

The Fog Town Crier

14-15 August 2010

San Francisco Bay Area, California



Just chillin'.

Between this viewpoint atop Mount Hamilton and Loma Prieta peak in the Santa Cruz Mountains 10 miles west, two million people in San Jose and Silicon Valley are awakening beneath a 2,000-foot thick blanket of Saturday morning fog. A jet landing at San Jose International just descended into the fog and churned up the level surface.

Fog-bound by the Bay

The guys on the road crew working along Curtner Avenue last week on my drives to work were wearing sweatshirts with the hoods pulled over their heads.

That was extreme.

Sixty-plus degrees is not that cold, especially for people doing physical labor.

But maybe people around here are psychologically adjusting to the fact that we might not have summer this year.

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All pictures in this newsletter were shot Aug. 14-15, 2010 except the family picture at AT&T Park in San Francisco on the sixth page.

Fog-bound by the Bay

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We haven't had a day hit 90 since June, and then we had only two. In the 46 days since, the high has reached 80 or better just 12 times.

"Everybody into the pool" is a foreign language phrase.

It's normal here to sleep under a blanket in summer with the windows open. Hardly anybody's house has air conditioning. It's because there's no warm Gulf Stream along the West Coast; the ocean current that rules our weather flows down from Alaska. But still ...

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The perpetual fogbank waits less than a mile offshore at Santa Cruz before its evening rush to the beach and over the mountains into San Jose.

Fog-bound by the Bay

– From previous

... Nobody's complaining.

We can read the newspapers. The East Coast, Russia – large parts of the world – are sweltering. Given the choice, most of us would rather not.

Fog that forms over the cold Pacific is the Bay Area's air conditioning. The "marine layer" is there when we wake up until the sun burns it off, but in the evening it creeps back over the mountains that rim San Francisco Bay.

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Just how cool is San Jose?

(Couldn't find figures for June)

July

Highest high temp:	88 (July 3, 15)
Days 80° or warmer:	12
Lowest high temp:	72 (July 8)
Days high was in 70s:	19
Highest nighttime low:	62 (July 15)
Nights low reached 60s:	3
Nights low was in 50s:	28
Lowest low temp:	53 (July 1)

August (through Sunday, Aug. 15)

Highest high temp:	79 (Aug. 3)
Days 80° or warmer:	0
Lowest high temp:	72 (Aug. 11, 14)
Days high was in 70s:	15
Highest nighttime low:	57 (July 12, 14)
Nights low reached 60s:	0
Nights low was in 50s:	15
Lowest low temp:	52 (Aug. 1)

Fog-bound by the Bay

– *From previous*

What's been different this summer is that the fog has been thicker. It takes longer to burn off – sometimes not until lunchtime – and that means the sun has as many as two or three hours less time each day to heat us up before the fog returns in the evening.

There also have been none of those two- or three-day heat waves we get a couple of times each summer when high pressure settles over Nevada – the West Coast version of a Bermuda High – and blows hot, dry desert wind back our way.

So when Emily in her kerchief and I in my cap settle down for a long summer's nap, we snuggle under a blanket and comforter.

OK, I lied about the kerchief and cap.



Looking west from the hills above Oakland, the afternoon marine layer from the Pacific is about to swallow up the Golden Gate Bridge. Alcatraz 'floats' in the center. The line of objects that appear to be in pairs are barges carrying steel for the new Bay Bridge, out of frame left.



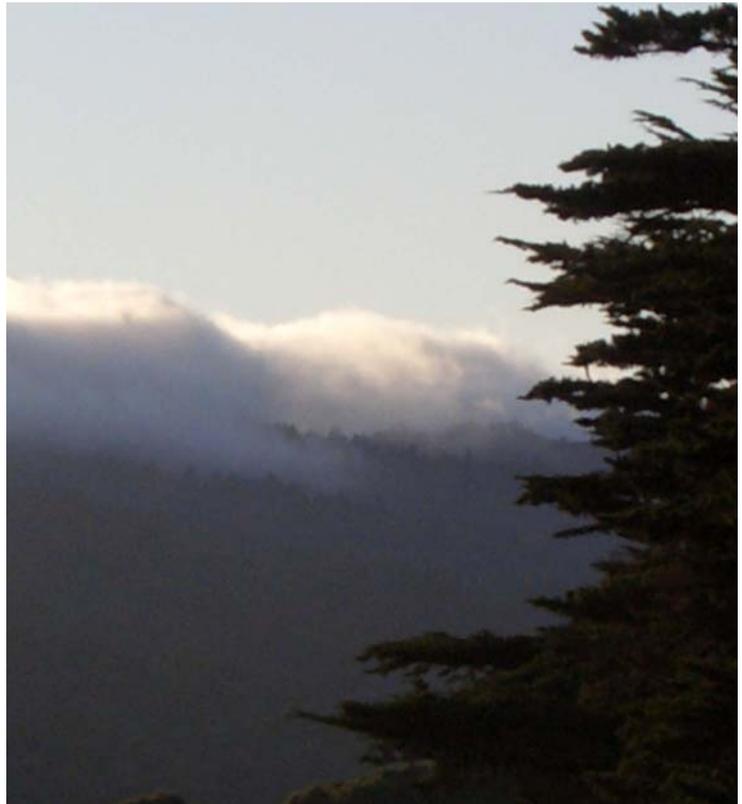
The Santa Cruz lighthouse awaits its evening envelopment by fog.

