

## Wandering and Wondering

By John Maybury *Pacifica Tribune Columnist San Jose Mercury News*

Posted:

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### DON'T DRINK THE KOOL-AID

I am sure many letters to the editor this week ask why Measure V (phone tax) failed 66-34 percent. I have my own theories on why Measure V bombed after the City of Pacifica wasted thousands of dollars on consultants, surveys, and campaigns for this ill-conceived Utility Users Tax. Like putting lipstick on a pig, proponents tried to sell the tax as a magic elixir for police, fire, seniors, and other popular city services, but apparently the voters saw through the subterfuge and called it for what it was: pie in the sky. Let's stop wasting money on knucklehead schemes like Measure V, and start building a real economic base with more and better visitor-serving businesses.

### COUNTRY BUMPKINS

English has a rich vocabulary to denote stupidity: inane, foolish, laughable, ridiculous, absurd, dumb -- the list goes on and on. Many words indicate the dim-wittedness of rustics, but few suggest their intelligence. City slickers tend to think of rural folks as country bumpkins, yokels, hicks, hillbillies, and rednecks. Bumpkin is a 16th-century word derived from the Dutch term for "little barrel" or "little tree." Yokel is 19th-century British dialect for "green woodpecker" (consider the American variant: "redneck peckerwood"). Herman Melville in "Moby Dick" coined the term "hayseed" to describe a "country-bred...bumpkin." The "New York Journal" in April 1900 wrote: "A Hill-Billie is a free and untrammelled white citizen of Alabama, who lives in the hills, has no means to speak of, dresses as he can, talks as he pleases, drinks whiskey when he gets it, and fires off his revolver as the fancy takes him." (adapted from [phrases.org.uk](http://phrases.org.uk))

### SHOP LOCALLY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

As the holidays approach, giant foreign factories kick into high gear to provide Americans with monstrous piles of cheaply produced goods -- merchandise produced at the expense of American labor. This year, let's make a difference by shopping locally and helping our hometown economy. Buy gift certificates for hair and nail salons, gyms, car washes and detail shops, service stations and garages, lawn care and landscaping services, some rounds of golf at the local golf course, locally owned and operated restaurants, housecleaning services, computer tune-ups and repairs, crafts workers (jewelry, pottery, sculpture, painting), community theaters and symphonies, musicians' concerts and CDs. Give the postal carrier, newspaper delivery person, babysitter, waiter, barber, trash collector, and handyman a big holiday tip. Remember, this isn't about big-box stores and national chains -- this is about supporting hometown businesses. The benefits come back to us in ways we cannot imagine. (adapted from an Internet piece forwarded by former Pacifican Barbara Caswell)

### SKUNKS & CLIMATE CHANGE

Claudia Vilagi writes: "We are noticing an abnormal amount of skunk activity in our Adobe-Higgins-Shamrock Ranch neighborhood. The foul odor is entering the house and awakening us at night, even with the windows closed. We are accustomed to this happening in January or February, not in

the fall! I wonder if you've heard about this from other readers in town? Do you suppose that the skunks are confused by the drought?"

## EARTH SYSTEMS

The Earth Systems Program is an interdisciplinary environmental science major at Stanford University. Students learn about and independently investigate complex environmental problems caused by human activities in interaction with natural changes in the Earth system. Earth Systems majors become skilled in those areas of science, economics, and policy needed to tackle the globe's most pressing environmental problems, becoming part of a generation of scientists, professionals, and citizens who approach and solve problems in a new way: a systematic, interdisciplinary way. Call 650-725-7437 for more information.

## MUSIC AND PHYSICS

A unique experiment will be demonstrated that refutes a foundation of quantum mechanics and shows that light does not behave like photons. A photon should go one way or another at a beam splitter, but when the test is done with gamma rays, the photon model fails. If you know any modern physics, this is a very big deal. All details of this work are available at [www.unquantum.net](http://www.unquantum.net). Other Eric Reiter inventions will be shown. Events are Monday nights at 6 during November at the

Chit-Chat Café, 5 West Manor Drive, Pacifica.

## RIDDLE

Q: What happens if you eat yeast and shoe polish?

A: Every morning you'll rise and shine!

## AIN'T THAT THE TRUTH

"The Tea Party is not as much fun as it sounds." (Nancy Pelosi on David Letterman, November 6)

## NEW NATION IS BORN: EUROPE

Gee, I didn't know Europe was a nation: "If the mission is successful, India will become only the fourth nation to visit the red planet after the Soviet Union, the United States and Europe." (Associated Press story about India's rocket launch to Mars, printed in the San Francisco Chronicle, November 6. Email corrections to [feedback@sfgate.com](mailto:feedback@sfgate.com))

## NEW EATS

Joining Pacifica's 100-plus food sources are The Whole Beast (catering whole-hog and whole-turkey feasts from the old KFC/Boston Bill's location; opening soon), The Breakers (a breakfast and lunch spot moving into the old Acapulco Mexican restaurant in Rockaway Beach), and three new Vietnamese sandwich places (Vy's on Palmetto, Dinosaur's in Eureka Square, and Beach Monkey Café in Adobe Plaza).

## SWAMI SEZ

"Not all those who wander are lost." (J.R.R. Tolkien, "Lord of the Rings")

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