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Vote "NO" on Rec and Park's Upcoming Parcel Tax

By George Wooding

On August 15, the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) fired every Recreation and Park Director in San Francisco. This is one of the best kept secrets in San Francisco.

About 99.9% of the people in the neighborhoods had no idea what the RPD was about to do. The people who work in City government, the RPD, and Service Employees International Union — the very union that represents the Rec and Park Directors — knew, but apparently didn't care enough about the Rec and Park Directors or the people in San Francisco to let us know beforehand. The firing of the park personnel needed to be kept as quiet as possible so the neighborhoods wouldn't become upset. The Rec and Park Directors are loved by the public because the services they provide for our local parks are vital. Firing the Rec and Park Directors had to be done quickly and quietly.

The park needs of San Francisco's citizens who pay for the parks are now secondary to the RPD's attempts to generate more revenue from the parks.

RPD's General Manager, Phil Ginsburg, always starts a speech by saying that he is "excited, lives in the neighborhood, loves the parks, visits them every day," but then tells the crowd how the RPD has had its General Fund budget slashed \$12.4 million last year and anticipates another \$6.8 million cut this year. Ginsburg's punch line is always the same: "RPD is broke and we need more of the public's money."

Being broke is not a good excuse for poor judgment, poor management, poor public notification, or poor prioritization of park resources. Ginsburg's firing of the Rec and Park Directors was clearly contrary to the will and interests of the people who use the parks. Had we known about the firings beforehand, the



501 Stanyan Street, home of the Recreation and Parks Commission. Meetings are third Thursday at City Hall, Room 416 at 2:00 pm

public would have saved the Rec and Park Director's jobs.

At the RPD's November 15 meeting to privatize JP Murphy Park, Nicole Avril, RPD's Director of Partnerships and Resource Development, stated that higher-paid RPD management employees were kept because of an RPD salary multiplier program that asked higher-paid employees to generate revenue of 5 to 10 times their paid salary. Responding to a Sunshine Ordinance records request regarding RPD's multiplier program, Elton Pon, RPD's Public Relations Officer, stated that there is no formal salary multiplier program. Pon stated, "To illustrate to the public the value of our employees, we will often refer to their salaries in comparison to the revenue that they are helping to bring to the department; oftentimes, it is indeed 5 to 10 times their salaries. It is a great talking point, but there is no formal program associated with it."

Without the public's knowledge and with no formal policy guidelines, the RPD has turned its entire administration into a sales force, and apparently, everything in the park is pretty much

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Health Commission Misses the Point

Laguna Honda's Gift Fund Scandal

By Patrick Monette-Shaw

As I reported in the December issue of the Observer, restitution of at least \$350,000 to the Laguna Honda Hospital patient gift fund is a good first step, along with recommendations to improve oversight of the gift fund. It's too bad that it took nearly a year to obtain both outcomes.

Lingering questions remain unanswered, following foot-dragging by San Francisco officials.

Although Mivic Hirose, LHH's Executive Administrator, and other Department of Public Health staff keep asserting that the audit of the gift fund "definitively ends any question" about whether gift funds were used strictly for patient benefit, observers note this isn't the case. Questions about the audit, and use of the patient gift fund, abound.

One unanswered question: whether another \$56,209 was transferred from LHH's patient gift fund to a capital project account or some other account, and whether that \$56,209 pushes the amount restituted for patient benefit to over \$400,000, rather than the \$350,000 restitution amount reported earlier.

On December 3, a Health Commission subcommittee — the Laguna Honda Hospital Joint Conference Committee — held a hearing at LHH to officially receive the City Services Auditor's 36-page report on its audit of LHH's patient gift fund. Tonia Lediju, the City Controller's director of audits, admitted that the Whistleblower Program team — who reports to her — had *not* conducted an investigation of the LHH patient gift fund whistleblower complaint filed in March 2010 by former LHH doctors Derek Kerr and Maria Rivero.

During that meeting, Health Commission president James Illig, noted that the "biggest mistake" made with the gift fund was that the hospital's administration team had lost track of the requirement for the Health Commission to approve changes to the gift fund policies. Illig couldn't bring himself to admit that the real "biggest mistake" was when LHH's administrators started to think in 2004 that the \$2 million patient gift fund was a slush-fund account they could — and did — raid for staff use.

Illig also praised the whistleblowers for having brought to light the gift fund problems. But he brazenly suggested it was "incumbent on" Drs. Rivero and



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Aerial perspective of the proposed Westside Wastewater Project looking East. Illustration provided by the SFPUC. For more information visit the website www.sfwater.org

Golden Gate Water Treatment Facility Found! Alternative Sites

By Nancy Wuerfel

Great public suggestions to the rescue! At the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) Site Alternatives Workshop on December 9, many practical ideas were put forth to save Golden Gate Park (GGP) from industrialization.

This is a win-win situation. The new proposals illuminate ways of placing the water treatment plant on land already under the jurisdiction of the SFPUC, so that the integrity of the GGP's valuable parkland will be respected as the cultural and environmental resource that it is. Wildlife habitat will also be preserved by maintaining the many trees slated to be removed to make room for the factory.

The two most attractive ideas are locating the facility either at the Oceanside Water Pollution Control Plant (OWPCP) on the Great Highway or at the underutilized Sunset Circle parking lot at Lake Merced.

Each location has unique advantages. The OWPCP is the source of the secondary water that will be treated into recycled water, and was the original choice for the plant to produce tertiary level water. More space is needed to manufacture the higher-level reverse osmosis (RO) water. The OWPCP site can also support RO treatment, by splitting the processing units to two adjacent areas. Placing the new facilities next to the effluent source could save construction costs and consolidate operation expenses.

The Sunset Circle site is a little larger than the area needed at the GGP site, so it can produce the same amount and type of water, utilizing a "green" building design for a facility that is integrated into the natural setting. There's even room for a parking

Cont. p. 3

Watchdogs, Lapdogs and Rubes

Just because there is an oversight committee does not mean there is effective oversight.

By Steve Lawrence

It is said that legislating is like making sausage. What is City governance like? Rube Goldberg comes to mind.

Rube Goldberg was a cartoonist who drew complex machines that performed simple tasks in very convoluted ways.

I follow the SFPUC, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, supplying water, sewer service and municipal power. Soon this city department will also supply electric power to homes and businesses, replacing PG&E. The department is one of the better run ones. Well-greased it may be, but the machine is complex and not what you might expect.

A decade ago there were well publicized "issues" with the spending of public bond money. At the Airport and City College, among others, bond funds were diverted and misspent. As a result requests for bond spending were accompanied with "oversight."

Thus in 2002 when the so-called "rebuild" of the Hetch Hetchy water system was authorized--now a \$4.6 billion bond funded program--an oversight committee was created. As public money had been misspent in the past, an oversight group would act as watchdog.

But as with anything in the public realm, the idea is one thing, implementation is quite another. Although SFPUC did not support the ballot measure creating the oversight group, once the measure passed SFPUC was keen to corral and control the group. It helped build the oversight machine. And SFPUC did a fine job of rubbing and neutralizing.

Today on the oversight committee are members whose terms have long since expired. Frequently, there have been vacancies, and ghost members, who never attend. According to rules in this town, a vacancy is equal to a No vote for any action the committee would take. So vacancies and ghost members are popular. Committees with missing members have difficulty getting the votes to take action. How convenient for the bureaucracy!

On the other hand, another City rule keeps "members" on committees after they should be gone. Why would that be done? The public employee bureaucracy invests in each committee member. Members are wooed with benefits that the bureaucracy can bestow. In addition, the oversight committee members of whom I write are paid, monthly. Not a great deal, but members receive pay.

Terms are for four years. Now, you might think that "four" is a term capable of no ambiguity; everyone knows what "four" means. You should not be in San Francisco government if you think such a thing. "Four years" means any of a variety of things in San Francisco government, including five, six, or even more.

Now, wait a minute, how in the world can "four" mean "five", even in San Francisco? "Holdover" is the key. When a member's four years expires, if no new member is appointed by the responsible appointer (often the mayor or supervisors) then the member whose four years has expired may stay as a "holdover."

Holdovers are very convenient for the public bureaucrats. Think about it. Holdovers have four full years of training. Naturally bureaucrats will live with the devil they know, and have tamed, rather than with the devil they don't know. If a holdover begins to act up, quick as a wink his appointer can be awoken, and poof, he's gone. This makes for very compliant holdover members. How convenient!

But, you may ask, how can a term of four years mean that a member can serve for five or six or more; four is specified; if a term were meant to be "until replaced," then the ordinance could easily have, and would have, said so, would it not?

Having been an attorney myself, I asked that very question of the City attorney advising the commission about which I write. He promised me an answer, and I reminded him about that for many months. I never got an answer. City attorneys work in and for the public employee bureaucracy; what is best for that bureaucracy finds a way.

The committee about which I write is no major committee. There are hundreds of such committees scattered through San Francisco government. This particular oversight committee had members who were not San Franciscans, had a member who worked for a firm that contracted with SFPUC, benefitting from the millions of dollars going to consulting firms, and, as discussed above, has members whose terms have long expired, one expired in 2007.

In 2011 SFPUC expects to issue more than \$1.25 billion in bonds under the committee's jurisdiction.

Bonds are like charging on your credit card. It's wonderful to be a big spender today. Tomorrow you pay, with interest. Ratepayers will be paying off bond indebtedness for thirty years.

As GM Ed Harrington said in the *Wall Street Journal* recently, average water rates will more than triple between 2003, when the water system's capital program was launched, and 2015, when the work is supposed to be completed. Under the program as it was when it launched, water supply was to be assured through 2030. Under the program today, however, water supply is assured--with warts--through 2018. The program's cost has risen about a billion dollars so far. It is about one-third completed.

"Oversight" is a fine concept, but making it meaningful is very difficult with a bureaucracy practiced at rubbing and undermining oversight committees. SFPUC has \$4.6 billion to spend. Who wants a watchdog? Now, a lapdog, that's different.

Feedback: Lawrence@westsideobserver.com



Watch the Lips Dept.



MY TWO CENTS By Will Durst

THE BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA 2011 STATE OF THE UNION DRINKING GAME! NEEDED TO PLAY:

- 4 taxpayers of any sex: 1 rich white banker- type wearing dark suit with loosened tie. 2 ordinary folks wearing jeans; 1 in a blue or flannel work shirt, the other in a white shirt, sleeves rolled up. 1 poor bedraggled person wearing clothes that look like they were retrieved from the bottom of a rodeo dumpster behind the animal performer stalls.

- 1 living room with a TV tuned to the State of the Union Address.

- 1 shot glass per person. Everybody brings own, scattering array on coffee table in front of TV. Banker gets first choice for use during game. White shirt picks next, then work shirt. Banker pockets last shot glass as well, and Rags either rents it from him, steals a replacement from the kitchen or drinks out of own cupped hands.

- Ante up 25 bucks. Cash. Except Banker, who tosses in an I.O.U. and Rags who everybody just avoids eye contact with.

- 3 packages of steamed Vienna Beef Chicago style hot dogs in the middle of table with butter grilled buns, tomatoes, onions, and some of that weird neon green relish on the side.

- 1 bottle of bourbon.

- A large stash of beer in cans on ice. Rags gets whatever is on sale, like Heileman's Old Style Ice Light Dry. Banker gets import of choice. Jeans get whatever they want, but have to buy all the beer, bourbon, hot dogs, condiments and carry the groceries by themselves.

RULES OF THE GAME.

Every time Barack H Obama mentions bipartisanship, everybody has to drink 2 shots of beer. If he talks about the lessons of Tucson, the last person to throw their arms in the air, fall to their knees and shout "Hallelujah!" has to drink 1 entire beer.

Everybody has to drink 2 shots of beer whenever John Boehner appears to cry. 1 shot of bourbon if he breaks down sobbing and disappears entirely from view.

Every time Barack H Obama says "Democratic leadership," the first person to stop laughing is exempt from drinking 2 shots of beer.

If either Vice President Biden or the Speaker of the House Boehner is seen nodding off on camera, last person to start singing "Wake Up, Little Susie" has to drink 3 shots of beer.

If the President says the State of the Union is good, but could be better, the last person to eat a fully accoutered hot dog has to drink 1 shot of bourbon.

Whenever the President defends ObamaCare, everybody drinks 2 shots of beer. If he mentions Congress voting to repeal it, drink a whole beer and throws hot dogs at the television. The first person to hit Nancy Pelosi in the head is exempt from having to drink 2 shots of bourbon.

If the President relates a touching heartfelt story of a supporter who was denied a decent education, Rags gets to kick everybody else once. Twice, if the subject of the anecdote is in the audience. 3 times, if he/ she is sitting next to a 2 star general.

Every time President Barack Obama talks about his resolve and adopts a frowny look with his brow all furrowed and stuff, drink 1 shot of beer.

If the Chief Executive winks at or points at Michelle, all 4 players swordfight with hot dogs. Whoever is left with an intact weenie does not have to eat an entire shot glass full of that weird green relish.

If the president mentions the Chinese President by name, the last person to ask "Hu Dat?" has to drink 2 shots of beer.

EXTRAS:

- Optional: Have all players drink with left hand. Unless left-handed. If they are caught drinking with dominant hand, they must watch the entire Republican response and no drinking allowed.

- If the Dancing Baby from Ally McBeal appears on the screen at any time, stop drinking immediately.

- Banker takes home money, shot glasses and bourbon. The I.O.U. is discarded.

- Leftover beer and hot dogs go home with Rags after he/ she finishes washing the dishes.

San Francisco based political comedian, Will Durst, writes sometimes: this is an example. Coming soon from Ulysses Press: "Where the Rogue Things Go!" Pre-order your copy at Amazon. Feedback: durst@westsideobserver.com



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RUMINATIONS FROM A FORMER SUPERVISOR

Dignity and Decorum

As January City Hall events over the selection of a new Mayor and new District Attorney unfolded, I was reminded of a cardinal concept instilled in me in my early days as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in January 1972, following my successful initial effort for elective public office in November 1971. The principle of dignity and decorum was inculcated by other supervisors with whom I'd met individually as soon as I could, especially then-Supervisor Bob Mendelsohn. The concept was not only preached; it was practiced in the main. Dignity included not only proper dress, but proper language, as well as standing to argue points of support or opposition concerning legislation and procedural and similar motions. The President of the Board of Supervisors appropriately sat at a higher level than the other ten members who were distributed equally on each side of a horseshoe-drawn circumference. Social niceties were constantly observed.



I was surprised to observe, however, after the mayoral selection by the Board of Supervisors to, via the city's television station, a peculiar rotunda proceeding which included a prancing master of ceremonies and former Mayor, together with the new Mayor's immediate predecessor and various city governmental officials, and a Chinese Chamber of Commerce official who apparently engineered the new Mayor's access to Room 200, City Hall. Whatever the rationale of the post-selection rotunda proceeding, noticeably absent were two living past mayors, to with the Honorable Frank Jordan and the Honorable Arthur C. Agnos. (Former Mayor Dianne Feinstein understandably was occupied with Congressional obligations in Washington, D.C., although her husband was present). Ex-Mayor Jordan informs me he was not invited until the "last minute" and was, thus, unable to attend; Ex-Mayor Agnos failed to return a telephone call to ascertain whether an invitation was conferred upon him, although Mayor Jordan doubted it was because of past unfavorable public comments uttered by Agnos about the recently-departed Mayor. The rotunda proceeding was obviously planned in advance. Decorum dictates that all living ex-mayors be invited as early as possible.

At least one pleasing example of dignity was displayed by a new Supervisor, Scott Wiener, who resolutely stood on the occasion of his first remarks at the Board of Supervisors January 8, 2011 meeting after his installation. Other supervisors also stood in the aftermath of Supervisor Wiener's performance at the beginning, but soon lapsed into the previously observable practice of speaking to the President of the Board and other members (as well as the gallery) while seated. The dress of all supervisors was at least sober and fitting and gives some hope that slovenly practices of the Chris Daly-era will end.

