

Quentin Kopp  
Kopp on COPs  
—p. 3



Steve Lawrence  
Ratepayers  
Organize!  
—p. 3

Anmarie Mobbutt  
"The Attack on Public  
Parks and Spaces"—p. 4



Will Durst  
Those French  
—p. 4

Business Corner  
Bookshop, West Portal  
Has...Books!  
—p. 6



West of Twin Peaks  
Central Council  
—p. 9

Patrick Monette-Shaw  
Whistleblowers  
Unappreciated,  
Unheeded  
—p. 5



## More INSIDE

Damaged Fountain . . . . .	3
Letters to the Editor . . . . .	4
Business Corner . . . . .	5
MUNI Credited . . . . .	7
Money Matters. . . . .	8
Public Notice . . . . .	9
Around the Town . . . . .	11
Sharon the Health. . . . .	13
Jack Kaye . . . . .	14
Kocivar on Education. . . . .	14
Calendar. . . . .	15
Remember When . . . . .	16
Phyllis' Findings . . . . .	16
Open Late . . . . .	16
Sudoku/Brain Füd. . . . .	16
At the Movies. . . . .	17
On Stage/Theater . . . . .	17
Real Travel. . . . .	18
From the Border . . . . .	19

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# CITY HALL'S DEBT MARGINALIZES THE VOTERS

By George Wooding

San Francisco voters have lost control over what, when, where, and how our City spends its borrowed money. Only 57.9% of San Francisco's \$2.6 billion long-term obligations have been approved by the voters through General Obligation Bonds (GOBs) and parcel taxes.

The balance of the City's long-term debt is dedicated to Certificates of Participation (COPs), which are currently 28.5% of owed long-term debt and Revenue Bonds, which represent 14.6% of San Francisco's current long-term debt load.

COPs are actually called "non-voter-approved debt," while the City maintains that revenue bonds — which are bonds tied to the revenue actually generated or given to a City department through set-asides — are voter approved. In truth, the voters gave permission for City departments such as the PUC, Libraries, MUNI and the Recreation and Park Department (RPD) to issue revenue bonds, but voters have absolutely no say as to how these revenue bonds will be spent by each City agency.

For example, your monthly water/sewage bill rate will increase by 11.4%, effective July 1 for single family homes. This staggering rate increase has little to do with your water usage. Conserve all you want, but you are actually paying for the PUC's revenue bond debt to repair our Hetch Hetchy water system. The Hetch Hetchy rebuild was originally supposed to cost \$3.6 billion and is now \$900 million over budget (\$4.5 billion). The PUC will soon start their sewage repair program called the SSIP, which was originally estimated to cost \$1 billion and is now expected to cost over \$5 billion. Our water and wastewater bills will increase astronomically and voters will have absolutely no say in any of this. Basically, revenue bonds mean, "just shut-up and pay."

The new COPs that will be issued without voter approval for the seismic upgrade of the Veterans War Memorial Building, Moscone West Convention Center upgrades, and the Hall of Justice rebuild — coupled with the revenue bonds which voters have no control over — will soon mean that SF voters will have input on over less than 50% of long-term debt decisions.

SF's politicians seem very content to have little or no public transparency, accountability, or input into long-term public financing decisions. Watch how easy it was to issue the seismic upgrade COPs for the War Memorial Building: On June 9 a COP report was issued by the Controller's office. On June 13 the COP was reviewed by the Capital Planning Committee. The Board of Supervisors Finance Committee will soon approve the COP for over \$170 million in principal, and the Supervisors will then approve the COP issuance by December 2011.

Just one small problem: In November 2002, voters rejected a \$123 million ballot proposal to seismically retrofit the War Memorial Building. Does Board President David Chui, the driving force behind this retrofit, have any respect for the voters decision in 2002?

"Big Brother" always knows better than us voters, and is actively trying to shove voter decisions aside. City Hall wants our money, but they don't seem to want us. Witness the audacity of Supervisor Scott Wiener's attempt to amend or appeal voter-approved ballot measures after only three years following passage, using a Board of Supervisors override vote. Weiner's proposed City Charter change headed for the November ballot shows great contempt for the judgment of voters.

Take a good look at the new PUC headquarters located at 525 Golden Gate Avenue. This Ecopalace was designed to be a symbol of the City's commitment to being "green." The project has been financially responsible, but did the voters really need a Taj Mahal of

Cont. p. 8



## Civil Grand Jury Ethics Commission: A Sleeping Watchdog

By Larry Bush

The San Francisco Civil Grand Jury today reported that the SF Ethics Commission is a Sleeping Watchdog that abdicates its responsibilities, has failed to act on all 18 Sunshine violations referred to it for action, and is vulnerable to manipulation in assessing fines against politicians and political groups.

It recommends several corrective actions, including televising Ethics Commission meetings to ensure greater transparency in its deliberations.

The Civil Grand Jury's findings echo in some respects the concerns about the Ethics Commission voiced during the Board of Supervisor's Rules Committee consideration of an appointee to the Ethics Commission.

Cont. p. 5



Supervisor Sean Elsbernd is shown here at the Ethics Commissions investigation into evidence tampering. He was excused from testifying and the phony check issue was never resolved by the Commission or pursued by the Director. At the Rules Committee he oversees new appointments to the Commission



## New Technology Reclaims an Old Treasure

By Jonathan Farrell

For decades the North and South Windmills have been mere shadows of what they once were. Often called "the Dutch Windmill" and "Murphy Windmill," the tower-style windmills with horizontal axis turn-style vanes were among the largest of their kind in the world.

Their majestic vanes (or sails) turning in the wind have been missing from our local landscape, looking more like ghostly structures from

an old horror movie like 1931's "Frankenstein." Our City has so many things that are "old world" and "new" for all to enjoy. Such treasures are often overlooked and at times ignored. Among them are the windmills. At Ocean Beach you will see them at the Western edge of Golden Gate Park facing the ocean. Some travel to places like Spain and Holland, to see the traditional windmills that are landmarks. Yet, we San Franciscans forget we have two windmills right here in our own Golden Gate Park.

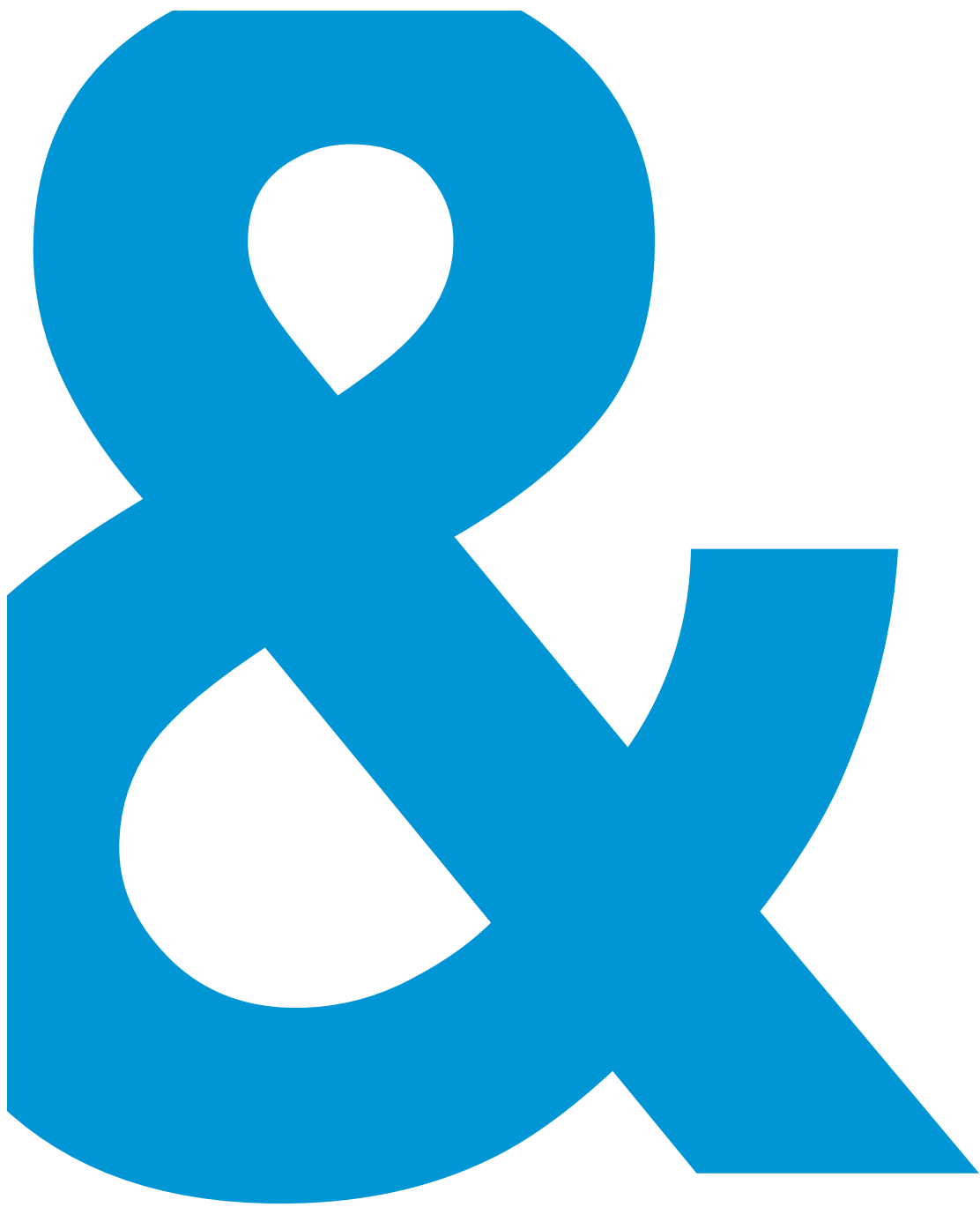
Both were built in the early 1900's. They pumped over a million gallons of water each day to saturate the vast sand dunes of "the outlands," helping to create the 1100 acres of Golden Gate Park.

When the windmills were in their prime, they were anchors of mechanical ingenuity cultivating and civilizing a vast "outland" for a growing City that needed a park to utilize and treasure as its respite from urban life.

Previous attempts were made to maintain and restore the windmills (once in the '40s and in the '60s, and then there was a cosmetic restoration to the Dutch Windmill in the '80s). But they were not enough to completely restore the windmills to their former glory, which, according to a report compiled by the architecture firm of Carey & Company, was from 1907 to 1935. According to that report from 2003, and from The Campaign to save the Golden Gate Park Windmills, the two windmills started to

Cont. p. 6





# Better together

## Bringing AT&T customers a stronger network faster.

AT&T customers, including those who join us from T-Mobile, will see significant service improvements from the merger. The addition of T-Mobile's spectrum resources and thousands of cell sites will quickly increase capacity and coverage, resulting in better call reliability and data speeds.

Mobile data traffic on AT&T's network has grown 8,000% over the last four years. With tablets, cloud computing, and a new generation of bandwidth-hungry devices on the horizon, demand is expected to increase an additional 8-10 times by 2015.

Integrating T-Mobile's network resources, while continuing AT&T's network investment, is the surest, fastest, and most efficient way to meet this challenge.

## Continued innovation for T-Mobile customers.

Through the integration with AT&T, T-Mobile customers can continue to enjoy innovative technologies, devices, and services for many years to come. They will have the freedom to keep their existing pricing plans and phones, and will benefit in the future with expanded capabilities.

T-Mobile customers will also benefit from network enhancements — such as improved coverage in remote regions and access to AT&T's planned next generation networks.

## Reaching more of California with LTE.

LTE technology is a super-fast way to connect to the Internet. The combination of AT&T and T-Mobile will allow AT&T to expand its LTE wireless broadband network to cover over 98% of California residents. That means one million more people in California, many in small towns and rural areas, will get access to LTE due to the merger.

Our customers will get a stronger network. The state will get a new choice for broadband. And more of California will get access to a cutting-edge wireless network and all the opportunities it brings.



[MobilizeEverything.com](http://MobilizeEverything.com)



**Historic Landmark Damaged**—St. Francis Wood Circle fountain, San Francisco, circa 1912 by John Galen Howard, 1864-1931, Architect. Teenagers used to pour dishwashing liquid into it and watch bubbles overtake the neighborhood back in the 1960s. Lately it has been a quiet reminder of the World War I era in a peaceful, tree-lined setting. [More page 10.](#)

Rising Cost of Utilities

Time for SF Taxpayer & Ratepayer Org?

By Steve Lawrence

**In July 1 rates charged for water and sewer rose again. For water the rate rose about 13%. Over the past five years the cost of water has doubled. Sewer rates have been rising at an average of 7.5% per year; this year the rate increase is 3.6%.**

Rates are sure to rise more. Water Power & Sewer, the new moniker for the city department still officially called San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), has completed a little more than one-third of its big work on the Hetchy water system. The \$4.5 billion work program aims to allow the water system to survive a sizable quake, to better withstand drought, and to ease maintenance.

Big work on the sewer system is coming. Some high priority work has been done; much more is planned. An ambitious master plan was adopted last summer. During the next twenty years a very long list of sewer system improvements are to be accomplished. The price tag is \$6 billion.

While in these days of debt and deficit we’ve all grown used to reading about billions (and even *trillions*, a million millions!), these are fearsome numbers, even for a big-spender like San Francisco. Adding what officials think will be spent on water and sewer system work, \$4.5 and 6 billion, and dividing by let’s say an expanded City population of 900,000, that is \$11,667 per person for water and sewer work.

But that’s not all. SFPUC also provides electric power. Today it provides power to City facilities. But SFPUC plans to soon replace PG&E, providing power—greener power, is the lure—to most of the City’s homes and businesses. While this is not supposed to cost extra, when does the City undertake a major program at no cost to taxpayer or ratepayer? Good luck with that plan.

Then there are many special programs. Stormwater swales, toilet give-aways, GoSolar subsidies, and many more. Public agencies in San Francisco love to buy your love. There is no shortage of individuals and community groups belying up to the ever-deeper public trough.

At a recent SFPUC Commission meeting, one of the commissioners brayed that SFPUC had not chosen to implement only the more cost effective water conservation programs, it had done all of them. It made sense to make such a statement: there were no ratepayer advocates present, only environmentalists. Commissioners pander to the

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extremists who work for nonprofits and attend meetings. The ratepayer? The Invisible Person.

Spending creates opportunities for public employees and politicians. Where to put the new recycled water plant? How about out in Golden Gate Park, which is Recreation & Park land? “Rent” can be paid which transfers ratepayer funds to a General Fund department without raising taxes. Spending at the behest of nonprofits creates a win for a nonprofit’s lobbyist. For the public agency, spending on nonprofits and for their causes creates “community benefits” to publicize, and advances a “you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours” truce.

Soon more spending is likely to be needed. Ocean Beach is eroding. (See last month’s column.) The treatment plant there, less than twenty years old — new for such a facility — is endangered. Either the beach needs to be seriously armored, or one of these years the ocean will undermine pipes and plant. Then billions will be needed to relocated critical infrastructure.

