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## Laguna Honda Hospital

# Unanswered Questions Remain for the Patient Gift Fund

by Patrick Monette-Shaw

Since a Whistleblower complaint about potential inappropriate spending from Laguna Honda Hospitals (LHH) Patient Gift Fund was filed last March, no corrective action has been taken.

After KGO TV's "I-Team" investigative journalist Dan Noyes aired a story on May 20, nothing meaningful has been done. Numerous public records requests subsequently placed have lead to only more questions, and few answers.

LHH was cited by California's Licensing and Certification (L&C) Division for a fairly serious "deficiency" involving patient choice in therapeutic activities, as a direct result of potential misappropriation of donations to LHH's Patient Gift Fund. In a citation involving "misappropriation of property/activities," L&C issued an "E" deficiency — citing a violation of Federal law — against LHH on May 19, the day before Noyes' story aired. The State citation documented that **patients now wait up to three months for bus trip outings** to culturally-appropriate restaurants.

An "E" deficiency involves a "pattern" having a potential for more than minimal harm, but not immediate jeopardy and without actual harm.

It is thought that the State is required to report potential violations of Federal regulations to the U.S. Department of Justice, which remains concerned about the welfare of residents at LHH.

**Shortly after LHH's 2004 revisions to its Patient Gift Fund policy, increases in gift fund expenditures benefitting LHH's staff, rather than patients, soon skyrocketed, after three staff education sub-accounts were created on August 12, 2005 shortly after Kanaley took control; the other education account was created in January 2008.**

The day after the KGO story aired, City Controller Bed Rosenfield recommended on May 21 — following a cursory "review" to determine whether LHH's accounting practices were consistent with City policies — that in order to avoid continuing questions regarding the Patient Gift Fund, the Department of Health should "create a separate account ... for employee training and development," effectively ordering DPH to segregate funds donated to benefit patients from funds for staff luncheons, education, and development.



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at Laguna Honda masks the turmoil that is going on behind the scenes

Deputy City Controller Monique Zmuda acknowledged on May 25 the Controller's review was "not an audit." Indeed, no audit has been performed to anyone's knowledge or the City would have already released results.

Later, Zmuda provided documentation indicating there are 20 separate sub-accounts within the Patient Gift Fund, four of which are for staff education purposes used mostly to fund catered meals for staff. The staff education accounts remain embedded within the Patient Gift Fund.

A patient was potentially denied funding from the Patient Gift Fund in the current fiscal year for a mechanical lift needed for discharge.

In stark contrast to the \$2,500 needed to purchase the mechanical lift, documents provided responding to public records requests placed by former LHH physicians Dr. Maria Rivero and Dr. Derek Kerr revealed that in current fiscal year 2009–2010, the Patient Gift Fund spent at least \$12,675 on catered meals for senior hospital staff members.

LHH suddenly, and deliberately, revised its Patient Gift Fund policy #45-01 on December 2, 2004 one month after former LHH Executive Administrator John Kanaley was hired, removing a patient representative from its Gift Fund Management Committee and a required quarterly report of gift fund activity

Cont. p. 9

## Merchants Struggling to Survive MUNI's St. Francis Circle Project

By Elliot Wagner

Merchants up and down West Portal Avenue are struggling to survive the chaos of the St. Francis Circle rail replacement project. Although MUNI conducted several community meetings to provide outreach to the stakeholders in the neighborhood, they waited until the last minute to 'drop the bomb' of gory details that caused an uproar. The merchants were dismayed that they were never consulted on a project that could potentially devastate them economically. The project has created far more intrusive challenges than anyone could have predicted. By some accounts, merchant traffic is down 20% with merchants losing as much as \$250,000 per month in revenues.

The challenges run the entire length of the district. At the "circle" end of the street, poor signage and unexpected street closures were causing confusion for drivers. The full potential impact of the project hadn't been communicated by the SFMTA. As the frustration mounted, merchants composed a letter to the Mayor asking to be heard and offering solutions to some of the major problems, particularly recommending that MUNI promote a "West Portal Grand Re-opening Event" once the project is completed within the next 3-4 months.

Kirsten Macauley, from the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services and Supervisor Sean Elsbernd brokered a meeting with the merchants, local residents, SFMTA officials, and the day-to-day project management team on June 18th at Waldorf High School. It drew a quite a vocal mixture of merchants and neighbors. Frank Alejandro, the project's Overall Operations Manager, stressed that SFMTA was there to listen. From the "tunnel to the circle" the meeting focused on seven major areas of concern. The MTA officials, the Project team and the Contractor listened carefully to the concerns and in some cases are now addressing the issues.

**Typical of the frustration, Jack of Venezia's Upholstery commented, "I would just like you (SFMTA) to go home tonight and think to yourself: I am a merchant and I have a store and am losing money. How would you feel?"**

**#1 West Portal Tunnel:** Merchants were distressed about the Parking Control Officers (PCO) and Transit Inspectors simultaneously attempting to direct both pedestrian and vehicle traffic. This causes mass confusion and unnecessary congestion, with one officer telling cars to make a turn, while the other telling pedestrians to walk, — often directly into the path of those turning cars. Solutions: MUNI officials promised to substantially

Cont. p. 5



### MUNI SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS PUBLIC HEARING

**Noon, Tuesday, July 6 • Room 400 • City Hall**  
SFMTA Board of Directors/Parking Authority Commission Meeting

#### Partial Muni Restoration Recommendations

Input from Muni Customers sought on restoration of service to some bus routes and rail lines affected by the May 8 service changes

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), which oversees all surface transportation in San Francisco including the Municipal Railway (Muni), will include at its Tuesday, July 6 Board of Directors meeting a hearing on improving Muni service September 4.

Additional information can be obtained from [www.sfmta.com](http://www.sfmta.com) or by calling 311 which also provides assistance in other languages.



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RUMINATIONS FROM A FORMER SUPERVISOR

# Supervisors’ Salary Scam

BY Quentin Kopp

Since my last column several San Franciscans, who believe in honest, effective administration of public affairs, noted to me the current salary of nearly \$100,000 for each of the eleven members of the Board of Supervisors and asked rhetorically for justification, or, at least, edification. It’s an interesting piece of city history.

In 1932 the rewriting of San Francisco’s Charter by a so-called Freeholders committee resulted in a section describing the duties and obligations of a Board of Supervisors member and establishing the salary as \$2,400 per year. That remained the level of compensation for the part-time Board members until 1956. The term “part-time” is accurate. Unlike the other 57 counties in California, San Francisco is both a city and county, and functions under the administration of an elected mayor.

The Board possesses no administrative responsibilities, and don’t allow supervisors to allege otherwise! In 57 other counties, the Board of Supervisors operates with both legislative and administrative duties. For example, in San Mateo or Alameda County the Board of Supervisors exercises responsibility for administration of the Department of Public Works, the Department of Health, the Civil Service Commission, the Planning Department, the Department of Parks and Recreation and any other county service, unless by ordinance or charter such responsibility is transferred to the county manager or administrator, which has occurred in some counties. In San Francisco, the Board of Supervisors constitutes strictly a legislative body. In fact, the 1932 Charter specifically barred supervisors from interfering in the operation or management of any department, rendering it misconduct and an act which could lead to impeachment. Unfortunately, that prudent provision (Section 2.114) was modified by an ill-advised “reform” of our Charter. Under Section 2.114 neither the Board of Supervisors, its committees or any of its members could dictate, suggest or interfere respecting any appointment, promotion, compensation, disciplinary action, contract or requisition for purchase or other administrative actions or recommendations of the erstwhile Chief Administrative Officer or department heads under the Chief Administrative Officer or under any board or commission. By 1998, however, the Charter provision had been repudiated by an amendment allowing a member of the Board of Supervisors to testify regarding administrative matters at a public meeting of a city board, commission, task force or other appointed body and allowing the Board of Supervisors to adopt legislation regarding administrative matters. The result is reflected on a weekly or daily basis with supervisors attempting to coerce commission or department action. The Chief Administrative Officer’s responsibilities have literally been abolished. A substituted figurehead City Administrator occupies space in just one of hundreds of unnecessary city government positions.

I digress, however. In 1956 (24 years after the 1932 salary had been set) voters were asked to raise a supervisor’s salary from \$2400 annually to \$4800. That made sense, and voters did so. In 1964, a Charter amendment increasing compensation to \$9600 per year was presented for voter approval. Voters again consented.

*In short, the Board of Supervisors dismissed history in inducing voters to allow the Civil Service Commission to utilize the pay of full-time supervisors with administrative responsibilities in counties such as Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Contra Costa and others for a virtual tripling of their previous voter-approved salaries, and also included these part-timers, who can, at best serve but eight years, in the generous City Retirement System.*

Then came the City’s first experiment with district election of supervisors in 1977, spawning a breed different from supervisors who properly treated their august position as a part-time responsibility and comported themselves (with one exception) by engaging in professional or business activity. Successive efforts were assayed to remove voter approval of any supervisorial salary change in favor of linking the salary fictitiously to a favorable comparison. One effort sought alliance to the salary of a superior court judge; another used compensation of supervisors in large counties like Los Angeles. Voters resented an effort to abolish their salary-setting power over their elected representatives and rejected such tactic.

Following a restoration of city-wide election of supervisors and a Charter initiative mandating presidency of the Board of Supervisors for the highest vote-getter, as the leading vote-getter in the 1982 supervisorial election, I was sworn in as Board President. I then proposed a Charter amendment adhering to the historical method of establishing supervisor compensation: voter approval. I asked the always-reliable budget analyst (Harvey M. Rose) to compare the 1964 consumer price index in San Francisco with the 1982 index regarding the 1964-approved \$9600 salary. The extrapolation produced \$23,924. I inserted that figure in the Charter amendment I proposed. My colleagues enthusiastically embraced that logical, modest proposal, and voters readily approved it in November 1982.

As the years passed, I was elected to the California Senate in 1986 and in 1996; an initiative to amend Charter Section 2.100 by electing supervisors by district was enacted. History repeated itself concerning the salary. Despite the fact that instead of responding to approximately 800,000 city residents, a supervisor now thinks in terms of responding to less than 80,000 residents, supervisors elected by district succeeded in changing the salary setting by voters. Such power was reposed in the Civil Service Commission (appointed by the Mayor, not by voters) which was directed to set the amount, based not on any change in inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index, but on alleged comparable salaries of county supervisors in other counties, jurisdictions in which the duties and responsibilities, as noted above, differ substantially from the strictly legislative role of San Francisco supervisors. The result is a salary approaching six figures for persons who mostly rely on taxpayer money as their only source of income. (That does not include additional stipends from service on regional boards such as the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation, Metropolitan Transportation Commission or the Bay Area Air Pollution Control District or the San Francisco Transportation Authority or the Peninsula Rail Corridor Joint Powers Authority or other little-known regional agency boards.) To be sure, some supervisors in May indicated voluntary acceptance of a small reduction in pay below the amount established by the Civil Service Commission because of San Francisco’s fiscal condition.

From curiosity, and at the request of San Francisco native and friend John Shanley, I secured a calculation of the inflation applicable to the 1982 salary of \$23,924. Based on the Consumer Price Index increase in those 28 years, a supervisor’s salary would be \$53,954 per year. A couple of voters have declared they could accept even \$55,000 a “rounded off” level for part-time legislators, noting that those part-time legislators continue to attempt to breach generally accepted American forms of governance, whether national, state or local. Within the last few years, supervisors have propagated measures to divest the mayor of appointing power respecting commissions, which form the executive



## News & Views West of Twin Peaks Central Council

### Annual Meeting Report

by Molly Oleson

The WOTPCC attracted nearly 50 people to its 7:30 p.m. annual meeting on June 28<sup>th</sup> at the Forest Hill Clubhouse. The big turnout was in large part due to the three significant matters at hand: the fraudulent depletion of the Patient Gift Fund at Laguna Honda Hospital, the restructuring of debt at Parkmerced and the election of WOTPCC officers for the September 2010 - June 2011 term. The speakers for the meeting were former LHH employees Patrick Monette-Shaw, Dr. Derek Kerr and Dr. Maria Rivero, and Seth Mallen of Stellar Management/Parkmerced. The audience included many neighborhood leaders including Judge Quentin



Marking 9 years of service to the WOTPCC, Former President Dave Bisho presents Rae Doyle an appreciation plaque.

Kopp and former Supervisor Annemarie Conroy

Before delving into the highly anticipated topics on the agenda, WOTPCC President George Wooding presented **Vice President Don Dutil**, who will be stepping down from the Board, with a plaque in appreciation of his years of hard work. Directly following the crowd’s rendition of “For he’s a jolly good fellow,” **Secretary Rae Doyle** was recognized for her nine years of dedication. Doyle, who also received a cheerful “For she’s a jolly good fellow,” will be leaving the Board but plans to cover WOTPCC meetings for the *West Portal Monthly*.

Seth Mallen, Executive Vice President of Construction and Sustainability at Stellar Management, was introduced to discuss the viability of **Parkmerced** in the midst of rumors of bankruptcy. Mallen announced that Parkmerced has not filed for bankruptcy but rather has, in conjunction with its lenders, engaged a special servicer to support the property’s loan payments. He said the move will ensure that bills are paid on time and allow for capital restructuring that will benefit Parkmerced and the lender. Assuring the audience that residents will be protected through the process, Mallen stated that all Parkmerced apartments currently under rent controls will remain rent-controlled.



Seth Mullen of ParkMerced discusses the future of the development and it’s financial health.

Following Mallen’s presentation, the election for next term’s **WOTPCC officers** began. With no new nominations from the floor, the candidates were approved unanimously. George Wooding will remain President, Matt Chamberlain will replace Dutil as Vice President, Carolyn Squeri will remain Treasurer and Blue Mudbhary will replace Doyle as Recording Secretary.

To shed some light on the recent revelations of the misuse of donations intended



Dr Derek Kerr formerly of Laguna Honda Hospital presents evidence of mismanagement of the Patient Gift Fund.

for patients of **Laguna Honda Hospital**, former LHH employee (and contributor to the *Westside Observer*) Patrick Monette-Shaw was introduced by President Wooding. Monette-Shaw, a patient advocate who was transferred to Rec-Park from his position at LHH and later terminated, described the ways in which the **Patient Gift Fund** was depleted to the benefit of the LHH staff. He stressed the need for a thorough investigation



The Regulatory Morass of the SFPUC Financing System

By Brian Browne

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is going deeper and deeper into debt, and voters no longer have the right to approve of how SFPUC incurs this revenue based debt. Ratepayers still have to pay for this debt through their utility bills. The structure of this debt has become considerably complex, and it appears that the SFPUC has become a financial intermediary, wheeling and dealing in complex debt instruments.



In the absence of voter oversight there does not appear to be any real regulatory constraints and oversight. This is exacerbated by the legal and financial complexities surrounding these programs in the overall context of a fragmented and unsystematic regulatory process. The unraveling of the thread between authorization of a project and the application of commercial paper is daunting.

The business model charges the SFPUC with planning and implementing possibly \$10 to \$15 billion in capital improvements and operating one of the largest multi-utilities in the US so this must be scrutinized. However, time and space are not available in this essay. Actual progress to date on water system improvements v promised deliverables weighs against a positive evaluation at this point.

The SFPUC (Commission) the politically appointed board of directors (commissioners) for San Francisco’s municipal water, sewer, and power systems, has potential plans to issue between \$5 billion and \$15 billion in revenue debt instruments. Rounding out/up:

- \$5 Billion for the Hetch Hetchy system fix-up,
- \$5 Billion for implementing community choice aggregation (AB117), and
- \$5 Billion for a city-wide sewer fix-up.

Total and annual repayment schedules for projected capital improvements are summarized below. Annual payments were estimated at a long-term coupon rate of 5.5% over a 25 year term.

