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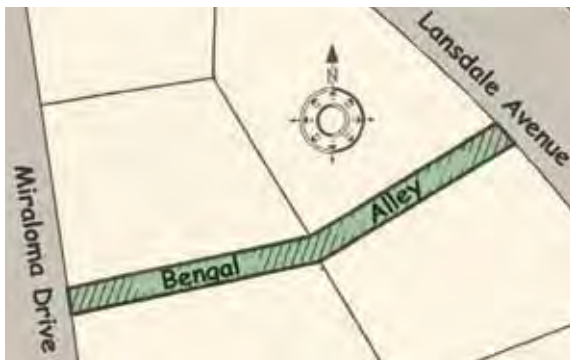
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Tigers and Bears on Bengal Alley

By Doug Comstock

Kay and her husband Fred Curry have an unobstructed view of Bengal Alley from their Mount Davidson balcony on Lansdale. It's not an alley at all, but a three section pathway that begins along the side of the Curry's home, where its newly restored cobblestone stairs invite a leisurely meander, then turns down the 17° slope to the exit at the cement stairs on Miraloma Street. With stunning ocean views, it's a peaceful public right-of-way where squirrels and wild birds compete for nature's bounty.

It is also a practical shortcut for the inhabitants of Sherwood Forest to meet the 43 MUNI that stops at its foot—no mean consideration for riders who must tread the additional two or three block detour along Lansdale, Casitas and Miraloma that the closure of Bengal Alley precipitated.



It was closed in 2008¹ and there is no date certain for its completion. But, essentially, it was closed to all but the most nimble visitor long before Department of Public Works installed the chain link fences. Overgrown with brush, clogged with excavated rubble dumped from neighboring developments and a large, discarded tree trunk, travelers were required to stoop—almost



Shock: The Curry's "Notice to Repair Sidewalk" estimated at half a million

crawl—through the mud obstacle course of the central section, to reach the crumbling cement stairs at Miraloma. Then there was the washout, common in the area, which nearly covered the remaining steps.

Dave Bisho was one of the neighbors inconvenienced by the closure of the path. "There is absolutely nothing wrong with this right of way. Bengal Alley between

Cont. p. 2

Parkmerced Agreement Illegally Excluded Public

By Hope Johnson, Chair, Sunshine Ordinance Task Force

Lurking in the darkest corners of San Francisco's Parkmerced Development Agreement is the question of enforceability of the agreement's rent control provision. The elusive answer remains shadowed in odd mystery, and the Board of Supervisors has done little to shed much needed light on the controversial issue.



Can the City require replacement of existing rent controlled housing scheduled for demolition?

California's Costa-Hawkins Act prevents local regulations from requiring rent control on new construction. Rent control on the new apartments might make the project economically impractical.

But the City Attorney's Office position is that rent control is part of the contract, and there is no reason to believe the contract will be violated or challenged. Despite that assurance, the Board of Supervisors spent several hours discussing the enforceability question during its March 29, 2011 hearing on appeal of the Planning Commission's 4-3 vote approval of the environmental impact report.

The Board ultimately chose to continue their decision on the appeal to May 24th to allow time to consider the oddly mysterious legal standing of the City to enforce such a condition.

Meanwhile, the Parkmerced Development Agreement itself was assigned to the Board's Land Use Committee for May 16, 2011. Committee Chair Eric Mar opened the meeting by explaining that, because the item had been improperly noticed, no action could be taken—the item would be continued to the committee's May 24th hearing.

Supervisor Sean Elsbernd introduced "technical amendments" to the agreement. Discussion ensued, including enforceability of the rent control provision and Chair Mar's concern that energy consumption might need revision. Members of the public were provided copies of the revised agreement and were told it would be available online later that day.

The newly introduced amendments were then approved by the committee, notwithstanding Chair Mar's repeated declaration that no action would be taken on the agreement until May 24th.

One week later, on May 24th, two separate meetings were scheduled that involved approval of the Parkmerced project, one was the Land Use Committee's continued discussion at 9 am and the other was the regularly scheduled meeting of the full Board of Supervisors later that same day at 2 pm. The Land Use Committee was to make a referral on the agreement to the

The Sunshine Ordinance Task Force concluded that the last minute introduction of fourteen pages of amendments did not provide adequate time for members of the public to review and comment on them as required under Sunshine. . .

Cont. p. 5

— Best of the Net —

Rose Pak Makes Deals, Gains Influence

By Matthew Robertson

Rose Pak had more in mind than a light Thai dinner when she walked into the now-shuttered Bong Su restaurant, with David Chiu in tow, on 3rd and Folsom in March 2009.

Harlan Kelly, her old friend who is assistant general manager for infrastructure of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, was waiting for the pair. Pak had been Chiu's date for the first few months of his time as Supervisor of District 3.

At Bong Su that night it was a rendition of "Getting to Know You," Rose Pak-style.

... but how she acquired that power is something of a mystery. She is not registered to vote, is not a registered lobbyist, and is not reported to receive any remuneration from her sole reported place of employment, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce."

She introduced the two of them, highlighting how wonderful it was that Chiu was a Harvard graduate, and that Kelly was an old friend. Pak had slipped into a black dress for the occasion. Chiu was in his characteristic blue suit. Kelly stuck with shirtsleeves.

Nursing her whiskey after the initial chit-chat, Pak dived into the nitty-gritty of the meeting: Kelly manages billions of dollars in contracts; how might those (nudge, Chiu) be made available not just for the international players, but local contractors, too?

It was left unsaid that "local contractors" meant businesses that could later throw money at Pak's political projects on call. The conversation didn't get that far. Chiu wasn't ready to commit to anything and he had another function to attend, so he excused himself after about 45 minutes, according to an individual sitting at an adjacent table who heard the entire exchange. When asked about the encounter, Chiu said he couldn't remember clearly. He said that he might have been with Kelly and Pak at a table together at some time.

Rose Pak has been a power broker in San Francisco politics for two decades, but how she acquired that power is something of a mystery. She is not registered to vote, is not a registered lobbyist, and is not reported to receive any remuneration from her sole reported place of employment, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Yet friends and foes alike credit her with being someone who gets things done.

"For the people who have gone down that road, it's very difficult to figure out...what you find is one percent of the iceberg, the other 99 percent nobody can see," says Aaron Peskin, a

Cont. p. 6

BENGAL ALLEY (Cont. from p. 1)

Miraloma and Lansdale is the main link for many Mt. Davidson and Sherwood Forest residents,” he said. “I’ve been going up that way since I was in grammar school.” In a letter to the City Attorney he requested that the owners clear the property and remove the locked gates to “open this vital link to the public once again...its closure discourages neighbors above from using public transit.”

At a meeting with District 7 Supervisor Elsbernd, Bisho was not convinced that it would cost the adjoining neighbors hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring the path up to code. He felt the estimates were way overblown. “The suggestion Elsbernd made that Bengal Alley has to be ADA compliant is untrue—only sites that have ADA areas within them must be ADA compliant. There are hundreds of public pathways and right-of-ways all over the city not ADA compliant, including at least a dozen on Mt. Davidson alone.”

When DPW closed the passageway and gave the adjoining neighbors 30 days to repair the “sidewalk,” Kay Curry organized Friends of Bengal Alley. It was noticed as an “unaccepted public right-of-way.” Then Deputy Director Mohammad Nuru reviewed the initial renovation plans and visited the site, but denied the neighbors’ request for help with the plan without improvements, noting “concerns about the safety of people on the path.” Though she agrees that the passageway was unsafe in 2008, “no one has ever, to my knowledge, been injured on the walkway,” said Curry. Regardless, if they did not make the repairs, the City would “cause such

repair to be made, and all costs shall be a lien on such property.” “Estimates were thrown around,” Curry said, “like half a million dollars.”

For the Currys, who are retired seniors, it was a shocking prospect. The current improvements cost “only about \$30,000.” The completed project should come close to \$50,000. One of the neighbors has contributed their share for 2009 and 2010, and they hope to get help from the other two stakeholders and the Friends of Bengal Alley; they will also apply for other grants.

After consulting with other landowners, as “Project Steward” for the undertaking,² Curry decided that they would opt for a more permanent fix, “not one that would last for 20 years, but for a hundred years,” Curry said. They didn’t want something that a rain-storm could wash away in a matter of a few hours. At the same time, they wanted to avoid hardscape improvements and the extensive permit regulations they might take. They contacted David Cody at the SF Permaculture Guild³ whose Hayes Valley Farm reuses an old freeway entrance at Octavia; Cody worked with them to design improvements at Bengal Alley. Boaz Mor is the construction company responsible for designing and overseeing final construction.

Cobblestone Steps

Kay Curry applied for a grant through the SF Parks Trust (now the SF Parks Alliance) to help repair the stair section. They received a \$850 grant, which helped with the \$4,385 expense. Today they are fully restored.

Mid-section Planters The new stairs, in the section that is less steep, are being replaced with a simple winding set of wooden steps dug into the hillside to make the path safer and improve water retention, that will last longer than most hiking trails and require less maintenance. The beds, supported by retaining walls averaging two to three feet in height, will slow and sink water into the soil and provide raised beds for vegetation, allow rooting to take hold. The intent is that no water will exit the site, but peak flows could still exit the site via

“The suggestion (Supervisor) Elsbernd made that Bengal Alley has to be ADA compliant is untrue—only sites that have ADA areas within them must be ADA compliant. There are hundreds of public pathways and right-of-ways all over the city not ADA compliant, including at least a dozen on Mt. Davidson alone.” ...DAVE BISHO

the storm drains on Miraloma. Pressure-treated redwood retaining walls and steps are lined with plastic to assure longer life.

Small Concrete Exit Stairs At the end of Miraloma, there is a newer set than the others, though its origin is unknown. The larger, higher set of stairs has suffered erosion and has no footings; it may need to be stabilized or replaced in the future.

Planting Areas Volunteers from the Permaculture Guild and Friends of Bengal Alley will plant the fruit trees, elderberry bushes and flowering plants that will serve to stabilize the alley, as well as provide yield and habitat. Plants will begin to be delivered in January.

For Dave Bisho and the neighbors above the walkway, the project can’t be finished too soon, and the Currys are grateful for the patience of the inconvenienced neighbors. Everyone is anxious to see the site completed and, contingent on the approval of DPW, the removal of the chain link fence.

When it is returned to the public, Bengal Alley will be a showcase as an inexpensive solution to slope challenges. This community asset is a small treasure that will also have a sustainable planting and maintenance plan for the exotic and native plants.

To join Friends of Bengal Alley, or for information on how to help with time or much needed cash donations, contact bengalstairs.org.



1 www.westsideobserver.com/news/bengal.html
2 www.bengalstairs.org
3 www.permaculture-sf.org

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Rec & Park

Ginsburg's and Ballard's Official Misconduct

By George Wooding



In May 2011, the Recreation and Parks Department (RPD) and its governing body, the Recreation and Parks Commission (RPC), sought to derail a public debate about plans for Golden Gate Park at a Commonwealth Club panel discussion. That a City department and its highest-ranking employees would engage in stifling public debate is deplorable enough.

That the same City department then withheld public records regarding its attempted curtailment of the First Amendment was equally disturbing, and led me to a five-month battle to release the public records.

The Sunshine Ordinance Task Force, referred “willful violation” and “official misconduct” charges against RPD staff to Ethics Commission for enforcement, my citizen’s victory.

There are many fine people who work for but General Manager Phil Ginsburg and PR Director Sarah Ballard, among others, are ruining RPD’s reputation.

In 2008 Mayor Newsom appointed his former Chief of Staff as RPD’s General Manager. Ginsburg had no experience with recreation or parks. Ballard was formerly a legislative aide to Supervisor Michela Alioto-Pier, and the wife of Newsom’s former press secretary Nathan Ballard.

The Ginsburg-led RPD is relying heavily on public-private partnerships to generate income for RPD. These relationships have potential to be financially beneficial, but Ginsburg’s and Ballard’s desire to please wealthy donors is pushing private-donor agendas over public agendas.

If your neighborhood needs a drinking fountain fixed, the RPD may (or may not) get around to it. But if billionaire Warren Hellman, (Hardly Strictly Bluegrass), or the Fisher Family, (City Fields Founda-

“Golden Gate Park Under Siege!” The four invited panelists included Mark Lynes, Conservation Director and General Counsel for the Golden Gate Audubon Society; Katherine Howard, ASLA, a landscape architect and member of the Golden Gate Park Preservation Alliance’s steering committee; Anthea Hartig, Ph.D, president of the Western Office National Trust for Historic Preservation; and myself, then-current president of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council. The panel moderator was Jim Chappell, former director of SPUR.

A promotional flier for the forum indicated that dramatic, potentially devastating changes to Golden Gate Park were underway as privatization and industrial development converge, indicating the forum would include supporters, neighbors, and members of local organizations who aim to protect the park’s heritage.

City Fields Foundation wants RPD to pave over the seven-and-a-half-acre Beach Chalet soccer field by replacing natural grass with artificial turf; add 60-foot lighting, widen roads, increase parking, and add bleachers so that the fields can be used until 10:00 p.m. Additionally, the Public

“This is the first time a City department eventually produced documents from back up files . . . These public officials signed non-public e-mails using their public titles in an attempt to sway the Commonwealth Club to bias a forum. . .”

tion), want a favor, it gets done. The RPD has become a lobbyist for the wealthy. This need to please has led directly to freedom of speech issues and charges of ethics violations against Ginsburg and Ballard.

Phil Ginsburg, Sarah Ballard, secretary Olive Gong, and RPC president Mark Buell were all found to have violated the Sunshine Ordinance, including failure to respond, withholding public records, and failing to assist the requestor. The Sunshine Ordinance Task Force (SOTF) is an 11-member committee appointed to ensure compliance with local open government laws. Their determination that a violation of the Ordinance has occurred involving willful failure or official misconduct, may result in discharge from office.

On October 25, the SOTF voted unanimously to forward charges of official misconduct against Ginsburg and Ballard to the Ethics Commission under Section 67.34 of the ordinance, which involves the willful failure — deemed official misconduct — of any elected official, department head, or other managerial City employee to discharge duties imposed by the Sunshine Ordinance, the Brown Act, or California’s Public Records Act.

In addition, the SOTF also ruled that RPD secretary Olive Gong, RPD’s Custodian of Records, and RPC president Mark Buell failed to comply with an Order of Determination, resulting in a referral to Ethics under Sunshine Section 67.30(c), which applies to any person who has violated any provision of the Sunshine Ordinance or other public records Acts.

If the Ethics Commission upholds the SOTF referral against these four RPD staff, the case will be forwarded to Mayor Ed Lee, who will then have to decide if the four should be removed for misconduct. This is the third major Sunshine violation by the RPD in the last three years. Ironically, every RPC meeting agenda includes a required statement: “Know your rights under the Sunshine Ordinance. Government’s duty is to serve the public, reaching its decisions in full view of the public.”

Private Partners Sabotage Public Event

The Commonwealth Club scheduled a panel discussion for May 11 titled,

Utilities Commission (PUC) is trying to add a four-acre wastewater treatment plant right beside the synthetic soccer fields. With trees being chopped down and natural grass fields paved over with recycled rubber tires, over half of the western edge of GGP is going to be altered. The park’s Master plan clearly states the western part of GGP should remain in a natural state, but the RPD needs the Fisher money and the PUC rent money more than they need the natural fields and landscape.

Fearful the Commonwealth Club forum might upend the Fisher Family’s plans, Ginsburg, Ballard, Buell, and lobbyist Susan Hirsch, tried to cancel or alter the forum. Ten days before it was to be held, the Commonwealth Club’s switchboard started receiving calls stating that the panel was “unfair and biased,” followed by letters and phone calls to members. Ballard e-mailed the Commonwealth Club that panelists were likely to incite the audience, were not rationally able to discuss the issues, and were deeply biased, had no interest in discussing facts and recommended the forum be canceled.

Buell e-mailed Commonwealth Club CEO Greg Dalton that he found the forum’s title inflammatory and the participants biased. Buell demanded the forum’s title be changed to “Issues Facing the Park” and demanded an RPD representative be included on the panel. Buell was added as a panelist, but the Club held its ground, changing the title to “Golden Gate Park Under Siege?,” replacing the exclamation point with a question mark.

City Fields Foundation’s director Hirsch, wrote to the Club event moderator Jim Chappell from her private e-mail address: “I wanted to follow-up to the phone message I left you regarding the upcoming Commonwealth Club discussion about Golden Gate Park. We [the City Fields Foundation] have a unique public-private partnership with Rec and Park; it’s too bad the focus is on something negative, rather than the positive impact.”

Hirsch & Associates, on behalf of brothers Bob, Bill and John Fisher, created the City Fields Foundation to collaborate

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RUMINATIONS FROM A FORMER SUPERVISOR By Quentin Kopp

Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition, defines hokey as “nonsense” and states that its 1924 origin is unknown. I find hokey in contemporary publications in San Francisco, the daily morning newspaper and otherwise, on an almost-daily basis. The history, for example, of laws becomes obscure or muddled in an era of rapid communications and apparently little patience for historical facts. One example is the so-called “three strikes” law enacted by California voters on November 8, 1994 by an initiative, commonly then known as Proposition 184. It’s not only criminal defense lawyers who condemn abhorrently such law as inflexible; it’s newspaper columnists, editorial writers and academic commentators. To the contrary, by approving the “three strikes” law (California Penal Code Section 1170.2)(c)(2)(A)), California voters, as noted in a 1996 California Court of Appeals decision, determined that those defendants who have been convicted of serious or violent felonies merit greater punishment upon conviction of any new felony. Fifteen years ago the law was deemed constitutional by the United States Supreme Court after having previously been deemed constitutional by the California Supreme Court.



Photo: Luke Thomas/fogcityjournal.com

“Among the ordinances and proposals under consideration to cure our City’s ills are such beauties as an effort by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and supervisors to raise money by forcing a private property owner who furnishes free parking to his or her customers on his or her private property to pay the city an annual fee of \$1000 per parking space. Think about it: a business owner buys property in order to conduct business and ensures space for customers to park without charge. That means customers don’t need to plug money constantly into parking meters. It’s obvious the Metropolitan Transportation Authority resents such foresight and business sense.”