Today San Franciscans are lucky to have pure water to drink, and a relatively easy place to dispose of treated sewage. Electric power here is expensive, compared to other cities, but we need no air conditioning, so bills are still low. What is worrisome is the trend: Utilities are fast becoming much more expensive.

We’ve had it good, we still have it pretty good, but will we in a few years? Even if luck holds, and no large earthquake or other disaster strikes?

To begin to control run-away utility costs, might San Francisco benefit from a taxpayer and ratepayer organization?

Steve Lawrence spends his time thinking and writing about San Francisco’s problems. [Feed-back: lawrence@westsideobserver.com](mailto:lawrence@westsideobserver.com)

RUMINATIONS FROM A FORMER SUPERVISOR By Quentin Kopp

**I**n last month’s *Westside Observer*, the illustrious George Wooding, 2010-2011 President of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council, wrote an acutely informed exposition and analysis of City Hall reliance upon “an expensive form of debt called Certificates of Participation “COP”...to pay San Francisco’s bills, ...”. Mr. Wooding sharply exposed a political practice of the Board of Supervisors and Mayor over the past 10 years of incurring civic debt with multiple year costs to taxpayers but without the taxpayer approval required for other long-term public debt, most usually, general obligation bonds. His revelation of such iniquitous city government practice in this modest monthly neighborhood journal raises the question of the absence of such reportorial disposition by our daily newspapers, which, sadly, no longer possess an investigative reporter like the *Chronicle’s* long-time writer Lance Williams.

George Wooding’s column reminded me of another wasteful, inefficient practice of San Francisco government arising from misuse of the city’s share of state gasoline tax payments to San Francisco. While most local taxes such as property, sales, parcel and real estate transfer taxes bear little logical relationship to ownership of property or purchase of products in terms of governmental cost, the state (and federal) tax on gasoline purchases does bear an unmistakable relationship to the charge. Gasoline tax is collected directly from the beneficiaries of the avowed use of such tax revenue. That is, gasoline tax proceeds are intended to pay the cost of this time with success from an unwitting electorate. City Hall, and particularly the temporary mayor, wants San Franciscans to borrow \$248,000,000, and incur increasing interest rates simply to cure potholes and repair streets, not to create new structures on a one-time basis.

**City Hall, and particularly the temporary mayor, wants San Franciscans to borrow \$248,000,000, and incur increasing interest rates simply to cure potholes and repair streets, not to create new structures on a one-time basis.**  
**That means City Hall has effectually squandered state gasoline tax remittances by not spending it exclusively for current street maintenance.**

building, maintaining and repairing streets and highways, and nothing else. The gasoline tax historically (and correctly) has been called a “user fee.” Those persons, residents and non-residents alike, who use California’s streets and highways, pay the cost of building, maintaining and repairing the same. In the same vein, bridge tolls are also user fees, utilized for creation, maintenance and repair of the bridges used by toll payers. California’s state gasoline tax of 18 cents per gallon began in 1922 (at two cents per gallon) after state legislators and governors had thrice presented general obligation bonds for approval by state voters in the years between 1904 and 1919. Our California forebearers finally realized that borrowing money by general obligation bonds caused additional interest costs for taxpayers, amounting to 50 to 75 percent additional interest expense on top of repayment (over 30 years usually) of the general obligation bonds themselves. Charging actual users of the structures needed for motor vehicular transportation was plainly a more rational and considerably less expensive method than long-term borrowing.

The difference between financing of structures from proceeds of a general obligation bond and financing streets and highways from a built-in user fee isn’t widely understood, even by elected officials, who prefer expediency rather than sound fiscal practice. For example, after my election in 1986 to the California State Senate and my appointment in 1987 as Senate Transportation Committee chairman, the then-governor, trying to avoid a gasoline tax increase necessary to accommodate a continually increasing California population and motor vehicle registration, persuaded two-thirds of each house of the legislature (but not me) to authorize submission to voters of a multi-million dollar state general obligation bond issue for state highways and local streets. California voters recognized the illogic of borrowing money, which would be repaid from the state general fund and not by highway users, and rejected the measure. During his gubernatorial tenure, however, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who knew less about fundamental governmental principles and generally accepted governmental fiscal practices than any governor in my lifetime, persuaded a pliable term-limited group of legislators to repeat that misadventure, Additionally, San Francisco receives for street maintenance and repair proceeds of the state sales tax upon gasoline, (also a user fee) amounting to \$12,596,000 in the last fiscal year and forecasted as \$13,938,000 in this fiscal year. There’s more: a small portion of the sales tax paid by users of gasoline, designated as the Road Fund, was also received in the amount of \$3,783,557 last year and will be the same for this fiscal year. Finally, the so-called Metropolitan Transportation Authority county share, obtained from federal gas/excise tax charges on gasoline users was \$3,178,017 last year and is fixed at the same sum this fiscal year. Total gasoline tax and Road Fund revenue for San Francisco’s maintenance and repair of streets was \$31,791,798 last year and will be about \$33,233,298 from now until June 30, 2012.

How did San Francisco use such money last fiscal year? How will it use it in the current fiscal year? For street repair, including pothole and patch paving, only \$2,537,979 of gasoline user payments was used last fiscal year and only \$ 2,570,602 will be used in the current fiscal year. For street paving, a proper use of gasoline user fees, \$ 12,596,000 was devoted last year and about \$13,938,000 will be devoted in the current year. All the federal gas and excise tax subvention money (\$3,178,017) was employed for traffic sign and signal maintenance last year and this year, but \$8,225,554 of gasoline user fees were diverted last fiscal year to street cleaning, both mechanical and manual, sidewalk and plaza cleaning, graffiti abatement and remedying illegal dumping. This fiscal year’s appropriation for such purposes purportedly to decline to \$5,876,822, but the \$2,620,174 spent last fiscal year for “Urban Forestry Maintenance” will be increased to \$5,279,582. Approximately \$2,634,000 was spent last year not for repair or maintenance, much less construction of streets, but for “debt service” on a \$48,000,000 Certificate of Participation the Board of Supervisors and then-Mayor Gavin Newsom authorized in 2010, notwithstanding the negative recommendation of the Board’s Budget and Legislative Analyst, Harvey M. Rose who warned that various street projects and disability access improvements to the Board of Supervisors legislative chamber were “routine and ongoing” and “would be

Cont. p. 8



# Privatizing Our Parks: Hidden from View

By Anmarie Mabutt

**T**he drive to privatize our public park space began on November 7, 1995. Ironically, with the same election that brought Willie Brown to City Hall, voters approved a new City Charter which contained numerous restrictions regarding the leasing of public park space. Sec. 4.113 of the new Charter reads



"No park land may be sold or leased for non-recreational purposes, nor shall any structure on park property be built, maintained or used for non-recreational purposes, unless approved by a vote of the electors." Sec. 16.112 requires that public hearings be held and Notice published "prior to the leasing, selling or transfer of management" of any facility used by the public. These laws should have protected SF's parks. Instead, under the not-so-watchful eye of City Attorney Herrera, the Recreation and Park Commission and the Board of Supervisors have routinely and repeatedly ignored these open government provisions of the Charter.

**... Recreation and Park Department has repeatedly failed to submit the required quarterly fiscal lease reports. And ... has never maintained a report of leases and use permits on its website as required by Administrative Code**

Since July 1, 1996, the effective date of the new City Charter, on at least twenty separate occasions, the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department has issued leases to private organizations to operate preschools in public park clubhouses. Having failed to submit this non-recreational use to a vote of the electors, it appears the Recreation and Parks Commission approved these leases in violation of Charter Section 4.113. Over this same fifteen year period, the Recreation and Park Commission and the Board of Supervisors have approved dozens if not hundreds of leases and transfers of management of public facilities in violation of the formal public Notice and public hearing requirements of Charter Section 16.112(a).

According to Clerk's Office responses to official public records requests, the Board of Supervisors does not publish a Notice of Public Hearing prior to the leasing or transfer of management of facilities used by the public. The only published notice the Board provides is the publication, normally just three days prior, of the agenda for the meetings at which these leases and management agreements are approved. The Clerk's Office insists this procedure satisfies the voter mandated public Notice and hearing requirements of Charter Section 16.112(a). But if that were true, why does the Board hold formal public hearings and file separate Notices of Public Hearing for every other subsection of 16.112? Prior to the adoption of any amendments to the General Plan, any changes in land or zoning, any proposed changes to major trolley, bus or other transportation routes and before "any fee, schedule of rates, charges or fares which affects the public is instituted or changed," the Clerk's Office routinely publishes a formal and separate Notice of Public Hearing.

Assuming the Clerk's current procedures regarding the notice of the leasing and transfer of management of public facilities do not satisfy the requirements of Sec. 16.112, the Kemper and TPC agreements for the Harding and Fleming Park golf courses, the Exploratorium leases at the Palace of Fine Arts, the SF Botanical Garden Society lease, the SF Yacht Club lease and the thirty-five year lease to the Music Concourse Community Partnership for the operation of the GG Park Underground Parking Garage were all improperly approved. Every lease represents another step in the privatization of parks.

Take the time to review the recent history of SF's leasing laws. In late 2000, Supervisor Barbara Kaufman proposed and the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved amendment severely reduced the Controller's oversight of leases of public property. Under this legislation, the Controller's duty to regularly review all leases was reduced to only those leases that exceed \$100,000/annual rent. Just two months later, in early 2001, Supervisor Gavin Newsom co-sponsored and the Board unanimously approved

amendments to several sections of the Administrative Code, including eliminating the requirement that the Budget Analyst review and report all leases issued for less than fair market value to the Board of Supervisors. Supervisors voting to approve this legislation included Aaron Peskin, Matt Gonzalez, Leland Yee, Gerardo Sandoval, Jake McGoldrick, Tom Ammiano, Chris Daly and Mark Leno.

Most recently amended in 2004, Sec. 23.34 requires all Boards, Commissions and Departments empowered to lease City-owned real property file quarterly fiscal reports with the Budget Analyst of all leases issued for less than fair market value or that were not approved by the Board. Section 23.34 also requires the Recreation and Parks Department to post a report of all such leases on the RPD website. But according to Clerk's Office responses to official public records requests, the Recreation and Park Department has repeatedly failed to submit the required quarterly fiscal lease reports. And the Recreation and Parks Department has never maintained a report of leases and use permits on its website as required by Administrative Code Sections 23.2 and 23.34. Not surprisingly, the majority of these improperly noticed and unreported leases were issued without competitive bidding procedures and/or for less than fifty percent of the fair market value of the property.

Finally, the Clerk's Office and the Board of Supervisors appear to be knowingly and regularly violating the agenda posting requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act and the Sunshine Ordinance. Last June I first informed then Rules Committee Chair David Campos, Board President David Chiu and the rest of the Board of their obligations to post the agendas for all regular and special meetings in a location that is "freely accessible" to the public. I even provided them a copy of a 1995 State Attorney General Opinion that specifically defines "freely accessible" to mean constant, 24/7 access. More than twelve months later, nothing has changed. The Board agendas continue to be posted inside City Hall and the Main Library. Posting the agendas in buildings that are locked for evenings, weekends and holidays does not meet the requirements of the statute.

The public notification and reporting provisions of the City Charter, the Ralph M. Brown Act and the Administrative Code are not trivial or insignificant. These open government laws are some of the public's most powerful safeguards in the battle to protect and preserve parks. Contact Mayor Lee, Clerk of the Board Angela Calvillo, General Manager Phil Ginsburg, Recreation and Park Commission President Mark Buell and the Board of Supervisors. The parks and people of San Francisco deserve better.

*Anmarie Mabutt: Attorney and longtime resident, is currently writing a book about the privatization of parks space. Feedback tenniselement@yahoo.com.*

## MY TWO CENTS By Will Durst

### Killer Carnivorous Snails From France

**Y**ou don't need me to tell you that this country is broke. Not just broke. Flat busted. Unflush. Tapped to the max. No bread or cabbage or scratch to speak of. Moolahless. Holes in our pockets. Fresh out of chump change. Sans simoleons. Hands sparkling clean of any filthy lucre. Moths flying out of our wallets. Lot of red numbers. Flinching from the whistle of the wind over our empty piggy banks. Got us a dearth of dead presidents is what we got.

So it's high time we start acting like it. As has been pointed out by pundits and politicians o'plenty, the guvmint needs to do what normal Merican families do when they run into desperate straits: pretend nothing is going on while we watch reality TV shows and drink lots of beer. No, no, no. Tried that. Didn't work.

First off, we got to stop handing over money to rogue nations that simply use it to buy guns they then turn on us. If we insist on helping these toads out, we should eliminate the middleman and furnish the guns direct. We can buy in much bigger bulk than they, procuring them cheaper, saving bundles of cash. And we taxpayers keep the kickbacks instead of the politicians. Win-win.

Secondly, we should take advantage of this Arab Spring democracy movement. Provides the perfect cover to lay off some of our under performing dictators. Isn't it about time we co-opted a new generation of despots? Since they'd be junior journeymen oppressors, they should cost less. Like major corporations lay off expensive senior executives, we'll replace our pricey aging tyrants.

But we all know it's not enough to make a few minor cuts in the budget, we also have to work on increasing revenue. And I don't mean selling off ancient public institutions like various national monuments or Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Their resale values ain't what they used to be. Although it might help to seasonally adjust the bottom line.

We need to think outside the box. Direct Research and Development to produce and sell something that every American needs. Like an anti SARS serum. The deal is, we engineer and market the antidote now, then fashion a huge penicillin-resistant SARS scare later, and have the FDA approved shot or salve or cream or whatever available at your local pharmacy in time for cold and flu season? Tie-Ming. Not just a city in China.

Doesn't have to be SARS. Could be anything. If SARS is too scary for the squeamish, lay down a few well-placed rumors of rampaging mutant Killer Carnivorous Snails from France and change the product to Fast Acting Snail Repellent. Same formula. Different packaging. Then ratchet up the panic with a bunch of infomercials. You know: news stories. Fox. CNN. Bloomberg. Create an imaginary vacuum and fill it. Worked for the Tea Party.

Even if it does eventually come out the whole event was manufactured, the residual damage would be minimal. What's the worst that could happen? People lose faith in their elected leaders? Oh no. Not that. The government is already lying to us on a regular basis, the least we can do is figure out how to make some money off of it. Got to ask ourselves: What would Microsoft do? The New York Times says Emmy-nominated comedian and writer Will Durst "is quite possibly the best political satirist working in the country today." Check out the website: Redroom.com, to find out more about upcoming stand-up performances or to buy his book, "The All American Sport of Bipartisan Bashing."

More: [willdurst.com](http://willdurst.com)

## Letters to the Editor

### Garbage, a response to Quentin Kopp

Solid waste collection services now being provided by either Sunset Scavenger Company and/or Golden Gate Disposal Company to all the residents of San Francisco, have provided uninterrupted waste collection services since 1906, well over 100 years.

