

Monterey Bay Area Air Is Clean—Sort Of

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'Classic' Smog Not a Problem Yet

By MAC BOWE
Mercury Staff Writer

SALINAS — Chambers of Commerce are fond of tossing out the claim that the Monterey Bay Area comprises the last clean air shed in the state.

In a sense, they're right. They're also wrong.

If one considers classic clothes rotting type of smudge which hangs over highly populated communities — the Monterey Bay Area is clean.

At least it is insofar as ground level readings are concerned. Oxidant readings during the last 24 months at Santa Cruz show ground level has reached the adverse points or .25 parts per million of nitrogen dioxide or one part per million of sulfur dioxide on only two days.

At Monterey during a six month period adverse oxidant readings at ground level have been reached only on one day.

Most smog experts rate pollution by whether or not there is any damage to vegetation or animals.

According to Edward Munson, executive director of the Monterey-Santa Cruz Air Pollution Control District, this hasn't happened so far.

"There has been some slight damage noticed to pine needles in Santa Cruz," he said. "We think this is drifting in from the Santa Clara Valley."

Anyone who lives in Monterey or Santa Cruz county has only to look over Monterey Bay on certain days to be convinced there is air pollution.

When atmospheric conditions are right a long brown plume of

smoke from the big steam generating plant at Moss Landing wanders across the horizon.

"It's harmless as long as it stays up there," Pacific Gas and Electric Co. officials claim.

"True," Munson agreed.

Emotions are rising, however, and demands have come from all over Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties to get rid of the brown plume. Top PG&E officials say they're pledged to eliminate it.

The generating plant is a significant part of the pollution picture, but not the major part according to Munson.

Here's how the smog czar rates pollution producers:

—Motor vehicles are far and away the leader.

—Next in line comes industry.

—Surprisingly in third place is agriculture.

—Home uses — gas burning, fireplaces, trash burning and others — rank fourth.

Because the auto is the villain, it has besmirched the character of some industries normally called "clean."

Take tourism — it's big business in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. Income from tourists and visitors is estimated at more than \$62 million.

Yet the cars tourists drive produce a daily average of 60 tons of all types of pollutants.

More than half the pollution produced by automobiles is carbon monoxide. Most of it does not rise into the air and if it does, it does not enter into the chemical process which produces smog.

Nevertheless, carbon monoxide is a major pollutant.

"It's a poisonous gas emitted at ground level and that's where it stays," said one scientist studying air pollution.

Munson agrees that national figures for sources of pollution are "approximately correct" for the air pollution district.

These show transportation is responsible for 59.9 per cent of air pollution. In Monterey County Munson says generation of electricity comes next with 18.7 per cent followed by manufacturing with 12.5 per cent; space heating is next with 6.3 per cent and refuse burning is last with 2.6 per cent.

Agriculture in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties is the biggest source of income. It ranges around \$232 million a year.

Munson isn't familiar with figures for pollution from insecticides. He ranks agriculture third, however, because of vehicle use stimulated by it, burning and various sprays used.

Here's what Theodore O. Tuft, a consulting agrologist and entomologist from San Francisco, says about insecticides:

"Properly used, there is practically no damage from them."

Figures on the total amount of insecticides used are not available either from Monterey or Santa Cruz Counties.

Al Culver, Monterey County agricultural commissioner, estimates, however, that lettuce, the largest crop in the county, gets somewhere in the neighborhood of 120 tons a year in the form of insecticides and its carrying vehicle, a hydrocarbon.

The vehicle comprises about half and the insecticide the other half.

Almost all of its is sprayed on lettuce from aircraft.

"I don't think very much of it is lost in the air," Culver said.

Tuft said that which reaches the earth is bio-degradable or decomposes.

True smog is a combination of factors.

It requires nitrogen dioxide, hydrocarbons and intense sunlight. It requires additional atmospheric conditions for it to remain in an area.

Major producer of hydroxide is the PG&E plant in Moss Landing. Munson says it

produces 190 tons daily or 80 per cent of that in the two counties. Officials of PG&E say production is more like 177 tons a day. Autos produce 29 tons daily.

Major producer of hydrocarbons is the auto which spouts forth 80 per cent of that in the district, or about 86 tons a day.

The two chemicals combine in the air in intense sunlight, producing ozone or oxygen in which two atoms join together.

George Haltner, chairman of the meteorology department at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey, claims that temperature inversions, or warmer layers of air, are present in the Monterey Bay Area more than half the time.

The inversions form a ceiling over the smog, keeping it at whatever level the inversion occurs. Inversions usually occur at an elevation of about 1,200 to 1,400 feet, but can occur at ground level.

Many of the high overcasts in the Monterey Bay Area are held in place by temperature inversions according to Haltner.

The ocean breezes which many claim "wash the area clean," don't always do so Haltner says.

On occasion the breezes can actually form an inversion. Breezes above an inversion have little effect on pollutants trapped beneath Haltner says. They also can disperse inversions.