One of the new supervisors, Mark Farrell, declared subsequently he would retain his private firm association, which was refreshing and might serve as an example for his ten other colleagues who pursue no private means of sustenance and treat their legislative service on the Board of Supervisors as a full-time responsibility, which as readers of the column know, it is not, despite the "full-time" amount of compensation bestowed upon these worthies. It's not merely surprising, but even ominous that all other supervisors eschew private enterprise in favor of a cocooned existence dependent entirely upon taxpayers and not the experience of "real-life" problems and issues. (Certainly, supervisors historically observed Charter Conflict of Interest provisions and avoided participation in matters creating any economic conflict between their interest and the public interest.) Incidentally, the afore-mentioned Supervisor Farrell's election, based on the vagaries of "ranked choice voting" (Janet Reilly won first place by 198 votes over Supervisor Farrell) is the subject of an unpublicized complaint to the California Fair Political Practices Commission and San Francisco Ethics Commission concerning alleged violation of law by former Supervisor Michaela Alioto-Pier and a committee which raised and expended funds to oppose candidate Reilly in District 2 in the amount of approximately \$221,000, including a \$140,000 contribution from real estate operator Tom Coates and \$50,000 from arch philanthropist and socialite Dede Wilsey. California law bars a public office holder or candidate from controlling a so-called "independent expenditure" committee like the one in the issue. The major complaint by a Sacramento law firm alleges that public officeholder Alioto-Pier controlled the "independent expenditure" committee. Numerous other violations of state and local law are asserted, with the request that a maximum permissible fine be imposed against Alioto-Pier. The complaining law firm

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Alternative Sites (Cont. from p. 1)

lot or a visitors center. Other bonuses include its close proximity to the Oceanside Plant and direct access to existing roads.

This site's best advantage is its inland location that reduces impacts from tsunami risk and sea level rise on the new facility. Also, this proposal can save Hetch Hetchy water by directing recycled water to keep Sunset Boulevard green — a savings not part of the current GGP plan.

We can use a parking lot to save a park.

Either alternative location will relieve the ratepayers from forever paying the added cost of leasing park property for the treatment plant. Either will avert delaying the whole project because of the extra time needed to get voter approval to build a non-recreational structure in GGP as required by the Charter, and then to redesign a facility for another site anyways after the measure fails.

This recycled water project is already \$26 million over budget and 13 months late. Part of this cost overrun is because of the unplanned decision to produce the highest quality of recycled water through RO treatment, a process that is 8 times more costly than producing regular water. The SFPUC has not justified the need for and use of the RO water for general irrigation purposes, much less the extra costs to fabricate it. Even the premier golf course at Harding Park will be using the less expensive tertiary recycled water supplied by Daly City.

Finally, when the free ground water in GGP is siphoned off to dilute our Hetch Hetchy drinking water in the Sunset Reservoir, the entire park's irrigation will be relying on this very expensive water. This will be like watering the grass with diamonds!

Many other proposals generated at the December 9 meeting are contributing to finding an alternative to using our GGP historic resource and open space. The SFPUC engineers are considering them all and will report back at the public workshop on February 15, 5:30 PM, 4th floor, 1155 Market St. Please join the discussion.

Nancy Wuerfel, a fiscal analyst by profession, has been a member of the Park, Recreation and Open Space Advisory Committee (PROSAC) since 2002

Parkmerced Plan at the Planning Commission

February 10, Thursday 1:30pm, Commission Chambers Rm. 400 City Hall.

Please check Commission Calendars for meeting agendas, locations and times. Agendas are posted to the website the Friday before the hearing.

1. Consideration of Certification to Final EIR. Consideration of Proposed Amendments to Planning Code, Zoning Maps, General Plan. Consideration of Coastal Zone Permit. Consideration of Proposed Development Agreement
General Questions : Joshua Switzky 575.6815 / Elizabeth Watty 558.6620

SFPUC Workshop on Westside Water v Recycling Facility
February 15, 2011 • 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. • 1155 Market Street, 4th flr. SF Public Utilities Commission • To discuss alternative locations outside of Golden Gate Park.

This workshop will report back on the engineering analysis of the alternative locations that were proposed by the public in December. Please attend and support the alternative locations outside of Golden Gate Park. For more information, please go to the website: www.goldengateparkpreservation.org and www.sfwater.org

Golden Gate Park Historic District

February 16th, 2011 • 12:30 p.m. (see agenda 5 days before meeting)
City Hall, Room 400 • SF Historic Preservation Commission

Preliminary step towards making Golden Gate Park a Historic District.

The Historic District designation can add a level of protection for the Park from inappropriate development. What areas should be open to change? What should be preserved for us today and for future generations of San Franciscans? All of these issues will be discussed as the legislation is developed over the next few months. To keep posted, please go to: www.goldengateparkpreservation.org. HPC agenda will be at: <http://www.sf-planning.org/index.aspx?page=2587>

Minnie and Lovie Ward Recreation Center/Rec & Park

February 16th, 6:30 pm, Minnie and Lovie Ward Rec Ctr Park, 151 Montana St. Info: 581-2542/sfrecpark.org

Want to learn about a proposal to renovate the Minnie & Lovie Ward Recreation Center Athletic Field? Have questions, thoughts, concerns, or ideas that you would like to share with the project team? Please join us for a public meeting to learn about a proposed field renovation!

Hearing on Urban Agriculture Zoning Proposal

February 17, 2011 • Planning Commission • 1:30pm, City Hall Rm. 300

Mark your calendars and save the date — the first Planning Commission hearing on the urban agriculture zoning proposal. The San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance (SFUAA) promotes the growing of food within San Francisco and the associated goals of our member organizations, through advocacy, education, and grassroots action. Info: www.sfuua.org

Beach Chalet Athletic Field Environmental Impact (EIR)

EIR to start in February with hearing for public's concerns • Recreation and Park Department / Planning Department

Start the EIR and hold a scoping hearing on the public's concerns:

Once this session is scheduled, please attend and express your concerns about this project and protecting Golden Gate Park from development.

Let us know if you would like the Beach Chalet fields to be renovated with natural grass, gopher controls, and preservation of the existing trees instead of the proposed 6 acres of plastic grass and 60 foot sports lights. www.sfoceanedge.org

Community Meeting Notices cannot list every important meeting, we depend on our readers to inform us of upcoming meetings that are important to you. Please send details to editor@westsideobserver.com



Sunset Circle Parking Lot at Lake Merced (looking East)



Oceanside Water Pollution Control Plant on the Great Highway (looking West)



NEWS & VIEWS West of Twin Peaks Central Council

By Mitch Bull

New Supervisors, resolutions on Recreation and Park actions and general information were the crux of the agenda at the West of Twin Peaks Central Council meeting on January 24th.

When WOTPCC President George Wooding called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM, over thirty people had arrived to fill the seats at the Forest Hills Clubhouse. A roll call of delegates followed and then the approval of the December minutes and the Treasurer's report.

In committee reporting, Matt Chamberlain (Planning and Land Use) reported that he had been in a meeting earlier in the day with officials from the MTA and Parkmerced concerning the 19th Avenue corridor report and the traffic impact. After the discussions at the meeting he told the group that he felt the MTA planner had a very good grasp of the potential impact of a possible increase of 6000-9000 units over the next twenty years and it appears that the MTA seems to have their act together as related to the planning. There were 4-6 key points in the meeting that Chamberlain will have distributed to the group in the near future. He said there are several items that the Planning Committee is still following, such as the proposed changes to the Discretionary Review process, and changes to the CEQA guidelines that were proposed by former Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier.

Avrum Shepard next reported on issues with the traffic patterns at St. Francis Circle causing long delays on Portola as it approaches Sloat, and the MTA will be looking into the problem. He also informed the group of changes in parking ticketing procedures to issue more tickets as a way to increase revenue for the city, and that more people have been towed on West Portal Avenue.

Council President Wooding informed the crowd that all Laguna Honda patients have been moved into the new portion of the hospital, but that HVAC equipment problems are causing excessive noise for neighbors located in close proximity to the facility.

Mark Farrell (District 2) and Malia Cohen (District 10), two of the four newly-elected supervisors, then took turns speaking to the meeting attendees. It should be noted that Supervisors Farrell and Cohen were not in the room at the same time in accordance with limitations on public attendance by the majority (2 of 3) of a committee. In addition, District 7 Supervisor Sean Elsbernd also did not attend the meeting for the same reason. Both supervisors provided their background information; both are native San Franciscans who weathered difficult elections and were elected through the "ranked choice" system of electing candidates. Farrell, with a solid financial background, is about getting the city's financial house in order, working to get pensions under control, and to focus on addressing the "quality of life" issues that face everyone in the city. Cohen followed Farrell, also as a native San Franciscan who attended Lakeshore Elementary, Aptos Middle School and Lowell High School. She listed her priorities as keeping District 10 (Bayview/Potrero Hill/ Visitation Valley) residents "working, healthy and safe."

Both legislators made references to the interim Mayor Ed Lee, as someone who is easy to work with and has an immense knowledge of how departments in the city operate. They also addressed questions about homeownership, and both expressed being proponents of "homeowners' rights" to the approval of the attendees.

Following the completion of Q&A for Cohen, the discussion for the evening turned to the Recreation and Park Department. Denis Mosfigian addressed the crowd on the issues concerning the "privatizing" of JP Murphy and other parks in the city. Discussion focused on the degree of "privatization" and the concerns on how the RPD handles the "notification" process with the public.

A letter was read to the attendees from Supervisor Elsbernd in which he addressed two proposed resolutions prepared by the WOTPCC and the current state of affairs at the RPD. He detailed budget issues at the RPD, as their budget was cut by over \$12.1 M in 2009-10 AND they have lost over \$36 M in funding from the general fund over the last five years combined. As a result, the RPD is embarking on a process of looking at potential community partners with like-minded missions, such as the Boys and Girls' Clubs, to lease out the clubhouses and have them utilized. His letter also stated that it is his belief that it is better to do this than to have the clubhouses continue to be vacant and possible safety hazards.

It is important to note that the Parks in question, such as JP Murphy Park, remain open for use by the residents. The main issue is the clubhouses, many of which were renovated, but remain closed due to a lack of funding for Recreation Supervisors to staff them. Many have been closed for years; the ones that were open were closed after the RPD laid off the remaining Recreation Supervisors last year.

Following the discussion, two resolutions were discussed. The first was written to address the WOTPCC membership's concern with the need for "Improved Notification and Neighborhood Involvement in SF RPD Clubhouse Planning." Authored by Matt Chamberlain, it was discussed, and amendments were made which were then voted on, passing 12-0. The second resolution, addressing the "Privatization of the JP Murphy Park Clubhouse" drafted by George Wooding, was also discussed and amended. Following further discussion it was also approved unanimously.

The next meeting of the WOTPCC is on Monday, February 21st at 7:30 in the Forest Hills Clubhouse.



Newly elected District 2 (Marina) Supervisor Mark Farrell and District 10 (Bayview) Supervisor Malia Cohen

Kopp (Cont. from p. 3)

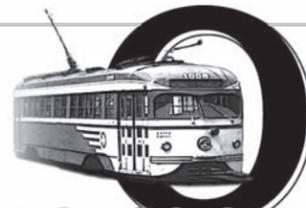
asks the Fair Political Practices Commission to file a civil lawsuit against her and other responsible parties by the end of March pursuant to relevant state law.

Speaking of legal proceedings, I've always proclaimed the integrity and objectivity of judges, Federal and State. There are few exceptions and California possesses legal authority through the Commission on Judicial Performance to administer discipline, including dismissal from judicial office of any California judge breaching the Code of Judicial Conduct. Federal law is more attenuated; the United States Constitution authorizes impeachment for lack of "good behavior" of trial and appellate Federal court judges (impeachment by the House of Representatives and trial by the Senate). That rarely occurs because of the laborious process. Unlike California judges, Federal judges are not subject to even one peremptory disqualification. Only proof of cause compels disqualification of a Federal judge, and the Federal system generally allows each judge to decide that challenge himself/herself. (Where else does an accused decide whether disqualification should occur.) Thus, it was saddening, and disquieting, to observe U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Stephen Reinhardt refuse to disqualify himself from a three judge Federal appellate court panel (supposedly chosen by the clerk of the court on a random basis) to consider the appeal by sponsors of California's Proposition 8 (the ban on same-sex marriage). Judge Reinhardt's wife is Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California (ACLU). The ACLU filed a brief in 2010 urging U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker to declare Proposition 8 unconstitutional. According to the State Bar of California's monthly magazine, Judge Reinhardt's wife was consulted in advance of the suit to overturn Proposition 8 by a lawyer for the suing parties. After Judge Walker unsurprisingly ruled for the plaintiffs in the trial court, sponsors of Proposition 8 filed an appeal, because the then-Governor and then-Attorney General simply decided not to exercise their state constitutional responsibility to do so. A motion to disqualify Judge Reinhardt was rejected by him (not by the other two members of the appellate panel). The Federal standard for a judicial disqualification is whether a reasonable person might question impartiality of the judge or if a judge or spouse possesses an interest in the case result. Would a reasonable person question Judge Reinhardt's impartiality in view of his wife's pre-trial assistance to the plaintiffs and her organization's filing a legal brief in support of the plaintiffs? I think so. Yet Judge Reinhardt believes he's impervious to that standard, thus shaking confidence in the objectivity of the eventual appellate ruling, and the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Invited to participate in the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the transportation planning and Federal fund-allocating agency for the nine Bay-Area counties, I secured data on the financial effectiveness of the 28 operating transit agencies in our nine counties, including the Municipal Railway. The state measures financial effectiveness by the revenue obtained from fares compared to operational costs, also known as the "fare box recovery ratio." The state standard is 33 and 1/3 percent. MTC's most recent data (fiscal year 2008-09) demonstrates that BART pays 62 percent of its operating costs from collected fares, meaning that taxpayers subsidize 38 percent of operational expenses, while the Municipal Railway obtains but 23 percent of its costs from fares. (The Bay area average is 23.78 percent); BART's service to San Francisco International Airport generates a 93 percent fare box recovery ratio, the highest in California. So, 17 years after supporters of ensuring BART service into SFO defeated opponents at the polls vindication of the righteousness of that cause seems manifest.

We're in a new year and it must be inevitable that a new year brings more incursions on languages. Maybe that's the reason for dismay after reading a December 16, 2010 comment from a National Weather Service Forecaster regarding prediction of heavy rain, i.e., "...it's going to be a significant weather event." That weatherman couldn't just forecast a heavy rain; let's wish for 2011 that "a significant weather event" doesn't become a normal spoken form of English and that rain remains rain. Meanwhile, be of good cheer and note the increasing success of the USF basketball team and their brilliant new mentor, Coach Rex Walters, from Santa Clara County, University of Kansas and the San Antonio Spurs. Join me on the Hilltop and watch the Dons show you a pace I never could have maintained in my salad days.

Quentin Kopp is a former Supervisor and State Senator.



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Parkmerced SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLLIN

By Former Supervisor Tony Hall



No doubt the crazy world of San Francisco politics has provided many of us with endless scenarios and theories as to what the future might bring to our great City, but as is always the case, time will reveal all. Needless to say, we are all hopeful that the new Board of Supervisors, and their selection of an interim mayor, Ed Lee, will serve the common interest of the City in an honorable fashion.

Ed Lee is a good person and I wish him the very best in the difficult year that lies ahead. As an established administrator within the city hall family, he will have plenty of advice and help from the status quo political machine that promoted his appointment. It is up to him now to demonstrate that he can represent all San Franciscans.

The main subject of this month's column is one of growing interest especially among the residents of the Westside. It concerns the proposed development plans for Parkmerced.