Can any city in the world equal that record? Not likely, and I ponder why anyone would ever question that extraordinary record, especially with the expanded and comprehensive waste diversion programs, the most advanced and comprehensive solid waste management program in the world.

I am the former President of Sunset Scavenger and a "Scavenger" who 'worked on the trucks' prior, to becoming its president in 1965, right in the middle of the controversial issue of "filling the bay" with anything; least of all "garbage."

Quentin and I first met more than 50 years ago, when he was a young attorney, just arrived from New York and we became friends, he a promising attorney and me a garbage collector. He became an elected Supervisor and I became the President of the garbage company, in the middle of the "Save the Bay Movement".

Point being, if we had no place dump the refuse/garbage collected, we, the (scavengers) could not "collect" it, which

could have surely happened, if we were unsuccessful in the development of the new landfill at Sierra Point in Brisbane. He, I, City Staff, and his colleagues helped to create a productive and working relationship between the waste collection companies and the City of San Francisco.

Out of this one single controversial event, (as noted) was the preamble, (50 years past) and because of this crisis, we the Scavengers, the elected officials and bureaucrats of San Francisco, worked together to create the most cost effective, comprehensive solid waste management programs in the world.

Ironically, who helped make that possible? My friend Quentin Kopp, who fully supported the plan that was the foundation of the program in existence today. It was really surprising and disappointing to me that he can now criticize and question a service that he supported and helped to create, one that overcame substantial bureaucratic, regulatory authority and incomprehensible environmental issues. As a result, we created what, in my humble, but experienced opinion (with some 57 years in this business). No one has a better comprehension and respect for the extraordinary, cost-effective services that the residents and business receive and enjoy to this day.

Leonard D. Stefanelli, San Francisco, CA.

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## WESTSIDE OBSERVER

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Ethics Commission (Cont. from p. 1)

Supervisors privately expressed reservations that one candidate, Allen Grossman, had sued the Ethics Commission over its failure to enforce the Sunshine Ordinance. His application was rejected by the Rules Committee in favor of Dorothy Liu, who was described by Supervisor Elsbernd as “the perfect candidate” because she had no experience with city politics or the Ethics Commission.

The Civil Grand Jury report found that the Ethics Commission has never enforced the Sunshine Ordinance and allowed rulings to be ignored.

“Since October 2004 through December 2010 there have been 18 cases where the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force has requested that the Ethics Department enforce a violation of the ordinance. In all 18 cases the commission has not taken ANY action for violation of the Sunshine Ordinance,” the report states.

“Because of the Ethics Commission’s lack of enforcement, no city employee has been disciplined for failing to adhere to the Sunshine Ordinance. The Commission has allowed some city officials to ignore the rulings of the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force” according to the report.

The Civil Grand Jury also recommended that the Ethics Commission meetings be televised as a step toward greater transparency of its deliberations. The Rules Committee settled on the nomination of Dorothy Liu, who expressed strong reservations about televising the hearings because they might embarrass some people. Grossman was a strong advocate of televising the commission hearings.

The Civil Grand Jury also found that there is a “negative and jaded perception” of the Ethics Commission members because of the way they are appointed, which can give rise to political interference in their decisions.

At Rules, Dorothy Liu promised that she would consult with the Board of Supervisors that appointed her before making any important decisions.

Ethics “Vulnerable to Manipulation”

The impression of political favoritism and irregularity in assessing penalties for violating city ethics laws was a key consideration of the Civil Grand Jury.

“When a violation has been established, the Commission staff engages in negotiations with the alleged violator or their counsel to determine the fine. This puts the Ethics Commission staff in a recurring negotiating role with the city employees, campaign consultants, campaign staff or lobbyists to establish the fine. This is most irregular and vulnerable to manipulation against the public interest,” state the report.

The report also found that Ethics Commission members had abdicated their responsibilities to its Executive Director, who controls what issues receive a public hearing or even whether commissioners know if their colleagues seek to consider complaints of violations.

“Additionally the commissioners are not notified about which specific items are scheduled for the closed session making it difficult to prepare for the meeting. One of the commissioners stated there was an expectation that “...the commission should support the Executive Director in his decision to dismiss a case”.

The Civil Grand Jury noted that only two Ethics Commissioners volunteered to appear to explain their work and responsibilities.

“The focus of this report, however, is limited to an examination of the arbitrary method by which fines are determined, enforcement irregularities, the failure to provide adequate transparency, the excessive influence of the Executive Director over commission members leading to the

commission members abdicating their responsibilities to serve as our independent watchdog, and investigations performed by Ethics Commission staff.”

Supervisors to Vote On Report

The next step is for city departments to provide a written response to the Civil Grand Jury findings and recommendations, followed by a hearing and vote at the Rules Committee and the full Board on the report and action on the recommendations.

Findings and Recommendations:

**Finding 1** Having the Ethics Commission staff establish the fine and then enter into negotiations could be viewed as lacking a strong and effective operating system that could lead to questions of fairness and transparency.

**Recommendation 1.1** The Ethics Commissioners should establish a fixed fine structure for violations or apply the maximum allowed fine.

**Recommendation 1.2** If the respondent disagrees with the fine a request may be made for a public hearing. This will allow the commissioners to exercise discretion over the fines process.

**Finding 2** The failure of the Ethics Commission to enforce Sunshine Ordinance Task Force actions weakens the goal of open government and reduces the effectiveness of the Sunshine Ordinance.

**Recommendation 2** All Sunshine Ordinance Task Force enforcement actions deserve a timely hearing by the Ethics Commission.

**Finding 3** Waiting for the District Attorney or City Attorney to inform the Ethics Commission that they are not going to pursue a case causes unnecessary delays.

**Recommendation 3** After the 14 day window, Ethics Commission investigations should start.

**Finding 4** Currently commissioners are appointed by elected officials. In turn, the staff and commissioners scrutinize campaign expenditures and activities of those same elected officials. The Civil Grand Jury feels this leads to the appearance of impropriety.

**Recommendation 4** The City Charter should be changed to add four additional commission members appointed by non-partisan community organizations and individuals such as: The League of Women Voters, Society of Professional Journalists, The San Francisco Labor Council, The Bar Association of San Francisco, and the Dean of UC Hastings Law School.

**Finding 5** The Ethics Commissioners have relinquished their authority to the Executive Director concerning items recommended for dismissal.

**Recommendation 5** The commissioners should amend section VI. A in the Ethics Commission Regulations For Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings to require review and a vote on investigations recommended for dismissal.

**Finding 6** The Ethics Commission staff does not appear to have a proper database to track issues efficiently.

**Recommendation 6** The Ethics Commission staff should create or modify their database to increase search and tracking capabilities.

**Finding 7** In the context of open government, providing audio recordings of the Commission meetings does not provide enough transparency.

**Recommendation 7** To maximize transparency, the San Francisco Ethics Commission should broadcast their meetings on the SFGOVTV television network.

Larry Bush is the editor of citireport.com. Feedback: editor@citireport.com

**Congratulations to Larry Bush, who's citireport.com was just named San Francisco's Blog of the Year 2011 by The Wall Street Journal**

Laguna Honda Hospital Fallout  
Watchdogs, Whistleblowers, and Grand Juries

By Patrick Monette-Shaw

**F**allout from Laguna Honda Hospital’s patient gift fund scandal just keeps expanding, with citywide — not just District 7 — implications.

Between two Civil Grand Jury reports, and two Sunshine Ordinance complaints involving access to public records, San Francisco’s Ethics Commission and the Controller’s whistleblower program aren’t faring well as a result, nor is the City’s Department of Public Health.

One focus of its report is that Ethics Commission executive director John St. Croix wields excessive influence over Ethics Commission members, and appears to overreach his authority.

Another finding is that no City employees have ever been disciplined for failing to adhere to the Sunshine Ordinance.

The Grand Jury noted that one Ethics Commissioner acknowledges there is an expectation that Ethics Commissioners are to blindly support decisions made by executive director St. Croix to dismiss cases. Shockingly, all cases referred to Ethics are first reviewed by a single individual — St. Croix — to determine the merits and disposition of cases. The Grand Jury recommends that the Commission hold hearings to review and vote on investigations recommended for dismissal by St. Croix.

A second Grand Jury report released in June—Hunters Point Shipyard: A Shifting Landscape—alleges SF’s Department of



two other whistleblower complaints.

Their first whistleblower complaint in September 2009 alleged a potential conflict of interest involving Dr. Bob Cabaj and Davis Ja & Associates who may have been awarded a contract by Deborah Sherwood, Dr. Cabaj’s Research and Quality Management Director in DPH’s Community Behavioral Health Services section, in a clear conflict-of-interest situation.

Their second whistleblower complaint, also in September 2009, was against Mitchell Katz, former Director of Public Health, regarding payments Katz received from Health Management Associates, a Chicago firm. HMA was first awarded a \$250,000 consulting contract in 2005 to examine integration of long-term care services between Laguna Honda Hospital and San Francisco General Hospital, and the “medical model of service” at LHH. The contract was amended to add another \$30,000 in services. Conclusions in HMA’s



**Lurking behind St. Croix’s and Lediju’s refusal-to-comply (with the Sunshine Ordinance) is City Attorney Dennis Herrera, whose office provides legal advice to both agencies. Some observers suspect the City Attorney is the ultimate barrier to open government in San Francisco.**

Public Health should “rigorously enforce conflict of interest guidelines governing dealings between its officials and the companies they are monitoring.” It’s about time somebody noticed rampant conflict of interest violations within DPH.

As I reported last month, the Controller’s whistleblower program and the Ethics Commission were found by the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force to have violated state public records law to release records, since both agencies seem hell bent on preventing release of whistleblower complaints that may expose potential wrongdoing at the highest levels of City government.

Two separate Sunshine Complaints filed by this author resulted in both agencies being ordered to provide the requested records within five business days. Both agencies have refused to provide public records for over six months. Both agencies are flouting the Sunshine Task Force’s Orders, asserting they will not comply.

On June 13 and June 24, St. Croix notified the Sunshine Task Force that Ethics will not release the records requested, validating the Grand Jury’s finding that Ethics simply ignores the Task Force’s rulings. Tonia Lediju, the City Controller’s manager of its whistleblower program, responded to the Task Force’s order saying that the Controller’s Office “respectfully disagrees” with the Task Force’s Order of Determination, and she refuses to attend the Task Force’s Compliance Committee hearing.

Lurking behind St. Croix’s and Lediju’s refusal-to-comply is City Attorney Dennis Herrera, whose office provides legal advice to both agencies. Some observers suspect the City Attorney is the ultimate barrier to open government in San Francisco.

Given their flat refusal to comply with the Orders of Determination, will Lediju and St. Croix be disciplined? Under the Sunshine Ordinance “willful failure shall be official misconduct.” Such discipline is the purview of the Ethics Commission.

Whistleblower and Grand Jury

Even before two former doctors at Laguna Honda Hospital—Derek Kerr and Maria Rivero—filed their third whistleblower complaint regarding misappropriation of Laguna Honda’s patient gift fund in March 2010, they had previously submitted

2005 report appear to have been written even before that consulting gig began.

The City Controller’s vendor on-line payment system shows that, in two years HMA has been paid \$87,233, with an outstanding balance of \$161,516, totaling \$248,749. Other records show that, since 2005, HMA is thought to have received over \$500,000 in contracts with San Francisco.

In 2008, Dr. Katz started receiving fees from HMA, which he collected through 2010. In 2009 HMA was awarded a new contract recommended by Katz and approved by the Health Commission.

Katz reported on his Form 700 Statements of Economic Interest that he received \$10,000 as a consultant to HMA in each of calendar years 2008, 2009, and 2010, for a total of \$30,000. DPH contracts Katz approved with HMA is another obvious conflict-of-interest case. Could it be that the whistleblower conflict-of-interest complaint is what drove Katz to suddenly resign to take a job in Los Angeles?

It’s probably no coincidence the two whistleblower complaints in 2009 led the Grand Jury to acknowledge conflict of interest problems are rampant at DPH.

Foot Dragging at Ethics

Notably, the City Controller’s Office and the Ethics Commission lumped Kerr’s and Rivero’s two separate September 2009 whistleblower complaints into a single investigation, on the dubious pretext that both complaints were against the same City department and involved similar issues.

The Ethics Commission reportedly referred the combined complaints to the District Attorney and the City Attorney in November 2009. The City Attorney declined investigating, but the District Attorney sat on the case for nine months before declining in July 2010 to press criminal charges and returned the case to Ethics, which has now been investigating the case for an additional 11 months.

While Ethics is charged with investigating conflict-of-issue complaints, it has literally sat for two full years on the two complaints against DPH officials.

The Grand Jury report noted that Sunshine Task Force actions deserve timely

Cont. p. 18



Ethics’ Executive Director John St. Croix, with a salary of \$137,897 annually, is considered the major stumbling block to the implementation of Sunshine laws according to many open government advocates, though Deputy Director Mable Ng and City Attorney Dennis Herrera often share the blame.



## Hard Copy Still King at Bookshop West Portal

Bookshop West Portal is a locally owned, independent bookstore in the heart of the West Portal, just a block down from the MUNI tunnel.

“People like coming in, we get lots of foot traffic,” said store manager Kevin Atkin.

It is because of the steady flow of foot traffic that local author Joseph Sutton was eager to sell his most recent book at the shop: *The Year the Giants Won The Series*. “Sales are going very well,” he said.

Drawn from his personal journal, Sutton’s observations of the Giants’ 2010 World Series victory remind us again that a bunch of ragtag ballplayers became champions of the world—against all odds.



“I’m a Giants fan,” said Atkin, “from the days they were at Candlestick Park.”

Atkin has been Bookshop West Portal’s manager since it opened in 2007, “It’s hard not to like Joe’s little book, especially if you’re a baseball or Giants fan. It’s a home run.”

“We’re not breaking any records here,” said Atkin, noting the shift in bookselling and publishing since the advent of electronic book formats like Kindle and Nook, as well as other wireless electronic reading devices.

“We’re fighting the good fight,” said Atkin, making reference to the digital revolution’s impact.

“It’s really all about the neighborhood,” he went on. “We are here because the people of West Portal wanted us here. It’s a very special neighborhood.” The constant stream of customers walking into the shop that afternoon was testimony to that. More than a dozen people walked in to browse in less than 10 minutes. Some asked for particular books or had a question about a favorite author.

“When will your next book be coming out, Joe?” asked one customer. “Next year,” replied Sutton, the



author of seven books. His eighth book, *Highway Sailor: A Rollicking American Journey*, will be out in 2012.

Sutton’s titles are also available in electronic format. “My book, *The Year the Giants Won The Series*, makes for a great Father’s Day gift because it’s not only about the Giants’ World Series year, but it’s interspersed with my reflections on coaching my son’s Little League team twenty years ago. It shows how my son and I bonded through the game of baseball.”

Atkin said, “At some point soon we’ll be offering digital book products, but old-fashioned hard copy is still king around here.”

