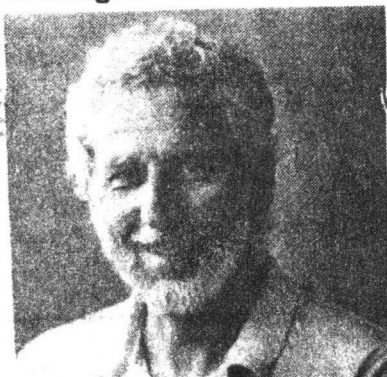


Busting one or two of the local myths

Sandy Lydon

Hindsight



Sandy Lydon

HAVE YOU heard the one about why the Sentinel does not publish on Saturday? You know. Because the McPherson family is connected with the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Well folks, it is not true. Just isn't. No matter how many times you hear it or repeat it. The Sentinel's Saturday hiatus has nothing to do with religion.

That story is a perfect example of a local myth.

Local myths buzz around like pesky mosquitoes. Occasionally we swat at them, but most of the time we tolerate them because they are not life-threatening.

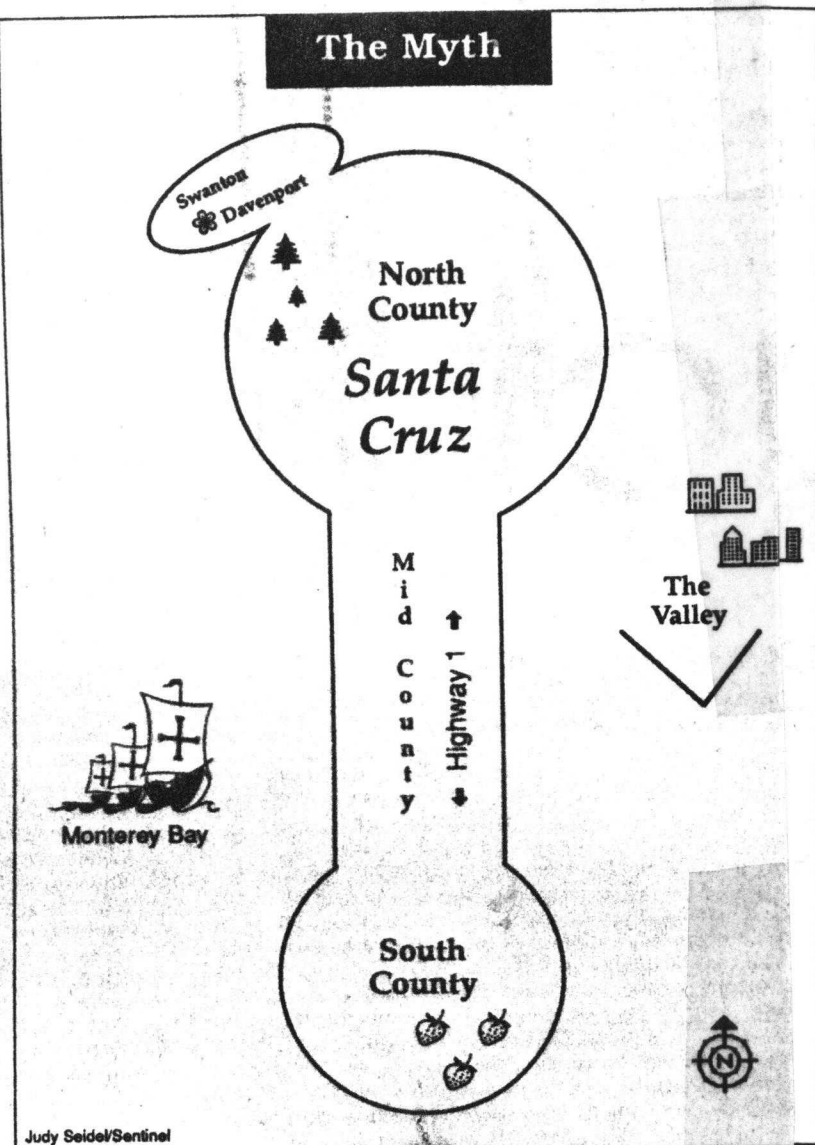
However, when they swarm in our eyes and obscure our vision, making it difficult to see either current or historic reality, it is time to call the historian.

