



Will Durst
Will joins the regular contributors at the Westside Observer

Plastic Grass in Golden Gate Park?

Katherine Howard knows parks – p. 2



Community Policing?
Jed Lane gives us the lowdown – p. 3

Small Business Fees and Taxes

Tony Hall gets to the root of the problem – p. 5



West of Twin Peaks Central Council
The budget deficit and City College – p. 3

Debunking the Derivative Debacle

Joe O'Donoghue – p. 5



Jeff Adachi
The City needs pension reform!

More INSIDE

Letters to the Editor	2
19th Ave Study Extension	3
Winter at the Farmers Market	4
Hank Basayne	6
MUNI Changes / Meeting.	6
Jack Kaye	7
Police Blotter.	7
Toxic Sludge Protest	8
Business Corner	11
Sharon the Health	13
Calendar	14
Movies	14
At the Theater	15
Westside Real Estate	15
Carol Kocivar	16
Real Travel	16
Gardening with Hilary Gordon	17
Games & Fun	18
Phyllis Sherman - Phyllis' Findings	19
Remember When?.	19

Will Kids Go to School In Their Own Neighborhoods?

by George Wooding

Parents throughout San Francisco are about to receive a big helping of “be careful what you ask for.” In the midst of its worst budget crisis, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) is trying to overhaul its wildly-unpopular student assignment system for elementary and middle schools. Newly-developed admission policies will prioritize sending students to school(s) closest to their homes. The overhauled school assignment system is scheduled to be finalized in March.

After 28 years of social engineering, the SFUSD has come full-circle by finally determining that neighborhood children would benefit by attending their local schools. This simple change in admissions policy will help keep San Francisco children in their neighborhoods and keep schools at the center of their communities.

Under the three current SFUSD admissions proposals, a child’s home address will become one of the major criteria for determining which school they are assigned to attend. Children living in neighborhoods with good public schools will mostly attend good schools. Children living in neighborhoods with mediocre public schools will mostly attend mediocre schools. The SFUSD and the Board of Education will be responsible for determining the geographic boundaries or “zones” into which each school and neighborhood fall.

The selection criteria for school boundaries/zones will have more impact on the neighborhoods than the creation of the eleven Board of Supervisor districts. There will be winners and losers in this process. Some children will receive better educations than others and property values will rise in neighborhoods with good schools. Nobody knows how these borders



will be determined.

There are three school admissions options being considered: First option, parents would be permitted to choose any public school in any newly-designated attendance area in which they live. Once a school is full, student applicant names would be placed into a lottery system. Academic performance would determine school assignments, with high- and low-achieving children being mixed. Second option, students would be kept in schools close to their homes. Parents would be allowed to choose other schools, but only if they have available vacancies. Third option, the SFUSD would segment San Francisco into large citywide zones. Students would be assigned to specific schools within a zone, but could express preferences for specific schools within a zone. The Board of Education appears to be favoring option three.

Prior to 1983, San Francisco school children mostly attended their local public schools with children from their

Cont. p. 8

RUMINATIONS FROM A FORMER SUPERVISOR

Most people recognize that history provides guidelines and lessons in human affairs. Having served in various elective and appointed public offices, replete with varying crucibles of disputatiousness and responsibility, commencing in 1967 with my appointment by then-San Francisco Board of Supervisors President John A. Ertola to the San Francisco Charter Revision Commission, historical reminders serve a purpose for younger generations and even older generations.



Having introduced successfully the legislation establishing the California High-Speed Rail Authority in 1996, and having served since June 2006 by appointment of the State Senate as a Governing Board Member, including three years as Board Chairman until June 30, 2009, I understand the inevitable differences of opinion about the manner in which the California High-Speed Rail Project should be consummated.

As the largest non-defense and non-space industry project in California’s history and invoking memories of such national projects as the Transcontinental Railroad, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Grand Coulee and Hoover Dams, and the Interstate Highway System of post-World War II America, ultimate decisions are vigorously debated and premises are acutely scrutinized. Moreover, contemporary California (and America) functions with legally-enacted environmental analyses intended to restrain adverse effects from any construction project, much less one with the enormity of high-speed rail.

While traditional anti-governmental spending entities and persons condemn the notion of trains traveling at speeds of 200-220 miles per hour and spurn replication of high-speed rail systems which began in 1964 in Japan and have been added in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, England, Belgium, Holland, South Korea, Taiwan, and China, national transportation policy has markedly shifted, just as California transportation policy changed with then-Governor Pete Wilson’s approval of a State Senate measure creating the California High-Speed Rail Authority and handing it the responsibility to implement high-speed rail as quickly as possible. That legislative and gubernatorial action was reiterated by California voters in November 2008 (after several postponements) with approval of a \$9.95 billion State General Obligation Bond for high-speed rail and its connection to regional rail systems. Having secured approval of its Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in early 2008 by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Federal Railroad Administration, the Authority Board certified the capacious document on July 8, 2008.

The next step in the process includes structural engineering design at the various section alignments between San Francisco and Anaheim, through San Jose, the Central Valley and

Cont. p. 6

MY TWO CENTS

By Will Durst

I’m only guessing, but a major problem has to be people around you being more likely to stick their face in a cast iron oscillating fan than tell you the truth. Let’s say you slip and fall and rip a hole in your pants down to your ankle while spilling hot coffee on a little blind girl in a wheelchair in front of a nationally televised audience. The worst you could expect to hear from a staffer is “well, that could have gone better.”



Therefore, I consider it my patriotic duty to offer up a little unsolicited advice intended for the President’s Eyes Only. Yo. Barack. Dude. You should totally chill. And listen up. Why? Cuz I can tell you the stuff that Mister Chaff of Staff Rahm Emanuel can’t. And I won’t go all ballistic on your butt or singe your receptionist’s eardrums either.

“It’s your so-called friends you need to watch out for. The ones who smile and nod and laugh at your jokes to cover the slip of a shiv between your third and fourth ribs on the left side. Trust me, with friends like these, you don’t need Richard Shelby. Unfortunately, most of your buddies are Democrats.”

First thing. Don’t worry so much about the Republicans. They’re going to do what they’re going to do. You don’t even enter into the equation. Expect to be accused of everything. All the way from “done nothing at all” to “moved too quickly” and all permutations in between. At least you always know where these guys are coming from. From behind and in front and 16 different sides — throwing knives of negativity.

It’s your so-called friends you need to watch out for. The ones who smile and nod and laugh at your jokes to cover the slip of a shiv between your third and fourth ribs on the left side. Trust me, with friends like these, you don’t need Richard Shelby. Unfortunately, most of your buddies are Democrats. Which is a lot like saying most of a general’s fighting force is terra cotta. The difference being terra cotta soldiers don’t cut and run so fast they leave little puffs of cartoon smoke.

Cont. p. 8

BRIGHT LIGHTS, ARTIFICIAL TURF IN RUSTIC GOLDEN GATE PARK?

By Katherine Howard



South Sunset Playing Field — sportsfield lighting seen from four blocks away. What will be the experience at Ocean Beach with this type of lighting nearby?

San Franciscans are currently facing a proposal to destroy the meadow and woodland in the western end of Golden Gate Park by developing a 15 acre soccer complex.