**Bottom line — there is no real regulatory oversight in SF. It has gone from a relatively simple and transparent system, with ratepayers and citizens involved, to a regulatory morass that is unmanageable. The SFPUC has authority to issue \$650 million in commercial paper. They have indicated they wish to double this amount to \$1.3 billion. Trying to keep track of actual authorizations and complementary commercial paper will be impossible. One disadvantage San Francisco has under state law is that it is a self-regulating municipality.**

| ITEM            | \$5 Billion   | \$15 Billion   |
|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Annual Payment  | 372,746,765   | 1,118,240,294  |
| Total Interest  | 4,318,669,118 | 12,956,007,355 |
| Total Principal | 5,000,000,000 | 15,000,000,000 |
| Total Payments  | 9,318,669,118 | 27,956,007,355 |

Prior to the passage of Proposition E in November 2002, voter approval was required for the SFPUC to issue revenue debt (bonds) tied to future rate increases. This system was straightforward and a relatively transparent process. The SFPUC would put forward a capital improvement plan to the voters. The back and forth during the run-up to the election would generate considerable information about the value of the proposal and the voters would pass or reject the plan. San Francisco has a long-history of voting for capital programs.

In the 1997, the measure to sell \$304 million A&B bonds for seismic and water quality, the accepted financing approach to disbursement of project funding was incremental issuance of revenue bonds.

In 1998 Ordinance 203-98 permitted the Board to “issue or incur short-term indebtedness in anticipation of the issuance of revenue bonds which have been authorized in accordance with the Charter.” The phrase “in anticipation” is pivotal. Commercial paper (CP) programs were based on the already authorized issuance of revenue bond.

The SFPUC initially established a \$250 million commercial paper draw to implement 1997 A&B work. This CP draw was repaid by selling authorized 1997 A&B revenue bonds. Members of the Mayor’s SF Infrastructure Taskforce (2000-2002) were concerned about the implementation of this CP program for the following reasons:

- 1) This step made the SFPUC a financial intermediary, for which it did not appear qualified, and
- 2) CP is significantly more difficult to monitor. Lots of time, varied churning and multiple rates are involved.

In November, 2002 Proposition E, a Charter Amendment, passed. It transferred from the voters to the Board of Supervisors the sole right to issue future revenue bonds. Proposition E specifically mentioned short term debt, commercial paper, and used the umbrella expression “revenue debt” to ensure the SFPUC was not constrained by debt instrument type.

Good public policy in general requires a KIS (keep it simple) approach. This requires a systematic, transparent and easy to understand system. The system for issuing short-term and long-term debt after the passage of 2002 Prop. E is significantly more complex. As one sage mother once said it is “as clear as mud.” SFPUC went from a relative KIS

Cont. p. 13



What’s Happening with Community Choice Aggregation?

By Steve Lawrence

City government is getting into the business of providing electric power to San Francisco households and businesses. Under a law passed shortly after the energy crisis, cities may organize a company to compete with PG&E. Although the energy crisis waned, Greens joined long-time public power advocates, like the Bay Guardian and other “progressives” to push “power to the people!” Greens hope that community choice aggregation will bring greener power.



The vehicle for selling competing, greener power is called Community Choice Aggregation, or CCA. San Francisco is organizing its CCA, called CleanPowerSF. Once organized, CleanPowerSF will notify all households that receive a bill for electricity that they are joining the CCA, unless the household opts out. For three years the city CCA will sell power for the same price as PG&E sells it. The CCA power will come over the same grid, PG&E’s grid, as it does today. It just is to be “greener” power.

How much greener? Not too much. PG&E’s power is currently about 15% from renewable sources like wind mills. The CCA’s power will start off at 24% from renewable sources. In the second year that will rise to 25%, and in the third year to 26%. By the tenth year it is supposed to rise to 51%.

However, all details are in doubt. The City, on behalf of the CCA it will organize, negotiated these details with PowerChoice LLC, a private company that was to have acted as the CCA’s agent. Recently, however, negotiations with PowerChoice have terminated. A new request for proposals will go out in July, it is hoped. Meanwhile, doubt is cast on all the details of what was to have happened had the PowerChoice deal not fallen apart.

**How much greener? Not too much. PG&E’s power is currently about 15% from renewable sources like wind mills. The CCA’s power will start off at 24% from renewable sources. In the second year that will rise to 25%, and in the third year to 26%. By the tenth year it is supposed to rise to 51%.**

How was the City CCA to sell electric power as cheaply as PG&E for the first three years? It was to have gone into debt. The City CCA would borrow up to \$400 million, which will be paid off between years 4 and 15.

If a household were to fail to opt out at the outset, could it do so later? Yes, but it must give six months notice, and it will cost. How much it would cost would be decided by rate-making authorities.

Would the City CCA really provide 51% renewable power in ten years? That was the target. Until recently the target had been by 2017. The percentage would include not only clean power provided, but also power conserved.

Why is the term “clean power” used, rather than “renewable power?” Renewable has a defined meaning; it excludes electricity generated by “big hydro”, as from the Hetch Hetchy dam and system. “Clean” is a term that might include power from big dams.

As part of the CCA program the City will acquire new power generation facilities. For example, it will demand that developers build wind mills or place solar panels and dedicate them to the City so that the City CCA owns generation facilities. While at first green power will be purchased on the open market, as time passes more and more is to be generated by city-owned facilities. Other generation being explored includes ocean and small hydro. Efficiency programs that reduce demand for electricity are also being aggressively pursued. Reducing power usage will count towards meeting renewable or clean targets.

To purchase green power the City CCA will engage a private agent or broker to buy power, and to service accounts.

Failed Prop 16, on the ballot in early June, might have made it more difficult for the City to organize its CCA. Had the proposition passed, cities were not to spend money organizing a CCA unless two-thirds of voters authorized it.

Recent review of the calendar of the General Manager of the SFPUC, the City department doing CCA, reveals that he is spending perhaps one-quarter to one-third of his time on the matter. With a \$4.6 billion Water Improvement Program, a perhaps \$4 billion wastewater program, and a new headquarters building also on the table, one might question the wisdom of expanding into public power just now.

Steve Lawrence is a PUC citizen activist.



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St. Francis Circle Project (Cont. from p. 1)

reduce the number of PCO's to avoid conflicting instructions, plus SFMTA vehicles will no longer park in the circle at the tunnel's entrance, and PCO vehicles will be prohibited from using metered customer parking spots.

**Issue #2 Ulloa Street:** Ulloa Street merchants were crippled by all the buses parking directly in front of their stores, blocking visibility and destroying their take-out businesses. Solutions: following the meeting, MUNI announced that the K bus drop-off location was moved to the front of the Library, and it had just finished repainting one of the Ulloa red zones as a 4-space, 30 minute green zone. These changes will go a long way to solving the problems.

**Issue #3 Restrooms:** Lack of restroom facilities for passengers on MUNI, who pour out of the buses, demanding to use bathrooms, even when bathrooms are not for the public. "I have to go," they frequently say, as they walk in, forming long lines that deny the use by paying customers. It's a persistent problem exacerbated by the project and consensus was that it is MUNI's responsibility to establish restrooms. Solution: SFMTA will investigate possible long-term solutions, but some short-term solutions will be attempted.

**Issue #4 Informational Signs:** Lack of signs informing drivers "West Portal is Open for Business." The placement of signs in merchant windows and on the buses has proven ineffective. Solution—MUNI installed multiple banners on posts at the St. Francis intersection announcing "West Portal is Open." Unfortunately, banners are prohibited on Portola Drive, which is classified as residential.

**Issue #5 Do You Know the Way to WP?** Already hard to find, all the construction and continually changing road detours, has made it more difficult — even for regular customers. East-bound drivers on Sloat are clueless about where to go after making the U-turn on Junipero Serra Blvd. There are no easily readable overhead signs with arrows informing drivers, in advance, about which lane leads to which of the intersection's multiple streets. Currently, only ground level signs exist, visible at the last moment. Solution: New large "West Portal" (with an Arrow) sign and promises to keep working on the problem.

**Issue #6 Invisible Businesses:** West end West Portal businesses are "invisible" because the K & M LRVs no longer pass by them. Solution: SFMTA has rerouted the 17 Park Merced bus thru St Francis Circle going down the 3rd block, with a bus stop at 14th.

**Issue #7 Realistic Timetable:** Probably most important, as I pointed out at the meeting, SFMTA's own literature says "To minimize these inconveniences, the SFMTA is implementing a series of measures. Proceeding with work 7 days a week to finish construction as quickly as possible, working 7am to–9pm M-F & 8am to 9pm on weekends." But that hasn't been the case. Work actually ends at 3pm with no work on Sundays. Yet we were told September 1st is still scheduled for its completion. This begs the question: could the project have been completed more than a month earlier by working the implied "full" schedule? Or could just working Sundays shave it by 14%?

*There are no easily readable overhead signs with arrows informing drivers, in advance, about which lane leads to which of the intersection's multiple streets. Currently, only ground level signs exist, visible at the last moment.*

Unfortunately, it's going to take 3.5 months — long enough to change shopping habits. When it's inconvenient to come to West Portal, customers change drycleaners, go to a different branch of their bank, or a different restaurant. And when they go to these other areas, they start to form personal relationships with new merchants. Will they come back to West Portal? It's not only about the business and revenue we are losing now, but what we will lose in the future, the long term economic consequences. It's our economic survival.

The Contractor (NTK) responded that working more hours doesn't always help. A great deal of time was spent waiting and working with PG&E to physically locate power grid points. SFMTA Traffic controllers make them wait for approvals and instructions. Additional complications, such as the availability of rails from the manufacturer and budget constraints necessitate spending as money it is available. Many complained about the lack of coordination for a project that has been in planning for years; issues should have been worked out with PG&E and suppliers in the beginning.

NTK promised to work closely with the Project Manager and team, and said that if it is reasonable to spend a little money to get it done-even one day faster, it will be done. MTA Project Manager Ha Nguyen added a very uplifting finishing touch: "If it's any comfort, every day I look at the schedule and try to find how can we cut it down. It's my responsibility. I am listening to your concerns."

Despite the problems some progress is being made. Construction schedules have been lengthened; sign improvements are being implemented to help drivers, and project officials took the time to listen. Merchants appreciate SFTMA personnel's sincere efforts and project Manager Ha Nguyen, Drew Howard, and SFMTA Public Relations officer Jeanette Sanchez, and Director Bond Yee for their contributions.

We also thank our neighbors for their ongoing support. We can only pray that you will continue to make a concerted effort to patronize our West Portal businesses during these very difficult times.

A vibrant WP Merchants Association can put on successful street events, fight for small businesses, combat parking changes and new taxes, and achieve a balanced variety of stores so that the Avenue will continue to be a "charming place to shop."

*Elliot Wagner, his wife Dimitra, and brother Dr Andrew Wagner, have operated Dimitra's SkinCare & Medi-Spa in WP for over 30 years. For the last 6 months, he has been trying to rally merchants into restarting the West Portal Ave Association, after being on its Board for over 15 years. He's also a VP on the SF Council of District Merchants. Elliot serves as the merchant liaison to GWPNA and WOTPCC.*

Vampire Nation

By Will Durst

Taking a breather from our Gulf Coast miasma in order to focus on an even ghastlier blight of cultural crude washing up on American shores. No, this is not about Lady Gaga. Although, I do intend to address walking parasites. Demon fiends. Bloodsucking vermin. The Ushers at the Gates of Hell themselves of which we are experiencing a veritable glut and I'm here to say that my soul is so weary of vampires. Bleh.

Used to be vampires were stylish and dangerous and romantic partly due to their rarity. These days, Children of the Night sightings are as frequent as Law & Order reruns. More ubiquitous than Subway sandwich shops. And about as horrifying. Movies and television and magazines and commercials and straight to video DVDs and books and comic books and kids books and even Muppets. Only a matter of time before Fisher- Price comes out with a line of vampire mobiles to hang over cribs.

Bayou vampires and New York City vampires and Elvis Presley tribute artists and tiny vampires with thyroid imbalances wearing herringbone fezzes. Vampires fighting werewolves. Vampires befriending werewolves. Vampire cops and vampire legal department research assistants and vampire DPW dispatchers and vampire insurance adjusters. Admittedly, the latter smacks of redundancy.

*You're a thousand years old. How much time to do you need to adjust to the agony of immortality? Stop it with the teenage angst already."*

Because of the proliferation of the walking undead to mainstream pervasiveness, these suburban mall vamps are consequently forced to raise the fantasy stakes to where the entire genre is tumbling into ridiculousness. Most frustrating is nobody plays by the rules anymore. Time-tested conventions are being discarded like blood ampoules at a neck biters winter solstice mortuary retreat.

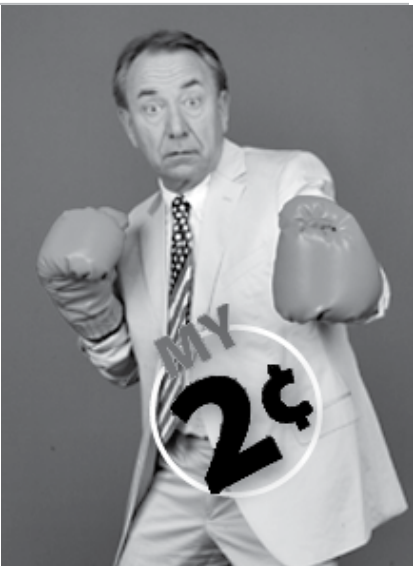
Garlic is no big deal unless it is. They can run extremely fast. Except when they can't. Super human strength is at their command- sometimes. Silver, mirrors, daylight, holy water and wooden stakes: Take em or leave them. That's the problem with kids today. No respect for their elders. If it was good enough for Bram Stoker, it should be good enough for these libidinous meat puppets.

You don't have to be Freud to get the repressed sexual desires theme. But wasn't it a lot more interesting when society was repressed and not flaunted by young starlets emerging from limos sans underwear? And what is it with the brooding? You're a thousand years old. How much time to do you need to adjust to the agony of immortality? Stop it with the teenage angst already.

And yes, yes, yesssssss. To be young is to identify with the alienation and the dressing all in black and the being pale and stuff. But the only thing less sexy than an ancient man caressing the carotid of a pubescent girl with his swollen incisors may be the prospect of she and he swapping denture cream. You think Anna Nicole Smith was creepy, multiply her husband's age by eight or ten and try imagining that. Not enough Ambien in Patrick Kennedy's medicine cabinet to quell those nightmares. Makes Harold and Maude seem the stuff of fairy tails. Tales. That's Tinkerbelle in Vegas.

And this anguishing over the weight of the eternal hunger is getting a bit old. You've had multiple centuries to come up with an efficient way to feed. You're not tormented, you're incompetent. You know, if Hollywood is really interested in a new way to make big bucks frightening America, they should greenlight a series of movies about the inner workings of Congress. Now, those soulless zombies are scary.

*Will Durst is a San Francisco based political comedian who often writes. This being a fine example. Catch his one- man show, "The Lieutenant Governor from the State of Confusion" at a Performing Arts Center near you. His new CD, "Raging Moderate" from Stand Up! Records, now available on both iTunes and Amazon.*



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Park Place Market  
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Parkmerced Leasing Office

Noe Valley Area:

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Nail Chic on Castro at Noe  
Noe Valley Library

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**Don't Miss Another Issue!**





SECOND THOUGHTS / By Jack Kaye

The Oil Spill Symbolism

What has been described as the greatest man-made disaster to ever hit this country shows no signs of abating after more than two months. The ruptured oil well located one mile below sea level has been leaking as many as 50,000 barrels (or 2.1 million gallons) a day of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico threatening sea life and all those depending on it for a livelihood. While all of its causes are still being investigated, the primary cause is clear—greed mixed with a good measure of arrogance. The greed made oil company decision-makers rush the job to minimize costs and maximize future profits. The arrogance made them believe that they did not need to take the time to do it right. They were blind to any possible environmental damage their corner-cutting could cause.

Where have we heard this before?