Taa Daa! The Mythbuster.

Myth No. 1: Watsonville is south of Santa Cruz. Or, put another way, Santa Cruz is north of Watsonville. Technically, of course, Watsonville is a bit south of Santa Cruz, but only a bit. Watsonville is mostly east of Santa Cruz and the ratio of east to south is 7 to 1. Using a ruler and a county map, you will find that Watsonville is about 14 air miles east of Santa Cruz and a little over 2 miles south. The notion that Watsonville is south of Santa Cruz has led to the modern appellation "South County."

Combine "South County" with the myth that Highway 1 runs north and south between Aptos and Santa Cruz and the county rotates on its axis. Hold a compass over Highway 1 where Capitola Avenue crosses it, and Santa Cruz-bound traffic is traveling 25 degrees south of west; at La Fonda it is 15 degrees south of west; at Morrissey, it is also 15 degrees south of west. Finally, at the North Branciforte overcrossing, the compass swings over to 15 degrees on the north side of west before the highway twists around through the Fishhook. That's why the setting sun sneaks beneath your sun visor along that stretch of Highway 1 — you are traveling west, not north.

Trivia question: Which is farther south, the Santa Cruz Municipal



the Santa Cruz mountains learn that the ocean is west of the coast. So, as the newcomers stand facing the water on the beach at Santa Cruz or Capitola, they assume they are looking west. The Highway 1 on-ramp sign confirms it. Actually, of course, they are looking south.

None of this would be too important, except that a new phrase has come into vogue lately, and it is time to bust the myth. I recently read that Santa Cruz was now "North County."

That's too much. What does that make Swanton? Davenport? The Far North? And the summit? Bonny Doon? Big Basin?

I can find no similar geographical "lumping" prior to World War II. In those days, people used the correct compass points and place names to describe things geographical. I cannot find any use of the term "South County" prior to 1950, and I believe that the term has become a form of geographical shorthand, or geographical laziness. It is easier to say "South County" than "the Pajaro Valley" or "Corralitos" or "Watsonville."

There is a danger in using these lumping, collective terms — the danger of stereotyping the county into distinctive, homogeneous regions where labels can be easily

terms (and incorrect ones at that) is just another way of saying "us" and "them." Regional stereotypes are just as useless these days as ethnic or racial stereotypes.

Mythbuster's recommendations:

1.) No more North County/South County. Instead, we should use the fascinating county place names which history has provided: Aromas, Corralitos, Rio del Mar, La Selva Beach, Live Oak, Aptos.

While I am at it, I would love to exorcize "Mid County" because a quick look at the map would explain that mid county is not. I suspect that the term mid county arose because it was between Santa Cruz and Watsonville. The actual mid point of the county is somewhere around Santa Cruz. We'll never get rid of "Mid County" because 13 businesses listed in the telephone book, all using "mid county" in their names. (As proof that the term "South County" has not caught on in the Pajaro Valley, there is only one business using that name in the telephone book, and it actually is located in southern Santa Clara County.)

2.) The compass confusion is a bit trickier. Getting everyone to use the compass points correctly would be wonderful, but I also am a realist. One way of making it easier

