

Friday Fishwrap a Variety

Community Comment
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Herb Caen, the late columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, occasionally referred to his Friday piece as the Friday fish wrap. In other words, a collection of topics of interest. This is my version of the fish wrap.

A well respected breast cancer charity, the Susan B. Komen foundation announced it was ending its support for planned parenthood for breast exams for low income women. It seemed a pure act of bowing to pressure from groups that don't like the fact that Planned Parenthood also engages in family planning including abortions. The fact is that Planned Parenthood is a clinic involved in counseling and treating low income women on a variety of health issues. Considering the state of health insurance availability in this country, this move is disappointing at best; at worst it's political pressure of the lowest order. I have heard from many women, including my own daughter, that they will no longer support the Komen Foundation. It's a sad day when political views are so devious that they even get in the way of basic social needs.

On a very different topic, did you here about the man shot by a Park Ranger with a stun gun for walking his lap dogs off leash? This seems to be a sign of the times we live in. We seem hell bent on criminalizing everything. This man was in the wrong for a variety of things, but none of them reach the level of using potentially lethal force to stop him from leaving. This kind of abuse by those in positions of authority define our state of affairs; we have turned our back on common sense, civil discourse, and accepted the use of force beyond what is called for. The man was wrong for not following the rules although there is some question about that. The park ranger was wrong for over reacting with a weapon. This was, after all, not about a crime of violence but an opportunity for a teaching moment. I hope the Park Service takes a deep breath and remembers what its mission really is.

Also in the Bay Area, another snapshot about things that need more attention than they get. Bart, the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, awarded a contract to build new rail cars to a foreign company. This is the kind of ongoing project that creates good jobs. Unfortunately, we don't seem to have the capacity to build these cars in our own country. If this is true, it demonstrates that we have somehow encouraged basic manufacturing to slip away from our shores. All countries should have the basic factories necessary to sustain themselves. Our tax laws are probably the best way to encourage this. That we, as a country, saved our automobile industry was critical to our nations future. We need to do more to encourage retaining factories and the products and jobs that come with them. In my opinion, a strong middle class is key to our future success as individuals and as a nation.

Finally, on the local front, I attended a meeting of the McKinleyville Community Services District Wednesday night. Forty or more people were there to support a skateboard park. The work done by private citizens to build a park is impressive and I hope is met with cooperation by the board.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.