

TONY HICKS: AND ANOTHER THING

Plenty to ponder in the daily news

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By Tony Hicks

IT MAY BE Tuesday as you read this, but it's still Monday where I write it. And that means a new week, a fresh start, a guy sitting at a computer who can't remember what he did over the weekend.

I like to sit down with the newspaper on Monday and take the time to give it a real going over. I like to feel fueled up with knowledge before I head out to the working world. Either that, or I'm just too lazy to take a shower.

Today's (Monday's) Times has some interesting stuff. There's a story about Pinole City Councilman David Cole, who might want to stay on the council despite the fact that he's leaving soon for an eight-year-stint in the Army (though he'd only have to be away for two of those years).

Never mind the obvious question (er, ah, Mr. Cole, why exactly would you enlist in the military after you committed to the people who voted for you until your term expires in 2010?). In some cities, two years is nothing. Some city councils can't do more in two years than rummage up a couple of citizen advisory panels to study a construction project on which no one agrees. Sometimes it takes five times that long.

But enough about San Ramon's City Center. Maybe Cole — whose request for a leave of absence can't be granted, according to the city attorney — just thinks they won't notice his empty seat for two years.

It does bring up a few interesting questions regarding the line between military and community service. For example:

Can one radio in a vote to a city council while ducking enemy fire on the battlefield?

Does the military have a special insignia for a "suburban city councilman"?

Is going to boot camp really more fun than spending hours discussing municipal lighting and landscaping districts?

Cole is one of three members of the Pinole Council under threat of recall over their votes not to renew the contract of the former city manager, as well as having what some consider a "suspect" relationship with a city restaurateur who hasn't been making timely payments on city loans. So maybe joining the Army isn't such a bad idea. It's probably safer.

Tony Hicks' And Another Thing runs Tuesdays in TimeOut and Sundays in A&E. Read his blog, "Insert Foot," on ContraCostaTimes.com. Reach him at 925-952-2678 or thicks@bayareanewsgroup.com.