

Of sunsets, sandtraps and seaviews

Those of us who've arrived in Pacifica since incorporation, and haven't a special interest in local history, may be surprised to learn the area near Mussel Rock, that landmark just north of Pacifica, used to be the main highway. On your way to the coast you would drive out Alemany Boulevard (now John Daly Boulevard) past Thornton Beach. Continuing along the coast (past what later became a garbage dump), you emerged on what's now upper Palmetto Avenue and so on south.

The 1957 'quake put the old road out of business. Landslides did in the highway. Now we drive up to 700 feet in elevation to get from Westlake to Sharp Park. All along the bluffs of western Westlake the ground is unstable. The planned George R. Stewart trail, named after one of my heroes, is badly eroded. Houses continue to be taken out of service by a massive, slow moving landslide north of Fairmont West. You can take an eye-opening geological sightseeing tour by a casual walk on the westernmost, southernmost streets of Westlake.

If we knew then what we know now, those houses would not have been built. The former garbage dump was criticized roundly and rightly as a poor use of valuable coastal frontage. It's obvious we should never build structures there.

What's left? How about greens and

The Reactor

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sandtraps? A golf course has been proposed. Any objective observer realizes that golf courses are major sources of open space. They make money. They preserve pristine views. Sharp Park Golf Course is a major benefit to Pacifica. Unfortunately the ecological philistines are out in force. Letters to the Editor, well orchestrated and well planned, prove nothing of value comes these days without an argument.

Words like "elitist" are thrown around. Ken Davis, who lives on Daly City's Seaview Drive, due west of Westmoor High, wrote to complain. Interestingly, he describes the "panoramic view of the coastline and the Pacific Ocean" from his home at sunset. Why he objects to greens, roughs and golfers I can't fathom. They won't interfere with his view. They'll probably increase his property values, as golf courses do elsewhere. I also don't understand why Mr. Davis hasn't invited me to view his sunsets. I love sunsets, yet no one who lives on the

Westlake cliffs has ever invited me over to view. Elitism?

There's a shortage of golf courses in this area. More folks want to golf than can be accommodated. Since the golf course will be far below his home, it's unlikely golf balls will sail through his living room window. If the next earthquake centers on Mussel Rock, the golf course will be far more likely to survive in usable form than Mr. Davis's home. There can be reasonable accommodation by the golf course for dog walkers, paragliders, joggers, and fisherfolk. Everyone can share the views.

I'm not a golfer. I'm unlikely ever to play around on this proposed course. Nevertheless, I applaud the concept. It's the best use I can think of for this beautiful place, now wasted, for the most part, on a few homeowners whose houses may go tumbling come some future earthquake.

Paul Azevedo is bracing for the Letters to the Editor about this column.

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