



Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

Golden Goose

Pacifica City Councilwoman Sue Digre says that “our environment is our economy.” This is true, but only in principle. I just don’t know if it really pencils out in hard numbers. It is more like an article of faith. Our open spaces, beaches, parks, and outdoors recreational opportunities all give us the look and feel of a premier destination, even though none of them really make any money for us. Because of some state bureaucratic nonsense, we can’t charge for parking at our busiest beach — Linda Mar. Our hotels, restaurants, and shops are good-quality businesses, but they never look terribly busy or full. That’s exactly why we Pacificans like living here. Life is slower and easier than up in the city. We can park where and when we want. We can drop in to eat or shop where and when we want: no reservations required. Will this Very Pacifica quality of life appeal to tourists visiting San Francisco on business or pleasure? Will they buy our marketing pitch to stay down here on the coast to save a few dollars but remain relatively close to their big-city attractions, conferences, and foodie venues? It’s a nice dream, and certainly one worth pursuing: Please come to Pacifica, spend lots of money, then go home, thank you very much. But without major structural changes in our tax base, city services, zoning, land use, etc., how can Pacifica realistically hope to survive? I don’t know the answers, but I salute all the citizens and officials struggling to figure out how to make Pacifica’s economy as sustainable as its beautiful environment. Just remember, though, that if we sacrifice our beautiful environment in pursuit of the almighty dollar, we will kill our Golden Goose.

Battleground

As the History Channel premieres a new show about the family feud between the Hatfields and McCoys, let’s note the geography of the dueling clans’ uncivil war: the Mason-Dixon Line, named for British surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, who marked the line between Pennsylvania and Maryland (1773-1777), still the informal divide between North and South, and once the line between the free states and the slave states. Jeremiah Dixon’s name may be the origin of the words Dixie and Dixieland.

Sesquipedalian

Horace (the Greek philosopher, not the Tribune sports editor) coined the word “sesquipedalian” to describe polysyllabic words that seem to be a foot and a half long, e.g., antidisestablishmentarianism (opposition to separation of church and state) and floccinaucinihilipilification (estimating worthlessness). Credit to Ben Schott of miscellanies.info.

First, Do No Harm

Something to keep in mind as we enjoy wildlife in its home, our “outdoors”: Just by being there, we add stress to the environment. If there are a lot of us, it can affect animals’ ability to survive, as they spend more energy responding to false calls (from our sound devices) or perceived danger (us being too close to their nests or dens (primary habitat), resulting in literally not enough energy to fend off real predators/competition, etc. The American Birding Association (aba.org) code of ethics makes this one of the first guidelines: “avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger; exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.” (Posted by Kathy Jana on PacificaRiptide.com)

Contradictanym

Lou Shapiro liked my list of words with opposite meanings. He sends along a couple of contradictanym: stand fast vs. run fast, impose sanctions (penalties) vs. grant sanctions (permissions). Lou adds, “But my favorite contradictanym belongs in a different category: cleave (split vs. adhere). It belongs in a different category because it is actually two different words, with different etymologies. They just happen to be spelled and pronounced the same way. Is there a term for that? Homophonographs? Dihomonymy? Homophonographic heteronymy?”

Early Warning

Every year the commercialization of Christmas starts earlier than the year before. 2012’s first breach of decency was in last Sunday’s newspaper coupons: Pillsbury Doughboy Glitter Ornaments from Danbury Mint. Let me be the first to channel my Inner Scrooge: Bah, humbug!

Swami Sez

“If a man does not make new acquaintance as he advances through life, he will soon find himself alone. A man should keep his friendship in constant repair.” (Samuel Johnson)

Mayburritoville

- Meandering: LomaPrieta.SierraClub.org
- Copyediting: Goofbuster.com
- Blogging: PacificaRiptide.com
- Email: mayburrito@goofbuster.com