

July 13, 2008

## Independence Day

My first Independence Day in San Francisco was, in a word, "typical" (mostly).

It was a cool, foggy day in which the sun struggled to break through the thick fog, never quite succeeding. This is typical for San Francisco in the summertime. If I'm not mistaken, the only other major city in the United States that is colder than San Francisco in July is Anchorage, Alaska, and that's only by a degree or two.

I sat on the front steps of my apartment (typical), although I kept my long-sleeve shirt on for warmth (not typical... since I am known in the neighborhood as "the guy who sits on the front steps shirtless reading the newspaper." I kid you not... I've actually been called this exact phrase on more than one occasion). I had to laugh when two guys walked by commenting on the misty weather. "Wow, the sun AND a spritz," as if walking along the sidewalk was better than a day trip to the spa.

I stayed in all day, as I was fighting a cold (typical, for I rarely get enough sleep nowadays and definitely suffer my share of colds). I wanted to go the gym, but they closed really early on this national holiday. Wouldn't you think that the gym would be open on a day when nobody is working and people actually have time to go to the gym? Typical.

So I cleaned the house (because my roommates certainly won't), hand-wrote a letter (I'm old-fashioned and proud of it), and balanced all my bank accounts (old-fashioned AND anal retentive).



## Fireworks

At night, I got the itching to watch the city's fireworks display. I went online and checked [nextbus.com](http://nextbus.com) so see when the next bus was arriving. This was not something I could do in San Diego, and it always makes me feel as if I am living in a real city. I threw on a sweater (typical for July, and quite depressing I might add) and caught the bus with seconds to spare.

I scored an incredible position on a hill at Fort Mason overlooking the fireworks launch site. That was awesome. Unfortunately, the thick fog shrouded many of the fireworks, and much of their beauty was lost. The fireworks that went up high were particularly hard to see. It was quite chilly, too, but I was toasty warm in my sweater and jacket.



## **Stranded**

When the show was over at 10:00 p.m., I stupidly thought I could hop on a cable car back to Market Street. They weren't in operation. Taking the streetcar was out of the question. They're often too crowded at Fisherman's Wharf... forget about during a special event. So I walked up Russian Hill and along Union Street to my bus line.

I don't know why I expected extra buses to be running every few minutes that night to accommodate the thousands of people leaving Fisherman's Wharf. While that would be typical of other transit agencies in other cities, it is certainly not typical of MUNI here in San Francisco. Instead, MUNI was running fewer buses in accordance with their holiday schedule. Thousands of people were stranded and scrambling to get home. And they wonder why their organization is so universally despised.

After waiting 30 minutes for a bus, one finally came. Unfortunately, it was so packed with people that the driver didn't even consider stopping. Even worse, he looked at us disapprovingly and gave us that horribly-insulting side-to-side French finger wag. I was royally pissed!

As I am far too frugal (i.e. cheap) to take a taxi, I had no other choice but to walk home, which was slightly over 2 miles. Luckily, San Francisco is like Paris in that the city is so beautiful one can easily walk for hours without getting bored. Unfortunately, San Francisco is unlike Paris in that the many hills make walking here a challenge.

I didn't mind too much. My biggest concern was burning all those precious calories that I can't afford to lose. A pint of Ben & Jerry's ice cream took care of that! It's the easiest 1,000 calories under the sun. That would be the fog-shrouded, non-existent sun on my mostly-typical, chilly Independence Day in San Francisco.

