

HERB CAEN

Out of My Mind

WHEN PEOPLE ask me how I like writing a column, I used to answer "Well, it beats digging ditches," and then I found out that ditch-diggers get \$3.18 an hour. Now I have to think of something else . . . Sudden thought while stuck in traffic behind a mail truck carrying the message: "Use Zip Code. The Last Word in Mail Addresses!" When numbers become words, we're in big trouble . . . Even more sudden thought while stuck in traffic on Dear Old 101, waiting for the stop lights to turn green in world-renowned Nevada: couldn't the State Highway people put their heads together, thereby forming a rock garden, and come up with a way to break this incredible bottleneck on a so-called super highway? . . . Modern art made easy: That vertical steel sculpture at Severely Facile, in Embarcadero Center, is a whistle for calling the giant dog with square intestines that deposited the Transamerica Pyramid in Ferry Plaza. Anticipating your next question, the dog is housed in the Transamerica Pyramid. . . . And since San Francisco Tomorrow is anti-Pyramid, how come its official insignia is two huge pyramids, side by side? . . . Stop mumbling. Speak up.

VALIANT puns of the week: A vacationist will make a val defense in your life, mate. . . . If were Mayer I'd make General Motors do something, like right now, about all those noisy, smelly buses. On the other hand, really buses are quiet, fast and ecologically sound, but our eschies at Silly Hall are against them because overhead wires are "unightly." Noise and pollution are preferable. . . . My golfs, I sound as sore and crutchy today as an old rodeo rider. . . . Meanwhile, our traditionalists are girding for a fight to save the old station at Thruway and Townsend—a striking example of California Mission architecture. . . . I walked over there last week to give it another look. It's a striking example of junk. Tear it down.

ADD IMPROVEMENTS I can live without those plastic egg cartons. . . . Not to mention plastic eggs with rubbery shells. How long has it been since you've tasted a real, fresh egg? . . . Nobody asked me, but most books titled "The Way and Wisdom of (fill in name)" turn out to have very little of either but them. I haven't read "The Way and Wisdom of Peter Bondoures" yet. . . . Every time Herm Riggeman sees a restaurant or theater advertising "popular prices," he wonders "popular" to whom. . . . And get a kick out of these letters—to the Editor from E. Boyles comparing the Oak Coliseum unfavorably to Gandiwick. The AstroTurf is always greener on the other side of the Bay?

CHASE WEBB, worrying in advance about a possible U.S. change from the linear to the metric system: "I'd walk 1,000 meters for a Camel." Give him a millimeter and he'll take a kilometer! A gram of prevention is worth a kilogram of cure? So ignoring, he danced out the door, singing to the tune of "Hushel and a Peck." "I love you a hetteliter and a dekaliter." Straaaange.

NEVER LEFT It is said there's NO news in this column. The tennis ball was invented 100 years ago by Britain's J.M. Heathcote, who found a rubber ball unsatisfactory on a wet court and had his wife cover one with flannel. There. . . . Since Station KFOU is in Ghirardelli Square you'd think its announcers would know how to pronounce that name but they still say "Jeer-a-dell" too often. . . . If I were Mayer, I'd charge motorists four bits to drive down the Lombard St. curvy-cup, at least on weekends. Last Sunday brought a steady stream of cars—12 in line with about 20 waiting—including a camper that scraped every bump on the way down. As for Coll Tower, I'd charge a buck with a 15-minute time limit for gawking. . . . And for the cheapest and most ludicrous artist in this essentially classy city, Bonnie Thorenson nominates the fake, painted "rock" on the hillside facing the Cliff House—especially now that it has a big hole in it. . . . If George Leonard got lost and his wife sent a bloodhound to find him, would that be a case of a dog talking a way? I don't care but Herbert the Furrier does.

S—T may be a dirty four-letter word here, but in Italy, it's slang for "the latest thing"—where a boutique named S—T has opened in Milan. Ever so many fun-loving San Franciscans are buying any little old cheap thing there to send to their friends here in a T—T gift box, and if you haven't rec'd one yet, you have clean-minded friends. Clean-minded but cheap. . . . Printer Bernie Moss, who did the cards for the "Rape of the Locks" barber shop in Sausalito, has this mental picture of a bunch of guys rapping a smoked salmon, and can't seem to shake it, poor devil. . . . And up in Petaluma this man asked a teenage clerk behind a drugstore counter: "Do you have anything for rabbits?" Teenager, honestly perplexed: "I don't know, sir, what disease do they have?" . . . Chingwah Lee, the Chinatown sage, was browsing through an old Chinese-English dictionary and discovered that "Ping" means "Fraternity" and "Pong" means "Autism" and that's how the world was saved.

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"A terrific souvenir to show the folks back home . . ."

Editorial Comment

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Peking's Fears

FOR SOME 20 YEARS, Peking has been extravagantly blackguarding the United States and shaking a derisory fist at this "paper tiger"—a process more recently brought to bear against the "running-dog's head" in the Soviet Union.

It is therefore strange to learn that although the Soviet Union has 45 divisions and uncounted nuclear missiles massed on China's northern frontier, and although the United States has troops and bases on Taiwan, in South Korea, in Thailand, and of course in Vietnam and vicinity, neither of these superpowers is Peking's biggest worry and Enemy Number One.

Of Russian manpower or rocket missiles, and he is even now moving placidly from Ping-Pong table toward negotiation table with the United States. But China has apprehensions, and unmistakable ones, about Japan.