Atkin pointed out that the aesthetics of a book in print are still very appealing. “The look, the feel, the texture and smell of the pages; a real book to hold in your hands is still portable,” said Atkin.

“Yet,” said Sutton, “for students or people who must do a lot of studying and research, having all the books on one device is a way to save on paper and printing costs. It’s more convenient without all the extra bulk and weight to carry around.”

“We like helping people get what they want,” said Atkin. He and shop owner Neal Sofman strive to ensure quality customer service.

Sutton, like many residents of the West Portal and Parkside Area, are pleased that Book Shop West Portal is their neighborhood bookstore. “It establishes an important presence along the merchant corridor of West Portal,” he said. “It adds to the ease and convenience of shopping and spending time in West Portal.”

*“The Year the Giants Won The Series” is now on sale at Bookshop West Portal. Info: [www.bookshopwestportal.com](http://www.bookshopwestportal.com) or call 415-564-8080.*

*Windmills (Cont. from p. 1)*

decline when electricity was established as the power behind the motors that facilitated water pumps and irrigation systems.

That, and the constant flow of strong sea winds, wet fog, and salt air, over the course of many years contributed to the windmills’ on-going deterioration. As the sails or vanes dilapidated they were eventually removed, left to decay along with other exterior debris such as broken shingles, etc. along the sides of the tower structures. By the 60’s the deterioration compounded the fundraising efforts and negotiations.

The North, or Dutch Windmill got a face-lift that started in 1976. Work was not actually done until the ‘80s; the North windmill got its wooden vanes restored. The Queen Wilhelmina tulip garden was replanted, yet the South or Murphy Windmill was untouched.

More than a decade passed before another effort was made in 2000 by the Cam-the Golden Gate mills. That effort at the Murphy Wind-nership with the the Recreation & As of now, rebuilding the Mur-its tower is only an and its base reveals pattern of wooden beams reminiscent craftsmanship.

“We have been Secretary of the Interior Standards on the restoration of this local landmark,” said project manager Dan Mauer.

He noted that, as with any historic restoration project, there is always additional work required while trying to document and salvage existing materials. “So that way we can maintain the existing design and fabric of the structure once rebuilt,” said Mauer.

The project is being carried out in phases. Lucas Verbij, a contractor in the Netherlands, is working on critical parts of the Murphy Windmill such as the mechanical gears and the pump.

The windmill-keeper’s cottage also suffered extensive neglect and damage over the years. It will be renovated as part of the project. The current phase is estimated at \$2,435,000.

The first two phases of the project have been estimated for completion by October. Plans to convert the cottage into a café are in negotiation. Finishing phases will follow, and time-schedules for that have not been established yet, Mauer noted.

*Free-lance writer Jonathan Farrell writes about San Francisco*



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### Local Massage Envy Employee Named Sales Associate of the Year

Massage Envy, the pioneer and national leader of affordable and convenient massage and spa services, announced that Priscilla Pedroza has been named Massage Envy Sales Associate of the Year. The award was presented at Massage Envy's Annual Franchise Conference held in Phoenix, Arizona.

Ms. Pedroza was selected from more than 3,500 Massage Envy sales associates across the country. Qualified candidates were nominated by their franchisee and reviewed by the regional developer. Each region then submitted one regional winner for consideration. Final determination was made by a committee at the Massage Envy corporate office.



"Priscilla is the ideal candidate to be chosen as Massage Envy's Sales Associate of the Year and we are very proud to recognize her for all her hard work and dedication," said Angeline Sebastian-Stafford, Massage Envy franchisee and owner of the Daly City center. "At Massage Envy, it is because of talented team members, such as Priscilla, that we are able to provide high-quality customer service with each and every visit."

The company launched the Massage Envy Spa concept in 2009 to build upon consumer demand for affordable access to healthy skin care treatments. Through a strategic partnership with global skincare leader Murad®, Massage Envy Spa customers benefit from facials and skin care treatments designed by one of the world's foremost leaders in skin health.

Today, there are more than 680 locations, making it the largest system of franchised massage and spa centers in the industry. The company also is the world's largest employer of licensed/registered massage therapists with more than 16,000 therapists providing over 250,000 massages every week.

Open seven days a week, each Massage Envy offers convenient times and locations to fit all its members needs. Visit Massage Envy on *Facebook* or on *Twitter*. For healthy living and wellness tips, visit Massage Envy's new blog at *Touchof-Wellnessblog.com*.

The Daly City Massage Envy Spa is located at 239 Lake Merced Boulevard at the Westlake Center. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call (650) 757-ENVY(3689). Additional information, including a list of all centers, can be found on the corporate web site at *massageenvy.com*.

### MUNI Deserves Credit for Its Vision of the Future

By Howard Strassner

A few months ago I wrote of how to improve service on the Muni 28 line on Nineteenth Avenue. But improving Muni service is much more than something we do to make it easier for me or you to get around. A Muni that works is an important part of every level of San Francisco today, and a Muni that works well will be important for all of San Francisco, including the west side, in the near future. In the more distant future public transit, like Muni, will: save some of our limited reserves of oil for our grandchildren's children; preserve some dry land; provide food for people that we will never meet; and preserve habitat for creatures of which we never think.



Muni is part of our community and we, as a people, have uniquely voted to guarantee Muni a small portion of our City General Fund and almost all of our parking taxes, fees and fines so that Muni can provide a reasonable level of transit service, at a moderate fare. We have agreed to significantly reduce fares for: seniors, disabled and youth. Unlike many other parts of the world, or with other City services, our Muni community appreciates visitors, and you don't have to be a resident to qualify for a reduced fare. We also provide low-cost transit passes for those of limited means in our community. Muni draws us through our community and other parts of town as we walk to and from transit stops. No matter who we are; we typically share our transit vehicle with people who don't look like us and/or speak a different language. Muni riders range from those who can barely afford the daily fare to those who can afford to own one or even a fleet of buses. In San Francisco, unlike many other cities in the US, people of means ride Muni because it is often better and certainly less costly than driving.

Muni is restarting their Transit Effectiveness Program in order to improve service. But, unlike my low cost proposals, they will need serious funding which may not be available. They must also allow time for environmental study, because without a full study of all impacts, a driver or Muni rider could complain that their needs were not considered and this can delay any improvements. It is important to the economic survival of San Francisco that Muni and regional transit be improved because Bay Area growth projections, based on the usual traffic patterns, predict a level of congestion in downtown San Francisco through which no one will want to drive, which might be enough to stifle any growth. Just imagine a downtown with more people working. This will require more

trucks to deliver supplies and more buses to move people. In an area which is already congested, the number of cars will have to decrease and so transit has to improve. Future growth will not impact the west side so much because, unlike downtown, we have ample street capacity. Of course, if more of us use the improved transit, the west side will not notice any congestion at all and we should support steps that will reduce even minimum traffic impacts on Muni.

As the cost of removing oil from the ground continues to increase, other components of public transit become more important. Bay Area studies show that the typical public transit bus moves a person at about 10% of the energy required to move a person in a private car, while well-used rail requires only 2%. Over time we hope that cars will be more efficient, but well-utilized transit will also improve. Thus, if more of us use more transit, this means that we will leave more oil in the ground for our grandchildren and their children. In a country that prides itself on our great progress of extending political and economic rights to all, isn't it time to extend some economic rights to our posterity? While it is not directly within Muni's scope, thinking even more broadly, we have to consider that the U.S. burns about 25% of all of the world's fossil fuels, and half of this is consumed in cars and trucks. So as more of us use transit we will consume less oil in our cars and leave more for our posterity and the rest of the world.

Whether your concern is to save your own time or money, or you want to help save the environment or the rest of the world, Muni is the way to go.

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

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Reverse Mortgage: Sound Option for Retirement Income?

The concept behind reverse mortgages is nothing new. They provide a way for those who are retired or about to retire to generate cash flow based on the value of their home. The terminology may sound confusing, but a reverse mortgage is considered a loan to the individual—similar to a home equity loan.

A reverse mortgage is an option for retirees to tap into the equity they’ve accumulated on their home, particularly if the mortgage is paid off or if the balance on the mortgage is low. But reverse mortgages can take different forms, and it’s important for homeowners to clearly understand the terms of any agreement they consider.

Given the financial strain many retirees feel today as a result of the volatile investment markets of recent years and despite the fact that home values were hard hit in recent years, curiosity about reverse mortgages remains high. Retired homeowners who are looking for income in addition to what they will receive from retirement plan savings, pensions and Social Security often consider this option to help meet their financial needs in retirement.

Key facts about reverse mortgages:

- A reverse mortgage allows one to receive income based on his or her home’s value while continuing to own and live in the home.
- Reverse mortgages are typically limited to individuals age 62 and older.
- Although payments are based on the equity in your home (among other factors), there is an obligation to repay the full amount received plus interest either at the death of the homeowner or when the home is sold. However, in many cases, the amount due will not exceed the value of the home when it is sold.
- Those who receive reverse mortgage payments remain obligated to pay taxes and insurance on the property. This becomes difficult for some—the number of borrowers who default on reverse mortgages has increased in recent years. Many don’t have sufficient assets to make property tax and home insurance payments, or they simply weren’t aware of this requirement. A good solution is to set up an automatic payment program through a bank or cash management account.
- The biggest factors that affect the amount

one can borrow are current age (older individuals may receive larger reverse mortgage payments), and the amount of equity one has on the house.

Three different options

There are three different types of reverse mortgages. They include:

- Home Equity Conversion Mortgages (or HECMs), insured by the Federal Housing Administration
- Single Purpose Reverse Mortgages (offered by some state and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations), typically aimed at low and moderate-income homeowners
- Proprietary Reverse Mortgages – private loans backed by the companies that originate the loan

The vast majority of loans in the market today are government-sponsored HECM’s. Participants can receive payments monthly or even establish a line of credit that can be opened when or if needed.

Obligations of the borrower

In many ways, reverse mortgages are similar to home equity loans in which the value of the home is used to generate cash flow while you continue to own and live in the property. There are costs involved and private loans tend to be more expensive

than those offered through government agencies.

Unlike a home mortgage, the amount you owe on a reverse mortgage increases over time. Interest is charged on the outstanding balance and added to the amount owed each month.

Repayment occurs by selling the home or having heirs take care of repayment after the death of the homeowner. Therefore, it is important to let heirs know in advance that the reverse mortgage is in place. Most of these loans have a “nonrecourse clause,” protecting heirs from owing more than the value of the home when the loan becomes due and the home is sold.

It’s also vital to be cognizant of the interest rate charged on a home equity line. Although some have fixed rates, most utilize a variable rate, so the net value of payments made can decline over time if interest rates rise.

Be sure to meet with an advisor for advice on the terms of any reverse mortgage you consider. This meeting is required for all who apply for a federally-backed Home Equity Conversion Mortgage.

Brandon Miller, CFP and Joanne Jordan, CFP are San Francisco financial consultants Info: brandonmilleradvisor.com.

City Hall Debt (Cont. from p. 1)

solar panels, waste water treatment centers, special furniture, and of course no parking because cars are bad? The six-figure-salary public employees who will work at this eco-shrine will park their cars a block away at the Civic Center garage. Counting the COP fees, principal, and interest — plus \$17 million in PUC asset sales and \$26.6 million in unappropriated Hetch Hetchy funds — the new PUC headquarters was expected to cost \$430.6 million. Project cost overruns are adding millions to the final total.

The green design of the PUC headquarters now in construction is supposed to save at least \$118 million over the next 75 years. A regular office building would have been less imaginative, but much cheaper. Why should City employees enjoy such a high-level work environment? Would voters have approved a project of this magnitude during such bad financial times.

With the addition of waterfalls in the lobby, LED “fireflies” on the building’s exterior and sound-based artwork on the “grand stairway,” voters are “saving money.”

When my wife spends \$300 at Nordstrom’s Rack and then tells me she “saved” \$200 because her purchases were marked down, I’m still stuck paying her \$300 gambit. Likewise, the City frequently claims it is saving the taxpayer money — yet, we are constantly asked to pay for more services or cost overruns, and are stuck with the bill.

General manager Ed Harrington states, “It was actually the right time to build it [525 Golden Gate]. We had held off for some time because the costs were quite high. We took that time to scale back some of the more expensive items that didn’t provide much return. When the economy turned around, it gave us the chance to get better bids and give the go-ahead to build it.”

Prior to 1979 and the passage of Proposition 13, almost 100% of the long-term debt owed by San Francisco was either approved by the voters through general obligation bonds (GOBs), parcel taxes, or increases in property tax assessments, which were based on increased home valuations. With the passage of Proposition 13, all GOBs and parcel taxes suddenly had to be approved by a two-thirds supermajority vote. Homeowners were the big winners, since property tax payments were then based on the acquisition value of a house rather than on its assessed value.

Prop 13, “The Peoples Initiative to Limit Property Taxation,” empowered homeowners to have a much greater say in the long-term debt that they were asked to pay. The new two-thirds majority voting laws allowed disenfranchised homeowner groups a much greater say in which long-term bonds were passed or not passed.

This was a very big deal in SF, where 65% of voters are renters. Renter interests

do not always coincide with homeowner interests, and the burden of debt repayment was the responsibility of homeowners, not renters. For the first time in years, Prop 13 allowed homeowners to effectively represent their own financial interests.

This was a terrible financial blow to the City’s property tax collections where revenues were on the decline. California municipalities had to turn to creative financing to off-set lost revenue.

In the very early ‘80s, a local law firm, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe devised a financing scheme called Certificates of Participation (COPs) requiring no voter approval; only approval of the Supervisors Finance Committee and a subsequent Board of Supervisors vote to issue COPs.

Desperate to replace lost revenue, municipalities and their complicit lawyers and judges almost immediately declared that COPs were legal.

This is the legal definition from the City Attorney’s office on how GOBs are different from COPs. Take a very careful look and see if you can find any differences:

“COPs: Are a contract that says if we need a \$100 of goods/services next fiscal year, and if you provide it, we will pay you \$100. This would not be a ‘debt’ for constitutional purposes. Why? This obligation would be a ‘contingent obligation,’ and the contingency has not occurred yet.”

“GOBs: However, a definite undertaking today to pay \$100 next fiscal year would be a debt for constitutional purposes. The triggering event is that we have incurred a definite obligation that would be paid out over a future year’s revenues.”

Although COPs are not considered to be debt under the state constitution, both COPs and GOBs are long-term commitments to pay back debt and both utilize rigid payment schedules over time. They are identical with the one exception that the state considers COPs to be a “contingent obligation” repayment in the future. How many angels fit on the head of a pin?

Bottom line: COPs are a state sponsored, instrument to create long-term, non-voter-approved debt at its pleasure and call this debt a lease/rental payment.

SF now owes \$1.3 billion in COP principal and interest. This will soon double with the upcoming War Memorial Building COPs, Moscone West Convention Center upgrades, and the Hall of Justice rebuild that will all increase payments out of the General Fund by over \$50 million per year.

