

Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury



TRASH TROUBLE

Don't miss Lionel Emde's Riptide exclusive "The Legal Travails of Coastside Scavenger." Lionel's painstakingly researched investigation of Coastside's legal and financial problems, including comments by CS' Chris Porter, answers some questions about Pacifica's beleaguered garbage company, and raises some new ones. Read it online now at PacificaRiptide.com.

WAIT FOR THE GATE

Motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians should always wait for the crossing gates to come up and the warning lights to stop flashing before attempting to cross railroad tracks, lest they wind up like the unfortunate victims below. On June 5 a southbound Caltrain hit a bicyclist at the Auzerais Street crossing south of the San Jose Diridon Station. The man was transported to Valley Medical Center, where he subsequently died of his injuries. The train, which had no passengers on board and was not in service, was traveling at 35 miles per

hour south on the southbound track. The crossing gates had been lowered for an Altamont Commuter Express train traveling north on the northbound track. The bicyclist was traveling from east to west. After the ACE train passed through the crossing, the bicyclist went around the lowered gates into the path of the Caltrain. On the same day, a woman and a pit bull that she was walking were killed by an Amtrak train in Hayward. The dog's owner had ridden his bicycle illegally around the crossing gates and across the railroad tracks in front of an approaching train doing about 70 miles per hour. The dog tried to follow him, pulling the woman in front of the train. She could not get free of the leash wrapped around her hand, and she and the dog were both killed by the speeding train. No one on the train was injured.

SOUP DIET

"In the battle to lose weight, hunger is the dieter's worst enemy. But research has revealed a

simple aid to taming the appetite: soup. It's dieting's best-kept secret. Imagine a typical lunchtime meal: chicken and vegetables with a glass of water. If you eat the food and drink the water, you will feel full for a couple of hours before hunger kicks in. But if you blend the food with the water to make soup, you will stay hunger-free for much longer, and be less likely to snack through the afternoon. How can blending the food into soup make such a difference? The answer lies in the stomach. Scientists have used ultrasound and MRI scans of people's stomachs to investigate what happens after eating solid-food-plus-water meals compared with the same food made into soup. After you eat a meal, the pyloric sphincter valve at the bottom of your stomach holds food back so that the digestive juices can get to work. But water passes straight through the sphincter to your intestines, so drinking water does not contribute to filling you up. When you eat the same meal as a soup, the whole mixture remains in the stomach, because the water and food are blended together. The scientists' scans confirm that the stomach stays fuller for longer, staving off those hunger pangs. Vegetable soup is best. It produces a more consistent blend. And it generally has fewer calo-

ries than chicken or fish soup." (Jack Challoner, science writer and author of the Web site explaining-science.co.uk, reporting for the BBC. Thanks to Clark Natwick for forwarding this news item. By the way, Clark and I plan to use two empty soup cans and some twine to talk to each other across Linda Mar Valley, a brand-new high-tech device we just invented.)

HOT DOG POLITICS

Jim Wagner has a bright idea and I second it. This reflects the best thinking of two guys who started out just wanting to sell hot dogs at the beach. Now we are thinking really big. How much fun would it be to have occasional debates at council chambers, moderated by Barbara Arietta or another community figure? Debate would be between council members and citizens on items of civic interest. The exchanges would be civil, recognizing that all participants are equal stakeholders in this community's future. There would be no yelling, screaming, threatening, or finger-pointing. We would all agree to stick to the issues and facts, and not engage in name-calling and personal attacks. These forums would be modeled after the commenting policies of Pacifica Riptide, Pacifica Tribune, and City Council. This would be no love-in or be-in. There are bound to

be disagreements. But the rules would be absolute: Play nice. Act like adults. There is no room in our small-town democracy for fear and intimidation. All would be welcome to speak freely, truthfully, honestly, and politely.

TRUTH ABOUT CATS & DOGS

"Unlike dogs, which exhibit a huge range of sizes, shapes, and temperaments, house cats are relatively homogeneous, differing mostly in the characteristics of their coats. The reason for the relative lack of variability in cats is simple: humans have long bred dogs to assist with particular tasks, such as hunting or sled pulling, but cats, which lack any inclination for performing most tasks that would be useful to humans, experienced no such selective breeding pressures." (Scientific American, June 2009)

SOUP & SURF

Local chef Derek Burns and friends are stirring the pot. They sell out of their tasty soup every week at the Coastside farmers market in Rockaway, and they plan to open a restaurant in the former garden center in front of Sea Bowl on Highway 1. Visit their Facebook page: The Surf Spot.

GREEN CAR WASH

Professional car washes use 60 percent less water

than hand washing at home. Car washes also capture some wash water for reuse, and treat the wastewater to make it less environmentally damaging. When you wash your car at home, you not only waste water, you also send soaps, solvents, and other nasty chemicals down the storm drain into the creek and ocean. Please use professional car washes!

SWAMI SEZ

"I'd put my money on solar energy. I hope we don't have to wait till oil and coal run out before we tackle that." (Thomas Edison, in conversation with Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone, March 1931)

SITSEER

- Scientist pulverizes iPhones, glow sticks, marbles, cigarette lighters: willitblend.com
- Pacifica sculptor Jerry Barrish turns salvaged plastic into good art: wired.com
- Check your kids' homework for plagiarism: plagium.com
- Rising seas threaten Pacifica shoreline: ecologycenter.org/terrain

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