

ANTICIPATION

by Award-Winning Local Author, Brad Herzog

Pacific Grove, with its Victorian architecture, is often described by travel writers as, “a time capsule of days gone by.” In 2000, that was literally true. The city buried a time capsule that year, to be opened in 2050. This happened to coincide with a time when I was vaguely well-known for an all-too-brief period of time. I had discussed a travel memoir that I had written, *States of Mind*, on national TV with the likes of Regis and Oprah. So, when the PG time capsule was buried, the city decided to include my book, which may have been my biggest thrill of all.

But does anyone remember what else is in it? It’s a valid question. These things can go awry.

Sometimes the time capsules are forgotten—or nearly so. In 2018, construction crews tearing down a former middle school in Massachusetts came across one from the day the school was dedicated in 1894. Inside were remnants of Civil War uniforms. Two years later, a San Francisco elementary school was preparing for a 100th anniversary when a former student came across a microfiche mention of a time capsule from 1910. With great fanfare, officials discovered a copper box behind the school’s cornerstone. It contained a letter mentioning that the city had “just about recovered from the effects of the great earthquake and fire of 1906,” along with items like a “courses of study” book, class pictures... and a pamphlet of trade rules for the cement workers union. Huh? Really?

And sometimes they’re simply lost in the haze of time. In 1991, PG Middle School buried a capsule, to be opened 30 years later, leaving a manilla envelope that led future excavators to an address on Laurel Avenue. Yes, for some reason the capsule was buried in someone’s front lawn. But there’s a new homeowner by now, who claims to have looked for it twice, unsuccessfully. So much for that. At least the envelope contained an itemized list of buried items, including a class T-shirt, two music cassette tapes, menus from local restaurants, and a U.S. Savings Bond.

Which is more than Carmel Valley can say. In 1962, a time capsule was buried at the Hacienda Carmel senior community. Fifty years later, a press release gushed about “what sort of treasures may see the light of day.” Legend had it—and that’s all they had to go on—that it was buried beneath a sundial on the property. Workers demolished a pedestal, dug three feet down, probed with metal rods... and found nothing.

So, PG did it right. The location of the time capsule is prominently marked outside of City Hall. It will neither be lost nor forgotten. And now that I muse on it, maybe I don’t want to know what else is inside after all. You know, delayed gratification. By 2050, I’ll be in my eighties, hopefully still around, probably being helped to the unveiling by my one of my future Nobel Prize-winning sons. And I’ll be eager to revisit times gone by.