

Let's Stop This Before it Happens Again!

By John Farrell



The Holidays are here! It is a time to celebrate and share with our friends and loved ones. We tell anecdotes from our past and share moments of joy with each other. We remember all those who have touched our lives and thank the good Lord for all He has given us.

On Monday, October 20, just before 7:00 AM, Lou Van Velzen was crossing the street on Sloat Boulevard and 43rd Ave on his way to the gym for his workout. He never made it. A woman driving on her way to an appointment ran him over. Lou was a close friend and someone I admired.

My wife went to grammar school and high school with Lou's daughter, and our families have been close ever since. Lou was at our wedding, our two daughters' baptisms and graduations, and it is our annual ritual to visit the Van Velzen's every Christmas. At Christmas, I would talk and laugh with Lou, and he would tell me amazing stories with his heavy Dutch accent. My daughters even called him "Opa" (grandpa in Dutch).

Lou worked for years at the *Chronicle*, and had you met him you would never forget his smile and warmth. Even though Lou was 87, I never thought of him as old. He was vibrant and sharp and always exercised. I could always count on Lou. Lou was a buddy and touched my life. I will miss him deeply.

On October 23, Priscila Moreto (I knew her by Precy) was run over by a motorized cable car as she walked in the crosswalk on Polk Street outside City Hall. She worked for the Controller's Office and we helped each other on numerous occasions. She was profes-

I recommend that the City get out of their "Let's Set Up a Task Force" or "Let's Do Another Study" mode, and ... "Just Do It."

sional, and was always there if I needed assistance. She too didn't make it. Both Lou and Precy were St. Gabriel parishioners.

On that fateful October Monday Lou became a statistic. As did Precy. My heart goes out to their families and loved ones. Both were irreplaceable. My heart also goes out to those who took their lives accidentally, since they have to carry that weight with them for the rest of their lives.

As of Nov 1, 14 pedestrians, including Lou and Precy, have been killed in collisions on our City streets this year. 11 of the 14 pedestrians killed this year were struck in "high injury corridors" that are known to City officials to be dangerous.

Per the *Chronicle's* City Insider's article "S.F. slow Cont. p. 5

The Shame of Rec and Park

By Kathleen McCowin

A few years ago, faced with the increasing number of artificial turf fields being installed in San Francisco with minimal public input, a group of us formed Soccer Parents and Coaches for Grass Fields in Golden Gate Park. We believed that playing on artificial turf and ground-up tire waste infill posed a serious risk to the health of our children.

On November 4th, voters were given the opportunity to weigh in on Proposition H, to keep artificial turf out of Golden Gate Park at the Beach Chalet Soccer Fields. The election battle was very lopsided, with over \$900,000 being raised by developers in favor of placing artificial turf in all of our parks.

Despite thousands of votes still remaining to be counted, the Recreation and Park Department started construction on the Beach Chalet Soccer Fields artificial turf project at 5:00 a.m. on November 5th, just nine hours after the polls closed."

Despite thousands of votes still remaining to be counted, the Recreation and Park Department started construction on the Beach Chalet Soccer Fields artificial turf project at 5:00 a.m. on November 5th, just nine hours after the polls closed.

Not only had our group's concerns about the dangers of artificial turf been ignored, but construction had been started prematurely on yet another set of toxic fields. A group of us went out to the Beach Chalet fields to protest this construction and the use of toxic materials on children's playing fields.

Our concern for our children's health is the core reason why I stood down approaching construction vehicles, held my ground while having my outstretched palm hit multiple times by a charging pickup truck, stood fast while being verbally threatened with being run over, and ultimately went to jail.

This industrial waste material containing multiple



carcinogens has not been tested in animals. This means its first real testing is going on right now with our children. For me personally, this "testing" was on my daughter Liz while playing soccer in high school on the Crocker Amazon fields.

NBC Network News has recently reported a cancer cluster in young soccer goalies playing on this toxic waste material. Dr. David R Brown, the former CDC toxicologist who authored a 2007 report calling for appropriate studies of this material, has stated he is not surprised. "I wouldn't put a child on one of these fields," said Brown.

Our concern is that these goalies, with their much higher exposure to the toxic crumb, are tragically the canaries in the toxic turf mine shaft. Informal lists from two soccer coaches have grown to over 90 cases, and are still growing. Typical exposure was for less than 10 years. It is likely a much larger number of players will suffer from cancer in the future.

My organization is considering our options going forward to protect our children. If you are interested in participating, please contact me through www.sfocean-edge.org.

Kathleen McCowin is an attorney who shares a home with her teen-age daughter in San Francisco's Sunset District. You can view the video of McCowin's arrest at: www.youtube.com search for A Tale of a Soccer Mom

SFPUC Don't Experiment With Our Drinking Water

By Brian Browne

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) plan to blend aquifer, aka well water, into San Francisco's Hetch Hetchy water supply must be stopped



...secret negotiations amazingly reset the allocations for San Francisco back to 81 MGD and advanced the peninsula's ad infinitum assurances to 185 MGD. That was the first betrayal. The second betrayal was that not all the 81 MGD allocated to San Francisco would come from pristine Hetch Hetchy sources."

until there is a proper and independent investigation into all aspects of this dubious project, including but not limited to health-risks, unfair costs to San Francisco, and the political capitulation of our existing water-rights to the peninsula during the secretly negotiated 2009 Master Water Sales Agreement (MWSA) by the SFPUC.

Mixing different source waters together is complex. Commingling pristine Hetch Hetchy supplies with well water requires a thorough and independent analysis of the well water and its impact on the purity of the entire system. What we all know is that water systems are integral to our health. There must also be an investigation as to why San Francisco came off so unfairly in these secret negotiations.

San Francisco averaged 86 MGD (Millions of Gallons

Outside Job:

OUSTING LAGUNA HONDA'S C.O.O.

By Dr. Maria Rivero and Dr. Derek Kerr

The June 2014 ouster of Laguna Honda Hospital's (LHH) Chief Operating Officer Mike Llewellyn so rattled the Department of Public Health (DPH) that the scandal was buried. As detailed in the September *Westside Observer*, Llewellyn was chummy with Rachel Decker, owner of the DPH-favored painting contractor William Decker Company. Cordial rapport between City officials and contractors often enhances public services — unless favoritism ensues.

In October 2013, the Controller's Whistleblower Program was investigating complaints about the "over-utilization" of a DPH painting contractor. Controller's records show Decker's dominance over the other 6 DPH painting contractors during Llewellyn's tenure. In the 5 fiscal years between 2009 and 2014, Decker pocketed \$783,211, or 41% of DPH's painting expenditures — almost twice as much as its nearest competitor, RAS Engineering. The bottom 3 contractors, M&A, Monticelli, and Arco took home 6.5%, 2.4% and 0% of the pie, respectively.

DPH records confirm the disparity. Between 11/1/10 and 10/31/13, Decker was granted a Cont. p. 5

Perhaps Decker Co. did excellent work at lower rates than their 6 competitors. Still, the relationship between Mike Llewellyn and Rachel Decker should have sparked concerns..."

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SEE OUR PROGRESS

in San Francisco



Patrick Moore
Senior Customer Care
Implementation Manager
INGLESIDE RESIDENT

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The Moskowitz Kidnapping

By Paul Drexler

This non-descript bus stop, located next to wealthy St Francis Woods, provided the climax to one of the most spectacular crimes of the 1950s. On the morning of January 16,, 1954, realtor Leonard Moskovitz went to meet with a prospective buyer and then disappeared. By late afternoon his worried family contacted the police. Then Leonard's father Maurice Moskovitz, the wealthy founder of the clothing store Rochester Big & Tall, received a ransom note from the kidnappers.



"Dear Dad," Leonard wrote, "I am being held prisoner by some men. They want \$500,000 ... get it for them right away or you won't see me again. Do not let police or authorities know or they'll kill me now if it comes out in the newspapers."

The newspapers soon knew the story but at the request of the police, they kept silent. "Not a line was printed, not a word spoken about the city's most sensational crime in many years," The Chronicle wrote later. This press secrecy was a once in a lifetime event and would be impossible in today's news world.

The family negotiated with the kidnappers in the personal ads in the paper. After three nail-biting days, replete with false tips and dead ends, the case suddenly broke open.

On Tuesday at 2:45 AM one of the kidnappers called Alfred Moskovitz, Leonard's twin brother. Alfred managed to keep the kidnapper on the phone long enough for police to track the call to a phone booth in the St Francis Circle bus stop.

Police Inspector Al Nelder was in the area when he saw movement in the phone booth. He jumped out of his car and caught Joseph Lear, one of the kidnappers. Lear led them to a house at 167 Arbor Street in Glen Park where they rescued Moskovitz and arrested Harold Jackson, the ringleader of the kidnap plot.

Jackson had an unlikely background for a kidnapper. He had once owned a private detective agency and had often worked with the police. But after two failed businesses he was desperate for money. He decided to abduct Moskovitz after reading about Leonard's real estate company and his family's wealth.

The story of the Moskowitz kidnapping and rescue dominated all the San Francisco papers for weeks. The Moskowitz family and the police gratefully made themselves available to the press. Leonard even wrote a first person account of his kidnapping for the newspapers.

Jackson and Lear were tried in May, only four months after the crime. Both got the death penalty, but the sentences were changed to life in prison. Both men died in San Quentin. The case sky rocketed Al Nelder's career and he became San Francisco's Police Chief in 1970. Leonard Moskovitz returned to a successful business career and died in 2008 at the age of 90.

The link below is to a 1950s newsreel report on this case, narrated by the inimitable Ed Herlihy: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tq9xHt0WpYo

Paul Drexler, Director, Crooks Tour of San Francisco, www.crookstour.com 415-713-3077



A joyful reunion occurred at the San Francisco hall of justice this morning when Moskovitz was greeted by his wife in front of television cameras and microphones.

Dear Dad

I am being held prisoner by some men they want \$500,000 I wont be turned loose until its paid . There are 5 men and they each want \$100,000 get it for them right away or you wont see me again Do not let police or authorities know or they'll kill me now if it comes out in the newspapers I have the promise of the leader I will be turned loose. as soon as ransom is paid If there is any interference they ll stop at nothing. Please, please do as they say. As soon as the money is ready put an ad in the examiner under personal column : "L, ready to conclude sale, please advise when and where to deliver." (Be sure this is word for word)

They want	\$100,000	in	20s
	200,000	in	50s
	200,000	in	100s
	500,000		

handout : chronicle file

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*U.S. Census Bureau, 2010
<http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?measure=82>

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Black Sands Beach

By Michael Moran

The weather has been great this fall and if you like to go to the beach in San Francisco on a beautiful day, you know to expect throngs of people. But where does one go on a hot day to find a beach that might offer a little solitude even on the best beach day? Black Sands Beach across the Golden Gate in Marin is an excellent option.

If you were at Baker Beach and you looked across towards Marin, you'd see a beautiful scalloped beach staring back at you, that is Black Sands Beach. It is remarkably easy and fast to get to and it is like an entirely different experience than going to the beach in the city. No crowds, no trash, but no facilities either. Also to get there, one has to hike up and down a fairly steep trail. But don't let the hike put you off, it isn't that steep, it isn't precarious at all, and the whole way down you can see the beach ahead of you.



The Drive To Black Sands Beach

To get to Black Sands Beach, you must drive, or ride a bike. If you can't drive or bike but wish to take transit you can go to the beach just before Black Sands Beach called Kirby Cove. Kirby Cove is just west of the Golden Gate Bridge, so you can take Muni to the far side of the bridge and walk due west past Battery Spencer. You will see a dirt road with a gate across the entrance, that is the road you want, at the bottom is Kirby Cove, a small campground and some more of Spencer Battery, and a nice small beach. There are no facilities here either so bring what you need and haul out your trash. But back to Black Sands Beach, drive over the Bridge and take the Alexander exit and head toward Marin Headlands, you will go past Kirby Cove and keep driving towards Hawk Hill. The drive is beautiful, so have your camera ready. When you get to the Hawk Hill parking area, go all the way to the end and you will see a small one-way road heading down the hill. Take that road, slowly and carefully, all the way, enjoy the incredible views and when you see a parking lot on the left, that is where you will park. There are trash cans here, and an out-house of sorts, but these are the only facilities. If the parking lot is full, you can park on the side of the road.



The Drive Continued

From there the way down is clear, the trail is fairly wide, it isn't dangerous, and you are never walking on the side of a cliff. On the way down you might see rabbits in the underbrush, the plants growing here are all native species (no ice plant) and you can even spot Yerba Buena (the original namesake of San Francisco) plants growing along the trail. Their roundish leaves taste and smell like vanilla-mint and they have delicate white flowers. Stay on

Cont. p. 8



WEST OF TWIN PEAKS CENTRAL COUNCIL By Mitch Bull



Assembly member Phil Ting reports on the State budget progress and City College

E-cigarettes, Safeway and an Assembly update were the big items discussed at the November meeting of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council on November 24th. **President Roger Ritter** opened the final meeting of 2014 with approximately 30 attendees.

Lisa Spinali, President of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association asked for the WOTPCC to send a letter supporting the project for renovation of the **Safeway store located on Monterey Boulevard**. The project, which has been in the works for over 7 years is awaiting a hearing at the Planning Commission, and Spinali explained that Safeway has been very cooperative in seeking community input throughout the process and has made changes in the project to incorporate citizen feedback on the design and traffic flow corridors of the proposed site remodel. Following the discussion a vote was taken and passed unanimously to send a letter supporting the project to the Planning Commission.

