

Wandering & Wondering



John Maybury

I FEEL THEIR PAIN

Confession is good for the soul: I like to print funny typos from other people's publications, just for laughs, just for the snarky joy of it, but not out of some mean-spirited schadenfreude. Hey, I make plenty of mistakes of my own, so there is no joy in Mudville when a fellow editor or writer screws up in print. The sad reality today is that too many newspapers, newsletters, magazines, and book publishers are getting by short-staffed, overworked, and underpaid. Blame the economic downturn and fierce competition from the Internet for advertising dollars and readers' eyeballs. Furloughs and layoffs decimate the ranks of print media editorial personnel. So when you see the kinds of goofs I love to make fun of, it is not to say that the hardworking skeleton crews producing these barely surviving publications are incompetent. Far from it. These are trained and educated professional journalists, writers, and editors. But they just don't have the resources to do everything needed. Most of them scramble to make their deadlines and fill their pages with reasonably decent content, but budget cuts have eliminated the proofreaders and copy editors—guardians of the English language. I ought to know;

I am one of them. Corporate greed has a role in this, of course, and I deplore publishers who gut the editorial staff to make their bottom line and enrich their shareholders. But while we assign blame, let's not forget that the reading public simply does not support print media as it used to. Other than this paper, do you buy or subscribe to newspapers and magazines? Do you buy books? Do you advertise in print media?

MEMORY LANE

Reinier Nissen writes: "I had a question about San Pedro Road. I recall driving down that road with my mom when I was in elementary school and seeing a sign up on a tree posted by a mother who lost her daughter in an accident. I think the sign said something about driving slower and being careful. I think it was around 1978-1985 that the sign was there. Do you have anything in the archives about that?" (If you know the answer, please email me. My email address is at the very end of the column.)

BIKE/TRAIN RIDER

Larry Weber writes: "I have used Caltrain as part of my daily commute for many years. I commute by bicycle from my home in Rockaway Beach to my business in Redwood City (Redwood Trading Post). I take Caltrain home from Redwood City to the Millbrae station, where my wife picks me up. Once in a while, if she is unable to pick me up, I will ride home from the station. I have been riding to work, rain or shine, by bicycle for about the past 25 years, and really enjoy it (it's an addiction really!). What a great way to start each day. My ride takes me up Sharp Park Road, along Skyline, through beautiful Sawyer Camp Trail, Canada Road, and

down through the hills of Redwood City. When the price of gas went up, so did the number of bicycle commuters using Caltrain. Over the past year or so, I have only been 'bumped' a few times, when the bike car is too full. Caltrain has just begun to remove a few more seats from the bike cars to allow for more bikes, which will help thankfully. Now that the price of gas has dropped, I have noticed a slight drop in the number of bicycles onboard. I would still bike to work and use Caltrain even if gas was free. That's how much I enjoy it! Cheers."



STICK TO DIET SODA

Women who consume two or more cans of soda pop daily are almost two times more likely than other women to show early evidence of kidney disease, according to a U.S. study. But there's no increased risk for men who drink lots of soda pop or for people who drink diet soda. The researchers analyzed data from 9,358 adults in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Rates of diabetes, obesity, and kidney disease are increasing in the United States, along with consumption of high fructose corn syrup, the sweetener used in most sodas. But the amount of sugar is more important than the type, Shoham said. "I don't think there is anything demonic about high fructose corn syrup per se," he said. "People are

consuming too much sugar. The problem with high fructose corn syrup is that it contributes to over-consumption. It's cheap, it has a long shelf life, and it allows you to buy a case of soda for less than \$10." A recent study found that nine of 20 samples of high fructose corn syrup from three manufacturers contained detectable levels of mercury. "This adds the intriguing possibility that it is not just the sugar itself in high fructose corn syrup that is harmful, because mercury is harmful to kidneys as well," Shoham said." (Robert Preidt, Health Day News; Public Library of Science, news release, February 9)

ENDANGERED WARDENS

Endangered Species: California Fish & Game Wardens is a new DVD available from Snow Goose Productions, P.O. Box 2480, Mill Valley, CA 94942. Cost is \$22, including postage and handling. Producer James Swann has promised to send copies to all California state legislators and the Department of Fish & Game (and Commission). California is last in the nation (and Canadian provinces) in the ratio of wardens per population. We currently have only 192 wardens in the field, when we could use 2,000 to 3,000 to do the job. Wardens make only about three-fifths of what a CHP officer makes, and are far more likely to be shot while on duty. Wardens generally work alone, often without backup, seven days a week. As a direct result of pay inequity, new applicants are almost nonexistent, and our wildlife and environment suffer accordingly. Reportedly, some 40 percent of the current understaffed force will be up for retirement within three years. Our wildlife is in dire straits, poaching is on the increase, and conditions will only worsen in light of the current fiscal disaster. Write to your governor, state assemblyman,

and state senator at State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814. (Jake Sigg, Nature News)



SPEEDY SONGBIRDS

Biologists have placed tiny light sensors on the backs of migratory songbirds to track their movements between the two hemispheres. One purple martin they tracked flew from Brazil to the northern United States in only 13 days, an average of 300 miles a day. (Earthweek.com)

CORRECTION

I am indebted to a fellow pedant who informs me that I made a mistake in last week's item about British cop series: I should have written Foyle's War, not Foley's War. Fie on me!

INNER EDIROT

•Leslie Davidson spotted this whopper in a San Francisco Chronicle story about a British nuclear submarine colliding with a French nuke sub (shades of Waterloo!): "Both vessels

returned damaged but otherwise safe to their home ports, with the 250 crew members abroad uninjured...."

•"CSU Joins National Effort to Increase Teachers" (headline from the California State University CSU Leader newsletter). G-Man asks, "How do you increase a teacher?"

SARAH STRANGELOVE

Must be cabin fever. Working indoors day after day while the rain beats down (God knows we need it). I see Sarah Palin in cowboy boots, playing Slim Pickens as Major T.J. "King" Kong, riding that A-bomb down to the Russki missile base, whipping the bomb's behind with her 10-gallon hat and yelling, "Yee haw, yee haw! I can see Russia from here." Purity Of Essence.

SITeseer

•Puzzles, games, fun stuff: mistupid.com
•See your seafood: teamorca.org
•Keep an eye on Washington: congressmatters.com
•Protect the Pacific: oceanhealth.org

SWAMI SEZ

"All great truths begin as blasphemies." (George Bernard Shaw)

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