As many of you already know, the Stellar Management group that purchased Parkmerced in 2005 filed a draft Environmental Impact Report with the San Francisco Planning Commission in 2009. It called for the destruction of Parkmerced's 1538 garden apartments in phases over the next 20 to 30 years. In its place, it proposed new construction of approximately 40 multi-story buildings to join the 11 existing tower buildings that were built in the 1950's. It also proposed the construction of some 15 "row house" buildings of undefined heights, an additional 60 low-rise structures of three to six stories each, and 310,000 square feet of retail and office space, mostly in the existing Crespi Drive area. Other changes proposed included the removal of many of the sites' trees and lawns, the extension of the Muni streetcar tracks with transit stops at the project, and the erection of wind turbine towers and related machinery along the eastern side of Lake Merced. Also proposed was the increase of auto parking spaces from 3,500 to 11,000 to accompany a projected population increase for Park Merced from the existing 7500 to perhaps 25,000 residents.

Many of you might remember that as a Supervisor, I was partial to development projects that were carried out in a responsible fashion, in full compliance with resident and neighborhood concerns, and added to the home ownership ratio that is so lacking in San Francisco. I am hopeful that, as this Park Merced proposal moves through the planning process, my reservations will be addressed.

You might also remember that one of my campaign promises that I was able to deliver on was the restoration of Lake Merced and Harding Park, so that the entire area would be able to start the slow process of once again becoming one of the most unusual and premier recreational areas located within municipal boundaries of any city in the country. Therein lies my concerns with the Parkmerced proposal.

Historically, Parkmerced was part of the greater Lake Merced area. In 1852 Lake Merced was a tidal pool, but in that year an earthquake caused a land collapse that severed the tidal pool from the ocean resulting in the fresh body of water known today as Lake Merced. It is a geological rarity because of its close proximity to the sea.

In the early 2000's, we had extensive studies conducted with the underground water aquifers that exist from the Golden Gate Park to the San Francisco Airport, and in particular how they affected the water levels at Lake Merced and surrounding areas. Of specific concern were how these aquifers and the land above them would react to seismic activity. We were able to develop a plan that resulted in restoring the water levels at the lake by reducing pumping of the aquifers and building water treatment plants in conjunction with Daly City, but as any geologist will tell you, there is just no way to second guess what mother nature may do in the form of seismic activity or earthquakes.

Here's the problem. Part of the land that Parkmerced sits on has been filled-in over the aquifers, and the deadly San Andreas Fault line that runs through the entire region.

During the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake—a mild reflection of the April 18, 1906 San Francisco earthquake—Parkmerced's 55 Chumasero Drive apartment tower experienced structural damage and possible liquefaction as reported by architect Aaron Goodman to the Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods in 2010. On January 18th, 2011, at a hearing on the matter, Dr. Terrence Faulkner of the Parkmerced Residents Organization produced United States Geographic Survey maps that indicate that Park Merced is one of the most earthquake threatened sites in San Francisco.

In addition to the above concerns, we on the Westside should be taking a close look at how a project of this size will impact congestion traffic along the 19th Avenue corridor and other issues in Westside neighborhoods.

The financial stability of Stellar Management, who linked up with the Fortress Investment Group in 2010, has been brought to question in recent months. We must remember that oftentimes, once projects like this are entitled, they are then sold to other investors at a greatly marked-up price, and since the approvals go with the project, a new buyer might not be as responsive to local concerns.

I called my good friend and very capable Planning Commissioner Mike Antonini, and he assured me that he would be taking a close look and address these problems as the project moves through the process.

I know there are politicians out there circling the waters to receive donations from the developers for their next run, but this project is far too serious for that type of foolishness. The primary concern should be about the SAFETY of the residents that will inhabit the development, should it be permitted to go forth. This is a big project with a lot of ramifications on the western side of the City. I think it is imperative that the sponsors of the project do all they can to address resident and neighborhood concerns, and especially these geological and seismic issues from a safety perspective. They must understand that this is San Francisco, and building residential structures here is not the same as building over granite on the east coast.

OBSERVATIONS: In my opinion, George Gascon may have been a capable Police Chief but I don't think he was in the job long enough to prove his ability. The outgoing Mayor was so busy congratulating himself on the Gascon Appointment as District Attorney that he probably didn't realize it was a slap in the face to the many qualified criminal attorneys who have given many years of dedicated service to our City but were overlooked for the sake of his political legacy.

As for the appointment of a permanent Police Chief, there are a dozen top-notch San Francisco-raised Officers serving on the force now that I would pick over anyone in the entire country. Why not give them a break to see what they can do for their City!

It is also heartening to see that some of the mayor wannabes are now picking up on the facts that I put forth in my May 2009 column in this paper relating to parking tickets and fines being increased to raise revenues to make up for a budget deficit.

By now most of my readers have heard that I have opened an exploratory committee to consider a run for San Francisco Mayor. You can sign up for updates, read my blog and offer your opinion at my new website, www.tonyhallsf.com.

Feedback: hall@westsideobserver.com

Planning Commission Hearing on Parkmerced: February 10, 2011

Room 400, City Hall, 1:30 pm (Check Agenda for item sequence.)

Fixing Our City's Broken Pension System

By Jeff Adachi

San Francisco is facing a fiscal crisis that threatens the quality of life for all San Franciscans and the future of our children. The Civil Grand Jury called it a "Pension Tsunami." The most recent financial data shows that our city is facing a \$400 million dollar deficit, while pension costs paid to city employee retirees will balloon to \$423 million this year, \$109 million more than last year. But what's most frightening is that these costs will increase by \$100 million a year, until we are spending one-third of our city's budget for benefits for city employees and retirees. A study by a pension expert puts the City's unfunded benefits liability at a cost of \$35,000 for every San Francisco household.

This is not a problem just facing San Francisco. Cities and states throughout the country are facing insolvency due to out of control pension costs and unfunded liabilities. But because our pension system is better off than most, we can take steps to fix this and avoid the crisis. But we have to act now.

The cost of not acting will mean even deeper cuts to education, public safety, health, senior and children's services. Education has been cut by 25%. Summer school has been cut for 10,000 kids for two years in a row, and school bus services have been cancelled. The Parks and Recreation budget has been slashed by nearly 50% in the last year. Children's and senior programs have been cut by 20%. In 2012, the fiscal cuts will be even more severe, with even more funding cuts coming from the state.

It's time to reform our city's pension & benefits system. San Francisco is fortunate. We haven't suffered the extent of the losses in property taxes that other counties have. We still have a vibrant business community that has suffered from the economic downturn but still produces good jobs and industry. We have not yet suffered the mass layoffs of city workers that many municipalities have. Our city employee pension system is still salvageable. But if we fail to act now, we will soon join the list of failed states and cities that are verging on bankruptcy. We cannot allow another year to pass without reforming our city's pension and benefits system.

How can the problem be fixed? Fixing the problem requires changing the City's Charter to ensure that the pension and retirement system is sustainable. This will require a combination of cost-saving measures, both by the City and public employees, to control the cost of pensions and benefits. A change to the City's Charter may be placed on the ballot by the Board of Supervisors and/or mayor, or may be placed on the ballot through a petition signed by 10% of the city's electorate.

With a new Mayor and Board of Supervisors, San Francisco has the opportunity to look at this problem anew and define an innovative, bold solution that will truly and realistically address this crisis. However, it is important that the public be informed of the choices we now face, and be part of the debate and solution. And if the elected officials are cannot design a comprehensive solution to this crisis, the electorate must act.

SF SMART Reform has taken the feedback from our membership and dozens of pension and benefits experts and drafted a series of principles and policies to guide reform. We hope that the principles invite and encourage debate and invite all comments that move this important issue forward. These comments will be used to improve and revise the measure, which we will release in the coming weeks for public review and comments. Our goal is to create the most effective and fair Charter Amendments, both for San Franciscans and city workers.

Ideas to Achieve Comprehensive Pension Reform SF SMART Reform offers the following policy directives to bring about changes in our Pension System in three critical areas. True pension reform must:

(1) Reduce the burden of retiree pensions on taxpayers by:	(2) Eliminate pension spiking and accrued pay resulting in higher pensions by:	(3) Improve public accountability and transparency of the pension fund by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Requiring existing and future employees pay at least one-half of the cost of their defined pension contributions. (Currently, city employees pay between 0-7.5% of their salaries into the pension fund. Some new employees hired after July 2010 pay 9%. However, the City now pays 18% and in four years, will pay 28%.) ✓ Change the pension benefit for new employees, capping defined benefit pensions at no more than \$90,000 per year. In addition to the defined benefit, employees will have a 401K where the City contributes a fixed amount to the employee's 401K. (A police employee who earned \$150,000 a year would qualify for a pension not to exceed \$90,000 and would have a 401K plan with combined employee and city contributions.) ✓ Eliminating supplemental "Bonus" COLAs (cost of living increases) for all city employees. (City employees will no longer receive a bonus retirement above and beyond cost of living increases as they do now.) ✓ Increasing the retirement age for new employees to receive full retirement benefits to 65 for non-public safety employees and 56.5 for public safety employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ For new employees, use an average of the employee's last five years of employment to rather than the last year or two years to determine the amount of the pension. (An employee who was promoted in her last year of employment to a higher paying position would receive a pension based on the average of her last five years of employment, rather than her last year.) ✓ Using the employees' base pay only to determine pensions, and exclude pension increases for salary increases due to premium pay, retention bonuses, training pay and other pay increases not related to a promotion to a higher job class. (A city employee qualifies and receives a salary increase due to retention bonuses or participating in special training. The employee still receives the salary bump, but the increase is not included in determining the pension the employee receives upon retirement.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Requiring the pension fund to report on its current unfunded liability, the fair market value of the assets available to pay that liability, the schedule of employer/employee contributions and the projected cost to the City and to the employee. The report should also include actuarial assumptions for the plan year as well as the return on investment for the plan year, a statement of the plans investment returns for each of the 5 preceding years. The report shall also include a list of the pensions paid by the City to individual employees. ✓ The City will create and maintain a public website with searchable capabilities, posting the information in the report. ✓ Create policy of accurately and honestly reporting on the financial liabilities of public pension costs.

These three priority areas provide an outline reforms necessary to bring the City's fiscal health back into shape. These ideas are offered for discussion. Making these changes won't be easy. Elected officials must look beyond the next few months and years to ensure the long term future stability of our City. And the cost savings will help ensure that all San Franciscans, including city workers, receive the services they need in these difficult economic times.

Please post your comments and ideas to our website at www.sfsmartreform.com or email us at sfsmartreform@yahoo.com. We will review your comments and consider any and all ideas in developing SF SMART Reform's action plan. Thank you.

SECOND THOUGHTS / By Jack Kaye

What's In A Name?

I have always been fascinated by language, especially words and more specifically, names. This interest was recently piqued by a conversation I had in the park. I met an attractive, middle-aged, blond-haired woman who told me that she was from the Netherlands. I asked her why the Netherlands was/were called Holland. She told me that Holland is an important part of the country, so people call the country Holland. She said it was like England—there is no country named England, but people still call it that.

I told her that England is a country and that Great Britain referred to England, Scotland and Wales, what I thought were three countries on the same island - Britain. I told her that the United Kingdom included Northern Ireland as well as the other three lands.

I checked online when I got home and found that there is some question as to whether Scotland and Wales are really countries anymore or yet. But England is definitely a country.

Then I noticed that when reporting the news, reporters never say England to describe where London is, they say the U.K. or the United Kingdom. Sometimes they even refer to England as the UK while then going on to mention Scotland and Wales by name as though separate.

Why can't England be England? Why can't Scotland and Wales be countries, again?

Then there is Europe with former countries breaking up into still previous ones. Remember Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia? Now they are what they were before World War 1 - Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro instead of the former and the Czech Republic and Slovenia for the latter.

Many European countries are part of the E.U. They share the same currency, allow free access between countries without border checks or tariffs, and are even striving

for a common language, English (or should it be called British or Ukish or Euish, though it doesn't look Euish?). Even calling Europe E.U. is confusing since the French call America, E.U. (Etats Unis) and even more confusing when people in Latin America call themselves Americans.

In India, China and Burma, cities, states and even an entire country itself are having a name change. What was once India included what is now Pakistan and that included what is now Bangladesh. And what was wrong with Bombay or Peiking? Whatever happened to Tibet which used to be a great independent country of monks and mystics? It is now called a part of materialistic China, but not by me. Burma isn't always Burma; its dictators have changed its name and now we don't know what the more P.C. name for it is. I say stick with Burma.

Someone once said that a rose is a rose is a rose and by any other name would smell as sweet. I'll call that someone Zelda since her words should be no less true if her name is changed, but they are. A rose is a rose only because we say it is and if it were called some vulgar name, it would not be smelled at all. It's all perception even about perception.

So I say let's call England, England and let's call Tibet, Tibet. And Burma must be Burma (too many good restaurants' names are at stake here). And not only do I think that the Netherlands should not be called Holland unless they officially change it and their people and language should be Netherlanders and Netherlandic, respectively or if they become Holland, the people and language should be Hollandaise.

This, I'm afraid, is my final word on the subject.

Feedback kaye@westsideobserver.com



Grim Cubed

By Carol Kocivar©2011

As more grim budget news makes its way into parent meetings and school sites, the reality of what is happening to our schools and our children is finally hitting home.



The casualties: Our children and the future of California

- A shorter school year
- Less instruction for students
- Larger classes
- Fewer counselors
- Fewer librarians
- Cuts in arts and music programs
- Teacher and staff support lay-offs

The budget is presented in numbers—large numbers with lots of zeros.

Education in California has suffered staggering cuts--\$18 billion dollars from schools in the last three years.

Another \$2 billion in deferrals of funding.

AND-This is then topped by the loss of one time federal money!

18,000,000,000

2,000,000,000

I try to picture this. A google search came up with a visual:

"If a billion kids made a human tower, they would stand up past the moon."

If 2/3rds of those children were traveling at the speed of light and one-third were coming at them from the other direction, how cold would it be in Alaska?

No No No. That is another math problem I am not going to tackle right now.

But if a million parents lined up end to end from here to Sacramento, there would be no doubt—regardless of political affiliation—of the real crisis facing our schools and our children.

It is little wonder that a survey of PTA leaders throughout the state identified school funding as the most urgent issue facing our schools

Parents overwhelmingly support the need to advocate for school funding, according to a survey recently released by the California State PTA, which represents nearly 1 million members. (Ahhh. More zeroes.)

Conducted in the fall of 2010, the survey of PTA leaders rated adequate school funding as the highest priority: 97.5 percent said they are interested or extremely interested in PTA continuing to advocate for it.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of more than 20 policy and legislative issues in education, children's health and safety.

Other major concerns**Complete curriculum that includes arts**

In addition to funding, parents also reacted to what they see as a narrowing of the curriculum--with 90.6 percent indicating they are interested or extremely interested in advocating for a more complete curriculum that includes arts education.

Small class size

Eighty-nine percent indicated they are interested or extremely interested in advocating for class-size reduction, especially as school districts have been forced to drastically increase class sizes due to budget cuts.

Highly qualified staff

Other issues of utmost importance to parents included recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and administrators (88 percent are interested or extremely interested), and supporting teacher effectiveness (91 percent are interested or extremely interested).

Budgets reflect our values.

Speak out for the health and education of our children.

Stay tuned as we enter into budget discussions and decide on ballot measures that will decide quite literally the future of California.

You can get more information on the budget and children's issues at:

California State PTA: www.capta.org

EdSource: www.edsource.org

California Budget Project: www.cbp.org

Feedback: kocivar@westsideobserver.com

Laguna Honda (Cont. from p. 1)

Kerr, this reporter, and George Wooding, president of the West of Twin Peak Central Council, to help LHH with the "processes of reconnecting with the community ... to ensure that donations continue to come in" to support patients.