Assembly member Phil Ting took the floor to give a Sacramento update, and he started by saying he was pleased to report a **balanced state budget** that was achieved without the drastic budget cuts that have been necessary in recent years. As a result of the improved economic conditions and the tax increased approved by voters, more funding is being allocated into K-12 education as well as the UC and CSU budgets. Ting also commented on the recent approval by voters of both the Water Bond and the Rainy Day fund legislation. He remarked that the passing of the Rainy Day Fund is important because it is the first time ever that the state government is required to set aside funding while times are good to be used when the economy eventually weakens.

The Assembly member addressed the topic of CCSF by explaining that many members of the Assembly are fighting to **keep City College open**, and that, of the issues raised by the Accreditation Commission, over 95% have been addressed and fixed, but that the number has to be 100% for full accreditation and recertification. Recommending a "hard look" at the Accreditation Commission, he feels the decision to allow it to continue (or not) in its present form is necessary. Ting feels that CCSF is a city treasure.

The Assembly member was less pleased with the recent actions of the **UC Board of Regents**, stating that Governor Brown and the Education Commission were shocked by the regents' decision to **increase tuition at UC by 28%** over the next 5 years. He also pointed out that the CSU system has implemented arbitrary "Student Success Fees" that are not governed. He believes that more funding could be given to the two systems with caveats, such as limiting the number of non-Californians admitted to the campuses. Ting also said that **UC President Janet Napolitano** may be engaging in a game of "chicken" with the state government leaders.

In a somewhat controversial remark, Assembly member Ting called for a **reduction of votes needed to pass a parcel tax from 67% to 55%** as it would be easy to start more projects. Needless to say, that line of thought was not warmly received by the neighborhood group delegates in attendance.

The final discussion of the evening centered on a proposal to open an **e-cigarette "Vape"** outlet at 1963 Ocean Avenue. Following presentations by applicant Blake Yee

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West Of Twin Peaks Central Council ANNOUNCES "VISION 2015"

The West of Twin Peaks Central Council, which represents twenty (20) homeowners' and neighborhood associations, will present a series of speakers at each of its monthly meetings from January through June 2015 to discuss their vision for San Francisco over the next decade and how it will affect our neighborhoods.

Speakers will include prominent local politicians and others who will discuss issues of concern to the members of our organization.

This will be a great opportunity to speak directly with your elected officials in an intimate environment about issues that matter most to you, including preservation of single-family residential housing, revitalization of neighborhood shopping streets, preservation of open space, transportation, and taxation, including residential parcel taxes.

We invite all members of the community to attend our meetings, which are normally held on the fourth Monday of each month at the Forest Hill Clubhouse, 381 Magellan Avenue.

For details please check our website at www.westoftwinpeaks.org/

WOTPCC (Cont. from p. 4)

on why the outlet would be good for the neighborhood, and by Robert and Carolyn Karis (representing Ingleside Terraces) on the problems associated with vape outlets, the WOTPCC was asked to vote on whether to oppose the vape outlet by supporting the appeal to overturn the Planning Commission approval of the project. The vote to support the appeal failed with

5 "yes" votes, 1, "no" vote and 8 abstentions. A motion for adjournment followed and the meeting ended.

The next meeting of the WOTPCC will be on Monday, January 28th at 7:30 PM at the historic Forest Hills Clubhouse. (No meeting in December) For more information see the WOTPCC website (www.westoftwinpeaks.org).

SFPUC's Water Experiment (Cont. from p. 1)

per Day) between the 1984 sales Agreement and the beginning of the renegotiations in 2009 for the Agreement renewal. The peninsula averaged 163 MGD during the same period. These secret negotiations amazingly reset the allocations for San Francisco back to 81 MGD and advanced the peninsula's *ad infinitum* assurances to 185 MGD. That was the first betrayal. The second betrayal was that not all the 81 MGD allocated to San Francisco would come from pristine Hetch Hetchy sources.

Currently the SFPUC has plans to acquire 77-78 MGD of Hetch Hetchy water for San Francisco and the rest of San Francisco's assurance from well water. This Hetch Hetchy number seems to be a movable amount based on what is left over after peninsula customers are quenched. Their thirst increases and our allocation of pure Hetch Hetchy water decreases. Thus less Hetch Hetchy water and more recycled brine for San Francisco. These secret negotiators did not seem to factor in that San Francisco built the wondrous Hetch Hetchy system.

San Francisco availability of high quality water has been a driving incentive for major health facilities locating and expanding in San Francisco; witness the ongoing development of the UCSF health complex in Mission Bay, plus many more health-care centers. The question must be asked and answered: Will this be imperiled

by the blending of well water?

A quick Google search for "Outbreaks of diseases due to contaminated water supply" will reveal that urban water systems are vulnerable. A recent outbreak of a large failed water purification system occurred in 1983 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in which at least 104 deaths occurred and 880,000 out of 1.6 million suffered cramps, fever, diarrhea, and dehydration. The most affected were the elderly, and immune-compromised. The blending of treated well water with pristine water does not appear to be a zero sum game and requires the most vigilant and independent analysis.

Well water extraction and treatment costs are much greater than our Hetch Hetchy water costs. By ceding large amounts of Hetch Hetchy water to BAWSCA-wholesalers, San Francisco must substitute more expensive water of an unclear composition. Passing these costs and risks on to San Francisco must not just slide through as a function of an over-bloated SFPUC PR machine.

The time has come for a full-blown City investigation — not just from the usual choir of bureaucrats and high jacked committees.

Brian Browne was coauthor of 2002 Prop P and former member of the Revenue Bond Oversight Committee it created.

Farrell (Cont. from p. 1)

to tame its mean streets" dated Nov 2, in regard to pedestrian deaths on our city streets, "Alarmed by last year's uptick, city officials vowed to do better, created a public awareness campaign and adopted a 'Vision Zero' plan with the aim to eliminating traffic deaths in 10 years. But Moreto's death left some wondering why no improvements have been made to the dangerous Polk Street crosswalk outside City Hall in the seven years since Leal (former head of the Public Utilities Commission Susan Leal) was hit — and whether city officials are paying pedestrian safety more than just lip service."

Lou and his family were very concerned about the speeding traffic on Sloat Boulevard, and that it was just a matter of time before another accident occurred. I was told Lou called the city numerous times on this matter.

City Hall has plenty of money to put traffic signals in these high injury

corridors. They have so much money that when the Board of Supervisors passed, in October, a measure to legalize short term rentals of homes, they rejected \$25 million due in back taxes from Airbnb.

I recommend that the City get out of their "Let's Set Up a Task Force" or "Let's Do Another Study" mode, and be more like Nike and "Just Do It." It will save lives. It might even save the life of someone close to your heart.

Contact your District Supervisor and let them know that enough is enough. One life taken is too many.

Let's stop this before it happens again.

Happy Holidays! — And please drive safely.

John Farrell Broker/Realtor — Farrell Real Estate, MBA, Former City Asst. Assessor-Budget/Special Projects, 5th Generation San Franciscan, Westside resident - farrell-reinvestments@yahoo.com*

Laguna Honda (Cont. from p. 1)



According to the City's Office of Contract Administration, "For general services, competitive bids are not required under \$10,000." Such small jobs need not be advertised because City departments have "complete discretion over the vendor selection process."

Blanket Purchase Order (BPO) authorizing \$400,000 in DPH contracts. The other 6 DPH painting contractors were granted BPO's ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000, and totaling \$1.2 million. Just 17 months into its 3-year BPO, Decker had already collected \$396,786 — over 99% of its allocation. However, the other 6 firms garnered just \$117,000 or 10% of the funds available to them. Decker's closest rival, M&A Painting, had received 24% of its \$250,000 allocation. Three of the painting contractors got nothing. No wonder somebody complained.

Perhaps Decker Co. did excellent work at lower rates than their 6 competitors. Still, the relationship between Mike Llewellyn and Rachel Decker should have sparked concerns, especially after DPH Director Barbara Garcia put Llewellyn in charge of all DPH facilities in late 2011. With such authority over contracts, there are many ways to indulge preferred parties.

According to the City's Office of Contract Administration, "For general services, competitive bids are not required under \$10,000." Such small jobs need not be advertised because City departments have "complete discretion over the vendor selection process." Records show that in the first 3 years of Llewellyn's tenure as COO, from November 2009 through November 2012, Laguna Honda processed 54 invoices from Decker Co. totaling \$448,375. Of these, 47 were for jobs costing less than \$10,000. They included a \$1,010 contract to paint "Mike's safe" and a \$2,210 deal listed as "Mike's wood table refinishing." These small contracts, awarded under Llewellyn's watchful eye, brought in \$228,667 — 51% of Decker's Laguna Honda revenues over 3 years.

Though disapproved, big jobs can evade competitive bidding rules if broken down into multiple small jobs, each costing under \$10,000. On 11/14/12 Decker Co. submitted 3 invoices at \$9,996 each for 3 near-identical LHH window projects. Had this window project been treated as a single \$29,988 contract it would have required competitive bidding and approval by the Office of Contract Administration.

A favored contractor could be told in advance about upcoming DPH projects, or informed about competing bids and proposals. Hefty contracts can be won with tiny under-bids. On 1/25/11 Decker Co. secured a painting job at SFGH for \$30,250. Its closest competitor, RAS Engineering, had bid \$30,500. When the bid results were sent to Llewellyn's office, he notified his staff; "I will take care of that."

Or, a painting company could be steered to work as a subcontractor under a bigger DPH contractor. The DPH pays the

larger firm that then pays its painting subcontractor. On 4/1/12 Turner Construction paid Decker's RMD Enterprise \$11,585 for 4 windows. The following month, Llewellyn received a proposal from Rossi Builders, another DPH construction contractor. On 10/22/12 Llewellyn sent Rossi's proposal to Decker's Office manager, who cheerfully responded, "Thank You Mike! Hope you are well!" In May 2013, Rossi Builders hired Decker as their painting sub-contractor.

When funds aren't available, money can be pulled from other pots. For example, LHH bosses could get SFGH funds to pay for their jobs and vice versa. Given its enormous budget and major hospital rebuild projects, the DPH has many money streams that can be siphoned when needed. For example, on 9/30/10, a \$3,130 Decker Purchase Order was revised because LHH's CFO wanted to switch from "operating funds" to "project funds" to pay for maintenance services. Similarly, creative accounting may explain why Decker's BPO balance increased from \$3,214 to \$14,269 between 3/1/12 and 10/17/13.

When DPH Director Barbara Garcia wanted to "expedite" the renovation of DPH Clinics in October 2013, Decker's BPO balance was depleted, despite the mysterious boost to \$14,269. Nevertheless, on 10/25/13 Rachel Decker submitted estimates to "John Lee A-Hole" to refurbish 4 Clinics for \$235,062. Technically, any bids above \$14,269 should have been null and void. Further, Decker's DPH contract expired a week later and wasn't renewed until 2/1/14. She was then granted a 3-year, \$1.8 million BPO to be shared with 3 other painting contractors. On 5/2/14, the Health Commission approved new DPH maintenance jobs by the Decker Co. Therefore, Decker maintained business ties with the DPH right up to Llewellyn's expulsion on 6/20/14.

The marginalized DPH painting contractors to whom we spoke had no comment. However, the Controller's 2013-14 Whistleblower Program Report mentions a manager who was fired for being "romantically involved with the owner of a contractor while...in a position of authority over contracted work." LHH insiders went along to preserve their livelihoods. Outsiders forced Barbara Garcia to address top-level misconduct that Laguna Honda honchos tolerated for years.

Dr. Maria Rivero and Dr. Derek Kerr were senior physicians at Laguna Honda Hospital where they repeatedly exposed wrongdoing by the Department of Public Health. Contact: DerekOnVanNess@aol.com

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The Fleecing of San Francisco

By Anmarie Mabbutt

Approved in June 1997, Administrative Code Section 3.7 requires City Departments, as part of the annual Fiscal Year Budget process, to submit the cost information (Budget Form 2C: Fee Cost Recovery) for each fee charged. The cost information is essential to any meaningful evaluation of the reasonableness and the necessity of the fees being charged. After several letters and public records requests back in 2010, I realized the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department along with several other City Departments, including Planning, Assessor-Recorder and Building Inspection, were not supplying the legally required cost information as part of their annual Fiscal Year Budget submissions. For the next two years, I wrote numerous letters to the Recreation and Parks Commission, the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, the Budget Analyst and the Controller urging them to insure that City Departments comply with all budgetary and fiscal provisions including Administrative Code Section 3.7.

The Board of Supervisors should request a comprehensive audit of the Recreation and Parks Department...

Despite repeated requests to do so, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department continued to refuse to comply with the cost information provisions of Administrative Code Section 3.7. So, in 2012, my husband filed a lawsuit in San Francisco Superior Court to compel the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department to supply the cost of recovery information for the hundreds of fees it charges. As part of the settlement, the City admitted the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department had been violating Administrative Code Section 3.7. And in FY 2013-2014, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department finally began including some cost of recovery information as part of its Fiscal Year Budget submission.