The banking, real estate and automobile industries in this country have had their own

*The banking disaster, caused in part by the real estate disaster, led to the loss of confidence in the financial system, which led to reduced spending, which led to reduced production which led to fewer jobs, which exacerbated the loss of confidence, and the vicious cycle continued like a snowball rolling down a steep incline.*

systemic ruptures recently. In each case the decision makers were greedy as well as arrogant. The combination made them all blind to the problems they were creating. As with the oil spill, the problems in each industry continued unabated for a long time. First there was denial, then there was minimizing the problems, and then there was a problem too big to disguise or disregard. In each case there was the externality, the spill over effect, of these business catastrophes and there are always innocent victims.

The banking disaster, caused in part by the real estate disaster, led to the loss of confidence in the financial system which led to reduced spending which led to reduced production which led to fewer jobs which exacerbated the loss of confidence and the vicious cycle continued like a snowball rolling down a steep incline. The bankers got greedy—they wanted ever-bigger bonuses and took ever-greater risks. They were arrogant because they thought that they could get away with anything, and that if they failed the government would have to bail them out.

The politicians who received generous donations from Wall Street were greedy. They wanted more money to stay in power. They were greedy for power. So they acquiesced to Wall Street’s demands and eliminated restrictions set in place to prevent another great depression. They were arrogant enough to believe that by earning money to betray their constituents they were still worthy of their votes.

The realtors also got greedy. They must have known that some of their clients could not possibly afford the homes they were bidding on with nothing to put down for the purchase. Their arrogance was in their thinking that their bubble could never burst.

The home-buyers who bought the homes that even they knew they could not afford were greedy for the American dream with all its trimmings but had not put the down payment in effort. Their arrogance was in believing that somehow they could get and keep something for nothing or at least for well under actual cost.

The corporate leaders of our car companies were also greedy. They wanted easy profits, and so abandoned the small economical family car that the country needed and

instead produced large truck-like SUVs which were inexpensive to build but could be sold for high prices because of their size. Never mind that they were gas-guzzlers and took up too much space. The leaders of “the big three” were arrogant enough to think that the American consumer would buy whatever Detroit gave them. Their blindness led to the bankruptcy of two of our three major automakers and a multi-billion dollar taxpayer bailout.

I believe that the Reagan tax cuts for the rich reducing the top tax bracket from 90% to 39%, unleashing a gush of suddenly rich and the suddenly terribly rich was a similar disaster. The rich built even bigger houses, bought even bigger cars, and developed bigger egos. They were ever greedy for more money and fewer taxes. They became increasingly arrogant and made risky investments that ended up almost destroying our economy.

The result of all this free-flowing greed mixed with arrogance polluted the nation’s economic waters from which our people are nourished.



The same thing happened in competitive sports — amateur and professional. Some athletes and their trainers got greedy for more success, better stats, higher salaries and bigger bonuses. They were arrogant enough to think that they could get away with using steroids to improve their strength and perseverance. As the violations seemed to piggy-back on previous ones and more athletes took performance-enhancing drugs in more sports, more of the results became hard to believe. Whether it was Olympic sprinters, weightlifters or swimmers, long distance cyclists, or professional baseball pitchers and hitters, the sports officials couldn’t stop the abuses. And meanwhile whatever integrity these sports had enjoyed became polluted by the cheating bred from greed and arrogance.

Today our favorite religions seem to be unable to control their own destructive eruptions. The Catholic Church has been unable to stop the eruptions of charges of priestly abuses that are being reported all over the globe. When the truth is finally told, the sexual abuse of children by the clergy will probably be found to have occurred on every continent. After a while we will also learn that this rupture of hypocritical immorality dates back hundreds of years with many of these priests themselves having been innocent victims in their youth. It’s hard to imagine what kind of greed and arrogance motivated these outbursts except perhaps a greed or desperate hunger for physical affection mixed with the arrogance that they could get away with it because they were above Man’s laws. And how could their “superiors” think that they could just cover it up? Who knows how many of these “tolerant” bishops had themselves been molested as children?

Then there is the religion that is so much in the news for its violence in the Middle East. The religious leaders either cannot or will not stop the violence that in the last 10 years has prematurely ended the lives of more than a million of its own people. Thousands of its adherents are blowing themselves up and killing innocent people in the mistaken impression that they will not only escape their lives of suffering but also that they will be somehow rewarded for their greatest of sins. Perhaps the leaders of this religion are also greedy for more power and are arrogant enough to believe that inciting their flock to violence will somehow not get them eternal damnation.

And then there are columnists like this one who is greedy enough to want his country, his world free of all that pollutes it and he is arrogant enough to think that somehow by writing about these problems, he can make them disappear.

Let us hope that the damages of this tragic oil spill in the Gulf are easier to repair than the other effects greed and arrogance are having on our nation and its people.

Feedback: [Kaye@westsideobserver.com](mailto:Kaye@westsideobserver.com)

WOTPCC Laguna Honda Hospital Gift Fund Resolution

**Whereas**, Laguna Honda Hospital (LHH) maintains a Patient Gift Fund that receives public donations for the use of LHH residents, and San Francisco’s Administrative Code Section 10.100-201 clearly states that LHH’s Gift Fund is a public trust intended exclusively for LHH patients’ general benefit and comfort; and

**Whereas**, In 2005, LHH staff sub-accounts were created within LHH’s Patient Gift Fund which were used for the benefit of LHH’s staff, using funds donated for the benefit of LHH residents without apparent foreknowledge of Gift Fund donors; and

**Whereas**, The Gift Fund money used for LHH’s staff has contributed to depleting the Gift Fund and reducing amenities for LHH’s residents; and

**Whereas**, On May 21, 2010 the San Francisco Controller’s Office ordered the Department of Public Health to separate the staff sub-accounts from the LHH Patient Gift Fund; and

**Whereas**, The San Francisco Controller’s office has only conducted a “review” of the LHH Patient Gift Fund, but has not performed an independent audit to determine the amount of Gift Fund money spent on LHH’s staff; and

**Whereas**, LHH previously had a Gift Fund Management Committee that monitored LHH Gift Fund expenditures, but this oversight committee was abolished, along with eliminating required quarterly reports of Gift Fund activity to the Health Commission, when LHH revised its Gift Fund policy on April 15, 2010 and on December 2, 2004, respectively; and

**Whereas**, The West of Twin Peaks Central Council (WTPCC) would like to both help residents of LHH, and help restore donor confidence in LHH’s Patient Gift Fund,

- Therefore, Be it Resolved** that the WTPCC:
- Recommends that the city of San Francisco conduct a thorough, independent audit of LHH’s Patient Gift Fund.
  - Believes that any Patient Gift Fund money determined to have been misspent must be returned to the Gift Fund sub-accounts that directly benefit patients in order to provide restitution.
  - Desires that a LHH Gift Fund Management Committee be re-established, consisting of LHH residents, community members, and health professionals.
  - Requests that LHH’s policy #45-01 governing the Patient Gift Fund be restored to its pre-December 2004 version to restore safeguards removed in the April 15, 2010 and December 2, 2004 revisions to the policy.
  - Urges that a quarterly Gift Fund donations and expenditures report be developed and forwarded to the Board of Supervisors Budget and Finance Committee for public review.
  - Calls for the Controller’s Office and the Department of Public Health to restore a mission statement describing the intended uses, and “restricted purposes” for each sub-account, and post it on LHH’s web site appealing for Gift Fund donations.
  - Respectfully requests that in an effort to maintain a constructive working relationship with LHH, a member(s) of the WTPCC be reinstated on LHH’s advisory Board.

**WOTPCC** (Cont. from p. 3)

of the \$1.3 million that has vanished from the fund over a 6-year period.

President Wooding presented a resolution that would help the residents of LHH and restore donor confidence in the Patient Gift Fund. The resolution consisted of seven recommendations including an independent audit of the Gift Fund by the city of San Francisco, a restitution of misspent funds, the re-establishment of a LHH Gift Fund Management Committee consisting of LHH residents, community members and health professionals, a restoration of LHH’s pre-December 2004 policy governing the Gift Fund to restore safeguards removed in recent revisions, the development of a quarterly Gift Fund donations and expenditures report to be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors Budget and Finance Committee for public review, the restoration of a mission statement by the Controller’s Office and the Department of Public Health describing the intended uses of the Gift Fund and a posting of the statement on LHH’s website, and finally, the placement of a WOTPCC member on LHH’s Advisory Board in an effort to maintain a constructive working relationship with the hospital.

*A well-researched Power Point presentation by Dr. Kerr and Dr. Rivero then exposed shocking details of the exhaustion of Gift Fund donations, including a photo of a check made out for \$18,000 to the Patient Gift Fund and the deposit slip illustrating that it had clearly been used for staff expenses. . . donations to the fund had been used to cover CPR classes for LHH nurses, staff lunches and the annual staff barbecue, and that there was a 65% decrease in resident bus trips due to a lack of funds.*

President Wooding noted that representatives from both LHH and the DPH were invited to attend the WOTPCC annual meeting, but neither party accepted the opportunity to take a stand. The refusal by these parties to talk about the issue at hand have many West of Twin Peaks residents feeling as though they are being shut out from LHH — a place they have longtime supported.

A well-researched Power Point presentation by Dr. Kerr and Dr. Rivero then exposed shocking details of the exhaustion of Gift Fund donations, including a photo of a check made out for \$18,000 to the Patient Gift Fund and the deposit slip illustrating that it had clearly been used for staff expenses. Dr. Kerr proved that donations to the fund had been used to cover CPR classes for LHH nurses, staff lunches and the annual staff barbecue, and that there was a 65% decrease in resident bus trips due to a lack of funds.

The presentation further emphasized the need for an audit and the need for West of Twin Peaks residents to advocate for the patients of LHH.

“I think that the power is in the people,” said Dr. Rivero. “People can say ‘no, this is not acceptable.’ And it’s not acceptable.”

After two revisions to the resolution were made, it was passed unanimously and decided that it be submitted to the City Attorney for review.

Monette-Shaw said he was deeply appreciative that the resolution passed unanimously. “I’m going to thank President Wooding for bringing this issue before the Council,” he said. “It’s great to get an adequate public venue to present this.”

For further details on the Laguna Honda Hospital Patient Gift Fund fraud, please see Patrick



# A Parks Commission Gone Wild

By George Wooding



San Francisco’s Recreation and Park Commission has long proved citizens have the right to be heard — but not listened to. Anyone testifying before the seven-member Recreation and Park Commission (RPC) about keeping our park lands as natural open spaces should expect, in return, glazed looks, yawns, furtive texting, and attempts to appear to be listening thoughtfully. Whatever your issue may be, long before the RPC starts taking public testimony, it has already decided what it will do.

Welcome to San Francisco’s version of pre-scripted Kabuki theater. The RPC’s new mantra is to make the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) financially self-sustainable through the creation of revenue-generating projects, events, and privatization of our park facilities. If you want to stop and smell the flowers, it’s the RPC’s job to approve making you pay for the privilege. This is completely sad, because the RPC was originally created to represent the citizens and be our advocates to the RPD and the Mayor’s office. Now, no member on the RPC listens to the public and all they want is our money.



San Francisco’s rubber-stamp RPC meetings are just a symptom of the Mayor’s Office having the power to select all seven RPC members. If you have friends in high places, or if your union or non-profit makes a major donation or concessions on your behalf, or if you personally make a large donation to Gavin Newsom, you, too, can be on the Commission. Citizens with little money and no political connections to Gavin Newsom on their resume need not apply to join this exclusive club.

*This is a great resume for someone who is trying to develop San Francisco’s parks, attract investment capital, privatize park services, increase private donations, and create park enterprises that will compete with private businesses. If we want to turn Golden Gate Park into a Six Flags theme park, Mark Buell is probably the perfect man for the job.*

Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi is sponsoring a November ballot measure — a City Charter amendment —designed to break the Mayor’s stranglehold over the RPC’s selection process. Mirkarimi’s amendment would change the appointment power so that the Board of Supervisors would appoint three RPC members, the Mayor would appoint three, and one member would be appointed jointly. Let’s take a look at recently-appointed RPC president Mark Buell’s qualifications for the job. According to the Secretary of State’s campaign finance database, prior to being appointed to the RPC last January, Mark Buell donated \$4,743.93 and his wife Susie Thompkins-Buell, the former owner of Esprit Clothing, donated \$25,900.00 (the maximum allowable) during October 2009 to Mayor Newsom’s campaign to become Governor. On January 19, former RPC president Jim Lazarus suddenly resigned after seven-and-a-half years of service. Following his appointment to the RPC and becoming the RPC’s president just days later (a highly unusual coincidence) Mark Buell donated \$6,500 twice and his wife donated \$6,500.00 twice (in March and May 2010) to Newsom’s Lieutenant Governor campaign — for total giving of \$56,643.93. Lazarus must have skipped making campaign donations. Mark Beull’s RPC resume commendably lists him as a native San Franciscan, a graduate of UCSF, and a decorated Vietnam Veteran. Buell’s resume goes on to state “He has spent 35 years in both public and private real estate development.” This is a great resume for someone who is trying to develop San Francisco’s parks, attract investment capital, privatize park services, increase private donations, and create park enterprises that will compete with private businesses. If we want to turn Golden Gate Park into a Six Flags theme park, Mark Buell is probably the perfect man for the job.

At a recent Recreation and Park Commission meeting, it was difficult to listen to

Cont. p. 8

## San Francisco Civil Grand Jury Report

### PENSION TSUNAMI: The Billion-Dollar Bubble

During recent periods of economic prosperity our City officials, along with compassionate voters, created relatively generous pensions for many City employees. With the recent downturn in our economy and loss of millions in value from the City’s pension fund, these rapidly increasing costs threaten to jeopardize the City’s financial future. The Office of the Controller estimates that the funding of pension and retiree health benefit costs for fiscal year 2010 is \$413 million, which is expected to rise to \$1 billion in 2015, approximately a third of the City’s current General Fund. The expected General Fund contribution, which is approximately 61% of the total pension and retiree health benefits costs, will increase annually by \$60 million for the next five years. This shift in resources may drastically impact funding to other basic services, affecting all San Franciscans.

**The \$100K Club:** The typical San Francisco public servant will receive a modest pension after many years of service and the Grand Jury is grateful for their dedication and hard work. However, we note that 24% of retired firefighters, 12% of retired police officers, and 1% of miscellaneous (non-safety) employees receive retirement benefits of over \$100,000 a year. The California Pension Reform website designates these as “the \$100K Club,” and San Francisco has more than 900 retirees in this category.

**Forgotten Proposition H:** In 2002, San Francisco voters passed Proposition H, a charter amendment changing the formula for Police and Firefighter retirement benefits and mandating that, should the City’s contribution rate to the pension fund exceed 0%, the City and Safety employees’ representatives should “meet and confer” on a “material pension cost-sharing arrangement.” The City’s contribution rate has exceeded 0% since fiscal 2004-05, yet the Jury found no evidence that the City and Safety employee bargaining agents established such a cost-sharing arrangement. The Jury has recommended that the City Attorney seek a court order requiring the SFERS Board to comply with the City Charter.

**The Swap:** Since 2002 the City has “picked up” the employees’ 7.5% pension contributions for members of the Service Employee International Union (SEIU) Local 1021 and other smaller collective bargaining units (at least 9,883 employees). In May 2010, the City and SEIU Local 1021 entered into an agreement that employees pay their own 7.5% contributions, and, in return, that the City increase the employees’ base wage by 6% or approximately \$60 million, effective July 1, 2010. This “swap” was described as “cost neutral” for budgetary purposes. However, the City’s negotiation team apparently failed to consider that the \$60 million swap would significantly impact the City’s future pension obligations.

**Pension Spiking and Pyramiding:** Pension Spiking is an end-of-career promotion or an excessive raise to increase or “spike” workers’ final pensionable income during the last year of employment, the base period for calculating the pension amount. The Jury found that seventy-one Firefighter retirees received a 10% or more increase in pensionable income in their final year before retirement — approximately 68% of the total number of Firefighters who retired over the past 22 months. There were few instances of spiking among Police or other retirees for that period. The Jury also found instances of pension-pyramiding among some nursing supervisors, for example. These retirees have been allowed to hold two concurrent jobs, resulting in dual pensions. The Jury recommends that the City take steps to curb abuses from pension spiking and pension-pyramiding by limiting the final pensionable income an employee can claim at retirement.