In reality, it is incumbent on City officials to reconnect with donors, not incumbent on the concerned citizens who had uncovered the abuse of the restricted patient funds.

On December 8, the Department of Public Health's chief financial officer, Gregg Sass, testily replied to a records request indicating that the \$56,209 in question was "not another transfer from the gift fund, but rather is just a clean-up, funds in and out, within the gift fund." But he did not elaborate on why the \$56,209 was transferred on November 16, 2006 on the same date that the \$176,480 was transferred to a capital account, since both amounts appear to have initially been involved in clearing a "cash deficit," and both amounts appear to have been returned to LHH's patient gift fund on September 27, 2010 while the gift fund audit was well underway.

But neither Ms. Lediju's November 22 audit report, nor her Quarterly Update report to the Citizen's General Obligation Committee (CGOBOC) on January 11, mentions the \$56,209 amount.

A document provided by the Controller's Office indicates that "no one at the Controller's Office or Laguna Honda could explain why the Gift Fund had been used for this purpose," referring to the transfer of gift fund monies into a capital account.

Given the gift fund scandal, donations to the gift fund may have fallen off even further since July 2010, but the Commission and LHH seem to be in no hurry to fix the fund's reputation. They fail to see it is incumbent on them to restore adequate oversight to the gift fund.

Sadly, the December 3 LHH-JCC meeting ended on a thud, when Health Commissioner Sonia Melara — who had bemoaned that her "reputation was on the line because people had asked [her] about the gift fund" and the media situation had not been a very nice one on her side since she "happens to be related to folks in the media" — recommended to accept the audit report, and chose to accept a motion *not* to take any action by choosing not to make the audit report an "action item," portending the full Health Commission will not take any action on the audit report, either.

The audit report failed to note that 56 separate \$50 employee-of-the-month awards to staff totaling \$3,342 had been paid for out of the gift fund, unreturned.

The audit report also failed to note that of the 50 deposits into the gift fund, fully 25 deposits — 50 percent, which represented 80% of all contributions wrongly initially allocated to staff sub-accounts — had been improperly made. Observers wonder what other errors Laguna Honda administrators may be making with accounting transactions — beyond just the patient gift fund.

Several of the audit report's conclusions trivialize the root cause of the patient gift fund misappropriations, and may be misleading. For at least 11 years, LHH's existing policies complied with the City's Administrative Code and donor intent. "The gift fund's problems were never

about a lack of policies and procedures. The problem was a willful alteration of long-standing, patient-centered, and law-abiding policies and procedures by the very folks in charge," says Dr. Derek Kerr.

"Several of the administrators who made these policy changes still make decisions at LHH," Kerr adds.

Illig and other City officials continue to stonewall on restoring LHH's gift fund web-page informing the public about how to contribute directly to the patient gift fund. That web page was taken down five months ago, in early September; it remains missing in action as of January 23.

In addition, this year for the first time Laguna Honda executives prohibited hospital employees from donating money directly to the patient gift fund through the City employees combined charities campaign; employees were restricted to donating to Louise Renne's Laguna Honda Foundation or to Laguna Honda Volunteers, Inc., both separate charities. Illig needs to investigate how this restriction will adversely affect sustainability of the gift fund, and should order the web page reinstated immediately in order to increase donations to the gift fund.

Several agencies remain interested in the audit of the gift fund and the City's whistleblower program.

Lediju's January 11 quarterly update to CGOBOC included only a four-and-a-half line summary of her CSA's 36-page audit report of LHH's gift fund; her summary didn't bother mentioning the \$176,480 restored to the patient gift fund.

When CGOBOC met January 20, its Audits Review subcommittee took up the gift fund audit report, and will report back to the full CGOBOC recommendations on a public hearing on the LHH audit, since CGOBOC is mandated by Proposition C passed by voters in 2003 to monitor and hold hearings on the City's whistleblower program and disposition of audits.

"Obviously, because administrators of Laguna Honda Hospital and the Health Department haven't learned their lesson, CGOBOC should hold public hearings on the LHH gift fund audit, since there could easily be a repeat of the patient gift fund scandal," says former LHH physician, Dr. Maria Rivero. Other observers concur with Rivero.

"Although Ms. Lediju's January 11 quarterly report to CGOBOC referenced \$151,739 inappropriately spent from the fund, several issues were missing from her update, including the \$176,480 wrongly transferred from the gift fund to a capital project account, and steps being considered to prevent a recurrence of the fund's mismanagement," notes Sherrie Matza, an LHH gift fund contributor and prominent advocate for Alzheimer's patients.

"Since DPH's director and others flatly refused to acknowledge significant mismanagement of funds even after it was crystal clear that misappropriation of funds had occurred, CGOBOC needs to schedule a hearing on the whistleblower program and the integrity of LHH's gift fund," Matza adds.

The fallout from LHH's gift fund scandal doesn't seem to be over, and may have implications for potential abuses of other charitable contribution programs administered by the City.

Patrick Monette-Shaw is an accountability advocate. Feedback: monette-shaw@westsideobserver.com.

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Don't Miss
Another Issue!

Parcel Tax (Cont. from p. 1)

negotiable. Staff understand implicitly that they had better bring in their informal multiplier revenue, or they may be formally fired.

Let's take a look at the RPD's new priorities: The Mayor's proposed budget (page 374) for Fiscal Year 2010–2011 decreased RPD services for children by \$1.5 million — from \$11.2 to \$9.7 million — a 13.4 percent change decrease, and at the same time increased the RPD's planning, development, and privatization budget by \$1.9 million — from \$300,000 to \$2.2 million annually — a 633.3 percent change increase.

While the Rec and Park Directors (who are among the lowest-paid workers), and the employees who worked directly with the community were being fired, Ginsburg found the money to hire six-figure bureaucrats, friends of the Mayor, and fund raisers. The neighborhoods need someone managing the parks and running the tiny-tot and after school programs a lot more than we need another bureaucrat sitting behind a desk. This year's RPD budget will be adding even more revenue-generating staff, and the parcel tax that the RPD will be peddling to the public in the November 2011 election will pay the salaries for even more "revenue-generating staff."

If the RPD had prioritized children services, they could have kept almost all of the Rec and Park Directors on a full- or part-time basis. Worse yet, the RPD negotiated a 75-year deal to rent 60 parking spaces to the PUC at the Civic Center Garage for \$6.5 million. To help offset RPD's General Fund shortfall, the PUC agreed to make a lump sum payment of \$3.3 million to RPD in fiscal year 2010–2011. In a July 28, 2010 letter, Katie Petrucione, the Director of Administration and Finance for the RPD wrote, "The up front lump sum payment from the PUC allowed the RPD to preserve services in the 2010–2011 budget. Without these funds, the department would have faced far deeper General Fund budget reductions and layoffs." Two weeks after Petrucione's letter, the Rec and Park Directors were fired.

Incredibly, the RPD made the parking deal with the PUC, but never received one penny of revenue from the \$3.3 million in parking space rent. The entire \$3.3 million was transferred directly into the City's General Fund. The City Controller's June 10 *Discussion of the Mayor's 2010–11 Proposed Budget* document shows on page 14 that the PUC gave \$1.8 to the General Fund under the long-term lease of the civic center garage, and on page 17 that the PUC gave an additional \$1.5 million under non-recurring revenue transfers (\$3.3 million total). The whole Civic Center parking rental was a scam to transfer PUC rental money into the City's General Fund. When Petrucione wrote her July 28 letter, both she and Ginsburg had to have known that the RPD was misrepresenting that the RPD would receive the PUC rent money, and had to have known that the Rec and Park Directors were about to be fired.

George Orwell would be proud of Phil Ginsburg. With absolutely no employment experience in Recreation or Parks, Ginsburg was appointed the RPD General Manager by his good buddy Gavin Newsom in July 2009. Newsom must have ordered Ginsburg to start privatizing the parks by mid-July, two weeks later. The word "privatization" means that the RPD assets, which of course are owned and paid for by the public, will now be used to generate as much revenue as possible for the RPD — or the City's General Fund — at the public's expense. What few people understand is that much of this privatized money will end up in the City's General Fund rather than in RPD's budget.

Under Ginsburg's short tenure, City parks and clubhouses, including JP Murphy Park and Golden Gate Park, are now viewed as revenue generators. The RPD has increased and expanded higher admission fees (arboretum); pushed poorly conceived, short-term, higher-paying contracts with private operations on park land, such as the Stow Lake Boat House; charged higher permit fees; scheduled more events on park land; licensed more vendors and services that compete with local private businesses (Dolores Park and Golden Gate Park); and finally, has aggressively pursued private donations, some of which come with strings attached.

If you make a large enough donation or pay enough rent to the RPD, you can build practically anything you want, anywhere you want, in Golden Gate Park. Watch what will happen with the proposed five-field, synthetic turf soccer complex in Golden Gate Park that is being pushed by the Fisher family.

RPD representatives have offered the communities surrounding JP Murphy Park three options to utilize the park; all three options are unacceptable. The West of Twin Peaks Central Council proposed and approved a resolution presenting a fourth option — to re-hire the Rec and Park Directors and restore crucial programming by having their salaries and services funded from either RPD's planning, development, and privatization budget, or from the approximate \$10.2 million the RPD is giving back to San Francisco's General Fund this year.

The privatization of City parks and clubhouses is especially troubling, particularly because the San Francisco neighborhoods have always supported our parks. San Franciscans paid \$110 million for the 2000 *Neighborhood Park Bond* and \$185 million for the 2008 *Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Bond*. After parks and clubhouses like the JP Murphy Clubhouse are remodeled (\$3.8 million was spent on the JP Murphy renovation), the clubhouses are quickly padlocked, and the parks are opened only sporadically because there are no Recreation and Park Directors. The RPD then labels the renovated facilities as "underutilized" and tries to lease out the clubhouses to non-recreational, profit-seeking businesses. Implicit with the passage of these capital improvement bonds was that the City would continue staffing the clubhouses with Rec and Park Directors. The RPD has repeatedly betrayed the voter's trust.

The park privatization fiasco is a lesson in bad judgment and governance. The bad economy, coupled with the City's overspending, created huge budget deficits. San Francisco is quietly taking away the money that the RPD is generating and placing this money into the City's General Fund. The City then limits the RPD's General Fund budget, which causes the RPD to prioritize staff who generate income over staff who serve the public's recreation and park needs. Finally, Phil Ginsburg then completes the circle by telling the public how broke the park system is and how badly he needs more of our money to save the parks.

The RPD is going to place a parcel tax on the November 2011 ballot. The tax will mostly be paid by homeowners who are not even receiving the benefits of the prior bonds and taxes that they have supported. The RPD should rehire Rec and Park Directors and hire more gardeners, restore services, and stop privatization of our parks before asking the public for any more money. The RPD can't even prioritize services to children.

Vote "No" on the RPD's upcoming parcel tax.

George Wooding Feedback: wooding@westsideobserver.com.



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Love and Money

By Brandon Miller, CFP and Joanne Jordan, CFP

So you've met the love of your life. Congratulations! After you've moved in together and agreed on where to put the sofa, how do you join your finances? And should you? There's one commitment that should be agreed upon from the beginning or quickly move to the head of the line; agree to a simple process for communicating your newly-joined financial lives. Here are a few tips we recommend to our lovebird clients, ensuring each is protected during a happy long-term relationship or the unfortunate break-up.



First, commit to a regular financial discussion. Scheduling a quiet monthly Sunday morning over croissants and coffee to review your finances may just save your relationship. Decisions should be simple in the first meeting, such as who will be responsible for paying the joint bills and what is considered a joint bill. Start with a cash flow analysis, listing all the committed expenses, such as rent or mortgage, utilities, food and then all the discretionary expenses, such as entertainment. Then identify the expenses you agree will be joint versus the ones that will be individual.

Next determine how to pay joint and individual expenses. We typically recommend creating a joint account to pay all the joint household expenses, while keeping your individual accounts separate to maintain your own credit (and autonomy). Each partner simply deposits an agreed upon amount to the joint account in a predetermined manner (monthly or with each pay period).

But how much do you contribute? Most clients do either an equal 50/50 deposit or a pro-rata deposit, where each person's contribution mirrors their income. For example, if you make 2/3 of the income, you might decide to pay for 2/3 of the joint expenses. The balance of each person's paycheck goes to their individual accounts and used at their discretion. (Shoe fetish anyone?)

Another Sunday morning topic should be where are you headed in life? Perhaps you are dreaming of a new house, a baby, early retirement or just paying down debt? Try to prioritize your goals as a couple so that future discussions, such as cutting back on spending, are shared sacrifices. If you're currently carrying any credit card debt, this should be one of the first things to tackle. Concurrently, we recommend that you build up a cash reserve. Once these two things are accomplished, then move to your longer term goals.

But what if things turn south and your love runs off with the scuba instructor from Puerto Vallarta? Now what?

The answer depends on how far you've taken this relationship. If you are legally married or registered as domestic partners you're faced with legal proceedings to divide your assets. In California, these formal relationships mean that you are subject to community property rules and all community property assets and debts the couple accumulated must be split equally, including that prized collection of antique toasters.

For example, let's assume Pat and Kelly decide to tie the knot. From that point on, all assets and income are owned 50/50 (with some limited exceptions such as gifts and inheritances which remain as separate property unless they get commingled as community property). Pat earns \$50,000 per year and Kelly earns \$250,000 per year. According to the law, each must report \$150,000 on their individual federal tax return and must also file a joint California tax return. Over the years, Pat has accumulated \$100,000 in their 401(k) plan, while Kelly's is only worth \$50,000. Upon divorce, Pat would likely need to give Kelly \$25,000 in retirement assets. This also applies to debts. If your partner has \$20,000 in credit card debt (whether you knew about it or not), you're still legally liable for half of that! And of course spousal support may also be awarded.

So with the joy and benefits of marriage or registered domestic partnership, there are also liabilities if your relationship changes from "forever" to "never". If you haven't formalized your relationship, then you generally have little legal recourse regarding the division of your assets and debts. Hopefully, you will both be fair and rely on the consistent Sunday morning conversations to ensure your financial lives are headed in the right direction, regardless of where your relationship is headed.

If you have significant assets or are concerned about them, consider drafting a prenuptial agreement. Be sure to keep your separate assets separate, while consulting an attorney, tax advisor and financial advisor familiar with these issues.

At the end of the day, combining households and creating lives together can be extremely empowering and productive. Just make sure it's done with thought, intention and caution. Happy Valentine's Day!

Brandon Miller, CFP and Joanne Jordan, CFP are financial consultants at Jordan Miller & Associates, A Financial Advisory Practice of Ameriprise Financial Inc. in San Francisco, specializing in helping LGBT individuals and families plan and achieve their financial goals.

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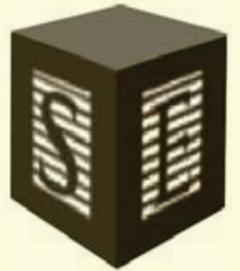
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By Mitch Bull

We're back in the swing of things and have shaken off the post-holiday overload. The sun is out and the rainy weather has ceased (for now). New supervisors, a new Mayor and a new District Attorney (the former Police Chief) have taken office, as well as an interim Police Chief. And that's only in San Francisco. California has a new Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General all who should smile favorably on the City.

Fiscal honesty dept...(ouch): The wrangling has started about the proposed budget that Governor Brown has forwarded, cutting 12.5 Billion dollars out of the spending plan, and trying to end redevelopment agencies and extend some taxes. How many of the cuts can be

made without a 2/3 majority vote, and how much fiscal pain are we really prepared to bear? Sacramento wants to balance their budget by pushing more responsibility onto the cities and counties. What will that do to local projects, school budgets, and life in the City as a whole? On top of all of this the "pension costs" are still looming out there. At least people are talking about the issue and not just trying to sweep it under the carpet and "kick the can down the road" for a few more years. Hopefully a workable budget plan can be implemented that allows the state to function, yet gets the long-term debt load under control. We'll see how much all of the stakeholders really want to address the issues at hand and what impact their actions will have on local SF needs such as transit; water projects and other local programs. We're all in this together as we vote for programs (via the initiative process); but we don't love paying for them. "Oh, we'll just float a bond measure to make it happen..." Now the hard work comes about.