Within the complex, 7.5 acres of parkland will be covered with artificial turf. The beautiful grassy green meadow will be ripped out. The top soil that has been carefully



The current grassy meadow as seen today. Imagine this area with bright striping, taller fences, sidewalks, and lots of lights. The trees vary in height, from 20 to 40 feet. The new 60 foot light poles will tower above the fields and be clearly visible from both within and outside of the Park, day and night. Photos: K. Howard

nurtured for over 140 years will be trucked off and dumped. In its place will be a thick layer of gravel. A plastic carpet with fake grass blades will be laid on top of the gravel and filled in with a mixture of tire waste and sand. Bright yellow and white stripes will be permanently painted on the carpet. More concrete and asphalt paving will be poured for sidewalks and parking.

The existing meadow is surrounded by trees, many of them planted to protect the park from the stiff ocean breezes. This project requires removal of a minimum of 65 trees and many shrubs; many of the remaining trees may be damaged by the construction. The project arborist's report does not deal with the potential damage to the rest of the Park's vegetation once the western windbreak has been compromised.

The lighting is perhaps the most objectionable element of this proposal. Sports lights will be mounted on 60 foot poles - over two times the height of the surrounding trees. New sidewalks and an expanded parking lot will have lighting. All lights will shine brightly until 10:00 p.m. every night. Many people go out to Ocean Beach to enjoy the sunset, to walk on the beach at dusk, to look at the stars, or to sit around a fire ring. The joy of these experiences will be destroyed by the sports lights. In addition, this lighting is disastrous to wildlife. Visit the South Sunset Playing Field at 40th Avenue and Wawona to witness the impact of commercial sports field lighting.

The only reason the City can afford these fields is donations from the City Fields Foundation, run by the Fisher family. But what will happen in 10 years, when the plastic fields wear out? Can anyone guarantee that in 10 years the City will have the money and the commitment to replace all the artificial turf fields? Will we have traded woodland and meadow for bare gravel and unplayable soccer fields?

The City has not played straight with San Franciscans about this project. Artificial turf was not mentioned in the Voter Information Pamphlet for the 2008 Parks bond, Proposition A. Public outreach has been one-sided. Private soccer leagues were mobilized to support the project last spring, but local residents weren't told until public meetings in the late autumn. The soccer supporters convinced some Supervisors to introduce a special resolution, but most San Franciscans don't even know about this project. Is the City worried that when San Franciscans learn what is planned for Golden Gate Park, they will rebel? That's what happened at Rossi Park and Potrero Hill, when the neighbors learned that their beloved parks were about to be hijacked for projects they never wanted.

The 1998 Golden Gate Park Master Plan is very clear about keeping the western end

Cont. p. 6



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In reading George Wooding's article in the February edition of the Westside Observer, (Paving Over Golden Gate Park), I was amazed that someone so involved with the community could be so misinformed. If not misinformed, the only other possibility is a tremendous bias against the athletes who have used the western edge (better known as Beach Chalet) soccer fields in Golden Gate Park for more than 50 years.

Mr. Wooding implies that the area should remain "pastoral" with meadows (ne: the current 3 soccer fields) and surrounded by groves of trees. Ask any parent who has delivered their child to the Beach Chalet fields if they are comfortable with the knowledge that the "groves of trees" obscure the lurking men looking for whatever. The best thing that could happen would be to reduce those groves to a minimal border so as to discourage the "lurkers".

Regarding the footprint the new fields would create: There are already 3 full grass fields and a restroom and fences around them. At most, there would be no more than a 20% increase in the open space. Most of the increased space would come from eliminating some of the groves.

Mr. Wooding portrays the inclusion of field lights and a clubhouse as a bad thing. Many of our baseball/softball fields have lights and absolutely every one of our golf courses has a clubhouse. Why would this be a bad thing?

The permits, exemptions, and other bureaucratic obstacles indicated by Mr. Wooding are no different than those encountered anytime anyone wants to do anything to change the status quo. They can be worked out without a big hassle or a lot of vitriolic.

Probably the most misdirected comments by Mr. Wooding have to do with the projected cost comparisons. I do not take issues with the costs he places on installation, repairs or maintenance. If one were to use his numbers, regarding costs only, over a 20-year amortization period, the artificial turf fields will cost about \$10,000 per year less than grass on average. Beyond 20 years, the turf fields would be almost \$80,000 less expensive per year.

These comparisons are for cost only: they do not take into account the revenue generated by the rental of the fields. One only needs to visit the new Crocker Amazon turf fields to realize the potential. They can be used almost constantly with no downtime for rainouts, reseeding or irrigation replacement.

Assuming the Rec & Park rescind their silly decision to triple field fees, the Premier divisions of SF Soccer and the Golden Gate Women's Soccer League will return to SF to play on the turf fields. They will come back not just because of a fee reduction but because they will be able to rely on a "rain or shine" schedule. This can happen with turf fields. Not only will the city recover the lost income of approximately \$100,000 but will eliminate the grass field maintenance of \$42,000/year and replace that cost with about \$6,000/year if turf field maintenance.

The Beach Chalet fields will not be converted to a picnic meadow even if turf is not installed. Adding a fourth field (turf or not) would go a long way in alleviating the incredible backlog of field demand by our youth teams. Turf would further enhance the outcome.

I would suggest a letter and/or a petition to your supervisor AND to Mr. Wooding supporting the new turfing proposal at the western edge of Golden Gate Park.

Richard Cross, 50 year SF Resident

After reading Mr. Wooding's article on the "Paving of Golden Gate Park," I was appalled to learn that a section of our nationally recognized historic park might be transformed from a woodland meadow with children's soccer into a full-sized super-sports complex. This development apparently introduces structures where none were intended according to the park's master plan.

The drawing in the article shows the present four fields to be expanded and adding two more. The park generously accommodates these grass soccer fields because they exist without conflict with the natural setting. But I gather that this concession is not enough in the eyes of those who view the park as just raw land to be developed.

It seems as if this new plan was drawn with no understanding of WHERE the complex is to be constructed. Golden Gate Park is not a vacant lot just waiting for someone with money to fix it up. It is already "fixed" with neat stuff like trees and grass and birds and bees, ready for people to enjoy. The Beach Chalet site currently serves multiple purposes from athletics to concerts with its flexible open pasture.

Golden Gate Park is special, very special. It is a gift of open space to the residents of a crowded city, both human and animal. It is a gift from the past to future generations to have something of value, far beyond the man-made structures that the early urban planners knew would fill up the city one day. It is the gift of nature to remind us of what is real and where we came from.

Thank you Mr. Wooding for bringing this poorly vetted proposal to our awareness. We did not know about this well kept secret. You mention that "there are many other parks and high schools where synthetic turf soccer fields could be built." Let the Recreation and Park Department pursue these other sites for installing soccer complexes, and leave the western end our most unique and wonderful park as it was intended to be - undeveloped.

Anna Gordon, Sunset Heights

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West of Twin Peaks Central Council News & Views



Steve Kawa, Newsom's Chief of Staff makes nice with Board members

By Mitch Bull

Budgets, deficits and oversight were the buzzwords at the West of Twin Peaks Central Council (WOTPCC) meeting on Monday, February 22nd. Fiscal matters filled the air as **Steve Kawa**, Mayor Newsom's Director of Staff, and **John Rizzo**, a trustee of S.F. City College, discussed budget issues, short-falls and even a bit of malfeasance before taking on questions from the neighborhood associations.

Council President Wooding opened the meeting at 7:35 PM and immediately introduced Kawa, who first answered the question that everyone is asking, "Is Gavin going to run for Lt. Governor and vacate the Mayor's office a year early?" (The short answer is that no one really knows except the Mayor).

The discussion quickly focused on the most pressing concern at City Hall, how to deal with the current **\$522.2 million dollar shortfall**, as the budget has to be brought into a state of "balance" by July.

