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The Reactor

Pacifica's Seven Wonders

I've been trying to think of the seven wonders of Pacifica. Naturally, we have more than seven wonders. Grace McCarthy is a wonder all by herself. But for the sake of this discussion, seven wonders it will be. The castle is a wonder. One test of a wonder is: would you expect to find it where you do find it? Frankly, if it wasn't there, would you ever go looking for a castle where it is, on a hill above a little coastal town near San Francisco? Since you are an intelligent person, your answer is "No," of course.

Edna Laurel Calhan is gone now. She had moved from Pacifica several years before she died, well into her nineties. Edna Laurel as many people knew her, was the nearest thing this town ever had to an Empress. In fact, many real live empresses have been less imperial than our Edna, even though she was the founder of the Pacifica Democrats before there was a Pacifica.

I think the Sanchez Adobe is a wonder. Here is a spot where Coastside history is condensed into one area of a couple of acres. On the Adobe site the area's history goes back perhaps 4000 years, give or take a thousand. Indians lived there in a little village they called Pruristac for uncounted centuries, eating their mussels and clams and abalone, gathering their seeds, daubing mud on their naked bodies to keep out the cold and the damp. Then came the Spanish, who brought cattle to feed the grizzly bears and guns to shoot the bears and bulls to bait them.

After the Spanish came the Mexicans, who granted over 8900 acres to a loyal soldier named Francisco Sanchez, a prominent citizen who lived mostly close to Mission Dolores in San Francisco.

Then, after the Sanchez family lost or sold its holdings in the 1870s, Americans lived in the house and on the property, until we rediscovered the fact that we do have a history 30 or 40 years ago.

Sadly another of the wonders of Pacifica no longer exists. Like the Colossus of Rhodes, St. Peter's Church isn't there any more... The beautiful church was not safe from defects in its structure, and had to come down.

Frontierland Park is another wonder. What had been a big pile of trash is today a place where children can play and young adults can exercise or sprawl on the lawns or picnic of a Sunday afternoon.

San Pedro Valley County Park is another wonder. Here is a secluded natural area on the very edge of a thriving community. Only a few hundred yards from civilization bobcats feed their families and birds stake out their territories. The wonder here is that city, county and water district worked together to bring this amenity to the area.

The fishing pier-sewer outfall is also a wonder for the same reason, a synergistic melding of two seemingly unrelated needs to form a harmonious combination.

That's seven wonders, but if they don't meet your criteria for wonder, let me know your idea for a wonder or two or seven in town. Very likely, there are better candidates for wonder than the ones I've mentioned. There might be Sweeney Ridge, now a part of a national park. How many cities do you know which have a national park in their boundaries?

Whether my choices are truly wonderful may be up for debate, but Pacifica is certainly a wonder. Of that there is no doubt.