Blogs and "local news" – Eric Kauschen is a local blogger (and devotee of the late Herb Caen) who blogs

under the name "Baghdad" on his "baghdadbythebay" blog, which covers a multitude of topics in San Francisco. Recently he put in a great plug for the local papers on the Westside by highlighting the *Sunset Beacon*, *West Portal Monthly*, *Richmond Review* and yes, the *Westside Observer* as examples of "really local news" that "talks about what's really happening in your neighborhood." It was great to see and really pushes the point home that information never really stops and is available in many different ways. Print, blogs, tweets and video all serve to inform and educate. Journalism is alive and well, and in the hands of more people than ever before; just different than it used to be. Good stories still need to be told, and people really want to know what's happening where they live. Check out Eric's blog at baghdadbythebaysf.com. Lots of really good stuff.

What about you? If you have an interesting story, idea, or some insights you'd like to get in the paper just drop it to us. You can reach me at: mitch@WestsideObserver.com. Be sure to check out the Observer online @ www.WestsideObserver.com.

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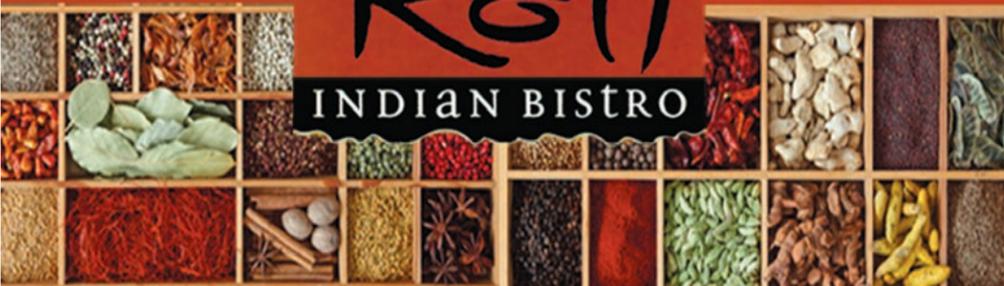
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ON THE PLUS SIDE By Hank Basayne



Why I'm (Almost) Fearless

"My life has been filled with many misfortunes, most of which never happened." —Mark Twain

Terror is actually so rare in my life that I've had to go looking for it, in Stephen King's chilling tales, in spooky movies, in roller-coaster rides. There's something exhilarating about the rush, the catharsis of these fancied brushes with dread and disaster, and a kind of smug Indiana Jones sense of joyous triumph when the threatened catastrophe doesn't happen.

As I grow older I've become much more careful. I look with increasing wonder at the youthful risks I used to take. I'm astonished at the reckless abandon with which some of my fellow humans frequently tempt terminality: sky-diving, climbing sheer rock walls, making right turns from the left lane, and indulging in casual, unprotected sex.

I think I understand the thrill, the cleansing rush, of these behaviors, but I'm also acutely aware of their potentially impossible high cost. I truly love and prize my life, and while I recognize our human tenacity by clinging to it, I also now know how fragile it can be.

On the other hand, as I continue to age, I find that I am less fearful than I used to be, less likely to wallow in fantasies of star-crossed outcomes, more inclined to give equal time to the prospect of a favorable end result. This unexpected, more relaxed outlook comes from the growing realization that my fears are nearly always in the future, that my apprehensions and anxieties have always been about things that have not yet happened.

Burdened, as we all are, with lively and vivid imaginations, it is the possibility of what might happen that generates my trembling, terror and sometimes panic, never something that is happening right now.

Fear can be beneficial, warning me not to get too close to the precipice, keeping me attentive while handling a sharp knife, causing me to avoid that deserted, dark alley at night. But my apprehension is always about "later," not about "now." I haven't fallen yet, my hand is still uncut, I haven't yet been set upon by thugs.

Fear can be life-saving, providing me with the adrenaline to run from the sabretoothed tiger or to snatch a toddler from an oncoming car. But on reflection, it isn't the tiger I fear. It's the pain I would suffer IF he/she caught me and started tearing my body apart. It isn't the speeding automobile, it's the anticipation of the sadness and loss that would follow the needless death of a child.

I think about the fears that have cluttered my past: anxiety while being wheeled into an operating room, anguish that a loved one might leave me, dread that a parent or sibling might die, trepidation that I might lose a job.

I have lived long enough to have survived all those things.

I realize that my fears were not about those events, but my own fantasies about what might result from them, that I might die, that I might not be able to make it on my own, that I could be without enough money.

None of *those* things have yet happened!

Courage is that quality of mind which enables us to meet danger with firmness and valor. I'm not talking here about courage which is facing extreme difficulty and proceeding anyway. I *am* talking about a slowly dawning realization, based on experience that most of the deepest apprehensions of my past never happened. Therefore shouldn't I start to view threats to my well-being with some equanimity? Shouldn't I consider what it is I really fear, and bear in mind that it is mere fantasy about a possible future outcome that is causing my dread? Since fear is always about something in the future, I need to remember that the future exists only in my imagination.

Not all fear is groundless. Sometimes it is extremely useful. But I have spent so much of my energy avoiding imagined pain and restricting my life by reacting to things that haven't happened that I'm ready to try something different now. Franklin Roosevelt taught us that "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." I used to understand that idea to mean "Don't add to the threat by fearing it." Now I see it as meaning "We have nothing to fear; it's only a figment, my imagining of what might happen, but probably won't."

Hank Basayne is a San Franciscan who wishes you a fearless New Year!



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SHARON THE HEALTH By Sharon Caren



Hormone Replacement Therapy

Why or Why Not?

As in every part of our life, we constantly strive for the balance of home, work, health and spirituality. When one or more areas is lacking, we manifest "symptoms" either physical or emotional like pain, exhaustion, hypertension or depression. It always shows up somewhere!

Our physical body is no different. In my years of studying the human body, I've come to realize the intricate and unique balance of hormones has everything to do with how the body functions. This subject is dear to me and I'll share with you my findings. We have a very complex system to keep us alive. So let's keep things simple.

You men might think this article is for women. However, you have mothers, wives, daughters and friends who *are* women and understanding the information can be most helpful. Also, men have hormones too, so no one is exempt. It's just as important for men to have their testosterone levels checked and if low, replaced with bio-identical hormones as a woman would do. I have found more and more men who are experiencing wonderful results with this treatment.

A **hormone** is a chemical released by a cell or a gland in one part of the body that sends out messages that affect cells in other parts of the organism. In essence, it is a chemical messenger that transports a signal from one cell to another to keep things working together as regulators. There are many, many hormones in the body but we'll only focus on these four: estrogen, progesterone, testosterone and thyroid.

Hormone Replacement Therapy or HRT, as you might have heard it referred to, is used to supplement the body with synthetic or natural hormone substances to restore the particular hormonal level back to the original healthy level. This brings our body back into "balance" and we can experience feeling more like we did in the younger days because the body is actually working effectively and efficiently again. Make sense?

Why consider HRT? Symptoms can range from low libido, weight gain, unexplained fatigue, osteoporosis, high cholesterol, heart disease, depression, and an array of menopausal symptoms—mood swings, hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, insomnia to mention a few.

First, you'll need to find a physician who prescribes this treatment for wellness. Usually blood work is ordered to find your current hormonal levels for a starting point. Basically, they test for the four hormones listed above to get a good picture. Some physicians will prescribe treatment on a trial basis without blood work to see if particular symptoms will subside. But most will want to test the blood first, and again at least on an annual basis, for re-evaluation.

Next is the choice of the type of replacement method, either synthetic or natural substances, in pill form (orally), patches or creams on the skin (trans-dermal). This is where the controversy comes in. It's a personal choice that needs research and paying attention to your inner guidance. As a society, we are so conditioned to take a pill for whatever ails us because it's quick and easy. I feel a better practice is to find out the alternatives and weigh benefits vs. side effects accordingly.

Many recent studies have shown definite risks of just using **estrogens**, like endometrial cancer and blood clots. Other possible risks include increase in breast cancer and gallbladder disease. Another study (the HERS study) found that estrogen actually caused women who already have heart disease to have more heart problems.

The most commonly prescribed estrogen is Premarin, in pill form, which is a conjugated equine estrogen, harvested from the urine of pregnant mares. I'm sorry but this just wasn't an option for me.

Estrogen side effects include worsening of estrogen-dependent diseases, uterine fibroids and endometriosis as well as breast tenderness and enlargement, vaginal bleeding, high blood pressure, nausea, vomiting, headaches, jaundice and fluid retention (edema).

Progesterone is usually given along with estrogen to combat the unopposed estrogen that is also associated with endometrial hyperplasia and cancer. There are both natural and synthetic progesterones, and Provera is the most widely prescribed synthetic drug

in pill form.

It is postulated that natural progesterone, estrogen and testosterone is better for the patient than synthetic, and in cream form so as not to pass through the liver. The natural cream hormones go directly into the blood through the skin and can be distributed to do their work on the cellular level. These are sex hormones that aid in reproduction and sexual health for men and women.

Lastly, many have issues with the **thyroid** being out of balance, either hypothyroidism—underproduction of thyroid hormone, or hyperthyroidism—over production of thyroid hormone. The thyroid gland is in the front of the throat, secreting a hormone that influences almost all of the metabolic processes in the body. A thyroid imbalance is the root of many symptoms.

Symptoms for hypothyroidism are lethargy, slow mental processes, depression, reduced heart rate, increased sensitivity to cold, tingling or numbness in the hands, development of a goiter, constipation, heavy menstrual periods or dry skin and hair.

For hyperthyroidism common symptoms are weight loss despite increased appetite, increased heart rate, heart palpitations, higher blood pressure, nervousness, excessive perspiration, frequent bowel movements, (sometimes with diarrhea), muscle weakness, trembling hands, development of a goiter, lighter or shorter menstrual periods.

For hyperthyroidism doctors may use radioactive iodide uptake tests. Your physician can also test the blood or track your basal temperature for milder cases of hypothyroidism. Again, there are both conventional and alternative treatments offering varied methods to bring proper balance. Conventional treatments rely on drugs and surgery. Hypothyroidism demands replacement.

Levothroxine is a widely prescribed generic synthetic drug. Side effects could be nervousness or chest pain. There can also be complications if also taking other drugs such as antidepressants, estrogens, blood thinners, heart drugs or drugs for diabetes. Synthroid is also a very commonly prescribed synthetic drug and is made from levothroxine sodium and contains only one hormone, T4.

Two natural thyroid medications that are compounded in the pharmacy along with the Bio-identical sex hormones are Nature-Throid and Armour (tablet form with fillers and binders to hold it together) and contain both T3 and T4 hormones. Getting the more natural thyroid formulation (from pig thyroid) works better for some and getting it in a capsule without the binders and fillers is preferable.

Whew, a lot of info to digest! I've researched this for myself to find a more natural way to deal with osteoporosis, depression, insomnia, and hypothyroidism. I've been on bio-identical sex hormone replacement and Thyroid, USP (capsule form) for over two years. My great side effects have been more energy, improved moods, no more depression, sense of well-being, calm, deeper sleep, able to focus during the day and better memory retention. My last bone scan showed no increase in bone loss... Yay!

Aging doesn't have to be painful when we learn to give the body what it needs to work and be in balance. I recommend you call Dr. Joel Lopez, 345 West Portal Ave. 2nd Floor, (415) 377-4743. He'll answer any questions you may have regarding this information. His website is <http://drjlopez.com/> If you have questions or comments on this article, please contact me, Sharon Caren 650.359.6579 or email sharoncaren@comcast.net. Also see www.sharoncaren.com.

Now At the Movies • By Don Lee Miller

BLACK SWAN

Ballerina Nina Sayers: Natalie Portman, a leading dancer with a NYC ballet company, is told by Thomas Leroy: Vincent Cassel that she has the lead in their upcoming production of Swan Lake over Lily: Mila Kunis. Thomas also expresses some doubts of her sexuality to play the Black Swan and suggests she goes home and excites herself sexually. She does, turns over on her bed and is startled to see her mother Erica Sayers: Barbara Hershey asleep in a chair. Their relationship is stormy. Very insecure, Nina has a tempestuous run-in with the principal ballerina, Beth Macintyre: Winona Ryder. Director Darren Aronofsky and writers Mark Heyman and Andres Heinz tread the fine line between S&M and the rigors of a ballerina's life. In real life, David: Benjamin Millepied and fiancé, Ms. Portman, are expecting in a few months. Strong sexual content, Disturbing violent images, Profanity, and Drug use.

Awards: Critics' Choice Award--Best Actress: Natalie Portman. Golden Globes: won Best Actress in a Motion Picture-Drama: Natalie Portman. Academy Award 5 nominations: Best Picture, Direction: Darren Aronofsky, Actress: Natalie Portman, Cinematography: Matthew Libatique, Film Editing: Andrew Weisblum

CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: VOYAGE OF DAWN TREADER

Caspian: Ben Barnes leads the Pevensie clan aboard a vessel at sea. There's Edmund Pevensie: Skandar Keynes, Lucy P.: Georgie Henley, and quirky cousin Eustace: Will Poulter. Michael Apted directs the fairy tale adventure script by Christopher Markus, Stephen McFeeley and two other writers. It helps with continuity if one has seen the earlier chronicles. Some frightening images.

THE FIGHTER

Boxer on the rise, "Irish" Micky Ward: Mark Wahlberg (also co-producer), is a decade younger than his brother, Dickie Eklund: Christian Bale, who years earlier knocked Sugar Ray Leonard to the canvas and don't you forget it! Dope addict Dickie has much the showier role. Their mother, Alice Ward: Melissa Leo also serves as their manager when she's not herding their seven sisters around Lowell, Mass. Mickey's girl friend, spunky Charlene: Amy Adams defends her man and her territory! Writers Scott Silver, Paul Tamasy +4 are ably directed by David O. Russell. Profanity, Drug content, Violence, Sexuality.

Awards: Critics' Choice Award: Best Acting Ensemble. Critics' Choice Awards & Golden Globes: won

2 Best Supporting Acting Awards in a Motion Picture: Christian Bale, Melissa Leo. Academy Award 7 nominations: Best Picture, Director: David O. Russell, Sup. Actor: Christian Bale, 2 Sup. Actress: Amy Adams, Melissa Leo, Original Screenplay, Film Editing.

THE KING'S SPEECH

Bertie/King George VI: Colin Firth, the second son of King George V: Michael Gambon, afflicted with a stammer who dwells in the shadow of his confident older brother, the heir to the throne. Bertie's loving wife Elizabeth: Helen Bonham Carter introduces Bertie to the speech therapist that is the winning combination, maverick Aussie Lionel Logue: Geoffrey Rush. When George V dies and Bertie's brother: Guy Pearce becomes King Edward VIII in 1936, he refuses to give up his lover, American divorcee Mrs. Simpson, resulting in his abdication and Bertie's extremely reluctant ascension to the throne as King George VI, leading a nation facing the horrors of inevitable war with Germany. The supporting cast includes Archbishop Cosmo Lang: Derek Jacobi, Winston Churchill: Timothy Spall, and the Queen Mother: Claire Bloom. Profanity.