Kawa, who has worked for several administrations at City Hall said that the current situation is the most difficult he has seen in 14+ years, and that many changes have already been put into place so that, with the "easy" ones gone, budget cuts now will be harder and more difficult upon which to agree.

With a total budget of **\$6.6 billion dollars**, San Francisco is unique in that it funds the Port, the Airport Authority, MUNI, as well as police, fire, the city government and a large group of social services, such as SF General Hospital, Laguna Honda, and others. Of the \$6.6 billion, the discretionary funds from the General fund totals \$1.15 billion. The shortfall is basically **50% of the discretionary budget** that is available.

Proposals such as reducing the workweek to 37.5 hours, or revamping some of the pension plans for (new) city employees are being floated by Supervisor Elsbernd and the Mayor. On the other side, proposals to strip the Mayor of the power to cut anything out of the budget (passed by the Supervisors) was also on the table, before being removed in the past several days.

The pension system seems to be the largest issue, as just maintaining the "status quo" for existing city employees will add **\$80 million in pension costs** in next year's budget alone. In addition, Kawa told the crowd that property tax "appeals" totaling \$29 billion have been filed at the city Assessor's office.

He also touched on the problems at the **Hall of Justice**, which is not seismically sound in the event of a major quake, but he knows it will be tough to get a bond measure passed by voters for retrofitting or replacing the current building.

Want some good news? The **SF Unified School District**, which is facing a \$113 million cut over the next two years, is the best performing urban school district in California. (Of course, the State Government continues to take money from school budgets).

Speaking of school budgets, **City College trustee John Rizzo** followed Kawa to discuss the problems that have plagued City College, especially with their capital improvement funds.

The news at Phelan Avenue is also somewhat bleak, as the State of California, by cutting **\$800 million from community college budgets**, has left CCSF with a \$20M shortfall in the operating budget. This has caused the administration to implement a hiring freeze, eliminate most part time teaching positions, and to (basically) eliminate the entire summer school program.

Rizzo switched the topic to the "other" budget, the **capital projects budget**. The school leadership failed to provide any fiscal oversight over the course of three bond measures, running up a **\$200 million overage** with three construction bond measures in 1998, 2001 and 2005. This lack of oversight, as well as possible criminal acts, resulted in **Chancellor Phil Day** being indicted on 9 counts, along with two of his "cohorts," as Rizzo described them.

The good news is that the tide has started to turn. The "**poor planning and lack of fiscal responsibility**" from the recent past has been replaced by Financial and Performance Audits, conducted by both external and internal auditors. Rizzo feels that with the new policy changes that have been implemented the capital budget programs will be run with much greater oversight with the goal being to finish projects "on time and at or under budget."

The oft-written about **Performing Arts Center** will, unfortunately, not be started anytime soon. A \$90 million portion of the funding that was to be provided by Sacramento is not available, so the project continues to languish. Timing is the problem, as Rizzo explained that if the project is not started within about 3 years, the costs of construction will have probably risen to a point where starting and completing the project as designed would be virtually impossible.

Monthly business followed the two speakers. In news to note, there will be a **MUNI Conference** on Saturday, March 6th from 9AM-1 PM at the Women's Building at 3845 18th Street.

The period to submit comments on the **19th Avenue Corridor** draft study, originally scheduled to end on February 26th has been extended and will now end on March 12th at 5:00 PM. If you have questions or comments about the study the environmental planner in charge is Rick Cooper. He can be reached at 415-575-9027.

Please note: The next meeting of the WOTPCC will be held on **Tuesday, (not Monday), March 23rd at 7:30 PM at the Forest Hill Clubhouse.**

Creating a 21st Century Police Force

Big Changes in the SFPD

By Jed Lane



On September 16th 2009 a group met for the first time at Ingleside station. This group, the Ingleside Station Community Advisory Board (CAB), is made up of involved citizens and is charged with advising the management of the station on the implementation of recommendations to improve community-police interaction and modernize the department. These changes are based on recommendations by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and have since been called for by our new Chief of Police, George Gascon.

The CAB is the voice of the communities contained in each police station's boundaries. The distribution area of this paper is covered by three stations Taraval, Ingleside and Park. As soon as the Chief made his command appointments he asked that each Captain organize its own CAB. Each is charged with bringing the voice of the community to the station Captain and taking the discussion issues of the Captain back to the communities. Ingleside got a head start because it was chosen by the previous Chief, Heather Fong, as the test station to implement PERF reforms and form a CAB. The new Captain, David Lazar, was chosen for his personal skill and his understanding of the community policing model.

Police forces across the country have been moving towards this model for decades. San Francisco started over thirty years ago with efforts to hire a force that reflects the society that we ask them to police. Also at that time the PD created SF SAFE as the outreach organization for the PD. Since then SAFE has worked with thousands of citizens, teaching how to create community and watch out for each other. In many people's eyes the PD wasn't moving in the same direction. Many felt that the first set of diverse officers that entered the force were enculturated into the existing atmosphere. Now the community and the command staff are asking the police to change how they work. In so doing, it is believed that the force and the community will, over time, build trust and solve the issues that exist in each community.

"He has made each station's Captain responsible for the rise or fall of crimes in their areas. Each month they have to publically answer for increases..."

There have been many reforms instituted by the Chief since his arrival. He has moved the Inspectors out of the Hall of Justice to the station houses, he has instituted CompStat to track criminal activity, mapping it to see where and when crime is occurring. Most importantly he has made each station's Captain responsible for the rise or fall of crimes in their areas. Each month they have to publically answer for increases and tell what they are going to do to reduce them. If there is reduction they have the opportunity to share what they did and give recognition to the officers and staff that made it happen.

How can the police reduce crime in any area? Haven't we demanded and been promised this before? They can't do it without us. Community policing is a long term strategy to bring the force in alignment with the communities they serve. Its goal is to create working relationships amongst all elements of a community to address the problems of crime and disorder that exist in each community. It is accomplished by the creation of problem solving teams that take a look at all elements of the problem. When they work it's because rank doesn't add weight to opinions. A beat officer, or a merchant might have a good idea that the Sergeant, Lieutenant, or Captain might not have considered. This is the function of the advisory boards. Members will sit with the PD and youth service providers, for example, to work out what the community expectation might be. Or they might form a committee to address robberies on MUNI working with the PD and SFMTA.

At this early stage many Captains are still finding their way in forming and working with neighborhood advisors. It has been reported by some members of district boards that their Captain doesn't seem to be as open as the CAB members would like—it seems to these people that the Captains listen but there is no exchange, no real conversation. Effective communication is a key ingredient in so much of life and the creation of a public/police working relationship will be no exception. Communication in an advisory board environment must be two way, it works best if there is mutual respect and a free flow of information and ideas. The basic tenets of effective communication are active listening, clear expression of ideas and taking ownership of the listeners' understanding of your ideas. We who are working on the district CABs and with other organizations have very high hopes for this partnership between the force and the communities they serve. It's our goal that San Francisco will be the safest large city in the country and that a true partnership will be forged to help solve the problems of crime and quality of life issues in every community. The Chief is in accord with this vision, and with his support we have the best chance ever to make it work.

Remember that every one of us can help in the reduction of crime by reporting it. If the police don't know that your car was broken into, or that you were robbed on MUNI or getting off MUNI, they won't have the true picture. Police reports can be filled out on-line for some crimes or you can call 311 to report anything. Obviously, if the crime is happening or if you know who did it and where the suspect is then call 911. All the information on reporting crimes is on <http://sf-police.org/index.aspx?page=778> but if you don't have access to a computer call 311 or 911.