For FY 2013-2014, RPD provided Budget Form 2C for 23 of the 41 Fee categories reported on Budget Form 2B including admission fees for the Japanese Tea Garden, the Botanical Gardens and Coit Tower, Recreation program fees, Summer Day camp fees and Camp Mather cabin and tent usage fees. The Budget Form 2Cs revealed several Fee categories for which RPD was charging and collecting fees that far exceeded the cost of recovery. For the Japanese Tea Garden, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department was charging residents a 238% rate of recovery, non-residents 333%. For Coit Tower, RPD was charging residents a 205.7% rate of recovery, non-residents 288%. For FY 2014-2015, RPD has increased the adult admission fees for the Japanese Tea Garden and Coit Tower to \$8 for non-residents and \$6 for residents. At these new rates, RPD is charging residents a 285.7% rate of recovery for the Japanese Tea Garden and a 262% rate of recovery for Coit Tower. For non-residents the rate of recovery has jumped to 380.9% for the Japanese Tea Garden and 349.3% for Coit Tower.

The RPD FY 2013-2014 Budget Form 2Cs also revealed several fees that while not excessive, are clearly irrational, including picnic and wedding fees. For FY 2013-2014, for picnic fees, RPD estimated spending \$445,943 to collect \$215,017. For wedding fees, RPD estimated spending \$169,243 to collect \$167,001. For the current fiscal year, on Budget Form 2C, for picnic fees, RPD estimates spending an additional \$95,676 to collect \$11 less revenue. For wedding fees, in FY 2014-2015, RPD estimates spending an additional \$31,003 to collect an additional \$3,708. The picnic and wedding fees are using General Fund dollars to subsidize the leasing off of the public park space to the wealthy for private purposes. These type of exclusionary fees run contrary to the very nature of public park space.

For the FY 2014-2015 Budget submissions, RPD included Budget Form 2C for 13 additional Fee categories. The FY 2014-2015 Budget Form 2Cs reveal several additional Fee categories for which RPD is profiting off of the public park space. For the Kezar parking lot, RPD estimates a 137.76% recovery rate. For the Carrousel rides, RPD estimates a 168.58% recovery rate. The FY 2014-2015 Budget Form 2Cs

also reveal a number of fees for which RPD estimates massive cost increases including Athletic Field rental fees, County Fair Building rental fees, Wedding fees, Recreation Center/Clubhouse/Gymnasium rental fees and Picnic fees. For these fees, for FY 2014-2015, RPD estimated the following increases for leave/non-productive time costs: 89%, 170%, 75.8%, 122.31% and 84% and overall cost increases of 20.4%, 79%, 18%, 51.4% and 21.4% respectively.

On the FY 2014-2015 Budget Form 2Cs, for 7 of the 23 categories for which comparative cost information is available including Athletic Field rental fees, Recreation Center/Clubhouse/Gymnasium rental fees, County Fair Building rental fees, Special Event permit fees, Photography/Film fees and Picnic and Wedding fees, RPD estimates an average increase of 94.77% in leave/non-productive time costs! These same 7 Fee categories are part of the more than 25 Fee categories for which RPD annually provides no verifiable revenue figures as part of its revenue submissions on Budget Form 2B. Budget Form 2B includes line items for each fee charged as well as a Units column. RPD often leaves the Units column blank for individual fees so it is impossible to verify the revenue figure reported for the cost of recovery calculation on Budget Form 2C.

Budget Form 2B reveals at least six Fee categories for which the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department routinely submits incorrect and misleading fee information including Athletic Field rental fees, Day Camp fees and Latchkey fees. For Athletic Field rental fees, RPD has completely ignored Ordinance #090717, the 2009 legislation that most recently updated the Athletic Field fee structure. Instead, RPD management has repeatedly submitted outdated revenue data using the 2005 categories and rates, none of which are relevant to an accurate calculation of the Department's current Athletic Field rental revenues.

Budget Form 2B is supposed to contain a list of all fees charged by each City Department. But for at least the past four years, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department has not reported several fees including yearly swim pass fees, golf card fees, Gymnasium rental fees and dozens of Day Camp fees. In a recent email, RPD Finance Director Katharine Petrucione assured me "the Department will ensure that its Form 2B submission for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 fiscal years captures all fees delineated in Article 12 of the Park Code." In this same email, Ms. Petrucione cited Park Code Sections 12.01, 12.44 and 12.47 and Administrative Code Section 21.3 as the legislative authority for what appeared to be several unauthorized fees including the Candlestick Park stadium tour fees, the Candlestick Park seat fees and the Scaregrove and Eggstravaganza fees. She refused to comment on what happened to all the revenue from the unreported fees. The Board of Supervisors should request a comprehensive Audit of the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department finances and annual Budget submissions.



My 2¢ • Will Durst © 2014

HOLIDAY OF GUILT.

The autumn dark is lengthening, which harkens the English-speaking, Judeo-Christian Holiday Season is about to split open wider than a crocodile mouth at the bottom of a baby duckling water slide. It begins with Columbus Day. No mail and the banks are closed. Much is to be said for starting slow. Then the downward hurtle is set off by Halloween, when people toss about candy, free, incognito.



...here in California, our one true unifying religion is recycling...perhaps allowing us to inhabit the planet a few weeks longer."

Fast forward to the favorite holiday of liberals all over California. The eagerly awaited, down-home, secular celebration, known for bringing families together every November. The one day a year dedicated to giving, not receiving. Of course, we're talking about America Recycles Day on November 15.

Don't know about you, but in the Durst household, there's something magically comforting about the grand traditions that have grown up over generations. Brown, blue and green stockings hanging from every fireplace mantle. The wacky winnowing ceremony that marks the traditional draining of the liquor cabinet into one big punch bowl. The pulsating glow from dozens of festive landfill tire-fires dotting the landscape.

Mandatory middle school pageants dedicated to raising high the 3 R mantra of the season: "Reduce, Reuse & Recycle." How that phrase echoes across the land! Sure, some kids today consider it dopey and old fashioned, but our little Eloise & Madaleine still squeal with delight while cleaning out the compost bin on America Recycles Day Eve.

So that it appears brand spanking new in the morning when beloved Happy the Vulture drops off sustainable presents to reward all the good little boys and girls who separated their straws from their juice boxes, depositing them in the proper receptacles the previous year.

Gathering round the dining table that was once a telephone wire spool, after a socially responsible breakfast of locally sourced egg substitutes, pork belly flavored tofu and an array of organic greens, the whole family troupes down to the

annual Recycling Parade, where participants dressed in green biodegradable bubble wrap ride on solar-powered garbage trucks and toss edible barks and mosses to the teeming crowds.

Then the big evening family get-together at Grandmama's house, where one of the uncles dresses as Happy or one of his dung beetle buddies passing out environmentally-friendly gifts. Many which are re-gifted to a clot of kids wearing wrinkled red crepe hanging from their necks going door to door singing ecological carols. Such as the merrily enchanting, "Can It. Save the Planet!"

Conservatives continue to malign this movement, as evidenced by their annual "War on Recycling Day," banning blue bins from government building cafeterias. But here in California, our one true unifying religion is recycling. Even if the complete blessing of the goddess Gaia will never be realized, our recycling frenzy blazes a path to the future: fostering a gentler and cleaner society, perhaps allowing us to inhabit the planet a few weeks longer.

And for all those who mock our liberal spirituality, accusing us of having as many gods as haircuts, just bear witness to our devotional manifestation once every week when we stagger to the curb with our holy sacrificial offerings, reverently reflecting for hours on what goes where. And in another eerie parallel, just like with normal religions, it's all pretty much based on guilt.

Will Durst is an award-winning, nationally acclaimed political comic. willdurst.com for for info on "3 Still Standing," personal appearances such as his hit one-man show "BoomeRaging: From LSD to OMG".

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Ruminations From A Former Supervisor By Quentin Kopp



It seems always appropriate (and even inviting) at the end of a calendar year to reflect on vagaries. One of those vagaries is the monopoly possessed by Recology, Inc. on San Francisco's garbage collection and recycling service. In my decades of public office and private experience, I know of no other major city not utilizing competitive bidding for such major local responsibility. Once upon a time, a garbage monopoly could be "sold" to captive customers as a genuine small, locally-owned and operated business. That can't be done now, and no better example of why it can't be done now was presented last month in Daly City. While it excoriates any effort to open San Francisco garbage collection and recycling to competitive bidding, Recology, Inc. bids competitively throughout the nation and specifically in California, including, most recently, Daly City. There, the City Council on November 21, after reviewing intensively bids from two other companies and Recology, Inc., voted 4-1 to reject the City Manager's recommendation of Recology, Inc. (perhaps influenced by her former Public Utilities Commission managerial position in San Francisco) and awarded a 15-year contract to a Recology, Inc. competitor. The City Council did so despite concerted lobbying efforts of such San Francisco political hotshots as Willie Brown, John Burton, and Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom, together with Congresswoman Jackie Speier. Instead of utilizing their political positions to ensure a favorable (to Recology, Inc.) City Council vote, our political luminaries offended at least four of the five council members with their meddling.

Meanwhile, a whistleblowing former employee lawsuit against Recology, Inc. in San Francisco Superior Court for cheating San Francisco and California taxpayers in recycling activity, which resulted in a \$1,800,000 jury verdict last July in San Francisco Superior Court against Recology, Inc. and for the benefit of taxpayers, continues. The trial judge granted Recology, Inc.'s post-trial motion to set aside such verdict, a highly unexpected act after a tedious four-week trial."

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Meanwhile, the Bay Area Toll Authority, composed of no Bay Area public officials of whom you've ever heard, announced its plan to build a bicycle lane on the Bay Bridge from Yerba Buena Island to San Francisco at a cost of approximately \$500,000,000! We know the new eastern bridge span has cost about \$6,500,000,000, approximately \$5,500,000,000 more than its 1997 estimated cost before Oakland's then-Mayor (Jerry Brown) and San Francisco's (Willie Brown) caused lengthy delays on construction commencement, and subsequent Chinese-supplied (and flawed) steel was added to costs. Included in the bill to tollpayers and California taxpayers in general was an expenditure of over \$100,000,000 for a bicycle lane from Oakland to Yerba Buena Island. We know bicyclists pay no registration or license fees, unlike motorists and truckers. Their exclusive lanes and the roads and streets they use are provided by motorists and truckers through gasoline taxation. Although the Toll Authority identified no source of the proposed \$500,000,000 new bicycle lane on the western span, it revealed it was paying a "consultant" \$10,000,000 to speculate on financial sources for (1) an additional \$10,000,000 to comply with the California Environmental Quality Control Act and (2) the chimerical \$500,000,000 for

construction. Upon its 1936 opening, Bay Bridge tollpayers were promised tolls would cease once bonds for construction were fully repaid. Ha! Ha! Tolls on the Bay Bridge were raised over 15 years ago to furnish approximately half the money (with State gasoline tax revenue providing the other half) to build the new eastern span. Now the Toll Authority embarks upon a bicycle project, which, I fearlessly predict, will trigger higher tolls within three years.

The last transportation item to contemplate is the revelation last month that the Peninsula Joint Powers Board (that is, Caltrain) electrification project is already \$200,000,000 over its original budget, with anticipated completion more than a year behind schedule. The electrification cost was originally fixed as \$1,200,000,000. It's now about \$1,500,000,000, of which some \$750,000,000 is supposed to emanate from the California High-Speed Rail general obligation bond of \$9,000,000,000 approved by California voters (for high-speed rail, not Caltrain) in 2008. There's a problem, however: Caltrain's Environmental Impact Report on such electrification uses the present San Francisco Caltrain station at Fourth and King Streets as the San Francisco terminal. The always-grasping Transbay Terminal Joint Powers Authority uses its pending First and Mission Streets dream as its San Francisco terminal, having already obtained and presumably spent \$400,000,000 from President Obama's vaunted 2009 stimulus bill to dig a big hole in the ground, which may resemble that infamous Alaskan "bridge to nowhere."

Now, let's apply ourselves to the happier notions of Hanukkah, Christmas, and a New Year called 2015. I wish all readers and their families, AND our esteemed publisher, Mitch Bull, a healthy and joyous celebration of those respective events.

In that same vein, let's convey warm best wishes and congratulations to B'nai Emunah in the Outer Sunset District upon its 65th anniversary, replete this month with special dinners, religious services, entertainment, and parties, parties!

Retired former Supervisor, State Senator and Judge Quentin Kopp lives in District 7

An Ethically Troubled Ethics Commission

By Patrick Monette-Shaw

Another example of the dysfunction of San Francisco's Ethics Commission arose on October 29, 2014 when an ethics complaint filed directly with the Ethics Commission was dismissed by Ethics Commissioners on the grounds that Ethics Commission staff failed to meet its burden to show there was probable cause the respondent had violated San Francisco's Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code.

Rather than ruling on the merits of the official complaint and hearing the complainants' allegations in an open, public meeting, Ethics Commissioners ostensibly dismissed the complaint entirely due to unspecified Ethics staff errors regarding meeting its burden, sinking to a new low.



Although Pilpel claimed to be speaking as an individual ... he switched from using the first person "I," into using multiple times the third person "we," again appearing to be speaking on behalf of, and representing, the Task Force.

A History of Dismissed Complaints

A June 2012 San Francisco Civil Grand Jury report — "San Francisco's Ethics Commission: The Sleeping Watchdog" — noted that the Ethics Commission held no public hearings on Sunshine Ordinance complaints referred to it over an eight-year period. An analysis in 2012 of 35 cases against City officials referred by the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force to the Commission alleging official misconduct showed five cases were then still pending, and that the Commission's Executive Director, John St. Croix, dismissed all 29 of the remaining cases, often citing the most arcane exculpatory excuses to let miscreants off the hook.

Before June 2012, the Ethics Commission had held just one official misconduct public hearing, in July 2011, that was referred to it by the Sunshine Task Force, a case involving Library Commission president Jewelle Gomez. (The Ethics Commission official misconduct hearing against Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi occurred on August 16, 2012.) Although the Ethics Commission recommended that Mayor Ed Lee remove Gomez from the Library Commission, the Mayor failed to do so for over two years. However, the Mayor eventually did not re-appoint Gomez when her term expired, and she was replaced.