As criminal law practitioners, victim rights organizations, and students may know, the law arose from a sickening event on October 1, 1993 when 12-year-old Polly Klaas of Petaluma was kidnapped and murdered by a repeated felon on parole, who was then arrested on November 30, 1993. The felon, Richard Allen Davis, owned a lengthy criminal record of arrests and convictions, commencing at the age of 12 and incurred over four decades. The father of a teenaged girl previously murdered by a convicted felon in Fresno, California started an initiative, which easily qualified for the November 1994 State General Election. Prior thereto, the legislature passed its own “three strikes” statute, signed by then-governor Pete Wilson on March 8, 1994. Essentially, both the legislative and initiative versions provide that any person convicted of a second felony is subject to a mandatory state prison confinement at twice the number of years otherwise applicable to the second felony and those criminal defendants with two or more prior felony convictions and convicted of a third act constituting a felony are subject to a minimum sentence of 25 years. (Serious felonies include murder, voluntary manslaughter, rape, assault with intent to commit rape or robbery, assault with a deadly weapon or instrument on a peace officer, arson, exploding a destructive device causing great bodily injury, burglary, robbery, kidnapping, selling heroin, cocaine or any methamphetamine-related drug and grand theft involving a firearm.) The only difference in the two “three strikes” versions of the law as between the Legislature and the People of the State of California is that the statute approved by the Legislature required the third felony conviction be based upon a serious or violent crime; the initiative does not specifically so require and some repeated crimes like petty theft qualify as a “third strike” under the initiative. That has led to clamor every few years or so, and particularly now because of asserted overcrowding of state prisons, that the “three strikes” law must be revised, if not repealed. For example, in the 2004 State General Election, a revision, commonly called Proposition 66, would have explicitly required the third felony conviction to be violent or serious so as to trigger a 25 years-to-life sentence. Voters rejected it and with good reason. What the academic pontificators, the American Civil Liberties Union, critics and some politicians neglect to inform citizens is that the “three strikes” initiative expressly contains protection against the concededly questionable spectacle of a criminal defendant with two prior serious or violent felony convictions being convicted of petty

theft, shoplifting, or marijuana possession and then sustaining a 25 year-to-life sentence. The 1994 initiative confers discretion upon the prosecuting attorney in any California county to move to dismiss or strike a prior felony conviction allegation in the furtherance of justice. And, if faith in prosecutorial discretion lacks respect among the aforementioned circles, the California Supreme Court in 1996 reiterated that the “three strikes” law did not give prosecuting attorneys the power to veto judicial decisions to dismiss a prior felony conviction allegation in furtherance of justice, meaning that any judge presiding over a criminal defendant’s trial and eventual conviction possesses inherent power to dismiss and ignore a prior conviction of a serious or violent felony in sentencing a criminal convicted of petty theft, for example. Commonly, in sentencing a person just convicted of a third crime and possessing a record of two prior serious or violent felony convictions, the judge presiding over a petty theft trial will dismiss one of the prior felony convictions. I have done it myself in those circumstances. In other words the “three strikes” law, as interpreted by the California Supreme Court, inherently possesses provisions which prevent the type of imagined injustice critical commentators love to conjure in order to convince people unfamiliar with the criminal justice system that the “three strikes” law is abusive and subject to no commonsensical judicial restraints. In a civilized society, the law is justifiable and necessary. I doubt voters will repeal it.

On November 5, 1996, two years after the people of the State of California enacted the “three strikes” law, voters enacted the constitutional prohibition against discrimination or preferential treatment (California Constitution, Article 1, Section 31). It declares the state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in activities of public employment, public education or public contracting. It also provides that nothing in the law shall be interpreted as prohibiting bona fide qualifications based on sex which are reasonably necessary to the normal operation of public employment, public education or public contracting. The law governs any city, county, city and county, the University of California, the California State University system, Community Colleges, school districts, special districts and all other political subdivisions or governmental instrumentalities.

Notwithstanding countless efforts, including those by San Francisco city

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Hang Those Ornaments

By Steve Lawrence

Ever noticed that the little extra expenses add up? How tempting is the seemingly insignificant little extra. What a pretty ornament!

Not that we don't already have too many. It's the same or worse at the municipal level. Let's do something nice for those in favor.

Examine almost any agenda for a Commission meeting of the SFPUC and you will find ornaments, large and small. A large ornament can be a whole program, such as the CCA program (community choice aggregation), the holy child of progressive Supes. In October CleanPowerSF (the child's name) advanced. Displacing PG&E, beginning about July, this City program is to sell "100% clean" electric power to a target of 75,000 green San Francisco households. The additional cost will be about \$7-15 per month added to the household's electric bill. Public power advocates are tickled pink.

And so it routinely goes. At the same meeting \$100,000 was authorized for a pilot project to enhance water efficiency in community gardens. There we go; we spend \$100,000 perhaps to teach gardeners how to water better? Also, an MOU (memorandum of understanding, a bureaucrat's contract) was authorized with the Arts Commission. A small water district just south of the City had its \$106,000 contract increased by \$209,000 to speed recycled water for Harding Park.

Of course compared to the \$300 million operating budget for our municipal Water Enterprise—and to debt spend-



With all its spending, how tempting it must be to steer a little here, a little there, to worthwhile groups and interests about whom feelings are warm. Cheer, cheer! For bureaucrats it can be Christmas all year! Even better when the spending is debt spending; we all know how using a credit card is so much easier than parting with cash."



But the majority of ornaments are smaller, are hardly noticeable on our already over-flowing municipal tree.

For example, in October the SFPUC (your water, sewer and public power supplier) agreed to buy "conservation credits." Is this like Al Gore's indulgences? Warm warning Al flew about the globe, using much energy while he railed against greenhouse gases and rallied the greens. To make up for his carbon-spewing ways he purchased carbon credits or offsets (indulgences), which made it all copacetic.

Similarly, SFPUC ornaments its tree by buying credits for "up to" \$550,000 from Wildlands Inc. What is Wildlands Inc? Its website says it provides "custom mitigation banking solutions." The website pictures a handsome blue heron. "To restore, enhance, preserve, and manage... in perpetuity." How warm and wonderful.

Did SFPUC competitively bid to acquire this custom mitigation banking service? What is the service, exactly? It is hard to know; this ornament was authorized without discussion by the SFPUC Commission. The matter was on the consent calendar, meaning discussion was considered unnecessary.

ing of that is perhaps double that this fiscal year—these October ornaments are dinky. With all its spending, how tempting it must be to steer a little here, a little there, to worthwhile groups and interests about whom feelings are warm. Cheer, cheer! For bureaucrats it can be Christmas all year! Even better when the spending is debt spending; we all know how using a credit card is so much easier than parting with cash.

Just as your little extras can add up to bloat your budget, so too do the tempting ornaments of public spending boost the rates you pay for water and sewer service. Bills for water and sewer are headed considerably higher. In a dozen years it is expected that the typical bill for sewer service will be about 3.25 times what it is today. Rates for water have doubled over the past five years; and over the next five years your water bill will increase by more than it has these past five.

When does the tree over-laden with ornaments tip over? When does a plucked public arise?

Have a merry holiday season!

Steve Lawrence is a longtime utility activist. Feedback: lawrence@westsideobserver.com

WESTSIDE OBSERVER

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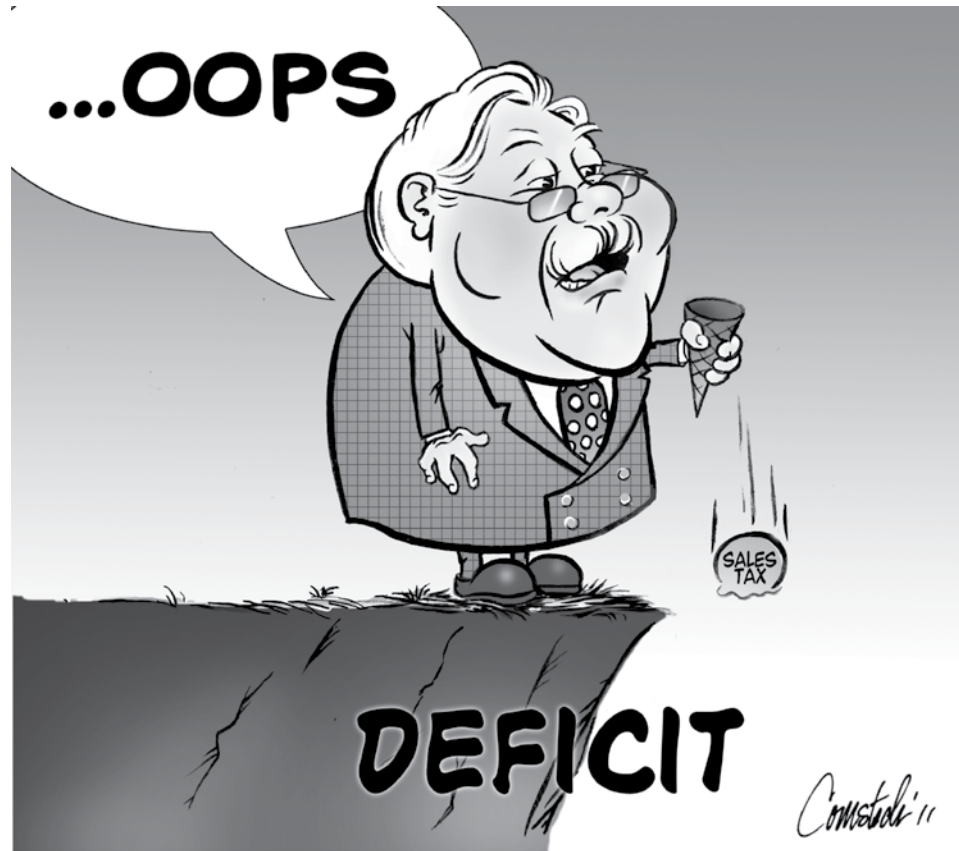
Letters to the Editor

The article, "Two Tough Little Dogs Survive Attack Of Two Hungry Coyotes", in the November 2011 issue of your Westside Observer, was high on sensationalism and inaccurate in its use of words.

This seems to be the usual fare in anything written about coyotes. But we all need to fine-tune what we see and what we report. For example, there is a big difference between "attack" and "encounter". And using the phrase "hungry coyotes", in this report, is just plain irresponsible — why would any writer use these words here except as a sensationalist scare tactic? We all need to develop an understanding of language nuance: "aggressive" does not mean "curious" or "inquisitive" or "playful" or even "mischievous".

One important fact left out of the article is that these very small and active dogs were not leashed, in an area where the owner knew coyotes have been seen. Several weeks before, I had met the owner there with her small dogs, unleashed then too, and I had let her know about the situation — she had told me that she already knew all about it and that her dogs were fine, back then. I'm all for off-leash dog walking generally — I walked my own dogs off-leash all the time. But the circumstances are different in a coyote area.

Everyone needs to understand that dogs raise the anxiety of coyotes because of territoriality — coyotes are tied to the land they use as much as we are to our own homes. Active small dogs, in particular,



MY TWO CENTS By Will Durst

TURKEY HOLOCAUST DAY 2011.

Let me be among the first 40-foot helium-filled balloons to kick-start our national parade of giving thanks. That's right, we're just about to butt heads with Turkey Holocaust Day, and to be perfectly honest, its about time. A little tryptophan poisoning might be the perfect prescription for these trying times.

Doubly comforting because this particular holiday isn't about greasing the wheels of capitalism with the fire-hose of consumer debt like that other holiday about a month down the road, which shall remain nameless. And this one doesn't hide under any religious robes either. It's purely about the journey to Comfort City through the Gluttonous Woods. Food, family, friends and football. 4 of the 5 Fs.

So, allow me to express my gratitude for the 4th Thursday of November. One of the little things that goes a long, long way to making life worth living. And here's a couple other examples of what a middle-aged round-headed political pundit bows his head and gives thanks for.

Barack Obama. Because no matter what you think of his policies, you got to admire his ability not to get involved in them.

Dick Cheney. 6 Heart attacks and the man still manages to go on a book tour. How does a guy without a heart, have 6 heart attacks? It would be like Rick Perry contracting a brain tumor.

Rick Perry suffered a 53 second brain freeze during a national debate. 53 seconds. It only took the San Francisco Forty Niners 8 seconds longer to score 2 touchdowns last Sunday. The Niners!

Former Democratic New York Congressman Anthony Weiner who escaped the press by entering sexual rehab. "I'm a sexual addict." Yeah. There's another name for that. We call it-Male. The man is simply suffering from a not so atypical case of Y chromosome poisoning.

Newt Gingrich for refusing to go gently into that good night. Even Brett Favre is saying "give it up, old man."

Herman Cain, whose long-form, cross-country, Fox News audition has exceeded all expectations. Roger Ailes

must be so proud.

The Occupy Wall Streeters. The 1% dismiss the Occupiers due to questionable hygiene. Just because you smell odd doesn't mean your message is any less true. The fact they can't afford Chanel No. 5 may be part of the point.

Bill Clinton who refuses to go away. God bless him. Although, President Obama might harbor another opinion.

Michele Bachmann. Her Newsweek cover photo made her look spooky so supporters complained they cherry-picked a creepy looking photo on purpose. Then the magazine put the entire photo shoot up online, asking, "which one would you have picked?" And everybody shut up.

The entire Democratic Party, for failing to realize they're in the middle of a war. Republicans attack them with torches and pitchforks and the Democratic response is to introduce legislation to reform pitchfork safety standards.

The entire GOP, which is waging an internal war for its very soul. The GOP Soul. Short book. Put it on the shelf right next to Great Democratic Leadership Battles.

Sarah Palin. Who refuses to go away. God bless her. Although, Mitt Romney might harbor another opinion. Or two. Diametrically opposed to each other.

Pat Robertson who called the Republican presidential field too extreme. Pat Robertson blasting his party for extremism. That's like having your drug intervention hosted by Lindsay Lohan. And Charley Sheen is driving the van.

You can't make stuff up like this. See, I'm telling you. Life is good. Thankfully yours.

Check out the website: willdurst.com



whereas many dogs have chased after coyotes. If a coyote approaches a dog, it could be for various reasons, from friendly curiosity, to messaging a warning, to testing and teasing — these don't constitute "attacks." Coyotes have followed some dogs, but this, too, does not constitute an "attack." Coyotes are easy to shoo off if the dogs are kept close using a leash.

The coyotes in our parks certainly are not "hungry" — I see them catch gophers and voles all day long, they are some of the healthiest-looking coyotes ever.

As to the incident reported in this article, I did not see the initial encounter, but I have seen many dog-coyote encounters, and I can pretty accurately describe what

Cont. p. 7

Westside Observer Turns 25

By Jonathan Farrell



Mitch Bull with Phyllis Sherman

In San Francisco there are at least a dozen or more neighborhood newspapers, often referred to as “hyper-local publications,” all of which have been reporting important local and citywide issues that impact residents. While the continued expansion of the internet has presented a challenge for all print media, the local papers endure.

Serving local residents and merchants is the main goal of these papers and the *Westside Observer* strives to stand out. In the past few years since Mitch and Alice have taken over as publishers, the *Westside Observer* has improved the design and production quality of the paper. The *Westside Observer* has transformed from a simple, flat design format, previously called “*West of Twin Peaks Observer*” with some spot color on the front page, to a full color, eye-catching 20 page issue each month.

This coming January the *Westside Observer* will celebrate 25 years in print. On Sunday Nov. 6, the owners Mitch and Alice Bull hosted a gathering at Que Syrah wine bar on West Portal Ave.

“It is our way of thanking everyone who contributes to the *Westside Observer*,” said Mitch as he addressed the gathering of about 30 people that evening. He and Alice also own and manage the *Castro Courier*, another neighborhood newspaper that serves the community’s need for local news.

“The *Examiner* and the *Chronicle*, I have respect for them,” said Mitch. “But the City’s mainstream papers are not covering the real news of the local community.”

Phyllis Sherman established the paper in the 1980’s, to give residents a voice and report about local events and concerns not reported in the *Chronicle & Examiner*. Sherman continues to contribute to the paper with her column “Phyllis’ Findings.”

Producing a paper every month is a collective effort. With the help of many people like Editor Doug Comstock, the *Westside Observer* reaches from the West Portal - St. Francis Wood area to the Forest Hill, Parkside and Sunset District.

“I am happy to say that our paper is doing well and not in debt,” said Mitch. He is looking forward to publishing “the paper” that residents go to first to get the local news.

Jonathan Farrell is a freelance SF reporter. Feedback: farrell@westsideobserver.com



Illegal Parkmerced Agreement (Cont. from p. 1)

Board. The Board was then scheduled to vote on approval of both the Parkmerced environmental impact report and the Development Agreement itself.

At the May 24th Land Use Committee, a brief presentation of the amendments previously introduced at the May 16th hearing was provided. Then Supervisor David Chiu introduced fourteen pages of new amendments specifically directed at tenants’ rights—the murky subject at issue for two months. These new amendments were not mentioned at the beginning of the hearing or at the meeting one week prior.

Supervisor Chiu said he and city attorney Charles Sullivan had stayed awake all night working on the amendments and Supervisor Cohen, a member of the committee, admitted she had only had about one hour to review the newly introduced amendments. Chair Mar expressed concern with a lack of transparency and that approval of the amendments would constitute a violation of Sunshine Ordinance public comment requirements.

The city attorney told the committee the agenda description of the Development Agreement was broad enough to encompass Chiu’s amendments. The amendments were approved, leaving only a few hours for the public to review and comment on amendments to a contract provision the Board had allowed itself two months to review. Several hours later on the same day, the Development Agreement was approved by the full Board.

Hope Johnson is Chair of the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance Task Force.

Plain Talk—Straight Talk By Joe O’Donoghue

A Belfast Thanksgiving Remembrance

The heavy unusual rainfall of this Thanksgiving eve drummed up in me remembrances of a far more ferocious Thanksgiving eve storm.

It was November 1995, I was in Belfast, in the company of two friends, one American and one Irish, both of whom had just become acquainted with each other. My American friend, Ed Emerson, was a White House liaison, an advance man for President Clinton, with Bay Area connections. My Irish friend, Oliver Kearney, was a well-connected Northern Ireland nationalist.

...we decided to open up another new front — one that would have an economic impact on those Northern Ireland businesses guilty of discriminating against Catholics. The goal was to reform, not destroy, those industries.”

At this particular moment, all three of us were huddled in a miniscule alcove, sheltered somewhat from the drenching rains, but not from the wind. We all three had just exited 15 feet from the US State Department offices, where a Thanksgiving eve party for 50 or more state department employees was in full swing. We had left the party for purposes of a very private dialogue.