This fear manifested itself, unreservedly and repeatedly, in the Prime Minister's recent and notable interview by James Reston of the New York Times, an interview directed mainly toward Vietnam and U.S. withdrawal therefrom. In essence, it arises from Japan's superb and improving economic position, from Chou's misadvised Japanese militarism is on the rise, from a Japanese military budget of \$16 billion for the next five years, and from historical facts, as cited by Chou, from which China has "suffered much in the last 50 years."

Eban's Optimism

IT IS THE PREDICTION of Alvin Eban, Israel's foreign minister, that 1971 will see no shooting war in the nervous Middle East, despite the warlike threats and ultimatums of Egypt's President, Sadat, and the hope of the Suez cease-fire agreement.

This is odd stuff. Eban says in effect, and Israel strenuously shrugs it off, confident that Egypt could not win a war and knows R. Bolduc, he says, the Soviet Union doesn't want a Middle East war. His assurance was in no wise disturbed by the opening of a two-week summit conference by the Presidents of Egypt, Libya and Syria, which has plenty besides a war with Israel to discuss—the Syria-Libya border fighting, King Hussein's feud with the Palestinians, the Sudanese civil war, the Arab oil price hike in oil prices to compensate for the cut in the dollar, to which existing price agreements are pressed.

Eban is widely renowned as an articulate and persuasive diplomat, and the world at large must now hope that he is no less talented as a prophet than as an orator.

ECONOMIC EXPANSION is bound to lead to military expansion, Chou asserted, and the Japanese militarists, he insisted, already have their prime targets, namely Taiwan and South Korea, in their sights. Japan has the wealth, the nuclear possibility—and the desire—to move into those convenient territories, he insists, and might well take over Vietnam to revive the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, when the United States withdraws its troops and abandons its bases in the Pacific.

In commenting upon this view from Peking, Yoshinobu Uchida, Japan's Ambassador to Washington, called it "the biggest nonsense" he ever heard. Edwin O. Reischauer, former U. S. Ambassador to Tokyo, also discounted it, observing that the Japanese military budget is less than one per cent of the gross national product and the smallest of any important country, that the Japanese army numbers less than 250,000 men, and that the citizenry is the most peace-minded in the world and venerates its no-war constitution.

Nevertheless, the fear plainly exists and is indeed held to have been the force behind Peking's flirting with the United States over the Ping-Pong table. If, as Reischauer suggests, it leads to a three-way Japanese-Chinese-American understanding, it could well produce a cure for the chronic irritations of war that plague East Asia.

ART HOPPE

Mr. Nixon's Freezing

THE SUCCESS of the President's wage-price freeze depends basically, as you know, on the patriotism of us Americans.

For while anyone who raises wages or prices is supposed to be "fined," the agency in charge is something called the Office of Emergency Preparedness. And if it's prepared for an emergency like this . . .

Well, fortunately, we all realize a genuine wage-price freeze would be good for the country. So the President's counting on each of us to patriotically hold the line. Nor, I'm glad to say, is his confidence in our patriotism misplaced. At least on our block.

YOU SHOULD have caught the scene at our butcher shop when last week's shipment of frozen Hawaiian bratwurst arrived. . . .

Now our block's a regular meeting spot and Hawaiian bratwurst is a neighborhood favorite. So as soon as our ethnic butcher, Heathcliff Forsythe, the is a pure Anglo-Saxon-American put up a sign reading, "Hawaiian bratwurst—the B," a crowd gathered.

It was Mrs. Harrahatty, who has an eye for such things, who first objected to the price. "Last week, Mr. Forsythe, it was \$46 a pound" she charged indignantly. "You are a profiteer undermining our entire war effort in Vietnam."

"I'm against the war in Vietnam," Mrs. Harrahatty replied Mr. Forsythe. "Maybe I could interest you in some rice balls instead?"

"If you won't think of our boys stemming the tide of Communism in Southeast Asia, think of us senior citizens," said our senior citizen, Mr. Knopkin. "Your greed in profiting against the vicious inflationary spiral is impoverishing those of us on fixed incomes."

"In the first two days of this wage-price freeze alone," said Mr. Forsythe, "stock market investors made \$20 billion. What a easy nickel a pound? Next?"

"Profits aren't un-American—the President has said as much," objected our block's Nixon supporter, Mr. G. Washington Carver. "It's wage and price increases that are. So our President has called on all of us to make sacrifices and . . ."

"And I'm helping," said Mr. Forsythe. "To combat inflation, the President's frozen wages and prices. To combat the recession, he wants you to spend more. So I'm helping you spend more of your frozen wages on my frozen bratwurst. You do your part to end inflation and I'll do mine to end the recession. Now, how many pounds you want?"

WELL, IN the end we all grudgingly bought our bratwurst at 80¢ a pound, it being the only Hawaiian bratwurst in town. But we were beginning to seriously doubt Mr. Forsythe's patriotism.

Fortunately for him, his delivery boy, Leonard, chose that very moment to ask for \$2 a week raise. Mr. Forsythe immediately proved himself a true American.

"Giving you a raise, Leonard," he said with a frown, "would be illegal, immoral, unethical, un-American and if you don't like it you can look for another job of which there aren't any."

So you can see how patriotic everyone is on our block. Those who earn wages patriotically want to freeze prices and those who set prices patriotically want to freeze wages.

But Mr. Nixon's wage-price freeze places a terribly unfair burden on Mr. Forsythe. After all, he's in charge of both.



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