



Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

Free Speech, Satire, and Racism

Last week's letters to the editor continued a spirited debate about the nature of free speech, satire, and racism. This all began with the Tribune publishing Frank Cimo's column containing what I consider a racist cartoon of President Obama as a crying baby. (If you do an Internet search on "crybaby Obama," you get hundreds of hits, including this infamous image, mostly from conservative websites and blogs.) I made my displeasure known privately to Tribune editor Elaine Larsen, but she wrote an editorial calling the cartoon "political satire and caricature" and defending it as "free speech." I respectfully disagree with her, but that's how it goes in a democracy. I believe in free speech, too, but freedom comes with limits and responsibilities. The most famous example of this is the notion that you must not yell "fire" in a crowded theater. I would add that you must not use hateful, hurtful images to make a political point. That is going too far. Most decent, thoughtful Americans get that distinction; most of us understand the difference between free speech, satire, and racism. For more on this issue, please see my next item about a unique new museum in Michigan.

Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia

The nation's largest public collection of artifacts from the segregation era (Reconstruction to the civil rights movement) on up to the Obama presidency is now on display at the brand-new Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan (jimcrowmuseum@ferris.edu). Founder and curator David Pilgrim, a former sociology professor at Ferris State and its current vice president of diversity and inclusion, began collecting racist art and articles in the 1970s. His collection of 9,000 items outgrew the pri-

vate viewing room on campus, so Pilgrim sought funding to build a full-scale museum. Detroit utility company DTE Energy put up most of the \$1.9 million. Historical note: Ferris State was founded in 1884 by educator Woodbridge Nathan Ferris (later Michigan's governor and then U.S. senator), a white man in a mostly white college town, who believed in equal access to education for all. No doubt he would have been quite proud of his school for hiring David Pilgrim, an African-American.

Animal and Human Cruelty

Even peace-loving folks like fireworks displays, but I think almost everyone hates stealth bombers who set off extra-loud M-80s before, during, and after the Fourth of July. In particular, I think that these insensitive morons are cruel to animals, which have no defenses against stupid human tricks. If you don't know what I am talking about, ask dog and cat owners how their pets react to quarter sticks of dynamite going off day and night. If the critters could speak, they might say, "Get me out of here." To top it off, Pacifica's mad bombers got away with murder this year. According to published police logs, only one citation was issued. Zero tolerance, my arse!

Phone Banking for Obama

Call Bonny O'Daniels at 650-728-5671 for upcoming Obama phone banking opportunities in Pacifica and elsewhere on the coast. Bonnie shares this wisdom from The Obama Truth Team Facebook Page: "Fiction -- Obamacare is a massive tax increase. Fact -- Obamacare is actually the largest-ever middle-class health care tax cut. Only free riders who can afford a plan but don't buy it will have to pay a penalty."

Train Ride on the Wild Side

Give thanks for Pacifica's cool, coastal summer climate, because it is hot and dry just about everywhere else in California, as Karen Rosenstein, yours truly, and several dozen other railfans discovered last weekend on an unusual Amtrak Coast Starlight train detour via Niles Canyon, Altamont Pass, San Joaquin Valley, Tehachapi,

Mojave, Palmdale, Lancaster, and Soledad Canyon (nonstop from Oakland to Los Angeles). If you ever get a chance to take this trip, or just ride any normal route, train travel is the only way to go (in our humble opinion). Two websites that regularly report on detours, charters, and other rail excursions are trainweb.com and trainorders.com.

Correction

Rockaway bluesman Peter Loeb writes: "You may know this already, but I thought I'd point out that somehow a copyediting error made its way into your column. The book about cooking on your car engine is titled "Manifold Destiny," not "Manifest Destiny." It's a shame because it's such a fun play on words. The first edition of the book is over 20 years old. In fact, I'm pretty sure that the recent Click and Clack column is a reprint of a much older column. I remember reading it some time ago. I always loved the idea of warming your tortillas and refried beans on your engine as you travel up and down I-5. I've owned a Camry hybrid for over 5 years now. I probably can't cook on the engine because it's barely running at slow, around-town or commute speeds. I don't think I can cook on the battery."

Pacifica Riptide's Nature Photographers

We here on the coast are lucky to live in a natural wonderland. I post fine nature photography by Stephen Johnson, Dave Yuhus, Paul Donahue, Erik Piro, and others on my Pacifica Riptide blog every week. You are always welcome to check out the flora and fauna at pacificariptide.com.

Swami Sez

"I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians." (Charles De Gaulle)

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