If you have questions or comments contact me at jed@westsideobserver.com

Jed Lane is a Civically Engaged Realtor, West Side native and resident of Miraloma Park.

19th Avenue Corridor

Time Extended for Public Comment

If you have concerns about possible changes to the 19th Avenue Corridor, the deadline for providing comments on the Study has been extended an additional two weeks. Public comments on the study will be accepted until 5:00 PM on Friday, March 12, 2010.

Written comments should be addressed to: Rick Cooper, Senior Environmental Planner, SF Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94103.

The study and appendices may be found at: <http://www.sfplanning.org/index.aspx?page=1570>. If you have any questions about the 19th Avenue Corridor Study, please call 415-575-9027.



WE'RE ALSO ON THE WEB
www.westsideobserver.com

Winter Fare at the Farmers Market Adds Variety and Value as Well as Health

Every Sunday 9am–1pm at Stonestown (Rear parking lot).



Kids were kept busy on the slides and bouncing to their heart's content. Grown-up were busy tasting free samples and squeezing fresh produce.



Shane Yuri demonstrates the apple peeler, corer and slicer —delicious too. Yuri Ranch is out of Ceres, CA, just 20 minutes south of Stockton



Isn't that our own cougar, Phyllis Sherman engaging the bread man? They offer French and Italian breads, focaccia, and Phyllis' favorite, chocolate zucchini loaf There are many varieties of breads, cakes and baked goods at the Market every week and vendors are happy to offer samples.



Bees are busy and there's more to it than honey. From skin care products to candles and All Natural Honey, Small Bees provides only the best all natural products from local Santa Clara Valley bees.



Olivera Egg Ranch's Emelda offers the freshest eggs; cage free, organic, free roaming, vegetarian diet. Their farm is in Gilroy and she's happy to tell you about her great chickens.



Tony Howe can't give the olive treats away fast enough. M&CP has the exclusive rights to California Kalamata olives. No lye is used in the curing process, only sea salt and water.



There are never any pesticides or sprays of any kind on Success Valley Farms' strawberries. The first harvest are sweet and plump and everyone is willing to sample. A box sells for \$3.50



There she is again, mooching Gary Peter's Springhill Cheese sampler. All Natural, 100% Fresh Cultured Grade A Jersey Milk, Salt and Enzymes. That's It! No Artificial Hormones



... add music, art, fresh sea fish, ethnic food booths and the main event—veggies picked this morning!

Plain Talk – Straight Talk

They Frankly Own the Place

By Joe O'Donoghue



With 29 million American workers still seeking full-time employment, it is patently clear that our economic recovery is still hovering in the liminal zone of economic uncertainty. Additionally, the failure of the system to generate jobs sufficient to absorb the 100,000 new workers who enter the job market every month means that the economic recovery plan has stalled. Obviously, in addition to the \$780 billion stimulus funds already spent, more stimulus money will be needed; and therein lies the conundrum, as the election of Scott Brown diminished President Obama's Senate majority that was so vital to securing such funds. For those millions of under employed Americans, this ominous news is most heart breaking.

“And ironically it was a San Francisco born native, Brooksley Born, a Lincoln High School and Stanford Law School graduate who was the first person who attempted to regulate these transactions. But not so ironically, Congress not only failed to act on her warnings, but passed legislation that did the opposite when they exempted these derivatives from any form of review, regulation or oversight.”

Meantime, as these middle class and blue collar American workers remain trapped in the abyss of economic hardship with near empty wallets, suffering deprivation and other wants, the Wall Street bankers and their allies who created this mess are once again euphoric now that their '09 bonuses exceeded those paid to them in '08. That these financial predators who were responsible for both packaging and selling the inflated toxic loans, assets that unleashed the devastating economic tsunami, were not only embraced but also rewarded with bailouts by the body politic, Democrat and Republican, is an indictment of the system. And this special treatment received concomitant with the obsessive prioritization given bankers' desires, leaves unanswered the question why such special attention, why this embracement? It also leaves unanswered why an equal focus was not provided to a program that would put the American unemployed workers back to work. It should be noted that it took the election of Scott Brown before this focus was realigned.

Accepting the argument that we needed to save the banks, why, however, did the Administration and the body politic, Democrat and Republican, allow these institutions to continue without constraint or review, the high-risk philandering that created the havoc to begin with? It also raises the question as to why more transparency of these secretive trades were not required, transactions so complex that Fed Chairman Ben Benanke found it necessary to take a refresher course from hedge fund managers last year. Meantime, these secretive and uncontrolled transactions are creating a fear that another meltdown is not far off. Originally designed to help farmers hedge against future price fluctuations, these financial instruments known as derivatives became the darling of Wall Street bankers in the mid 1990's. Buoyed by Congressional legislation that protected them from regulation, this form of trading became a new way for financial institutions to create money while at the same time avoiding taxes. Small wonder that this trading market grew exponentially from \$20 billion to a nominal valuation of over \$680 trillion today. And ironically it was a San Francisco born native, Brooksley Born, a Lincoln High School and Stanford Law School graduate who was the first person who attempted to regulate these transactions. But not so ironically, Congress not only failed to act on her warnings, but passed legislation that did the opposite when they exempted these derivatives from any form of review, regulation or oversight. Described in 2002, as “weapons of mass destruction” by none other than Warren Buffett, these derivatives are considered the “anthrax” of the financial industry.

Considered also by many to be a time bomb ready to explode, it is feared that if such should happen, it will truly be an Armageddon meltdown that will totally devastate the world's economy with no exceptions. And these warnings are still going unheeded by the administration and the body politic, Democrat and Republican alike. Despite the testimony before a Congressional committee several months ago that “today's business model is about making money through tricks and traps” by none other than Elizabeth Warren, a Harvard law professor, Chair of the Congressional Oversight Panel, no action has yet been taken to regulate, review or give more transparency to these transactions. It should also be noted that the nominal value of \$680 trillion attributed to these transactions is 13 times greater than the Gross National Product of every country in the entire world.

Realizing that we've already had two previous meltdowns, one in 1998 when the global economy was threatened by a mere \$5 billion derivative loss by a major hedge fund company, and considering the housing bubble meltdown of April 2008, it is incomprehensible why the body politic and the Administration continue to ignore the dire Cassandra warnings of such eminent and knowledgeable people. And when one considers the fact that the two previous meltdowns were generated by the same nefarious financial junta who is in control of this \$680 billion “dark market,” it makes the reluctance of the body politic to act shocking. It would appear, as is now alleged by some, that the financial junta has usurped, through huge lobbying and power, the House of Representatives and the Senate, including the Administration itself. According to no less personage than Democratic Senate Whip Dick Durbin, “they frankly own the place,” as he stated in April 2009. And when one considers that Wall Street powerhouses are entrenched at the Federal Reserve, the Treasury Department and the regulatory agencies, e.g. the SEC, FDIC and the CFTC, one is inclined to give credence to this hypothesis.... a hypothesis that we now all have time to dwell on.