Today's picture pages

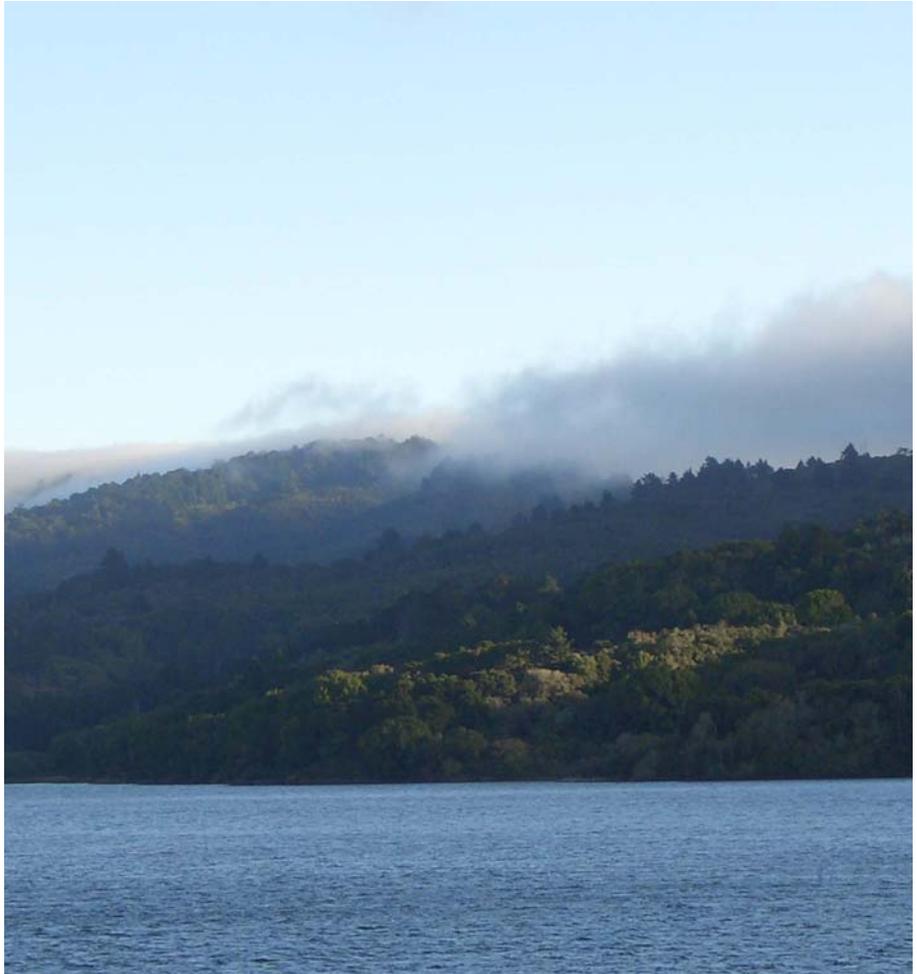


The San Francisco Bay Area is a mountain-rimmed basin more than 100 miles long and 50 miles across that fills with cottony fog most summer nights. This view is from the highest peak in the rim, 4,360-foot Mount Hamilton just southeast of San Jose.

Like a slow-motion tidal wave, fog that has been thickening all afternoon pours over a low point in the mountain ridge along the San Francisco Peninsula above Crystal Springs Reservoir. The forests of these mountains receive most of their moisture from fog drip, not rainfall.