Awards: Critics' Choice Award--Best Actor: Colin Firth. Golden Globes: Best Actor in a Motion Picture--Drama: Colin Firth. Critics' Choice Award--Best Original Screenplay: David Seidler. Winner of 5 British Independent Film Awards for Best Actor: Colin Firth, Best British Independent Film, Best Screenplay, Best Supporting Actor: Geoffrey Rush, and Best Supporting Actress: Helena Bonham Carter. Nominated for 14 BAFTA Film Awards: Best Actor for Colin Firth, Best Cinematography, Best Costume Design, Best Editing, Best Film, Best Make Up/Hair, Best Production Design, Best Screenplay (Original), Best Sound, Best Supporting Actor: Geoffrey Rush, Best Supporting Actress: Helena Bonham Carter, and The David Lean Award for Achievement in Direction: Tom Hooper. Academy Award 12 nominations: Best Picture, Best Direction: Tom Hooper, Actor in a Leading Role: Colin Firth, Sup. Actor: Geoffrey Rush, Sup. Actress: Helena Bonham Carter, Original Screenplay: David Seidler, Production Design: Eve Stewart & Set Decoration: Judy Farr, Cinematography: Danny Cohen, Costume Design: Jenny Beavan, Film Editing: Tariq Anwar, Music (Original Score): Alexandre Desplat, Sound Mixing: Paul Hamblin, Martin Jensen and John Midgley.

LITTLE FOCKERS

Family patriarch, Jack Byrnes: Robert DeNiro examines the family tree to choose a successor.

Soon enough, he makes his choice known to his son-in-law: Gay, err, Greg Focker: Ben Stiller, married for ten years to Jack's daughter, Pam: Teri Polo. With their twins, money is tight so Greg, in addition to being a male nurse, takes a second job as a salesman for a drug company. Pam's mother, Dina: Blythe Danner; Greg's parents, Bernie: Dustin Hoffman and Roz: Barbara Streisand; and Pam's former beau, Kevin: Owen Wilson, always seem to be around. When Jack sees Greg with his gorgeous new work partner, Andi Garcia: Jessica Alba, he suspects hanky-panky. The ensemble cast also includes Prudence: Laura Dern and Randy: Harvey Keitel. Dir. Paul Weitz and writers: John Hamburg, Larry Stuckey +2 keep the mature sexual humor moving along. Profanity, Drugs.

127 HOURS

Director/co-producer Danny Boyle has chosen an unusual true story for the follow-up to his Oscar-winner, Slumdog Millionaire. While hiking in scenic Utah, a young man, Aron: James Franco, meets Kristi: Kate Mara and Megan: Amber Tamblyn and plans to attend their party the next evening. However, when his arm is trapped by a falling boulder, it provides actor Franco and director Boyle a virtuous opportunity to display their talents, but how many camera angles are there for a guy who can't move for more than five days? There are flashback memories of his parents: Treat Williams and Kate Burton. The screenplay is based on Aron Ralston's book, Between a Rock and a Hard Place, with spectacular cinematography by Enrique Chediak and Anthony Dod Mantle and split-screen editing by Jon Harris. Profanity. Disturbing violent content/Bloody images.

Awards: Critics' Choice Award: Best Song: If I Rise; 5 nominations as Best Actor: James Franco, and Score noms. Academy Award 6 nominations: Best Picture, Best Actor: James Franco, Adapted Screenplay: Danny Boyle and Simon Beaufoy, Film Editing: Jon Harris, Music (Original Score): A.R. Rahman, Music (Original Song): "If I Rise": Music by A.R. Rahman, Lyric by Dido and Rollo Armstrong.

THE TOURIST

When Elise: Anjelina Jolie sizes up men at a train station bound for Venice, her choice of an American math teacher, Frank: Johnny Depp seems an unlikely choice. From the men hovering near her with earphones, the audience knows immediately that she must be the girl friend of the wealthy criminal they seek. Inspector John Acheson: Paul Bettany and Chief Inspector Jones: Timothy Dalton have Elise in their sights and expect her to

lead them to her illusive lover. Since she As lovely as Venice is, it is undone by Jolie who has never looked so exquisite; she should add this make-up person and her costume designer to her personal employ. The Englishman: Rufus Sewell is a man of mystery. Director/co-writer: Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck and Christopher McQuarrie: co-writer w/others present a humorous tongue-in-cheek adventure romance with action! in a lovely setting. Violence, Brief profanity.

TRON: LEGACY

Sam Flynn: Garrett Hedlund follows the clues to his father's warehouse, eventually discovering his father, Kevin Flynn/Clu: Jeff Bridges, is still alive but trapped in one of his video games. When Sam gets into the game himself, he discovers the lovely Quorra: Olivia Wilde; Alan Bradley/Tron: Bruce Boxleitner; and Castor/Zuse: Michael Sheen. Director Joseph Kosinski, and Writers: Adam Horowitz, Edward Kitsis + 6 others remake Disney's 1982 film, Tron. Sci-Fi action violence. Brief mild language.

TRUE GRIT

Teenager Mattie Ross: Hailee Steinfeld comes to a Texas town to bury her late father and to hire Marshall Rooster Cogburn: Jeff Bridges to track down his killer, Tom Clancy: Josh Brolin. After some persuasion, she convinces Rooster to work for her, and even interests a bounty hunter, LaBoeuf: Matt Damon, too. Along the way, they encounter a nasty villain, Lucky Ned Pepper: Barry Pepper and some other outlaws.

Co-directors Joel Coen and Ethan Coen also co-wrote the screenplay from the novel by Charles Portis. Intense western violence/Disturbing images.

Awards: Critics' Choice Award--Best Young Actor/Actress: Hailee Steinfeld. Won Boston Film Critics Society: Best Cinematography. Academy Award 10 nominations: Best Picture, Best Actor: Jeff Bridges, Best Direction & Adapted Screenplay: Joel Coen and Ethan Coen, Actress in a Supporting Role: Hailee Steinfeld, Art Direction: Jess Gonchor (Production Design), Nancy Haigh (Set Decoration), Cinematography: Roger Deakins, Costume Design: Mary Zophres, Sound Editing: Skip Lievsay and Craig Berkey, Sound Mixing: Skip Lievsay, Craig Berkey, Greg Orloff and Peter F. Kurland.

AT THE THEATER • By Dr Annette Lust and Flora Lynn Isaacson



Dr. Annette Lust



Flora Lynn Isaacson

THE LAST CARGO CULT

Mike Daisey, a storyteller full of surprises, returns to Berkeley Rep

As we enter the Thrust Stage the usher hands me a twenty dollar bill and my guest a one dollar bill. Surprised from the start of Daisey's fast moving monologue, *The Last Cargo Cult*, we are next taken aback by a set filled with boxes piled from the floor to the ceiling behind the table where Daisey sits to deliver his monologue. He begins by describing

a rocky plane trip to a South Pacific Island that makes a landing on water that provokes screams and we are surprised when the pilot is able to spin the plane out and all the passengers quiet down as we believe they are able to make a bumpy on-shore landing. Daisey suddenly jumps to a description of how he was a poor student in a liberal arts college where he soon learned that despite what the school had advertised there was no equality among the students. Daisey then jumps to a description of a celebration on the island for John Fromm, considered by the islanders as a deity in heaven who sends them shipments of material riches in cargos. Thus the reason for Daisey's title, *The Last Cargo Cult*, that refers to the islanders' cult that reverses America's preoccupation with material acquisitions.

Daisey's storytelling continues to make his spectators laugh spontaneously, as well as surprises them with sudden outbursts of his underlying message: our belief that money is the financial basis of our world, but how money controls and victimizes us.

At the end of his piece his final surprise is to move downstage and say, "In fact many of you leaving tonight will ask yourself if you got your money's worth. I gave you all my earnings for this performance to render the abstract idea of money

concrete. But I do have to pay my rent. So you are welcome to place the bills you received in this can on the table before leaving." Which to everyone's surprise, most of the spectators did do.

Directed by Jean-Michele Gregory, Daisey has tightened his former tendency to ramble garrulously. His piece this season is structured and projects his dynamic stage presence. His chutzpah and provocative ironic humor are interspersed with tales of travel, politics, morals, psychological insight and comedic accounts of personal tales such as riding with his wife as the chauffeur, whose painfully awkward driving he is not allowed to criticize.

For a lively evening that will keep you wide awake see Daisey's *Last Cargo Cult* and *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs* that run through Feb. 27.th Tickets/Info 510-647-2949 or visit berkeleyrep.org. Dr. Annette Lust

CANDID

A circus show with a meaning, Sweet Can Production's new show *Candid* is not your ordinary circus that mainly presents spectacular physical skill feats, acrobatic stunts, and clowning. Rather, *Candid* continues to convey an underlying message regarding the company's mission to stage meaningful circus.

From the very start, two frightened couples peering through a window at a raging storm run back indoors to read and tear up newspapers filled with dismal happenings that they trash. They combat their glum feelings by imaginatively manipulating everyday objects and circus props. Chinese acrobatics specialist Matt White dances with a broom that he caresses and later balances on his forehead. There follow handstands, cartwheels, tap dancing with garbage cans over their heads, breathtaking contortions by Nobutaka Mochimaru, happy hoop dancing by Natasha Kaluza, co-founder Kerri Kresinski performing spectacular acrobatics as she climbs to the heavens on aerial silks, and clown Jamie Coventry juggling plates as a café waiter.

Their spirits lifted, the couples return to the window to see a calm sky and bright sunlight. They proceed to play games such as musical chairs. One

of the female acrobats moves into the audience kissing spectators in a fun audience interaction. Finally they mount a staircase of furniture pieces and poised, look upward as though awaiting a future challenge. Their sturdy stances reassure us that they will stretch their imagination to convert daily hurdles, as their mission states, "into a breathtaking circus."

According to the message underlying *Candid*, we need to reaffirm our power to make change when faced with dire circumstances. The title of the production suggests a double meaning. For founder Beth Clarke and co-founder Kerri Kresinsky, it contains a play on words. One meaning is "Can did (it)" in response to the title of their former production "Yes, Sweet Can." In reference to the second meaning Clarke adds, "We like the open, spontaneous nature of the word candid as *not wearing masks, available, honest, vulnerable*." And, as also stated in their mission, Sweet Can aims "to create intimate, heartfelt performances in which the audience and performer easily connect with one another. The company presents the circus performer as a human being accessible to everyone and who uses his circus skills to make connections by demonstrating the shared emotional experiences that unite us all."

Candid is a mix of circus arts integrated with dance, mime, and original music interspersed with popular tunes by musician composer Eric Oberthaler. Directed by Joanna Hargood, an internationally famed choreographer and S.F. Clown Conservatory teacher, the performers offer a lively rendering of each of their specialties, technically perfected since their last show and that appear to be freshly improvised in this new one. They make us feel that we are part of their family of acrobats in an intimate playing space.

This spirited home grown circus that entertains and appeals to audiences from tots to the elderly inspires us with the courage to reconvert our tribulations through the power of our creative imagination.

Candid plays through Jan. 9th at the Dance Mission Theater, 3316 Mission St., S.F.

For info call 415-273-4633 or visit www.sweetcanproductions.com for future company events. Dr. Annette Lust

CORALINE

A Morality Tale. The San Francisco Playhouse is currently presenting the West Coast Premiere of the musical stage version of *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman's story of a bored young girl who finds her way into a fantasyland that is not what it seems. Gaiman's story was adapted for the stage by Obie-Winning Playwright David Greenspan and features book and lyrics by indie-musician, Stephin Merritt (of the rock group The Magnetic Fields).

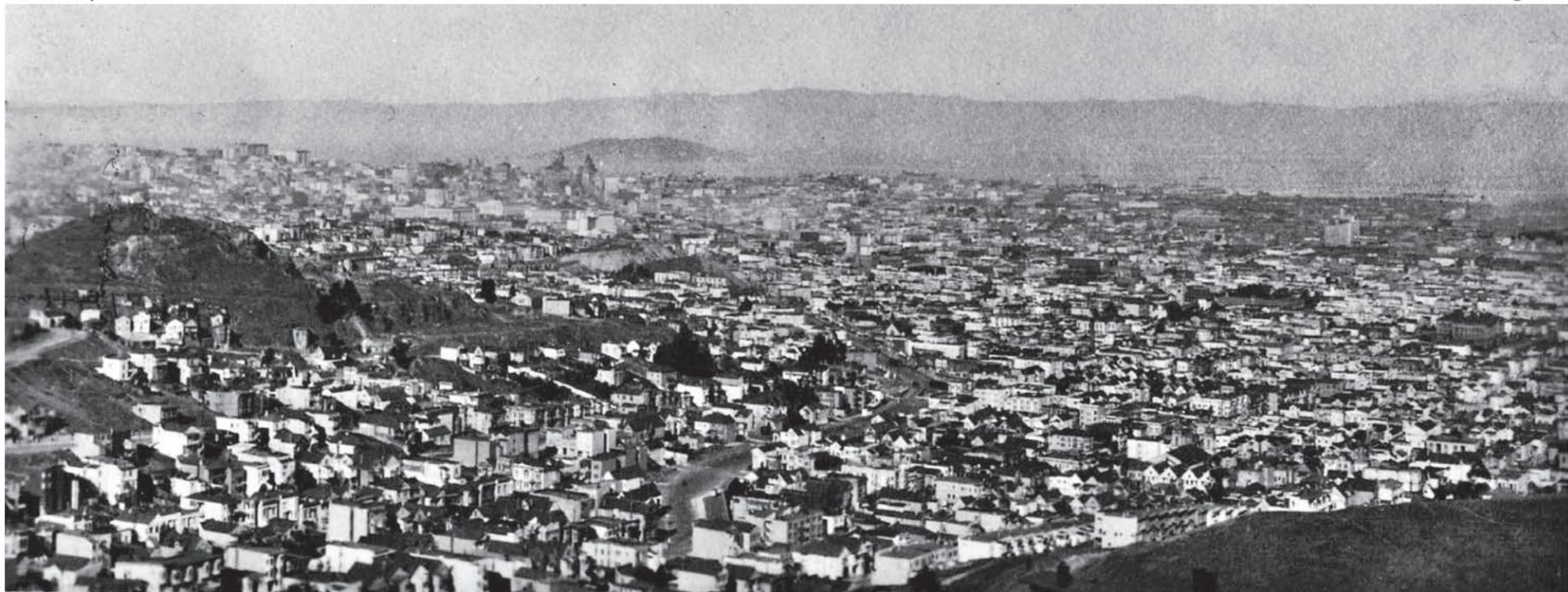
Coraline (Julia Belanoff alternating with Maya Donato) discovers a locked door while exploring her new home in an old four-unit house. Her mother (Stacy Ross) and her father (Jackson Davis) work from home and are so bound to their computers they have little time for Coraline. Coraline finds a key that opens a door. Behind the door are duplicate parents with much more time for love and games, who look just like her own except for the large black buttons they have for eyes. They turn into scary figures as the plot develops and Coraline longs for her home again.

Coraline's only friend is the sardonic Cat (Brian Yates Sharber) who has one of the best voices in the ensemble. There are three roomers in her house: Mr. Bobo and an old circus mouse trainer played with a humorous touch by Brian Degan Scott and two aged actresses, delightfully portrayed by Susie Damilano and Maureen McVerry. Julia Belanoff has both a good voice and stage presence as Coraline, but many of her words get lost. Stacy Ross steals the show as Coraline's mother, as does Director Bill English with his clever black and white set which sets the mood for the show. Valera Coble's costumes are imaginative.

This production is a morality tale because Coraline develops courage as she steps up to the challenge of her journey beyond the door and discovers contentment after all.

Coraline through Jan. 15, Tickets 415-677-9596 or www.sfplayhouse.org. Harper Regan by Simon Stephens Jan. 25-Mar. 5. Flora Lynn Isaacson





View of San Francisco from Twin Peaks. Date [190-?]. Twin Peaks-1900's. By permission from the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Little Restaurant Survives On Big Ideas

By Doug Comstock



In 1978, when the Central Sunset had little resemblance to the splashy display of ethnic shops, restaurants and businesses that crowd Irving Street today, William Sang opened Shangri-La Vegetarian Restaurant. Now the street is chockablock with Chinese signage, meticulously calligraphed in gaudy colors and flashing neon, vying for attention, while Anglo-centric shops are rare.