*The Civil Grand Jury is empowered by the Constitution of California to investigate the various officers, departments and agencies of the City and County of San Francisco*



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# What I Heard at City Hall

By Gregory P. Miller

If you have read my previous articles in this newspaper (*Perils to our Parks*), you will not be surprised to learn that I support the proposed Charter Amendment which would change how Recreation and Park Commissioners are appointed.

Currently, all 7 Commissioners and the General Manager are appointed by the Mayor. The amendment calls for 3 to be chosen by the mayor, 3 by the Board of Supervisors, and one by a joint selection by the Mayor and the President of the BOS.

I attended a the Board of Supervisors Rules Committee hearing on June 18<sup>th</sup> to consider this amendment. The testimony of Commission President Mark Buell was particularly enlightening. Herein, I quote some highlights – I encourage readers to consult sfgovtv, (<http://www.sfgovtv.org/> video on-line) to view the meeting.

**Commissioner Buell:** “. . . We have this enormous budget problem and we are trying to deal with it. . . .

. . . . Mayor Newsom approached me and asked would I go on the Recreation and Park Commission with a specific goal intended. And that was to find a way to bring more resources, private resources, philanthropic resources, and some stability in funding Rec and Park, at the same time trying to get it off the General Fund because of the problems that you are only too well aware of that are systemic at a state and national level in terms of revenue . . . .

. . . . When the Mayor talked to me, he mentioned that one of the things that he was impressed with was the New York Park Central Park Conservancy. As you may be aware, that really got started in the 80’s, but in 1998 they contracted with the city of New York as a private nonprofit and took over Central Park as an operation. 80% of the employees belong to the conservancy, 20% to the City. . . .

. . . . So you are coming at a time when Rec and Park, I think, has never been better and we are trying to shape a philanthropic portion of the community which really hasn’t been there to a great degree. So at the same time we are improving services, cutting our budget, trying to generate new revenue (and I’m sure that you will hear from people who disagree with the way that happens), that you are going to put on the ballot a divisive measure that I think will discourage philanthropic dollars and I think give less confidence in the Rec and Park Department . . .

**Will there be a formal announcement of this policy and a detailed plan for the public’s review and discussion? Or will it be implemented quietly, bit by bit, until we turn around and our parks are out of our reach — or at least fenced and closed to general use?**

. . . So I guess what I’m telling you is be very careful as you put something on the ballot that will be publicly debated and, I think, be divisive at the same time that we are making an effort to try to bring major philanthropic dollars that have in the past not been there.”

So..... Let me get this straight-- according to Commissioner Buell: Our parks are being managed better than ever. BUT San Francisco can no longer afford its parks. THEREFORE, we desperately need the aid of wealthy donors. BY THE WAY, public discussion of such matters is damaging.

I applaud Commissioner Buell for his clarity and candor, and I do not doubt his good intentions. However, his statement raises important issues:

1. Does Mr. Buell’s statement outline the long-term policy of Mayor Newsom?
2. Will there be a formal announcement of this policy and a detailed plan for the public’s review and discussion? Or will it be implemented quietly, bit by bit, until we turn around and our parks are out of our reach — or at least fenced and closed to general use? Sue Bierman Park is covered with the tent of a private theatrical enterprise. The Stow Lake Boathouse is planned to go from a community-friendly gathering place to a high-end restaurant. Threatened by RPD with the withdrawal of gardening staff, the Arboretum will charge for admission - yes, residents won’t have to pay the \$15 per family this year, but remember that is the path that the Japanese Tea Garden took. First charge only non-residents -- get the infrastructure in place -- and then get the residents to pay just a little, then more, then more.... It now costs \$5.00 for residents and \$1.50 for resident kids. For kids! City staff are being dismissed and replaced by volunteer labor. City buildings are leased long-term at low rates to private organizations.
3. Why is RPD using the City’s current financial crisis as a rationale for sweeping permanent changes? Fiscal problems are generally temporary and are best handled with temporary measures. San Franciscans built and maintained their parks largely through public funding for over 100 years, even through the Great Depression. Now in the middle of an economic downturn, we are told the only solution is to throw ourselves on the mercy - and the control - of private donors. Why is that?
4. If we “get it off the general fund” and rely on the “major philanthropic dollars”, who will be making the key decisions about our parks? What role will the ordinary citizens and their elected representatives play in this new world? The Parks Trust is having a fundraiser in the fall. The higher categories of donors get a private meeting with the General Manager. Since the General Manager has two and half hours of open office time for the public each month, this may be worth the price.
5. Has the Board of Supervisors been consulted, or at least briefed, about the plans to privatize and commercialize our parks?
6. The Board retains ultimate control over the City budget. The General Fund contribution to our Parks is around \$30 million each year -- this is about ½ of one percent of the City budget. Does the BOS see any other means of dealing with the situation short of permanent privatization and commercialization of our parks? Has this even been talked about?
7. Why is a Charter Amendment that includes more diverse representation considered “divisive” by RPD? If massive changes are required, wouldn’t the actions of a more representative body be more likely to gain widespread public support?
8. Why would the proposed Charter amendment “discourage philanthropic dollars?” Do private donors object to a democratic process? Aren’t private donations most appropriate and appreciated when solicited to support objectives chosen by the majority of citizens?

If you are concerned about such issues, write to the Commission, write to the Mayor, and write to your Supervisor NOW to support the Recreation and Park Commission Charter Amendment.

Gregory P. Miller, 36 year SF resident, retired senior financial analyst, US Navy veteran. Feedback: [miller@westsideobserver.com](mailto:miller@westsideobserver.com)

## POLICE BLOTTER/TARAVAL STATION

### TARAVAL IN TRANSITION

Captain John Sanford, Jr.

This letter is specifically directed to the various residents, merchants, visitors, and the outstanding police officers of the Taraval Police District.

My name is John Sanford, Jr. and I have been promoted to Captain of Police and assigned to the Taraval station command by Chief George Gascón. I am replacing Denise Schmitt and I understand that is a very tall order to follow. I am sure many of you are aware that Denise was promoted to Commander of Police, and personally I believe she was an excellent choice. Commander Schmitt is witty, intelligent, humorous, and kind hearted. I have the utmost respect for Commander Schmitt and wish her all the success that continuously comes her way.

It does not seem like that long, but Taraval was my first assignment fourteen years ago as a newly appointed sergeant. I am excited about returning to the Taraval district as the next captain. I follow a string of very accomplished captains, many of whom have personally mentored me and offered guidance and direction over the years. In fact, the name Captain Sanford may ring a bell to many of you because Keith Sanford (no relation) was one of those outstanding captains assigned to this district.

I am ready for the challenges, but look forward to the many opportunities. I am very comfortable and relieved because I am aware of the talented officers and supervisors that this district has to offer. We are a department in transition and I am committed to making the transition here at Taraval as smooth as possible. My first obligation is to the men and women of the Taraval station. It is my immediate intention to check on the welfare of these great officers who service the district day and night. I firmly believe that addressing the concerns and needs of those who provide the services is the golden key to dealing with many of the complexities that face us as police officers.

I am inspired by the Taraval community because I am fully aware of the level of involvement that many community members have. I believe that this level of engagement is not only important, but the hidden ingredient to true partnerships that build bridges to understanding and trust. This district is also complimented with some very engaging members of the Board of Supervisors. I have quietly watched from the sideline the concerns and level of engagement that these Supervisors have for this district. I am equally committed to partnering with them to bring about needed changes and securing the safety of those who dwell within our district.

As we move onward, I eagerly look forward to this transition period and offer you my word of commitment and dedication to this newly assigned post.

Captain John Sanford, Jr., Taraval Police Station, (415) 759-3100

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Visit us at [TARAVAL.ORG](http://TARAVAL.ORG) for news, safety tips and the latest in neighborhood watch information!

### Park Commission (Cont. from p. 7)

Commissioner Gloria Bonilla’s tortured speech about her concern for the environment, before she finally arrived at the “But, the RPD needs the money” part of her decision. Perhaps a new condition for RPC appointments should require acting lessons, since the RPC’s decision was never in doubt. Commissioner Larry Martin droned on about how the public needed to accept “change” for a pro-development decision. President Barack Obama hasn’t used the word “change” as often as Larry Martin did that night. Martin, a one-time, high-ranking Transportation Worker’s union official, was appointed by Mayor Newsom in 2007 and has absolutely no recreation and park experience listed on his official Commission resume.

If having no practical recreation and park experience is seen as a plus by the Mayor’s Office, current RPD director Phil Ginsburg is uniquely qualified for his job. Mr. Ginsburg served as a San Francisco Deputy City Attorney from 2000–2004 as the City’s chief labor negotiator, served as head of the City’s Department of Human Resources from 2004–2007, and was Mayor Newsom’s Chief of Staff from 2007–2008. On July 7, 2009 Ginsburg was appointed by Newsom as the RPD’s new General Manager, with absolutely no previous experience in managing park or recreational facilities. “Phil Ginsburg is a skilled manager and a natural leader who loves this city and our parks. We are lucky to have Phil on the job, and we expect great things from him as he leads this department into a new era,” said Mayor Newsom.

The “new era” mentioned by Newsom is based on a simple premise: The public pays for the parks, the RPD controls use of our parks, and then the public is charged again when they use park services. This is called privatization.

The RPC members routinely approve Rec and Park Department requests, whether for charging fees, decreasing Rec Center staff, or turning our parks into landscaped flea markets. Commission members simply did what Mr. Ginsberg and the Mayor’s office wanted them to do. The right decision for RPC members will always be to do what Ginsberg and Newsom want them to do. Fortunately, concerned neighbors and environmental groups who care more about parks remaining as natural parks than becoming “financial cost centers” are fighting back by challenging the RPC’s rubber-stamped attempts to make a profit.

No member on the current Mayor-controlled RPC ever has a differing opinion. An analysis of the last 21 posted commission meeting minutes (1/15/09 – 2/18/10) revealed that 100% of the 130 agenda items presented to the RPC were approved and 97.6% (127) of the commission votes were unanimous.

According to Supervisor Mirkarimi, his RPC appointment Charter change initiative “Will bring additional diversity and accountability to the Recreation and Park Commission.” Mirkarimi isn’t saying that RPC members appointed by the Board of Supervisors would be more qualified than Commissioners appointed by the Mayor. He’s saying that the Commission members will represent different points of view than the current RPC members appointed exclusively by the Mayor. Many people and neighborhood groups who love nature have been pushed aside, ignored, and disenfranchised by the current RPC’s and RPD’s “financially self-sustainable” mission. It would be nice to have an accessible Commission represented by many points of view, rather than just the Mayor’s point of view.

Supervisor Mirkarimi’s RPC appointment initiative merits consideration and public approval. If San Francisco voters want to bring the Commission back into balance and make the Commission represent San Franciscans, rather than representing the Mayor, we need to support Mirkarimi’s Charter amendment and have it placed on November’s municipal ballot. Let’s allow San Francisco voters to decide.

Please contact the offices of this legislation’s seven sponsors — Supervisors Ross Mirkarimi, David Campos, Chris Daly, Sophie Maxwell, Eric Mar, David Chiu, and John Avalos — and show your support for the RPC appointment Charter amendment.

It will be the first step in reversing the Kabuki theater we now have at the RPC, and in regaining control of our parks.

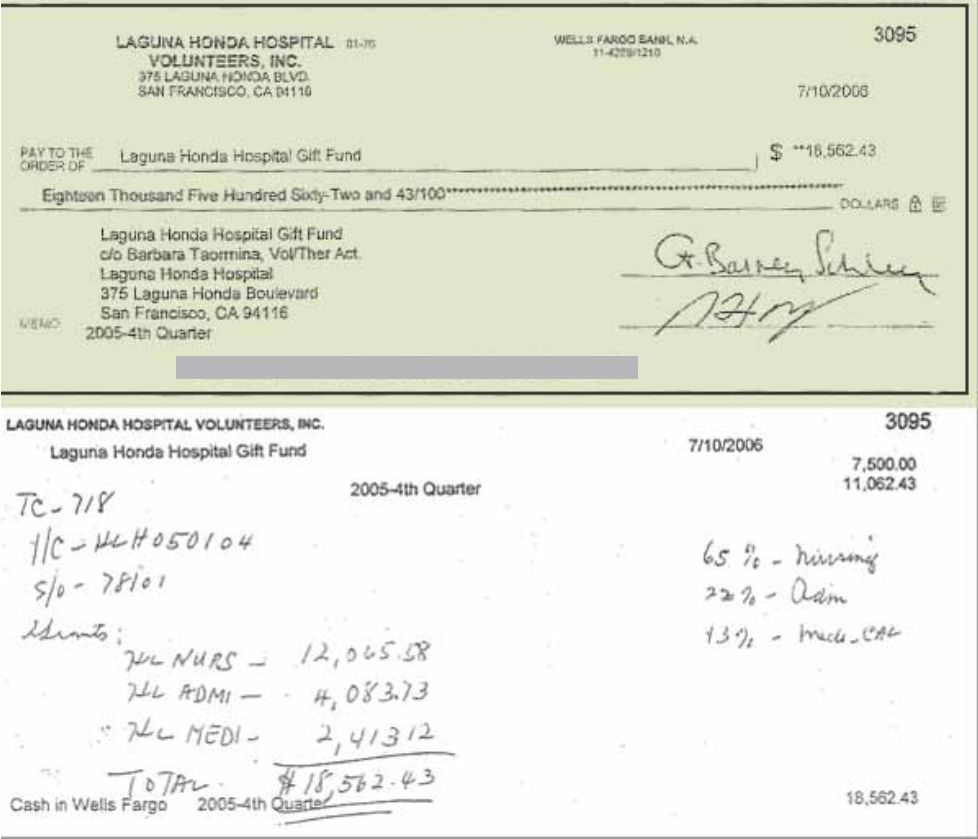
George Wooding, President, West of Twin Peaks Central Council. Feedback: [wooding@west-sideobserver.com](mailto:wooding@west-sideobserver.com)



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Laguna Honda (Cont. from p. 1)



One of the many checks obtained under the Sunshine Ordinance indicates misspent funds that should have gone to patients welfare

to the Health Commission, weakening oversight. When LHH suddenly revised the policy again on April 15, 2010, the Gift Fund Management Committee was simply eliminated.

Shortly after LHH’s 2004 revisions to its Patient Gift Fund policy, increases in gift fund expenditures benefitting LHH’s staff, rather than patients, soon skyrocketed, after three staff education sub-accounts were created on August 12, 2005 shortly after Kanaley took control; the other education account was created in January 2008.

Although Dr. Rivero and Dr. Kerr have proposed a six-point action plan to restore the charity-donating public’s trust in the Patient Gift Fund, none of their proposed remedies have been implemented since KGO’s May 20 story aired.

Their action plan requested an independent fiscal audit of the gift fund’s income and expenses for the past five years; full restitution for any misspent donations intended for patients; reinstatement of the Gift Fund Management Committee; appointment of a patient representative or ombudsman to the Gift Fund Management Committee; inclusion of approval of any disbursement over \$500 from the Patient Gift Fund in published minutes of monthly meetings of the Gift Fund Management Committee; and submission of quarterly reports itemizing all donations and expenses to the Patient Gift Fund to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors’ Budget and Finance Committee for public review.

Other remedies proposed include returning the gift fund policy to its pre-December 2004 status, and a mission statement describing the intended uses and “restricted purposes” for each of the 20 sub-accounts must be restored and posted on LHH’s web site.

In mid-2009 LHH’s current Executive Administrator Hirose combined previously-held community meetings with her monthly Town Hall staff meeting, opening the combined meeting to the public. But in reaction to the KGO story, on June 4 LHH’s combined meetings went closed, locking out the public.

