



Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

ELAINE LARSEN, R.I.P.

Former Pacifica Tribune editor and publisher Elaine Larsen (1962-2015) died January 12. Our coastside community mourns her passing. She was a friend and defender of this column for 15 years. Our condolences to her family.

JERK MERGE (CONTINUED)

I got lots of good feedback on my “jerk merge” item last week. Someone who commutes out of town on southbound Skyline Boulevard says the “jerk merge” just after Sneath Lane is really brutal, and the evildoers usually drive a certain kind of vehicle. Can you guess which one? I also heard from Rick Bauman about what he calls “lame Caltrans signage” on southbound Highway 1 in Linda Mar. I agree: p— poor execution by the highway department. But remember, cars and signs don’t cause “jerk merge.” People do.

BEAR BELLY

Obesity is a growing problem for bears living too close to human civilization (just ask folks at Lake Tahoe, Yosemite, and Sequoia). Seems the stocky scavengers have grown fat and lazy from excessive Dumpster diving and fast-food grazing. Easy access to human garbage and pet food has tempted them into bad eating habits, losing their natural hunting instincts from the wild. Please don’t feed the bears!

CLEAN AND GREEN

Patronize dry cleaners who use EPA-approved dry-cleaning equipment and nontoxic cleaning solutions that are odor-free and easier on the environment.

OUTDOORSMAN TOM STIENSTRA

Nature-loving columnist Tom Stienstra covers hiking and biking trails, horseback rides, camping trips, and fishing holes all over Northern California in his San Francisco Chronicle outdoors column appearing regularly in the Chronicle’s Sporting Green section. Also visit

tomstienstra.com for Tom’s universe of media and educational resources.

WILD RIDE

Clear winter days are a good opportunity to explore Mount Hamilton and enjoy amazing views of the entire Bay Area. In a month or so, the mountainside will be covered with colorful wildflowers. How to get there: Take 101 south to Capitol Expressway East, turn right on Quimby Road (once you leave San Jose suburbia, Quimby runs uphill through ranches and oak trees) to Highway 130, which zigzags (watch out for slow-moving bikes, weaving motorcycles, and wide SUVs) all the way to Lick Observatory at the top. Here you can visit the planetarium, with its telescope and displays. Instead of returning home the same way, you can follow the switchbacks down the east side of the mountain into Anderson Valley, where the fields soon will be covered with wildflowers. The road branches right into Del Puerto Canyon to Patterson and left into Mines Road to Del Valle and Livermore. Warning: Much of the road is narrow and there are no services (no gas, food, or lodging).

PLAY IN THE DIRT

Winter is a fine time to get outdoors and do some gardening. Here are several green-thumb sites for gardeners, farmers, landscapers, and others who enjoy getting dirt under their fingernails and upgrading their toolsheds, regardless of the season: farmshow.com, growpots.com, nomowgrass.com; and evatech.net for the coolest remote-controlled robot lawnmowers.

POLAR DRIFT

Satellite imagery shows Earth’s magnetic field weakening, and the North Pole drifting southward toward Siberia. (Earthweek.com)

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