Joe O'Donoghue is a longtime political combatant, former President of the Residential Builders Association (RBA) and acting President of the newly formed Condominium Owners, Builders, Remodelers Assn. (COBRA) Feedback: joeo@westsideobserver.com



The Art of Governance and the Economy

By: Tony Hall / Former Supervisor and Executive Director for Treasure Island



It seems that all we have read about these past few weeks relates to employment. One politician talks incessantly about how many jobs he has created. Another politician talks about how many jobs he has saved. A third politician talks about nothing but lies associated with the first two. There seem to be only two job categories that get any positive attention. One is the **non-private sector** positions supported by taxation. The other, and flourishing, is those employed by the various media spin machines out there doing their best to convince the weary and wary taxpayer of a particular point of view. Once again you, the taxpaying voter, are left trying to figure out the truth and what should be done.

As a father, I can attest to how difficult it is for those who are interested in remaining in our City to actually find employment in their chosen field of study, let alone in a meaningful or contributory fashion. This is the sad reality that underlies the flight of our local talent, discourages families, and takes an eventual toll on our quality of life. When we address these problems and offer realistic solutions, we are immediately classified as prophets of doom, or uninformed disgruntled individuals by the ever so politically correct, pseudo-intellectual elitists that are now running the City. The fact is that no one really needs to say anything but only has to look around. Notice the recent proliferation of vacant storefronts, the lack of buyers in the open shops that beg for customers with almost unbelievable sale promotions, the restaurants and diners less than 20% full, or the drop off in attendance of the various galas, social and charitable events for which San Francisco is so well known. No one knows this better than the small businesses trying to survive here in the City.

“Not one member of the current Board of Supervisors comes from, nor has any experience with, what it takes to sustain a small business. It is no wonder that they have voted unanimously and consistently to impose non-productive and senseless red tape measures that have now resulted in 12 City departments requiring some 250 different types of permits and fees from our local private enterprises.”

In San Francisco, a small business is defined as having an annual payroll of less than \$250,000. Approximately 80% of the 90,000 businesses registered in the City are considered small, and they employ about 50% of the roughly 700,000 workforce. Small businesses are absolutely vital to the health of our local economy. With an unemployment rate equal to or slightly above the national average, it means that San Francisco, as a non-manufacturing, service oriented, culturally diverse tourist destination is doing something wrong in its treatment of this lifeblood of the City. Small businesses employ the middle and lower income workers thereby allowing them to live here. Small businesses provide a steady stream of tax revenue that pays for the essential City services we all demand like police, fire, recreational facilities, etc. etc. What we as the voting public are doing wrong is directly related to the type of person we elect to represent our interests both at the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor's Office. What they, our elected, are doing wrong, (I will try to be charitable here and plead ignorance on their behalf), is continuing to make life as miserable as they can for any type of small business to survive in our City by imposing excessive permits, fees and regulations. Not one member of the current Board of Supervisors comes from, nor has any experience with, what it takes to sustain a small business. It is no wonder that they have voted unanimously and consistently to impose non-productive and senseless red tape measures that have now resulted in 12 City departments requiring some 250 different types of permits and fees from our local private enterprises. Does it require the thinking of a genius to determine that the more the City wants of fees and taxes from a business, the less that very business can afford to have available for its' payroll, for fair and adequate wages, or for growth. Sadly, I don't believe that our current electeds' thinking is going to turn around even with a crash course of Biz 101, so our only option is to look for different representation.

Much of what the Board of Supervisors does can be mitigated by a strong, forthright mayor who is first of all dedicated to serving the **common good**, as opposed to a personal career agenda. The public is not stupid, and they will instinctively support someone who they think is working on their behalf. It is amazing what leadership a chief executive can exert when he has the support of the public and is not afraid to engage the legislative branch in seeking compromises that further the common good. It is not good enough to think you are representing the peoples' interest by limiting your involvement to catchy buzz phrases and sound bites delivered during hastily assembled press conferences.

Of course I am not stating here that the business community should be left entirely to their own whims and fancies when it comes to the guidelines of their behavior. We should not begrudge anyone from making a profit from his or her own ingenuity or entrepreneurship if such an endeavor is contributing to the local economy without exploiting or causing hardship to anyone else. It is also reasonable to expect that these small enterprises contribute to serve the common good. This is where good leaders and legislators can achieve positive results for the community. The problem here is that in recent years, the business community has been exploited, blackmailed and cajoled by those in power seeking political donations to further their own agenda, or saddled with unrealistic and expensive fees, permits, and regulations designed to satisfy some narrow special interest at the expense of the whole. The resultant negative spiral is to attempt to collect more from fewer sources. This is wrong and must stop if we are to retain any semblance of integrity in our effort to attract and promote employment.

I don't criticize unless I have a solution to offer. Volumes could be written citing certain examples and providing specific solutions regarding the preservation and creation of jobs so that our City can remain healthy. Just a few obvious examples might be worth citing.

The Small Business Assistance Office: Once touted by the Mayor and Board as a cure all that would focus on the specific needs of small business was sold to the voters in November of 2007. It was to be a clearinghouse for permits and produce reports on how the City can improve its small business functions. Staffed by incompetent political hacks it has been a total disaster. According to an audit by Budget Analyst Harvey Rose, for whom I have great admiration for his truthfulness and integrity, that Office now two years later lacks any comprehensive strategy to provide services to its clients, or a plan to streamline small business functions, or any provision for facilitating the permitting process. To the contrary, the recent broad sweep increase in municipal business fees is a testimony to their incompetence. **The solution:** Staff the office with qualified people or disband it. It's that simple.

ON THE PLUS SIDE

I NEVER Exaggerate

By Hank Basayne

I like to think of myself—in my fantasy—as way cool. You know, reserved, moving slowly and deliberately. (Important people are never in a hurry.) Serious, not full of smiles, rarely laughing. Somewhat formal. Always sensible. Never nodding in agreement. Pausing, for a beat or two, before thoughtfully responding to anyone. Speaking quietly, so that others may have to strain a little to hear me. Not speaking very often, so that others have to wonder or speculate about what I’m thinking. Like Robert Vaughn in Bullitt, or Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy, or Al Pacino as the older Michael Corleone, or Herbert Marshall in anything. Think Ben Kingsley, laden with gravitas.

So much for fantasy. In reality I am very much otherwise. Burdened with persistent curiosity and a sometimes alarming amount of enthusiasm, my Myers-Briggs personality type is ENFP. I once heard ENFPs described as “the puppy dogs of the universe.” You know how they are, tails always wagging, eager, hyper energetic, constantly



busy, passionately poking into everything, fascinated by a dead leaf blown by the wind, always looking for something new to chew or paw, or considering what to eat next. Puppies playing make you smile but you never take them seriously.

While I don’t yell very often any more, I do tend to express myself vigorously. Hungry, I’m liable to say *I’m starving!* Having enjoyed a movie, a concert or a book, I’m apt to express my pleasure with *I loved it!* Disappointed might come out as *Devastated!* So much for gravitas and restraint.

Like you, I have my ups and downs. In my middle years my “downs” or blue periods might have been written by Dostoyevsky. (“Suffering is the sole source of consciousness.”) Not so much now that I’m an elder. I’ll let the darker moods play out, believing that they will pass and the sun will come out again.

Elders—supposedly having accumulated some wisdom from experience—are expected to be moderate, serious, mostly solemn, kindly but pensive. It’s a role I try to play every so often but it doesn’t feel like my natural state. Excitement is absolutely more interesting to me than self-possession. I’m more curious about the extreme than the judicious. So what if I sometimes come off as excessive. Moderation in all things, we are instructed. Does that include being moderate about moderation?

