

The Reactor

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Dumpy, dreary makes me weak and weary

Is Pacifica really a "slightly dreary, dumpy place"? A travel book by Kim Weir, the Northern California Handbook, says so.

True, she also states we have good food, good views and "attitude," whatever that is. She mentions the all-you-can-eat Sunday brunch at the Moonraker, the "surprisingly good" sandwiches at La Vita, and the "straightforward Italian" at Dan's Place in Moss Beach.

But getting back to dreary and dumpy, my first reaction was to bristle defensively at this kind of look-down-your-nose attitude. Whadya mean dumpy? Whadya mean dreary?

Unfortunately, there's truth to those words, though we hate to hear them. If David Letterman did his top 10 about Pacifica dumpiness, it might go like this:

10. The heavy cable that spoils the views from the yellow condos on Roberts Road, the ones called Portola's Landing, until someone pointed out Portolá didn't land, he walked.

9. The Lions recycling operation. Those folks are volunteers. I applaud what they're doing, but couldn't we hide it better?

8. Unfortunately the recycle depot's image is reinforced next door by the ugliest fence on the Peninsula. It puts the worst foot forward for Linda Mar Shopping Center.

7. If out-of-town visitors decide to explore that pretty little country lane known as San Pedro Terrace Road, they discover dumpers beat them to it. As fast as it's cleaned up, it's re-messed.

6. Any freeway fence after the wind has blown. Bad!

5. Pacific Manor Shopping Center's poor planning. One store has square posts out front, the next one the original telephone poles that hold up the roof.

4. The street trash cans in Pacific Manor Center. They were originally a matter of pride. They looked good. Vandalism and neglect have combined to make the cure worse than the disease. Fix 'em or junk 'em.

3. The rusty corroded pipe railings on Sharp Park Promenade. Do not put anything iron near the ocean unless you have taken extraordinary steps to prevent it from rusting. When will we ever learn? IRON RUSTS! IRON RUSTS! IRON RUSTS!

2. The former Ed Cordero Showroom. Can't we put a coastal scene on those tattered billboards?

1. Pedro Point Shopping Center. A total disaster. I know all the reasons why, and I can forgive, but the folks we want to impress don't know the story. They only know what they see. If they come from the south, it's their first impression of Pacifica. They see fading store fronts, plywood, and an old Safeway Store that's a mess.

Each problem could be corrected, or mitigated, or improved, if the right people decided to do it. The city could handle some, the owners others. First must come the will to do it.

No one ever gets a second chance to make a first impression. We'll never be Carmel, but we can do better. Our Letterman-style list might be entirely different.

The important thing is: Let's do something. With the tourist and visitor so important to the Pacifica economy, it hurts a lot to hear words like "dreary" and "dumpy." Let's clean up our act.