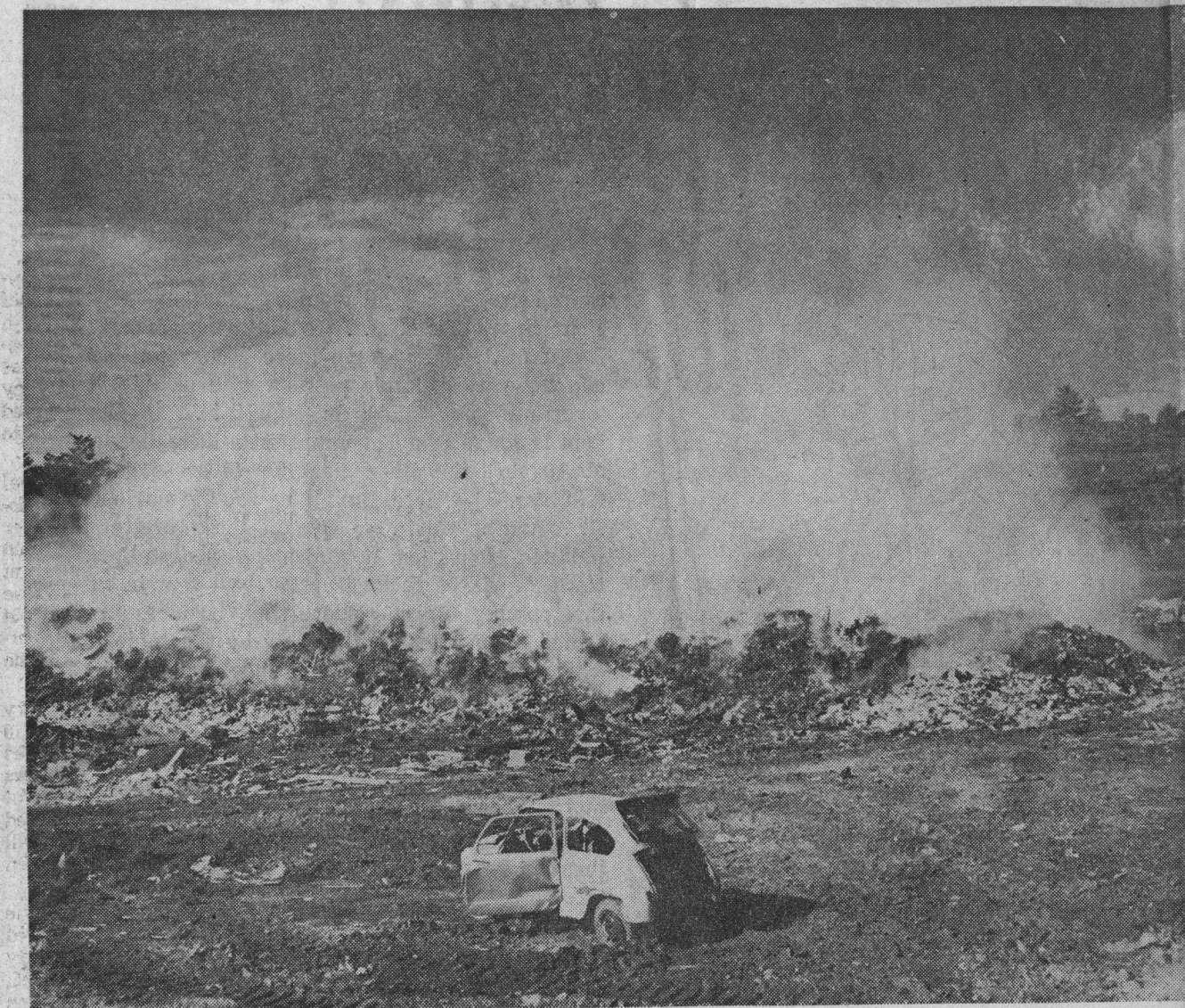
There are many paradoxes involved in air pollution.

According to Stanford Research Institute, nitrogen dioxide inhaled by a heavy cigarette smoker probably far exceeds any amount which he has received from "fallout" from the PG&E brown plume.

The man who drives from Salinas to Santa Cruz to attend a meeting to protest air pollution emits about 3.9 pounds of polluted matter from his automobile.

Santa Cruz and Monterey counties spend \$177,884 a year in the form of grants to chambers of commerce to entice tourists and visitors and their pollution producing automobiles into the area.

Together the counties spend \$33,020 a year to eliminate air pollution.



DUMP—Smoke billows from a burning area in Santa Cruz City dump. The Monterey-Santa Cruz Counties Air Pollution Control District recently put the city on notice to stop burning. The city is in the process of converting the dump, about three miles north of the city, to a cut-and-fill operation. In past years smoke from the dump has sailed over Santa Cruz, causing numerous complaints.

GILROY SPEECH

College Official In Blast at AFT

By BILL GLINES
Mercury Staff Writer

GILROY — Striking American Federation of Teachers (AFT) groups "riding on the coattails of student unrest" represent a miserable action, a Gavilan College audience has been told. Dr. William Miller, community education coordinator at strife-torn College of San Mateo, replied to a question: "This rigidification has made it difficult to institute change ahead of crisis. The question: How are you going to get students involved? Not one person on a campus should be without power. Student organizations have been phony because traditionally they have been involved in parades and rallies. There's need for student organization with power. Then there are the phony faculty organizations. Maybe these phony faculty organizations should join the AFT. It is here where the

Miller made no direct comments on San Mateo campus problems, but spoke generally

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