True, there was another Chinese restaurant when Sang opened—long since vanished—in the next block, but only a few vegetarian restaurants in the Bay Area. A survivor, Shangri-La offered something unique to vegetarians and wannabes alike, high-protein faux meats that taste satisfying to meat-eaters and feel like meat to the tooth. But the very success of the Central Sunset business area threatens it today.

A thin, inconspicuous man with Clark Kent horn-rimmed glasses, Sang is a devout Buddhist. Nimble and energetic at 64, he adheres to a strict vegetarian diet. Every morning, weather permitting, Sang practices Qigong for an hour at nearby Golden Gate Park. "Like Tai Chi—but Tai Chi is Taoist", he said, explaining the subtle differences in the exercise regimes. "I changed to the Buddhist way of Qigong."

Today is like most days for Sang, who works a seven-day week (Shangri-La closes two days a month, every other Wednesday). "For the most part, I do everything," he said. He runs the kitchen, handles the money, does the books and orders the supplies. He employs four part-time workers, as well.

Most time consuming is the preparation of "seitan" faux meats—making wheat protein "wheat meat" to entice people who are used to eating meat. "Fake meats have been eaten in China for hundreds of years," he said, "but they're a crutch to help meat-eaters change their diet." Among the most popular faux meat items at Shangri-La are goose, chicken, beef, lamb, and spare-ribs.

The process and recipes are closely guarded, but generally involve rinsing away the starch from whole-wheat flour until only the high-protein gluten is left. Traditionally, gluten is then boiled in a soy sauce broth until it solidifies to resemble meat. Recipes for the various flavors are handed down through the generations. Today natural food stores sell instant gluten and packaged seitan is available in cans, refrigerated or frozen.

After his early morning exercise, he walks to his small storefront near 21st and Irving to start the day's preparations. The diverse menu is low to modestly priced, with a dizzying menu of over 100 dishes. Kitschy but clean, the oblong room is divided neatly by nine tables. On normal days Shangri-La serves 60-75 customers.

Long-time customer Rich Lesnik has been coming to Shangri-La for 25 years. "It's my favorite restaurant," he said, "The hot and sour soup is the best in San Francisco, and the vegetable dishes are inventive, always fresh, and cooked to order, so 'less oil' is easily done. They're wonderful people." In the '80s, Lesnik used to travel from the Mission district to Shangri-La, but now he lives close by in the Outer Sunset.

"Shangri-La is not just here to make a profit," said the soft-spoken Sang, "we promote a healthy lifestyle—to get people to eat more vegetables—and for religious reasons." Strict Buddhists eat no meat, though varying sects view meat-eating differently.

The history of ancient China began with the prophet-king Fu Xi who taught people to plant seeds and live a vegetarian life. Vegetarianism among Chinese is still more common in China than in the U.S., but as wealth has increased, so has meat consumption.



Today most Chinese Americans forgo meat only on special days, such as the first and fifteenth day of each month of the Chinese calendar, and on Buddha's

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Phyllis' Findings / Phyllis Sherman



The news out of Tucson last week about the horrendous activities of the schizophrenic murderer was hard to take. Jared Lee Loughner was a troubled youngster from the get-go apparently, and the world was stunned at such unbelievable mayhem. I learned a new word from all the talk about the killings...the word, which you won't find in your local Webster's dictionary, is ANOSOGNOSIA. Medical dictionaries would probably rule it as belonging to a person who is unaware of what he has done. I was especially chilled about the murder of the nine-year-old Caroline Green because my beautiful granddaughter is the same age as Caroline was, and I was able to relate only too well to the tragedy. Her parents thoughtfully donated Caroline's corneas to two children in Boston. It's been said that the loss of a child is the worst possible thing for parents to handle and I don't doubt that for a moment.

During our respite from newspaper publishing, I visited my son and family in Bethesda, Maryland. It was bitter cold but we didn't have such balmy weather here in S.F., so I didn't feel I was missing much and survived the frigid Northeast. Among our activities we saw the film '127 HOURS', which is the true story of Aron Ralston, a mountain climber who was trapped in a canyon with his arm pinned against a boulder. It was a wildly funny and bracing film, at once visceral and thought provoking. Many of the movie viewers covered their eyes when James Franco, alone on the screen for awhile, takes a knife to remove his arm from its captivity. In 'TRUE GRIT' Jeffrey Bridges and Heilee Steinfeld adapt an old John Wayne western into a fine film by Ethan and Joel Coen. 'THE KING'S SPEECH' is based on the true story of the Queen of England's father and his remarkable friendship with maverick Australian speech therapist Lionel Logue. Colin Firth as King George VI, who unexpectedly becomes King when his brother Edward abdicates the throne, will undoubtedly win an Academy Award for his role (as a stutterer). His improved voice helps the King lead the nation into war. 'BLUE VALENTINE', which has won accolades from all over, is the story of love found and love lost told in past and present moments in time. Dean and Cindy use one night to try and save their marriage. It's an honest portrait of a relationship on the rocks that entails lots of sex and lots of heartbreaking detail and emotions. One play I went to see in Washington DC was a new one by Tracy Letts called SUPERIOR DONUTS, from which I expected a great deal as Letts won a Pulitzer Prize for his last show, 'AUGUST, OSAGE COUNTY'. I found DONUTS much of a bore and was surprised that he's planning to bring it to Broadway. Maybe there'll be a rewrite. The current New Yorker just arrived and they have a long agonizing review of 'GREEN HORNET', the jist of which states that the writers and director have turned this hundred-million dollar movie into the first out-and-out bore of the year. Be advised. One theater that rarely disappoints is the New Conservatory Theater on Market Street. 'DIRTY LITTLE SHOWTUNES' with lyrics by Tom Orr was top notch. Conceived and Directed by F.Allen Sawyer, this satirical parody was a tremendous amount of fun...perhaps not everyone's cup of tea...irresistible irreverence...but we laughed a lot at the naughty bits. Over at the Jewish Community Center, LOST IN YONKERS by Neil Simon and directed by Nancy Carlin had a brief but successful run. Simon has won 17 Tony nominations and in 1991 won a Pulitzer for Lost in Yonkers. I found the show very nostalgic and it made me search my bookcases where one of Neil Simon's early books REWRITES was hiding and I started reading this deeply touching memoir, with amusing anecdotes of his writing life. Much of his work is autobiographical and I can easily relate. Neil Simon was born July 4, 1927. STRANGE TRAVEL SUGGESTIONS: Jeff Greenwald's Improvised monologue inspired by the joys of wanderlust. Great show...thru Feb. 19, MARSH, BERKELEY...2120 Allston Way, Berkeley (800-838-3006)

A few political items that may prove of interest: Now that the rogue dictator, Jean-Claude Duvalier has put in an appearance in Haiti, former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a onetime priest of the slums who became Haiti's first democratically-elected president said he was prepared to return home "today, tomorrow, or anytime." He was ousted in 2004 in the midst of growing unrest and under intense pressure from the United States. He said his doctors had recommended that he not spend another winter in South Africa where he has lived because he has a serious eye condition. Just what Haiti needs amid earthquake recovery, cholera epidemics and total squalor..two disturbed no-goodniks to add to their misery.

The Human Price of Technology

Master storyteller, Mike Daisey, has just returned to Berkeley Rep in The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs. With his wry eye and eccentric intellect, Daisey examines how the Apple CEO and his obsessions profoundly shape our everyday lives; and he travels to China to investigate the factories where millions toil making iPhones and iPods. His journey shines a brilliant light on our love affair with our devices and the human cost of creating them. All throughout Daisey's scintillating two-hour nonstop monologue, he is seated behind his little table flanked by Seth Reiser's impressive lighting design on

Cont. p. 13

Phyllis (Cont. from p. 12)

the back wall of the theatre. According to Berkeley Rep's Artistic Director Tony Taccone, Daisey "combines the hysteria of a comedian, the intelligence of an essayist, the intensity of an actor and the desperation of a raconteur." In the Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs, Mike Daisey takes us on a tour of three cities in China where workers in the tech industry literally put their lives on the line for the privilege of having a job. This storyteller comes equipped with his tools of emphasis and tone with metaphor and irony, and with much embellishment and humor, to get us to see things in a new light. This newest monologue directed by his wife, Jean-Michele Gregory, has as its main focus, the rise and fall, and rise of Steve Jobs, Apple, industrial design and the human price we are willing to pay for our technology, woven together in a complex narrative. According to Daisey, this monologue is a perfect example of years of journalism, travel, research, investigation, sweat and tears. It examines our technology through a personal lens. Mike Daisey share his experiences in Hong Kong and Shen Zhen and Apple's labor practices. However, Apple is hardly alone--every major electronics manufacturer uses the same inhumane labor practices in the creation of their products. Daisey's main concern is to make people aware of labor conditions in China and the systems we have created to feed it. The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs will alternate in repertory with his other monologue, The Last Cargo Cult. Performances will take place through February 27 at Berkeley Rep, 2025 Addison Street, Berkeley. Performances are held Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 8 p.m.; Wednesday and Sunday at 7 p.m.; and Thursday, Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. For tickets and information, call 510-647-2949 or go online at www.berkeleyrep.org.

On a happier note, the carefully constructed guest list for President Obama's state dinner for President Hu Jintao of China included Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Bill and Hillary Clinton, the heads of Microsoft, Boeing, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase and Walt Disney. Also singer Barbra Streisand, ice skater Michelle Kwan, the cellist Yo-Yo Ma, the architect Maya Lin and fashion Designer Vera Wang. Trade was a major theme of the day. Later, as she walked into the White House for the dinner, Barbra Streisand was asked what accounted for her invitation. Her reply was deadpan: "I worked in a Chinese restaurant."

END QUOTE: The turtle lives 'twixt plated decks
Which practically conceals its sex
I think its clever of the turtle
In such a fix to be so fertileOgden Nash,1931

Feedback: phyllis@westsideobserver.com

		7		5	8			
		6	7			8		
5						7	1	4
	1			2				7
			6		4			
2				7			6	
3	6	2						5
		8			9	1		
			5	3		6		

Rules: Each puzzle is a 9 by 9 grid of squares divided into nine 3 by 3 square blocks, with some of the numbers filled in for you.

The Object: Fill in the blank squares in such a way that each of the numbers 1 to 9 appears exactly once in each row, column and block.

Answer: The answer appears below.

BRAIN FÜD

One of the volcanoes on the Hawaiian islands just erupted and sent all kinds of rock and ash into the air! I just saw it on the news!", Fred spouted, running into the room. Everyone paid close attention to the television set as they changed it to the news channel. Liz, knowing that isn't true said, "Hawaii? I think not". How did Liz know the eruption never happened?

BRAIN FÜD ANSWER

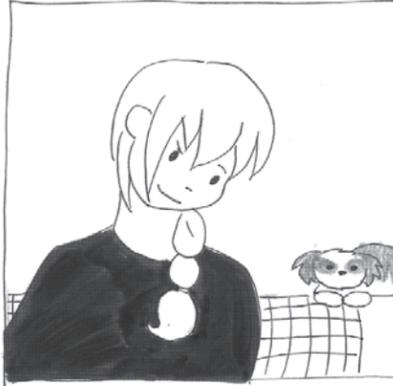
A shield volcano has slowly flowing lava with no ash spouting out. Every volcano on Hawaii is this way. On the other hand a composite volcano shoots out rock and ash, with a small amount of lava. A good example would be Mt. St. Helens. If a composite volcano were to erupt it would not be on Hawaii.

The type of volcano on Hawaii is a "Shield" volcano, and the volcano Fred explained is a "Composite" volcano.

SUDUKU ANSWER

4	9	1	5	3	2	6	7	8
7	5	8	4	6	9	1	3	2
3	6	2	1	8	7	9	4	5
2	3	9	8	7	5	4	6	1
8	7	5	6	1	4	3	2	9
6	1	4	9	2	3	5	8	7
5	8	3	2	9	6	7	1	4
9	2	6	7	4	1	8	5	3
1	4	7	3	5	8	2	9	6

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Sat. Feb 5 | 11am-11:30am | The Red Shoes: two teen-aged sisters, sixteen-year-old Lucia and fifteen-year-old Flavia Purpura-Pontoniere. They play lively traditional Celtic and American music on fiddle and cello. For children of all ages. West Portal Branch Library, 190 Lenox Way 355-2886.

THURS • PARKMERCED/PLAN

Thurs Feb 10 | 1:30pm | Commision Chambers Rm. 400 City Hall. Please check Commission Calendars for meeting agendas, locations and times. Agendas are posted to the website the Friday before the hearing.

1. Consideration of Certification of Final EIR
 2. Consideration of Proposed Amendments to Planning Code, Zoning Maps, General Plan
 3. Consideration of Coastal Zone Permit
 4. Consideration of Proposed Development Agreement
- General Questions : Joshua Switzky 575.6815 / Elizabeth Watty 558.6620

THUR • AUTHOR W. GORTNER

Thur Feb 10 | 7pm | The author will read from *Tudor Secret (Elizabeth I Spy-master Chronicles #1)* From the author of *The Confessions of Catherine de Medici* and *The Last Queen* comes a riveting account of the Tudor era - a time of danger, intrigue, conspiracy, and, above all, spies. Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave. 564-8080

FRI • BLUEGRASS & OLD TIME FESTIVAL

Fri Feb 11 | 8:30pm | ACOUSTIC MAYHEM NY hash meets CA grass! The Wiyos + Good Luck Thrift Store Outfit + Possum & Lester@Slim's, 333 11th Street, SF CA. 415-255-0333 \$14 advance / \$15 doors

SAT • BLUEGRASS & OLD TIME FESTIVAL

Sat Feb 12 | 8:30pm | INVASION: Portland vs Humboldt The best of the best in a battle of bluegrass! Bucky Walters -vs- Whiskey Puppy -vs- Eric Clampitt + Dirt Floor Band@Cafe Du Nord, 2170 Market St./ \$13 advance / \$15 doors / 21+

SAT TARAVAL POLICE STREET FAIR

Sat Feb 12 | 11am-4pm | Taraval Police Station is hosting a Chinese New Year Celebration/Safety Awareness Street Fair. This event will take place on Irving Street between 26th Avenue and 27th Ave. We will have special guest speakers, an inflatable jumper, a clown, traditional Lion Dancing, and the SFPD Special Operations horses, canines, and members of the SWAT team. We will have several booths to distribute SFPD coloring booklets, fingerprinting of children for their parents.

SUNDAY • LUNAR NEW YEAR AT THE ZOO



Sun Feb 13 | 10am-3pm | Celebrate the Lunar New Year - Year of the Hare - at the San Francisco Zoo with interactive culturally-themed family entertainment presented by East West Bank. Come see the Red Panda Acrobats and the Chung Ngai Dance Troupe perform amazing contortions, traditional lion and folk dancing, as well as Chinese yo-yo tricks. Additionally, the Chung Ngai Dance Troupe will give kids and adults a chance to learn a few yo-yo tricks of their own and teach everyone how to do the famous lion dance. It's a celebratory day full of entertainment, crafts and more. The Zoo's Lunar New Year festivities will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Zoo's Playfield Promenade. Activities and entertainment at the Zoo's Lunar New Year celebration is free with paid

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After wowing audiences at last year's Chamber Music America conference, this burgeoning ensemble makes an exclusive Bay Area appearance featuring violist Katie Kadarauich of the San Francisco Symphony. Saint-Saëns, Bartok, Giltuz, Beethoven and Martinu.
FRIDAY, FEB 11, 8PM, MCKENNA THEATRE, FREE, PRE-CONCERT TALK: 7PM

MORRISON ARTISTS SERIES
MÉXICO: POLÍTICA Y POÉTICA
This is a Mexico you haven't yet seen. This edgy, riveting exhibition unveils a much different side of culture than traditional folkloric art, as some of today's most exciting artists turn trauma and social unrest into jarring, ironic imagery.
FEB 17-MARCH 24, FINE ARTS GALLERY, FREE, OPENING RECEPTION: FEB 17, 4:30-7:30PM

MORRISON ARTISTS SERIES
SAN FRANCISCO CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PLAYERS
In a special 40th-anniversary celebration of this award-winning new music ensemble, San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra director Donato Cabrera conducts modern classics and new works. György Ligeti, Brian Current and Du Yun.
MARCH 6, 3PM, MCKENNA THEATRE, FREE, PRE-CONCERT TALK: 2PM

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admission. Guests born in the Year of the Hare (1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011) will receive free Zoo admission to the event.