The Ethics Commission had also dismissed every complaint during the previous 17 years alleging retaliation for filing whistleblower complaints. This will likely continue until voters demand removal of the Commission's executive director, John St. Croix, who was paid \$148,419 in Fiscal Year 2013-2014 to bury the public's right-to-know investigations.

Two Clear Violations of Ethics Regulations Dismissed

As reported in the *Westside Observer* last September, wayward Sunshine Ordinance Task Force member David Pilpel appears to have violated the Statement of Incompatible Activities (SIA) applicable to Task Force members when he spoke during the public comment on a matter under discussion during the Ethics Commission on April 28, 2014 at a meeting that was referred by the SOTF for enforcement, by introducing himself as "David Pilpel, member of the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force." Asserting one's affiliation as a member of a given policy body during a public meeting of another quasi-judicial body, or another policy body, is strictly prohibited by the SIA.

As we reported, the SIA applicable to Pilpel clearly provides that no officer may hold himself or herself out as a representative of the Task Force, or as an agent acting on behalf of the Task Force,

unless authorized to do so. Pilpel had not requested or received a waiver known as an Advance Written Determination from either the Board of Supervisors, or from the Ethics Commission, exempting him from this SIA prohibition. And the Task Force itself had not authorized Pilpel to speak on behalf of the full Task Force on the matter under discussion.

Pilpel directly interfered with the Task Force's referral of Sunshine complaint #12-058, *Dominic Maionchi vs. Recreation and Parks Department* to the Ethics Commission in a case involving Rec and Park's General Manager Phil Ginsburg over failure to release public documents regarding leases of boat slips, a case that Ethics returned to the Task Force for further factual information. The Task Force is poised to send the Maionchi matter back to the Ethics Commission on December 3.

The first complaint about Pilpel's probable April 28 violation of the SIA was filed by this author on June 22 and remained a pending Ethics complaint that had not been dismissed — until October 29, when it was suddenly dismissed apparently due to potential Ethics staff errors.

Then, on July 28, 2014, Task Force member Pilpel again spoke before the Ethics Commission during public comment on Sunshine complaint #13-024, *Mica Ringel vs. Planning Department* being heard by the Commission, committing a second violation of the SIA. Although Pilpel claimed to be speaking as an individual on July 28, within the first minute-and-a-half of his testimony he switched from using the first person "I," into using multiple times the third person "we," again appearing to be speaking on behalf of, and representing, the Task Force.

Notice was received on August 15 that the second SIA complaint filed by this author against Pilpel on August 4, 2014 involving the Ethics Commission's July 28 hearing was dismissed by the Ethics Commission's Executive Director on August 13. In dismissing the second SIA complaint against Pilpel, St. Croix only cited Section III.A.1, "Activities that Conflict with Official Duties," of the applicable SIA.

St. Croix made no mention in his dismissal letter of Section III.B.1 of the SIA, "Restrictions That Apply to Officers or Employees in Specified Positions," which provides that certain activities are also expressly prohibited for individual

When Pilpel addressed the Ethics Commission on both April 28 and July 28, he was clearly engaging in providing advice to the Ethics Commission (as an entity) concerning Sunshine complaints that may appear again before the Task

Best of the Net: 48hillsonline.org

Will there be a mayor's race in 2015?

Four more years — without opposition?

By Tim Redmond

With Mark Leno officially taking himself out of the 2015 mayor's race, there's a real possibility that Mayor Ed Lee will run essentially unopposed — and that would have a ripple effect on more than the city's top job.

An empty race with no serious contenders or issues would depress turnout — impacting the series of initiatives likely to share the ballot next November.

There's certain to be a measure more tightly regulating Airbnb and other short-term rentals. There could be another attempt at addressing speculation and evictions. There might be a downtown and tech-driven move to modify (read: gut) the 1986 slow-growth measure Prop. M.

Low turnout almost always skews conservative. If the turnout had been five points higher last month, David Campos would have won the state Assembly race. The Airbnb measure cuts across political lines somewhat: The Apartment Association is supporting the concept at this point, and I wouldn't be surprised if Sen. Dianne Feinstein was on board. Westside low-density neighborhoods don't like short-term rentals because they want to stick with single-family housing.

But without a serious candidate challenging Lee on the issue, there won't be the sort of discussion about rezoning the city that really ought to happen. And with a very low turnout, it's impossible to tell what will happen.

A low-turnout election would absolutely hurt any tenant measure and would make it harder to defeat an attack on Prop. M.

And, of course, it would give Lee and his allies grounds to say that the mayor has a popular mandate for his pro-growth, pro-tech policies.

Why isn't Leno running? He's a savvy politician, and he knows the race wouldn't be easy, but that's never stopped him before. It was a huge uphill battle to unseat incumbent Carole Migden for the state Senate seat he now occupies. But he really, really wanted that job; I'm not sure he wants the Mayor's Office that badly.

Randy Shaw's argument that the lack of a campaign manager dissuaded Leno is a bit disturbing. Yes, the senator has always been close to the folks at BMW, but Northern California does not lack in talented political consultants, and after all his years in Sacramento, Leno could have found someone else.

And I'd hate to think that a decision as important as a race for mayor of San Francisco could be controlled by a few unelected private hired guns who make money running political campaigns. Ick.

I think the Ron Conway factor was also at play here.

Conway paid for a series of vicious attacks on Campos. He will almost certainly put up as much money as it takes to try to damage anyone who dares to challenge Lee and the hegemony of the new tech oligarchy. Leno is a highly respected legislator, but he's had to put up with his share of ugly shit in campaigns in the past. I'm not sure how much more he wants to take.

This, of course, is the problem with having one or two people so utterly dominate local politics. It's as if the days of the Brown Machine are back — but it's not even

an elected mayor at the center. It's a billionaire plutocrat who likes to get his way and is accountable to nobody.

Leno could only have won if he'd had the solid support of the left — and if he'd endorsed Campos, that would have been an easier

task. With his record in Sacramento and his leadership on Ellis Act reform, he would have been an easy choice for tenant groups. But he'd have to go out and convince labor and the allies of Campos and Tom Ammiano not just to endorse him but to go out all for the Leno for Mayor campaign.

In the end, that might have happened. But it hadn't happened as of last week.

So now what happens? I don't know.

I talked to Ammiano today. There's a lot of Run, Tom, Run talk out there, and of course he's flattered by all the support.

He told me he'd love to be mayor — but he doesn't want to run a symbolic campaign. There would have to be the organization, the money, the structure to make it possible for him to win — and right now, that's a stretch.

He also said that it's worth thinking about whether progressives should be talking longer term — focusing the next four years on getting good supervisors elected, fighting evictions and pushing tenant ballot measures and working on things like Charter reform, and looking toward electing a real progressive mayor in 2019.

Art Agnos and Aaron Peskin have demonstrated that you don't need to hold elective office to play an effective role in local politics. Ammiano might do well in that kind of role as he contemplates the future.

Another four years of Ed Lee will be rough. We survived Willie Brown and Gavin Newsom, but I've never seen the city in such a crisis of survival as a progressive community. I wonder how many of us will be left after this economic earthquake settles down.

The protests in the streets, the grassroots fights, the ballot measures, the resistance — all the stuff that works when City Hall is against you — that's going to be our lifeline. And the good news is, we've done it before — and there are new generations of activists joining the fight.

But wouldn't it be nice to have someone in Room 200 who we didn't have to fight all the time?

Our choice for Best of the Net is Tim Redmond's 48hillsonline.org—the secrets of San Francisco.

The Best of the Net is a feature of the Observer in which we present an outstanding journalistic effort of particular local interest in our effort to assure that our readers are the best informed citizens of San Francisco. If you have a suggestion for our "Best" feature, email: editor@westsideobserver.com



Four more years — without opposition?

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Holiday lights...and Santa's on the way... Each year, the time seems to go by faster and faster. Here in the newspaper business, by the time we get a copy out on the street we are planning out the next one, as the calendar clicks by at its rhythmic rate. As the Thanksgiving holiday was a week later this year, the holiday season will be compressed into a shorter amount of time. Weren't the Giants just playing baseball? (It's only been 5 weeks since the parade...) I will note that I saw my first Christmas tree in a SF window on November 11th and it seemed early, but now I'm not so sure...

Let's keep it local... with the ease of online retailing and the crushing number of catalogs that we receive during this time of year, it's important to not forget the amazing "brick and mortar" stores that line our shopping districts and make us a neighborhood. From **BookShop West Portal** and **The Music Store**, to **Ambassador Toys**; **The Art of Style**, to **Harmony A/V and Music**, we have a terrific number of places to fulfill our holiday gift lists. And how about a pampering at **Dimitra's**, or a yoga class at **Relativity**, topped with a great dinner at one of our amazing local restaurants! From **Paradise Pizza and Pasta** at one end of West Portal to the **Bullshead** at the other end, there is no end to the number of different restaurants and cuisines that can excite our taste buds. And that's just West Portal – add in **Stonestown Galleria**, the **Marketplace on Sloat**, and **Westlake** across the "border" in Daly City and you can find something for everyone on your holiday list, without using much fuel to get there. While online shopping is quick... it really doesn't do much to put me in the holiday spirit. Getting out in the cool breeze, seeing children looking in the windows, hearing the Salvation Army bell ringers, and (even) scurrying for parking helps to bring out the holiday spirit.

Local Stuff... starting on January 11th the **Ocean Avenue Association** will have its "Second Sundays" event, which will feature live music on Ocean Avenue from 4-9 PM during each second Sunday in 2015. For the January event, the **Fog Lifter Café** will host jazz, and **The Ave** will be hosting samba. For more info contact Neil Ballard at: neil.oacbd@gmail.com...the **Sunnyside Neighborhood Association** is seeking your support in their quest to have the Planning Commission approve the plans for the remodel of the **Safeway, located on Monterey Blvd.** In a rarity, there is basically no opposition to the plan and the folks at Safeway have done a very good job in listening to the concerns of the community and making changes to their proposal during the 7 and ½ years that the project has been in the planning stages...Opponents of the **Parkmerced** project lost their appeal at the state Supreme Court to overturn the approvals for the project, so it appears that the project will move forward in the coming year... All of the ballots had not even been counted after the November 4th Municipal Election when the construction equipment started work at the **Beach Chalet/Golden Gate Park playing fields**, the very next morning. With the victory for the pro-plastic turf contingent, many changes will be coming to the western-most end of the park.



Giving Thanks... as the end of the year sneaks up on us, it's always a good time to look back on this year and be thankful and appreciative for what we have. Over the past year, we have observed another **World Series** crown for the G-men; an inconsistent and maddening season-long trundle by the **49ers**; and an early season tease of what should be an exciting and successful year for the (future – S.F.) **Warriors**. West Portal has seen some vacancies, and filled others, and San Francisco continues to change and evolve, something that has been going on since gold was discovered in "them thar" hills." It seems that the "towering crane" is now the official "bird" of the City. Thank you to our writers, our staff and colleagues, our advertisers (without whom there would be no newspaper), our readers and my family, who makes this all worthwhile. Let's plan for more local news and event coverage as the Observer moves into its 28th year.

Santa's Come A Callin... Get ready for Santa-Con 2014. It's that time of year when hundreds of thousands of "Santa's" crowd the streets worldwide to celebrate the holiday. The event started in San Francisco in 1994.

The event has become a phenomenon worldwide. The website SantaCon.info has an updated list of every SantaCon event around the world, and as of December 4 the tally stands at events in 334 cities in 46 countries. The dates vary by city and this year, SantaCon SF will be held on Saturday, December 13. Santa's cavort all across the globe, from North America to Europe and Asia; From San Francisco to Montreal to New York City, SantaCon crosses the Atlantic to hit London, Paris and Hamburg, before continuing on to Beijing, Tokyo and Sydney.



Do you have an event, a neighborhood fact or just an observation to share? Drop us a line at mitch@westsideobserver.com and share your ideas or just let us know what you think.



