



Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

CASH FOR TRASH

See “One Man’s Trash” in the February 2015 issue of Wired magazine. It’s about Matt Malone of Austin, Texas, and his lucrative Dumpster-diving sideline. Techie by day, Malone cruises by night in his big pickup truck, salvaging perfectly usable (sometimes even brand-new) discards out of big-box stores’ trash bins. Mechanically minded Malone does minor repairs if needed, spiffs up his recovered treasures, and sells them online and elsewhere. Malone estimates that if he did this full time, he could easily make \$600,000 a year, but he still likes his day job in computer security. He has very little competition for his nightcrawler haul, but is foiled occasionally by stores that use trash compactors in the mistaken belief that crushing still-useful items is environmentally friendly. (It isn’t.) Malone practically weeps whenever he arrives too late at a trash compactor to rescue a load of shiny new bicycles or printers. He does not understand why stores toss and crush high-value, salvageable items. This article may make you stop and wonder the same thing, too.

ZIP-IT

Dorsetta Hale writes, “Thanks so much for the tip about Zip-It. It couldn’t have come at a better time. I’d been all set to call the plumber for a clogged sink when I saw your column. A trip to Ace Hardware, four dollars versus a \$100 house call; two minutes later and the drain was good as new. Cha-ching, money saved. Thanks again.”

NEVER VOLUNTEER

Scott McKellar says, “Never let your neighbors know what you do for a living IF you are a plumber, or fix televisions, or cure computer problems. Because if you rat yourself out, you will get unpaid part-time work during moments you had other plans for.”

SPELLCHECKERITIS

Fellow literati Peter Loeb is repelled by bad English in the printed word. Recently, he read a Pacifica Patch/Bay City News Service story about rescuers saving a stranded hiker by “repelling” down a Pacifica cliff. Evidently, these local media rely on a spellchecker and don’t know the difference between “repel” and “rappel.” Unfortunately, this kind of sloppy writing and editing has become an epidemic in publishing, journalism, and society at large. When we let our computers do our thinking for us, we are lost. Game over, man.

RACCOON-PROOF GARBAGE CAN

For 20 bucks, Joe Sarasua will raccoon-proof your garbage can. Recology gives out Joe’s phone number (650-359-3525) to customers who want to be able to lock their garbage cans. Supposedly, Epsom salts will keep the critters away, but even at dollar-store prices, the cost can add up, and it’s messy. Tying off your bungee cords doesn’t always work, plus it’s a hassle (and you could put an eye out when those suckers snap back on you). So Joe’s little 10-minute garbage can conversion is the way to go. If you’re handy and want to install the locks yourself, Joe will sell you the kit for only \$15.

SWAMI SEZ

“Experience is a cruel teacher, but fools will learn from no other.” (Helen Louise Headley)

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