“After two years of arm twisting by neighbors demanding LHH hold community meetings, now we can’t even get return calls or email replies. Denying us access to community meetings to ask whether our donations to the Patient Gift Fund and Volunteers, Inc. have been misappropriated is an affront,” says George Wooding, president of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council.

On May 24, Dr. Kerr and Dr. Rivero submitted a complaint to the California Attorney General’s Registry of Charitable Trusts, requesting that the State audit LHH’s Patient Gift Fund. They have since submitted supplements to the Registry documenting additional problems.

They documented that at least \$188,442 in questionable allocations and expenses that should have benefitted patients, did not. The City has provided some conflicting public records highlighting potential accounting discrepancies. Rivero and Kerr are still investigating what has happened to three major bequests, and are concerned about irregularities with the Hospice sub-account.

“Various oversight authorities have an obligation to investigate,” Kerr maintains, convinced LHH’s patients and Patient Gift Fund donors deserve no less than a full audit.

To that end, Dr. Kerr and Dr. Rivero have asked that the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of California, Joseph Russoniello, investigate and conduct a full audit, since his office pursues restitution on behalf of victims and violations of federal law.

The Patient Gift Fund balance was \$2,086,872 in December 2004. The Controller’s Office confirmed as of June 6, 2010 the current balance dropped to only \$726,808, indicating that within five-and-a-half years it shrank by \$1.3 million. Of the remaining balance, 17% (\$123,517) is dedicated for staff use, and only \$603,291 remains in sub-accounts for patients.

At the rate of current earnings and spending, the Patient Gift Fund may be completely insolvent within three years.

Three donations totaling \$54,502 from Laguna Honda Volunteers, Inc. likely intended for direct patient benefit were deposited into sub-accounts for nursing, administration, and physician education, instead.

Like most of us, patients enjoy going out to enjoy a meal at a nice restaurant Patient bus trips to restaurants plummeted 66 percent between first quarter 2009 and first quarter 2010, even while staff education sub-accounts earned \$89,998 in interest on May 11, 2010. In first quarter 2009, 487 patients went on restaurant outings; by first quarter 2010, the number of patients provided restaurant trips plummeted to only 166.

The monthly bus trips provide unique opportunities for social dining, culturally meaningful meals, and connection with San Francisco’s greater community. The interest deposited into the staff education accounts could have funded an additional 464 restaurant outings for patients.

Supervisor Sean Elsbernd attempted to justify the reduced bus trips on the drop in LHH’s patient census and that current patients have a higher acuity, implying they are too sick for outings. He offered no proof LHH now has higher-acuity patients. And Elsbernd had his dates wrong; LHH’s census had already dropped to 790 patients by March 2009, and it had 760 patients in January 2010, indicating that the census had fallen by just 3.7 percent — which doesn’t justify cutting the restaurant bus trips by 66%.

When a donor to Laguna Honda Volunteers Inc. requested its board of directors support calls for an audit of LHH’s patient gift fund, the board’s administrative consultant responded that Volunteers, Inc. had been assured by LHH’s staff and the City Controller

# And On With The Show...

## The Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony at Laguna Honda Rolls Ahead Unabated



Above: Mayor Gavin Newsom applauds Elsbernd as former City Attorney Louise Renne and Mitch Katz bask in the moment.

Right: The less than ostentatious tent greets guests and officials.



Left: Mayor Gavin Newsom assists Louise Renne with the giant scissor for the momentous cutting of the ribbon as Elizabeth Cutler looks on.

Below: The sparkling new main lobby of the \$585 million redesigned Laguna Honda Hospital has been in the works since Mayor Dianne Feinstein determined that the former 1867 Almshouse from the Gold-Rush era, needed rebuilding to serve the city’s poor, frail elderly.



Left: Elizabeth Cutler with the Mayor, Congresswoman Jackie Speier and Commissioner Jim Illeg.

### Angela Alioto’s Tobacco Settlement Funds

#### Why was the major source of rebuild funding deprecated?

Most speakers during LHH’s ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 26 — with the exception of LHH Resident’s Council president Elizabeth Cutler, in wheelchair— wrongly credited former City Attorney Louise Renne for filing San Francisco’s consumer protection lawsuit against the tobacco industry.

The tobacco settlement, which provided significant funds for the rebuild, is projected to earn San Francisco \$984 million by the year 2060, plus interest.

In 1996, then Board of Supervisors president Angela Alioto initiated, authored and passed legislation (Resolution 46996) to sue Big Tobacco. Pages 218 through 221 of Alioto’s book *Straight to the Heart: Political Cantos*, details how Renne tried to stop Alioto’s groundbreaking legislation outlining the lawsuit, which Renne then outsourced to a private law firm.

Surely Renne, now president of the LHH Foundation, would *not* engage in revisionist history taking credit for Alioto’s work. Yet, Alioto was seated among the audience, not among the honorees and Renne’s name is featured in an artwork installation in the hospital’s new main lobby but Alioto’s is nowhere.

that “there was no impropriety” regarding funds Volunteers, Inc. donated for patient benefit. Details in the multiple complaints Dr. Rivero and Dr. Kerr submitted to various regulatory agencies reveal many improprieties in expense and revenue records.

Why would Volunteers, Inc. believe the very LHH staff thought to be responsible for potential misappropriation of funds from trust purposes to non-trust purposes?

To his discredit, Supervisor Elsbernd — who has the power to do so — hasn’t called for a full audit, nor has he held any hearings to explore potential Patient Gift Fund abuses. Donors and patients have a right to know what happened to these restricted-use donations.

Monette-Shaw, an accountability advocate, is a San Francisco Hospital Examiner at Examiner.com. Feedback: monette-shaw@westsideobserver.com.





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| 123 Dellbrook Ave. | 3  | 2  | 2 Tandem | 1576    | 10/30/09  | 750,000      | 805,000    |
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[www.sfzoo.org](http://www.sfzoo.org)

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## July &amp; August Calendar

## DAILY

**1** **Empire of Thirst** | Photographer Robert Dawson | June 26–Aug 1 | Jewett Gallery Main Library, 100 Larkin St. Color and black and white photographs that address the issue of water. Some of Dawson's work looks at our culture's desire to possess, control and shape the land and water to our needs, other photographs document the misuse of water and still others examine a complex, evolving relationship to water that Dawson hopes to influence with his work.

## THURSDAY

**2** **Beijing, California** | 8 pm | July 1–17 | The Asian American Theater Company (AATC) completes its 2010 Season with this world premiere, a new play by Paul Heller, based on a story developed with and directed by Duy Nguyen. Thick House, 1695 18th Street, San Francisco. \$15-25. (415) 401-8081.

## FRIDAY

**3** **Friday Night Jazz Every Fri** | 7–11 pm | Cliff House – 1 Seal Rock.

## SATURDAY

**4** **Farmers Market** | Every Sat | 10 am–2 pm | Parkmerced: at the corner of Arballo and Serrano.

## SUNDAY

**5** **Farmers Market** | Every Sun | 10 am– 3 pm | Stonestown: at Stonestown Galleria (19th Avenue @ Winston)

## TUESDAY

**Every Tues** | 4–8 pm | Que Syrah. Take \$1 off each glass, 10% off of each bottle of wine consumed at the store. 230 West Portal Avenue 731.7000

## SUNDAY

**San Francisco Symphony** | Stern Grove Festival | July 11 | 2 pm | Conductor Donato Cabrera. The afternoon features Copland's Danzón Cubano and Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo, Gershwin's Cuban Overture, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 6, Pastoral. Free Concert Sigmund Stern Grove, 19th Ave. & Sloat.

Got an event? The Westside Observer is happy to list local events. Please contact the editor at [editor@westsideobserver.com](mailto:editor@westsideobserver.com)

## REAL TRAVEL FOR REAL PEOPLE



## From Russia with Love

By Sergio Nibbi

**O**ur first visit to St. Petersburg was in 1990. With Ronald Reagan's admonition, the Berlin Wall had just come down

and at the time St. Petersburg was still known as Leningrad. The city was renamed after the fall of Communism in 1991. We heard how much it had changed, and with three full days there we were about to find out how radical that change really was.

Through a friend of a friend we able to find the name of a tour guide, and after endless internet exchanges the program was in place. Natasha was to meet us at the ship immediately after our arrival, and the 14 of us would pile in her minivan and start exploring.

All went well until 600 people aboard ship tried to leave at the same time. The Dixieland jazz band at the bottom of the gangplank helped pass the time, but the Russian custom's officials would not budge. It's their country and they were going to move at their own speed. Without ever cracking a smile the six or seven white uniformed, medal laden officers checked and rechecked our documents. Eventually we were allowed on shore.

After the informal introductions, Natasha and Mikhail, her driver, took full command. She spoke perfect English and headed off to show us her lovely city. We started very simply with a quick tour of the immediate area and with the first stop at a local pier area, we all jumped out anxious to photograph and be photographed. The most amazing



## TUESDAY

**13** **Kevin Starr** | July 13 | 7 pm | *Golden Gate: The Life and Times of America's Greatest Bridge* Starr's new book is a lyrical account of the building and significance of the Golden Gate Bridge. Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave., Info: 564-8080

## WEDNESDAY

**14** **Oren Harman** | July 14 | 7 pm | *The Price of Altruism: George Price and the Search for the Origins of Kindness*, One man's quest to crack the mystery of altruism, an enigma that has haunted scientists since Darwin. Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave., Info: 564-8080

## SUNDAY

**18** **Caravan Palace/DePedro** | July 18 | 2 pm | Electro-global sounds-an amalgamation of Parisian subculture, jazz, and swing that draws audiences to the dance floor. Guitarist and songwriter Jairo Zavala's explosive solo project, DePedro, is the culmination of years performing with Latin rock bands. Sigmund Stern Grove, 19th Ave. & Sloat.

## MONDAY

**19** **Paul Harding** | July 19 | 7 pm | The Pulitzer Prize-winning author will read from his masterful novel *Tinkers*, in which an old man lies dying in a bed in his living room. He hallucinates to rejoin the father he lost decades ago, an epileptic, as he returns to the wonder and pain of his childhood, he recovers a natural world. Bookshop West Portal, 80 West Portal Ave., Info: 564-8080

## TUESDAY

**20** **Taraval Police District Community Mtg** | July 20 | 6 pm | Our monthly Taraval/Community meeting at Taraval Police Station, 2345 24th Ave. (3rd Tues of each month).

## SUNDAY

**25** **Jovanotti /Bomba Estéreo** | July 25 | 2 pm | Cross-cultural cool-Italian superstar Jovanotti has amassed a huge following in Europe featuring spoken-word lyricism and a smooth melding of influences. Colombian group Bomba Estéreo's energizing brand of "psychedelic cumbia" is sure to start the afternoon off *en fuego*! Sigmund Stern Grove, 19th Ave. & Sloat.

## SUNDAY

**1** **Ricki Lee Jones /Meklit Hadero** | Aug 1 | 2 pm | Songstress stylings of vocalist Rickie Lee Jones over a career spanning thirty years, "Duchess of Coolsville" has amassed multiple GRAMMY's. Local favorite, singer/songwriter Meklit Hadero opens the day with musical tales influenced by her Ethiopian heritage and jazz. Sigmund Stern Grove, 19th Ave. & Sloat.

## SUNDAY

**8** **San Francisco Ballet** | Aug 8 | 2 pm | Artists of the Company perform a selection of works from their current repertory. Renowned for its incomparable level of innovation and exuberance, San Francisco Ballet is one of the premier ballet companies in America. Sigmund Stern Grove, 19th Ave. & Sloat.

## SUNDAY

**15** **Maceo Parker/Darondo** | Aug 15 | 2 pm | Bringing the funk, Maceo Parker is one of the living legends of funk, former saxophone for James Brown, cultivating a sound recognized worldwide. Bay Area soul singer Darondo has experienced a recent resurgence in popularity, share his shattering falsetto and gravelly bass. Sigmund Stern Grove, 19th Ave. & Sloat.

## SUNDAY

**22** **They Might Be Giants/Rogue Wave** | Aug 22 | 2 pm | Indie rocks Stern Grove Festival's season finale. They Might Be Giants with their eclectic geek rock sound, smart lyrics, and offbeat musical style. Local indie rock favorite, Rogue Wave opens with dreamy melodies and catchy songs punctuated by psychedelic guitars and intricate rhvthms. Stern Grove. 19th Ave. & Sloat.



part was not the memorial to the sailors lost at sea, but rather the two muzzled, baby bears frolicking around the tourists.

Next stop was the Fortress of Peter and Paul, the oldest building in the city which had been used as a political prison during the rule of the tsars. Within the walls is the Cathedral of Peter and Paul which was the first of the many we were to see.



After our visit, we managed a quick stop at a very small souvenir shop where a lovely young woman greeted us with a tray full of vodka. Actually, we were more interested in the clean, available toilets.

We were told that you could visit the Hermitage every day for eight hours a day, spend three minutes in front of each exhibit and it would take you over eight years to see it all. We saw it all in three and half hours. The Hermitage consists of five connected buildings, including the Winter Palace. The lines are endless and the exhibits mind numbing. We especially enjoyed the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Rembrandt and Rubens as well the countless Impressionists that make the Hermitage one of the largest and most famous museums in the world.



Day two started with a one hour ride to Pushkin to visit Catherine's Palace, but not before Natasha swung by the local farmers market. This 20,000 square foot building was packed with all sorts of meat products, deli items, cheeses, fruits and vegetables. As we took endless pictures we were offered various items to taste. We passed on most.

With room after room of gold leafed walls, hand carved furnishing, and inlaid floors — and the splendor of the Amber Room — we toured Catherine's home where she lived and died. It's no wonder they had a revolution!

The Yusupov Palace allowed us to see where Rasputin was murdered — he was one tough SOB — they poisoned him, shot him and finally dumped him in the river where he froze to death. And if that wasn't enough, we finished up the day of sightseeing with a canal cruise along the Neva, the main river running through the area where we had astounding views of the city before the heavy rain drove us all down below.

Our lovely day was spoiled by the sight of a blazing fire destroying one of the more famous Greek Orthodox Churches. It had been undergoing a major restoration. From the bus, and then from our veranda, we could see the flames shooting hundreds of feet in the air as the local fire departments struggled in vain to control the inferno. Later in the evening, we could see the helicopters carrying water buckets in a futile attempt to extinguish the flames. We learned from Natasha the next day that, although the entire building was destroyed, people were able to rush in and save some of the priceless artifacts and manuscripts. What a tragic shame. We felt so sad and so close to these priceless treasures belonging to the people of this marvelous city.

(Cont. on p. 16)



SFPUC Financials (Cont. from p.4

system to a regulatory morass while burdening its customers with an avalanche of debt. To fill this uncertain regulatory gap between commercial paper and authorized long-term revenue bond debt, the Board passed Ordinance 266-06. This ordinance attempted to tie together the 1998 Ordinance 203-98 and 2002 Proposition E. It did not simplify the process. The main reason for 266-06 was to initialize a \$150,000,000 commercial paper for SFPUC's new sewer program. This ordinance did acknowledge the requirement that commercial paper (and derivatives thereto) programs could be used only after the Board had approved and identified the issuance of a dedicated revenue bonds program. Proposition E also spoke to giving the SFPUC the right to enter into joint power sharing agreements, set rates, speak to rate fairness and interestingly allowed a conduit for Hetch Hetchy enterprise "surplus" revenues to be transferred to the general fund. Surplus revenues belong to the ratepayers in the form of a rebate and/or must be plowed back into the system to reduce future charges since surpluses come from rates. Any transfer to the general fund would be contrary to 1996 California Proposition 218 (a revival of the old idea of no taxation without representation), a constitutional amendment, especially in light of the 2006 Big Horn Case<sup>1</sup>. All revenue bonds must be repaid through rate increases. A genuine concern is that a rate increase of one percent will see a decrease in actual demand of greater than one percent, i.e., total revenues will fall, and less rather than more will be available for debt service after a rate increase. Bottom line — there is no real regulatory oversight in SF. It has gone from a relatively simple and transparent system, with ratepayers and citizens involved, to a regulatory morass that is unmanageable. The SFPUC has authority to issue \$650 million in commercial paper. They have indicated they wish to double this amount to \$1.3 billion. Trying to keep track of actual authorizations and complementary commercial paper will be impossible. One disadvantage San Francisco has under state law is that it is a self-regulating municipality. The current system does not work. A good start would be to rescind Proposition E. Brian Browne is a member of the Public Utilities Revenue Bond Oversight Committee, a specialist in economic and regulatory analysis of water, wastewater, natural gas, power, and transportation sectors. Author of numerous studies on these subjects.