Belfast at this time was enjoying, due to peace negotiations, a lull in the armed conflict. However, peace talks at the table had stalled and movement forward was stymied. The dialogue between Oliver and Ed — that of some disarming of the IRA — was verboten at the formal negotiations; hence our unofficial sidebar discussion in the doorway. Not unexpected, the verbal reaction from Oliver was so hot that it fused steam out of the cold wind and rain, for this proposal was viewed as one of total surrender. Nevertheless, Oliver, being a practical man with a desire toward peace, agreed to bring the proposal — unofficially — forward. For us, this was progress; a beachhead had been established.

Discussions between Oliver and me continued during that night, and we decided to open up another new front — one that would have an economic impact on those Northern Ireland businesses guilty of discriminating against Catholics. The goal was to reform, not destroy, those industries.

So, upon returning to San Francisco, armed with data compiled by Oliver Kearney about Northern Ireland’s industries and their discrimination policies, we consulted Warren Hinckle, our guru genius. Warren’s creative plan was to pour the nectar of Northern Ireland’s flagship export, Bushmills, down the drain in front of Gino and Carlo’s, an Italian bar, with the honors to be executed by Willie Brown, a black man. This irony would not be lost on Europeans. And in fact, the TV media coverage of this event in Europe exceeded our expectations.

So for me, this Thanksgiving was a memory of fulfillment of turkey feathers flying and how a few of us shone more light on how shocking Northern Ireland’s hiring practices were at that time.

Feedback: joeO@westsideobserver.com

Beach Chalet Soccer Fields - Public Comment Due

Written comments due by 5:00 p.m. on December 12, 2011

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields project has been released. This project would replace natural grass in Golden Gate Park with 7 acres of plastic grass and tire waste and install 150,000 watts of 60 foot tall stadium lights next to Ocean Beach. “a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historic resource . . . (DEIR)”

In November, the Historic Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the DEIR. Soccer enthusiasts from all over Northern California cited examples of poor maintenance of the present grass fields by the Department of Recreation and Park, and asked for a renovated playing field. Local residents talked about their love of Golden Gate Park as a special place in the City and expressed dissatisfaction with the DEIR’s inadequate discussion about the loss of wildlife habitat, the loss of a considerable chunk of Golden Gate Park to development, and the impact of the 60 foot stadium light towers on the Park, on Ocean Beach and on views from Sutro Heights.

Chris Patillo, a qualified historic landscape architect who specializes in cultural landscapes, said that she supports soccer play but “. . . I have reviewed your EIR and I think it inadequately presents alternatives to you. I believe there is an alternative that is a viable alternative that will not obliterate an important cultural landscape.”

The Commissioners raised concerns about the impact on Golden Gate Park and encouraged the Planning Department to pursue the alternatives in more detail. Some Commissioners suggested that the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields be renovated with real grass and no night lighting combined with fixing up other playing fields. The goal is to provide more playing time for youth soccer without destroying the historic character, the aesthetic value, and the habitat of the western end of Golden Gate Park.

Send written comments to Mr. Bill Wycko, Environmental Review Officer, SF Planning Department, 1650 Mission Str, Ste. 400, SF, CA 94103 or bill.wycko@sfgov.org For info or a copy of the DEIR www.sfoceanedge.org

Katherine Howard, ASLA Golden Gate Park Preservation Alliance

Scoping Meetings on MUNI’s Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP)

Tues Dec 6 & Wed Dec 7 • 6:30 pm • One South Van Ness 2nd Floor Atrium (So Van Ness & Market St.)

The purpose of this notice is to receive comments to assist the Planning Department in reviewing the scope and content of the environmental impact analysis and information to be contained in the EIR for the TEP Program.

The purpose of the EIR is to provide information about potential significant physical environmental effects of the proposed project, to identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and to describe and analyze possible alternatives to the proposed project. Preparation of an EIR does not indicate a decision by the City. However, prior to making any such decision, the decision makers must review and consider the information in the EIR.

Send written comments to Mr. Bill Wycko, Environmental Review Officer, SF Planning Department, 1650 Mission Str, Ste. 400, SF, CA 94103 or bill.wycko@sfgov.org Comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on December 9, 2011.



Laguna Honda Charitable Giving Plummet — Again

By Patrick Monette-Shaw

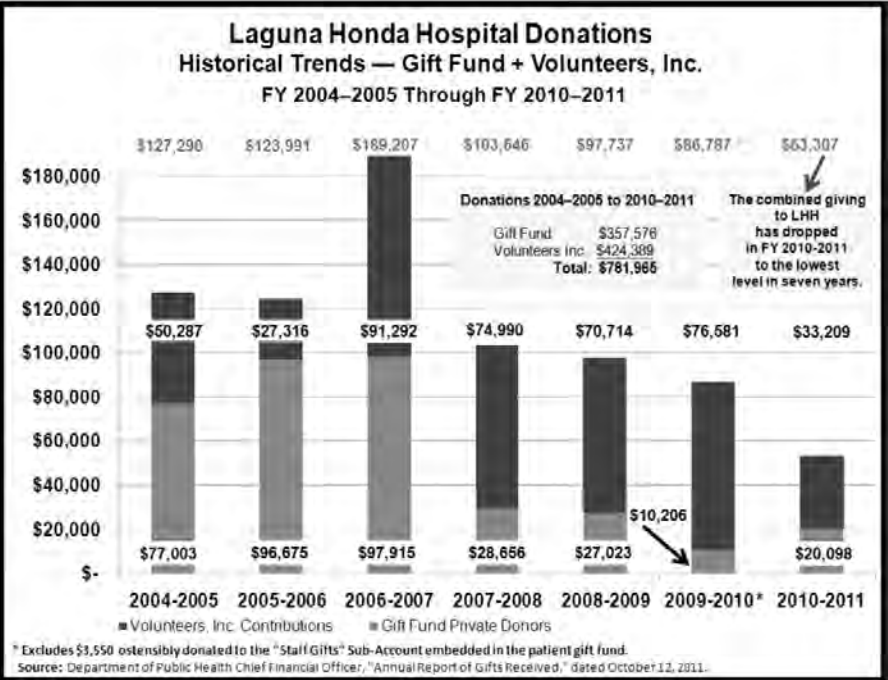
On October 18, the Department of Public Health presented its annual gift fund report for Fiscal Year 2010-2011 to the Health Commission. Of note, contributions to Laguna Honda Hospital's patient gift fund have dropped to their lowest levels across seven years.

Contributions from private donors to LHH's patient gift fund reached \$20,098, up from the \$10,206 donated from private sources in Fiscal year 2009-2010, but the second lowest amount of private giving since Fiscal Year 2004-2005.

Also in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011, Laguna Honda's partner, Laguna Honda Volunteers, Inc. — renamed in 2011 as the "Friends of Laguna Honda" — donated just

funds on behalf of LHH. Ms. Hirose replied that she would review the Laguna Honda Foundation's charter and would report back to the LHH-JCC in November.

Commissioner David Sanchez then recommended that Health Commission President Steven Tierney and Commissioner Melara meet with a few members of the Laguna Honda Foundation's board of directors, which is comical when not sad, because Ms.



\$33,209 to the patient gift fund, down from its \$76,581 donation in Fiscal Year 2009-2010.

Between private donations and donations from Volunteers Inc., LHH's patient gift fund received just \$53,307 in Fiscal Year 2010-2011 — the lowest amount the gift fund has received across seven years, and approximately only half of what it received in Fiscal Year 2009-2010.

Following the report presentation, several Health Commissioners peppered DPH staff with questions.

Commissioner Edward Chow asked about the status of the Laguna Honda Foundation, because there was no data in DPH's report about this separate foundation. As previously reported, when former City Attorney Louise Renne incorporated her Laguna Honda Foundation in 2004, she did so without setting up a memorandum of understanding between the City, DPH, LHH and her foundation, a continuing source of consternation to the Health Commission since the San Francisco General Hospital Foundation has always had a memorandum of understanding with the City.

Mivic Hirose, LHH's official Executive Administrator, responded that financial information is not required from Renne's Foundation. Hirose failed to mention that while the City's Administrative Code doesn't require reporting of non-profit financial information, IRS rules do require detailed financial reporting.

Minutes of the Health Commission's October 18 meeting report that Hirose stated, "The LHH Foundation declined to submit data, as they have in the past." As far as anyone knows, it has never submitted data for DPH's annual gift fund report.

Moreover, Renne's Foundation has contributed not one dime to LHH's patient gift fund across the years, per previous DPH reports of annual gift fund charitable contributions.

Commissioner Chow is concerned that Renne's Foundation is using a City hospital's name to raise funds, but isn't forthcoming about its finances. Commissioner Sonia Melara, Chair of the LHH-JCC, asked if the Renne Foundation's charter states that it would raise

Renne has adamantly refused to disclose any financial information about her Foundation to anyone.

It's unfortunate that the Health Commissioners are so unaware of the Renne Foundation's primary exempt purpose. According to Laguna Honda Foundation's 2009 IRS Form 990 for the period ending in June 2010 posted on www.Guidestar.com, the most recent data available, Renne claims her foundation was "established in order to support Laguna Honda Hospital ... by providing an organizational structure for a \$15,000,000 capital equipment campaign for the hospital's replacement project" and to "serve as the Hospital's Center [of Excellence] for advancing research and educational programs focused on improving the healthcare and quality of life for frail elderly and disabled persons in institutions or in community-based care."

The furniture, fixtures, and equipment for LHH's replacement facility eventually cost over \$40 million, but there have never been any reports that Renne's Foundation ever raised any of the \$15 million it told the IRS it would raise when seeking its non-profit designation.

Finally, the same minutes show that Commissioner Jim Illig asked for information on the IRS 990 forms from the fiscal agent for Renne's Laguna Honda Foundation, because "the Foundation's IRS 990 forms only provide basic information regarding the fiscal agent it uses."

Illig was referring to the fact that the Laguna Honda Foundation's Form 990's filed with the IRS since it first began reporting after being founded in 2004 has not once reported any income, and no expenses. Renne's Foundation has always reported that it is "operated as a project of" either the San Francisco Foundation, or more recently, of Community Initiatives, and its IRS Form 990's have always reported zero income and zero expenses.

The San Francisco Foundation spun off some of its projects in 1996, creating Community Initiatives for organizations that did not have their own IRS non-profit designations. Renne's Laguna Honda Foundation is one of the few clients of Community

Cont. p. 18

Pak (Cont. from p. 1)

former confidant and now political nemesis.

Pak's influence has waxed and waned across the over two decades she had been involved in city politics. But the trend has always been upward.

She is a short, rotund, loud, and cantankerous woman known for her foul-mouth and frequent drinking and smoking. She also craves attention, and has been comfortable calling elected officials late at night to list her demands: sitting on the balcony of her condo, with a bourbon and a cigarette nestled in her hands, she gets ready to settle into long, late night conversations.

In some cases, the other party gets fed up with it. Former Mayor Art Agnos, for example, whom Pak exercised significant sway over, frequently tried to get off the phone. Pak would portray her suggestions as being in the interest of the mayor or his administration, without suggesting that it was in her interest, according to Larry Bush, former aide to Agnos.

She was most dangerous when trying to exclude members of the Asian community that she did not like, Bush says. "There was a constant intimation of loyalty tests."

Agnos and Pak later had a falling out over the demolition of the Embarcadero Freeway, which was damaged with the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989.

Under Frank Jordan, the mayor from 1991 to 1995, Pak had less influence. Jordan was supported by Pak's opponents in Chinatown, like Pius Lee. But while she did not have the inside track to the mayor as she did under Brown and does under Ed Lee, she did her best, plying chief of staff Jim Wunderman, for example, with an all-expenses paid trip to China.

Pak's influence hit the stratosphere when Willie Brown became mayor. Brown and Pak had been good friends since at least the early 1980s, and shared a close relationship with a similar outlook: essentially, that political power is meant to benefit the friends of the victor.

In Gavin Newsom's term beginning in 2004, Pak was on the outside again. Newsom, with national political ambitions and a war chest filled with old money from the Getty family, had no time for a backroom dealer from Chinatown. He was notorious for ignoring her phone calls.

Pak still made sure she still had her people on key commissions, and she raised money to help elect progressives to the Board of Supervisors, which gave her sway.

Pak will be looking at a thorough political renaissance with a full-term Lee administration.

She also paints a picture with two brushes, as the Chinese saying goes. While Pak is manipulating commission seats, funneling money into political campaigns, and having ceaseless meetings with city officials, she also carries on a long-term relationship with the Communist Party of China.

And there is often some overlap between the two.

The list of names on a typical China junket organized by Rose Pak can end up being a roadmap to influence and patronage. In a late 2007 trip, for example, there was Ringo Wong, a former president of the Chinese chamber of Commerce, donor to the "Run Ed Run" campaign, and a man whom Pak helped get a restaurant concession in the international airport terminal; Robert C. Chiang, a builder so "flagrantly incompetent" for the public projects he has been awarded that he has cost the city millions of dollars, according to the *SF Weekly*, whom Pak has protected for years; Harlan Kelly, another Pak loyalist who has helped steer contracts to Pak's friends and protected them when problems arose with their work (like with Chiang); Tilly Tsang, current or former board member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce; Simon Snellgrove, who heads the development of the waterfront project "8 Washington," which will be one of San Francisco's most expensive destinations when completed; P.J. Johnston, who was Mayor Brown's press man and now works for Simon Snellgrove; Johnston's wife Karin, who works for Snellgrove's lobbying firm, HMS Associates, whose head, Marcia Smolens, is good friends with Pak; Shih-Wei Lu, a former World Journal reporter who became Lee's spokesperson almost as soon

as he became interim mayor; Kinson Wong, owner of the R&G Lounge in Chinatown, which is a Pak-preferred haunt; David Lem, a contractor who was helped by Pak and Brown in getting a contract to rebuild the Asian art museum; and Louis Goudeau, former staffer in the Mayor's Office of Protocol and a Brown loyalist.

Each has their own story with a Pak twist. Pak was helpful in pushing Snellgrove's 8 Washington project through, according to several people who saw it play out.

Along with advancing the interests of the project in City Hall, Pak also had the Chinatown Community Development Center withdraw from a coalition of local groups that were opposed to it, according to attorney/author Phil Ryan, who for twenty years was a legal associate of Willie Brown. Ryan was on the Golden Gate Tenants Association when he witnessed Pak's machinations. "It really showed her muscle," he said.

Both Ryan and Peskin are confident that Snellgrove returned the favor: "I guarantee she's getting paid," Peskin said. Ryan: "How do I know she's getting paid? Because I have an IQ over 104."

P.J. Johnson, spokesman for Pacific Waterfront Partners, said he did not know all the lobbyists on the project, and downplayed its significance by describing it as "our tiny project."

Chiang is another case of a friend getting a good deal. His friendship with Pak helped him keep his job when his work on the Martin Luther King pool project spiraled out of control. The project had a perfectionist architect, Harry Overstreet, who required a monolithic pour of concrete for his design. The first attempt was not up to his standards and it was scrapped, running up the project cost.

In a Department of Public Works meeting about the debacle, someone suggested simply firing Chiang and bringing in the bonding company.

Harlan Kelly, who was in the meeting, gasped and said: "What about Rose? Robert Chiang is her guy!" according to someone who was in the meeting.

Pak's blustery manner has made her friends and enemies.

"She is good at the theater of politics," Peskin says. "If I was at dinner or a public event, she would come and sit next to me and make it appear that we were close to one another, even though I had no desire to talk to her."

He continued: "You'd be at an event and she'd be talking loudly next to you, so everybody could see she was talking to you... it's a brazen, childish, and immature technique..."

Chris Daly, a former Supervisor, describes Pak as "insufferable."

He remembers a commemoration ceremony for September 11, soon after he became a Supervisor. He arrived at the City Hall event and sat up the front, the place reserved for politicians and VIPs. A few minutes later, after the program had begun, Pak turned up and sat next to him. "She proceeds to start talking to me, during the most solemn program, saying things like 'look at what DiFi's [Dianne Feinstein] wearing, where does she get those dress suits...'" Daly recalls.

The current mayor, Ed Lee, does not find Pak's boorishness as bothersome, or perhaps thinks he has no choice. According to David Chiu, Ed Lee told him that Lee only ran for mayor because he was "having trouble saying 'no' to Willie Brown and Rose Pak."

Observers of San Francisco politics worry that if Lee wins the election, it will be open season for, as Aaron Peskin put it, "Ms. Pak and Mr. Brown and the money influences that they represent."

Reprinted from www.theepochtimes.org, the online version of their publication **The Epoch Times** at: www.theepochtimes.com/n2/united-states/rose-pak-makes-deals-gains-influence-137005.html and another on the same subject: www.theepochtimes.com/n2/united-states/lee-runs-for-san-francisco-mayor-with-pak-behind-135739.html

The Best of the Net is a monthly feature of the Observer in which we present an outstanding journalistic effort of particular local interest. This December/January issue we have two featured articles (See page 9 for our 2nd BON. If you have a suggested blog or column for our BON feature, email: editor@westsideobserver.com

Letters (Cont. from p. 4)

might have happened based on those many other observations. The incident could have been initiated by a surprise encounter, or by the active little dogs getting too close to where the coyotes were, or even by either the coyotes or dogs approaching the other to investigate or in a test of “one-up-manship” — but it really doesn’t matter who initiated this particular incident. The result was that both parties became excited. If the dogs had been leashed, that would have been the end of it.

Instead, the little dogs ran off — and running always is seen as an invitation for another to chase, be it dog or coyote. So the owner ran in one direction to retrieve one of her dogs. Meanwhile, the other small dog headed in the other direction.

What drew my attention was the furious barking at the top of a hill. I looked up to see the little dog barking and running after a coyote. As far as I have seen, dogs only bark when they are chasing — not when they are being chased. Then the owner began yelling frantically for her dog, which would not come.

Within seconds the coyote had turned around and was now chasing back — and the little dog stopped barking. The silence did scare us for what it might mean. The three of us who were there all ran up the hill to retrieve the dog, but it was nowhere to be found.

One dog was found later that day. But even though several people, including me, spent many hours combing the park and streets for the other, it was three days before that one finally was found — found far away from the park.

The entire incident could have been prevented if that dog owner had put thought into protecting her little dogs in the first place.

