



On a cosmic scale, it happened just a short time ago, on a star close by. A burst of photons erupted from Fomalhaut, "the whale's mouth," in the constellation of the Southern Fish, and rushed toward earth at light-speed.

At the same time, citizens of a handful of coastal villages and housing tracts were thrashing out whether they should unite for their mutual benefit.

Some residents were wholeheartedly in favor, knocking on doors, passing petitions, meeting in one another's homes, researching state law, doing the spadework needed.

OTHER PEOPLE just as adamantly objected. They could see nothing but higher taxes, problems and complications. They liked their little villages, where

Alcoholics Anonymous

No dues, no fees and no initiation are necessary for membership in Alcoholics Anonymous, just a desire to stop drinking.

Five different meetings are conducted in Pacifica: Newcomers and Oldtimers, Lutheran Church, 4400 Cabrillo Highway, Monday, 8 p.m.; Coastside Group, 480 Manor Plaza, Wednesday, 8 p.m.; Noon Discussion, St. Peter's church, 700 Oddstad Blvd., Wednesday, noon; Pedro Valley Pacifica Discussion, Lutheran church, 1165 Seville Drive, Friday, 8:15 p.m.; and Grupo Libertad, conducted in Spanish, Fairmont Recreation Center, 649 Park View Circle, Sunday, 11:30 a.m.

Those interested in joining AA can attend any of the meetings or call the San Mateo county office, 573-6811, 24 hours.

Manor Village ignored Linda Mar and Vallemar ignored them both.

And the burst of photons from Fomalhaut continued on its way. When it started it packed unimaginable power, bursting from its super-sun with tremendous force, but as it traveled ever further into space, its strength divided, and divided again.

In the coastal villages, they held an election. They voted to cooperate as one city. A lawyer destined not to live in the city he named would give it a magnificent title, "Pacifica" a name conjuring up an image of a vast ocean basin, an oceanic rim ... and peace. It was particularly appropriate, too, because the city lies over a sliver of land on the edge of the vast pacific plate, awkwardly butted to the north american plate, joined along a tight fissure called the San Andreas fault.

AND OUT THERE, streaming toward earth with unblinking, unwavering force, the photons of the Whale's Mouth continued their journey.

Houses were built, tracts were bulldozed out of virgin hillsides, mayors and councils were elected, served, and were replaced.

City managers came, acted, resigned and were replaced. A pier was built, businesses came and went, residents came, raised up children, who married, and began in turn to raise up their own children.

SCHOOLS OPENED, and filled to bursting, and more schools were built, and then the tide turned, and schools started to empty, and be closed.

And the photons from Fomalhaut continued on their way.

The tide turned many times along the coastal waters, and in the new city, the tide turned against "progress." Highways were rejected. New houses and added residents suddenly seemed too heavy a burden to the community already in place.

IN THE COMMUNITY called Pacifica, it seemed a long time. After all, 22 years is almost a human generation. To the photons from Fomalhaut, it was almost the end of the journey.

Tomorrow (Thursday), Pacifica celebrates its 22nd birthday. And if you look into the night sky, about 10, look for the brightest star in the constellation of the Southern Fish. It is the 18th brightest star as seen from earth, and the light you will see started on its journey of seven Parsecs the summer that brought us all together to be one city.

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