TUES • AUTHOR PEGGY ORENSTEIN

Tues Feb 15 | 7pm | The author will discuss *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. The acclaimed author of the groundbreaking bestseller *Schoolgirls* reveals the dark side of the rise of the girlie-girl in her new book. Orenstein examines the not-so-innocent side of princess culture represented by *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Ariel*, *Belle*, and others. Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave. 564-8080

TUE • TARAVAL PUBLIC SAFETY

Tue Feb 15 | 7pm | [the Taraval Station Public Safety Community Meeting will not be held at Taraval Station for the month of February. It's at Minnie & Lovie Ward Recreation Center 151 Montana @ Captiol Ave. Phone: 337-4710. Discussion: Victim/Witness Protection Program.

THU • COUNTRY BLUEGRASS SHOW

Thur Feb 17 | 8:30pm | Classic bluegrass meets old-school country meets west

ern-swing! Whisky Richards + Misipi Rider + Lady A & Her Heel Draggers + West Nile Ramblers + DJ Lazy Magician@Cafe Du Nord, 2170 Market St, \$13 advance / \$15 doors / 21+

FRI • BLUEGRASS BONANZA

Fri Feb 18 | 9pm | The hippest show with the hippest bands! The Earl Brothers + Henhouse Prowlers + BrownChicken BrownCow@Plough & Stars, 116 Clement Street @2nd, 9pm show / \$10-\$15 sliding scale / 21

FRI • ALT • BLUEGRASS SHOW

Fri Feb 19 | 8:30pm | Whatever you do, don't bring the kids! Pine Box Boys + Old Man Markley + Kemo Sabe + Hang Jones@Cafe Du Nord, 2170 Market Str. \$13 advance / \$15 doors / 21+

MON • CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETING

West of Twin Peaks Central Council | Mon. Feb 28 | 7:30 pm | A resource for neighborhood organizations. Learn and comment on issues. Fourth Mon each month Forest Hill Clubhouse at 381 Magellan Ave.

Got a local event? Send it to: editor@westsideobserver.com

Film Noir Lights Up the Castro

By Jonathan Farrell

Lines formed down the block to enter The Castro Theater on Tuesday night Jan 25. It was the fifth evening in a week-long celebration of classic vintage films of the "film Noir" genre. This year marks the ninth year the Film Noir Festival of San Francisco has featured some of the gems of the 1940's & '50s.

"Each year we get more people," said Bill Arney who dressed in a suit and fedora hat of the era. Arney has been lending his voice as announcer and MC to the festival for the past five years. "Last night we had over 800 people," he said. The Theater has a maximum seating of over 1,400.

"I used to live in Sam Spade's apartment, which is on Post and Hyde Streets," said Arney. Sam Spade is the main character in one of the most recognizable film noir movies of all time, "The Maltese Falcon." Based on the novel, written by Dashiell Hammett the movie not only made Humphrey Bogart a star but firmly planted San Francisco as a legendary location for film noir movies.

Living at that place where Hammet wrote his crime and detective drama brought Arney to the festival. "That is where I met Eddie," he said. Eddie Muller is the founder of the SF Film Noir Festival, referred to as "Noir City." As a native San Franciscan, Muller was always attracted to the alluring elements that make San Francisco and the surrounding Bay Area a great place to live.

Muller, a journalist, artist and enthusiast for preserving classic films, found his calling while attending the SF Art Institute. His love for film grew as he participated in film making and acting classes of instructor George Kuchar back in the 1970's.

With his experience, various contacts and charm, (Muller looks outstanding in a suit and fedora), he was able to put together a film noir festival in Los Angeles. And then, in 2002 Muller formed the Noir City festival as we know it today, here in San Francisco.

Film noir is a term used primarily to describe stylish Hollywood crime dramas. As a cinematic description it particularly highlights traits that emphasize cynical attitudes and impulsive motives.

Muller and his staff, many are volunteers, work to bring back these films from a distinctive era. As a result

Muller has reintroduced or in some instances delivered something entirely unknown to contemporary audiences.

"He is the 'Czar of Noir,' (an affectionate title many in the festival circle use) but I see him as the Pope of film noir preservation," said Jeffery Friend. This is Friend's first year volunteering at the festival. "Many of these movies you see here you will not find on video," he said.

Friend like many who help out or attend the festival are captivated by the ambiance of the noir film. It's use of dim light and shadow, to emphasize key aspects to a story's intensity is a format. Seldom films of the noir style have direct lighting. It is mostly set in subtle tones to feature aspects of human nature and emotion that are lurking beneath the surface.

"I started my interest in vintage films through old horror movies and then got into detective films which lead me into film noir," he said.

Friend mentioned that lots of film noir of the 1940's and '50's can be traced to pioneering influences in film history such as German Expressionist cinematography that can be traced back to the 1920's.

Use of nuances and even symbolism was one way filmmakers of that time period were able to examine the deeper and complex consciousness of humanity as the world became impacted by the First World War and then a humiliating economic depression.

Moviegoers Marina Cazorla and Devin Hallett are major fans of the festival. "They have a great collection of movies here that no one else has," said Cazorla. Hallett agreed as the couple chatted waiting in the long line for the box office to open.

"I like the glamour, the fashions, the stars of that time were stunning," said Cazorla.

"Some of these noir films have a great sense of romance," said Hallett.

"Think of the story in "Casablanca," said James Godsoe, as he agreed with Hallett. Casablanca is another iconic film.

Godsoe's girlfriend bought him a season pass last year and he has been a fan of the festival ever since, inviting friends to join him.

"Yes, there is a lot of espionage and intrigue but it is the love between the star-crossed lovers played by Bogart and Bergman that people remember most," said Godsoe.

Like Godoe, many people are season pass buyers.

The line for season pass holders is as long as those buying a ticket for just one show. This years theme is "who is crazy now?" The theme again reiterates elements that makes film noir unique, hidden elements not seen at first but that dwell in the shadows of the human condition.

And like Friend, Cazorla & Hallett, vintage movie aficionado Tim Vigil discovered film noir through old movies and adores the film festival. "Growing up in San Leandro, my mom used to watch old movies on TV."

"In those days, said Vigil there were no VCR's or DVD's, If you wanted to watch old movies you saw them on local television on shows like 'Dialing for Dollars' or a morning, mid-day or late night movie with a local celebrity hosting the program," said Vigil.

The crowd that Tuesday night was a mixture of people, both old and young, men and women. Some were attired in clothes of the 1940's and '50's, many just donned a fedora. Smiles and conversation among patrons during intermission were plentiful. Yet whether dressed for the festival or not what drew the large crowd in was a love for classic movies.

"Old movies are great," said Philip Fukuda - this is his third year as a volunteer. "If you work more than three shifts during the festival you can see all the movies for free," he said.

Hal Savage has been working with the Noir City festival for all nine years. "I met Eddie in LA when he started the very first film noir festival," said Savage. "I honestly did not think it would pack the theater, but the festival has kept growing each year," he said.

"Sure, I could stay home and watch old movies on my VCR or DVD player but I would not get to experience the audience reaction and comradery."

"That alone by itself is a treat, because each audience laughs or reacts on their own. It is not scripted, it's totally spontaneous," said Godsoe.

As Friend pointed out, "if we did not have film festivals like this, many of some of the most important vintage films would not be preserved and appreciated," he said. All proceeds go to the Film Noir Foundation which works closely with Muller to preserve and restore classic films.

For more information about the Ninth Annual Film Noir Festival, visit the Film Noir Foundation web site at link: <http://www.noircity.com/foundation.html>

Winter Beauty

By Hilary Gordon/Photos by Blair Randall, 2011

What makes a garden beautiful in winter? Although our mild climates let some blossoms from late summer and fall hang on plants into January, it is not flowers that make a beautiful garden in the dead of winter.

In winter, the shape and structure of the garden is unclothed. Without the distraction of flower colors, and with bare branches exposed on deciduous trees and shrubs, errors in pruning or design are painfully obvious, while good pruning and design hold the garden's beauty firmly grounded.

Here are some factors to consider as you look out your window at the wet or chilly garden this month.

1. Shape: do the pathways, retaining walls, patios, and other hardscape features divide the garden into balanced, usable spaces with appealing lines for the eye to follow as it wanders through the garden spaces? (Hint: think in curves)

2. Pruning: are the large trees and shrubs well pruned into graceful, open shapes that fit well into the spaces they occupy? (Hint: this might be a job for an arborist, but what a great investment)

3. Foliage Color: while your plants are out of bloom, most of the garden color comes from foliage. Does your garden include plants with silvery, golden, or red foliage? Even different shades of green are important. (Hint: lots of medium green plants together can be a visual jumble, but if each plant has a contrasting foliage color, their individual shapes and textures show up as beauty)

4. Texture: every plant has its own texture and posture; erect, rounded, weeping, tiered, or spiky. Does your garden create a harmonious whole? Does it match well with your home? Your personal style?

5. Repeated Elements: Nature designs landscapes with repeated elements. A grassy meadow may have hundreds of grasses, but only two or three varieties, each with a color and texture that repeats throughout the space. Repeated elements, whether colors, plants, or hardscape features like pots, walls, or paving, can help unify your design while



resting and informing your eye.

This is a wonderful time of year to make changes in your garden; New Year's resolutions in horticulture! Add a half wine-barrel of salad greens, or a small sunny herb garden, and bring your garden into your kitchen. Or pick a plant that you really don't like, and replace it, finally, with something better. Maybe a favorite feature could be repeated once, or a hundred times. Maybe the plant whose fragrance reminds you of someone special could be moved to a more prominent location. January is a wonderful month



for gardeners to dream big dreams, and sharpen their pruners!

Heads up! This month at the Garden for the Environment, is the beginning of a regular once-a-month tour of the garden, focusing on climate-appropriate garden design. Meet me in the garden (7th avenue and Lawton) on the second Saturday of each month at 1pm. See you then!

Hilary Gordon is Sustainable Landscape Education Manager at the GFE. A life-long gardener, trained at the City College Horticulture program, she has worked as a professional landscape gardener from 1984 until the present.

Have a question for Hilary? Meet her in the garden Wednesdays 10-2 and Saturdays 10-4.

Real Travel By Sergio Nibbi



Fabulous Florence



After checking out of our hotel in Venice we were ready for a luxurious three hour ride on our Eurostar train to Santa Maria Novella in Florence. On the train you feel like you should fasten your seat belt — it looks so much like the inside of an airliner. And the food is fantastic.



Florence, where the Renaissance started and our trip is ending. Where to eat in Florence is always a dilemma because there are so many good restaurants. We opted for Camillo's where we had eaten four years ago with our traveling companions and by chance ended up at what they call the "Family Table." It's either the best or the worst table in the house, located right next to the open kitchen, and although it's the best show in town, it's also as hot as the kitchen, if not hotter. We called and reserved the same table ("prenotare" is the Italian word for "reservation" and it rolls right off my tongue like a local) and yes, just as much fun but even hotter than we had remembered. More cold wine please; grazie.

The following night we ate at Buca Lappi and ordered the bistecca alla Fiorentina, about eight pounds of T-bone beautifully seasoned as only the Florentines can do. And by the way, don't forget the beans. We had beans at every meal: plain, with tuna — a real specialty — and of course always properly laid to rest in inches of the local olive oil, as green as our envy of those who are staying longer in this beautiful city. We were here for such a short time that we didn't even have a gelato, but we did get to San Lorenzo, a flea market of the first order. Are we getting old or sensible or both? We couldn't find an adequate piece of junk to buy, so we settled for some fresh fruit instead.

We joined our friends for breakfast on the verandah of their hotel, the Tornabuoni Beacci, and after a sad farewell we headed back to our apartment where we have been staying for the last two days. What a lovely place and such a great location right next to the Piazza della Repubblica and just 30 seconds from the porcellino where we can rub the bronzed pig's nose every day for good luck. It's been a great stay in Florence and after an all too short visit we left the treasures of this great city and got on the train and headed for Perugia.



Feedback sergio@westsideobserver.com

Shangri-La (Cont. from p. 12)

birthdays. "Buddha has a lot of birthdays," Sang said, chuckling. "We serve many Chinese who keep Buddhist traditions. Many tourists from China have to come here to eat. They even take a cab to come here—it costs more for cabs from downtown than for dinner."

Sang peers cheerfully from behind the large wooden statue of the dancing Buddha, his long, immaculate fingers adjust the strap of his dark red apron. "I have a lot of work to do," he said resolutely, carefully opening an antique clay pot sheltered in its niche behind the counter. He begins the chopping and mincing for the homemade clay pot pickled treat that greets each customer. "The clay pot is not large enough to make for all, if it is busy, sometimes (we) run out," he said with a satisfied smile. "Sometimes customers try to order pickle to go, but we can't do it. This is a very special clay pot, from China, we cannot get in United States."

Shangri-La does not depend on Buddhists, or even Chinese patronage. Most diners are Caucasian and they come from all over the city.

To Dixie Mahy, President of the San Francisco Vegetarian Society, the little restaurant in the Sunset has been a pioneer in illustrating the benefits of a vegetarian diet. "Shangri-La provides tasty menus to demonstrate how delicious and satisfying meatless recipes can be," she said.

It's not so satisfying monetarily. Sang is aware that a "business must make money," he said, aspirations aside. Business has been slow since the recession began in November of 2008. There is also increased competition from other vegetarian restaurants.

According to Newsweek the number of vegetarians has doubled in the past ten years. The increase is even greater in the western states. On the other hand, there are almost ninety vegetarian restaurants and thirty vegan (no animal products whatsoever) restaurants in the Bay Area.

Sang's mood shifts when he speaks about the rent. In 1978, when there were many abandoned storefronts, the rent was \$300. "Today the rent is almost \$5000," he said. His nervous laugh betrays a serious concern. "It makes me have to work harder." He has seen many businesses come and go as the rents continue to escalate. "If I had known how popular this area would become, I would have bought the property."

Growing up in San Francisco, Sang did not expect to become a restaurateur. He studied television production at San Francisco State, and left for Taiwan shortly thereafter to pursue his career. He points proudly to an old photo of himself receiving an award as he left a lucrative position in Taiwan to devote his time to the restaurant.

"It will be a great loss to the general community at large—not just to us vegetarians—if they have to close," said Mahy. "With rents like this, it would be difficult for any restaurant to stay in business, especially in these times with the downturn of the economy."

Mary Allen, who lives in Forest Knolls, discovered Shangri-La over 20 years ago. Spry at 74, she counts herself a steady customer. "I love eating at the Shangri-La. I host my annual birthday dinner party for eight of my friends there. I can count on the owner playing Happy Birthday on his harmonica for us—always fun! Even my carnivorous friends enjoy this restaurant."

Sang has no regrets. "Helping people eat vegetarian is the reward," he said. It's in keeping with the Buddhist precept of non-violence, known as ahimsa, "if you keep your heart in mercy at all times, you will not eat meat."

As the front door opens, a soft bell tinkles announcing the first customer and Sang springs into action.

Shangri-La, 2026 Irving Street, San Francisco - (415) 731-2548



Where are they now? West Portal Midgets, circa 1953 • Walt Lunny sends this photo. Replies to editor@westsideobserver.com



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