Yelling, being loud, seems to belong to the young, or at least to the immature. Excess testosterone? The need to

be heard? The belief that I’m not real unless others notice me? I find that kind of overkill annoying, more than is required. Like profanity, I see forceful expression at high volume both coarse and offensive, a bankruptcy of ideas and reason. In these later years I value tranquility more than I used to. As a kid I wondered how old people could just sit in the sun, doing nothing. Now I find that prospect somewhat attractive.

I don’t know if the constant drive for self-improvement is just an American trait. Losing weight, getting fit, saving for tomorrow, fixing the broken shutter, finding more efficient ways to do things—next week I’ve got to get organized. It’s as though we each carry a chrome-plated model of perfection that we persistently, and futilely, try to match. But there is a serenity that comes with an end to striving, a calmness, a sense of relief.

In the end, I’m stuck with just being me. Perfection will remain out of reach. I will continue to lean more toward the Sid Caesar in me than the Ben Kingsley. I’m likely to continue to use words like Always and Never, to sometimes over-sell my enthusiasms, to still say I’m exhausted when I’m merely tired. Perhaps one of the true joys of aging is the slowly dawning realization of the profound wisdom of Popeye as he sang “I yam what I yam, and that’s all I yam!”

Feedback: basayne@westsideobserver.com

GG Park (Cont. from p. 2)

of Golden Gate Park free from development and preserving the ‘pastoral’ nature of this area. The Master Plan was certified after 10 years of research, an Environmental Impact Report, input from City Departments, neighborhood organizations, consultants, and community members. Why does the City spend tax-payer money on a long-range plan and then ignore it?

We agree that kids need to play. But kids also need to learn that nature has a value in itself. What are we teaching them - to choose between playing soccer and being a good environmental steward? Kids shouldn’t have to make this choice.

There are alternatives – renovating the grass fields, installing gopher barriers, improving the drainage, investigating new soil products, and planning effective maintenance. Many soccer players prefer natural grass. Let’s give people a sustainable choice.

We urge the Recreation and Park Department to use the same creativity it is using to meet the budget deficit to preserve the landscape of Golden Gate Park. RPD has just proposed an apprentice gardener program - How about assigning an apprentice to the playing fields? Enlisting a donor to endow a permanent groundskeeper? Urging the City Fields Foundation to rethink their single-minded devotion to artificial turf and night lighting? Selecting some of the other 15 parks listed in the Bond Report book for renovation? Let’s repair the Golden Gate Park grass fields and use the rest of the \$9 million for all the other parks that desperately need the funding.

“Since its creation, Golden Gate Park has been threatened by City officials who have no understanding of the intrinsic value of a woodland park. In 1915, the City fathers proposed to build the Panama Pacific International Exposition in the Park. In 1951, the City planned to build a freeway through the Panhandle and the Park. Both times, the people of San Francisco rose up to say, ‘Don’t destroy our Park!’”

Golden Gate Park provides the experience of nature for the poor, the young, and the old who do not have the means to travel to nature outside of the City and are otherwise restricted to a hard-edged environment. The Park has always provided San Franciscans with a respite from City life. This is what the Park was designed for, and this has been its primary use since it was planted in the sand dunes.

Since its creation, Golden Gate Park has been threatened by City officials who have no understanding of the intrinsic value of a woodland park. In 1915, the City fathers proposed to build the Panama Pacific International Exposition in the Park. In 1951, the City planned to build a freeway through the Panhandle and the Park. Both times, the people of San Francisco rose up to say, ‘Don’t destroy our Park!’

Golden Gate Park is San Francisco’s forest, her meadows, her lakes. Golden Gate Park is too important to pave and light up like a suburban parking lot.

Please tell the Planning Department and RPD: We need an EIR to explore these issues. We need an EIR for fair outreach to the community. We need an EIR to find alternatives. We need an EIR so that the Bond money can be spent wisely. (Please copy us on your letters.)

“Tree and Large Shrub Report, Golden Gate Park Soccer Fields,” prepared by Hortscience for the City Fields Foundation, February 2010. Download: www.sfoceanedge.org

Golden Gate Park Master Plan, http://www.sfgov.org/site/recpark_page.asp?id=30236 or google “golden gate park master plan”

Katherine Howard, member, American Society of Landscape Architects Historic Preservation Professional Interest Group, Chair (elect), Citizen’s Advisory Committee to the Golden Gate Park Concourse Authority, Golden Gate Park Preservation Alliance. Guest Lecturer: UC Berkeley Certificate Program in Landscape Architecture, Landscape Design History. To learn more: www.sfoceanedge.org, feedback: howard@westsideobserver.com.

Significant MUNI Changes for West Portal

Meeting March 8 • Barbagelata Realty/45 West Portal Ave. • 6:30

SFMTA has proposed moving the #48 bus stop from the ex-Walgreens to Squat & Gobble. They also want to relocate the #48 layover to the west side of Clarendon, just south of Ulloa (bus will be parked in front of City’s parking lot, rather than in front of residences & businesses). These proposed changes will directly impact some West Portal merchants, alter traffic flow, and effect some metered parking spaces and RPP (street parking/residential Parking Permit) spaces.

The meeting will be with SFMTA’s Bond Yee (Director, Dept Parking & Traffic) and Bryant Woo (Traffic Engineer / Safety Divisions). It is arranged by Elliot Wagner.

This meeting is open to all interested merchants & neighbors! Just please RSVP to ElliotWagner@hotmail.com or 415-731-8080 to insure adequate seating, etc.

Kopp (Cont. from p. 1)

Los Angeles, together with accompanying environment analysis. It is laborious, necessitating investigation of all environmental effects and the feasibility of alternatives. As California courts have continually iterated, in the first part of the EIR, the standard is whether an alternative is potentially feasible: in the second part, the final decision on project design approval, the decision-making body evaluates whether the alternatives are actually feasible and may reject as infeasible any alternative identified in the EIR as potentially feasible. Among present public opinion differences about construction of the project between San Francisco and San Jose are those relating to whether the entire route alignment should be aerial, underground, or trenched. Such potential opinions are not endemic only to high-speed rail on the Peninsula. As the history of key decisions in the development of Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) demonstrates, similar contentious differences of opinion throughout the three-county district in the 1960s occurred. In downtown San Francisco, 14 citizen advisory groups raised questions about BART facilities. Over a nearly two-year period, BART dealt with station mezzanine extensions, station locations, the depth of BART structures below ground, separate utility chases, sidewalk width, plaza developments the length of Municipal Railway platforms, placement of station entrances—all seeking to prevent adverse effects upon traffic circulation patterns. Similar discussions occurred in downtown Oakland.

In Berkeley, city planners proposed placing a portion of the alignment underground. In spring, 1964, a City Council Committee headed by Mayor Wallace Johnson, propounded the sale of “tax allocation bonds,” of which \$6.2 million would be earmarked for construction of additional subway alignments throughout Berkeley. Berkeley asked BART to provide an estimate of the additional cost of total underground construction. BART’s preliminary estimate was \$21 million. Berkeley’s engineers adamantly defended the estimate of \$10 million for realigning the route underground. At the end of 1964, the BART estimate of total subway cost increased to \$25 million, and the Berkeley City Council decided to offer Berkeley voters a choice between a shorter or longer subway extension. Voters were given three choices: First, establishment of a special district within BART, in which a bond election could be held; second, approval of a bond issue for \$2.4 million, representing the difference between the Federal Capital Grant of \$4.7 million and a \$7.1 million low bid for the two shorter underground portions; and third, approval of a bond issue of \$20.5 million to cover, with a federal grant, BART’s estimate of \$25 million as the cost of placing the entire alignment underground through Berkeley.

