competitor

**TECH:** Seismic's Buy Advances Its Position, Brings New Talent

By ELISE REUTER

Seismic CEO Doug Winter had never planned to acquire his main competitor. The sales-enablement software company had just hit its stride, nearly doubling its revenue last year, and Winter didn't want a distraction.

"We were not going out looking to buy somebody, but this opportunity presented itself," he said. That opportunity took the form of Savo Group, a legacy competitor that had been in the business since 1999. Savo was "the big fish," the

Seismic page 42

## Canine to Five: Cos. Find Dogs a Welcome Addition

**WORKFORCE:** Buildings Adapt; Perk Appeals to Millennials

By RAY HUARD

When Tien Nguyen and his three partners formed CPC Strategy — a digital marketing service in downtown San Diego — they invited the people they hired to bring their dogs to work.

"Our idea from day one was to create a work environment that people would want to come in and enjoy," said Nguyen, who usually brings his own

Pets page 36

Tien Nguyen with his dog, Pip



# RISING TO THE CHALLENGES

**BUILDING:** From Shanghai To Seaport Village, Developer Takes On the Big Jobs

By RAY HUARD

Yehudi "Gaf" Gaffen likes to fish and hunt.

When he hunts, he uses a bow and arrow instead of a gun.

When he fishes, he does a particularly difficult form of fly fishing.

As a younger man, he ran marathons.

"I was running 100 miles a week," Gaffen said.

Friends and business associates said that need to challenge himself is typical, illustrated perhaps in that Gaffen is involved in two major projects on opposite sides of the planet.

He and his partners in Protea Waterfront Development are developers of the \$1.2 billion re-

development of a 70-acre portion of San Diego's waterfront that includes Seaport Village. His project management firm, Gafcon, also is overseeing the development of a sprawling waterfront site in China along the Huangpu

Gaffen page 32



Renderings show what the Seaport San Diego development might look like at the street level.

## Gaffen:

from page 1

River spanning five square miles. The project is estimated to cost more than \$7 billion.

Gaffen sees the San Diego Seaport project as his legacy, and also the most complex project he's ever undertaken, although it's smaller than the development in Shanghai.

### 'On the Verge'

"I don't think anything as big as this has been done in San Diego," Gaffen said. "San Diego is on the verge of truly becoming one of the great cities of the world."

Final plans for Seaport are expected to be unveiled in November with final architectural designs ready in early 2019.

Gaffen said he's personally overseeing Seaport, as he calls it, while others in his company are working more directly on

planning and development of a residential community in Shanghai, said Davy Liu, whose company is the primary developer.

"We're overseeing the design of the project and the vision and the concept of the project," Gaffen said. "Once we do that, they take over the execution."

Liu said he'd heard of Gaffen through business associates and was impressed by a model of Seaport Gaffen presented at a real estate development exhibition in San Diego.

### Building Confidence

After working with Gaffen for more than two years on the Shanghai project, Liu said Gaffen "was more than we expected."

"He assembled a professional team, including the architect, the designer and even some of the business operators," Liu said. "Everything he promised, he delivered."

A big difference between the Shanghai and the San Diego project is that every-



Gaffen in Seaport and in a Chula Vista shopping center.

### Taking on Challenges

"He enjoys the challenge. The bigger the project and the more complex it is, the more he thrives on the challenge," Schwartz said.

Gaffen's fishing and hunting buddy and former guide, Steve Eadie, said that sense of wanting a challenge comes across in Gaffen's choice of hobby —

who cares about people."

In college, Gaffen started out studying civil engineering at the University of Cape Town but found it too distant from real projects. He earned a degree in construction engineering.

"I always knew I wanted to build things," Gaffen said. "I always loved building scale models."

Driven by the political turmoil in South Africa, Gaffen and his wife-to-be, Pam, came to San Diego in 1979.



Gafcon is overseeing the vision and conceptual design of a master-planned waterfront community in Shanghai.

Gaffen's parents fled their home countries in Eastern Europe before World War II to escape anti-Semitism.

His mother was born in Latvia, his father in Lithuania.

They were able to obtain visas to South Africa, which was welcoming Jewish immigrants. His parents left their parents, grandparents and siblings, who were all murdered during the Holocaust.

### A Window to the Past

In 1941, 830 Jews in his mother's

birthplace of Bauska, Latvia — home to much of Gaffen's family — were marched into a forest and shot by Nazis and their collaborators.

In October 2017, Gaffen went to Bauska to dedicate the Memorial Synagogue Garden on the site of a destroyed synagogue as a celebration and commemoration to the Jewish community that once thrived there. Gaffen led the memorial project and worked on it for 15 years.

In one corner of his office is a window that Gaffen took from his family's

former home in Bauska.

Photographs of his home and field where Bauska's Jews were murdered are mounted as transparencies in the window panes.

Gaffen said the window gives a connection to his heritage, as does the African tribal art which is on display throughout Gafcon's Sorrento Valley offices.

### Protea Holdings

In addition to Gafcon, Gaffen is a founding partner of Protea Holdings,



YEHUDI 'GAF' GAFFEN

**AGE:** 66  
**OCCUPATION:** Developer, CEO Gafcon; CEO Protea Waterfront Development  
**BIRTHPLACE:** Johannesburg, South Africa  
**ALUMNIUS:** University of Cape Town; bachelor's degree in building science  
**ONGOING PROJECTS:** Seaport in San Diego; Zicha Hi-Tech Development Park in Shanghai, China  
**QUOTE:** "I always knew I wanted to build things."

which he and Jeff Essakow started in 1994 to focus on buying and developing San Diego property.

The company owns and operates a number of high-profile projects, including Flower Hill Mall in Del Mar and the La Jolla Corporate Center.

Gaffen's past projects include the Hall of Justice in downtown San Diego, Los Angeles Downtown Women's Center, renovation of the Los Angeles Forum, UCLA Weyburn, DeNeve and Sprout student housing towers, Del Mar Fairground redevelopment, redevelopment of San Francisco's China Basin after it was damaged in a 2014 fire, Beth Israel Synagogue, Del Mar Country Club, San Diego Jewish Academy, and the Coronado Police Station.

Looking back on his career, Gaffen said he vividly remembers standing at the waterfront in San Diego when he first arrived.

"I never, ever would have dreamed where I'm sitting today would ever be possible," Gaffen said.



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## Rising To The Challenges

By Ray Huard

Sunday, October 21, 2018

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Rendering shows tentative plans for Seaport, the \$1.2 billion redevelopment of a portion of the downtown San Diego waterfront that includes Seaport Village. Rendering courtesy of Gafcon

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Yehudi "Gaf" Gaffen likes to fish and hunt...



Courtesy of Gafcon

Yehudi "Gaf" Gaffen

**Yehudi 'Gaf' Gaffen**

**Age:** 65

**Occupation:** Developer; CEO Gafcon; CEO Protea Waterfront Development.

**Birthplace:** Johannesburg, South Africa

**Alumnus:** University of Cape Town; bachelor's degree in building science.

**Ongoing projects:** Seaport in San Diego; Zizhu Hi-Tech Development Park in Shanghai, China.

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