Coyotes do not want to interact with humans, which is why leashing dogs and keeping them next to you is the best defense against an encounter getting out of hand. And keeping your dogs calm reduces the possibility of alarming coyotes in the first place.

I have written a couple of articles which might be useful. One is on coyote and dog coexistence: www.marinatimes.com/dec10/pets_petpages.html. The other is about coyotes generally: people need to know more about coyotes in order to understand them and deal with them — www.wildcarebayarea.org/site/PageServer?pagename=eNews_February2011_landingpage#coyote.

Janet Kessler

The San Francisco Health Code prohibits the presence of coyotes in our parks, along with bears, wolves, and other dangerous predators. San Francisco taxpayers pay for the parks, and have a right to visit those parks without fear for their children or companion animals.

The city has been remiss in enforcement

because of bleeding-heart “naturalists” who believe our city should be reclaimed by the predator species and indigenous weeds and scrub that once covered sand dunes before people arrived. These reactionaries now threaten our safety.

City Hall needs to step up and do its job before an injury or death claim is filed.

Two weeks ago, CBS Sunday Morning ran this update piece about an abused, now retired circus elephant that had an unusual friendship with a stray dog. www.cbsnews.com/2300-18563_162-10010114.html?tag=mncol;lst;1 After years of dedication, the poor elephant’s heart was broken because a couple of coyotes attacked and killed the dog.

Coyotes are killing house cats and attacking dogs from the Presidio to the Panhandle. City Hall needs to start doing its job before a child becomes the next victim.

Barbara Meskunas

... bleeding-heart “naturalists” who believe our city should be reclaimed by the predator species and indigenous weeds and scrub that once covered sand dunes before people arrived. These reactionaries now threaten our safety.”

Barbara Meskunas

Coyotes do not want to interact with humans, which is why leashing dogs and keeping them next to you is the best defense against an encounter getting out of hand. And keeping your dogs calm reduces the possibility of alarming coyotes in the first place.”

Janet Kessler

time at work? How much is the health cost of auto pollution? Part of the investment will last over 50 years, another part will last more than 100 years. I am not ready to believe the off-street rail in Brooklyn, built 90 years ago and still serving the public, was a waste of money.

Visits to Montreal and Vancouver, cities with similar density and size, convince me we don’t get good service because of the interaction of transit with cars. They have invested in systems that are all off-street rail and so the trains are really moving. Let’s recognize what we experience every time we take Muni. Isn’t it usually 10-20 stops because of traffic lights and signs? Then, slow downs because of traffic, many turns because of our street plan, and then of course hills. It’s the randomness of traffic that causes bunching then all lines converge on one short section of track.

Muni is getting some funding for infrastructure which will make efficiencies. Let’s fund more and get as close as we can to all off-street rail. Next time you are at Sloat and West Portal imagine the train going underground to skip that intersection.

As for the street bond, I think the City is doing what it must to keep the system working in spite of the people who think taxation is the worst thing that can happen.

We under-fund, under-invest in the public service and then complain about it.

Todd LeFurge, Twin Peaks

WEST OF TWIN PEAKS CENTRAL COUNCIL By Mitch Bull

President Matt Chamberlain and the WOTPCC were the audience for a discussion of the election results by Fall Line Analytics principal David Latterman, who enthralled the crowd with his detailed metrics and conclusions drawn from the voting information for the November 8th election.

Latterman, who had previously spoken to the group on the process of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is a political consultant who has worked on many San Francisco campaigns, including the recent mayoral campaign for Board of Supervisor’s President David Chiu.

He started by outlining the PVI, Progressive Voter Index, showing the matrix of voters from conservative to moderate to progressive. District 7 came in as the most conservative voters (to no one’s surprise), with Districts 5 and 9 being the most liberal. Latterman spoke on the topic of “political geography” and its importance to San Francisco, especially as the Supervisors are chosen on a district-wide basis. District 7 also finished in the top two in voter turnout, trailing District 8 by a small margin. The top four districts in terms of percentage of voter turnout were 8, 7, 4 and 2. All of these districts are conservative or moderate in their voting.

Other metrics showed the balance of the voters in SF. Conservatives are 7% of the voters, Moderates are 39%, and Liberals are 36%, with the Progressives tallying a solid 19%. On a party basis, Democrats lead with 54%, followed by 25-30% who “decline to state” party affiliation, 6% Republican and 3-4% for other parties. Metrics also show that the Chinese vote is generally steady at 16-18% while the LGBT vote is approximately 10% of the voters.

How did these metrics show or affect the November Mayoral election? Latterman says, not at all, as the election showed a low turnout (40%) as Ed Lee drained all of the interest out of the race when he declared as a candidate. Lee started the campaign with polls showing 30% support of the voters. Following weeks of campaigning from the 16 candidates, the Mayor stayed approximately the same, winning with 31% of the final votes. Even with the large amount of candidates, ranked choice voting had no real effect on the results as no one was really close to catching Lee.

The race for sheriff was somewhat closer as Supervisor Ross Mirkirimi won with 38% of the vote, followed by Chris Cunnie and Paul Miyamoto at 28 and 27% respectively. Cunnie and Miyamoto finished basically in a dead heat for second place, splitting most of the 2nd place RCV votes.

District Attorney George Gascon won the contest for DA with 42% of the vote, over second place finisher David Onek (24%) and Sharmin Bock (21%). In an interesting note,

if Ms. Bock would have finished second, the vote would have been much closer as she was listed either 1st, 2nd or 3rd in almost as many ballots as Gascon. Latterman believes that the progressive block’s strong showing for Onek cost Bock a chance to make the race very close.

The propositions were decided by large margins, with the exception of Prop H, the School Assignment proposition. It was virtually a dead heat, winning 50.06% to 49.94%.

Latterman cited the following trends resulting from the ballot results: San Francisco voters are still on a trend to support moderate candidates; the election was more economy based, and less ideological than in the past. Bond initiatives fared well, while tax increases did not. The Progressives (left) won the endorsement game; and a strong, unified Chinese block held together to elect Ed Lee, removing the “interim” part of his title and selecting him as SF’s newest Mayor.

2012 will be an interesting election season, as new Supervisors will be elected in Districts 1,3,5,7,9 and 11. Redistricting (to better balance the population numbers within the 11 districts) will affect some of the district voting trends somewhat, but Latterman thinks the core voting values of each district will basically remain constant.

In other WOTPCC news, the delegates voted almost unanimously (1 abstention) to send a letter to the Planning Commission to ask for a 90 day extension to the Public Comment Period for the Draft EIR for the Beach Chalet Athletic Fields Renovation Project, citing as factors, the replacing of grass with artificial turf; increased parking; increased lighting; the erection of bleachers; and the damage that will occur to the flora and fauna in the park.

David Pilpel, from the Redistricting Task Force, also spoke briefly explaining the process for redistricting and why it is necessary. As the South of Market (SOMA) area in District 6 has grown through new housing units, etc., the other districts have to be reallocated to more evenly distribute the number of residents in each of the 11 districts. Districts 5,7,8 and 9 (described by Pilpel as the “squishy middle” will probably see the most changes in borders. For more information see the WOTPCC website (www.westoftwinpeaks.org).

December is a “dark” month for the WOTPCC. The next meeting will be Monday, January 23rd at 7:30 in the Forest Hill Clubhouse.



Public Input on MUNI’s Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP)
Tues Dec 6 & Wed Dec 7 • 6:30 pm
One South Van Ness, 2nd Floor Atrium (See Public Notices on page 5.)

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MONEY MATTERS • By Brandon Miller and Joanne Jordan

Time Right to Refinance?

"Rates can't go lower." Or so advertisements from mortgage companies have been claiming for years. But it's possible that now, it's more true than ever. According to research done by Freddie Mac, the average rate on a 30-year mortgage in the U.S. dropped below 4% for the first time ever in 2011. Rates on shorter-term, 15-year mortgages are even lower.



Many who do have significant equity in their home refinance to "cash out" some of that equity for other purposes. But it can be risky; this strategy backfired on many homeowners when housing prices crashed in recent years. Those who took out too much cash were suddenly "underwater," owing more on their house than it was worth when its value declined.

For some, this may create a great opportunity to refinance your mortgage, but doing so often isn't the best decision financially for families in certain circumstances. Here are four things to consider before you make any decisions:

1. How much equity do you have? Refinancing may be a priority for homeowners with disadvantageous loan terms, or who owe more on their homes than they are worth. But these situations can make it difficult to qualify for refinancing. Your first step should be to consult with your mortgage company about whether arrangements can be made to structure a different financing package for your home.

If you do have equity in your home, you have more flexibility. In cases where the amount you owe on the mortgage is significantly less than the value of the home, it's possible to structure a payment that may be dramatically lower than your current monthly mortgage expense. If the amount of equity is not much different than the current value, the payment will be closer to what you already have, but would likely be an improvement due to the recent decline in interest rates.

2. Why do you want to refinance? Locking in a historically low rate can be appealing, but is it a fit for you? If you are within a few years of paying off your mortgage, it may not make sense for you to re-start with another 15- or 30-year mortgage. If you're focused on reducing your total debt, financing your home for an extended period of time may not be a favorable move.

Many who do have significant equity in their home refinance to "cash out" some of that equity for other purposes. But it can be risky; this strategy backfired on many homeowners when housing prices crashed in recent years. Those who took out too much cash were suddenly "underwater," owing more on their house than it was worth when its value declined. If the rationale for refinancing is to access cash, be sure it is for a worthwhile purpose like paying down more expensive debts such as credit card balances, or financing an improvement on your home that could boost its value.

3. Are you in a position to refinance? If you have run into credit problems due to the sluggish economy, refinancing may not be as easy as it used to be. Households need to have a sufficient credit score — usually 700 or higher — to be able to qualify for a conventional mortgage.

Employment status could be another factor. A number of Americans, some involuntarily, have recently left the workforce and started their own businesses. If you don't have an established record of income yet as a business owner, it might be a difficult time to obtain a new mortgage. Ask about this upfront when you contact your mortgage company to make sure it's worthwhile for you to pursue the mortgage application process.

4. Determine the terms that suit your needs If everything else works out and refinancing seems to be a good choice, the final question is whether to opt for a 15-year or 30-year mortgage. An adjustable-rate mortgage is also an option, but since the terms of those loans are subject to change, it may not make sense given the historically low rates that exist today.

If your primary goal is the lowest possible payment, a 30-year loan makes sense. If you are trying to focus on reducing debt and accumulating wealth, a shorter-term loan may make more sense; the total interest paid on a 15-year loan will be significantly lower than with a 30-year mortgage. While monthly payments will be higher, a 15-year loan offers you more long-term advantages, since the financial obligation of a mortgage will no longer exist after 15 years, allowing you to concentrate on retirement or education savings.

If you ultimately decide to refinance, be sure to compare costs of different lenders. The breakeven point on the cost of the loan (the number of years you need to keep the mortgage before the costs of obtaining a new loan are overcome) is a critical measure of whether refinancing is a worthwhile move for you.

Brandon Miller, CFP and Joanne Jordan, CFP are financial consultants at Jordan Miller & Associates, A Private Wealth Advisory Practice of Ameriprise Financial Inc. in San Francisco, specializing in helping individuals and families plan and achieve their financial goals. For more information, please visit jordanmilleradvisors.com.

Finally, the Bus Rapid Transit Study

By Howard Strassner

In November 2011 San Francisco released its first ever Draft Environmental Impact Study, EIS, for a Transit Project for Bus Rapid Transit, BRT. The purpose of an EIS is to list all of the possible impacts of a proposed project for consideration by involved public agencies and legislators, and to allow ample time for the public to respond by suggesting additions to the list and/or support for the project. The Board of Supervisors, sitting with its Transportation Authority hat, will consider technical and political components before the Study is certified as Final. Only then, if no one sues, will it be ready for funding and construction. San Francisco is supposed to be a Transit First City, but the Van Ness BRT Study started years after BRT systems were in operation throughout the world and even in a few US cities. Better late than never, because BRT will provide most of the transit speed of subways at about a tenth of the cost. Because of these advantages our Federal Government is willing to fund up to \$75 million, or about 80%, of Van Ness BRT capital costs.



Better late than never, because BRT will provide most of the transit speed of subways at about a tenth of the cost. Because of these advantages our Federal Government is willing to fund up to \$75 million, or about 80%, of Van Ness BRT capital costs.

The Study shows that if you do everything right, you can reduce running time by about 33%. If this could be applied to the entire system except the subways (which have different problems), Muni might reduce operating costs by over \$100 million and/or greatly improve service. The study also clearly shows that about 14% of the cost of operating a bus is due only to interference from autos and trucks.

The Study includes operating information for three options (plus no project), and construction costs as well as impacts. All of the three build options reduce running time by at least 19% by including:

- Fewer bus stops, saving acceleration and deceleration time. Stops will be located about 900 feet apart to provide stops near the many crossing bus lines to allow easy transfers.
- The buses will be low floor and stops will be graded to allow easy boarding for seniors and for those who require wheel chairs.
- Riders will use all bus doors and pre-pay their fares.
- Traffic signals will include transit priority, though this time savings will have to be balanced against the needs of crossing bus routes and traffic.
- A few left turns will be eliminated to move buses faster, similar to the methods frequently used in San Francisco to move traffic.

The two best options (doing everything right) include:

Running buses in a dedicated center lane with no parking or right turning cars which prevent buses from moving. These options reduce running times by 9% more than the option with buses running in the right hand lanes adjacent to parked cars. This also means less swerving, improving the quality of the ride.

A sub-option with almost no left turns, which reduces running time by another 5%. One left turn will remain with two lanes to accommodate out bound commuter traffic to Lombard.

The Study took four years to write. Approval and option selection will take about a year. Detail design and bidding will take about two years. Construction will only take about a year and a half (to minimize

construction impacts) and operation is planned to commence in 2015. The Project will also include; new over head wiring to power the electric buses; new street lighting; new stations; new roadway; some accommodation for Marin commuters on Golden Gate Transit buses; new and replacement medium plantings and improvements for pedestrian safety. The best performing option includes the capital cost to replace a major sewer line somewhat before its normal replacement time. The over 500 pages of study include about 100 pages on Transportation Impacts, which provide most of the background for this article.

In addition to transit improvement the Study shows that:

About the same number of people will move along Van Ness by bus, on one lane, as will move by private auto on two lanes.

The travel time for cars will be essentially the same as today (not good) even though there is one less traffic lane, and by 2035, the design year, there will be more cars in SF than today. This concept is hard for today's drivers to accept but;

The Study shows that: some drivers will be diverted from Van Ness to Gough and Franklin; transit ridership will increase by up to 35% and 50% of this increase will be former drivers who will ride the greatly improved transit; some drivers will find other streets and times, and some of the measures that reduce transit running time will also help to keep cars moving. These predictions are made by computer simulations which have proven to be accurate over time.

It is fortuitous that this study comes out just before Muni starts its study for the Transit Effectiveness Project, TEP. Overall, the study shows that reducing the impact that cars have on transit reduces transit travel times and improves transit reliability while not slowing down auto traffic. TEP previously showed with outreach questionnaires that these are the qualities desired most by current and future transit riders. Hopefully, low cost measures of diverting autos will become part of a more effective Muni.

Howard Strassner is former President of the Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods and Transportation Chair for the Sierra Club

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The Dog Killer and the SF Art Commission



By Mike Strickland, sfciviccenter.blogspot.com

The 59-year-old Brooklyn-based artist Tom Otterness has forged a very successful career as a maker of cartoonish bronze sculptures that often look like outtakes from a Ziggy comic strip. Governmental bureaucracies in charge of public arts funding love his work because it's whimsical, inoffensive, and he's a brand-name artist who has created work for the feds (a courthouse in Los Angeles, for instance), the state (in Sacramento, among other capitals) and cities (famously in Manhattan's 8th Avenue/14th Street subway station).

Otterness also occasionally puts in digs at capitalism in his cute sculptures, and this is one reason the right-wing *New York Daily News* calls him "depraved". The other reason is that a conceptual art piece Otterness created in 1977 when he was a 25-year-old immigrant to New York City from Wichita, Kansas consisted of adopting a shelter dog, tying the animal to a fence, and then shooting it for a looping film for a gallery. At the time, art critic Gary Indiana in the *New York Village Voice* wrote a condemning article about the stunt, but then somehow people forgot about it in the age before the internet, and Otterness reinvented himself as a successful public sculptor over the last three decades.

The news of the dog killing has been resurfacing in recent years with animal rights activists especially upset, such as the woman above who was at a special San Francisco Art Commission meeting last Wednesday afternoon urging the group to cancel their two contracts with the sculptor. It seems that on the Art Commission's recommendation, both the General Hospital rebuilding, and the proposed Chinatown Central Subway to Nowhere have \$750,000 contracts for sculptures with Otterness for their new spaces.

The Brooklyn library, through a patron, commissioned bronze statues of two lions and their cubs from Otterness a couple of years ago for the same amount, but animal lovers caused an uproar when word spread about the artist's dog killing past, and the commission was eventually cancelled. In September, Joshua Sabatini at the *San Francisco Examiner* picked up the story and the tabloid paper produced a lurid front page to trumpet the tale. Since that time, members of the San Francisco Art Commission have been in public relations spin overdrive trying to figure out what to do.

Finally, behind closed doors, a decision was made and offered up to the full commission by President PJ Johnston. He is pictured above left, next to the similarly abbreviated JD Beltran, the interim Executive Director of Cultural Affairs who replaced Luis Cancel, the Brooklynite who was recently ousted from the high-profile post for absenteeism and the bullying of influential staff members.

PJ Johnston is a fourth-generation San Franciscan and son of a former California State Senator. He has a "communications" business that does public relations for outfits like Stellar, the New York developers of Parkmerced, which is in the process of evicting its elderly tenants from their 1940s garden apartments so they can build high-rise housing.

While doing research for this post, I stumbled across an online article in 7x7 by the society columnist Catherine Bigelow that chronicles PJ's 40th birthday two years ago at the Purple Onion nightclub which seemingly everyone who is currently in charge of San Francisco attended. The

photo above (website only) is of PJ and Chinatown fixer Rose Pak, and the photo below features former mayor Willie Brown Jr., Tosca owner Jeanette Etheredge, PJ, and Richard and Eleanor Johns, who are recent controversial appointments by Ed Lee to the Historical Preservation Board and the Airport Commission.