1. [www.tensarcorp.com/.../SPECTRA\\_CS\\_GREENBUSH\\_10.06.PDF](http://www.tensarcorp.com/.../SPECTRA_CS_GREENBUSH_10.06.PDF)

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SHARON THE HEALTH

## BURNS, BUGS, AND BASICS

By Sharon Caren

Now that summertime is official, here are some great tips to make your activities and vacation trips more enjoyable. Below are suggestions for healthy and all natural products you won't want to be without (for emergencies) to carry along in your first aid kit.

### Fun in the Sun

The existence of nearly all life on earth is fueled by light from the sun. A recent study indicates that more exposure to sunshine early in a person's life relates to less risk from multiple sclerosis (MS) later in life. New research is being done showing that vitamin D from the sun may have positive effects on cancer patients. On the other hand, excessive sunlight exposure has been linked to all types of skin cancer caused by the ultraviolet part of radiation from sunlight. Don't be fooled by the fog either. UV rays can penetrate cloud cover! **Eye Protection** Not all sunglasses are created equal. In the past, I've purchased expensive ones that I've lost or broken and turned to the less costly ones with stickers of UV protection. Unfortunately, cheap sunglasses are unlikely to provide true protection. We'll probably have to spend about \$100.00 on a pair of sunglasses to cover the full range of protection needed. Wearing a brimmed hat or visor is also a big help. An article in Time.com points out that wearing cheap sunglasses can actually do more harm to your eyes than if you were forced to squint. When we squint, our pupils constrict to tiny dots that limit the amount of light getting in. However, when wearing sunglasses, our eyes feel as if they are in a darkened room and the pupils dilate to let in more light. If you are wearing cheap sunglasses, then much more harmful light may reach your eyes. That additional exposure to UVA and UVB rays may increase the risk for cataracts, macular degeneration and even development of ocular melanoma—a very rare type of cancer. Read more: <http://wellness.blogs.time.com/2009/08/04can-cheap-sunglasses-be-bad-for-your-eyes/#ixzz0rhTZFDTB>

What's new is the application of all we know about the beneficial effects of plant substances to create modern-day oils. These oils are great for people who are searching for an alternative to prescription drugs and their awful side effects.

The suggested products below are treatments I've researched and used personally. They do not contain harmful chemicals. **Sun Screens** Unrefined Shea Butter, natural SPF of 6. All Natural Sunscreen SPF 15, 30, or 50 – go to <http://shop.mercola.com> **Be Physical** It's time to get out and enjoy your favorite activities like hiking, biking, and swimming. If you haven't been moving your body much this year, the muscles will feel it. Most importantly, stretching is in order before and after. If you'll only stretch once, do it after the activity. As a Licensed Reposturing Trainer, I teach personalized stretch routines to keep you flexible and out of pain from injury. <http://www.sharoncaren.com> then click "personal posture plan" for more information. If you feel pain from sore muscles, try these on the affected area: Pure Therapeutic Grade Essential Oils: Deep Relief - roll on Pan Away Peppermint Wintergreen **Camping, Cooking, Cutting, Cleaning** When vacationing away and out in nature this summer, you'll want to have items that are easy to carry in your pocket and are extremely effective if the need arises. **For Sunburn relief** LavaDerm Cooling Mist will relieve stressed skin. This is a blend of gentle skin-soothing ingredients; lavender essential oil and aloe vera. Spray directly onto the affected area and repeat every 10-15 minutes until desired relief is achieved. Also use the Essential Oil of Lavender. **Bug Repellent, Bug Bites, Bee Stings** Purification Oil Blend keeps critters away and neutralizes poison from bites or stings to alleviate pain and swelling. You can also use Oil of Lavender or Peppermint.

**Poison Oak** Oil of Peppermint helps to dry up the rash quickly and stops itching. **Cleaning and drinking water** Oil of Lemon disinfects and deeply cleans cooking utensils and purifies drinking water. Oil of Peppermint is wonderful. Just add a drop in drinking water and this will bring down the body temperature if one is over come by heat exhaustion or fever. **Antiseptic, Antibacterial, Antifungal** Oil Blend of Thieves put on topically, under tongue, or diffuse. For added protection use Thieves Waterless Hand Purifier, Thieves Wipes, Thieves Throat Lozenges. **Cuts, scrapes, and bleeding** Oil of Helichrysum helps to coagulate the blood when poured on an open wound and expedites healing. Be proactive and beef up your first aid kit before an emergency occurs not only just for summer but all year long. You'll sleep better at night knowing you have some alternatives. I'm sharing all I've learned and what has worked for my family and me. As an educator of Essential Oils, I'm passing along these ancient healing techniques using the life-blood of plants. In ancient Egypt, the Pharaohs used oils to promote physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. So, the use of oils for healing is very old. What's new is the application of all we know about the beneficial effects of plant substances to create modern-day oils. These oils are great for people who are searching for an alternative to prescription drugs and their awful side effects. <http://www.youngliving.com/sharoncaren> Always consult your doctor. I'm not a doctor and I don't prescribe or diagnose.

Please contact me with comments, questions or information you'd like to share on health and wellness at [sharoncaren@comcast.net](mailto:sharoncaren@comcast.net) Also, visit: [www.sharoncaren.com](http://www.sharoncaren.com)



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At the Theater • By Dr Annette Lust and Flora Lynn Isaacson

**SPEECH AND DEBATE**  
*Teenagers Discovering the Truth About a Supposed Sex Scandal*

What has such a dull title, Stephen Karam’s *Speech and Debate*, now undergoing its Bay Area Premiere at the Aurora Theatre’s 18th season, got to do with the play’s content concerning a sex scandal? Not until we see the play do we understand a threesome of maladjusted teenagers’ efforts to comprehend and eventually bring freedom of expression and tolerance related to a town sex scandal by starting a club entitled *Speech and Debate*. They hope that this will allow them to be heard as they probe into the details of how Salem, Oregon’s mayor became involved with a blonde male student at their school. In addition, Drama Queen Diwata, who started the club with openly gay Howie and school journalist Solomon, also promotes her musical, which lauds sexual freedom. At one point in the musical they disrobe, Diwata wearing a nude body stocking, and the boys in their underwear that hilariously brings the house down.

As they grow closer, the play appears to revolve around the threesome’s findings about themselves and their own sex lives - how does it supposedly bring solutions about what it means to be an adult? Do these teenagers probing into their own acts bring about a clearer understanding of the reasons for adults’ actions? One leaves the show believing these teenagers’ persistent third eye has clarified, to the point of understanding and forgiving the doings of adults. As bothersome as they can be, their sincere attempt to understand themselves and their roles in respect to another generation may, by the same token, enlighten adults.

Director Robin Stanton handles the confining use of space at the Aurora and carefully balances the placement of her characters in each scene in which the actors successfully play to the audience on three sides at a fast moving pace that befits the energy of teenagers.

Jayne Deely as Diwata creates a clever go-getter teenager who makes the action go round by luring the two unwilling males into making her club survive and her musical recognized. Even when she begins to succeed, she never abandons her teenage critical perspective about how the media misunderstands her innovative aspirations. Jason Frank’s “comme il faut” or proper allure renders his Solomon a serious, justice-pursuing character who ends up adapting to the craziness of his adventurous partners. Maro Guevaro, who was a Fine Arts major and is a freelance graphic designer, created an intriguingly dramatic portrait of a repulsive gay interested in nothing else except searching for a sex partner. Hodi Hornlien offers a good characterization of a conventional adult teacher and reporter that contrasts with the youthful mentality of the threesome.

The use of such projections as a café to clarify that the table and a chair before us is in that café on screen, or to show typical scenes of American life, seems unnecessarily distracting.

Although some critics devaluate the play as being a series of light TV sketches with trite content and no solid dramatic conflict, while it is highly comical and

entertaining, it also provokes serious thought about how today’s teenagers can bring a breath of fresh air to alleviate the social constrictions of today’s adults.

*Speech and Debate plays until July 18th. For info and tickets call 510-843-4822 or visit auroratheatre.org. Dr. Annette Lust*

**50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FANTASTICKS**  
Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the Fantasticks is reimagined in a world devastated by Global Warming to bring new resonance to its theme of hope and of facing the truth before one can grow.

SF Playhouse Artistic Director Bill English’s approach is to set this fable of love in a post-environmentalcollapse landscape designed by Nina Ball. It isn’t clear that his concept adds much to this 50th Anniversary production that opened Saturday, June 19. However, English’s staging as always is playfully charming.

The story of the Fantasticks is by author and lyricist Tom Jones. Harvey Schmidt’s pleasant score is played by the by accomplished Music Director Robert Moreno with a solo piano. The simple allegorical story features elements of traditional musical theatre, commedia dell’arte and vaudeville. The show begins and ends with a familiar “Try to Remember” sung by the entire cast and led by Tarek Khan who plays El Gallo. He has a smooth and resonant baritone and masterfully commands the stage with his voice and his sly comedic timing.

Sepideh Moafi plays The Girl (Luisa) and Jeremy Kahn plays The Boy (Matt) who fall in love. Sepideh Moafi’s delightful Luisa steals the show whenever she’s onstage. Jeremy Kahn’s haircut and his infectious grins captures his innocence.

Louis Parnell is Matt’s father Hucklebee, and Joan Mankin is Luisa’s mother Bellomy, at times comrades in a plot to trick their children into marrying, and at other times, enemies. These two wonderful comedians will play off each other as well as harmonizing and sharing with each other their frank irritation and exasperation with their children.

Ray Reinhardt stands out as Henry, The Old Actor, a flamboyant, befuddled thespian, whose faithful sidekick is Yusef Lambert as Mortimer, the Man Who Dies. Their slapstick episodes brought much laughter to the audience. Norman Munoz plays The Mute, deftly on hand to provide props and create the mood or a wall when needed.

Costumes by Nina Ball were particularly effective and imaginative as was her apocalyptic ruins of a set. Barbara Bernardo’s choreography of Mankin’s and Parnell’s dance routines is a sheer delight.

*The Fantasticks will have a long run at SF Playhouse until September 4, 2010. For tickets, call 415-677-9596 or go online at www.sfplayhouse.org. Coming up next at SF Playhouse on October 2 will be the Sunset Limited by Cormac McCarthy. Flora Lynn Isaacson*

**LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES**  
*Love and Revenge at Porchlight Theatre* Porch Light Theatre Company opened their 10th Anniversary Season in Ross on June 19 with “Les Liaisons Dangereuses adapted by Christopher Hampton. Co-directors were Ann



Dr. Annette Lust



Flora Lynn Isaacson

Brebner and Ken Sonkin.  
Adapted from a 1782 novel written in the form of a series of letters, by military strategist, Choderlos de La Clos. This play is a study in strategy, intrigue and cruelty. The plot focuses on the Marquise de Merteuil (Tara Blau) alternating with Anne Darragh) and the Vicomte de Valmont (Nick Sholley), rival who use sex as a weapon of humiliation and degradation all the while enjoying their cruel games. There targets are the virtuous (and married) Madame de Tourvel (Rebecca Castelli) and Cecile de Volanges (Kelly Elizabeth Anderson), a young girl who has fallen in love with her music tutor, the Chevalier Danceny (Eric Rhea).

In order to gain their trust, Merteuil and Valmont pretend to help the secret lovers so they can use them later in their own treacherous schemes. A complicated unfolding of interconnected and self serving schemes and betrayals ensues with reputations ruined and negative outcomes for all. The climax of the play boasts a sword fight between Valmont and Danceny which is noted for its excellent choreography.

Rounding out a strong cast of supporting players includes Molly Noble as Cecile’s mother Madame de Volanges, Candace Brown as Valmont’s understanding Aunt, Madame de Rosemonde, Thais Harris in an exceptional performance as Emilie, a courtesan and Don Wood as Azolan, Valmont’s servant.

The action of the play takes place during one autumn and winter in 1785 in various salons and boudoirs in and around Paris that are the sumptuous rooms of pre-Revolutionary France. Set Designer, Ron Krempetz gives us a turquoise background with a pink floor containing a green square at the center with a blue diamond in the middle. Costume Designer, Todd Roehrman deserves a great deal of credit for his lush, period costumes of the gloriously attired aristocrats.

*Les Liaisons Dangereuses plays through July 10, 2010 at the Redwood Amphitheatre at the Marin Art and Garden Center, 30 Sir Francis Drake Blvd., Ross. For tickets call 415-251-1027 or www.porchlight.net. Flora Lynn Isaacson*  
**ACTORS WANTED FOR BAY AREA AUDITIONS OF THE 26th FALL FRINGE OF MARIN FESTIVAL-AUGUST 24/25. SHORT PLAYS CONSIDERED FOR UPCOMING FRINGE OF MARIN FESTIVALS** For info call (415)-673-3131 ( 10 a.m. to noon) or email jeanlust@aol.com.

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15th Annual SF Silent Film Festival  
at the Castro July 15 to 18

By Tom Mayer

This year, the SF Silent Film Festival will present their 15th annual festival at the Castro Theater July 15 to 18, expanding the festival from its usual three days to four. The highlight of the festival will be the U. S. premiere of the restored version of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), with 30 minutes not seen since the 1927 premiere in Berlin. SFSFF artistic director Anita Monga says “This discovery is one of the most important in silent film history.” The tale of how a film archive in Argentina found the long-sought footage — lost for 70 years — is an astounding story.

Internationally renowned musical star Matti Bye and Ensemble play Benjamin Christensen’s incomparable *Häxan*, a witches’ brew of the scary and darkly humorous. A composer and silent film accompanist since 1989, winner of the 2008 Guldbagge Award (the “Swedish Oscar”) for his score of *Everlasting Moments*, at the 2009 Academy Awards.

Every year, the festival showcases a series of short films, presenting them throughout the festival before each feature program. For the 15th annual festival, the imaginative and beautiful films of Georges Méliès, will be featured.

This year, the Festival focuses on silent film music with a new program that will give the audience the chance to hear from the festival’s extraordinary musicians.

Info:www.silentfilm.org or call (415) 777-4908.



Westwood Park Grocery Company’s building under construction (not before 1917). Anyone knowing the address or date of this building please contact editor@westsideobserver.com. Photo: Gabriel Moulin, Permission: Moulin Studios. 1460 Grand Ave, San Rafael, 94901 and the SF Public Library Historical Photograph Collection.

PHYLLIS’ FINDINGS

By Phyllis Sherman

There’s never enough time to read everything that comes into the house. The SF Chronicle arrives Thursdays through Sundays. I like Datebook, Mick LaSalle’s interesting movie reviews and an occasional article but there’s nothing like the NY Times to keep you well informed...so I read it daily...time permitting. I frequently save it for late at night when all is still and quiet and there are no competing things to do. Occasionally I’m sorry that I didn’t read it earlier because often they’ll review a new TV show that’s on that evening and I’ve already missed it. However, TV can’t compete in my mind with things I learn from the paper. The Tuesday issue has a Science section which is usually fascinating and keeps readers up-to-date on new developments around the world that you’d miss otherwise. Recently they discussed a new tool for helping heart patients described as a new smart implantable defibrillator that monitors heart information and transmits it to doctors and hospitals. They wrote about how tanning sometimes turns into an addiction and how weight lifting injuries, especially for women, are on the rise. The main news section told all about the unapologetic terrorist who set the Times Square bomb that didn’t go off. The 30 year old terrorist, who spoke perfect English, described his tactics and how he conceived the plot with Taliban help in Pakistan. He’s sentenced to life. Another article detailed how 800,000 Afghanistan citizens use heroin, opium and other illicit drugs...a jump from five years ago. 90% said they were in need of drug treatment. Apparently, they’re taking drugs against the hardships of life.

