

The Reactor

by Paul Azevedo



After 14 years in Pacifica, I went to my first Terra Nova football game the other Friday night. The score against South San Francisco was a satisfying 14-0, but it wasn't really very important to me.

I was there because this year I have a personal interest in the marching band. I'm sure that there were many other parents there that night, bundled against the cold, because of one very important player, or bandsman, or pom pon girl.

I WAS NOT AS bundled up as I should have been, but that may have been impossible this side of thermal underwear.

The cheerleaders had my sympathy. Goosebumps on their tiger spots. At least the players had those black overcoats or whatever they are.

Dust clouds swirled up as high as the lights. Paper airplanes flew around the stands. Clouds of torn paper hung in the air to celebrate good happenings on the field.

THE CHEERLEADERS went through very well-trained paces, but something was missing I could not define. It may have been about 30 degrees fahrenheit.

Little kids tore up ice plant to throw at adults and each other.

Over by the tennis courts and along hillsides, in the men's room, along the fences, adults and students warmed up with beer and occasionally, whiskey.

By the end of the game hundreds of green and brown bottles littered the hillsides.

I'M NOT A football fan. It's always looked to me like a bunch of mobile helmets and shoulder padding; toy soldiers on a chewed up lawn.

Given that bias, I enjoyed the game. For one thing, I was closer to the action. And I think it's more fun to watch a high schooler fumble a pass than some pro catch his for the 899th consecutive time.

IT'S LESS like watching a robot team when the announcer is a guy perched on a painter's scaffold behind me, talking about guys like Rovegno, Diaz, Keuntje, Nava and Kremesec. They are real people, with real families. They're not interchangeable parts, like the pros whose most human action is holding out for \$400,000 instead of \$350,000.

Imperfection is more fun to watch.

I made the ultimate sacrifice after half-time. The marching band needs funds, so I bought an ice cream bar from a bandsman. Too bad it wasn't hot coffee.

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