



## Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

### LEASH PG&E

Any other company with such shoddy safety and record-keeping practices would be out of business by now, but not the unspeakable PG&E monopoly. Day after day, we read news stories about PG&E's failings, and we wonder when the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) will get serious about reforming the giant utility to protect the public from unsafe pipelines, crooked and cooked books, and general contempt for ratepayers, all culminating in a natural gas explosion that killed eight people and destroyed 38 homes in San Bruno last year. Paying fines and legal settlements is just a drop in the bucket for PG&E, and obviously has not changed the arrogant corporate culture at the utility. The situation requires drastic intervention. PUC regulators need to be watchdogs, not lapdogs.

### SOY BOY

Food made from soybeans (including soy milk, tofu, veggie burgers, and tempeh) may help lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, osteoporosis, and cancer. It also may reduce the severity of hot flashes in menopausal women. Soy products are high in calcium, and many are available in organic form. Personally, I like Westbrae unsweetened soy milk on my breakfast cereal, sprinkled with Splenda. Yo soy marinero!

### WATER CHAMPION

Last year the drought appeared to be over. This year it looks like it's back. Such uncertainty in precipitation from year to year is likely to be the "new norm" for California in the face of climate change. Water shortages affect the environment and the economy, and are likely to worsen as population grows and available water decreases. Frank Niccoli, a Peninsula landscape contractor and educator, has won this year's Water Champion Award for conserving water. In 1979 he founded The Village Gardener, a landscape construction and maintenance company. He limits water waste in landscapes through comprehensive irrigation management and less water-intensive plant-

ing and maintenance techniques. The latter include non-chemical pest control methods and a focus on native plants. He has contributed to multiple professional landscaping associations, including the California Landscape Contractors Association, where a water management program (now being used by more than 600 landscape contractors) was developed under his leadership. Since 1996 Frank has developed curriculum and taught classes on sustainable landscape practices, residential irrigation, integrated pest management, California native plants, and water management at Foothill College. He also chaired the Foster City Environmental Sustainability Task Force. (The 2012 Silicon Valley Water Conservation Award winners are honored Thursday, March 22 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Redwood City Council Chambers, 1017 Middlefield Road. This event is free and open to the public.)

### REDWOOD BLUEGRASS

Chris Stuart & Jeanet Beazley plus Brittany Haas & Lauren Rioux play bluegrass music. Saturday, March 24. First Presbyterian Church, 1667 Miramonte Avenue (at Cuesta Drive), Mountain View. Doors open 5 p.m. for jamming. Concert venue opens 7 p.m. Showtime 8 p.m. \$18/advance, \$20/door, half-price for teens, free for ages 12 and under, free for music students. Info and tickets: rba.org, 650-691-9982

### DRONE MAGIC

San Francisco International Bagpipe Festival. Saturday, March 24, from 5 p.m. to 12 midnight. \$15 admission, children free. Bring a bagpipe to get in free! Drone Magic is a unique festival of bagpipe music from around the world. Pipers gather to perform the music and traditions of Ireland, Spain, Bulgaria, Northumberland, Scotland, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Hungary. Ethnic Bulgarian food by Hristo Kolev and libations available for purchase. Croatian American Cultural Center, 60 Onondaga Avenue at Alemany, San Francisco (Ocean exit off 280). Info and tickets: croatianamericanweb.org, BrownPaperTickets.com

### SHUTTLE FUNDING

The San Mateo County Transportation Authority (TA) and the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (C/CAG) announce a joint call for projects for the county's Local Shuttle Program. A total of \$7 million is available for fiscal years 2013 and 2014. The goal of the program is to fund operating projects that provide

access to regional transit service and/or meet community mobility needs in the county while reducing congestion in the commute corridors; 4 percent of all sales tax revenues from Measure A are designated for funding shuttles. While employers and private entities are not eligible to apply directly, they may partner with a local jurisdiction or a public agency. Application materials are available on the TA website. Applications are due by Monday, April 16, at 5 p.m. Info: Celia Chung, 650-508-6466, chungce@samtrans.com; or Tom Madalena, 650-599-1460, tmadalena@co.sanmateo.ca.us

### CLASS FOR WRITERS

"Effective Book Proposals: A Writing Seminar" with Jay Schaefer. Saturday, March 31 from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon. Mechanics' Institute, 57 Post Street, San Francisco (half-block from Montgomery BART). \$75 for members of Mechanics' Institute, \$95 for nonmembers. Info: milibrary.org

### PACIFICA PALINDROMIST PONDER'S PUMAS

Alan Wald is up to his old tricks again this week. Herewith his latest palindrome on a hot topic - catamounts. Take it away, Alan! "Anna and Otto's new palindrome-themed restaurant Bib may serve a new palindromic menu item inspired by California Fish and Game Commission president Dan Richards' recent hunting trip to Idaho, where he bagged a mountain lion, which is a protected species in California: 'Taco cat'—stuffed with 'Ragu o'cougar' sautéed in 'lion oil' ('Senile felines' on request)."

### MUSSEL ROCK MARAUDERS

Helen Nicely reports on Pacifica Patch and Pacifica Riptide that coyotes have killed two dogs at Mussel Rock during the past few weeks.

### SIGHTSEER

Internet treasure trove for wordsmiths: verbivore.com

### SWAMI SEZ

"Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities." (Voltaire)

### MAYBURRITOVILLE

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