The City Council Members strongly supported, as did a citizens’ committee, the larger bond issue. So did citizen and political organizations from the conservative Berkeley Citizens United to the radical Committee for New Politics, who waged a strong campaign amidst the crest of much anti-BART sentiment, which, in turn, was encouraged by the San Francisco Chronicle’s stinging campaign against BART. On October 5, 1966, voters approved the larger bond measure by an 82% “yes” vote. In the end, additional costs of placing the route underground from a financial concern of such additional costs were more than satisfied by Berkeley’s bond issue: The ultimate low bid for the entire subway through Berkeley was \$12.5 million, thus obviating Berkeley’s need to issue the total approved general obligation bond. Today, although Bay Area residents take for granted the fact of underground Berkeley BART stations; the decision-making process was, however, arduous but different in scope than the decision-making process which California and federal environmental laws require in 2010. All interested persons may be assured that the California High-Speed Rail Authority follows (and will continue to follow) those therapeutic laws, which didn’t exist for the 71-mile initial BART system that opened on phases beginning on September 11, 1972.

Fundamental principles of fair expenditure of public funds will be practices, without favoritism based on affluence.

Former Supervisor Kopp was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1971 and served until 1986, representing the conservative West Portal neighborhood.



Japan’s Shinkansen (new Main Line) also known as the “Bullet Train” is a network of high-speed railway lines in Japan operated by four Japan Railways.

SECOND THOUGHTS / By Jack Kaye

Where is Our Fourth Estate?

Over the last few years, the country has lost some of its best journalists, most notably Tim Russert and Peter Jennings and Walter Chronkite, one of the greatest of all. Their successors lamented their passing, promising to try to carry on their proud tradition.

But have they?

With a few exceptions, the members of the mainstream mass media have failed to live up to that legacy. In large part, the newspaper and television coverage of events is either shamelessly excessive or terribly shallow and incomplete.

When it comes to covering the big stories like severe hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, or earthquakes, the media reports from the scenes, *ad nauseum*. The death figures change by the hour from being ridiculously small to being record-breaking. Every detail of the disaster is reviewed and repeated, incessantly. We are forced to see the worst of the tragedy until it saturates our consciousness. We are invited to look at as many ruined buildings and shattered lives as possible.

When 9/11 came into our lives we were shown footage of the crash not just dozens of times but hundreds or even thousands of times, as though picking at a wound.

Then here was the tsunami in Indonesia, the flooding in New Orleans, the terrible storms in the Midwest, the landing on the Hudson, and now the earthquake in Haiti. The media could not seem to spend enough time on these events. The anchors were obliged to leave the warmth of their studios to venture into these crises. Reporters informing us of killer weather must actually be in that weather to report on it even if they are falling down or can hardly see.

During these disasters, no other news occurs or, at least, is reported. There is no war overseas, no crime in the streets, no child lost or abandoned. There is just the one main story that is designed to reveal just how loving and compassionate we all are.

But then, for all other news on regular news days, the journalists can't seem to get or share all the information necessary to tell the story.

Here are some cases in point.

The governor of New York at the time was accused of having an expensive night with a prostitute. Every day we heard about him and the prostitute and how much she charged to fly to give him service. What they did not report immediately or even weeks later was that this john was a regular customer for many years dating back to the days that he was the state's attorney general. At that time he vigorously prosecuted the major houses of prostitution except for the one he frequented.

When reporting on economic news, the media neglects to connect all the dots. For the past few years, the country's recession has caused a high unemployment rate. The current administration is trying to help by pumping money into the economy, causing a large budget deficit. It has been *one* year now and the unemployment stands at just under 10%, twice as much as it should be. When this is discussed, it is rarely, if ever, mentioned that when the last great recession occurred during the Reagan administration, Reagan tried for five years to reduce the unemployment rate he inherited from his predecessor. He lowered taxes for the rich and thereby incurred record deficits.

It took FDR *nine* years to end the depression after creating record deficits and finally needed World War II to get us back to "normal."

Our President has been forced into a record budget deficit because of the disaster left him by the former administration. The deficit is now \$12 trillion with Obama's first year shortfall of more than \$1 trillion. The right wing media is howling that we are at \$12 trillion because of Obama. No one has mentioned that the \$11 trillion deficit that Obama did not cause came to us from Reagan and Bush, the Right's heroes. The deficit actually decreased under Clinton, the Right's villain.

The country suffers from serious immigration problems. Poor, unskilled, uneducated masses are coming into our country illegally. It is estimated that there are now 12-20 million document-free immigrants in this country, breaking laws and taking jobs away from Americans who really need the work. No one mentions that this problem got bad when Reagan gave those in the country illegally at that time amnesty and did not secure our borders. This gave tens of millions of poor Latin Americans hope that if they could get here illegally, get good paying work without having to pay income or payroll taxes, they too would eventually be handed keys to the Promised Land as did their countrymen before them.

During the Presidential campaign, the minority-party candidate made two strange, but unchallenged, statements. To this date I have not heard one media person point out the absurdity of the comments.

The first was a reaction to the opponent's promise to eliminate tax cuts for the rich that were put in place by his predecessor on a temporary basis. The reclaimed taxes would be used the help fund needed services. The candidate from Arizona accused his Democratic rival of being in favor of using taxes for the redistribution of wealth. Not one person so far has reminded the senator that government exists to provide needed services by redistributing wealth. All taxation dating back to the Dark Ages has been collected for the redistribution of wealth, be it from the farmers to the rich nobles or from the taxpayer for the services needed by the population whether for defense or urban planning and development or welfare for the poor. I have not heard one media person ever point this out.

The second was regarding not deporting the many document-free immigrants currently in our country. The compassionate conservative minority-party candidate responded by saying that these are G-d's children and therefore cannot be deported. No one reminded the senior senator from Arizona that by that logic all living creatures are G-d's children. How can we ever go to war? Aren't the enemy soldiers G-d's children? How can we slaughter animals? Are they not also G-d's children?

We have been in Iraq for almost eight years now. We have almost complete control of the country and all of its records. And yet the media has been unwilling and/or unable to ascertain and report how many people have died as a result of our invasion. The media has never to my knowledge even reported that they weren't reporting it. So while we hear, as we should, exactly how many of our troops have died in Iraq, we don't hear that at least 50 to 150 times that many Iraqis have been killed during this period. The media just can't figure out how to find this information out or even that it is important. Would you want to know that, let's say, from 200,000 to 600,000, mainly civilian Iraqis, have been killed?

There are notable exceptions to the rule of poor reporting. The PBS News Hour (the Lehrer Report) goes into the major news in depth trying to cover every angle. The BBC World News is also excellent and much more thorough than its American network counterparts.

What these good news shows prove is that good journalism is still possible. We don't want fluff. We don't want to see and hear the same big news story until we are numb but we insist on hearing the whole story with the necessary facts and figures on the rest of the news. We want to be treated like intelligent, well-educated adults. How can we learn and grow to make intelligent decisions if we cannot get news that actually teaches us about our world and its inhabitants?

If we want a strong fourth estate, we have to demand it.

Feedback: kaye@westsideobserver.com



POLICE BLOTTER

It seems as if we just cracked the new decade and yet March is already upon us. Officer Ha has been working diligently to develop a user friendly and informative website for all of you. If you have not done so yet, please visit TARAVAL.ORG for the latest crime prevention tips as well as crime maps and archived information for our District. The Station is going through Crowd Control Training in preparation for both this Thursday's statewide education rallies as well as the scheduled demonstrations to commemorate the start of the war on March 20th.