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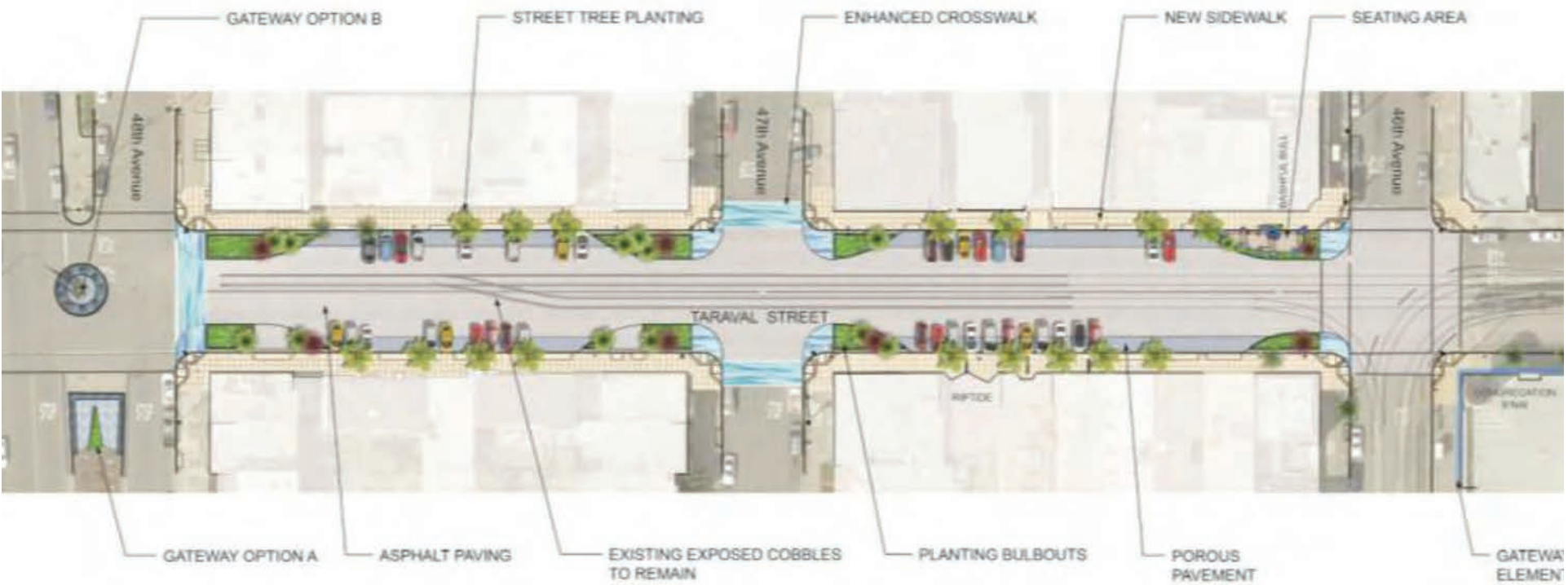
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Taraval Streetscape Construction Underway

Ocean-themed improvements plan for neighborhood safety and beauty

Construction began early in November on the Taraval Streetscape Improvements Project. The project area stretches from 46th Avenue to 48th Avenue on Taraval Street, a commercial corridor serving the surrounding residential area in the Outer Sunset.

This project is paid for by San Francisco voters who approved the Road Repair and Street Safety Bond.

“The Taraval Streetscape Improvement Project is one example of how the Road Repair and Street Safety Bond, passed by voters in 2011, has brought necessary infrastructure improvements to our neighborhoods,” said District 4 Supervisor Katy Tang, who represents the Sunset. “This project brings long overdue investments to key commercial corridors, and our community looks forward to the pedestrian safety, landscaping, and corridor revitalization improvements along lower Taraval.”

The Taraval Streetscape improvements include more visible crosswalks, enhanced



Project includes Taraval from 46th to 48th streets

ing pedestrian safety along the corridor; a public seating area, new landscaping and street trees to revitalize the stretch; and streetlight upgrades and roadway paving to make the street safer.

The crosswalks at 46th, 47th, and 48th avenues will be decorated with a blue wave pattern, a nod to the nearby Pacific Ocean. Pervious pavers will be installed in the parking strip allowing rain water to percolate into the aquifer instead of the sewer. The



existing exposed cobblestones along the Muni tracks will remain.

The scope of work will include a safer crosswalk at 47th Avenue; and bulb-out landscaping will be installed along the improved corridor.

The streetscape will include a new traffic roundabout at the intersection of 48th Avenue and Taraval Street. An artistic gateway will be installed in the middle of the roundabout. The piece, featuring three concrete “sails,” is being created by Colette Crutcher, a Bay Area artist known for her mosaic staircases. Her design will reflect the oceanic theme of the neighborhood. A second decorative gateway is being developed with help from Supervisor Tang’s office, to be installed on the façade of Congregation B’Nai Emunah at 46th Avenue.

The contractor, L. C. General Engineering and Construction, Inc., will take steps necessary to minimize the impact of construction between the Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day holidays. No work will be performed on the commercial block on Taraval between 46th and 47th avenues during the holidays.

Construction of the \$1.2 million streetscape improvement project is expected to be completed by April 2015.

San Francisco Public Works is partnering with the City’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development (Invest in Neighborhoods program), the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency and City Planning. Other key partners include Supervisor Tang, neighborhood residents and merchants.

Info: visit SF Public Works Taraval Streetscape Improvements Project.



Improvements include more visible crosswalks, sidewalk bulb-outs to shorten crossings at intersections, a public seating area, new landscaping and street trees, streetlight upgrades and roadway paving.



Toast for Christmas?

Seems like the Toast Eatery has been boarded up for a very long time, but the permit posted on the door indicates that it expires on December 22nd. All the Toastheads can perhaps look forward to Toast for Christmas Dinner.

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Ready for SantaCon?

More than a pub crawl, more than a flash mob, it is “Santas only” and a twenty-year San Francisco tradition that started right here in 1994. Initially meant as a protest against holiday consumerism, it has spread to over 300 cities in more than 40 countries, from Adelaide, Australia to Winnipeg, Manitoba. 13,000 participants in the Guildhall Square in Derry City, Ireland achieved the largest gathering of Santas and a Guinness World Record in 2007. Inspired by a Mother Jones article about a political group in Denmark that thronged a Copenhagen department store dressed in Santa costumes, the original 1994 SantaCon (“Santarchy”) was sponsored by the SF Cacophony Society, a group of pranksters, artists and adventurers. Santa Chad Mulligan first listed it on *Rough Draft*. “Red Tide” day is usually held on December 14, however other locations begin as early as December 11 and run through December 22. This year the SF event is scheduled for the 13th. Santas, elves and the occasional lost Easter bunny move from the meeting place at Union Square and begin blocking streets, high five-ing people in cars, jumping on trolleys and hanging off the edges singing Xmas carols. Then the mandatory pub crawl (you don’t have to have a drink in every bar) while tourists have no clue what’s going on. It may carry over into Sunday.

SAT • DEC 13 • SNTACON • UNION SQUARE • NOON • BRING A TOY • WEAR FULL COSTUME • HAT ONLY? NOT COOL

December / January

CALENDAR

EVERY SUNDAY • FARMERS MARKET

Farmers Market | Every Sun | 9 am–1 pm | Stonestown rear parking lot: at Stonestown Galleria (19th Ave @ Winston).

EVERY TUE & THU • JOB SEEKERS LAB

Tue 10 am v–1 pm & Thu 2 pm – 5 pm | Internet-ready computers are available for resume, preparing job applications and/or searching for jobs. Handouts, books, some staff assistance. Bring a flash drive. Main Library, 100 Larkin, 6th Fl. 557-4277

EVERY TUE • COMPUTER SKILLS

Tue | 1:15-2:45 pm | Come get help with setting up email accounts, word processing and other basic computer related tasks. Most Tuesdays at this time. Ask questions and learn the basics of using a computer! Main Library, 100 Larkin St.

EVERY TUES • QUE SYRAH HAPPY HOUR

Every Tue Happy Hour | 4–8 pm | Que Syrah Wine Bar. Take \$1 off each glass, 10% off each bottle (consumed on site). 230 West Portal Ave 731-7000

EVERY THURS – NIGHTLIFE

Every Thu | 6–10 pm | The Academy of Sciences brings live music, science, mingling and cocktails. GG Park \$12 (\$10 Members). calademy.org/nightlife.

JAZZ FRIDAYS @ THE CLIFF HOUSE

Every Fri | 7–11 pm | The Balcony Lounge at the Cliff House hosts jazz every Fri night. 1 Seal Rock. cliff-house.com/home/jazz.html.

FRIDAY NIGHTS @ THE DEYOUNG

Every Fri | 5–8:45 pm | Music, poetry, films, dance, tours and lectures. Cafe: special dinner, no-host bar. Art-making children/adults. deYoung Museum, GG Park. deyoung.famsf.org/deyoung/fridays

FRIDAYS @ OFF THE GRID/FT. MASON

Every Fri | DJs 5-7:30 - Live Bands 7:30-10:30 pm | Off the Grid. Over 32 food trucks and street food carts in a huge circle with a full bar and bands in the middle? Now that’s a party. Ft. Mason Ctr. Marina Blvd.

EVERY WED • FREE E-BOOKS

Wed | 1:30-2:30 pm | Do you have an eReader? You can check out more than 40,000 electronic books for free. Bring your Kindle, Nook, iPad or other eReader — we will show you how to use it to download books and other materials from the Library website. West Portal Branch Library, 190 Lenox Wy.

EVERY DAY • CLOUD FOREST

Daily | 9 am-5 pm | Fall is the best time for one of the only botanical gardens in the world where the alluring plants of the cloud forest thrive outdoors. For hundreds of rare and endangered plants native to the world’s misty cloud forests, foggy feels like home. SF Botanical Garden, 9th Ave at GGPark. 661-1316

THU-SUN • GOLDEN GIRLS DRAGSHOW

Dec 4-21 | Hilarity ensues when four drag stars play the characters the world has come to know and love are Heklina (Dorothy), Cookie Dough (Sophia), Matthew Martin (Blanche) and Pollo Del Mar (Rose). Opens Thurs. Dec. 4 - 8:00 pm. Plays Thurs. Fri. & Sat. - 8:00pm / Sun. - 7:00 pm. Performance dates are: Dec. 4, 5, 6, 7 / 11, 12, 13, 14 / 18, 19, 20, 21, 2014.

FRI, SAT, SUN • DICKENS CHRISTMAS

Fri–Sun Nov 22–Dec 21 | 10 am–7 pm | Great Dickens Christmas Fair & Victorian Holiday Party commences Nov22 and continues five weekends from 10am to 7pm, including the Friday after Thanksgiving, through Sunday, December 21, 2014 at San Francisco’s historic Cow Palace, 2600 Geneva Ave.

SAT • HOOK

Sat Dec 6 | 2 pm |Hook is presented in memory of Robin Williams, who stars as Peter Pan, with Dustin Hoffman as Captain Hook, Julia Roberts as Tinkerbell and Maggie Smith as Granny Wendy. Merced Branch Library, 155 Winston Drive 355-2825.

TUE/THU • LITERATURE SERIES

Tue, Thu Dec 9,11 | 7 pm | Diane Frankenstein’s Adult Literature Series continues at Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal. Texts for the series are 20% off diane@dianefrankenstein.com 564-8080

SAT • COWSPIRACY

Sat Dec 6 | 10:30 am | Cowspiracy: The Sustainability secret follows Kip Andersen as he uncovers the most destructive industry today, the devastating impact large-scale farming has on our planet and offers a new path. Main Library, Koret Auditorium, 100 Larkin St.

MON • E-READER DROP-IN

Mon Dec 8 & 15 | 4–5 p.m | Bring your Kindle, Nook, iPad, or other eReader device to the reference desk for help in checking out library eBooks and eAudiobooks. Merced Branch Library, 155 Winston Dr. 355-2825

TUE • AUTHOR JARED DIAMOND

Tue Dec 9 | 6:30 pm | Jared Diamond, Professor, UCLA; Author, Pulitzer Prize-winning *Guns, Germs and Steel, Collapse and The World Until Yesterday* is a scientist known for drawing from a variety of fields, from anthropology to evolutionary biology. A night of intellectual stimulation with one of the world’s most celebrated polymaths. \$10. Castro Theatre, 429 Castro St, 7:30 p.m. book signing

WED • FROZEN

Wed Dec 10 | 6:30 pm | Snow Queen Elsa’s eternal winter spell is broken by her sister Anna, a mountaineer and his raindeer. A Disney animation of Hans Christian Anderson’s fairy tale. Free at West Portal Branch Library, 190 Lenox Way

WED • DYLAN THOMAS NITE

Wed Dec 10 | 7 pm | On the centenary birthday of Dylan Thomas, Dulais Rhys’ slideshow of his life is accented with audio examples of the poet’s unique voice, including *A Child’s Christmas in Wales*. Merced Branch Library, 155 Winston Drive 355-2825.

THU • A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Thu Dec 11 | 6 pm | Classic 1938 version with Reginald Owen, Gene Lockhart and Kathleen Lockhart. Free at Ortega Branch Library 3223 Ortega St.

SUN • WINTER RUNDERLAND

Sun Dec 14 | 7:30 Check-in Begins | 5K fun run takes place at Crissy Field in San Francisco! The Winter RUNderland 5K is a flat, short, and incredibly scenic Figure 8 Loop around Crissy Field. The views of the city and Golden Gate Bridge are incredible, and it’s the perfect gentle run for beginners and experts alike.

When you register for the Winter RUNderland 5K, Titanium Racing will donate \$5 of your registration fee to Edgewood Center for Children. Online registration available through Dec. 13 at www.edgewood.org/run5k Same-day registration also available.

TUE • COMMUNITY SAFETY MEETING

Tue Dec 16 | 7 pm | Meet with Captain Curtis Lum. 3rd Tue of the month. Taraval Police Station 2345 24th Ave 759-3100.

SAT • OMI NEIGHBORS IN ACTION

Sat Dec 20 | 1–3 pm | Annual Holiday Toy Give Away the Saturday before Christmas at Minnie & Love Ward Rec Center - Capitol & Montana Streets.

MON • SHARP

Sun Dec 21 | Noon–2 pm | Winter Solstice Luncheon free to SHARP members; \$10 for non-members. Noon to 2 p.m. 1736 9th Ave @ Moraga. RSVP required by Dec 10. (sharpsf.com) We welcome your potluck contribution. Be hungry.

TUE • COMMUNITY SAFETY MEETING

Tue Jan 20 | 7 pm | Meet with Captain Curtis Lum. 3rd Tue of the month. Minnie & Lovie Ward, Capitol & Montana St Call to confirm: 759-3100.