Captain Greg Suhr, the newly appointed San Francisco Chief of Police, was there, and so was Steve Kawa, the Mayoral Chief of Staff under both Newsom and Lee. Seemingly the only person who wasn't there was Ed Lee, or maybe photographer Drew Altizer just didn't get his picture. In Bigelow's article, there is a quote from former Mayor Willie Brown, Jr., once again reveling in his own corruption.

"If you know PJ like I know PJ, then you'd agree that we are all amazed he arrived at this moment tonight," teased Mayor Brown, referring to PJ's active lifestyle. "We've actually long been celebrating his eventual demise because of all the secrets he has on us!"

PJ announced that he was offering a motion for the General Hospital contract to continue forward, but that he was recommending the cancellation of the MTA subway contract. There were a few timid demurs and questions from the commissioners, but this looked and sounded very much like a rubber-stamp commission, and they quickly passed the motion 11-1.

This didn't make the animal activists particularly happy, as the Solomon-like decision to cut the baby dog in half seemed rather grotesque, but the reasoning was as much economic as anything. San Francisco had already paid Otterness \$375,000 for the General Hospital sculptures and wouldn't get anything back if they pulled out now, so the reasoning was, "let's not let our moral fervor get in the way of fiscal prudence."

The questions of how these commissions were approved and vetted never came up, and neither did the central question of why San Francisco government agencies who constantly preach "hire local and buy local" don't do the same thing with publicly funded art. PJ Johnston mentioned at one point that "hiring only San Francisco artists would be illegal because there are federal funds involved," missing the point completely.

Infusing and circulating money into the local economy through local grants should be mission statement number one for any San Francisco bureaucracy, particularly an arts commission, and it's not as if the Bay Area doesn't have enough great creative artists needing work. Johnston also mentioned that "San Francisco is an international tourist destination, and we should have world-class public art," implying that the local stuff was too provincial. In truth, there's nothing more provincial than requiring a New York imprimatur for something to be considered "world-class," and the idea that an international tourist

Cont. p. 14

SF PUC Declines Rec & Park's Lake Merced Deal

Is Joint Management With Rec & Park Off the Table?

By Jerry Cadagan

The October edition of the Observer had a detailed story describing the problems at Lake Merced. The heart of those problems is that for years, the lake has been the subject of a failed management system under which the SF Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and the SF Recreation and Park Department (RPD) shared unclear management responsibilities, resulting in what a recent opinion piece in the *Chronicle* called a "two-headed monster." SFPUC owns the lake and surrounding lands, and Lake Merced activists have long believed that SFPUC should be the sole manager.



Recently, staff at SFPUC submitted to the five Commissioners of the agency a proposed Memorandum of Understanding with RPD that did no more than perpetuate the two-headed monster. At its November 8 meeting, the SFPUC Commissioners declined to approve the MOU. That was the first sign in many years that the top people at SFPUC may be willing to step up to the plate and fulfill the agency's responsibility to properly manage the lake.

Encouraged by the SFPUC Commissioners' refusal to perpetuate the two-headed monster, Lake Merced activists have submitted to the Commission a proposal under which SFPUC would be the sole manager at the lake (with the exception of Harding Park golf and RPD's successful Natural Areas Program), but would

receive advice from RPD on recreational matters, and at SFPUC's option, RPD might manage specific recreational programs.

It is hoped that at some point in the near future the Commissioners at SFPUC will act on the recommendation of the citizen activists who know Lake Merced the best.

Jerry Cadagan is a long-time Lake Merced advocate.



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Hail to the Chief...with all of the angst being written about Ranked Choice Voting, and how it would play out with the mayoral candidates the election turned into a big yawn, as Ed Lee put away the competition. Entering the race with a base of about 30% of the voters, he finished with 31%, with John Avalos and Dennis Herrera pulling in 19% and 11% respectively. None of the other candidates could muster more than 9%. Congrats to Mayor Lee on winning a full term.

With all of the money raised and matched with public financing do you think the citizens got their moneys worth with many candidates only receiving 5% or less of the vote? The concept is altruistic, but with this many candidates could the money have been better spent. Supervisor Sean Elsbernd is working to revamp the public financing process.

Voter turnout was only 40%, much weaker than in 2003 when Gavin Newsom and Matt Gonzalez locked horns in a very tight race. It was better than in 2007 when Newsom ran against a very weak field of challengers, dropping the turnout to 34%.

One election down—yet another is looming as six districts will have elections next year for supervisor. Voters in Districts, 1,3,5,7,9 and 11 will go to the polls. Here in District 7, there seems to be no front-runner to replace Elsbernd, but several potential candidate names are being mentioned. Antonini, Crowley, Garcia and (N) Yee being among them, with others sure to join. It should be an interesting summer and fall leading up to the next election in November 2012.

Don't you know SOTF? It's the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force, which is becoming the first line of defense for civic-minded activists watching out for governmental abuse and incompetence. We are featuring two stories this month. Whether it's hidden records at Rec and Park (see the George Wooding piece), or meeting rules that are broken, as Hope Johnson, the Chair of the Task Force documents in her report concerning Parkmerced, there seems to be no shortage of important stories to bring out into the open. The SOTF is a valuable resource for the citizens of San Francisco, but one that most people don't know about. Read the pieces and you will see why their work is important.

I cannot believe it's the last issue of the year, but my calendar says December at the top. All of us at the Observe wish everyone a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season! Support our West Portal, Lakeside and Sunset and merchants and look for us in the New Year.

Do you have an interesting story, idea, or some insights you'd like to get in the paper? Just drop it to us in the mail, or email me at: mitch@WestsideObserver.com. Be sure to check out the *Observer* online at www.WestsideObserver.com, or on Facebook and Twitter.

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SUN • SHARON ARTS POTTERY SALE

Sun Dec 4 | 11 am–5 pm | Hand-made pottery, glass artwork, ceramic vases, bowls, serving dishes, and jewelry. Proceeds benefit the Sharon Art Studio, Free. Sharon Art Studio, 300 Bowling Green Dr. 753-7005. sfrecpark.org

TUE • FREE DAY CONSERVATORY OF FLOWERS

Tue Dec 6 | 9 am–4:30 pm | First Tuesday of each month is free at the Conservatory of Flowers, Special Exhibit fees, if any still apply. JFK Dr. Golden Gate Park.

TUE • PARKSIDE PRE-SCHOOL STORYTIME

Tue Dec 6 | 10 am–12 pm | Pre-school storytime (Ages birth–5). Events start at 10am and 11am. 355-5770.

TUE • GREATER WEST PORTAL-GWPNA

Tue Dec 6 | 7:30 pm | West Portal Playground Clubhouse, 139 Lenox Way. We welcome new members at any time who are interested in the vibrant life of this community in the “Western Heart” of San Francisco. gwpna.org

TUE • SF ORGANIZING PROJECT

Tue Dec 6 | 6:45–8 pm | First Tue of the month. SFOP works with public officials about healthcare, affordable housing, safety, workforce and education. Grace Lutheran Church, 3201 Ulloa St. at 33rd Ave. 564-7102 or danielr1@aol.com.

WED • SF ZOO FREE DAY

Wed Dec 7 | 10 am–4 pm | First Wed of every month free for SF residents. Proof of residency. http://www.sfzoo.org/

THU • 82ND ANNUAL HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING

8 Thu Dec 8 | 5 pm–7:30 pm | The annual lighting of the Monterey cypress tree at McLaren Lodge in Golden Gate Park, featuring small rides for children, live entertainment, a cookie factory, arts and crafts, and a visit from Santa. Free.

THU • SUNSET DIST COALITION MEETING

8 Thu Dec 8 | 7 pm–9 pm | Info or to be added to the agenda please call Susan at 415.586.8103 or ssuval@sbcglobal.net Taraval Police Station, 2345 24th Ave.

TUE • SUNSET DIST NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION

8 Thu Dec 8 | 7pm | Meeting, the 2nd Thursday of each month at Taraval Station 2354 24th Ave.

SAT • CHRISTMAS AT SEA FESTIVAL

10 Sat Dec 10 | 3–4:45 pm | Family fun at Hyde St. Pier with music, refreshments, and a visit from Santa. 499 Jefferson St. \$5 for adults/kids free.

SAT • ZOO VOLUNTEER DAY

10 Sat Dec 10 | 8 am | 2nd Sat every month, SF Zoo, Sloat at Great Hwy. Pickup trash, paint, etc. Get a free steam train ride. 753-7080, sfzoo.org.

SAT • JINGLE BELL WALK & RUN

10 Sat Dec 10 | 9 am–11 am | Lake Merced A benefit for the South Sunset Playground Mosaic and Mural Project. Also, a 1k Elf Run for kids 8 and under. 672-4992 www.artineveryclassroom.org

WED • 37 AVE SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

14 Wed Dec 14 | 7 pm | 2nd Wed each month. Meet your neighbors, discuss ongoing neighborhood concerns. Sunset Ministry, 3010 Noriega St. at 37th Ave. Art 452-7804/Art.Tom@cbsnorcal.com.

WED • MERCED ARTS & CULTURE SALON

14 Wed Dec 14 | 7 pm | Five Fabulous Women Artists of the 1800s. Local artist Marlene Aron discusses and presents slides of: Cassatt, Morisot, Bracquemond, Gonzales and Claudel. They exhibited in the Paris Salon and the World Exposition in Paris & Impressionist exhibitions in the early 1870s. Merced Branch Library, 155 Winston Dr. 355-2825.

VEGAN HOLIDAY COOKING DEMO

14 Sat Dec 17 | 2 pm | Patti Breitman, co-author of *How to Eat Like a Vegetarian Even if You Never Want To Be One*, demonstrates how to add flavor, flair and kindness to your holiday table. Ingleside Branch Library, 1298 Ocean Ave.

MON • SUNSET-PARKSIDE MEETING

15 Mon Dec 19 | 6pm | SPEAK aims to educate Sunset/Parkside residents on public safety, zoning, planning etc. 3201 Ulloa St. (Grace Lutheran) 3rd Mon each month. speaksanfrancisco@yahoo.com

TUE • TARAVAL COMMUNITY SAFETY MTG

2 Tue Dec 20 | 7pm | Captain Curtis Lum, Taraval Station Public Safety Community Meeting, the 3rd Tuesday of each month at Taraval Station 2354 24th Ave.

WED • FREE DAY ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

2 Wed Dec 21 | 9:30 am–4 pm | 3rd Weds are free on a first come, first served basis, and early arrival is recommended. Final entry on free days is 4pm. Music Course, Golden Gate Park.

SAT • FREE TIPSY TOW

3 Sat Dec 31 | 6 pm–6 am | Had a bit too much to drink? AAA's Tippy Tow Program is free up to five miles. (800) 222-4357 and say “I need a tipsy tow.”

TUE • FREE DAY AT THE DEYOUNG

3 Tue Jan 3 | 9:30 am–4:30 pm | 1st Tue of month is free. Special exhibit fees, if any, apply. deYoung Museum, 50 Hagiware Tea Garden Dr., Golden Gate Park

THU • JUDAH BEACH MERCHANTS MTG

5 Thu Jan 5 | 1–2 pm | 4019 Judah St. Celia's Restaurant, 1st Thu of month. Judah Beach Association includes merchants along the Noriega corridor from the ocean to Sunset Blvd. Buffy Maguire 606-1884 or buffy@javabeach.com

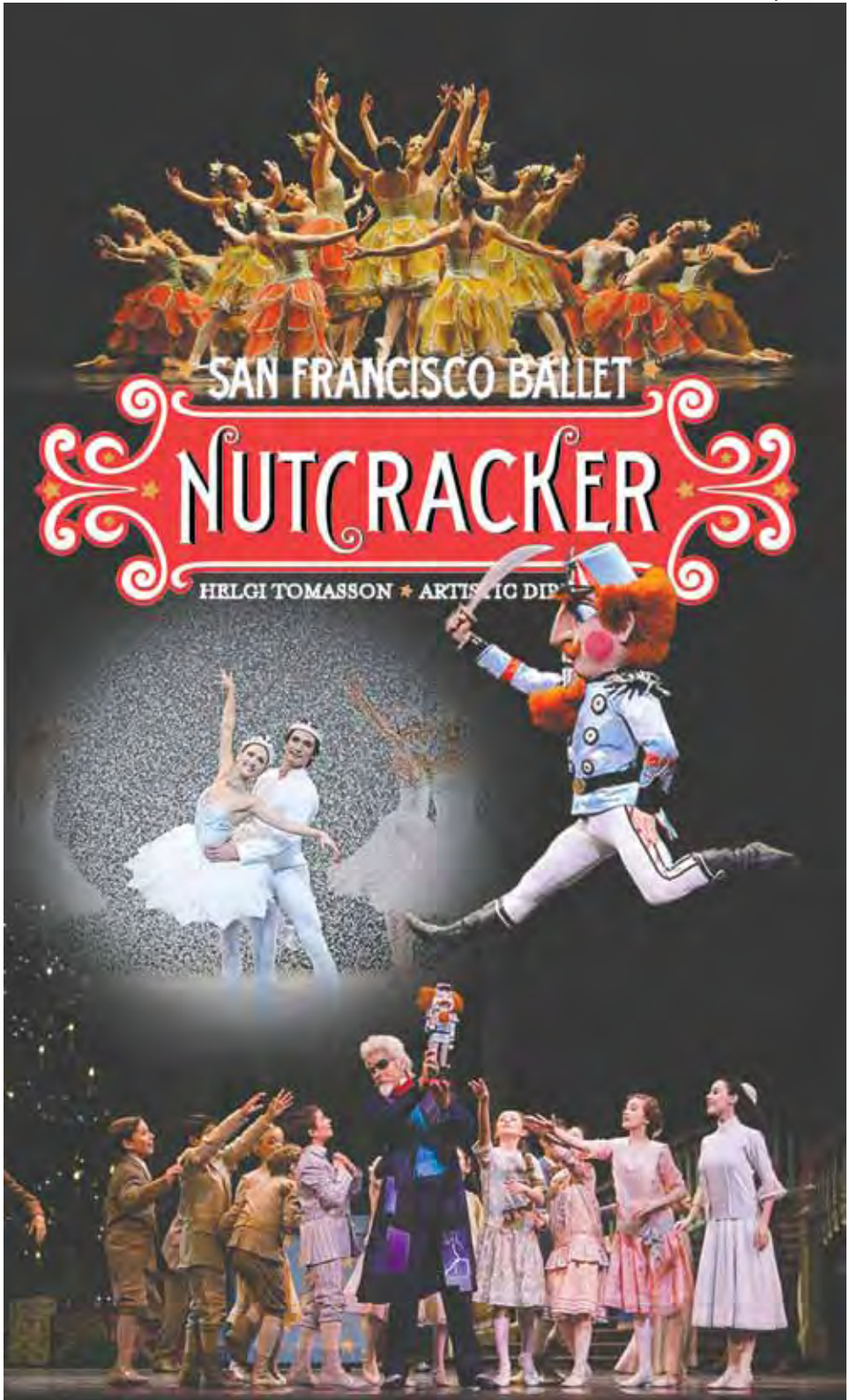
THU • TARAVAL-PARKSIDE MERCHANTS

5 Thu Jan 5 | 7 pm | First Thurs of each month. Taraval Police Stn. 2345 24th Ave. Dallas Udovch 753-8925.

MON • CENTRAL COUNCIL MEETING

2 Jan 23 | 7:30 pm | West of Twin Peaks Central Council | A resource for neighborhood organizations. 4th Monday each month. Forest Hill Clubhouse, 381 Magellan.

Got a local event? Preference given to West Side events. editor@westsideobserver.com

**A SAN FRANCISCO TRADITION: THE NUTCRACKER**

San Francisco's Most Beloved Holiday Tradition

Photos: Eric Thomasson

7 pm only | Fri Dec 9 & Tue Dec 13

2 pm & 7 pm | Sat & Sun Dec 10–11, Wed–Sun Dec 14–18, Tue–Sat Dec 20–24 Mon, Tue Dec 26–27

The first ballet company to bring the Nutcracker tradition to America, San Francisco Ballet's awe-inspiring production is like no other. Set in San Francisco during the 1915 World's Fair, Clara's dreamlike journey is an ode to the City's historical grandeur - all amidst colorful, larger than life scenery, over 200 dazzling costumed characters, and of course Tchaikovsky's beautiful score performed live by the world-class SF Ballet Orchestra.

**HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS • FREE OPEN HOUSE • MARINE MAMMAL CENTER**

Dec 10 | 10 am – 5 pm |

•Book-reading and signing - 10:15 AM and 12:15 PM

Join writer and illustrator Eva Chrysanthe whose work has been published in The New Yorker Magazine, The New York Times Magazine, and The New York Observer. Eva will host three child-friendly readings from her illustrated book "The Revenge of the Sea Otter." This eight page comic strip was written just for The Marine Mammal Center and chronicles the plight of sea otters and Northern fur seals on the Farallon Islands during the last two centuries. Open house visitors will get a FREE autographed copy and a chance to watch her at work illustrating some of our patients!

•Film screening of 2011 Release Celebrations

Shot and produced by documentary film maker Mary Piller, enjoy a fun and beautiful video featuring many of the Center's patients as they were released back to their ocean homes earlier this year.

•Docent-led Tours* - 11:00 AM, 1:00 PM, and 3:00 PM

Learn fascinating facts about seals and sea lions from our education experts while seeing exhibits and patient viewing areas.

•Meet n' Greet Reception - 12 PM - 2 PM

A special chance to meet members of our veterinary team! Talk to our vets, volunteers and staff over hot apple cider and nibbles in our ocean-view boardroom!

•Photo opportunities with Frannie the Fur Seal! ALL DAY! Bring your camera and create a unique holiday card!

Info: (415) 289-7325 (www.marinemammalcenter.org) 2000 Bunker Road, Fort Cronkhite, Sausalito.

Details: http://www.marinemammalcenter.org/Get-Involved/events/hfh-open-house-2011.html

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

Mystery, Murder and Mischief in Fall 2011 Fringe of Marin, Program One

Thanks to the inspiration and leadership of Dr. Annette Lust, the Fringe of Marin Festival is now in its 28th season.

The opening play of Program One, **Who Is Who**, was an exhilarating mystery comedy written and directed by Bill Chessman about wealthy British people pretending to be someone else. Outstanding performances were given by Jim Colgan as a perfect butler and C. Conrad Cady as Inspector Nigel Cork from Scotland Yard. The theme of this play is that things are seldom what they seem.