Something else to worry about...a new study from Australia suggests that couch potatoes live shorter lives. The study followed 8,800 adults ages 25 and older for six and a half years and found that each daily hour of television viewing was associated with an 18 percent increase in deaths from heart disease and an 11 percent increase in overall mortality. Those who watched TV four hours or more a day were 80% more likely to die of cardiovascular disease than those who watched two hours or less, and 46% more likely to die of any cause. And it didn’t matter whether they were overweight, according to the study. Although it’s possible that people who were already ill watched more TV than those who were healthy, the researchers tried to rule that out by excluding subjects who already had heart disease and by adjusting for differences in risk factors like diet and smoking. While the benefits of physical activity have been well studied, there is growing interest among researchers in assessing the effect of being sedentary. “For many people, on a daily basis, they simply shift from one chair to another--from the chair in the car to the chair in the office to the chair in front of the television,” said the study’s lead author David Dunstand of the Heart and Diabetes Institute in Victoria, Australia. “Even if someone has a healthy body weight, sitting for long periods still has an unhealthy influence on blood sugar and blood fats.” The moral of the story...”off your tush!”

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Theatrically speaking, there’s not a great deal going on except for The TOSCA Project at ACT which was delightful...the SF Ballet was involved and the show was dazzling. The San Francisco Playhouse is presenting the 50 year anniversary of THE FANTASTICS. It is re-imagined in a world devastated by global warming to bring new resonance to its theme of hope and of facing the truth before one can grow. Beautiful melodies, among them the hit songs “Try to Remember” and “Soon It’s Gonna Rain” sparkle throughout

the comedy and evoke the agony and rapture of being young, full of dreams, and giddy with love. It’s directed by Bill English who is consistently top-notch. It’s scheduled to play through September 4, 2010 so put it on your list. In the film department, I caught JOAN RIVERS..A PIECE OF WORK, which got ecstatic reviews from most reviewers. I wasn’t quite as thrilled, although impressed with her total openness. She leaves nothing to the imagination...including details of her numerous face lifts and her impressive sex life. She was funny, if a bit “over-the-top.” If you’re a conservative type, stay home. On the other hand, if you’re a conservative-type or a liberal-type, I’d highly recommend TOY STORY 3. It’s smart, funny, poignant, and highly creative .Go, with or without a child. You’ll love it!

\*\*\*\*\*

Just an addendum from the SF PLAYHOUSE you should make a note of: On September 28th, they’re having the West Coast premiere of THE SUNSET LIMITED by Cormac McCarthy, directed by Bill English. A startling encounter on a New York subway platform leads two strangers to a run-down tenement where they engage in a brilliant verbal duet on a subject no less compelling than the meaning of life. TV and film star Carl Lumbly returns to the SF Playhouse in the lead role.

\*\*\*\*\*

END JOKES; Tom calls his boss and complains, “Mr. Lee, Velly solly..no come work tomorrow. Bad backache, headache, stomach ache.” The boss, Mr.Lee, sympathizes...”Tom, I have the same problem, but when I don’t feel better, I just ask my wife for a little sex and I feel much better. See if that works.” The next day, Tom calls his boss and says, “Mr. Lee..good advice. Feel better. Thanks..and by the way..you got velly rice house.

\*\*\*\*\*

Out of the mouth of jewish children  
A little boy was attending a wedding of a close relative. After the ceremony, his cousin asked him, “How many women can a man marry?”  
“Sixteen,” the boy responded. His cousin was amazed that he had an answer so quickly.  
“How do you know that?” “Easy,” the little boy said. “All you have to do is add it up, like the Rabbi said: 4 better, 4 worse, 4 richer, 4 poorer.”  
\*\*\*\*\*  
A little girl became restless as the rabbi’s High Holy Day appeal sermon dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, “Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?”  
\*\*\*\*\*

After the circumcising of his baby brother in shul, little Jonah sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, “That rabbi said he wanted us brought up in a Jewish home, and I want to stay with you guys!”

Feedback: phyllis@westsideobserver.com



“UP”

Movie Review by Marissa Sherman

UP is a wonderful movie about an old man named Carl and a young boy named Russell and their adventurous journey to Paradise Falls in South America. They are not close friends at the beginning of the movie but with all of the adventures they share they become very good buddies. Carl wants to go to Paradise Falls in South America. This was a long-time dream he had with his wife Ellie. However, unfortunately it doesn’t happen that way as Ellie died without first seeing the Falls. Instead, Carl uses balloons (thousands of them!) and attaches them to his house and he is now able to float. Once he takes off in the air, he gets a knock on his door and Russell, the neighborhood scout, asks to come in. On their way to Paradise Falls, they meet a dog name Doug and a bird named Kevin. But they also meet Charles Muntz , an explorer who became evil over the years. So evil that Charles Muntz had his dogs all gang-up on

Doug, a friendly dog, Kevin, Russell & Carl. The special effects throughout the movie were terrific. The dogs wore special collars that allowed them to communicate with humans. They could speak to humans!

I thought the movie was great and the characters were funny, especially Doug and Kevin. It was especially cool when the balloons were moving the house and they floated through cities. I would recommend this movie to people that like adventure stories and don’t mind some sad scenes. This movie is probably best for kids over six years old.

Marissa Sherman is the granddaughter of Phyllis Sherman



Marissa is 12 years-old



# Baby Baby

By Carol Kocivar ©2010

Don't worry. I don't go around telling my friends I have the cutest and most beautiful granddaughter in the whole wide world. I would never do that. Never ever. I am too cool. I am more into technology than baby boasting.

**On Cue: I take out my iPhone and say:**

"Have you seen *Camera Genius*? It lets you zoom in to take a close up. Here... look at the definition in this baby's picture."

**And then...**

"Take a look at this neat app. I've been using the *iVideo camera* and love the color and sound. Watch closely. You can see this baby start to roll over and grab for her toys. Nice color, huh? Did you see her put her toes in her mouth?"

**The slide show:**

"My daughter just sent me this *mobile me gallery*. You can watch a slide show and even put captions on the bottom of each picture. See the baby watching the fish in the aquarium?"

**The video chat:**

"Do you know how to record an *iChat*? Take a look. I have a small collection of chats right here on my computer. It's really easy. You can even save them on itunes. The sound is really quite amazing. Hear the baby cooing?"

By this time, I might just have let it slip that this photogenic baby is my BABY BABY. Well, not exactly mine. She lives with my daughter and her husband.

Look, here is a picture of the three of them. Don't you think her eyes are just like her dad's?

They are coming to visit next week. I have this cute little App called *flash for free*.

If I take a picture and the room is too dark, I just select the photo and it will lighten up just as if you have a real flash on your iPhone.

There is one more thing I am going to try when she gets here: *iTalk*.

Maybe— if I am really conscientious—I can record her first real word: "Grandma."

*In addition to being smitten with her new granddaughter, Carol hosts a radio show on education issues and volunteers with the PTA. Have you joined? Just click here: <http://www.capta.org/sections/membership/join-support.cfm>*

Feedback: [kocivar@westsideobserver.com](mailto:kocivar@westsideobserver.com)

**Russia** (Cont. from p. 12)

On the last day, we drove out to Peterhof where Peter the Great decided to build a little summer home that just happened to have over 130 fountains scattered across the palace's grounds. It took over 20 kilometers of underground piping and numerous reservoirs to supply the water for these naturally working fountains and waterfalls. No pumps, just water from the mountains that eventually spills into the adjoining Gulf of Finland.

After touring the dazzling gardens, we moved inside to tour this immensely luxurious imperial estate. For over an hour we again went from one gold leafed room to the next. Natasha pointed out each room, each painting, each piece of furniture and what each architect did and when. She is an amazing woman, and the facts and figures in her head astounded us all.

The one thing that impressed me the most was how many Italian architects, engineers, painters and craftsmen were involved in these structures. I kept reminding our friendly group that, were it not for the Italians, they would be looking at mud huts and tables made of saw horses. No clothes, cars, buildings, high fashion or good food would exist without us Italians. They listened, but almost threw me off the bus.

The Cathedral of Our Savior on Spilled Blood has over 7,000 square feet of mosaics covering the walls and ceilings, and is one of the most memorial buildings we saw in the three days of touring. By the end of the third day, we were all starting to drag a little, and after our fond good-buys, we all literally headed for the showers. The toilet stories would take up a whole chapter, but it was all very nicely summed up by one of our friends who shall remain nameless: "If I had known this I would have worn Depends".

The part that was so astounding is that most of the buildings we saw were nearly destroyed by the Germans during World War II. They have since been rebuilt from no more than a skeletal frame to the amazing structures that exist today. The elaborately carved moldings, statues, gold leafing, silk covered wells, inlaid floors, and lighting fixtures have all been meticulously reproduced and restored. Along with the more than 10,000 buildings that were destroyed during the war, more than 1.25 million people died in the fighting and as a result of disease and starvation.

We listened intently as Natasha spoke about the average salaries for a workman — about \$500 per month. A high paying job would bring in about \$1,000 per month. Apartments rent for \$300 to \$400 a month. During Communism, the Party built housing for the masses and the resulting apartments are what we would consider slums. The tenants have now been able to purchase their miniscule units for no more than the cost of the paperwork, and they can even buy and rent other units as their finances allow. Inflation is 15% per year, and they don't even mint coins anymore because they are virtually worthless.

The older people have a tough time with the new systems, but the younger ones have taken capitalism to heart. The streets are filled with beautiful young women in tight jeans and spiked heels and everyone walks because the traffic is Manhattan at its worst. The Metro is reliable and inexpensive.

All in all, it was an unforgettable three days and we all came back with a new feeling for this country and its people. We loved all that we saw and did and it will be with us for a long time to come. I certainly hope that it won't take us 16 years to return, but considering how tired everyone became, it may take us that long to recover.

## Where Are Drivers Most Likely To Be Ticketed?

The full list of state rankings and further information [www.motorists.org/ticket-trends/](http://www.motorists.org/ticket-trends/).

| 10 STATES MOST LIKELY TO TICKET MOTORISTS: | 10 STATES LEAST LIKELY TO TICKET MOTORISTS: |
|--|---|
| 1) Florida                                 | 51) Montana                                 |
| 2 tie) Georgia                             | 50) Wyoming                                 |
| 2 tie) Nevada                              | 49) North Dakota                            |
| 4) Texas                                   | 48) South Dakota                            |
| 5) Alabama                                 | 47) Alaska                                  |
| 6) Missouri                                | 46) Maine                                   |
| 7) New York                                | 45) West Virginia                           |
| 8) North Carolina                          | 44) Idaho                                   |
| 9) District of Columbia                    | 43) Nebraska                                |
| 10) New Jersey                             | 42) New Mexico                              |



## Now At the Movies • By Don Lee Miller

### GET HIM TO THE GREEK

Record company intern Aaron Green: Jonah Hill is given three days to escort an outrageous British pop idol, Aldous Snow: Russell Brand from London to a NYC morning network TV interview and on to the Hollywood premiere of his latest film that evening. Aaron's boss, Sergio Roma: Sean Combs has a Zero tolerance level for mistakes. Guest appearances include Christina Aguilera, Mario Lopez and Pink. This hilarious comedy is directed and dialog written by Nicholas Stoller, with characters by Jason Segal. Profanity, Violence, Female Nudity, Adult situations.

### JONAS HEX

President Grant: Aiden Quinn has an enemy in terrorist Quentin Turnbull: John Malkovich, who manages to build a secret mighty weapon years ahead of the A-bomb. Jonas Hex: Josh Brolin has the hideous scars to prove Turnbull doesn't like him, as well as the memories of his wife and son who were brutally murdered by Turnbull and his gang. When Jonas again meets up with Turnbull, it's at a Texas military fort in the Wild West which Turnbull demolishes as the demo for his weapon before heading for Washington, D.C. Based on the DC comic books, there's eye-candy in the form of Lilah: Megan Fox, stripped down to her bustier, but still handy with a bobby-pin and a pistol. Extreme Violence, Profanity, Female Nudity, Adult situations.

### KNIGHT AND DAY

Clueless innocent June Havens: Cameron Diaz meets Roy Miller: Tom Cruise in the Wichita airport as she's enroute to Boston for her sister's wedding. June is in the privy aboard the small plane while Miller kills all the baddies aboard and then lands in a corn field. (Havens is not to be confused with the late beauteous blond musical star June Haver, whose career was also at 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, the releasing company.) Roy is hiding an energy source "powerful enough to sustain a city for years" yet small enough to fit into a chess piece; the inventor is nerdy Simon Feck: Paul Dano. The real villain, Fitzgerald: Peter Sarsgaard is a dirty FBI agent, who is supposed to work for FBI Director George: Viola Davis, but has loyalties to an arms dealer, Antonio: Jordi Mollà. Roy and June wind up on a Caribbean island he happens to own, then bounce to Seville for the race with the bulls, and, next stop, onto an Austrian train. This fast moving thriller is terrific! Never mind that June looks ten years older than Roy. Violence, Profanity, Adult situations.

### THE KARATE KID

Dre Parker: Jaden Smith is very down when his mother, Sherry: Taraji Henson moves from Detroit to Beijing. He soon meets a lovely classmate Mei Ying: Wenwen Han and the class bully, Cheng: Zengwei Wang. Fortunately for Dre, his apartment manager, Mr. Han: Jackie Chan knows Kung Fu and agrees to teach him, opening a new world to Dre. Although long, the producers' (Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith) confidence in their son's talent is rewarded. Violence, Profanity, Adult situations.

*Kopp* (Cont. from p. 3)

branch of government. In 2002 as a reaction to then-Mayor Willie Brown, the Charter was amended to empower the Board of Supervisors with appointments of the Planning Commission and Board of Permit Appeals. In 2003, that same change occurred with the Police Commission. In 2005, the supervisors, still oblivious to the time-honored principal of separation of power between the executive and legislative branches, failed to secure voter approval to enable supervisory appointment of members of the Municipal Transportation Agency governing board. On June 8th, Proposition C on the Municipal ballot represented a Charter amendment to grant supervisors the power to appoint five of the Film Commission's 11 members. It was defeated. (Can you imagine the reaction of the San Francisco Supervisors if members of Congress ever propagated a United States Constitution amendment to grant the Senate, or House of Representatives, or both, the power to appoint Presidential cabinet secretaries or members of the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Trade Commission or any other executive branch commission member?)

In short, the Board of Supervisors dismissed history in inducing voters to allow the Civil Service Commission to utilize the pay of full-time supervisors with administrative responsibilities in counties such as Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Contra Costa and others for a virtual tripling of their previous voter-approved salaries, and also included these part-timers, who can, at best serve but eight years, in the generous City Retirement System. Maybe historians like John Shanley are correct in craving reinstatement of historical voter rights over those who supposedly serve voters.

Since the Observer will not publish next month, I convey my warmest best wishes for a scintillating summer, free of care and full of sports and songfest.

*Quentin Kopp is the former SF Supervisor, State Senator and Judge.*

### KILLERS

Computer tech Jenny Kornfeldt: Katherine Heigl and government assassin-for-hire Spencer Aimes: Ashton Kutcher meet cute at Cannes and despite the objections of her parents: Tom Selleck and Catherine O'Hara, are married soon thereafter. Spencer retires from his job. Switch to their third anniversary and every hitman and hitwoman on their block are out to kill them and collect the \$Million-plus bounty. Too soon it becomes repetitive when they can't trust anyone today whom they could yesterday. Violence, Profanity, Adult situations.

### PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

Desert spectacle features buffed-up Jake Gyllenhaal as adult Dastan, a smart beggar selected by the King of Persia, Sharaman: Ronald Pickup, as his adopted son, vying with two real sons for the throne. The King's brother, Nizam: Ben Kingsley wants to possess the magical Daggar of Time, which can make time run backwards so he can overrule Sharaman's lineage to the throne. The guardian of the dagger, Princess Tamina of Baghdad: Gemma Arterton, after a dangerous pursuit in collapsing tunnels, stops barking at Dastan long enough for a fadeout kiss. Violence, Profanity, Sexual situations.