All of this debt and interest eventually clogs San Francisco’s General Fund, causing discretionary funds available to fix pot holes (among other infrastructure problems), to hire park gardeners, or to fund police academy classes, to vanish.

SF voters are marginalized by our politicians and City department heads to avoid public accountability. Our City officials

would rather quietly issue “non-voter-approved” long-term debt than discuss the merits of projects with the citizens or risk voter rejection of GOBs at the ballot box.

It is long past time that voters place limits on the amount of COP debt that can

KOPP (Cont. from p. 3)

most appropriately financed on a pay-as-you-go basis without the issuance of long-term debt such as COPs.” He reminded supervisors and Newsom that long-term debt, such as general obligation bonds and COPs “is typically issued to finance large one-time capital improvement projects...” They ignored their Budget Analyst, so now our general taxes are squandered on \$2,360,775 in interest to the “Goldman Sachs” of the world.

In short, San Francisco has misused its share of state and federal gasoline taxes and the excise and sales taxes thereon. Instead of practicing historically fundamental governmental financial wisdom of applying user fee proceeds from gasoline taxation for routine work, city government has been “cute”, applying it to planting and maintaining street trees and a loan to lower the President of the Board of Supervisors’ podium so that it is 12 inches above the floor, installing a ramp to such podium and improving the audio/visual wiring which runs underneath each podium. Furthermore, in October 2010 the Department of Public Works informed the Budget and Legislative Analyst some \$38,964,935 of a \$48,000,000 Certificate of Participation is allocated to repaving, maintaining and repairing streets because the department considered all those projects “Capital Improvement Projects”, and not routine maintenance. That’s how our city government operates, ignoring elemental principles, misspending gasoline user taxes and incurring debt indebtedness which will be repaid, not by motor vehicle drivers, but by property, parcel, sales, real estate transfer and other taxpayers from the City’s General Fund.

There’s more: as revealed by the Examiner’s Melissa Griffin on May 31, 2011, city government spent \$29,000 for a poll on whether voters will approve the \$248,000,000 general obligation bond for street repairs and potholes. One poll question was premised on “tens of millions of taxpayers’ dollars” dedicated from proceeds of such bonds to a remodeling project on Jefferson Street for the America’s Cup, more money for that one project than all other city-wide uses of the money. The implication is that more bond proceeds would benefit billionaire Larry Ellison and the America’s Cup extravaganza than San Francisco residents. The ultimate taxpayer expense of such bond, including interest, will approach a half a billion dollars. One doubts such bond folly will

be issued and how COP debt can be spent. Let the voters decide, not the politicians.

George Wooding is president of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council. Feedback: wooding@westsideobserver.com.

receive a hospitable audience if voters truly understand the financial sins of their city government.

A remarkable story was published in late May concerning one of the candidates for San Francisco District Attorney and the appointed “paratrooper” D.A, George Gascon. It appears that Sharmin Bock, a one-time Alameda Country Deputy DA, met with Gascon last spring demanding he appoint her Chief Deputy District Attorney or she would probably run against him. Her alleged theory was that Gascon needed a capable person to manage the DA’s office while he campaigned. Gascon claims Bock declared that if he didn’t hire her for such position she would probably enter the race. According to the journalistic jackals in the Chronicle, Bock didn’t deny the conversation. California Elections Code section 18205 states that a person shall not directly elicit or receive any “valuable consideration...in order to induce a person not to become or to withdraw as a candidate for public office.” Violation of that law constitutes a felony. If Bock solicited Gascon for such a benefit or received such a benefit, namely, appointment as Chief Deputy District Attorney for not running against him would that violate section 18205? Perhaps. The act, if true, is serious. One would expect a genuine prosecutor to proceed. Apparently, however, for this D.A., municipal corruption isn’t a favored subject, even for referral to the state Attorney General.

Finally, let’s consider one of city government’s newer bureaucracies, the Department of Environment. Like almost all city bureaucracies, its growth has been voracious. The annual salary ordinance for fiscal year 2010-11 shows a total of approximately 85 full-time positions and an expenditure budget of \$13,537,260. Who pays for that? Almost 57 percent of that department’s budget emanates from the “Solid Waste Impound Account Fees” paid to Recology by we, the ratepayers; it’s yet another reason for enormous residential garbage rates, and explains the symbiotic relationship between the Department of Environment director and staff, on the one hand, and Recology executives, on the other. Let’s see if the circulating initiative to require competitive bidding for garbage removal bestows a voter choice in November. Meanwhile, be of good summertime cheer.

Feedback: kopp@westsideobserver.com



WEST OF TWIN PEAKS CENTRAL COUNCIL *By Mitch Bull*

A new slate of officers, a photo op, and a briefing by Mayor Ed Lee highlighted the West of Twin Peaks Central Council meeting of June 27<sup>th</sup>.

WOTPCC President George Wooding called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM with about 55 people in the audience and a short agenda, centering on a visit from Mayor Ed Lee. Once it was determined that a quorum was reached by roll call, the minutes from the last meeting were discussed. A clarification of statements made by Planning Director John Rahaim was discussed in which he had spoken about the changes in the Housing Element. The discussion focused on the topic where the use of “neighborhood” input into the Planning process was broadened to where the “community” would have input. The minutes were amended to include wording where Rahaim stated that, even as the community at large would have input, the neighborhoods affected by planning would be given greater weight in the process. After this the minutes were approved as amended.

Paul Conroy represented the Nominating Committee (Conroy, D. Bisho, and G. Linn) announcing the proposed officers for 2011-12: President Matt Chamberlain, Vice President George Wooding, Treasurer Carolyn Squeri, Secretary Blue Mudbharry, and Parliamentarian Roger Ritter. The nominations were approved unanimously.

Wooding discussed the agenda, centering on an appearance by the Mayor to officiate the installation of officers and to pose for a photo with the current and past officers to mimic a photo of a 1937 meeting between the WOTPCC offices and then-mayor Angelo Rossi.

Shortly thereafter, Mayor Lee arrived, and officiated over the “swearing in” of the new officers, after which he addressed the audience and took questions.

In his remarks, Lee touched on the fact that he is the first interim mayor since Dianne Feinstein (following the Moscone-Milk assassinations). A long-time SF government employee, Lee has served under 4 mayors in his 22 year career spanning 5 different departments, he is still learning so much about the city as he is now involved in all aspects of the city operations.

He recapped his performance to date with by citing the 5 priorities that he has been focusing on: Keeping the City Safe; (hiring a new Police Chief); Working to reap the economic benefits of the America’s Cup Yacht Races (bringing jobs and tourism); Supporting and implementing the SF “Local Hire Ordinance” that was instituted; working on the crafting of a “Consensus-based Pension Reform Plan” (that would end job-spiking, while raising employee contributions); and addressing Street

Maintenance with the \$248M Street Improvement Bond which will be on the ballot in November. In discussing the Bond measure, he spoke of the poor condition of the streets citywide as a result of “deferred” maintenance, and the need to implement the bond just to keep things status quo. He went on to state that the bond measure would not result in an increase in property taxes. (DPW Director Ed Riskin discussed the concept of “geographic equity” on how the bond money would be spread out equally in all sections of the city when asked in Q and A of which specific streets would be targeted.)

In a short question session the Mayor fielded questions on: 1). Whether he will support the initiative to require competitive bidding for the SF Garbage Collection Operation (the Mayor said he feels that things are working well now, so he sees no need to change the current operation); 2). The concepts of creating “parklets” that take away parking spaces in areas that desperately need them; and 3). Is he going to jump into the race for Mayor? On that note, he reasoned that he doesn’t regard himself as a “politician” and that his is focused on running the city and achieving what he set out to do, and that the process of campaigning would take away from the time he is devoting to the job. (But he didn’t say specifically, no, he is not running.) He did laugh when asked if he would support a “write-in” campaign on the ballot. (Interestingly enough, audience members included mayoral candidates Tony Hall, Joanna Rees and Dennis Herrera—probably very interested in what Lee is going to do...)

Following his remarks, the 1937 “redux” photo was taken. The official business ended with the delegates discussing a motion to officially support (as the WOTPCC) the initiative put forth by Supervisors Mirkarimi, Mar, Avalos and Campos to oppose the “privatization” of Park and Recreation facilities within the city. With input from both sides, of the issue, it was decided to work via email, and to craft a ballot statement that can be supported by individuals and individual Neighborhood associations, but not as the WOTPCC as a whole.

*With that, President Wooding adjourned the meeting. Summer recess is upon the WOTPCC and new-President Chamberlain will convene the next meeting on September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM in the Forest Hills Clubhouse.*



### Save Golden Gate Park

**When:** Wednesday, July 20 • 7:00 – 9:00 pm

**Where:** Community Meeting Room - Richmond Police Station • 461 6<sup>th</sup> Ave (Geary/Anza)

**What:** Two construction projects threaten the western end of Golden Gate park— the seven-acre artificial turf with 60 foot tall stadium lights Beach Chalet Soccer Fields project and the 40,000 square foot water treatment factory. Between these two projects, over 250 trees which form the park’s protective western windbreak, will either be cut down or damaged by construction. These projects threaten the natural environment, the bird, butterfly, and wild animal habitat, the historical design character, and the beauty of Golden Gate Park.

**Who:** Environment and park supporters, soccer players who prefer real grass to plastic turf, neighbors, and anyone who values Golden Gate Park as parkland.

[www.sfoceanedge.org](http://www.sfoceanedge.org) and [www.goldengateparkpreservation.org](http://www.goldengateparkpreservation.org)

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59 Cityview Way 4BR/2BA exquisitely renovated home featuring gourmet kitchen, wood burning fireplace, oak floors, modern upgrades.  
\$779,000



409 Dellbrook Ave. 6BR/4BA home with large patio and oak floors. Over 2500 sqft (per tax records). Needs basic updating. Big upside potential  
\$700,000



5 Clairview Ct. 2BR/1BA home ready for a basic remodel. Wood burning fireplace, oak and birch floors, Twin Peaks and partial ocean views.  
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Summer is upon us and that means music in the Stern Grove on Sundays, the Outer Lands Festival in Golden Gate Park, and many other local musical events. Check out our calendar for listings and dates.

I recently attended a retirement party for one of “San Francisco’s Finest.” SFPD Motorcycle Officer Tom Vellone has put away his riding gloves and helmet after a distinguished career. Tom served in a variety of venues, operating out of Mission Station, Tenderloin Station and the Hall of Justice. 200+ people attended the event, put together by his wife Susan. Photos and video snippets traced his early life, his hobbies (scuba diving), and photos of the years spent protecting the citizens of SF in many different ways. Best wishes in retirement and a “thank you “ for a dangerous job well done.

Help promote live music in West Portal!—The Board of Supervisors is considering approval of an ordinance that would allow small merchants to have music in their venues. Live musicians such as a guitarist, small jazz trio, etc. could help the restaurants and shops to attract customers and provide for a “Parisian” type of ambiance on the Avenue. Currently West Portal is not included in the proposal. Email or call your local supervisors to put a plug in for this worthwhile endeavor.



Will he or won't he? This was the question posed to Mayor Ed Lee at the West Of Twin Peaks Central Council meeting on Monday, June 27th. His honor, being on hand to conduct the swearing in of the new WOTPCC officers, sidestepped the question somewhat by saying that he doesn't want to be distracted from the job at hand by having to campaign, and that we doesn't see himself as a “politician.” With people downtown wearing “Run Ed Run” shirts, and Paul Conroy asking the Mayor if he would endorse a “write in” campaign, will the lure be too much to resist? The audience at the event also included candidates, (Former District 7 Supe) Tony Hall, Joanna Rees, and City Attorney Dennis Herrera.

Our readers filled the “mail bag” this month with observations in the neighborhood and a historic description of the “historic” photo from last month. Reader Hobie MacQuarrie, who claims to live in a computer free zone, penned a response, informing us that our photo was a nice picture of Miraloma Park in the mid-fifties, with O'Shaunessey Blvd. in the foreground. His letter describes the purchase of the house in 1960 for \$19,500 (\$2000 down), and that the house is still in the family, with his son and daughter-in-law living there. While there the family witnessed the transformation of the golf driving range into McAtter High School (Now School of the Arts), and the development of Diamond Heights. The letter even closed with a telephone number; DELAWARE (DE) 4-XXXX. How many remember when the prefixes were words. I used to love the sound that the rotary telephones made... Thank you to the Mac Quarrie's for sharing with us.

Unfortunately, a young driver with extremely poor judgment crashed his car into the fountain at St. Francis Circle on June 26<sup>th</sup> at about 4 AM, causing an extreme amount of damage. Rumor has it he was trying to “jump” over the structure with his car. Fortunately the driver was not seriously injured, but he was arrested. I hope he has better insurance than he has common sense.

Finally (from local “celeb” Marc Troy) – Hello to Bella, who has opened “Simply Bella” a ladies boutique in the second block of West Portal; and a farewell to Maris Jewelers who are having a “retirement” sale and saying goodbye after 37 years on the Avenue.

As most of you know, this is a combined July-August issue of the *Observer*, as we do not publish an August issue to give our staff and families a bit of a break. September marks my 3<sup>rd</sup> year as the Publisher of the paper, and I want to say thank you to our writers, contributors, advertisers and readers who make this journey so worthwhile. Have a great summer, and see you in the fall.

If you have an interesting story, idea, or some insights you'd like to get in the paper just drop it to us. You can reach me at: [mitch@WestsideObserver.com](mailto:mitch@WestsideObserver.com). Be sure to check out the *Observer* online at [www.WestsideObserver.com](http://www.WestsideObserver.com).

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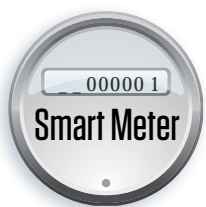
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SHARON THE HEALTH / By Sharon Caren



Scan Your Brain

Science has always had much information about our physical body but the brain has been more of a mystery. As recent as 1935, a common procedure was Lobotomy for brain treatment. By 1951, 20,000 lobotomies had been performed in the U.S.

I received such a great response to my previous article on Brain Health that it prompted me to share news on a technology that isn't very well known. It is an advanced technology called SPECT promoting natural treatments for a healthy brain with huge results. This technology is also taking away some of the mystery about the brain.

Dr. Daniel Amen has been scanning thousands of brains in his clinics for the

past 20 years. He is a clinical neuroscientist, psychiatrist and brain-imaging expert leading the world-renowned Amen Clinics. Dr. Amen has written 19 books including a New York Times bestseller, *Change your brain, Change your life*. You may have seen him on a PBS Special. That's how I found him.

**What is SPECT Imaging for your brain health?**

Single photon emission computed tomography is a functional scan to show how the brain works; measuring blood flow and activity patterns. It's a nuclear medicine study that uses radioisotopes as tracking devices to look at living brain tissue. It's very different than a CAT scan or MRI that only shows what the brain looks like and not how the brain functions.