MON • CENTRAL COUNCIL

Mon Jan 26 | West of Twin Peaks Central Council meets to discuss topics of interest to Westside residents. Meets the last Monday each month. (No meeting in December) westoftwinpeaks.org

MON • SHARP

Mon Jan 26 | 7 pm | William Hammond Hall transformed 1,000 acres of sand dunes into the world renown pastoral garden and woodland that is our front yard. Meetings last Mon of each month - sharpsf.com for details. 1736 9th Ave @ Moraga.

THU • OMI NEIGHBORS IN ACTION

Thu Jan 29 | 7 pm | Meets last Thu each month. This meeting is at Temple UMC 65 Beverly/Sheilds Street.

Local event? editor@westsideobserver.com
Priority: Westside Events

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At the Movies / By Don Lee Miller

ALEXANDER AND THE TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE NO GOOD, VERY BAD DAY

Alexander's: Ed Oxenbould 12th birthday couldn't be more fouled up if he tried. His dad Ben: Steve Carell, his working mom Kelly: Jennifer Garner, brother Anthony: Dylan Minnette, and sister Emily: Kerris Dorsey all have their worst day. Judith Viorst's children's book provides humor, often broad, in this crowd-pleaser for the entire family. Rude humor. Some reckless behavior. Profanity.



BEFORE I GO TO SLEEP

Housewife Nicole Kidman is anything but ordinary. Husband Ben: Colin Firth must hide photos of her best friend and their nine-year old son who died of an illness. She awakens each morning almost frantic with no memory of anything, including her near-fatal accident! She is shocked to see a woman of 40 staring back from her mirror; where did the years go? Christine thinks Dr. Nasch: Mark Strong is her confidante, but she learns he is a doctor with the institution she was in. This mysterious yarn was directed and written by Rowan Joffe from S.J. Watson's novel. Despite the efforts of the fine cast, somehow Joffe doesn't seem to have the ability to make the pieces fit coherently

BIRDMAN

Riggan Thomson: Michael Keaton, a screen actor beloved for his action hero Birdman of 20 years ago is opening in a Broadway drama. His assistant/daughter Sam: Emma Stone, and Riggan's best friend/manager/play producer Zach Galifianakis are on his team. Also performing in the play are Lesley: Namoi Watts and Laura: Andrea Riseborough. Lesley has the 'perfect' replacement for the fired actor, her b.f./actor Mike: Edward Norton who is arrogant, difficult and way over their budget. Riggan's ex-wife Sylvia: Amy Ryan and the one theatre critic who matters Tabitha: Lindsay Duncan round out the cast. Director/co-writer Alejandro González Iñárritu with co-writers Nicolas Giacobone, Alexander Dinelaris and Armando Bo present this complex tale of Riggan's attempt to return to the fame he once enjoyed. Excellent performances aid the cause. Profanity throughout. Some sexual content. Brief violence.

THE BOOK OF LIFE--3D

In this animated feature, tour guide Mary Beth: Christina Applegate introduces the love story of feisty Maria: voice of Zoe Saldana and bullfighter Manolo: v.o. Diego Luna, complicated by his military rival Joaquin: v.o. Channing Tatum. Joaquin is protected from injury and death by the medal bestowed upon him by Xibalba: Ron Perlman, the ruler of the dreary Land of the Forgotten. The digital creations are greatly enhanced by looking like wooden dolls with exquisite, colorful backgrounds and foregrounds. Having Guillermo del Toro as producer assured the Mexican tale of romance, rivalry, bullfighting, gods and the life beyond has a realistic tone, enlivened by the 3D. Director/co-writer Jorge R. Gutiérrez with co-writer Douglas Langdale make the animation come to life.

THE HUNGER GAMES—MOCKINGJAY, PART ONE

Katniss: Jennifer Lawrence goes to District 13 when District 12 is destroyed by Pres. Snow's: Donald Sutherland forces to report to Pres. Coin: Julianne Moore to become the symbol of the revolution. She has become closer to Gale: Liam Hemsworth (They're engaged in real life.) during this taut period when she doesn't know the fate of her mother and sister. Peeta: Josh Hutcherson is being held by Snow and forced to produce propaganda for the masses favorable to Snow and Caesar: Stanley Tucci. Haymitch: Woody Harrelson and Beetee: Jeffrey Wright join the Coin team. Plutarch: Philip Seymour Hoffman (his final role; the film is dedicated to him) counsels Coin in her actions. There's about 30 minutes of padding to keep it the length for the franchise. Anxious fans have to wait until next November for Part Two. Intense sequences of violence/action. Some disturbing images and thematic material.

INTERSTELLAR —IMAX

When Earth's food supply is running out and devastating sand storms are destroying the crops, famine looms in the near future. The answer lies in space travel on the Endurance to a recently discovered wormhole where possibly there is a planet where humans could exist. Pilot Coop: Matthew McConaughey must leave his 10-year old daughter Murph and son Tom, 15, behind to find it. NASA astrophysicist Prof. Brand: Michael Caine sends his daughter Amelia: Anne Hathaway on the voyage. The team travels to the wormhole, aware that their days are years on Earth and that when they come back, their children will be elderly. Adult Murph: Jessica Chastain assists Brand in his labwork. By their return, Murph: Ellen Burstyn (in old age make-up) is elderly. Director/co-writer Christopher Nolan with his son has fashioned an intelligent, thoughtful adventure story with top actors in all the key roles. Some intense perilous action. Mild profanity.

JOHN WICK

John Wick: Keanu Reeves, a recent widower whose beloved wife died suddenly, has a reputation (as a feared former mob hit man) for being able to defend his turf. A couple days later, a dog is delivered to him as a present from his wife to keep him company. He must battle Russian Mafia chieftan Vigo Tarasov: Michael Nyqvist and his mob when his punk son Iosef Tarasov: Alfie Allen steals Wick's vintage Mustang, beats him up and kills the pup. Marcus: Willem Dafoe is a mystery man who keeps one guessing which side he's on. Wick's vengeance supplies the high action in this adventure. Directors Chad Stahelski and David Leitch with writer Derek Kolstad keep the up the speedy pace. Reeves commands attention for the 101 minutes. Strong bloody violence throughout (the death toll approaches 101 killed in close combat!). Profanity. Brief drug use.

THE JUDGE

Hank Palmer: Robert Downey, Jr. returns to his Southern home for his mother's funeral. His father Judge Joseph Palmer: Robert Duvall seems to be losing it. Hank's ex-wife waitress Samantha: Vera Farmiga and brothers Glen: Vincent D'Onofrio and Dale: Jeremy Strong welcome him back. C.P.: Dax Shepard figures in on the hit-run with which the judge is being charged. In the trial scenes, opposing counsel Dwight Dickham: Billy Bob Thornton and Judge Warren: Ken Howard prominently appear. There's Oscar buzz for Duvall and Downey, who also produced with his wife.

KILL THE MESSENGER

San Jose Mercury journalist Gary Webb: Jeremy Renner exposes the CIA involvement in Nicaragua's cocaine syndication. Many don't believe him; others think maybe he's snorting himself. This true story is most compelling! Renner is getting Oscar talk for his role. His life, his family and his integrity are threatened by heavy pressure applied

Cont. p. 14

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At the Theater / Flora Lynn Isaacson and Linda Ayres-Frederick

PERSUASION

Popular English author Jane Austen (*Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*) had a final novel, *Persuasion*, which has been brought to life by Marin native Jennifer Le Blanc and directed by Mary Ann Rodgers at Ross Valley Players (RVP).

Anne Elliot (Robyn Grahm) is the 27-year-old over-looked middle daughter of the vain Sir Walter Elliot (Steve Price), an arrogant baron who spends excessive amounts of money. Eight years before the story properly begins, Anne is happily engaged to a Naval officer, Frederick Wentworth (Gregg Le Blanc - husband of Jennifer), but she suddenly breaks off the engagement when persuaded by her friend, Lady Russell (Rachel Kayhan) that such a match with a penniless man is unworthy. The breakup produces in Anne deep and long-lasting regret.

Wentworth re-enters Anne's life when Sir Walter is forced by his own financial irresponsibility to rent-out Kellynch Hall, the family estate. Kellynch's tenants turn out to be none other than Wentworth's sister Sophia (Ellen Brooks) and her husband, the recently retired Admiral Croft (Clay David). Wentworth, who has just returned from sea, is now a rich and successful captain and has never forgiven Anne for rejecting him. While publicly

declaring he is ready to marry any suitable young woman who catches his fancy, he privately resolves that he is ready to become attached to any appealing young woman with the exception of Anne. All of the tension of *Persuasion* revolves around one question: will Anne and Wentworth be reunited in their love?

RVP Director Mary Ann Rodgers gets an energetic performance from a large and impressively talented cast, some of them in multiple roles. Robyn Grahm is perfect as the central character Anne, and is well supported by Jayme Catalano as Anne's sister Elizabeth, and Rachel Kayhan as Lady Russell, the confidante who prior to the story's beginning persuaded Anne to dump Wentworth. Some of the outstanding secondary players are Anne Riply, as Lady Dalrymple, and Gregg Le Blanc who was wonderful as Capt. Wentworth.

Many of the actors stopped briefly out of character to deliver a running narrative connecting plot development that otherwise might be difficult to follow. An easel

Cont. p. 13



Flora Lynn Isaacson



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Money Matters By Brandon Miller & Joanne Jordan

Considering Health Care Costs in Retirement



With all the uncertainties of the future, it's difficult for people to know exactly how much to save for retirement. While it may be relatively easy to gauge how much you'll need for everyday living expenses like food and housing, other expenses such as the costs for health care can be a lot more difficult to estimate.

...a baby boomer couple retiring in 2020 will need an average of \$227,000 to cover medical expenses. You can hope your costs will be on the lower side of that figure, but there's really no way to predict the amount of medical care you'll need as you age—or the price tag that will go with it. "

According to projections from the Employee Benefit Research Institute*, a baby boomer couple retiring in 2020 will need an average of \$227,000 to cover medical expenses. You can hope your costs will be on the lower side of that figure, but there's really no way to predict the amount of medical care you'll need as you age—or the price tag that will go with it.

To help people better understand how their future health status, health care costs and finances are all intertwined, Ameriprise Financial recently released the *Health, Wealth and Retirement*SM study. Here are five key findings from the study, along with some tips to help you manage future medical costs:

Most baby boomers have yet to take financial action to prepare for health care and potential long-term care costs in retirement. You can take some comfort in knowing you're not alone if you haven't

put a plan in place to manage your future health care costs. But, because these costs can be so significant, the sooner you take action, the better off you'll likely be.

The majority of boomers see the connection between health and potentially reduced health care costs in retirement. While many health events are unpredictable, you can control some aspects of your future state of health. One way to offset your need for medicines or surgeries is to take care of yourself now—by eating right and getting sufficient exercise and rest.

1 in 4 baby boomers have experienced a serious health condition; 54% say it had a financial impact. This insight reinforces the vital importance of an emergency health care fund and the value of a comprehensive medical plan. Your task is then to learn about your health coverage options in retirement, including supplemental plans that can help offset large and unexpected expenses in exchange for monthly premiums.

Those who have taken action to prepare for health care coverage in retirement experience positive emotions, while those who have not experience worry, anxiety and insecurity. Do your best to reduce the amount of worry and stress in your life by taking steps to plan and save for your health care expenses in retirement.

A majority (62%) of those preparing for retirement plan to consult their financial advisors about how to afford future health care costs. This fact reveals

that this is a task that requires a second opinion. With the help of a qualified financial advisor, you can explore strategies for managing future health care costs in the context of a larger plan that considers all of your wants and needs in retirement.

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

Check Out Our Website! westsideobserver.com



At the Movies (Cont. from p. 12)

by the CIA. His involvement with Ronald Quail: Robert Patrick and his girl friend: Gena Sims are key to the plot. Webb's book and Nick Schou's *Kill the Messenger* provide the facts for Peter Landesman's screenplay, directed by Michael Cuesta with all the complicated twists forcing Webb to his final act. Profanity. Drug content.

NIGHTCRAWLER

Louis Bloom: Jake Gyllenhaal (gaut from losing 40 lbs. for the role) finds himself learning to be a photo journalist for accidents. He follows the police calls and upgrades his camera equipment as Joe Loder: Bill Paxton suggested if he wants to be successful. Nina: Renee Russo buys his work for her TV station. Bloom makes no secret of his infatuation with her. Sharon Tay, Kent Shockneck and Pat Harvey play themselves in this competitive devil chase, fast action thriller. Director-writer Dan Gilroy delivers the gruesomeness of what Bloom finds as his nightcrawler business progresses. Performances are riveting! Violence including graphic images. Profanity.

ROSEWATER

Iranian-born journalist Maziar Bahari: Gael Garcia Bernal leaves his pregnant wife in the U.K. to chronicle the controversial 2009 presidential elections in Tehran. Arrested as a CIA-Zionist spy after his video revealed police violence, Maz's insecure, angry interrogator Javadi: Kim Bodnia tortures and berates Maz during his 118 days of blindfolded imprisonment in Evin Prison. His only identifying trait is the strong scent of rosewater. Writer-director Jon Stewart (host of *The Daily Show*) debuts as the filmmaker. Maziar's mother: Shohreh Aghdashloo mounts the campaign for his release. *Rosewater* becomes an unexpectedly, thrilling knockout smash for Stewart and Bernal. Stewart based his screenplay on the memoir by Bahari and Aimee Molloy. Some crude references. Violent content.



