



# Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

## THING

In 1991, my Pacifica friends Brenda and John Hall alerted me about a rare rental listed in the Tribune classified ads. I jumped at the chance to move here. After years of living in the East Bay and San Francisco, I was ready for sleepy P-Town. So I rented the converted garage on San Jose Avenue. Landlord Don Roberts had done a nice job of making the place watertight, and I got through a rainy winter warm and dry. Bright orange nasturtiums grew all around the property. It was good to have a cozy cabin on the coast, just a block up from Sharp Park fishing pier. I used to walk out on that pier to feel the full fury of Pacific storms coming ashore.

I liked the neighborhood feel of Sharp Park. Pacifica Thai was right across the street from me (and still is going strong, getting better by the year). Nearby El Grano de Oro turned out fresh-baked tortillas and served a full taqueria menu (and still does to this day). A block farther on was Oceana swimming pool (now Brink), where I could burn off the calories. I was all set.

I started writing occasional features and news stories for the Tribune. After a while, the editor asked me to do a regular column, and I came up with the name "Wandering and Wondering," which covers just about anything

that catches my interest, aiming to entertain, inform, or annoy you every week.

As a newcomer to town, I was impressed with the relatively relaxed pace and the friendly people here (though I have developed a severe dislike of leaf blowers and barking dogs -- the bane of suburbia). After all the time I had spent in the city, it was a real treat to be able to park anytime, anywhere, without worrying about street-cleaning days, parking tickets, and road rage.

In Pacifica, I can walk into any restaurant and get a table without any reservations or waiting lists. I can shop in local stores without any pressure or stress. I can go to San Pedro Valley County Park and walk for miles without seeing a soul (but usually deer, bobcats, owls, coyotes, foxes, and occasional ghostlike apparitions said to be mountain lions). I can ride my blue beach cruiser all over town without having to worry about traffic. Big ups to Gearhead for that wonderful bike.

In Pacifica, I know many dedicated stewards of our open space and natural resources. In civic affairs, I note the active involvement of many private citizens working for free (research, fundraising, publishing, blogging, lobbying, and even hard physical labor) for the benefit of community services and infrastructure.

When the Iraq War heated up 10

years ago, several of us decided to call a community forum and start a local peace group, which held monthly peace vigils at Highway 1 and Linda Mar, organized against military recruiting in our high schools, ran Fog Fest outreach booths, wrote stories for and bought ads in the Tribune, and honored students with peace-maker awards. I am very proud of the dedicated volunteers who have kept this worthy organization going all these years. To learn more, visit Pacifica Peace People online. One of the best things about this town of 40,000 is the variety of independent, locally owned grocery stores: Oceana (formerly Food Town), Sun Valley, Pacifica Farmers Market (Manor), and the seasonal outdoor Coastside Farmers Market in Rockaway. The popular mantra "Shop Locally" really is possible in Pacifica.

As a music lover, I rely on Pacifica Performances, which brings world-class musicians to Mildred Owen Concert Hall to perform classical and popular music of all kinds. Again, the beauty of Pacifica is that this venue has free parking, low ticket prices, and plenty of seating.

Five years ago, I met with a group of fellow activists and environmentalists. We wanted to go beyond traditional print mode to cover issues and subjects you might not read about elsewhere. We started Pacifica Riptide ([pacificariptide.com](http://pacificariptide.com)). Individual contributors and local business advertisers support our alternative-media website, and hardworking volunteers (myself included) research, write, and edit all the content.

As 2012 begins, please think about sharing your Pacifica stories,

ideas, and pictures with me so that I can use them here in Wandering and Wondering and on Pacifica Riptide. All you have to do is email them to me at [mayburrito@goofbuster.com](mailto:mayburrito@goofbuster.com). Keep in touch, folks, and have a Happy New Year.

## SING FOR HEALTH

"Singing can be joyful, especially around the holidays. It may also provide health benefits, some research suggests.

- Singing and asthma: Studies have found that singing helps people with asthma and bronchitis because of the deep breathing, and because a variety of muscles, such as the diaphragm, get a workout. There's even some evidence that singing lessons can help suppress snoring.

- Singing and the immune system: Researchers in Germany looked at antibodies (part of a healthy immune response) and stress hormones in members of an amateur choir, comparing levels when the singers were singing or just listening. Their stress hormones went up when they listened, and their antibodies went up when they sang, possibly because singing made the singers feel good and they didn't like just listening. Temporary changes in immunity mean very little, however. Many activities produce ups and downs in antibodies and stress hormones.

- Singing and aging: In a survey called "Creativity and Aging" from researchers at George Washington University, members of senior chorales in the District of Columbia, San Francisco, and Brooklyn reported better health and fewer falls than non-singers.
- Singing and Alzheimer's: A

British branch of the Alzheimer's Society reports that singing is helpful for patients with dementia. Singing familiar songs and learning new ones can help build self-esteem and alleviate loneliness. Though there is no proof that engaging in such memory-dependent exercises as singing or learning new mental skills can prevent Alzheimer's, many experts think such activities may at least help delay the onset of memory problems in some people.

- Singing and human intelligence: Walter Freeman, a famous neurobiologist at University of California, Berkeley, believes that singing and dancing are genetic in origin, and that they helped the brain evolve. They have also served as a means of transmitting knowledge from one generation to another.

- Singing and sociability: According to Chorus America, an organization of singing groups, more people in the U.S. and Canada take part in choral singing than in any other performing art. And most singers say that singing in a chorus builds social confidence." (UC Berkeley Wellness Letter)

## SITeseer

- Origins of English words and sayings: [phrases.org.uk](http://phrases.org.uk)

## SWAMI SEZ

"Any society, any nation, is judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members -- the last, the least, the littlest." (Cardinal Roger Mahony, 1998)

## MAYBURRITOVILLE

- Meandering: [LomaPrieta.SierraClub.org](http://LomaPrieta.SierraClub.org)
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