**Why Scan?**

SPECT helps provide answers to mental health problems, ADHD, head injuries, toxic exposure and past emotional traumas. It also helps in understanding and

treating addictions giving families better information to help decrease shame, self-blame and conflict. With this information, treatments are tailored for each individual brain, helping to prevent mistakes because of vague diagnosis.

Even if there is no apparent problem, the scan is used as a screening tool to point out vulnerabilities. It's used as a baseline in case of future problems. This is an early detector of Alzheimer's. The scan can indicate the potential for Alzheimer's up to 9 years before symptoms occur. Also, scans help with individualized care for your brain. A Director of the National Institute of Mental Health said, "Brain imaging in clinical practice is the next major advance in psychiatry."

I have Dr. Amen's book, *Magnificent Mind at Any Age* and I highly recommend it. There are pictures of a healthy brain and an Alzheimer's-diseased brain, amazing!

The healthy brain is full, even and has symmetrical activity. The diseased brain shows deterioration and actual holes indicating low activity in very important areas. In cases of ADHD there are scans of before and after treatments. You'll see the improvements in the physical brain mass and the patients reporting the wonderful results in their quality of life.

A brain that looks like Swiss cheese could be a result of drug or alcohol abuse. However, there's a story of a 30 year old man who never used drugs or alcohol. He painted cars in his garage with little ventilation. This activity had the same result on his brain as an addict! Having a scan allowed him to change his behavior, get out of a toxic environment, and through natural treatments, get his brain healthy again. He also reported the strained relationship with his wife improved as well.

We can outwardly see symptoms of disorders such as addictions, ADHD, Alzheimer's, and some mental health problems but there are so many other ways brain dysfunction shows up subtly. Let's look at making your dreams a reality. Why are so few people really able to attain their

life's dreams? The commonsense approach that we hear and read about is:

Try harder  
Visualize your success  
Work longer  
Take responsibility  
Stop complaining  
Change your attitude  
Don't let anyone get in your way!

In order for the above to work, we must start with a healthy brain. To realize our dreams, our brain must work right. The brain controls everything we do. If our brain is troubled in some way, we'll experience trouble in life. It's that simple. Having a brain scan can be a helpful tool to finding the source of trouble. It's an option in some cases that could be seriously life altering. There is an Amen Clinic in Fairfield, California, which can be reached at 888.564.2700.

It's not necessary to have a scan to improve brain function. There are many healthful things we can do to heal and balance the brain:

Natural supplements  
Healthy diet  
Regular exercise  
Thinking strategies  
Medications when needed  
Having a greater knowledge of what our brain needs to be healthy, we become proactive instead of reactive in gaining a better quality of life.

Happy summer to you!

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

*Please call me with questions or comments at 650-359-6579 or [sharoncaren@comcast.net](mailto:sharoncaren@comcast.net). Also visit: [www.sharoncaren.com](http://www.sharoncaren.com)*

**Amen Clinics have announced that they will be opening a SF Bay area clinic in Brisbane in the late Summer (probably by September).**



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## PTA MOM—Now more than ever....

By Carol Kocivar ©2011

**W**hen my son was a junior in high school, he put a song on my computer that reminds me why I am a PTA volunteer.

Whether it is writing an agenda for a meeting, or calling PTA parents, or just clearing emails, it always makes more sense listening to Eric Clapton singing "If I Could Change the World."

It was my son's subtle way of telling mom, "I understand what you are doing."

This school year, now more than ever, our children need PTA to change their world.

Improving the lives of children has a new urgency. Pundits are now saying that this may be the first generation of children in America to grow up less healthy and less educated than their parents.

Stop right there.

Less healthy and less educated?

We need to write the new script: And it is NOT Waiting for Superman. It is The Power of PTA.

This Great Recession makes the work of PTA in our schools and our communities even more valuable. If there was ever a time for us to speak loudly and clearly for the rights of children, it is now. Imagine, just imagine, the power of almost one million PTA parents and teachers working to improve the lives of children.

We want our children to be healthy, to live in a safe community, to attend quality schools. We want our children to have the skills they need to support themselves and their families. We want our children to be responsible citizens in a democratic society.

These are the dreams we have for every child. This is not something we leave to chance, or leave for someone else to do. We know as PTA that every day we can improve the lives of children.

We need to remind our elected officials, whether on the school board or the city council or in the California legislature, that meeting the needs of children is the responsibility of all of us. That means investing in children.

Investing in children is not an issue of Republicans versus Democrats.

It is not an issue of left versus right. It is an issue of right versus wrong.

As we begin a new school year, the planning you do today will pay off in dividends for our children. As Diana Scharf Hunt once said, "Goals are Dreams with Deadlines."

So take a few moments to dream. Imagine.

What can I do each day to improve the lives of children?

How can I change their world?

Feedback: kocivar@westsideobserver.com

For resources and ideas on how YOU can be involved, visit the California State PTA web site at [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org)

Want to contact the district PTA in San Francisco, just email: [2nddist@sftpta.org](mailto:2nddist@sftpta.org)

Don't have much time but want to support the cause? You can join the Golden State PTA on line:

<http://www.capta.org/sections/membership/join-support.cfm>



## SECOND THOUGHTS / By Jack Kaye

### The Israel Issue



**O**nce again the U.S. is trying to get a peace settlement between Israel and Palestine. Israel was granted statehood by the League of Nations (which became the U.N.) after World War II which saw the death of more than half the Jewish population of the world. The general region referred to as the Palestine was under British rule at the time. The Palestine has been under many rules, but never has had self rule. Israel had been the home of the Jewish people since the time of Abraham, the father of Judaism, Christianity and of Islam, more than 4,000 years ago. The word Israel is in almost every Jewish prayer. The Jews believe that the land was given to their people by G-d.

The 1948 agreement gave statehood to Israel with the boundaries limiting it to about 8,000 square miles. Israel is surrounded by Arab countries which have approximately 8.6 million square miles (1000 times the size of Israel) in 21 countries with a current population of more than 360 million Arabs. Israel has a current Jewish population of 5.3 million, about the same number as those who reside in the U.S. The number of countries with majority Muslim populations including non-Arab countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Indonesia, is 47.

When Israel was recognized as a state, so were several other countries in the world and in the region. Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Libya and Iraq were some of the newly formed and recognized countries created during that time, as were Pakistan, Bangladesh, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, to name a few. Boundary lines were also moved after World War I in other countries like Hungary, Poland, Germany and Romania and for the entire Middle East after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire.

Now, in 2011, the world has watched the "Arab Spring." Arabs in Northern African countries are revolting against their dictators who have ruled them almost since many of the nations were first created. The Arabs claim that after all these years they want democracy and freedom from oppression. But these same young, brave freedom fighters do not want the same for their own women, nor for the Jewish people.

It isn't enough that this ancient people who have done so much for the world in science, philosophy, art, and literature should be restricted to a mere 8,000 square miles of what had been arid waste land; the reborn Arabs do not want Israel to exist, at all.

And yet, seeing all this, some in America side with the Arabs. These people consider the Arabs the underdogs because 63 years ago some Arabs living in Israel were displaced. At the same time Jews living in what became Jordan were also displaced. But they cannot see Israel as the underdog even though it has one-68th the number of people and one-1000th the land mass that the Arabs do.

Some people feel that the Jews should not have a homeland because no country should be religion-oriented. They must concede that Muslims have 47 countries. They say that is wrong, too. They must be reminded that the Jews are not only a religion, they are also a people, a nationality like Arabs or Italians or Mexicans. And like

all the other nationalities, they deserve a homeland, Israel. The Arab people have 21 homelands; why can't the Israelites have one the size of New Jersey?

So what is the solution to their situation? Our President and their Prime Minister said it differently, but clearly. Israel must go back to its pre-1967 borders plus swaps to ensure Israeli security. The swaps would be that Israel keeps East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, which they took in 1967 after all of the surrounding Arab nations attacked Israel and were soundly defeated by this small struggling nation. In exchange, the Israelis would return the West Bank and all the Israeli settlements there which now accommodate 300,000 Israelis. (They have already returned the Sinai to Egypt and the Gaza to Palestine as prior peace gestures.) Under this plan, Israel with its 5.3 million people would have 8000 square miles, while 4 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza would have 10,000 square miles.

The land and homes would be given to the Palestinians, who could house the descendants of those Arabs displaced from Israel in the late 1940s. These "refugees" have been mostly kept in refugee camps in neighboring Arab countries for the past 63 years. Refugees, not welcomed and integrated into their new home's society, for 63 years!

This agreement would end the problem. Everyone involved knows that this is the deal. But the Palestinians are a divided camp. The residents of Gaza, given their independence by Israel, elected Hamas to lead them. Hamas is a terrorist organization whose goal is the elimination of the Israeli state. They have now formed a coalition with Fatah, the governing power of the West Bank. Even if Fatah wants to accept this deal, its partner can't and at the same time say that Israel cannot exist.

I think that it's high time that we realize who the true underdog is in this drama. It is Israel, the little country, one tenth of one percent the size of its hostile neighbors.

If the Arab states said that they would no longer use any weapons to attack others or even to defend themselves, there would be peace in the Middle East. If Israel said that it would disarm completely and not fight even to defend itself, it would be destroyed in days.

Now who's the underdog?

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

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Tarantula!  
At the SF Zoo  
All Summer

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**EVERY • FRIDAY NIGHT**  
**Friday Night Jazz** Fri | 7–11 pm | Cliff House, Balcony Lounge – 1 Seal Rock .

**WED • CPAB MEETING**  
6 Wed July 6 | 6pm | Community Police Advisory Board, Taraval Station, 2354 24th Ave.

**SUN • STERN GROVE MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
10 Sun July 10 | 2pm | AfroCubism brings musical greats from Mali and Cuba. Local Cuban group Pellejo Seco warms up with salsa-infused sound. • 19th Ave/ Sloat /. FREE / Info 252-6252 www.sterngrove.org

**TUE • AUTHOR KATE LEVINSON**  
1 Tue June 12 | 7pm | The author will discuss *Emotional Currency: A Woman's Guide to Building a Healthy Relationship with Money* at BookShop West Portal. Adventures of an American Romantic in Iran 80 West Portal Ave. Info: (415) 564-8080.

**THU • LET'S DANCE**  
14 Thu Eves July | Social Ballroom Dances classes for couples – 6 lessons for \$70 per couple. Thursday evenings beginning June 16th at the Forest Hill Christian Church 250 Laguna Honda Blvd. 661-2746 for details

**SAT • WINE TASTING**  
10 Sat July 16 5-8pm | Cooper Vinyards Tasting at Que Syrah, 230 West Portal Avenue 731.7000

**SUN • STERN GROVE MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
1 Sun July 17 | 2pm | Pioneering 80's band The English Beat bring reggae and dub-infused ska. SF's My First Earthquake kick off with new-wave inspired style. 19th Ave/Sloat/. FREE / Info 252-6252 www.sterngrove.org

**TUE • AUTHOR MIRIAM GOODMAN**  
19 Tue June 19 | 7pm | The author will read from *Too Much Togetherness: Surviving Retirement as a Couple*. 80 West Portal Ave. Info: (415) 564-8080.I

**TUE • TARAVAL PUBLIC SAFETY**  
19 Tue July 19 | 7pm | Captain Curtis Lum, Taraval Station Public Safety Community Meeting, the 3rd Tuesday of each month at Taraval Station 2354 24th Ave.

**WED • COMMUNITY MEETING**  
Wed July 20 | 7-9pm | Save Golden Gate Park. Discussion: Beach Challet Soccer

2 Fields and the Water Treatment Facility. Community Mtg Rm. Richmond Station, 461 6th Ave. www.sfoceanedge.org or goldengateparkpreservation.org

**SUNSET/PARKSIDE NERT**  
2 Thu July 21 | 7pm | Neighborhood Emergency Response Team, www.sfgov.org/site/sfnert) meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month at Incarnation Episcopal Church, 29th Avenue near Noriega

**SUN • STERN GROVE MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
2 Sun July 24 | 2pm | SF Symphony with conductor Michael Francis and pianist Sara Davis Buechner: BEETHOVEN Overture to The Creatures of Prometheus, and Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat major, Emperor, TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 4 in F minor, | 19th Ave/Sloat Blvd. FREE Info 252-6252 www.sterngrove.org

**TUE • DON GRAY - SF HISTORY ASSOCIATION**  
2 Tue July 26 | 7pm | On Crissy Field Airstrip -Slideshow and Commentary. Don Gray SF resident, pilot, and aviation historian. Walking tours of Crissy Field and working to establish a museum in one of the original airplane hangars, using actual historic aircraft and period artifacts to chronicle the exciting, risky, and heroic exploits of American aviators. St. Philip's Catholic Church, 725 Diamond (at 24th St.) \$5 non-members. 750-9986, ron@sanfranciscohistory.org



**SUN • STERN GROVE MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
3 Sun July 31 | 2pm | SF Ballet is one of the premier ballet companies in America. | 19th Ave/Sloat Blvd. FREE Info 252-6252 www.sterngrove.org

**SUN • STERN GROVE MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
7 Sun Aug 7 | 2pm | R&B great Aaron Neville with chart-topping hits. Local bluesman Quinn Deveau and the Blue Beat Revue open | 19th Ave/Sloat Blvd. FREE Info 252-6252 www.sterngrove.org

**SUN • STERN GROVE MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
14 Sun Aug 14 | 2pm | Flamenco-Javier Limon showcases Mallorcan chanteuse Buika, along with Spanish singers La Shica and Sandra Carrasco. Brazilian singer Luisa Maita opens with samba sounds. | 19th Ave/Sloat Blvd. FREE Info 252-6252 www.sterngrove.org

**SUN • STERN GROVE MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
2 Sun Aug 21 | 2pm | The renowned SF Opera perform an afternoon of arias and solos. Mezzo-soprano Dolora Zajick. | 19th Ave/Sloat Blvd. FREE Info 252-6252 www.sterngrove.org

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**He Who Gets Slapped** (USA, 1924, 95 minutes)Dir. Victor Sjöström  
Cast: Lon Chaney, Norma Shearer, John Gilbert

## The 16th Annual Silent Film Festival

**Castro Theatre • July 14–17, 2011**

The largest silent film festival in the U.S.,Other films will include the newly-restored *Upstream* by John Ford (recently found in New Zealand), Murnau´s *Sunrise*, the Japanese classic *I Was Born, But by Ozu*, the Arctic documentary *The Great White Silence*, Maurice Stiller´s *The Blizzard*, and the restored Douglas Fairbanks classic *Mr. Fix-It*.  
See [www.silentfilm.org](http://www.silentfilm.org) for more info and tickets.







The San Francisco Commercial Club visits Forest Hill, April 18, 1913. Permission SF History Center, San Francisco Public Library. Source: Greg Gaar Collection; Dewey/Pacheco

Phyllis’ Findings / Phyllis Sherman

A STORY WITH TEETH

Here’s something I’ll bet you didn’t know. In the 18th century England straight, white teeth were a sign of beauty, affluence and moral fortitude, perhaps because tooth loss was a common result of venereal disease and the treatment with mercury. Wealthy and fashionable citizens engaged in a fad known as live-tooth transplantation similar to the way today’s socialites and celebrities purchase foreign substances, like injections and saline implants to augment their bodies.