Louisville by Joe Amata, directed by Crystal Nezgoda, starred C. Conrad Cady as Ralph and Rick Roitinger as Louis. The suspense builds in a dramatic encounter between two men as a burglar is set up to be a killer and is discovered by a “supposed” homeowner.

Michael Belitos, a retired advertising executive turned magician, presented **Why We Travel: A Magical Mystery Tour**. His definition of travel includes both discovery and revelation. Mr. Belitos contrasts the attitude of travelers with the attitude of tourists. In his trip to the Amazon jungle, teaming with exotic wildlife and splendor, and being a magician, he makes magic before our very eyes.

In Joseph O'Loughlin's **The Psychic**, directed by Keshuv Prasad, the psychic played by Rick Roitinger is a TV personality who seeks counseling from a priest played by Jeffrey Orth. The play builds into an unexpected climax of tragedy, horror and controversy.

In the second half of the program, **Stay with Me**, by Justine Kaltenbach with music by Sanna Salmenkalio and directed by Tracy Ward, a “possible” gay young man, Ernst (sensitive played by Tyler Costin) seeks suicide counseling from Lucious, understandingly played by Lonnie Haley. Both actors give fine performances but need more projection.

It Don't Have to Hurt, a solo performance written and directed by Susan Little, is performed by Diane Rodrigues as Iris, with excellent comic timing.

The grand finale of the evening was **Can One Make Love Wrapped Up in the French Flag?** James Colgan directs this sexy French farce written by Benoit Vitse, a Romanian living in Paris. This charming play involves an amorous couple, delightfully played by C. Conrad Cady and Crystal Nezgoda, who wonder if they will be punished by French law for wrapping themselves in the “drapeau tricolore.”

A memorable outcome of the Fringe of Marin is to discover fresh voices and to bring in the community to participate either as artist or spectator. *Flora Lynn Isaacson*

From Theatre of the Absurd to the Meaning of Life in Fall 2011 Fringe of Marin, Program Two

In Program Two, **Waiting to Go** (a take off on *Waiting for Godot*) is written and directed by taxi driver Michael Ferguson, who wrote it from conversations he's heard in his cab. This play stars known Bay Area actress Maureen Coyne and Al Badger, a festival favorite, as a middle-aged couple waiting for a cab to sort out a family mess and confront siblings about their mother's need to sell her home because money is gone. Both the dialog and situation are extremely clever.

Next up was a monologue by perennial festival award winner Steve North titled, **A (Tail) Tale of Two Dogs**. Steve North is a master of the monologue, and this one is truly theatre of the absurd, pointing out the foibles of the human condition proving that pets are more important than people.

In Suzanne Birrell's delightful comedy, **Saturday in the Park with Vic**, we meet two old friends: Sally, played by Maureen Coyne with a great sense of comic timing, and Norma (Lynn Kirschner), her hilariously wacky shadow and partner in crime. While bird watching in the park, they hear Vic (Tyler Hewitt) speaking on his cell phone about a plot to shoot the mayor and all hell breaks loose. Suzanne

Birrell is a perfectionist as both a playwright and director

Love Birds is a charming romance written by Rod McFadden and expertly directed by Carol Eggers. George (Rick Roitinger) and Marcia (Claudia Rosa) meet on a park bench. George feeds the pigeons and Marcia is reading a Jane Austen novel. Both Rick Roitinger and Claudia Rosa are a dynamic duo as their romance develops. It is a clever idea to have the lights go on and off to signify time passing over three weeks as two lonely people find each other reading and feeding.

Next, **The Perfect Step**, written and directed by Melinda E. Lopez, David Moltzen and G. Randy Kasten, with a musical contribution by David (Dr.Dave) Rogers, offered a musical play about a woman who is ambitious, a writer who wants to be an editor and to be free to travel all over and ends up agreeing to settle down with her man and take the perfect step. Judi Rich is Sophia, the ambitious woman; Gifford Teeple is her man, Rick; Paula Suyehiro plays Tiffany, a very seductive, sexy woman who is Garrett's girlfriend; and David Moltzen is Garrett, a taxi dispatcher.

Kenneth Nugent's strong drama, **The Finger**, is directed by Tim Giugni to a startling climax. Marcia Bonham (Claudia Rosa) doesn't want surgery on her son's finger because that would make him fit for the Marines to go to war and get killed. Dr. Ingels (Rick Roitinger) wants to perform the operation to save her son. They have a clash of wills, leading to a tragic conclusion. Both Roitinger and Rosa give strong performances.

The final play, well worth waiting for, is George Dykstra's **No Kidding, The Meaning of Life!** Mr. Dykstra directs his masterpiece with a superb performance by Burl Lampert as The Guru and a fine performance by Keshuv Prasad as The Seeker. This play contains very clever dialog and one liners which are both philosophical and entertaining, building to an excellent ending.

This season's Fringe of Marin offered plays that were well written and performed, a play by a noted European playwright, works by talented Bay Area playwrights, and a brand new stage for the performers, as well as excellent audience attendance and discussions. *Jean Bercut*

For information about participating in or attending the upcoming Spring Fringe of Marin, visit www.fringeofmarin.com, or contact Annette Lust at JeanLust@aol.

Ross Valley Players' Heartfelt Mockingbird

The powerful and yet sensitive stage version of the great American classic, **To Kill a Mockingbird**, opened Friday, November 11, 2011 at Ross Valley Players. This is an outstanding production, from the marvelous casting, to the brilliant staging by James Dunn, the wonderful set, and the time-perfect costumes.

Veteran Actress and Director Mary Ann Rodgers plays Jean Louise Finch (or Scout) who is the narrator of the story, and we witness all of the events through her eyes. She is onstage all the time, either speaking to the audience, listening or observing. She looks back on her life as Scout during the summer of 1935 in Maycomb, Alabama.

Katrina Horsey's young Scout was both focused and chipper. Scout Finch lives with her brother Jem (sensitive portrayed by Gerrit deBlauw), and their widowed father Atticus (portrayed by Steve Price in an amazing performance). Atticus is a prominent lawyer and the Finch family is reasonably well off as compared to the rest of society. One summer, Jem and Scout befriend a boy named Dill (played by Layne Ulrich in an excellent performance).

Atticus is a lawyer who has been assigned by Judge Taylor (played with



Dr. Annette Lust



Flora Lynn Isaacson

Now At the Movies • By Don Lee Miller

THE DESCENDANTS

Hawaiian real estate mogul Matt King: George Clooney not only has to deal with raising his daughters: Alexandra, 17going on 25: Shailene Woodley and Scottie, 10: Amara Miller; his wife is in a coma from a boating accident and he has to decide when to pull the plug. Alex's doofus boy friend Sid: Nick Krause is attached at the hip. Cousin Hugh: Beau Bridges and the other cousins are counting their millions before Matt can decide if he really wants to sell off their beachfront holdings. He learns that his wife was having an affair with a real estate guy, Brian Speer: Matthew Lillard, who'll profit from the sale. His wife Julie Speer: Judy Greer has a devastating scene that could put her in the running for Supporting Actress. Then there's his wife's father Scott Thorson: Robert Forster who is contentious. Though all of this, Clooney goes from anguished to wrought in a performance that would have most tearing their hair out as his life falls apart around him. Directed/co-written by Alexander Payne, this is only his fourth film. Clooney and Payne could also get Oscar nominations. Profanity.

HAPPY FEET 2

Mumble's (voice of Elijah Wood) son: Erik: v.o. Ava Acres is growing up and wants to fit in. Mighty Sven (who can fly!): v.o. Hank Azaria is a zany inspiration to Erik. A trapped elephant seal (v.o. Richard Carter) is rescued. When mother Gloria: v.o. Pink (who gets to belt "Bridge of Light") and others are trapped as suddenly crashing glaciers produce a valley surrounded by peaks where the men are, they must be fed and rescued. Wacky Ramon/Lovelace: v.o. Robin Williams supplies some comedy. Some of the most beautiful underwater scenes feature The Krill: v.o. Brad Pitt & Matt Damon. Kids of all ages will enjoy this one. Directed and co-written (plus 7), who can't come up with a compelling storyline, by George Miller (Mad Max). IMAX. 3-D.

IMMORTALS

Ancient Greece: 1228 BC. King Hyperion: Mickey Rourke kills everyone in his path to get the Epirius Bow which has the power to free the imprisoned Titans. He captures the oracle Phaedra: Freida Pinto and her three oracles. The Old Man: John Hurt befriends peasant Theseus: Henry Cavill (next: Man of Steel) who has been chosen by the god Zeus: Luke Evans to protect his people. Directed by Tarsem Singh with brutal battle scenes with half-a-dozen beheadings and blood everywhere, this bloodbath seems more inspired by comic books and Lord of the Rings than mythology. Profanity. Nudity. Violence. 3-D

IN TIME

This sci-fi thriller, set in the near future in NYC, has the premise that time can be "tattooed" on the arm of every human, with additions, purchases and subtractions made; when you clock out, you die. You live until age 25 and must buy/steal additional time after that. Will Salas: Justin Timberlake isn't very macho as the poor boy hero from the ghetto who should be tough enough to outrun the timekeeper, Raymond Leon: Cillian Murphy. Will connects with a socialite, Sylvia Weis: Amanda Seyfried and they run off together. Why a wealthy lady with lots of time would care for this bum doesn't compute. His mother Rachel: Olivia Wilde runs out of time. Directed by Andrew Niccol; Profanity. Partial Nudity. Some violence.

J. EDGAR

Hoover ran the FBI under eight

appropriate authority by Alex Ross) to defend a young black man, Tom Robinson (in a moving performance by Wendell H. Wilson), who has been accused of beating and raping a white woman (an hysterical Melissa Bailey). This is the pre-integration South, a time when black people had few rights. In Tom's trial, for instance, the Sheriff, Heck Tate (played by Ray Martin) constantly calls Tom "boy"

presidents over 48 years, ending with his death in the Nixon reign. Despite the extraordinarily fine interpretation of J. Edgar Hoover by Leonardo DiCaprio, the man himself was an unlikeable, fussy, paranoid, rules-obsessed, without humor, mama's boy cuddled by Anna Marie Hoover: Judi Dench, almost to the point of smothering. (The old age make-up could have been better.) He frets about not being able to dance when Lela Rogers (Ginger's mother): Lea Thompson (Back to the Future) invites him to dance at a premiere party. His office is capably run by Miss Helen Gance: Naomi Watts, who shares every confidence. His No. Two man in the FBI is also his platonic lover, Clyde Tolson: Armie Hammer; there is on-screen kissing, hand-holding and wrestling for those who might be uncomfortable with same. Hoover's first fame came when he found the Lindbergh baby killer. For viewers with an interest in old buildings, the Orpheum Theater: LA and the Library of Congress are used. The script by Dustin Lance Black (Oscar-winner for Milk) was thrown into a mix and assembled by heaven knows what formula. The film is getting Oscar buzz. Directed by Clint Eastwood with his usual aplomb. Profanity. Mild violence.

MY WEEK WITH MARILYN

Asst. Director #3 Colin Clark: Eddie Redmayne on the filming of The Princess and the Showgirl in London wrote his first book about Marilyn Monroe: Michelle Williams and Laurence Olivier: Kenneth Branagh in 1998. That serves as the basis for this tale of the filming. Dame Sybil Thorndyke: Judi Dench stands up for MM when she's late or flubs her lines, which is often. Colin dates setworker, Lucy: Emma Watson, who is jealous of his time with MM. Mrs. LO/Vivien Leigh: Julia Ormond knows that Larry always falls for his leading ladies. Marilyn's acting coach Paula Strasberg: Zoe Wanamaker, husband Arthur Miller: Dougray Scott and producer Milton Greene: Dominic Cooper all have ways of controlling/driving MM batty. She develops a closeness to the quiet 22-year-old AD Colin. Williams does a very credible job with direction by Simon Curtis. There's Oscar talk. Songs from other MM films are tacked on at the beginning and end. Profanity. Nudity.

PUSS IN BOOTS

In a spin-off from the Shrek series, Puss: voice of Antonio Banderas has his own film. In this prequel, Kitty: v.o. Salma Hayek, Humpty Dumpty: Zach Gallifianakis, Jack: v.o. Billy Bob Thornton and Jill: v.o. Amy Sedaris interact along his suave swashbuckling path. This is a fast-paced action adventure for all. Although it's free of the Murphy-pun influence, the jokes could have been funnier. IMAX. 3-D.

THE TWILIGHT SAGA: BREAKING DAWN: PART 1

Bella: Kristen Stewart marries vampire Edward: Robert Pattinson in the first 20 minutes. The next 20, almost without dialog, is in their honeymoon cottage in the Bay of Rio de Janeiro with lots of nudity and lovemaking. Bella has a 3-4 month pregnancy and births a freakish child (never seen) as Jacob Black: Taylor Lautner and the wolves surround the Cullen family home, threatening attack. This is about as corny as it gets; for died-in-the-wool Twilight fans only! Directed at almost a snail's pace by Bill Condon. Profanity. Violence.

even though he's a married man with three children and a steady job. Atticus, on the other hand, treats Tom with respect. In his impassioned final speech to the jury, Atticus stresses that an unbiased court system is the very foundation of American society, and that every person is entitled to a fair trial. Outstanding performances are given by Frederick Lein as the scurrilous

Cyclists Meet Commute Advocates Head-on Over Oak/Fell Lanes

At a “discussion” on separated bikeways on Oak Street and Fell Street between Scott Street and Baker Street, it was clear that the three-block territory is a battleground among local residents who want to maintain precious parking spaces, auto commuters, who want to retain consistent traffic flow and bicyclist, who want to improve the safety of their commute.



The San Francisco Metropolitan Transportation Authority (SFMTA) held the discussion to solicit feedback on several proposed solutions. Their objective is to make the dangerous three-block area a safer zone. This is the critical link where bicyclists must cross into freeway-like traffic coming to and from the Panhandle as they proceed to or from “the Wiggle,” a designated bicycle pathway that flows from Scott to Market Street.

Prompted by the 550% increase in westbound bicycle traffic on Fell Street since the Fell tow-away lane closure trial in 2002 the agency’s primary goal is to make cycling more attractive and safer through a separated bikeway along the three blocks. The December 3rd meeting, held at the SF Day School at 300 Masonic is the final community input meeting.. Comments will be considered and finalized by the Spring of 2012.

Additional comments may still be directed to Luis Montoya, Luis.montoya@sfmta.com or call (415) 701-4376. To obtain graphs and illustrations—in full—of the Oak/Fell Community Presentation, go to: sfmta.com/cms/bproj/OakandFellBikeways.htm

Design Concept A

- Remove travel lane from Fell and Oak to accommodate one-way cycle tracks on each street

Design Concept B

- Remove parking from Fell and Oak to accommodate one-way cycle tracks on each street

Design Concept C

- Create parking tow-away lane on Fell and Oak to accommodate one-way cycle tracks on each street

Design Concept D

- Remove travel lane from Fell or Oak to accommodate two-way cycle track on one street

Design Concept E

- Remove parking from Fell or Oak to accommodate two-way cycle track on one street

Ginsberg & Ballard (Cont. from p. 3)

with RPD in renovating athletic fields. Hirsch and Associates are philanthropic advisors, a limited liability corporation specializing in managing foundations.

The City Fields Foundation’s Form 990-PF tax returns for 2008, 2009, and 2010 posted on www.Guidestar.com show that Hirsch and Associates received a total of \$1,092,352 from City Fields in three years as one of its five highest-paid contractors for professional services. City Fields is a private foundation with different IRS reporting rules than traditional non-profit organizations. Notably, during the same three-year period, it spent an additional \$108,974 on “fundraising.”

The Foundation’s web site lists as one of its “Team Members,” RPD employee Dan Mauer, a landscape architect and project manager in RPD’s Capital Improvement Division who was paid \$158,035 by the City in FY 2010. Combine Ballard’s \$112,431 annual salary and Ginsburg’s \$205,788 annual salary, and you have a minimum of \$476,254 in RPD salaries working on a public-private project. Given the symbiotic relationships between Hirsch, the Foundation, and RPD staff, Ms. Hirsch clearly had a vested financial interest in influencing the Commonwealth Club’s forum about Golden Gate Park.

Despite their interference prior to a public event, the forum held on May 11 was cordial and respectful.

How Did RPD Go So Seriously Wrong?

On June 3 and June 9, I submitted Immediate Disclosure Requests for public documents to the RPD, seeking any and all documents between April 15 and May 30 regarding the Commonwealth Club’s May 11 forum. On June 9, secretary Olive Gong claimed, “We [RPD] do not have any documents in response to your requests.” Asked again, Gong provided copies of e-mails sent from Ginsburg, Buell, and Ballard stating each had “no documents responsive to this request.”

Unbeknownst to RPD staff, I had already received, copies of most of the documents I had requested, trapping RPD in an obvious lie. So I filed a Complaint with the SOTF, submitting proof of documents RPD claimed didn’t exist.

At an SOTF hearing on July 26, Gong admitted the requested documents had *once* existed, but, claiming RPD’s Record Retention policy permitted RPD employees to independently determine when any document’s “business utility” had ended, they were deleted, asserting

departmental policies can supersede State law.

Over the summer, during a half-dozen SOTF hearings, Gong continued to assert RPD couldn’t locate responsive records.

When subsequent testimony revealed that agencies must keep records of all documents for no less than two years and only *duplicate* records may be erased before then, per Government Code §34090 task Force vice-chair Bruce Wolfe viscerated RPD’s deletion policy.

Ron Vinson, Deputy Director of SF’s Department of Technology (DT), claimed they could only retrieve e-mails that had *not* been deleted. “The Department...[isn’t] responsible for individual department e-mails and its contents. I can only give you what we have and that’s what is in the system for recovery.”

In truth, the City has a robust back-up system of e-mails necessary for anticipated lawsuits and disaster preparedness resiliency. This false claim (inability to retrieve deleted e-mails) left the door wide open for abuse of the Sunshine process.

141 days after the original records request was placed with RPD, and just two working days before the SOTF was expected to refer charges — Gong finally coughed up 14 pages of e-mails she claimed were retrieved from DT back-up tapes. Ginsburg’s RPD could have provided me with the documents from back-up tapes in June.

