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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

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Today is National Punctuation Day (www.nationalpunctuationday.com), founded by Jeff Rubin of Pinole, who — according to his postcard — is concerned with “punctuation do’s and don’ts” (figure that out). Today’s column celebrates the punch in punctuation.

Becky Handman, working at Longs Drugs in Berkeley for the summer, took a phone call from a curmudgeonly customer. “Let me talk to your manager,” he demanded. “You’re so polite you make my heinie hurt!”

As to other aspects of dealing with the public, Michele Drier overheard a lawyer in the offices of Legal Assistance for Seniors describing a security guard requesting that he take his shoes off, and “then he wanded my bare feet. “

Chris Martin and Coldplay rented the basketball court of the Sports Club/LA in San Francisco at the Four Seasons to work out with trainers for three days last week; and Martin, Gwyneth Paltrow and baby Apple were spotted by Michelle Talgarow in line at Mijita at the Ferry Building for lunch on Thursday; that night, the grown-ups went to Venticello.

The Napa Valley Register reported Thursday that the Napa Planning Commission had voted the day before to give Nancy and Paul Pelosi permission for a 5,000-gallon-a-year winery near St. Helena. Perhaps celebrating that approval, the Pelosis were spotted having dinner Wednesday night at Cindy’s Backstreet Kitchen in St. Helena.

“Well-behaved dogs always welcome, along with you,” says the sign for the Sunday Worship Service at the Golden Gate Lutheran Church at Dolores and 19th streets, noticed by observant pedestrian Stephen Vincent.

Building manager Virginia Dubendorf, who describes herself as “the one that allows them in,” says there are four regular canine worshipers: a sheepdog, a German shepherd and two Jack Russell terriers.

A pit bull former regular doesn’t come anymore because his family moved away. There’s never been any problem with the four-legged visitors, and “most are better behaved than their owners,” says Dubendorf.

“Once in a while, during Communion, they cry a little bit,” but that’s because they’ve been left in the pews, not because they’re begging for food. Nonetheless, “they know where the kitchen is,” and the dogs “are the first ones down” there for lunch after the services. What they pray for: “Who knows?” asks Dubendorf, a realistic sort of woman.

Tad Friend’s “Letter From California” in this week’s *New Yorker* is about Tyler Cassity, who organizes environmentally sensitive “green burials” — unembalmed, in shrouds or wooden coffins — at Fernwood cemetery and mortuary in Marin County. Cassity has served as a consultant to “Six Feet Under” and inspired the decision to have a main character have a green burial. The show’s Alan Ball told Friend that Cassity is beloved by the show’s staff for many reasons, including “his soulfulness, his soft voice. Every-

body in the writers' room has a huge crush on him: men, women, gay, straight."

Trekking to work past the building site of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on the first block of Oak Street, I've watched the construction of its west wall, particularly the formation of windows in the concrete. But around 15' (feet, in punctuation-talk) away from three windows is a 14-by-48- foot elevated billboard, completely blocking the view from inside. The billboard is in an adjacent parking lot, and Conservatory rep Kathryn Pellegrini says it was put up after ground was broken for the new building. She was quick to note that the spoiled views aren't from practice rooms; the people who will see nothing but the back of the sign are office workers. And who knows, the Embarcadero Freeway came down, and so did the fence around Hayes Green ... anything is possible.

The fault was mine in Friday's column about a conservative watchdog group criticizing Armistead Maupin's remarks on Starbucks coffee cups. In Maupin's phrase about regretting surrendering his youth to bigots, I'd typed "mouth" instead of "youth," a gaffe that gives rise to all sorts of off-color wisecracks. Maupin, who has a great sense of humor, took it well. Nonetheless, my typo makes the original statement sound vulgar, which it wasn't. "I don't know what bothers me more," said Maupin, "that the Concerned Women for America seem to have a reasonable objection or that I seem to be disparaging my favorite form of sex. You blew it, Leah."

Driving in Monterey County, Audrey West passed an SUV with a magnetized pink ribbon attached saying "Support Our Boobs."

Public eavesdropping

"310 pounds! ... I need to stop putting salt on my margaritas. It makes me retain water."
— *Man at Kaiser in Santa Rosa, overheard by Robert Tavonatti.*