At a time when dentistry was still new, ladies and gentlemen had their damaged or rotten teeth pulled and quickly replaced with teeth taken from the mouths of live donors—indigents who were forced to sell their teeth for cash. Fear of disease transmittal and criticism of the exploitative nature of the practice contributed to its disappearance in the 19th century.

This bizarre and short-lived dental procedure provides insight into many aspects of late 18th century life, including divisions between

the rich and poor, changing standards of beauty and the rise of consumer culture. In our culture people’s bodies play a key role in their personal and social identities, and body parts are viewed as commodities that can be bought and sold. Many contemporary trends such as cosmetic surgery, tattooing, body piercing and the sale of organs on the black market, can be traced to this strange and largely unknown fad.

I gleaned this information from Professor Mark Blackwell, chair of the Department of English in the University of Hartford College of Arts and Sciences. The article entitled “*Extraneous Bodies: The Contagion of Live Tooth Transplantation on Late Eighteenth-Century England*,” earned Blackwell the prestigious James L. Clifford Prize, conferred by the American Society of 18th Century Studies on an outstanding study of 18th century culture.

I’ll guess your dentist never heard of this mouth enhancing improvement.

\*\*\*\*\*

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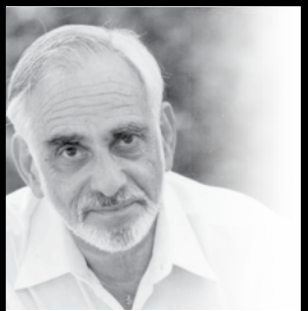
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I can get a sample of RADIALABS INSTANT WRINKLE REDUCER After cleaning your face, apply to wrinkles around your mouth, forehead or any other fine line or wrinkle. After one minute to absorb completely, continue with whatever skin care regimen you usually do.(Product said to contain 20 or so indecipherable ingredients.) Each month you’ll receive for \$79 another container of this product charged to the credit card you used for the sample.

What a deal! The tiny container..Lot #B2210RL (only readable with a strong magnifying glass also listed a phone # in Ft.Lauderdale, Fla. 877-309-3491. I called the number and let it ring for an interminably long time to no avail. Checking the blogs on the internet were other callers with similar complaints. Opening the container I found the contents, with no applicator, and consistency of a thick creamy viscous product similar to Crisco or Instant Glue. Someone in Florida is cleaning up!

\*\*\*\*\*

Isaac Asimov; "If my doctor told me I had only 6 minutes to live...I wouldn't brood. I'd type a little faster." (Author of 289 books.)



Remembering and Celebrating the Life of Hank Basayne

**Location:**  
First Unitarian Universalist Society, Starr King Room

**Time:**  
3 PM Sunday, July 10th

Please join us.  
Adela Basayne

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

**Sudoku-fun!**

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

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

**Answer:** The answer appears below..

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

OPEN LATE By Julie Behn www.JulieBehn.com



**BRAIN FUD**

**Letter Juggle**

Take the given words, and by moving a single letter from one word to the other, make a pair of synonyms, or near synonyms. For example, given: Boast - Hip, move the 's' from 'Boast' to 'Hip' creating two synonyms: Boat - Ship.

1. Our - Start	4. Cash - Broom
2. Strip - Tumble	5. Plight - Lam
3. Clause - Idea	

**Answer**

5. Light - Lamp
4. Crash - Boom
3. Cause - Ideal
2. Trip - Stumble
1. Sour - Tart



Now At the Movies • By Don Lee Miller

THE ART OF GETTING BY

Private high school senior and art major in NYC, slacker George: Freddie Hightower avoids studying while falling in love with Sally: Emma Roberts. Principal Martinson: Blair Underwood introduces George to an alumnus Dustin: Michael Angarano to help George buckle down. The cast is rounded out by Vivian Sargent: Rita Wilson as George's mother with Sam Robards as his stepfather, Jack, and a teacher, Ms. Herman: Alicia Silverstone who influences George. He's given an ultimatum: to catch up his entire semester's work in the final few days or he won't graduate. Director-writer Gavin Wiesen in his first film gets fine performances from his cast. [Angarano is Uma Thurman's leading man on the DVD *Ceremony*, out soon.] Profanity.

BRIDE FLIGHT

Three Dutch brides-to-be fly as passengers in an air race from London to beautiful New Zealand in 1953 to meet their grooms who have gone ahead to acquire homes and jobs Down Under. Ada: Karina Smulders is hiding a secret from her seatmate, Frank: Waldemar Torenstra, as well as from Esther: Anna Drijver and Marjorie: Elise Schaap. During the flights with many connections, they become friends. The tale is told from fifty years later in flashback, starting with Old Frank: Rutger Hauer, now a successful vineyard owner and winemaker, still friendly with Old Ada: Pleuni Tuow; the mother hen, Old Marjorie: Petra Lasuer; and the dress shop owner, Old Esther : Willeke van der Pol. In English and Dutch with English subtitles. Nudity. Love-making.

GREEN LANTERN 3-D

Test pilot Hal Jordan: Ryan Reynolds finds an unconscious alien pilot in a strange spacecraft crashed on the coastline near the highway he drives every day. He is given a mission by the dying pilot, along with a green skintight suit and an unusual ring. He is granted

special powers and membership in an intergalactic peace-keeping society. His boss, Carl Ferris: Joy O. Sanders, Senator Hampton: Tim Robbins, a sniveling, jealous Hector Hammond: Peter Sarsgaard, Dr. Walker: Angela Bassett, a scientist working at Ferris, and the alien leader Sinestro: Mark Strong provide the leading roles. Oh, yes, there's love interest Carol Ferris: Blake Lively. The CGI-action adventure has Martin Campbell's direction of the DC Comics tale by Chris Morgan and Gary Scott Thompson. Action violence. Profanity. Sexuality.

THE HANGOVER: PART II

The trio of partying groomsmen who awaken after a night they can't remember are the guys who woke up last time in Las Vegas: Phil: Bradley Cooper, Stu: Ed Helms got a face tattoo, and Alan: Zach Galifianakis got his long locks shorn. In Vegas, Doug: Justin Bartha was the groom; this time it's Stu. The vile smut and filth becomes too much for its intended male audience with the relocation to Bangkok. Mr. Chow: Ken Jeong introduces them to his gangster friend, Kingsley: Paul Giamatti. Alan provides a real surprise at the wedding. Director/co-writer has to take much of the blame. The closing credits include the photos taken during the very forgettable night. Violence. Profanity. Male/Female/Trannie nudity. Gore. 3-D, IMAX.

KUNG FU PANDA 2

Po: voice of Jack Black battles an evil deadly emperor peacock who would love to kill Po and his band of heroes: Tigress: v.o. Angelina Jolie, Monkey: v.o. Jackie Chan, Mantis: v.o. Seth Rogan, and Viper: v.o. Lucy Liu. Other characters include: Soothsayer: v.o. Michelle Yeoh, Shifu: v.o. Dustin Hoffman, Shen: v.o. Gary Oldman, Master Croc: v.o. Jean-Claude Van Damme. Po seeks out his birthplace when he learns he was adopted, hoping the answers will give him greater understanding and wisdom. KFP2 is directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson with a nice mix of the old and the new.

SUPER 8

In the summer of 1979 in the small town of Lillian, Ohio, a deputy sheriff, Jackson Lamb: Kyle Chandler who lost his wife four months earlier, has to uncover what really caused a catastrophic train wreck. Unusual disappearances and strange events start happening in Lillian: people go missing and dogs turn up thirty miles away. The town drunk, Louis Dainard: Ron Eldard, is the father of Alice: Elle Fanning, star of the Super 8 film. There's fine support work by Mrs. Kaznyk: Jessica Tuck. The screenplay-direction by J.J. Abrams and production by Steven Spielberg make this a film not to be missed. During the closing credits the Super 8 sci-fi movie made by the 14-year-olds is shown. Profanity.

X-MEN: FIRST CLASS

In this prequel, young Professor X/Charles Xavier: James McAvoy and Magneto/Erik Lehnsherr: Michael Fassbinder portray the characters seen previously played by Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellan. Their foe is Nazi Sebastian Shaw: Kevin Bacon. Before they became archenemies, they were the closest of friends, working together to save the Mutants. The rift that rose between them ended any possibility of Magneto's Brotherhood and Xavier's X-MEN ever being friends again. The women are Moira: Rose Byrne, Raven/Mystique: Jennifer Lawrence, and Emma Frost: January Jones. Director-screenwriter Matthew Vaughn and co-writers Ashley Miller, Zach Stentz, and Jane Goldman + two story writers: Sheldon Turner and Bryan Singer provide terrific entertainment for anyone over 12. Language. Violence. 3-D



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

KAFKA'S METAMORPHOSIS AND HUMAN ALIEN-ATION AT THE AURORA

The Aurora's production of Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, adapted by British director David Farr and Icelandic actor/director Gisli Orn Gardarson, opened with clerk Gregor Samsa waking up one morning to find himself transformed into an ugly insect. After a bed juts out from the upper part of the wall before us, Gregor (his transformation expertly mimed by Alexander Crowther), late for work, struggles to get out of bed. His stereotyped mother (Madeline H.D. Brown) and father (Allen McKelvy) and eventually his boss (Patrick Jones) reprimand Gregor. When the family sees his transformation his mother and father refuse to have him at the dinner table and only his sister (Megan Trout), who will not let him die of hunger, brings him food. Dependent on Gregor to pay the bills, the family will now take in a lodger. When a Nazi type potential lodger (Patrick Jones) makes arrangements to rent a room in their home, after discovering the ugly insect in the home, he abandons the room and leaves promising to punish the Jewish family for not disclosing this to him.

The more obvious meaning of Kafka's metaphor is that of alienation of an individual who is not complying with the family and society's requirements. Gregor is a sensitive soul, no doubt an artist like Kafka tired of a boring clerical job and attempting to encourage his sister to become a dancer. Like Kafka, who was sickly, he is disgusted by his physical appearance. Like Kafka, who was Jewish, he feels he is an outcast. And like Kafka, Gregor has a tense relationship with his father.

Director Mark Jackson expertly directs the play, set in the 1950s, like a farce with broad, exaggerated and stylized movement beautifully choreographed but with few farcical comic elements. Although these exaggerated movements serve to mock the conventionality of the family and the brutality of the Nazi lodger, the insertion of more comic moments, like those excellently played in the scene in which the lodger very slowly pays the Father (Allen McKelvy) bill by bill for the room, would lighten the austere stylization of the ensemble.

Otherwise the play is admirably directed by movement expert Mark Jackson who succeeds in transmitting Kafka's profound depiction of human and social alienation as well as render this theme relevant today.

*Metamorphosis* plays at the Aurora through July 17th. For information call 510-843-4822 or visit [www.auroratheatre.org](http://www.auroratheatre.org). Dr. Annette Lust.

TWO SPINSTERS IN SEARCH OF LOVE AT THE OFF BROADWAY WEST

In *Indulgences In the Louisville Harem* by John Orlock, two Kentucky spinster sisters struggle against the suffocating loneliness in their cloistered existence until swept into a thrilling, yet bizarre courtship by a world famous mesmerist and his assistant. This play, which opened June 17 at Off Broadway West Theatre Company, reminds one of Tennessee Williams.

In *Indulgences*, two sisters named Florence

(Jocelyn Stringer) and Viola (Kim Saunders) are full of yearnings that find expression in flowery speeches and mutual reproach. They receive a catalog listing eligible gentlemen and argue about whether to use it. Pretty soon, two top-hatted men from the International Institute of Science and Populism turn up. They are Amos Robbilet (Damien Cin Seperi), a mesmerist who is unable to speak and Winfield Davis (Paul Stout), who serves as Robbilet's voice, wooing for him, like Cyrano, though occasionally also speaking for himself. The two are obviously con men who are more comic than menacing. In fact, the best moments of the Off Broadway West production belong to Winfield Davis. Perhaps this is because Davis' speeches are better written than the rest of the play or because Paul Stout brings a real sense of humanity to his role.Both Jocelyn Stringer and Kim Saunders give moving performances as the two sisters with superb Kentucky accents but should project their voices more. Damien Cin Seperi gives a fine comic mime performance as Robbilet.

Under the meticulous direction of Richard Harder a good balance was achieved between the comedy of the con men and the melancholy of the two sisters. The cozy living room set by Bert van Aalsburg was in period turn of the century style. The costuming by Sylvia Kratins was both authentic and proper for both period and character. The lighting design by Colin Cross was remarkable. Richard Harder's direction was crisp, clean and concise. Indulgences In the Louisville Harem is a natural for the Off Broadway West Theatre Company where the direct addresses to the audience and the comic turns emphasize the theater's intimacy.

*Indulgences In the Louisville Harem continues through July 30 at the Phoenix Theatre in San Francisco. For tickets go to [www.offbroadwaywest.org](http://www.offbroadwaywest.org) or call 800-838-3006.*

*Coming up next at Off Broadway Theatre Company will be Master Harold and the Boys by Athol Fugard from Sept 30, 2011-Nov 5, at Phoenix Theatre, SF. Flora Lynn Isaacson*

LET ME DOWN EASY AT BERKELEY REP

The title, *Let Me Down Easy*, of Anna Devere Smith's solo at Berkeley's Roda Theatre announces the content of her piece that explores facing death and illness in the testimonials of more than a dozen prominent figures with a down-to-earth a sense of humor. Directed by Leonard Foglia, Smith proceeds with authority and a pragmatic and a positive attitude that reassures her audience from the start. So ably and

vivaciously does she interview and impersonate each of her candidates, that one does not immediately perceive the profundity of her questions or that of the formers' responses.

We meet such personalities as cancer survivor Lance Armstrong and are amazed at his casual attitude about his battle with his condition and return to cycling. One of Smith's strongest portrayals is that of Ann Richards, former governor of Texas, in which she depicts the latter with a heavy Texan accent, chain smoking and a victim of cancer of the esophagus, commenting unabashedly on the weaknesses of George W.Bush.

Smith expertly interprets multiple impersonations - so many and so quickly that her transitions from one to another would not be as clear without the projected names and titles of each one above the stage. Yet it is this very energetic forging ahead to the next interview that she presents with forceful conviction that grabs and retains our attention.

Although *Let Me Down Easy* provokes laughter throughout, it carries within each of the interviews an in-depth inquiry into the ways each candidate of a different walk of life faces two of our greatest fears - death and illness. The solo actress/journalist accomplishes this aim with great artistry, amusing us with her straightforward and down to earth humor but not allowing us to leave without reflecting on how we will depart from this earth.