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Second Thoughts / By Jack Kaye



Saving the Affordable Care Act

In what is called President Obama's most important legislation, the Affordable Care Act has been under constant fire. The House voted 54 times to end it. The GOP shut down the government trying to kill it. Recent polls show that the majority of the American people are against it. It is cited as part of the reason the Democrats lost control of the House in the 2010 election and then of the Senate in 2014.

Why?

The Affordable Care Act was developed to curb the abuses of the medical insurance industry. Individuals needing health care coverage not available to them through their employers, or through a federal program like Medicare or Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California), had to apply to the healthcare insurance companies operating in their area. People found to have had pre-existing medical conditions were faced with very high, almost unaffordable policy options. Companies also asked questions about behavior, such as whether someone smoked cigarettes or marijuana, whether one drank and how much, and about any previous medical conditions. Even if they were no longer a problem. The companies would then raise their rates accordingly.

Insurance companies also had caps limiting the amount of claims they would accept. If the patient cost them too much, they could discontinue their coverage.

As many as 50 million Americans were thought to be without any medical coverage. When illness became too much to ignore, many would wind up in the emergency rooms of their local hospitals, making the cost of their treatment even greater. Some could not pay for their treatment, theoretically making everyone pay a little more to make up for the loss.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) came up with a solution. Let individuals without insurance sign up for it through a health exchange in their state. The exchange would let all the health care carriers bid to get the business. This would make their rates more competitive. The companies could not ask about pre-existing medical conditions or lifestyle questions. They had to accept all applicants. But in order for this to work for the insurers, everyone had to get coverage. To ensure that everyone got coverage, fines would be imposed on those who elected to not sign up. Hopefully, with everyone getting coverage, there would be enough healthy applicants to make up for the unhealthy ones who would be sure to sign up.

In order to ensure that everyone could afford coverage, the government promised to give tax credits to those with insufficient means. Those with almost no money would be transferred to the Medicaid program where they would get coverage for free, if they met certain other criteria.

We were told that those who do not sign up are being irresponsible, causing the rest of us to pay for their medical care if it is ever needed.

But many people objected. Why should the young and healthy, who might not need or want medical coverage, have to subsidize the unhealthy? Why should people be forced to buy insurance they don't need? And why are some people getting tax credits? Will this be like the Earned Income Credit which has a fraud rate of about \$11 billion a year? And does the government have the right to fine or tax the public for non-compliance?

Now that the GOP controls both chambers, it is likely they will try again to force the President to end the ACA.

I think that I have come up with a way to make everyone happy.

First, keep all the favorable parts of ACA, including allowing children under 26 to be on their parents' plan, having no caps, and having state exchanges to bring all the available companies in a competition for this once-captive audience. The mandate that businesses of a certain size must offer health insurance to its employees who work at least a certain number of hours a week should remain, as would federal coverage still be available to those who cannot afford coverage at all.

The individual mandate should be dropped, and also the fines for non-compliance. People should be able to keep whatever coverage they currently have, and those without any coverage do not need to buy it if they don't want to. In return, the private insurers bidding in the state exchanges can reject any applicant with serious, long term, and well-documented medical conditions like cancer, heart disease, kidney failure, liver disease, pancreatitis, and AIDS. They could not consider past injuries, alcohol or tobacco use, etc., just the agreed-upon serious pre-existing conditions. Those rejected for serious conditions would be immediately transferred to the federal program, just like those with insufficient income are, except these people would have the same share of cost as they would have through the exchange if they were healthy.

Since private carriers would have no new policies with serious medical pre-existing conditions, they would not need everyone to enroll to make money. And since people would buy insurance only if they chose to, and since there would be no federal subsidy through tax credits, the insurers would have to lower their rates to be competitive. Income would not be an issue unless the person were close to indigent and therefore also eligible for federal medical coverage, but with no deductible.

But what about the argument that those who choose to go without insurance are being irresponsible? Is a person who keeps himself healthy and never needs medical services irresponsible? If he does need to see a doctor, he will have to pay for it. How is that irresponsible? On the other hand, if a person abuses his body with excessive food, alcohol, tobacco and/or drugs, but has coverage and makes use of it regularly, is he responsible? Does he not cost the ratepayer and the taxpayer more than the person who takes care of himself and needs little medical attention?

I think that with these changes, most of the objections to ACA will disappear and the vast majority of our people will embrace it - even Republicans.

Feedback: kaye@westsideobserver.com

Senior Smarts By Anise J. Matteson

Coping with the Holidays During Bereavement

By Anise J. Matteson

Christmastide is the festival season from Christmas Eve until after New Year's Day.

Christmas is observed as a legal holiday that commemorates the birth of Christ—a Christian feast on December 25 or among Eastern Orthodox on January 6. It is observed with religious ceremonies and prayer.

The word Christmas comes from the early English phrase *Christes Masse*, which means *Christ's Mass*.

Many people write Xmas instead of Christmas. This form of the name originated in the early Christian Church. In Greek, X is the first letter of Christ's name. It was frequently used as a holy symbol.

Christmas is a family occasion—relatives gather to exchange gifts and share their happiness.

The custom of exchanging Christmas gifts is a tradition associated with the gifts the Wise Men brought the Christ Child. Gifts are homemade or bought and wrapped with bright paper and ribbons.

Santa, a symbol of gift giving, creates an atmosphere of cheerfulness.

Family dinner consists of: meat, potatoes, vegetables, dressing, gravy, cranberry sauce, nuts and fruits. Dessert: fruit cake, plum pudding, pumpkin or mince pie. Drinks: eggnog.

Usually the word "White Christmas" is associated with snow at Christmastime. It is also a term associated with churches and social groups celebrated as a way of sharing. Several days before Christmas, members of the group wrap canned goods, turkeys, and other foods in white paper. They distributed these gifts to needy persons in the community. This tradition continues today with receptacles throughout the city for donating food items or purchasing a \$10 bag of groceries for supermarkets to donate to a charity. (The World Book Encyclopedia)

HOLIDAY COPING STRATEGIES

This article is intended to provide solace for families coping with an anticipated loss or who have lost a family member this year.

To all my readers, may you and your loved ones enjoy a Merry Christmas and a healthy New Year.

Evaluate Your Coping Plans

- ♥ Do your plans isolate you?
- ♥ Do your plans reflect what a particular holiday means for you?
- ♥ The most difficult part of the holiday season?
- ♥ The most difficult people to be with?
- ♥ Grief triggers?
- ♥ Traditions you want to include?
- ♥ Traditions you do not want to include?
- ♥ People you would like to be with you?
- ♥ People you do not want to spend the holidays with?
- ♥ Things that might help you when you are feeling intense grief?

Assert Yourself

Dr. Louis E. LaGrand offers the following advice in his book *Healing Grief, Finding Peace*:

- ♥ Your needs come first. Tell family and friends specifically what you can and cannot do.
- ♥ You may want to eat out, have someone else hold it this year, or have others assume more responsibility.
- ♥ You don't have to follow the exact schedule or routines of the past. Consider starting a new tradition.
- ♥ There is nothing wrong with reducing the amount of time you spend at events or in preparation for the day. Tell all concerned what your level of participation will be.
- ♥ Find a way to symbolically honor your deceased loved one. Make it a habit to acknowledge the memory of your loved one at major family events. It's okay if tears flow.
- ♥ Tell yourself and accept the fact that the holidays will be different. Identify

what emotions you are feeling and express them to your grief companion.

♥ Diligently manage your anticipation. Keep things simple and focus on the values, beliefs, joy, and wisdom of the deceased. Remember that laughter and a smile are still important parts of life.

TIPS FOR ADULTS ON PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR THEIR KIDS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Be aware of the behavior of adults, particularly parents on a grieving child. Parents must let the child know that adult tears are not a rejection of the child.

Don't avoid long-standing family tradition. Traditions are often comfortable for the children. (e.g., decorating the tree, lighting the candles, the big family dinner.) Focus on available support from family and close friends.

Create a specific time during the holiday season to talk as a family about favorite memories of the person who dies.

Provide children with special amounts of attention, praise and emotional support.

Take an active role in helping the child cope.

Pay attention to cues and talk openly about how natural it is to be thinking of your loved one.

Recognize that the child may have questions about the death...Be patient and honest in your answers.

Provide reassurance through actions as well as words.

Recognize that children need to talk, not just to be talked to.

©Suggestions provided by: Hospice by the Bay, from: *Helping Children Cope With Grief*, by Dr. Alan Wolfelt—printed with permission of Hospice by the Bay for inclusion in Elder Caregivers NEWSLETTER – October 2003, p. 8.

GENERAL TIP FOR ADULTS ON PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR ADOLESCENTS

They should be listened to and allowed to ventilate their feelings, whether they be guilt, anger or plain sadness. (Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, MD, *On Death and Dying*, p. 185.)

SYMPATHY NOTE

How to write a letter to enclose with a holiday card to someone who has experienced the death of a loved one?

Barbara Kate Repa, Senior Editor at Caring.com has these suggestions:

- ♥ A handwritten note.
- ♥ Avoid explanations or excuses for tardiness.
- ♥ The note can be brief or long. The intent is to convey that you are thinking of him or her and sending support.
- ♥ Concentrate on extending sympathy rather than personal updates. Do not inject recounting your own loss.
- ♥ If you do not know what to say, phrases often used are:

With deepest sympathy,
Our heartfelt condolences,
My heart goes out to you and your family.

I'm so sorry for your loss.
_____ will be sorely missed.

Your family is in my thoughts and prayers.

- ♥ Use the deceased's name.
- ♥ Talk about the deceased. Include specific comments about the person who died—an anecdote that captured the person's personality, comment on how the person inspired or taught you or made you happy.
- ♥ Skip the unpleasanties (drudging up past disagreements, sums of money

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666 Rockdale Dr	Miraloma Park	4	2	1	1,060,000	1,250,000	117.92
225 Teresita Blvd	Miraloma Park	3	2	1	1,149,000	1,300,000	113.14
191 Dalewood Way	Sherwood Forest	3	2.5	1	1,449,000	1,550,000	106.97
75 Cresta Vista Dr	Westwood	3	3	2	1,475,000	1,500,000	101.69
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							8	2
5	6	3					9	
				6	7		5	1
9				2				7
					9			
8	7					3		
	4	7			2	6		
			6				2	5
2	8							

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 below.

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

BRAIN FUD

A Rose Garden?

Can you figure this saying out of the weeds that snare it?

roges	toses	rosev
noses	royes	eoses
rosei	roser	
rhses	reses	

As I changed one letter in 'roses' every time, each letter spelled out 'everything' coming up, so therefore: everything is literally coming up roses!

Everything's coming up roses!
Answer



And the winner is....

Clarendon Elementary School in San Francisco

By Carol Kocivar ©2014



Ever step back in time? Step back into a place that has so many great memories of growing up?

I did the other day.

It was my children's elementary school—Clarendon, where they attended the Japanese Bilingual Bicultural Program.

For years, whenever anyone asked about public schools in San Francisco, I would tell them about my children's school and say it was the BEST school in the state.

Well, I was wrong.

Not just the best school in California but one of the best schools in the entire country.

Take a look here. A press release from the San Francisco School District:

Clarendon Elementary School has been recognized as a 2014 National Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education, along with 12 other California public schools and two private schools.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools program honors schools that show exemplary performance for all student subgroups and those that have demonstrated considerable improvement in the performance of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Principal Peter Van Court credits the school's success to several factors. "We have great parent participation and a great staff, so our students are thriving."

I couldn't resist a revisit.

Clarendon is not only where my children grew up but where I also grew up. It is where I learned how great schools work. That experience of joy and success has guided my journey as an advocate for great public schools.

So I took a trip back in time.

I was a little bit on remote control, the route embedded in the early morning memory of dropping off and picking up kids day after day, year after year, through two kids in elementary school.

The first thing I heard when I got to the school was laughter. Kids out on the playground in a physical education class giggling and just having fun.

Then I heard the music—kids actually learning to play musical instruments.

Then I saw the parents. A parent leader was in the principal's office discussing, collaborating on how to work together to improve the schools.

Then I ran into a teacher from the time my kids were in the school. (Please note—my kids are now grown up.) She knows me. She remembers my children.

I saw the vivid reminders that this is a bilingual school. This is a school where children learn, and value, different languages and different cultures.

There are so many ingredients to a successful school.

Paramount is supporting great teachers. Making this a caring community where teachers want to come in early and stay a little later. Making sure there is time for teachers to work together in grade level teams.

You need a principal who recognizes and values and strengthens all those ingredients.

It was all still there, just as I remembered—caring teachers and a caring school community.

A school where music and art and



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different languages and parent engagement are part of the culture and fiber of the school.

We know that we can have great public schools. There are lots of moving parts, not just one silver bullet, which create success.

AND you need the money to pay for these.

Thankfully, in San Francisco our community voted to invest extra funds to support those essential ingredients, including the arts and libraries and physical education.

Generous parents dig deep into their own pockets to try to make up for the failure of the state to fund all the ingredients needed for successful schools.

Ohh...just one more note. Sort of cream on top.

Not only was Clarendon selected a National Blue Ribbon School this year, but it was also selected as a California Distinguished School.

Carol Kocivar is former President of the California Parent Teachers Assn. and lives in the Westside. Feedback: kocivar@westsideobserver.com



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<http://www.sf-fire.org/index.aspx?page=1338>

Holiday Bereavement (Cont. from p. 18)

owed, comparison to other relatives death, apologies or explanations for having been out of touch or less-than-flattering words about the deceased).