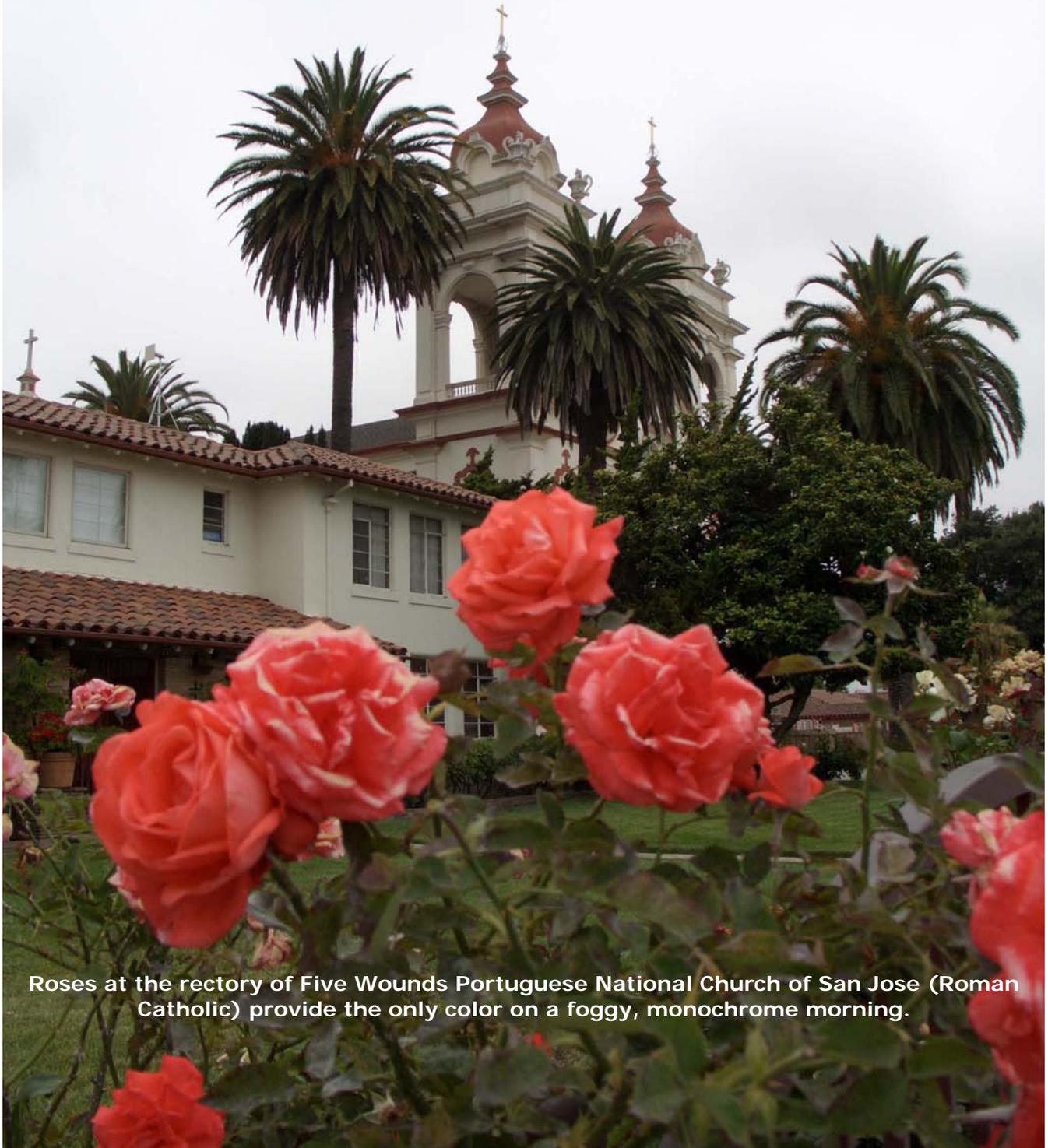


Fog creeps over the ridge toward Crystal Springs Reservoir. This artificial lake is the water supply for San Francisco and lies in a narrow valley created by the San Andreas Fault. The water comes more than 200 miles through the Hetch Hetchy Aqueduct from the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park.



Cool summer days are normal in the Bay Area, just not every day. This is my family at a July 4, 2008 Giants baseball game in San Francisco (right to left): Gordon Meacham (son), Julie Meacham Jones (sister), Thomas Meacham (nephew), Lee Meacham (brother, Thomas' father) and my wife Emily.

Goodbye from San Jose



Roses at the rectory of Five Wounds Portuguese National Church of San Jose (Roman Catholic) provide the only color on a foggy, monochrome morning.