

Wandering & Wondering



John Maybury

HAPPY NEW YEAR

I am thrilled that in 2008 we will elect a new president and be rid of the worst president this country has ever had. For eight long years we have lived with the result of the Supreme Court's cowardly selection of George W. Bush over the winner of the popular vote, Al Gore! This is reason enough to celebrate all this year. We have almost made it through, folks. But on a smaller scale, let's give thanks for small miracles, too. The San Francisco Chronicle (sfchronicle.com) TV guide goes full size, and BART (bart.gov) doubles Peninsula train service. Halleluia! Also, let us never forget that 2007 was the year that our federal government's Defense Advanced Research Projects (DARPA) gave us the Hybrid Insect Micro-Electro-Mechanical System (HI-MEM), a cyborg "moth" with a chip in its "brain," to spy on harmless antiwar protesters at home

and dangerous terrorists abroad. Remember, flush hard, it's a long way to Washington.

MALLS CAN'T BAN PROTESTS

Here's some righteously good news for the new year. The California Supreme Court has ruled that labor unions and political protesters have the right to leaflet and exercise freedom of speech at shopping malls, including the right to call for store boycotts. The court said that a shopping center is like a public commons or town square, where people come together to shop and talk, two of the hallmarks of a democratic open society. Hey, even the president says the best way to fight terror is to go shopping, so it must be right, right? The court ruled that a peaceful picket line may hand out literature and carry signs as long as it doesn't interfere with business.

GOLD COUNTRY POLICE BLOTTER

Once again, the Nevada County (Calif.) Union's "Police Blotter" makes our Tribune "Police Beat" column sound pretty tame by comparison. The Union's cop beat reporter claims the foothills area has more than its fair share of oddballs and curmudgeons. You be the judge. Recent items forwarded by our Grass Valley correspondent Lyn Lossow:

- A caller from the 300 block of Bennett Street reported a man with a gray beard and missing teeth was going door to door asking for a knife in exchange for two chocolate bars.
- A man from the 100 block of Stanford Court reported that Waste Management was stealing his garbage.
- A woman from the 300 block of Broad Street reported she was drunk in public and wearing high heels. Officers provided assistance.
- A woman called from the 22000 block of Wild Canary Road to report an emu had been loose in her driveway for the last three hours.
- A caller from Greenhorn Road reported that a scruffy, drunk man with gray hair, in pajama Charger pants, asked the caller to "Call the cops because he was ready to party."
- A woman called from the 10000 block of Adam Avenue to report a man was looking into her window last night but she didn't report it until today for religious reasons.
- A woman called from the 100 block of Ocean Avenue to report a man was trespassing at a residence for sale. There was no damage done. In fact, the man washed the windows and cleaned the bathroom.
- Someone called 911 from the 12000 block of Slate Creek Road, then hung up. Dispatchers determined a dog accidentally made the call.

THE QUEEN FLIES FIRST CLASS

"Bees are acceptable in the continental surface mail when shipped under federal and state regulations to ensure that they are free of disease. Packages of honeybees must bear special handling postage, except those sent at a First-Class Mail rate. Only queen honeybees may be shipped via air transportation. Each queen honeybee shipped via air transportation may be accompanied by up to eight attendant honeybees." (Leal Charonnat forwarded this U.S. Postal Service regulation 9.3.7.)

11 WORST GIFTS EVER

1. Holiday sweater. Not just a cliché, but a reason for someone to beat you up.
2. Gift certificate. Why not just send me a card that says, "I don't really know you that well."
3. A gym membership. What are you tryin' to say?
4. Gourmet gift basket. So, someone sent this to your office and you got stuck with it? Great. I'll be sure to eat these rosemary herb crackers while watching ...
5. DVDs. OK, it was fantastic when a friend gave me the boxed "Godfather Trilogy," but no one wants the shrink-wrapped bargain bin DVD of "Weekend at Bernie's 2."
6. Books. Just because you cried at

the end of "Memoirs of a Geisha," doesn't mean I will. It just means I will use "Memoirs of a Geisha" as a coaster while I watch "Weekend at Bernie's 2."

7. Homemade stuff. I get it. You're poor. I'd much rather you just buy me Two Buck Chuck because I don't have anywhere to display this beautiful ... um, what is this?
8. Ornaments. First of all, by the time anyone's really opening gifts, the tree's done. Second of all, big whoop. An ornament = a piece of junk you stick on a bush.
9. A charitable donation. Or worse, a donation to a presidential candidate. No thanks, hippie. I don't want to save the trees. I just want some passes to AMC or a nice bottle of booze.
10. The re-gift I can spot a re-gift from a block away. It's usually some fruity-smelling bath and body set with the price tag half scratched off and the usually attached To/From tag mysteriously missing.
11. Coal. Which is probably what I'll be getting. (Beth Spotswood, sfgate.com, Dec. 20)

SNEAKY, SQUIRRELLY

California ground squirrels and rock squirrels have been observed chewing dead rattlesnake skin and smearing it on their fur to mask their

scent and scare off predators. The squirrels also have evolved to become resistant to snake venom. (Earthweek report on UC Davis study)

SITeseer

- Oldies but goodies: cruzintheavenue.com/DYRT.htm
- Stop junk mail, plant trees: greendimes.com
- Test your geography knowledge: travelpod.com/traveler-iq
- Good news about Sweeney Gate, Pedro Point: pacificalandtrust.org
- Tea for two: vitalTleaf.com
- Nontoxic alternatives to garden pesticides: Lysol spray, vitamin B-12, human urine
- Get fit fast: swatworkout.com
- Philly cheese steak, Philadelphia Freedom: Starvin' Marvin, 932 Geneva at Mission

SWAMI SEZ

"What the mind doesn't understand, it worships or fears." (Alice Walker)

MAYBURRITOVILLE: A STATE OF MINE

- Email stories & photos: mayburrito@goofbuster.com
- My columns on the Web: PacificaTribune.com, WanderingAndWondering.com
- Local news: PacificaRiptide.com