*Let Me Down Easy is extended through July 10th. For information call 510- 647-2949 or visit [www.BerkeleyRep.org](http://www.BerkeleyRep.org).- Dr. Annette Lust*

REBORNING AT THE S F PLAYHOUSE

SF Playhouse just presented the world premiere of New York playwright Zayd Dohrn's *Reborn*, featuring three top local actors who offer superb acting . SF Playhouse veteran Lorri Holt (last seen as origami artist Ilana in *Animals out of Paper*) is pitch-perfect as exacting quiet Emily. Lauren

English (who recently graduated with an MFA from the Tisch Graduate Acting Program in New York) is sensational as fragile and obsessive doll artist Kelly. As Emily's demands rise, years of carefully constructed denial over Kelly's own abandonment of an infant rise to the surface. Alexander Alioto is delightful as empathetic, but clueless, boyfriend of Kelly by the name of Daizy. A fourth character is a *Reborn* doll named Eva, the stimulus creating suspense and conflict that drive the characters. The doll named Eva, after Emily's late daughter, is amazingly lifelike, but Emily says it's not quite right, and Kelly, a perfectionist, vows to keep working until Emily is satisfied. As she works around the clock to finish it she begins to suspect that Emily is the mother who abandoned her nearly 30 years earlier. As seen in high-detail video projections (by Kristin Miltner) on Nina Ball's aptly makeshift New York loft set, Kelly makes realistic dolls for parents holding onto a memory of a grown or deceased child. In Josh Costello's skillful staging, the shifting balance between humor and suspense keep the experience tight.

*Coming up next at the SF Playhouse will be the WEST COAST PREMIER of TIGERS BE STILL by Kim Rosenstock and directed by Amy Glazer, from June 21st through September 3rd, 2011. For tickets and for more info, call 415-677-9596, or visit at [www.sfplayhouse.org](http://www.sfplayhouse.org)- Flora Lynn Isaacson*

WANTED-ACTORS-PLAYWRIGHTS-DIRECTORS FOR FRINGE OF MARIN FALL ONE ACT PLAY FESTIVAL Actor Auditions Aug. 23-24. For information call 415-673-3131



Dr. Annette Lust



Flora Lynn Isaacson

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Real Travel

By Sergio Nibbi



Hong Kong

Live It, Love It

**T**he red canvas bag filled with tourist information handed to us as we disembarked, said it all, “*Hong Kong, Live It, Love It.*” We certainly did, and although we were there only three nights, we thoroughly enjoyed it. The service at the Kowloon Shangri-La is superb, as was the view from our 21st floor room overlooking Victoria Harbor and all of Hong Kong. At night all the buildings are lit up as if it were New Years every day.

We had seen enough of the city during our mini tour to feel comfortable going off on our own, and so with map in hand we set out to explore and enjoy. The shops are endless and some of the most beautiful I have ever seen. When you see a guard standing in front of a jewelry store, you know the gems are real and not cubic zirconium. I have never seen diamonds sparkle like that. One of our first stops was at the Peninsula Hotel where we met Henry, the tailor. While Karen picked out the fabric, I stood motionless as they measured every square inch of my body—one arm is longer, one shoulder droops.

The side streets have a cornucopia of shops and mini malls, and on Nathan Road hawkers were in full force trying to sell us custom suits, shirts and watches. Some were extreme pests, but not obnoxious. After a long day of looking, our bodies begged for a massage, and so back to the hotel where we were pampered beyond belief.

When traveling, everyone has a suggestion and a favorite place, and so a visit to Stanley Market was a must. The concierge suggested taking the city bus just down the street — for a mere \$13.20 (HK), about \$1.70 (US), we could take the one-hour ride to the end of the line and get there in comfort. I handed her a bunch of money and she counted out the exact change for us, which is a requirement on the bus. And so with camera bag in tow we patiently waited for bus #973. The bus was virtually empty, so we took the two front seats on the second level. Karen sat on one side and I sat on the other. I watched her get tossed from side to side as the bus snaked its way to the top of Hong Kong and then back down. I must say, we did see a lot of the peninsula, but Karen’s first words as we got off the bus were, “We’re taking a taxi on the way back.”

Stanley Market is ideally located just above the beach and stretches for blocks. Restaurants anchor one end, while stalls make up the rest. You name it, they have it. We found a couple of trinkets—other than a gelato at Gino’s. Not as good as in Florence, on the other side of the globe.

A pit stop before going back sounded prudent, and when I saw Karen turn around and come right back out I knew this was not the Hilton. The little old Chinese attendant read her face and escorted her to the handicap bathroom around the corner. I handed her a handful of coins.



Whistleblower

(Cont. from p. 5)

hearings before the Ethics Commission, and that waiting for the District Attorney or City Attorney to inform the Ethics Commission they are not going to pursue a case causes unnecessary investigative delays.

Just as there is nothing in the City Charter that prevents the Controller from concurrently investigating cases while Ethics is investigating the same case, there’s also nothing that prohibits the Ethics Commission from concurrently investigating cases. The Grand Jury recommends that after the 14-day window, Ethics investigations should start promptly.

The Grand Jury’s “Sleeping Watchdog” report also noted that the failure of the Ethics Commission to enforce Sunshine Task Force actions weakens open government.

“The Ethics Commission is denying justice to the public through its delays and burial of complaints,” said Dr. Rivero. “It should be reorganized or disbanded, since it appears to be wasting taxpayer money.”

The Grand Jury is believed to still be working on yet another report regarding the City Controller’s whistleblower program; the third Grand Jury report is expected to be released after the July edition

of the Observer goes to print.

Isn’t it a pity that although San Francisco voters have tried multiple times to strengthen our local whistleblower and open government laws, the two agencies charged in the City Charter with routing out government fraud and inefficiency — the Ethics Commission and the City Controller’s whistleblower program — are asleep at the wheel, and it is only by profound luck that the citizen’s Civil Grand Jury is now exposing the corruption of San Francisco’s open government legislation?

It shouldn’t take six months of wrangling to order release of records under the Sunshine ordinance. And it shouldn’t take two years to investigate whistleblower complaints that should be made public.

Where will this end? When will this end? When all of the “Get Out of Jail Free” cards, or “Get Out of Town Free” cards are issued to City officials to let them off of the “transparency and accountability” hook?

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



From her toothless smile, I could see she was pleased.

On Monday we worked our way back to the Main Cruise Terminal where there are endless shops, one nicer than the other. When the shopping bags got too heavy, we headed back to the hotel for a drop off and then went out again. I have no idea what I’m going to do with three pairs of pajamas, two robes and a shirt that makes me look like Kung Fo, but at five to eight dollars apiece, they were too good to pass up. After a few fittings, Henry had stitched his magic, and after one more stop at the Peninsula Hotel, we headed back with the chore of packing for the last time. My new outfit took top honors in my fold up bag.

The first night in Hong Kong we ate at the hotel’s premiere Italian restaurant, Angelini, and at the suggestion of the concierge the next night we ate at a small Italian restaurant called Incontro. It was so enjoyable we ate there again the following night.

Our room package provided us access to the Horizon Club which had a delicious breakfast, lunch snacks and cocktails in the evening. The service and ambiance were beyond description. Giving it all up for our four-hour flight in coach to Tokyo was not easy.

The entire trip has been an amazing and eye-opening adventure. The hotels were luxurious and the service impeccable. All the people we met were courteous, polite and extremely helpful, from the poorest of the areas to the more affluent. Whenever we ate out, everyone was very considerate of Karen’s peanut allergies and always made sure she ordered the right food. We never felt unsafe and always moved around freely.

American dollars are readily accepted. The toilets were always available and usually quite clean and well maintained. That’s the good news; the bad news is all the poverty that we saw, not only in Cambodia but also in the more affluent areas; there are so many struggling, hard-working people mixed in with the very rich. I’m sure not much will change in the immediate future; the Bentleys will still pick up people at the cruise terminal and the airport and take them to the luxury hotels and spas, the diamonds will continue to sparkle, and the crippled kids will still beg on dirt floors of the market in Sihanoukville.

When we arrived at the Hong Kong airport this morning, we were met at the car by a lovely young couple wearing the red uniform of the Shangri-La Hotel: “Good morning Mr. and Mrs. Nibbi.” Without hesitation they placed our luggage on dollies, accompanied us to the check-in-counter and placed our bags on the conveyor belt. We followed them to security as they bid us farewell —we never touched a bag. Now that is service!

So here we are, back in our beautifully appointed All Nippon triple 7, heading back home. The perfectly manicured attendants bow before presenting the next course, and I feel so embarrassed by it all.

Soon we’ll be approaching that oh, so, familiar runway 28 left at San Francisco International Airport. Back home again, without so much as needing a band-aid. We left Hong Kong at 10 a.m. on Tuesday and we arrive at 9 a.m. on the same day — all this and an extra day for good behavior.

On the way to the airport, our driver was playing some music and out of my early morning stupor I suddenly heard the gravelly voice of Louie Armstrong singing “What a Wonderful World.” In retrospect really says it all.

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

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From the Border

YIKES!

By Hilary Gordon

Photos by Blair Randall, 2011

For me, every year there's a moment in May when the garden is suddenly just too much. All the irrigation has to be troubleshoot and turned on after winter. All the weeds are as high as an elephant's eye. All the winter crops suddenly bolt so all the vegetable beds have to be turned over and planted for summer. All the spring blooming ornamentals need deadheading, while the cool season annuals, like forget-me-nots, are already finished and need to be composted. Yikes!

It only lasts for a minute, and then everything starts to fall into place for a new season. And May is also a time of great rewards. Several special plants at the GFE bloomed for the first time after three years in the ground (a Beschorneria yucoides, and a Carpenteria californica for you plant geeks out there). The harvest box started to have more variety after the winter of kale, Swiss chard, and more kale. Our artichokes, now mature, have been producing like gangbusters this spring. Our college interns had to study for exams, and talked about how much they would miss the garden when the semester was over, but also about how much they learned. (We grow much more than plants at the Garden for the Environment. We grow gardeners!)

For me, May is also a time of reflection. At the height of the madness, ten days out from the last rain and four gardens worth of irrigation to check and start, I worked thirteen out of fourteen days, either in my own or someone else's garden. Granted, I'm a gardening fool, but what's it all for? (Especially since plenty of rain later in the month made it possible to turn all the irrigation off again!) Why

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

Have a question for Hilary? Meet her in the garden Wednesdays 10-2 and Saturdays 10-4. Garden for the Environment is at 7th Avenue and Lawton.



Ixia maculata Hybrid



Abutilon Hybrid

do I put myself through all the madness of the season year after year?

There's something about gardening that makes all the work worthwhile. In a city full of hard edges and congestion, in a world where action increasingly takes place on a flat screen, the garden offers a three-dimensional experience. Actually, it's four dimensional, because timing, seasons, and weather are so important. The young fig tree may leaf out, but if gophers eat its roots, it will die. No one can reset it, reboot it, or give it another life like a video game. You have to wait until next year when the season is right for planting again.

At the same time, nothing is too serious in gardening. The dead tree's leaves can be stripped into the compost pile; its trunk can become part of a homemade retaining wall. Everything decomposes and returns as fertility.

There is humor and humility in the right-sized-ness of gardening. The task is just the right size for a person, not too big, like healing a polarized nation, or too small, like much cultural trivia. It is no coincidence that humor and humility share the same linguistic root as human. All these words come from humus—soil.

Gardening is real in a way many things aren't. Either the rose blooms - or it doesn't. Either the lettuce tastes good - or not. Gardening roots us in time and place and into our own hearts and hands. We get to use all of ourselves; our imaginations, our observation, our intelligence, our physical strength, our teamwork, all play their role in gardening.

If you have a garden, you are one of the lucky ones. If you don't, there is a community or school garden project looking for your help as a volunteer. You can adopt a garden, and before you know it, you will be waking up on volunteer days and jumping out



Ixia maculata Hybrid, one of the many summer blooms at Garden for the Environment of bed, wondering if your carrot seedlings came up, and if the poppies bloomed.

Try it! Your head, heart and hands will thank you.

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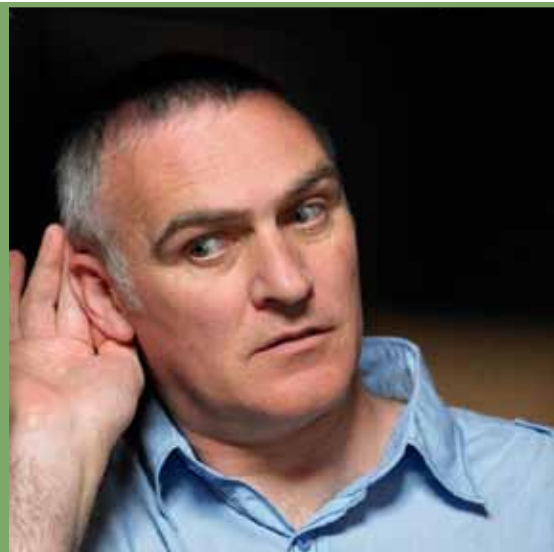
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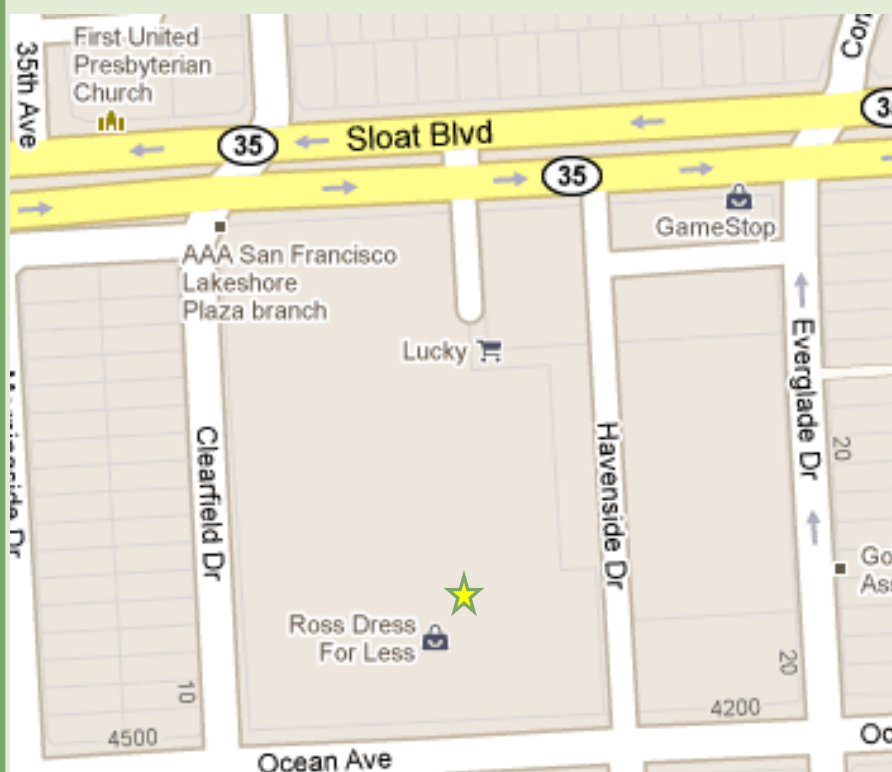
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