- ♥ Avoid platitudes—clichés about death.
- ♥ Write from your heart.
- ♥ Include your return address and full name. (www.caring.com/articles/sympathy--note)

Editor's note: this is a shortened version of Senior Smarts. For Mattison's complete column, including a list of support groups, go to the website: www.westsideobserver.com/health.html

Anise Matteson is an elder care consultant, retired Registered Health Information Technician and writer of reference books for seniors including *Coping with the Holidays: Excerpts from Elder Caregivers NEWSLETTER*, ©2007, and forum host for *Caring for an Aging Loved One*. cfaalo@yahoo.com.

Theater (Cont. from p. 13)

stage-right informed the audience as to the locale of each scene, which otherwise would remain a mystery. An austere all-white set by Malcom Rodgers doubles as both indoor and outdoor locations. One nice special effect was twirling parasols when the characters rode in a carriage. The period costumes by Michael A. Berg absolutely stole the show.

First produced after her death in 1817, *Persuasion* is the last of Jane Austen's romantic novels. Jennifer Le Blanc's adaptation retains its own enduring charm.

Persuasion at Ross Valley Players runs Nov. 14– Dec. 14. Thu: 7:30 pm; Fri-Sat: 8 pm; Sun: 2 pm. Special Performances Sat., Dec 13, 2 pm and 8 pm. The Barn Theater of the Ross Valley Players at 30 Sir Francis Drake Blvd., Ross CA. Tickets: 415-456-9555, x 1, or www.RossValleyPlayers.com. Coming up: *Impressionism, a contemporary romance* by Michael Jacobs, Jan. 16 – Feb 15. *Flora Lynn Isaacson*

PROMISES, PROMISES

A Musical for the Holiday Season at SF Playhouse

Promises, Promises is one of those musical comedies that borrowed its plot from a non-musical film, and a 1960 classic at that. The comedy-drama *The Apartment*, produced, directed and co-authored by Billy Wilder, starred Jack Lemmon, Shirley MacLaine, and Fred MacMurray, and won six well-deserved Academy Awards. In 1969 Neil Simon and Burt Bacharach adapted the film and turned it into the musical *Promises, Promises*. The most memorable song of the show, "I'll Never Fall in Love Again" joined the standards of the day, earning a Grammy Nomination and became a hit single sung by Dionne Warwick. But what does all this have to do with the current local production of *Promises, Promises* now running at SF Playhouse? The show fits nicely into a holiday season motif with its office Christmas party revels, as well as the less than desirable aspects of the season: broken-hearted naivete seeking solace by downing too many sleeping pills.

Chuck Baxter (a convincing Jeffrey Brian Adams) is the ambitious but invisible office worker who gains attention by lending his tiny apartment to his philandering superiors for their romantic trysts. He runs into trouble when he finds himself sharing a would-be girlfriend Fran Kubelik (the charming Monique Hafen) with his callous boss J.D. Shelldrake (Johnny Moreno). With hope of gaining Fran's attention dashed, Chuck seeks solace picking up a tipsy Marge (the hilarious Corinne Proctor) at the local bar, only to be surprised to discover

Fran nearly overdosed in his bed. Once rid of Marge, he seeks help from his neighbor Dr. Dreyfuss (the comedic Ray Reinhardt) to save Fran's life.

With creative choreography by Kimberly Richards, the two and a half hour show includes a dizzying array of projections by Micah Steiglitz. The stronger second act makes additional use of Director Bill English's Set Design as it shifts back and forth from the office locales to the interior of the apartment.

Promises, Promises continues Tuesdays through Sundays thru January 10, 2015. No shows 11/27,12/24, 12/25, 1/1 Tickets: \$20-\$120. 415.677.9596. www.sfplayhouse.org. Linda Ayres-Frederick

THE TRAIN DRIVER

Few shows can be described as riveting, but Off Broadway West's Bay Area premiere production of *The Train Driver* by Athol Fugard fits that description precisely. It helps to have a Tony Award-winning playwright and seasoned director Richard D. Harder to interpret the work. Harder previously won an SF Bay Area Critics Circle Award for directing OBW's production of Fugard's "Master Harold" and the Boys.

Set in Fugard's native South Africa, the 75 minute drama follows a white train driver Roelf Visagie (intensely depicted by Conor Hamill) who is devastated by unintentionally killing a black woman who stepped in front of his moving train with an infant strapped to her back. Haunted by the experience, Roelf seeks solace and answers by traveling to the township's graveyard, where he encounters the aged black gravedigger named Simon Hanabe (a sensitive portrayal by Melvin Thompson). Simon's job is to bury the nameless. Through their unlikely friendship, Roelf comes to face his guilt and remorse. Fugard has called *The Train Driver* his most significant work in a 50-year career. A longtime advocate of the abolition of apartheid, Fugard is a master storyteller, interweaving the personal with the political. While his characters may not be formally educated, their driving need to understand their life experience makes them both genuinely articulate and ultimately poetic.

The Train Driver continues at 8pm Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays through December 6, 2014. 3pm Sunday Matinee November 30. The Phoenix Theatre, 414 Mason Street (near Geary) Sixth Floor, SF Tickets: \$40 General Admission (TBA, Senior, Student & Group Discounts Available) 1.800.838.3006 www.offbroadwaywest.org Linda Ayres-Frederick





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Real Travel By Sergio Nibbi



A Bright and Shining Star

It was a simple conversation between two old friends that had nothing to do with travel. At the end of our discussion, George Lippi from Fugazi Travel happened to mention the new cruise terminal in San Francisco, and how lovely it was, and how much people were enjoying cruises to Mexico leaving from and returning to our beautiful city. The conversation ended, and two weeks later we were standing in line waiting to board the Star Princess with our daughter Kathy and her husband Mark. People spend months planning trips but this one happened quickly, without warning, and was a complete and total surprise.

The new terminal is beautiful, very modern, and the walls lined with the names of generous donors that made it all possible. Up the gangplank, stop and smile for the camera, carry-on over your shoulder, and head for your room.

Once settled in we toured the ship and got our bearings while the tons of provisions on the dock were loaded aboard, and the huge barge on our starboard side nursed ten days of fuel into the ship's thirsty tanks. Leaving an hour late gave us the opportunity to pass under the Golden Gate Bridge in early darkness, enjoying the orange lights illuminating this magnificent structure.

Three days at sea sounded like a real treat, but like all good things it went by much too quickly. We were fortunate enough to have "any time dining" which gave us plenty of time for a cocktail or two, and saved us from having to rush off to dinner at a predetermined time. The food and service was truly first class, and as an added treat, we had the opportunity to try the specialty restaurants like Sabatini's and the Crown Grill.

Our first stop on Monday was Cabo San Lucas, where the challenge of the day was getting on and off the tenders without looking like a drunk trying to find his way home, while those a little chunkier than we struggled mercilessly while we placed bets on who would or would not get dunked in the process. Why is it that the older, fatter ones always want to struggle with the tender's steep, narrow ladder, just to go and sit on the top deck for the short ride to town? One could do an award winning video on just that alone.

Once past a small army of hawkers, we worked our way along the boardwalk and into a few shops selling still more of the same trinkets. Kathy and Mark had gone scuba diving that morning and were ready for some nourishment, so we sat with them and settled for some nachos and a coke when we spotted a sign that said, "Massage \$20.00." Karen and I looked at each other and said, "what the heck." It turned out to be one of the best massages ever.

Tuesday was Loreto, which we found to be a small town with a big surprise. The three block walk to the main street brought us past the Mission of Our Lady of Loreto, built by the Jesuits in 1697, a charming stone church with a bell tower and center court yard which was so reminiscent of our California missions. What nice people in this town, and so helpful. Our biggest disappointment was missing a ride back to the ship on the small cart powered by a donkey, and whose owner was as the sign said "hearing impaired." No haggling, the sign said it all, "\$3.00 per person." We gave up on the wait and took a taxi instead.

That evening we were to be treated to a very special surprise, again courtesy of our good friend George. We had been contacted a few days earlier by Jean Paul Musiu, the head Maitre d' inviting us to what is known as the "Chef's Table" dinner. At 6:30 sharp we met in the lobby by the dining room entrance, where we introduced ourselves to the



other two couples and donned our white coats. The eight of us followed Jean Paul through the dining room, very much aware of the stares from the other diners, and into the kitchen where we were instructed on how to wash our hands and explained the protocol of kitchen cleanliness. We were given a tour of the kitchen where 1,500 meals are prepared and served in 90 minutes. With all that going on, the Executive Chef, Joel Directo, joined us at a special table where we were served champagne and hor d'oeuvres that were beyond description.

Lobster and Shrimps Margarita, Tartare of Sterling, Silver and Beef, Mini Quiche with Black Truffles and a warm Potato Timbale with Sour Cream and Caviar, and that was just the hor d'oeuvres!! Once at the table we were served a Seafood Risotto topped with a mini lobster on top, a Strawberry and Cracked Pepper Sorbet with a splash of Grey Goose as a pallet cleanser, a Double Impact of Surf

At the Movies (Cont. from p. 19)

by the CIA. His involvement with Ronald Quail: Robert Patrick and his girl friend: Gena Sims are key to the plot. Webb's book and Nick Schou's *Kill the Messenger* provide the facts for Peter Landesman's screenplay, directed by Michael Cuesta with all the complicated twists forcing Webb to his final act. Profanity. Drug content.

NIGHTCRAWLER

Louis Bloom: Jake Gyllenhaal (gaut from losing 40 lbs. for the role) finds himself learning to be a photo journalist for accidents. He follows the police calls and upgrades his camera equipment as Joe Loder: Bill Paxton suggested if he wants to be successful. Nina: Renee Russo buys his work for her TV station. Bloom makes no secret of his infatuation with her. Sharon Tay, Kent Shockneck and Pat Harvey play themselves in this competitive devil chase, fast action thriller. Director-writer Dan Gilroy delivers the gruesomeness of what Bloom finds as his nightcrawler business progresses. Performances are riveting! Violence including graphic images. Profanity.

ROSEWATER

Iranian-born journalist Maziar Bahari: Gael Garcia Bernal leaves his pregnant wife in the U.K. to chronicle the controversial 2009 presidential elections in Tehran. Arrested as a CIA-Zionist spy after his video revealed police violence, Maz's insecure, angry interrogator Javadi: Kim Bodnia tortures and berates Maz during his 118 days of blindfolded imprisonment in Evin Prison. His only identifying trait is the strong scent of rosewater. Writer-director Jon Stewart (host of *The Daily Show*) debuts as the filmmaker. Maziar's mother: Shohreh Aghdashloo mounts the campaign for his release. *Rosewater* becomes an unexpectedly, thrilling knockout smash for Stewart and Bernal. Stewart based his screenplay on the memoir by Bahari and Aimee Molloy. Some crude references. Violent content.



and Turf with more Lobster, Scallops and Beef Filet and Lamb Rib Chops presented on a metal rack designed by the Romans, which allowed us to choose which chop we wanted along with a variety of sauces, vegetables and chateau potatoes. The Baked Camembert with pine nuts followed and set the stage for a very special Bittersweet Chocolate Mousse with Caramel Cream and Milk Chocolate Crunch. The three wines that accompanied the dinner were superb, and to top it all off, Jean Paul presented each couple with an autographed copy of the Princess Cruises cookbook, *Courses, A Culinary Journey*, as well as a set of photos taken at the table. There are no words to describe the evening.....Thank you Jean Paul, Joel Directo, and to the staff that took such great care of us.



The following morning we arrived at La Paz, and took a complimentary bus for the 30 minute ride into the center of town, looked around through the windows of the bus, looked at each other and said, "Let's not bother to get off and wait for another bus." Back we went, did some trinket shopping and were back on board for our 1:00 pm departure.

Today it was Puerto Vallarta, where we took a \$4.00 taxi ride into town, walked around a bit and found a taxi driver that would show us around town for \$10.00 per person. The one hour tour brought us by Elizabeth Taylor's house, which is in the process of being remodeled, Richard Burton's bridge with a statue of both, a stop at the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a swing by "Tacos Bells" and a rollercoaster ride back to the ship. All the streets are paved with cobblestones that definitely show the ravages of time, and as the taxi driver told us, it's a "Mexican massage." This evening we set sail for San Francisco at 8:00 PM, and then after three days at sea it's back under that beautiful bridge and back to reality. The timing for us was perfect. In a few more days its Thanksgiving, which sets the pace for us as we face the holiday season. Considering that we have seven functions in seven days coming up I think this mini diversion was wisely timed. Take care, enjoy the season, stay well, thank you to our Star Princess and as my Mexican friends say, "Hasta la Vista." v

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J. Otto Seibold and Mr. Lunch is organized by The Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, and is based on three books by J. Otto Seibold and Vivian Walsh: *Mr. Lunch Borrows a Canoe*, *Free Lunch*, and *Mr. Lunch Takes a Plane Ride*. Supporting sponsorship is provided by the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund. Additional support of this exhibition and education programs at The CJM is provided with thanks to proceeds from the Sixth Annual Family Gala: *Mr. Lunch Throws a Party*. Major sponsors include Yamiléé Bermingham and Douglas Winthrop, the Felson Family, Debbie and Scott Kay, Nellie and Max Levchin, Shana Nelson Middler and David Middler, Alison Gelb Pinous and Mark Pinous, Leesa and Martin Romo, Christine Russell and Mark Schlesinger, Roselyne Chroman Swig, and Wendy and Richard Yanowitch. Major support for The Contemporary Jewish Museum's exhibitions and Jewish Peoplehood Programs comes from the Koret Foundation. J. Otto Seibold, Untitled, 2014. Vector illustration, dimensions variable.