

TOURISTS— You've Got to Love 'Em!

Agatha Hoff

Like lemmings to the sea, visitors reappear on San Francisco's streets and bridges on their way to our tourist meccas every summer. They wrestle valiantly with our parking and driving regulations. I'm pleased to note that our crosswalks near schools and busy intersections are festooned with bright yellow hash marks, needing no explanation.

During my days presiding in traffic court, one of my favorite questions came from a British tourist who earned brownie points for addressing me as "m'lady." She informed me that she had been driving in San

sumed enough malted milks and sundaes to require a permanent change in clothing size and future eating habits." He showed me receipts for \$500 worth of chocolates he had shipped back home to Texas and wanted to know if I thought he had contributed enough to San Francisco's economy without paying the overtime parking ticket.

I'm well aware that one shouldn't attribute stereotypical characteristics to individuals from abroad or from far-flung regions of our own country. However, my experience with foreigners was that they were unfailingly polite. At the same time, some Ameri-

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Francisco for four days and would very much like to know what the sign "Ped X-ing" signified. Our slang usage was a total mystery to her.

Then there was the Texan who felt compelled to break up a fight between two hippies on the tour boat to Alcatraz. His attempt had resulted in a broken watch and a scar after one of the guys' earrings had ripped into his face. On returning to Fishermen's Wharf, the Texan and his wife decided to console themselves with a visit to Ghirardelli Square.

"The rain began to pour and my wife and I became hostages in the Chocolate Factory. I immediately con-

cans—and Texans in particular—never failed to mention how many dollars they had spent on their visit to San Francisco.

People from smaller California cities often projected an inferiority complex.

"Well, I'm stupid and from Stockton, so that's two strikes against me," was one of the more memorable lines from a vacationer protesting a ticket issued for parking in what actually turned out to be an improperly marked tow-away zone.

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cisco—a strange place to me, after all,” he concluded.

A visitor from Michigan once made me an interesting offer. He had amassed several citations for parking in a residential permit area—each one worth twenty dollars—while spending a few days with a local friend. His seventeen-year-old son, in cross-country training for his high school running team, had bolted up and down 124 of the Lyon Street steps, twelve times a day, losing fifteen pounds in the process. The Michigander was thinking of charging the city for the loss of fifteen pounds. “Pounds for dollars,” he called his proposition and stated that he owed the city five dollars of his twenty-dollar fine, but not a penny more.



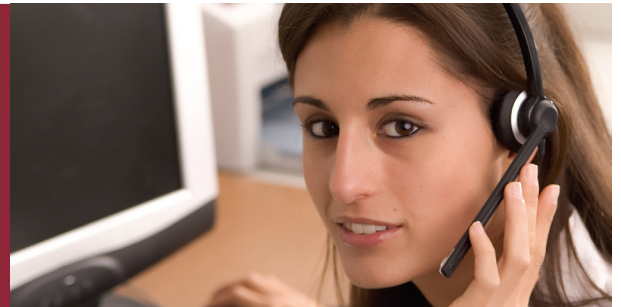
“May the Parking God’s blessings of deep insight and heroic empathy befall the reader of this letter. Amen.” How could I resist such an opening line? “Please excuse me the mistakes during my vacations with a rented car. I was for the first time in San Francisco. MY MONEY IS EMPTY, therefore I want to please you to wait for my check so soon as possible, when I’m back in Germany.”

I hope we all treat the tourists with deep insight and heroic empathy as they converge upon us once again!

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