

1/5/77

the reactor

By Paul Azevedo



The dog's owner was apologetic. In fact he told my wife he would keep the animal in the rest of the day.

His German Shorthair had crossed the street from his own home. He came up silently behind my 10 year-old son. He bit deeply into my son's shoulder, through jacket and shirt. The bloody gashes were over two inches long.

The doctor gave my son a tetanus shot, cleaned the wound, did the other things necessary. The pain is my son's. The bill is mine. Presumably the dog's owner will pay. I'm told that the animal had had a rabies shot. Thank God! At least my son will not have to undergo that painful series of shots.

WHAT HAPPENED here, though? Why should this dog have been loose. . . ever? It's illegal to allow a dog to run loose in Pacifica. It's against an ordinance, and all that.

I don't think that such a dramatic word as "defying" is in order here. The owner just did what a lot of his neighbors do. He decided that his dog should run free. In spite of the (unenforced) leash law, hundreds or thousands of dogs run loose in Pacifica, day and night. Especially night.

IN FACT, at times in the early morning, say four a.m., there are more dogs on the street than there are people.

In my neighborhood there are several big Irish setters. All over town I see dogs nosing the neighbors' flowers, messing on their lawns, lifting their legs on all convenient posts.

THE POLICE have primary responsibility here, but recognizing their own lack of expertise, the responsibility has been turned over to a voluntary agency, the Peninsula Humane Society.

The Humane Society pleads lack of funds, and works, I understand, 9 to 5. I seldom see a Humane Society truck in Pacifica, though I'm around town most of the day and most of the week.

THE HUMANE SOCIETY wasn't up Carmel Canyon the day my son was attacked. It was not in Vallemar the day a dog prevented one of our Tribune carriers from entering his own home for two hours.

The Humane Society was not there when a carrier was put in fear as he tried to do his route in Half Moon Bay.

The Humane Society was not there the day that a motorcyclist of my acquaintance was chased for about a mile.

The dogs have one thing in common, as have their owners. They have little to fear. This is wrong. The leash law should be enforced. Why should my boy suffer because a dog is allowed to run loose?

It's not doing the dogs any favors, either.