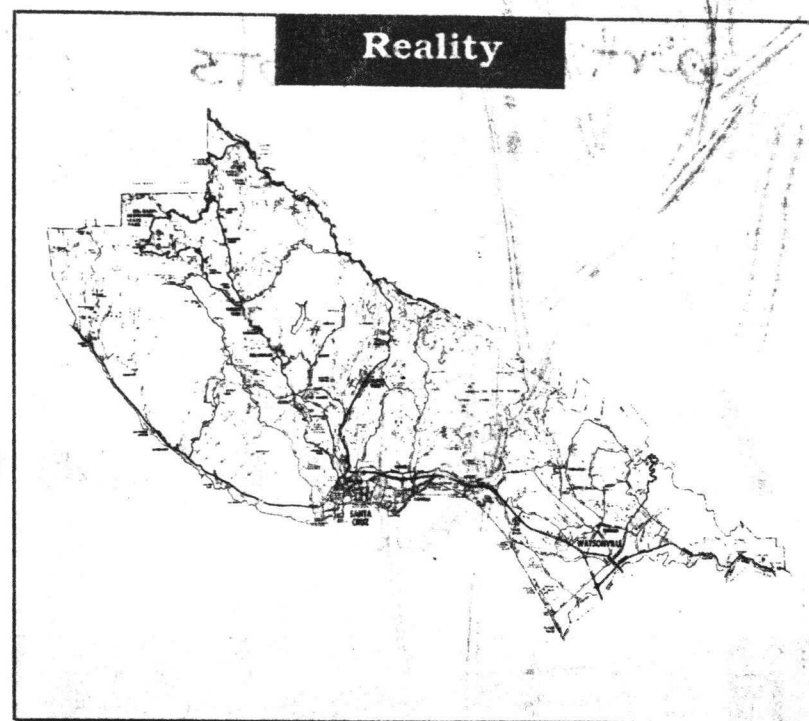
your compass home.

Maybe we could adapt something similar: *sierra* (mountains) for toward the Santa Cruz mountains, *mar* (sea) for toward the sea, *Ben Lomond* (after the mountain) for west and *Madonna* (for Mount Madonna) for east.

Myth No. 2: The Sentinel does not publish on Saturday because the McPherson family belongs to the Seventh-day Adventist church.

The McPherson family is descended from the founders of the First Congregational Church of Santa Cruz and many members of the family are still active in that church. Then why no Saturday paper? The Saturday hiatus dates from when the Sentinel absorbed the Santa Cruz News. It was decided that the employees needed a day off, and since Saturday was the weakest advertising day, Saturday was selected. It had nothing to do with religion.

Future columns will address such myths as the reason for horses not being allowed in Nisene Marks State Park, the Chinese tunnels under Santa Cruz and what Santa Cruz County looked like in



its "natural" state.

If you have myths you want busted, send them along and we'll see what we can do. Meanwhile, I am going a couple of blocks *mar*

and then about nine miles. *Madonna* — to Corralitos.

Sandy Lydon is a local lecturer, instructor and writer of matters historical.

also 15 degrees south of west. Finally, at the North Branciforte overcrossing, the compass swings over to 15 degrees on the north side of west before the highway twists around through the Fishhook. That's why the setting sun sneaks beneath your sun visor along that stretch of Highway 1 — you are traveling west, not north.

Trivia question: Which is farther south, the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf, the Capitola Wharf or the cement ship at Seacliff? Given that Highway 1 supposedly runs north and south, you might be tempted to answer Seacliff, but the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf actually is the southernmost of the three.

Immigration has had a lot to do with this tipping of the county. Most people from the land beyond

the term "South County" prior to 1950, and I believe that the term has become a form of geographical shorthand, or geographical laziness. It is easier to say "South County" than "the Pajaro Valley" or "Corralitos" or "Watsonville."

There is a danger in using these lumping, collective terms — the danger of stereotyping the county into distinctive, homogeneous regions where labels can be easily attached and the regions dismissed. "South County" has grown to mean much more than just a compass direction — it means ethnic, agriculture, conservative, Hispanic. Which then led to the newer term, "North County," which means what? Anglo, industrial and liberal?

The use of such geographical

county" in their names. (As proof that the term "South County" has not caught on in the Pajaro Valley, there is only one business using that name in the telephone book, and it actually is located in southern Santa Clara County.)

2.) The compass confusion is a bit trickier. Getting everyone to use the compass points correctly would be wonderful, but I also am a realist. One way of making it easier might be to give directions using landmarks. In Honolulu, for example, locals use *mauka* (mountain) for toward the mountains, *makai* (sea) for toward the sea, *Ewa* for things north toward Ewa Beach (west) and *Diamond Head* for east. All you have to do is find the mountains, then Diamond Head, and you're oriented. You can leave