

Wandering and Wondering

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ALANDROME

As President Barack Obama calls for unified action against Boko Haram, the Islamist group spreading terror throughout Nigeria, a palindrome-loving member of the group taunts the president: "OK, Obama, I am a Boko." (Pacifica palindromist Alan Wald does it again!)

EL NINO GRANDE

Weather wonks now say that they are up to 65 percent "confident" that we will get a strong El Nino later this year, which could mean lots of rain. But you need to read all the weather blogs and forecasts to realize that Mother Nature is incredibly fickle this way. Forty years ago, when California faced a brutal two-year drought, a strong El Nino occurred but produced very little rain. I remember that period well. I lived in the East Bay then, and I had to let my lawn die, take 30-second "Navy showers," and follow the flusher's creed "if it's yellow, let it mellow." Let's hope it doesn't come to that in 2014, but just in case, please start conserving water NOW.

ODD FOOD

A strange new product appeared in my newspaper food coupons last week: Jimmy Dean pancake and sausage on a stick. I think almost everybody loves a good corn dog. But pancake and sausage on a stick? Really?

KILLER BEES

Scientists have now developed robotic "bees" to help pollinate fruit and nut trees and other flowering food crops, but concerned observers of this technology sector warn that the little drones could be used for other, less benign purposes such as surveillance and worse. If you saw a recent episode of "Elementary" in which a mosquito-like drone spied on its victims and "stung" them with a lethal drug, you will know what I'm talking about. Luckily, Sherlock Holmes heard the buzzing sound and took appropriate defensive action.

LAUGHING ALL THE WAY

Laughter really is the best medicine, according to a new study out of Loma Linda University. Researchers there recently reported that their research has found a positive correlation between good humor and mental health, especially important in fighting stress and memory loss. So go ahead, yuck it up all you want. It's good for you.

ROCKAWAY RUMBLE

A longtime reader who says he occasionally disagrees with me about growth and development, nevertheless wanted to share his concerns about negative changes going on in his East Rockaway neighborhood. Here is his story: "Recent developments in my neighborhood demonstrate why many

Pacificans say No to development. I thought this might be an interesting story for you. On Wednesday, April 9, I was sitting on my back deck enjoying the quiet serenity of the open space that I own, behind my house, when to my dismay I heard and observed a backhoe excavating and dumping brush, trees, and dirt onto my property. This land is very steep, and the way this material was left, perched on the edge, leaves no way for this to go, in the event of rain, but into the creek and area behind my house. Upon further investigation, we learned that this contractor decided to take it upon himself without a city permit. He claims he is only clearing poison oak so that a survey team could survey the land. Clearly there is no need for a backhoe to clear brush alone. The land had been gouged up to four feet in some areas, and much dirt was displaced. I have two letters in my possession from the City of Pacifica, one dated September 18, 1995, and the other May 13, 1996. The city had requested that we donate our property to the city's Open Space Program. It also stated that this property was a natural habitat for 'red fox, opossum, skunk, raccoon, rabbits and California crested quail. The forested hillside provides a canopy for songbirds and great horned owls, and nesting sanctuaries for the red-tailed hawk.' It was obvious to me that the city was opposed to development to this open space area. At this time, I question: 'What has changed?' Several of my neighbors who took the time to walk this devastated area were appalled that this occurred without the city's oversight. We immediately notified the planning and building departments, and a building inspector responded. He took photos of the area and today I was informed that a stop order would be issued on Monday. I believe that there should be consequences for this type of reckless behavior. The area in question can be seen from approximately 600 Rockaway Beach Avenue."

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