“Mr. Wooding’s case is significant on several levels. This is the first time a City department eventually produced documents from back up files. Rec and Park’s lack of compliance also hid City employee and commissioner attempts to sabotage public discussion of privatization of public land. These public officials signed non-public e-mails using their public titles in an attempt to sway the Commonwealth Club to bias a forum arranged by members of the public,” Hope Johnson, chairperson of SOTF, said.

“...these officials sought to discredit both the qualifications and motives of forum panelists. There is no greater justification for the Sunshine Ordinance than to protect citizens’ rights to free speech and public assembly,” Greg Miller, a member of San Francisco Ocean Edge, testified.

Hopefully RPD staff will be punished for making a mockery of local government transparency.

Feedback: wooding@westsideobserver.com

Dog Killer Artist (Cont. from p. 9)

would travel to San Francisco to see anything sponsored by the San Francisco Art Commission is seriously delusional.

To add to their problems, the Arts Commission has fallen under the eyes of open government activists Peter Warfield and Ray W Hartz Jr. (pictured above flanking an unknown lady). These are the people who take the time to sit through boring meetings and pore through self-serving, poorly written minutes in order to inform the clubby bureaucrats that what they are doing is illegal and completely against the spirit and intent of open government laws. The minutes of Wednesday’s meeting were filled with notifications of expenditures but in some cases without any amounts or explanations for what the money was being spent upon. This did not amuse Mr. Warfield or Mr. Hartz, who politely expressed their displeasure at every moment that



public comment was legally required, an activity that brought them nothing but disdain from the commissioners, even though their motives are ethical and, in a minor way, heroic.

Reprinted from www.sfciviccenter.blogspot.com, by SF Mike (Michael Strickland)

The Best of the Net is a monthly feature of the Observer in which we present an outstanding journalistic effort of particular local interest.

Theater (Cont. from p. 13)

Bob Ewell, father of the girl who accuses Tom; Anne Ripley as Mrs. Dubose, the crabby neighbor; Wood Lockhart as the prosecuting attorney Mr. Gilmer; Sumi Narendran, who plays the Finch’s housekeeper Calpurnia with care and apprehension; and Jeffrey Taylor as Boo Radley, a mysterious neighbor.

Director James Dunn has put together an excellent show. The first act

is mostly exposition and introduction of characters. The performance moves quickly leading up to the famous court room scene in the second act. In Mr. Dunn’s capable hands, the play, at all times, lives up to its potential with good pacing and tense delivery.

Mockingbird at Ross Valley Players through Dec 11. Reservations, 456-9555 or www.rossvalleyplayers.com Flora Lynn Isaacson

SHARON THE HEALTH / By Sharon Caren

Enzymes – The Key To Digestion And Health

In the early 1990's I learned about the importance of enzymes in every function of the body. I've supplemented with digestive enzymes ever since. After reading this information, you may feel similarly.

What is an Enzyme

Enzymes, the biological catalysts, speed up the chemical reactions in all living things. Without enzymes nothing would work. Food would sit for weeks in the stomach, and we would eventually die. Enzymes are absolutely vital to human health and are the foundation on which life is perpetuated. The purpose of enzymes is to break molecules apart or put them together, which they do very quickly and efficiently. There are many specific enzymes for each chemical reaction needed to make each individual cell work properly.

Over 3,000 known enzymes in the body perform every type of chemical conversion imaginable. They control the body's vital metabolic processes and are

allows for higher production of metabolic enzymes, crucial for daily metabolism, health, and detoxification.

There are two major enzyme systems in the human body

Metabolic enzymes help run all the body systems. They speed up the chemical conversion within the cells for detoxification and the production of energy and are produced in the organs of the body such as the liver, pancreas, and gallbladder. Enzymes enable us to move, think, see, hear, and feel, which comprise the complete control mechanism of the body. (One researcher found over 98 enzymes carrying out the metabolic functions in the arteries alone.)



“When you understand the critical importance of enzymes and the life-giving role they perform in the body, you'll discover explanations for health problems that you or those around you may have. Knowledge gives hope, especially when products are available that can increase the potential for vibrant health and longevity. There are all natural supplements available. It's important to find a reputable company you can trust to give you organic ingredients in supplements”

present in every biological system. Enzyme conversion creates energy and builds new cells. All living cells require nutrients and enzymes to divide, grow, and perform their normal activities. Enzymes turn the food we eat into energy and facilitate the use of this energy.

Without the beneficial work of enzymes, foods and proteins may go undigested and might ferment and putrefy in the gastrointestinal tract. Undigested foods tax the body, zap energy, and spur the overgrowth of yeast, fungi, parasites, bacteria, and microorganisms that contribute to viral conditions, gastritis, Crohn's disease, diverticulitis, and other inflammatory conditions.

Inadequate digestive enzyme activity is also linked to chronic inflammation elsewhere in the body such as fibromyalgia, herpes, inability to gain or lose weight, bad breath, body odor, skin rashes, and migraines.

Digestive enzymes promote complete digestion and help those who have difficulty digesting and assimilating food. As we age, we need more enzymes for complete digestion. Enzymes are essential in unlocking and metabolizing the vitamins, minerals, and amino acids in food.

When the diet is supplemented with digestive enzymes that are naturally present in whole, raw, or uncooked foods, there are two powerful benefits:

The body is able to extract the maximum nutritional value from food.

The body can reduce its internal production of digestive enzymes, which

Digestive enzymes break down the food we eat to release the nutrients for absorption. They are the most talked-about enzymes because food is the fuel for life. These enzymes are secreted along the digestive tract where the food is broken down. The essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that sustain life are then released and absorbed into the blood stream to be carried throughout the body.

The waste continues through the digestive tract and is discarded. However, if the waste does not move, causing constipation, the waste begins to break down into putrefaction that the body will reabsorb as poison, creating all types of body dysfunction. Digestive enzymes include ptyalin, pepsin, trypsin, lipase, protease, and amylase. However the cellulose enzyme, needed for the digestion of fiber, is not manufactured by the body and must come from the food we eat or supplementation.

Enzymes are Important for New Mothers

Amylase, found in the saliva of adults, breaks down carbohydrates and simple sugars found in vegetables and fruits. However, it is not produced in the bodies of infants when they are born. Their digestive systems are able to produce protease, cellulase, maltase, lipase, lactase, and sucrase, but not amylase. Because amylase levels are very high in the mother's milk, for nursing babies, their systems would be overloaded. Babies who have not been breast-fed automatically have an amylase deficiency.

Amylase deficiency may start as an early allergic condition where the child develops allergies to starches, proteins, and sugars. Parents then take the child to the doctor or hospital where they may use chemicals that could create other lifelong problems while not addressing the real issue.

In the last few decades, science and technology have made it possible for us to supplement our diet with all kinds of nutritional supplements. With enzyme supplementation, children and adults no longer have to suffer because of digestive problems and insufficient nutrient absorption.

Beware of Processed Foods

We must avoid processed foods whenever possible, as they are devoid of the necessary enzymes for digestion and usually contain enzyme inhibitors to increase shelf life. Inhibitors block the enzymatic process, which stresses the body into an out-of-balance condition.

A lack of digestive enzymes in the food we eat forces the body to overproduce its own digestive enzymes, and limits its ability to produce metabolic enzymes crucial for health and normal metabolism. This limitation occurs because both digestive enzymes and metabolic enzymes are created from the same enzyme precursors (PST) that are produced in the liver.

The production of these precursors is limited in the human body, so when the digestive system must overproduce digestive enzymes due to an enzyme-less diet, it causes a harmful underproduction of metabolic enzymes, which are a must in every process of the human body. The immune system, circulatory system, liver, kidneys, spleen, pancreas, and even our ability to see, breathe, and think depend upon these metabolic enzymes.

Early signs of enzyme deficiency can manifest with complaints of heartburn, gas, bloating, fatigue, headaches, stomachaches, diarrhea, constipation, chronic fatigue, yeast infections, nutritional

deficiencies, pain, joint stiffness, skin eruptions, psoriasis, eczema, and colon, liver, pancreas, and intestinal problems.

Many enzyme supplements are not only deficient but also inactive. Here is how some enzymes are destroyed or rendered inactive:

Planting, growing, and cultivating food grown with chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides will produce a crop basically devoid of enzymes.

Heat begins to break down the enzymes at 118 degrees F. and they are totally destroyed at 129 degrees F.

Pasteurization, sterilization, microwaving, chemical processing for freezing, and any other modern processes kill the enzymes or render them inactive.

The choice is yours

When you understand the critical importance of enzymes and the life-giving role they perform in the body, you'll discover explanations for health problems that you or those around you may have. Knowledge gives hope, especially when products are available that can increase the potential for vibrant health and longevity. There are all natural supplements available. It's important to find a reputable company you can trust to give you organic ingredients in supplements.

Give a gift of life this Holiday Season. Those of you who are on the path to a healthier lifestyle, please share this with others who are searching for answers but don't know what questions to ask. My purpose is to help educate, strengthen and uplift people everywhere to feel good.

Many blessings and Happy New Year 2012!

Please email me sharon@sharonthehealth.com or call 650.359.6579 if you need help finding the right enzymes or any questions you may have. Also visit www.sharonthehealth.com

“The views expressed are those of the writer. If you have any questions about your health, you should always consult with your doctor.”

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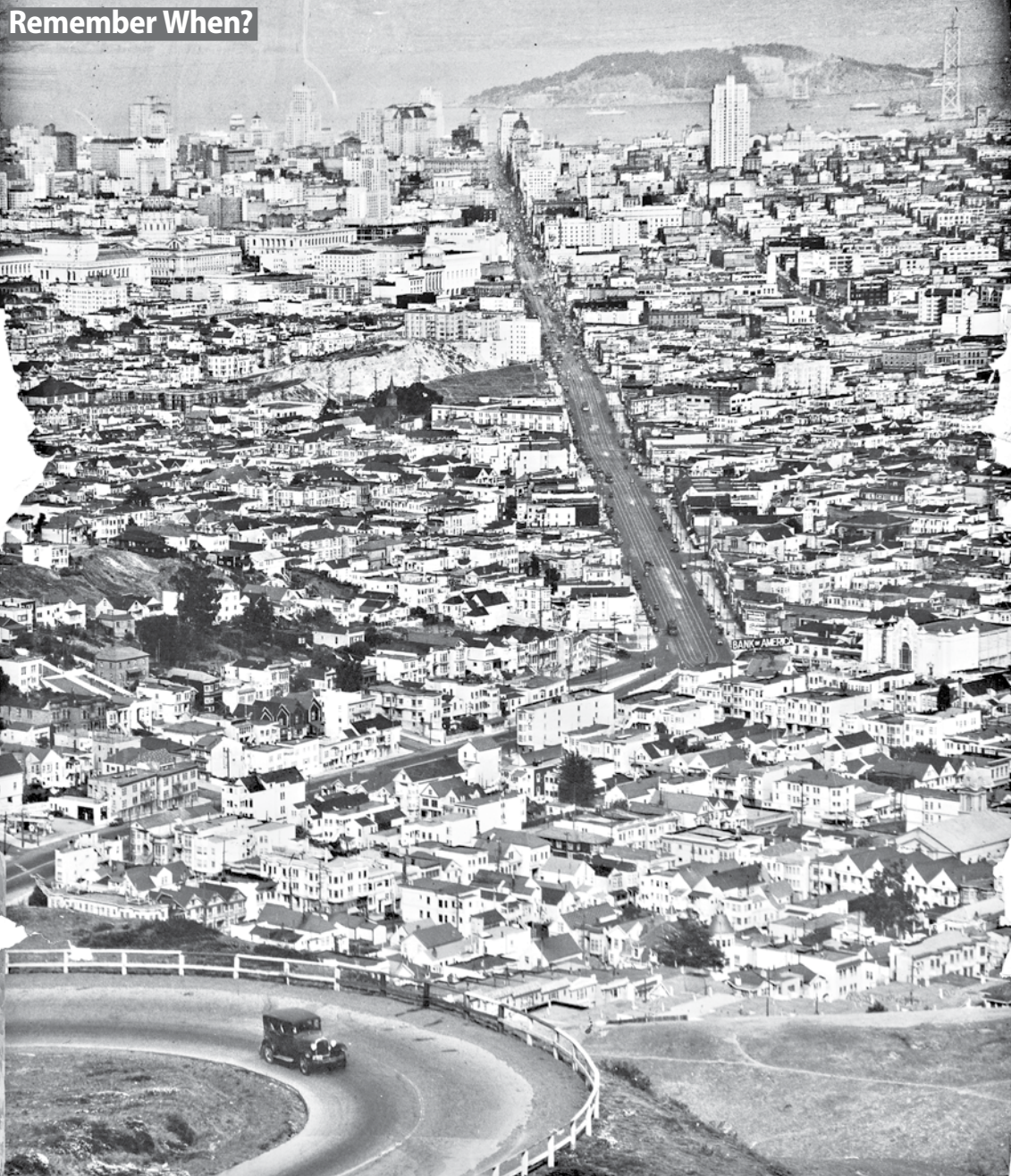
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Remember When?



Market Street from Twin Peaks (Note Bay Bridge Construction) • Oct. 12, 1934 • By permission SF History Center, SF Public Library.

Phyllis’ Findings / Phyllis Sherman

Squeeze an Extra Hour into Your Day

Latest reports say that if you only sleep six or seven hours per night you’ll live longer than if you sleep eight or more hours. The findings are only preliminary, so if you’re a late sleeper, don’t worry until we know for sure. What we do know is that there’s a way to squeeze an extra hour into your busy day.

You wonder how you can do it all, right? Well, actually you can’t. There’s always something else vying for your attention. And when you put off something, until something else gets done, chances are you won’t get any projects completed.

Well, there is one way to squeeze an extra hour into your busy day. I did it and it works. In the morning, whenever you awaken, don’t lie there and vaguely think about all the useless or pointless things you did yesterday or should have done or will do when the time is right. Nor should you think about all the nefarious things that have happened in the past week...what your kids or what your wife or husband or significant other intimidated...just GET UP!!! If you’re a morning newspaper reader you’ll finish it an hour earlier! If your spouse isn’t up yet, make breakfast and surprise him or her...it will gain you important points. That’s my tip for the New Year approaching. Try it.

Some good things and some horrendous things happened recently. First the good thing, or maybe we could also call it a calamitous thing. I had a car accident and Alioto’s Body Shop on Folsom spent some time replacing a headlight and fender that was severely damaged. When it was returned it seemed drivable, but when I attempted to drive up one of SF’s many steep hills, the car wouldn’t make it. I carefully (with some trepidation) backed the car down the hill...fortunately it was



midday and few cars approaching. I attempted a less steep hill and it still wasn’t working. I thought perhaps the gas was low so Alioto sent someone with a can of gas and it still didn’t do what I hope it would do. (I believe that even with an empty tank, a car can go another 20 miles or so.) The next thing that occurred is that my car was stalled at the intersection of Clipper and Portola with cars whizzing by. One of the nearby drivers called the police, who eventually showed up, raised the hood to indicate that I was disabled and proceeded to call a tow company. That took another 3/4 of an hour and the car was towed to Twin Peaks Gas Station where Ed is proceeding to figure out what the problem is (and apparently there are several.) Ed couldn’t figure out how Alioto could have returned the car without checking it out more thoroughly. It was freezing cold and rainy and darkness was now approaching and what I wanted to inform you is that the policeman, Calvin Chow, could not have been more helpful and guided me through several hours of anxiety and apprehension. I have since called the San Francisco Police Department to report Officer Chow’s good deeds to the Captain. It was an unfortunate calamity but fortunately no injuries.

A few things to look forward to: Rumor has it that in short order a Jewish delicatessen will be opening on 24th Street. More lox, whitefish, kreplach, and other

New York-type favorites will be available locally. It’s about time. Another happy interesting happening...”The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier” displays around 140 ensembles from the French designer, including costumes from the movie “The Fifth Element” and Madonna’s famous cone bra. Next stop: San Francisco’s de Young Museum in March.

Some Things You Should Get To:

At the Contemporary Jewish Museum”Houdini: Art & Magic” is an interesting exhibition with pictures and videos of the magician in action. Also some fun magic gifts in the Museum store for the magician kids in your life. Til January.

ANNAPURNA is not about the mountain but an absorbing drama at the Magic Theater by Sharr White and directed ably by Loretta Greco. This two character play concerns a terminally ill cowboy and his Eastern sea-board ex-wife who tracked him to a remote part of the Rockies for the final resolution of an incident that drove them apart 20 years ago. Thru Dec 441-8822 The Marsh on Valencia Street is featuring a very funny solo show with Marga Gomez in “NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER.” It’s a hilarious mix of childhood memories, lying about her age, reflections about her childhood and some social satire.that will keep you laughing. Thru Dec 17 unless it’s extended. 282-3055.

The Best Things Anybody Ever Said: Roses are reddish Violets are bluish If it weren’t for Christmas We’d all be Jewish ...

Benny Hill Santa Claus has the right idea... visit people once a year... Victor Borge I stopped believing in Santa

OPEN LATE

Could be?

Uhhm... could be.

Pregnancy Test

And would it be a good thing?

It would be a very good thing.

By Julie Casson

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

Claus when my mother took me to see him in a department store, and he asked for my autograph...
Shirley Temple
My parents had only one argument in forty-five years. It lasted forty-three years...
Cathy Ladman
Tell your boss what you think of him and the truth shall set you free...
Unknown
Formula for success: Rise early, work hard, strike oil...

J. Paul Getty
Eternity is two people and a roast turkey...
James Dent
Avoid fruits and nuts, you are what you eat...
Garfield (Jim Davis)
I asked the clothing store clerk if she had anything to make me look thinner and she said “How about a week in Bangladesh?...”
Roseanne Barr

phyllis@westsideobserver.com

BRAIN FÜD

Some people’s names (such as “Will Power”) suggest a certain personality or career choice. Given below are some last names and professions (in no particular order). For each last name, your task is to think of a common first name, such that it suggests one of the given professions. Each last name and profession must be used just once. Example: Sonny Day would suggest a meteorologist.

Last Names: Ball, King, Major, Mee, Soares, Turner
Professions: Paleontologist, Author, Musician, Plumber, Astrologer, Lawyer

Answer
Crystal Ball - Astrologer (crystal ball)
Dinah Soares - Paleontologist (dinosaurs)
Paige Turner - Author (page turner)
Dee Major - Musician (D Major)
Lee King - Plumber (leaking)
Sue Mee - Lawyer (sue me)

Sudoku-fun!

