

## **The Height of Something or Other 11/10/93**

It's an interesting bit of trivia that the top of Sweeney Ridge, at the San Francisco Bay Discovery Site, is roughly 1230 feet above sea level, or roughly the same height as the Empire State Building.

Should you, on your next visit to New York, decide to walk up the stairs of the Empire State, and should you be allowed to do so, you would have to achieve roughly the same height to accomplish your goal.

Start on the first floor of Pacifica by taking off your shoes and wetting your toes in the Pacific. Walk east, admire the statue of Don Gaspar de Portolá given the state of California by the government of Catalunya and now resident in the Plaça de Catalunya here in Pacifica. While it's not precisely the path of Portolá, let's ascend via Crespi drive, named after the Father Crespi who came with Portolá. The third floor is roughly 700 Crespi. As we continue up and east, we climb to the fifth floor between Escalero and Seville. The street curves and climbs, and by the time we get to Manzanita, we've climbed above the 450 foot mark, or, in the Empire State, the 36th story. Climbing higher on Crespi, we come to the 47th story, at roughly the corner of Lerida. If you're puffing just thinking about this trek, remember that in New York there are elevators. Here you walk or drive. Down a bit, then turn onto Fassler Ave, and at the end of Fassler you're at the 625 foot level, half way there, or in N.Y. about the fiftieth story. If you've brought along your grandmother and drove this far, at this time you're at the end of the line, because there is no automobile access from Pacifica to Sweeney Ridge permitted via the historic trail.

If you are a young, vigorous hiker, you have another fifty stories to go. Admire the wild flowers if you are going up in the spring. On a clear brisk day in the fall, after a rainy wind has cleared the air, you can admire the Farallones, Point Reyes, Mount Tam, and eventually Mount Diablo to the east. Floor after floor you continue your climb. At the thousand foot level, more or less, think of the famed airplane crash into the Empire State Building many years ago. You are now on Cattle Hill. Rockaway and Vallemar lie below. San Pedro Rock dramatically sticks its toe into the Pacific, as you did when you started. The gallant old chunk of geologic history is the farthest western point of North America from here south. Soon you will arrive at the same observation deck so important to Portolá, his royal bosses, their Mexican successors, and eventually to the 49ers.

You will see a chunk of serpentine rock suitably engraved, and a granite monument to the memory of Carl McCarthy, who devoted the energy of his retirement years to showing so many thousands his vision of a Discovery Site he hoped would be dedicated to the enjoyment of all the American people. Today comparatively few persons have enjoyed the magnificent views. Even most Pacificans have never made it to the top. Some day? Who knows?