

# Yes, We Have No (Green) Bananas

*Why one Safeway isn't the best of the bunch.*

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At which Walnut Creek Safeway do you shop most often?

Countrywood? The one downtown across from Nordstrom? Or Encino Grande, all the way out on Ygnacio?

But wait. As the infomercial says, there's more.

Did you know that Walnut Creek actually has another Safeway?

Step right up, folks, and welcome to the Rossmoor Safeway. I'm thinking in this case, AARP stands for Almost Adjacent to Rossmoor Parkway.

If you've never been, it's worth a trip – not for the groceries, mind you, but for the experience.

Why you ask? Easy. Because a trip to the Rossmoor Safeway tests my driving skills, patience, kindness and above all, my sense of humor. And who among us doesn't need a refresher course in all of the above?

I celebrated my 56th birthday this week and am a card-carrying member of AARP. But at the Rossmoor Safeway, 56 is the new 36.

If I'm ever feeling old, I just have to run in there for a quart of milk and I feel younger than if I had spent the day at the Claremont Resort and Spa. What's more, at only 5 feet 1 inch tall I feel downright statuesque when I'm in there.

Your first clue that you aren't in Countrywood is the parking lot. The age of the car – as well as the driver – is much older. And the number of Japanese and German cars is equal to or less than the number of American models. I think the DMV should make the Rossmoor Shopping Center parking lot part of the driving test – you have to watch out for runaway drivers and sauntering seniors.

Once inside, I suggest that you take one of the smaller carts some of the stores are now sporting. Why? It's easier to maneuver and, I promise, you will not end up buying much.

The aisles are wide enough and certainly meet the building codes. However, put more than two carts, one walker and a Hoveround scooter and you are lined up like you're getting on the Bay Bridge.

I try to help anyone who seems to be struggling physically or mentally, but no one can hold a candle to this Safeway's unflappable employees. They are incredibly patient and are certainly destined for helping-hand heaven or Safeway Sainthood. There's not a bad one in the whole bunch.

Which brings us to the bananas.

You'll be hard pressed to find any green bananas at the Rossmoor Safeway. I guess workers there don't think customers will live long enough to see them ripen.

Unlike every other Safeway in Walnut Creek, let alone the universe, this Safeway doesn't have a Starbucks or an abundance of health-conscience and gourmet foods.

What does this say – that the residents of Rossmoor don't deserve as nice a store or as wide a range of products as those who frequent other Walnut Creek Safeways? It looks that way to me.

And this is the thing that really bothers me – this Safeway is not inside the Rossmoor gates. It's in a shopping center that boasts not only a convenient location and lots of parking – it even has a post office!

A lot of residents in south and west Walnut Creek probably would shop there if the store was updated and offered the same level of products and services as other Safeways. I'm sure many of the people who live close to the Rossmoor Safeway shop at the Alamo or Lafayette Safeway instead, taking their minivans and tax dollars with them.

It's not like the Rossmoor shelves are empty – they're plenty full – but it's what they carry that's so obviously discriminating – or targeted – depending on which side of the register you're on.

It sells greeting cards, with a particularly large selection devoted to sympathy and concern.

Balloons? The store has them, too – especially ones that say "Get Well Soon" or "Welcome Home" – because you're obviously either in the hospital or just getting out.

Magazines? Oh sure, but not as many copies of the Robb Report, Rolling Stone, Parenting or Playboy as there are Reader's Digest and Redbook. And speaking of reading, on your way out you can grab a copy of the Yellow Pages. The thought apparently is that shoppers there don't know about the Internet or have a smart phone.

If you've been to the Safeway downtown on Broadway, you've no doubt grunted that the only thing smaller than the store is the parking lot. The Rossmoor Safeway is huge and has room inside and out for a redesign – making it an example, rather than an exception.

Safeway has been serving Walnut Creek for 83 years and apparently thinks the people who shop at the Rossmoor location were there for the 1928 grand opening.

It's a shame to treat Rossmoor residents like second-class citizens and to ignore well-to-do, hungry Walnut Creek residents who live nearby.

When it comes to marketing, I'm anything but green. I think there's a ripe opportunity here that needs to be checked out.