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 so that each of the numbers 1 to 9 appears exactly once in each row, column and block.

Answer: The answer appears aside.

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

SECOND THOUGHTS / By Jack Kaye



A Simple and Fair Federal Income Tax

America is in the midst of an economic crisis. We have a federal debt in excess of \$14 trillion dollars, we are running annual deficits of more than a trillion dollars, we have 14 million people out of work, and 50 million people, including one in five of our children, living in poverty. While job creation is essential, so is reducing the annual deficit by cutting unnecessary federal spending and raising revenue.

Studies have found that the richest Americans are paying at an average rate of only 17% for their annual federal income tax, and that half of American households pay no federal or state income tax at all.

There has been much discussion about changing the tax code to make it simpler and more fair. Conservatives want a flat tax with everyone paying the same rate. They want to reduce the highest rate while expanding the base, meaning that more people would be paying taxes while the richest would pay less. The last time tax rates were lowered in favor of the wealthiest Americans, under the Bush/Cheney administration, the result was no new jobs, record deficits, a Wall Street crash and the tattered economy we are now suffering.

I have a recommendation that would simplify the federal and therefore the state income tax code for individuals and couples, not including the self-employed. My plan would be very simple, fair, and would raise at least \$200 billion a year in new revenues. This figure could be adjusted, as could the recommended tax brackets and standard deductions.

Under this plan taxes would have one purpose - collecting revenue with which to fund needed government services. The tax code would not try to encourage or discourage behavior with deductions or credits. It would treat all income equally, be it from work (minus FICA deduction), dividends, pensions, insurance benefits, bonuses, interest, lawsuits, lotteries, etc.

As of 2008, people's income from stock dividends has been taxed at 15% while income from savings interest can be as high as 35%. Actual capital gains are also now at the 15% level, down from 35%, while only a maximum of 85% of Social Security benefits are taxable and legal settlements are not taxed at all. Under this new system all these income sources would be treated as equal.

Under this plan there would be no itemized deductions, only a standard one. For discussion purposes it could be \$15,000 for an individual or \$30,000 for a couple. There would be no deductions for children, medical care costs, charitable contributions, education costs, mortgage payments, state income tax, etc. Currently there is no itemized deduction for buying food for the family or for eating at restaurants with the kids, but people do it. There is no itemized deduction for buying the family clothes, but people do it. There was a deduction for interest paid on credit cards and car loans but that was dropped 30 years ago. People still pay interest on them even though they can't write it off. The three martini lunch was dropped as a business deduction, but people still have them every day.

There would be only five tax brackets that would range from (after the standard deduction) 10% for net incomes up to \$50,000, 15% up to \$100,000, 20% up to \$250,000, 25% up to one million, and 30% for income over \$1 million. These brackets could be adjusted to raise or lower the tax burden.

Here are some examples:

Imagine that there is a couple that earned \$50,000 in net salary (after deducting FICA withholding for payroll taxes), \$20,000 in Social Security benefit payments, \$10,000 in interest, and \$5,000 in capital gains. The total is \$85,000. The couple would deduct \$30,000 in a standard deduction, leaving them a net income of \$55,000. The first \$50,000 could be at a 10% tax rate or, in this case, \$5,000. The remaining \$5,000 of net income would be

taxed at 15% or, in this case, \$750. The total tax would be \$5,750 or 6.7% of their gross income.

Let's say there is a couple who earned \$200,000 in net salary and \$310,000 in capital gains. Their total would be \$510,000. Using the standard deduction, they would net \$480,000. The first \$50,000 would be at 10%. The second \$50,000 would be taxed at 15%. The next \$150,000 would be taxed at 20% and the remaining \$230,000 (net income over \$250,000) would be taxed 25%. So in this case, the couple would owe \$5,000+\$7,500+\$30,000+\$57,500 = \$100,000 in taxes. That equals a 20.8% tax on their gross income.

As a third example has a couple making \$5 million in capital gains, (including dividends also currently taxed at only 15%). They would have a standard deduction of \$30,000 and then owe \$230,000 for the first \$1 million and \$1.2 million for the remaining \$4 million for a total of \$1.43 million or 28.6% in federal income tax.

This tax code would not give an Earned Income Credit or a Making Work Pay Credit to low earners, who currently not only don't pay taxes but actually get paid taxes costing \$115 billion a year. The lowered rates for the wealthiest, under Bush/Cheney, reduced tax revenues by almost \$100 billion a year.

That does not mean that those in need of relief for college loans, income supplements, special medical needs or anything else currently credited in the tax code would be ignored. With the money saved, hundreds of billions a year, there would be money for these purposes. More and larger college grants and some very low interest federal loans could be awarded to deserving students; low income workers could receive a reduced cost for health care benefits, help with rent payments, access to food discounts and other benefits targeted at those in need of help.

But what about the loss of deductions for home mortgages and charitable contributions? Will people still buy homes or give to charities? Good question.

While home mortgages have other problems now, if people see buying a home as a lifetime investment in their own well being, they will continue to buy homes. With some of the revenue raised by eliminating this deduction, more affordable mortgages can be funded to qualifying families. The \$30,000 standard deduction is more than most middle class families claim in itemized deductions for home mortgage interest and charity.

With charities, it is an open question. I have found in my own case, now that I have subjected my family taxes to the standard deduction, I still pay as much for charities and feel better about it because I don't have to keep track of every receipt and tally them to see how much I can save for my kindness. This way it is just out of the desire to help others without any expectation of reward.

I believe that this recommended tax code change would raise needed revenue by both expanding the base, meaning more than just half of all families will be paying some tax, and by getting the rich to pay more but at a lower marginal tax rate.

Then, if this plan is adopted and revenue is raised, it must be put to good use. Government waste, including fraud, inefficiency, ineffectiveness, duplication of effort and international overreaching must be minimized and our deficit must be reduced. Our tax dollars should go to good use.

Feedback: kaye@westsideobserver.com

Funding, Curriculum, Health And Safety

By Carol Kocivar



Adequate funding for education is the most important policy issue that parents and families want the state to address, according to a recent survey conducted by the California State PTA.

On behalf of its more than 900,000 members statewide, California State PTA is calling for a united effort to qualify and pass a ballot measure in November 2012 to begin restoring funding for education programs that have been cut."

The survey showed that 98.6 percent of respondents think adequate state funding is important or extremely important.

The survey measured the importance PTA volunteers place on 33 different legislative and policy issues related to PTA's major focus areas: education, health, safety and parent involvement.

Nine out of every 10 say adequate funding is extremely important. That was by far the highest response for any single issue in our survey.

On behalf of its more than 900,000 members statewide, California State PTA is calling for a united effort to qualify and pass a ballot measure in November 2012 to begin restoring funding for education programs that have been cut.

Last year PTA also joined as a plaintiff in a historic lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the state's school finance system, and PTA has been active in opposing legislative proposals to make deeper cuts to education funding.

Education, Health, Safety and Parent Involvement

The survey showed parents and families place the highest education priority on ensuring that every student has access to a complete curriculum that includes the arts, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) as well as on smaller class sizes, strengthening teacher and administrator effectiveness, and reducing the dropout rate.

Reforms such as common core standards and more choices for parents such as charter schools - while generating interest - were not seen as nearly as critical.

Preventing bullying and cyberbullying rated extremely highly in the survey, with 95.2 percent saying it is important or extremely important.

In terms of children's health, 94.2 percent rated physical activity and physical education as the most important issue, followed by nutrition and healthy school meals, and preventing alcohol, tobacco and drug use.

Parent and family engagement has been a longstanding focus of the PTA. In this year's survey, parents rated the importance of several specific issues related to parent involvement, noting a particular need for greater involvement at the middle school and high school levels.

The impact of budget cuts

PTA members throughout the state also highlighted the severe impact of budget cuts on their schools. Of those surveyed, 96 percent said that in the past few years state budget cuts have forced their local schools to cut or eliminate programs and services to students.

Hardest hit have been programs and services that provide students with extra support or that help all students receive a well-rounded educational experience.

Summer school topped the list with 33 percent saying it has been eliminated, and another 28 percent saying it has been cut significantly.

Arts education programs have also suffered dramatically, with 22.6 percent reporting they have been eliminated and another 42.7 percent saying they have been cut significantly.

Other programs and services deeply affected by budget cuts include buses and transportation; instructional aides; physical activity and sports programs; Gifted and Talented Education; enrichment programs, such as field trips and assemblies; libraries, librarians and media centers; school nurses and student health centers.

Feedback: kocivar@westsideobserver.com

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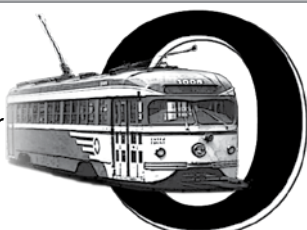
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Laguna Honda (Cont. from p. 6)

Initiatives that actually has independent IRS certification. Community Initiatives is a separate non-profit organization that handles the books for Renne's Laguna Honda Foundation, and "rolls up" Renne's Foundation finances into Community Initiatives' own IRS filings.

If Commissioner Illig expects that Community Initiatives will suddenly cough up data on Renne's non-profit Laguna Honda Foundation, he's sadly mistaken.

I requested financial information about Renne's Foundation from Community Initiatives in early 2010. On March 8, 2010, Melanie Beene, CEO and President of Community Initiatives, sent me an e-mail stating that Louise Renne had demanded that all requests for information about her Foundation's finances be directed to Renne.

In August 2010, Beene indicated she would ask Community Initiatives' Board of Directors to consider releasing summarized financial records of revenue and expenditures of its "client," the Laguna Honda Foundation, if the Foundation refused to provide the requested financial records.

But on March 28, 2011, Ms. Beene changed her tune, e-mailing me that "After consultation with legal counsel, we have received verification that neither Community Initiatives, nor its fiscally sponsored project, Laguna Honda Foundation, is required to provide a public requester with any program data other than what appears on each organization's [Form] 990 filed with the IRS."

If Illig is able to obtain data Renne's Foundation has refused to provide to members of the public, more power to him. But he's likely barking up the wrong tree, and will continue to do so until the IRS revokes Renne's IRS non-profit designation.

Renne has installed her minion, former Deputy City Attorney Marc Slavin, as LHH's *de facto* Executive Administrator, and his office at LHH is still reported to be in the space that Renne renovated for her Foundation at taxpayer expense. A reader of this column reported they had called Community Initiatives and was told that Slavin was a Laguna Honda Foundation employee, ostensibly at the same time he was a City employee at LHH — which would create obvious conflicts of interest — but I have been unable to obtain independent confirmation.

The various scandals involving Renne's Foundation will likely never change, ruining the good reputation of — and charitable contributions to — LHH's patient gift fund.

Monette-Shaw is an open-government accountability advocate, a patient advocate, and a member of California's First Amendment Coalition. Feedback: monette-shaw@westsideobserver.com.

Quentin Kopp (Cont. from p. 3)

government to evade the understandable provisions of that part of our State Constitution, and consistent, continuous judicial decisions upholding the State Constitutional provision, every legislative session discloses efforts by one or more legislators to try to circumvent Article 1, Section 31. The clarion call of "affirmative action" is heard throughout the state capitol and levels of local government. As was pointed out by the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League in 1995, affirmative action, as originally conceived, was an effort to provide education and training for persons in certain categories to compete equally in a merit-based process. He declared; "Equality of opportunity was a worthy goal in the 1960's and 1970's, and it remains a worthy goal today. We still believe there is a place in our society for in-service training, apprenticeship opportunities, placement assistance and recruitment of those victimized by past discrimination." I agree. Our society needs unremitting commitment to traditional forms of affirmative action and aggressive enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, but the best solution is assistance for the economically disadvantaged, regardless of race, color, sex, ethnicity or national origin. In fact, in the United States Senate debate over the 1964 Federal Civil Rights Act, its progenitor, the late Senator (and Vice President) Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota declared the act " would prohibit preferential treatment for any particular group..." In 1973, in the House of Representatives, an amendment to the so-called Alaska Pipeline Bill provided: "The Secretary of the Interior shall take such affirmative action as he deems necessary to ensure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, creed, color, national origin or sex, be excluded from receiving, or participating in any activity conducted under any permit, right-of-way, public land order or other Federal authorizations granted or issued

Zephyr Holiday Food and Toy Drives

Zephyr Real Estate is once again accepting contributions for the annual Food and Toy drives to benefit those who need a little help this season. As with prior years, the SF Firefighters' Toy Program and the SF Food Bank are the recipients of the donations from. To find the nearest Zephyr office to drop off, visit www.zephyrsf.com.

Last year, the SF Firefighters Toy Program gave away 40,000 toys to over 25,000 children. This program has been actively brightening the holidays for disadvantaged children since 1949. Their work is not only around the holidays, but throughout the year for displaced children who become victims of fires, floods and other disasters.

under this title." Senator Humphrey's fight against racial discrimination and preference was an example of public service at its finest, an object lesson for those who note deficiencies in observing State Constitutional requirements and thoughtful civil rights principles articulated by the creator of the Federal Civil Rights Act.

Finally, you can't disregard in this season of Christmas and Hanukkah fervor some of the trappings of post-election City Hall. Among the ordinances and proposals under consideration to cure our City's ills are such beauties as an effort by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and supervisors to raise money by forcing a private property owner who furnishes free parking to his or her customers on his or her private property to pay the city an annual fee of \$1000 per parking space. Think about it: a business owner buys property in order to conduct business and ensures space for customers to park without charge. That means customers don't need to plug money constantly into parking meters. It's obvious the Metropolitan Transportation Authority resents such foresight and business sense. I'll be waiting to observe Board of Supervisors action on that inane proposal while it contemplates a Mirkarimi proposal to charge grocery and other types of business customers money for paper bags in which to carry their purchases home. It's not enough that City Hall wants to compel our children and us not to eat specified foodstuffs, it's not enough that such savants advise us to eschew plastic bags and it's not enough that we recycle paper bags. City Hall will generate money for its \$6,800,000,000 annual budget by docking us for using a paper bag to carry our groceries and then to recycle such bag. It's a wonderful world in often clownish City Hall, but let's enjoy fun, games, parties and presents this month and trust in the New Year.

Quentin Kopp is a former Supervisor, State Senator and Judge. Feedback: editor@westsideobserver.com

Annually, approximately 200,000 toys are distributed. Toys should be new and without gift-wrapping.

The SF Food Bank expects to distribute food to over 36,000 households during the holidays. Their goal is to raise 200,000 pounds of food – enough to provide food for more than 825,000 meals. The Food Bank supplies food to over 450 local non-profit organizations that serve thousands of families, seniors, children and individuals. Food items should be non-perishable. Most-needed foods are tuna and canned meats, cereal, peanut butter, beans, rice, pasta, soups and stews, 100 percent fruit juices, and canned fruits and vegetables. While shopping during the next month, buy an extra can of food.

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Real Travel *By Sergio Nibbi*
Beauty and the Beast

No addresses, no street lights, no sidewalks and no mail delivery. Does that sound like a remote village in a third world country or an Occupy encampment? One would never guess that it's these attributes that add to the charm of Carmel by the Sea.

The sunsets are stunning, as are the views from the huge blimp overhead as it zooms in on the famous and infamous. The original Bing Crosby clam-bake, now the Pebble Beach National Pro-Am, has drawn huge crowds and has become a mecca for both serious amateurs and comedians



alike. Even with the Tiger Woods of a few years ago, who can forget Bill Murray's antics?

For years, the locals have managed to keep Carmel in the limelight while restricting the size of the homes with a stern Planning Department and strict water management. All the more reasons for the ten million-dollar homes along Scenic Drive that remain mostly empty all year long, their owners scattered all around the state and the world.

Recently, an influx of new restaurants has placed Carmel in direct competition with the Napa Valley and beyond--small restaurants, but big on pleasing the most

discrete palates. What was recently a model airplane store is now a restaurant, featuring some of the best pizzas on the peninsula as well as being a great spot for breakfast. La Bicyclette expanded to the corner and instead of recorded sounds of airplane engines revving up, or of military jets in dog fights, one can now hear the sound of sizzling pizzas or the clinking of wine glasses in the intimate dining room.

One of our favorites has been Cantinetta Luca, and



now with its expanded Salumeria Luca, the menu has been expanded to include take-out items ideal for a relaxing meal at home or a late night picnic at the beach. Fires on the beach

are still allowed in a restricted area of Carmel beach, and what better place to enjoy freshly roasted marshmallows squeezed between graham crackers and melting Hershey bars to create unforgettable S'mores with the Pacific Ocean washing ashore just a few feet away.

For a tourist, walking the streets of Carmel is always a treat with dozens of small stores and art galleries lining the main thoroughfare, Ocean Avenue. The cross streets are conveniently numbered 4th, 5th, 6th, etc., but the tourists still rely on Carmel's finest to help them find the location of their parked car. Now what about finding your best friend's house for a weekend visit? Easy: "west side of Monte Verde, three houses north of Fourth." It's worked for all these years and the locals wouldn't have it any other way.

And are the tourists easy to spot? Yes, they're the ones wearing white shoes and short pants on a typical July afternoon when the sun hasn't shined in days. As beautiful as Carmel is, the weather during June, July and August is no better than San Francisco's Sunset District. Beautiful in the morning, but once that fog rolls in by mid afternoon it's time for that sweater that got left behind at the hotel.

Carmel has often been referred to as an area "for the newly-wed or nearly dead," and its 4,000-plus citizens want to keep it that way. With the many festivities, shows and wine tasting rooms the area has changed, but it seems always for the better. The elegant Concours d' Elegance brings in some of the most beautiful cars ever crafted, and the Monterey Jazz Festival rocks on for days in mid-September. The Carmel Art Festival and the 4th of July parade always make for great summer fun. The recently remodeled Sunset Center hosts great shows and performers on a regular basis, and when all else fails, you can always enjoy the music from Carmel's jazz station, KRML. Of course, that brings back fond memories of the days when Clint Eastwood was mayor and people would pile into the quaint, shingled City Hall just to see and listen to Clint with his gravelly voice.

Aside from all its charm and beauty, one can't think about Carmel without hearing those haunting words by Jessica Walter, when she called Dave Garver, the KRML disk jockey played by Clint Eastwood and seductively whispers "play Misty for me" in the movie of the same name. A great movie, a great village and a wonderful place to visit, but if you go during the summer months don't forget your winter gear. We know from experience. We went there on our honeymoon 51 years ago and froze our fannies off!

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