



## the reactor

by Paul Azevedo

For those of us who watched it happen, it's hard to believe that it happened 10 years ago.

It was in the pre-Easter season of 1971, though, that a Pacifica man made nationwide headlines because he was married, had been for several years, and had a five year-old son.

Because that man was a Catholic priest, the pastor of St. Peter's Church, the shock waves are still reverberating for some of us.

THE SON IS about 15 now. We are all 10 years older. The family now lives in the Santa Clara Valley or its environs. The Examiner had an interview not long ago that brought up-to-date what Robert Duryea (seems odd even now not to call him "father") is doing and thinking.

I can only wish Bob Duryea and his family well. Though I wish that things had not happened the way they did, I thought him an excellent pastor. I'm sorry things could not have been worked out, naive though that sentiment is.

NAIVE IS A proper word to describe my feelings when the first rumor about the marriage came to me, from a non-Catholic friend in Fairmont. I laughed it off, and ignored it.

As the "secret" continued to spread, those April days of 1971, the then editor of the Tribune, Pat Lynn, was able to reach Father Duryea.

Then the agreement was made, agonizing from the point of view of a weekly newsman with such a big story within his reach.

THE TRIBUNE did not break the story in the next issue. Instead the priest was able to handle things his way in a more dignified and systematic manner, insofar as this is possible when a life pattern is so publicly and abruptly wrenched out of its accustomed grooves.

For all of us who knew, it was 10 days of "hanging by our thumbs," hoping that the Tribune would have a "beat" on a major national story originating in Pacifica.

FOR ME, it was the hope, as sensational as the story was intrinsically, that it would be handled with sympathy and understanding for a man I liked and respected.

I think that I can say it was, for which I am grateful to Pat Lynn. The Tribune did indeed score a "beat," the avid reporters of the metro dailies notwithstanding. (Lynn and the Tribune later won a state award for good reporting.)

Four months later I was on vacation in Colorado, where I had never been before, and I picked up a copy of Good Housekeeping, which I read once every five years or so.

There was a feature article, with full color photos, and interviews, retelling the story I had come to know so well, of a priest, and a nurse, and a hospital where they had come to know each other. Somehow it seemed fitting that I should pick up this magazine at random, 1500 miles from home, and read about a man I had first met when he baptized a tiny cousin of mine, in a Berkeley church, years before.