### SEX AND THE CITY 2

The fearless foursome is back on the beat, Manhattan, that is. After a fairly dull first hour in NYC, things pick up with a cameo by Liza Minnelli. At the movie premiere of her ex-boy friend: Jerry "Smith" Jerrold: Jason Lewis, Samantha: Kim Cattrall is invited by a Moroccan potentate for an all-expenses-covered visit to Abu Dhabi, along with her "PR assistants", Carrie: Sarah Jessica Parker, Charlotte: Kirsten Davis, and Miranda: Cynthia Nixon, who quickly prove to be the Ugly Americans, almost spoiling the foreign locales. Jerry is also filming his second starring film in the sands nearby. Profanity, Sexual situations.

### TOY STORY 3

This is the one film this month designed to please an audience of any age. There's something for everyone! Woody the Sheriff: voice of Tom Hanks is the one toy Andy has selected to take to college with him, but the other toys are supposed to go to the attic. In a mix-up they almost go to the recycle dump or the Sunnyside Daycare center. Woody has to rescue Buzz Lightyear: v.o. Tim Allen; cowgirl Jessie: v.o. Joan Cusack; Mr. Potato Head: v.o. Don Rickles; the pig Hamm: v.o. John Ratzenberger; the dinosaur Rex: v.o. Wallace Shawn and others, before Andy leaves. Ken: v.o. Michael Keaton and Barbie: v.o. Jodi Benson, fall in love at first sight. The day care center is run like a prison by Lotso Bear: v.o. Ned Beatty. Disney-Pixar has outdone their past partnerships. The six-minute prelude cartoon, Day and Night, could easily have been paired with Knight and Day, and certainly shines as brightly. Animated, 3-D, IMAX.





ON THE PLUS SIDE

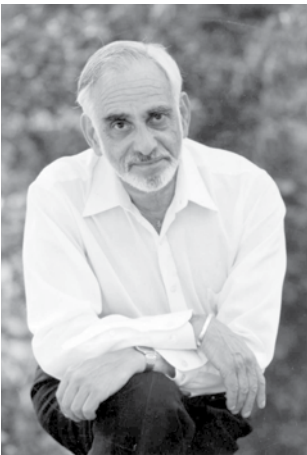
Conversations With the Other Me

By Hank Basayne

In one of my occasional attempts to try to make sense of this strange business of growing older I’m considering the possibility that imagining my future might make just as much sense as reviewing my past. I can’t recall where I hid my magic wand or when I mislaid the wishing ring, but if now—in my 80s—I were to stumble on either one, I’d conjure up some visits with myself at some different—both earlier and later—ages.

As I think about this I’m struck first by how large a cast of characters I’ve been: the eager young and somewhat superficial corporate executive; the daring, creative and sometimes foolhardy entrepreneur; the outwardly dutiful but inwardly resentful son; the sometimes devoted husband, and at other times the squirrely, unreliable husband. I was also a patient, loving father of young children and the impatient, self-focused father of teenagers; a doting grandparent; a sometimes tough boss. I’ve been a patient, attentive lover as well as a person who heedlessly ran over others, ignoring the reality of their feelings.

At times I was a compassionate friend, a public performer, a goofy joke-teller, and a concerned teacher and wise counselor. At parties, a “hale fellow, well met,” but on the inside, insecure and doubting my own worth. Sometimes a crier at movies or on hearing certain music. I’ve mishandled important relationships, taken unwise risks. “Me” turns out to be plural: courageous, cowardly, enthusiastic, depressed, innovative, lazy, energetic—the list is endless.



There’s comfort in the fact that there’s a whole lot I don’t have to go through anymore. He might congratulate me on realizing that I don’t need to still try to impress anyone, no need to continue trying to be the good guy or the pleaser. He’d caution me to judge others less harshly, to let go of preoccupation with the trivial and give up the persistent need to try to understand or know everything.

I really find I don’t like a lot of those people. I didn’t like some of them while I was being them. I wish that when I was 19 I could have had a serious conversation with me as I am now—or at least when I was in my 50s. I might have made different, better choices. Looking back, much of my life seems to have been lived in a semi-conscious state—unable or unwilling to look at the consequences of my decisions.

While somewhat sobering, this exercise has been useful. In looking back I’ve found some of those past personae to be quite okay. I would now cross the street to avoid some of the others. While none of us knows how many heartbeats we have left, looking ahead I sense an opportunity to still fashion a bit of the person I would have liked to become.

What would my conversation with myself be like if I could visit with me at 90? The 90-year-old me might remind the 83-year-old me that the ability to forget is as useful as the ability to remember. There’s comfort in the fact that there’s a whole lot I don’t have to go through anymore. He might congratulate me on realizing that I don’t need to still try to impress anyone, no need to continue trying to be the good guy or the pleaser. He’d caution me to judge others less harshly, to let go of preoccupation with the trivial and give up the persistent need to try to understand or know everything.

He would probably advise me to deepen the connections with others that I still have left, spend more time with children and grandchildren and friends, and to pursue my true passions: reading, music, theater and dance. I’m sure he would counsel me to spend more time in cultivating an inner tranquility and prepare myself to accept my death without regret or terror.

Any of us who are conscious of aging must, in some small way, be heroic. I have deep respect and admiration for the courage and bravery of every human who struggles to get through the day, the week, the year—and tries to find meaning in life. Looking both back and ahead is a kind of triangulation, helping us to see where we are, what we still want, what’s in the way, how we might negotiate around any obstacles. Talking with the child I was and the older person I may still become is revealing, instructive and fruitful. Now, where did I put that wishing ring? I’d love to have those conversations with the other me’s.

Hank Basayne is a San Franciscan knows better than to spend time hunting for a wand. Feedback: basayne@westsideobserver.com

Westside Real Estate Report

Pricing a Property to Sell Fast and for the Highest Price

By Jed Lane



What sales strategy sells homes fast and for the highest amount? We will answer that question after a market update.

The median price for homes within the distribution area of the Observer was \$949,943 in the past month. There were forty-four homes sold with eighty-eight active on the market at this writing. With a two month supply of homes the area is solidly in a seller’s market right now. Currently there are thirty-eight properties under contract and proceeding through the sale process. Citywide the median price for single family homes is \$750,500, down 4% with sales volume increasing over the prior month by 32% and 41% over the same month of the prior year.

If you are contemplating selling your property, how important is the price that you list it at? More importantly, how does the list price affect the sale and the proceeds? A discussion in my office about homes selling over the asking price prompted this research and what was found is rather startling!

When a Realtor sits with a selling client and reviews the recent comparable sales to set a list price for the property, the agent has been taught that setting the price is the owner’s responsibility, “agents advise but the client decides” is the saying. Knowing that and acknowledging that owners sometimes hope, believe, or wish that “their” home is worth the top dollar, this research will inform if not shock you.

A few details first. “Original asking or list price” is the price the property is set at when it is first entered in the MLS. If there are price reductions before the property is sold the last listing price will differ from the original price. It is possible for a home to sell for “more than the asking price” after reductions have taken place and there are cases where the property sells for the original list price after reductions. The purpose of this research is to find out how properties are priced when they are brought on the market and if the market price is reached consistently. Remember that the sale price is a negotiated price that reflects an agreement on the part of the buyer and the seller. It is what the buyer is willing to pay and the seller willing to accept.

The first question was how often do homes in our area, or San Francisco entirely for that matter, sell for the original list price? When I ask that question of agents and non-agents the answers vary around 50%. Interestingly the answer is much lower. In our area, over the past year, only 8% sold for the original asking price. Just 34 of the 420 homes sold equal to the original asking price. 42% sold for more than the asking price, which is a marketing technique that is favored in San Francisco. The remaining 50% of properties sold for less than the original asking price. Further in this sample the homes that sold for less than the original asking sold for 30% less than the original price. Homes that sold for

| SFH Sold At Original Asking Price |            |     |             |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-----|-------------|
| Year                              | % of sales | DOM | % of median |
| 1999                              | 12%        | 41  | 88%         |
| 2005                              | 5%         | 32  | 91%         |
| 2010                              | 6%         | 35  | 108%        |

| SFH Sold Above Original Asking Price |            |     |             |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----|-------------|
| Year                                 | % of sales | DOM | % of median |
| 1999                                 | 50%        | 28  | 106%        |
| 2005                                 | 80%        | 26  | 102%        |
| 2010                                 | 45%        | 32  | 99%         |

| SFH Sold Below Original Asking Price |            |     |             |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----|-------------|
| Year                                 | % of sales | DOM | % of median |
| 1999                                 | 38%        | 53  | 82%         |
| 2005                                 | 16%        | 59  | 89%         |
| 2010                                 | 49%        | 84  | 98%         |

more than original asking fetched 3% more on average.

Realizing that this past year was an unusual market, a survey of the citywide market was done for the same May to May time periods in 1994/1995, 2004/2005 and 2009/2010. The results show a consistently low percentage of properties sell at the original list price.

While most people would expect that the largest percentage of sales would be in the category of properties that sell for less than asking the opposite is true in our market. While this is a function of low supply it also became the normal marketing technique for properties during the run up of value since 1993. The interesting data emerging here is that the current technique to get the best price for the property is to set the price correctly and sell at the original asking price.

When the values were escalating it was assumed that the market (buyers) would pay the relatively same market value for properties. So if you had a 3 bedroom 2 bath home the market value would be the same no matter how you arrived at the eventual sale. This data proves that to be a false assumption. Using the average size of sold properties, which is a 3/2, data shows that depending on overall market conditions, the eventual selling price does relate to the original list price. Currently the best price is reached when a sale happens at the asking price. Whereas in 1999 and 2005 the best price would be arrived at by setting the original price low.

The data does bear out the fact that the fastest sale, shortest days on market (DOM) is reached by pricing low but while the property might sell three days faster, you will lose 9% of the sale price!

In conclusion a small percentage of sellers are pricing correctly and reaping the benefits. A large number are still pricing below market, under the assumption that San Francisco buyers know where the correct value should be and they are doing OK with that strategy. Unfortunately the majority of sellers are pricing above the market, reducing and reducing for two months before selling for a bit less than the median value.

What is the correct value for your property? Talk with your Realtor and see if they know this information. Any underpriced property will sell above asking. Now you know that isn’t where the best price is.

Jed Lane is a Real Estate Broker associated with Coldwell Banker, West Side native and current resident of Miraloma Park. Questions? Contact him at jed@westsideobserver.com

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2. WEAR SUNGLASSES



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

Rules:

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

The Object:

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

Answer:

The answer appears aside.

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

BRAIN FUD

RIDDLE – INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN...

Every nation do I know,  
But so rarely do I go  
Anywhere,  
Sometimes people  
Come and stare,  
Touch me here,  
And poke me there,  
Spin me round,  
Then leave me alone  
When what they sought,  
They have found.  
What am I?  
Answer

4 6 0 9 8 7 5

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FROM THE BORDER

Butterflies In The Garden

By Hilary Gordon/Photos Blair Randall, ©2010

As summer brings warmer temperatures and some sunny afternoons, one of the most enjoyable sights in the garden is a variety of butterflies flitting from plant to plant, seeking nectar and egg-laying opportunities. Look for butterflies congregating in open, sunny spots with some wind protection. To make garden areas more attractive to butterflies, plant some of their favorite nectaring flowers. Butterflies like flat-topped flowers formed from many tiny florets. Many



flowers in the daisy family fit this profile. Daisies form a great landing platform for butterflies, and each daisy flower is formed from multiple tiny cone and ray flowers, each with its own miniscule nectar source. Butterflies can land in comfort and take advantage of many nectaring opportunities at once. Other examples include verbenas, buckwheats, lantanas, and yarrows, as well as plants in the parsley family. A well-planned butterfly garden will include a sequence of bloom, so that as one flush of flowers fade, it will be replaced by the next wave of blooms. (Photo: Verbena rigida at GFE)

At the Garden for the Environment, the Waterwise Demonstration beds near the South Gate provide a good demonstration of many butterfly plants. In fact, butterfly



enthusiasts often drop by on a still, sunny day to spot many of our local butterflies feeding here. In these beds you can see three different yarrows, (Paprika, Moonshine, and our native Millefolium) blooming along with Astericus “maritima” and Erigeron glaucus from the Daisy family. Look also for Verbena rigida and Verbena bonariensis. Later in the summer, Milkweed, Lobelia laxiflora, Lantanas, and Eriogonum giganteum, (our native Buckwheat “St. Catherine’s Lace”), will replace these flowers with fall-blooming butterfly snacks. In addition to the flowers which provide food, butterflies need water. But they can’t drink out of deep standing water, such as a bird bath. Butterflies can be seen clustering where puddles form in damp sand or gravel. They can insert their straw-like mouth parts into the wet sand and suck up water along with dissolved minerals from the mud and sand. Butterfly fans call this behavior “puddling”. Butterflies will be attracted to puddles in sunny, wind-protected spots. You can even create a puddle for butterflies by putting a layer of sand or gravel with a little soil in a shallow dish with some water. Choose a sunny, flowery spot in the garden for your “puddle”. (Photo: Seaside Daisy at GFE)

At the GFE, butterflies, along with other beneficial insects such as honeybees, can be seen puddling near our grey-water demonstration area. In the heart of the garden, opposite our small greenhouse, our kitchen sink drains right into the soil above the exterior border. Here in a rock and gravel basin, water drains from the sink after hands or vegetables are washed, or watering cans are filled. These frequent small gushes of water support a planting of Creek Monkeyflower and our California native Columbine, as well as providing a puddling opportunity for our honeybees and visiting butterflies.

If you provide the right flowers and puddling opportunities, and attract butterflies to your garden, then naturally they will lay eggs and your garden will soon have caterpillars. Some caterpillars, like the cabbage looper, are destructive to food crop plants. But most caterpillars don’t do significant harm to garden plants, although they do feed on some leaves. Caterpillars are just baby butterflies, and we can’t have one without the other. Don’t kill caterpillars unless you can definitely identify them as a crop pest. Avoid the use of the pesticide “Bt”. Although Bt is a less-toxic (to humans) pesticide, it is fatal to all caterpillars, not just pesty ones. Bt is suspected as a factor in the decreasing number of Monarchs. (Photo: Achillea ‘Moonshine’)

A few chewed leaves is a small price to pay for the pleasure of seeing these colorful floating beauties flitting through the garden. Hilary Gordon is Perennial Plants Collection Manager at the GFE. A life-long gardener, trained at the City College Horticulture program, she has worked as a professional landscape gardener from 1984 until the present. Have a question for Hilary? Meet her in the garden Wed. 10-2 and Sat. 10-4. Feedback: hilary@westsideobserver.com



Verbena rigida at Garden for the Environment

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# URGENT UPDATE

## SAVE OUR NEIGHBORHOOD FIREHOUSE

**T**he San Francisco Board of Supervisors will be voting this month on a new city budget. While there are many important priorities that must be balanced, one of the most important should be our neighborhood firehouses.

As San Francisco firefighters, our priority is to protect our community. That's why we are working so hard to keep open our first line of defense during fires, medical emergencies or any major disaster. **We know money is tight, so we are improving efficiency and even taking less pay so there is enough to keep our neighborhood firehouses open.**

**As the budget vote nears, we need your support to let the San Francisco Board of Supervisors know:**



*Help save our neighborhood firehouse,  
Station #20 on Olympia Way.*

**NEIGHBORHOOD  
FIREHOUSES** are a  
**COMMUNITY PRIORITY**

**Act Now to Protect Your Neighborhood Firehouse by**

- 1.** Joining online at [www.SaveOurFirehouses.com](http://www.SaveOurFirehouses.com)
- 2.** Joining the Save Our Firehouses page on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SaveOurFirehouses](http://www.facebook.com/SaveOurFirehouses)
- 3.** Filling out and sending this card to:  
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