Information on Conducted Energy Devices

As you may have read in the paper, the Department is exploring the option of adding Conducted Energy Devices to the continuum of Force Options available to its officers. Though commonly referred to as Tasers, which is a brand name for one version of a device which is used by Law Enforcement when dealing with violent and combative suspects. The San Francisco Sherriff's Department utilizes these devices and the Department is exploring the option of developing a policy for their use. Lt. John Sanford of The Community Relations Unit will be hosting a series of community meetings on the Conducted Energy Device (CED). The next meeting is scheduled on Tuesday, March 2, 2010, 5:30 p.m. @ the Mission Police Station Community Room. Tuesday, March 9, 2010, 5:30 p.m we will be at the Bayview Police Station Community Room. Thursday, March 18, 2010, 5:30 p.m. we will be at Northern Police Station Community Room, and Tuesday, March 23, 2010, 5:30 p.m. we will be at the Ingleside Police Station Community Room.

These meetings are intended to educate the public regarding the potential use and equipping of officers with the CED. We will hear the concerns of the community and attempt to answer questions and share information related to the CED.

Anyone having additional questions or concerns can write the Community Relations Unit @ SFPDcommunityrelations@sfgov.org , or call our office at (415) 734-3280

Proposed Medical Cannabis Dispensary

As many of you are aware, the Planning Department is currently evaluating an application to open a Medical Cannabis Dispensary at 2139 Taraval St. A hearing on the matter is set for March 18th at City Hall. I will send an e-mail with the exact time and location as soon as the Planning Department publishes its calendar. The opinions of the residents and business community are very important for your Planning Department to make a decision on whether this type of business is an appropriate fit for the community. I have attached a letter I sent to the Planning Department expressing the Department's concerns with locating an MCD in this largely residential area.

There are many ways you can educate yourself regarding this proposed commercial endeavor. A group identifying itself as Bay Area Compassion Health Center, Inc (BACH) has posted flyers stating they will hosting informational meetings this Wednesday and next at 6:30 PM at the proposed location. They will also be using the Taraval Station Community Room for an open house meeting on March 14th at 6:00 PM. If you are interested in speaking to the people who have made this application I encourage you to attend. If you wish to express your concern or support to the Planning Commission, please write or e-mail to:

Ms. Cecilia Jaroslowsky at the Planning Department
1650 Mission St. #400, SF 94103
Email: cecilia.jaroslowsky@sfgov.org

19th Avenue Shooting Suspect Located

February 16th's newsletter included a wanted bulletin for Mr. Yuji Baba who had shot a family member in the leg after a business dispute. Sgt. Lederer tracked the suspect as far as Shasta County and put the alert on a State Wide system. On February 22nd, Modoc County Sherriff Department notified Sgt. Lederer that they had located Mr. Baba in their county, a short distance from his vehicle. Mr. Baba had died from what the coroner has ruled as a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Fleeing Robbery suspects spotted by Rapidly responding Taraval officers

Cont. p. 9

For a complete Police Report from the Taraval Police Station, go to our website:

www.westsideobserver.com

Where to find the Observer?

West Portal Avenue Area:
Century 21 — Scott Keys — 101 Vicente
Dubliner Irish Bar
Greenhouse Café
West Portal Books
West Portal Music Store
West Portal Library
Zephyr Real Estate Office
Ocean Avenue Area:
Lakeside Grill (Ocean Avenue)
Villa D'Este (Ocean Avenue)
Stonestown Area:
Stonestown Cinema
Stonestown YMCA
Portola Ave Area:
Creighton's Bakery - Portola Dr.
Curves — 608 Portola Drive
Mollie Stone's Market — Portola Dr.
Sloat Blvd Area:
Aqua Surf Shop (Across from SF Zoo)

John's Ocean Beach Café on Sloat
Taraval Street Area:
Tennessee Grill (1128 Taraval)
Trolley Cafe (1300 block of Taraval)
Parkside Library (1200 block of Taraval)
Sunset Pet Supply — (2226 Taraval)
Parkmerced Area:
Park Place Market — Parkmerced
Noe Valley Area:
Bell Market (24th and Noe)
Fresca Restaurant (24th and Noe)
MRW Hairdresser
Nail Chic on Castro at Noe
Noe Valley Library
Other Locations:
Garden for the Environment Lawton & 7th Ave.
Italian American Social Club 25 Russia Ave.
Massage Envy Westlake Shopping Center — Daly City
Merced Library Branch — 19th Ave @ Winston
Sunset Library — 18th Street @ Irving
Main Library — 100 Larkin St.

SF Gardeners to Dump Toxic Sludge on the Steps of City Hall

Community gardeners who were misled into accepting toxic sewage sludge from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) are giving the sludge back to the Mayor's office.

Twice a year since 2007, the SFPUC has hosted "Compost Giveaway Events" in locations throughout the city. Although the city has marketed the material as "organic compost" or "organic fertilizer," it turns out that it is really toxic sludge generated by San Francisco and seven other counties' industrial, hospital, commercial and residential sewage.

In fact, the USDA explicitly prohibits food grown in sewage sludge, or in any "product" derived from sewage sludge, to be labeled organic. Sewage sludge is a noxious stew derived from all the industrial, hospital, commercial, residential and radioactive wastes and stormwater runoff that end up in municipal sewer systems.

Spearheaded by the Organic Consumers Association and joined by representatives of dozens of local environmental groups, citizens will dump the sludge on the steps of City Hall and hand deliver a letter calling for Mayor Newsom to

#1 end the give-aways and

#2 clean up the school yards and backyard gardens that have been contaminated with sewage sludge.

The Organic Consumers Association (OCA) reports that "San Francisco has come up with an ingenious plot to trick city residents into taking their toxic sewage sludge back and disposing of it in their own gardens. San Francisco is having Synagro, the corporate giant of the toxic sludge industry, "compost" some of the toxic sewage sludge. Then they give it away to San Francisco's gardeners telling us it's "high-quality, nutrient-rich, organic Biosolids Compost."

Neighborhood Schools (Cont. from p. 1)

own neighborhoods. Children who grew up in the same neighborhoods knew one another, and had a real sense of community, camaraderie, and belonging. Neighborhood schools were an integral part of their local communities. In a 1982 desegregation settlement with the NAACP, the SFUSD agreed that no school would have more than 45% of students from one ethnicity and that each school would have students from at least four ethnic groups. This was the beginning of 22 years of desegregation busing in San Francisco. Only a few lucky children were able to attend their local neighborhood schools, and rather quickly the schools and children became disconnected from their own neighborhoods. Little Joey would grow up attending a school miles away, never meeting the children who lived a block away. Schools became divorced from their neighborhoods.

"San Francisco parents have had enough of the diversity index system, and are increasingly angry. Last year, 9,900 students (18%) failed to receive any of their seven school choices. Upset parents are either fleeing to private schools or moving out of town, leading to substantial lost revenue for the school district."

In 1994, the *Ho verses SFUSD* lawsuit was filed, and eventually settled in 1999. This lawsuit settlement made it illegal to use any racial component in school assignments. To be in legal compliance, the SFUSD created a "diversity index," giving students preference to schools based on social and economic factors, but not based on racial factors. The diversity index factored poverty, the mother's educational level, English skills, home language, and academic performance of students at their previous school. Parents could apply to up to seven schools, and if there was space their child would get into one of those

selected schools without being forced to use the diversity index. Under the diversity index system, children living near an excellent school have had an extremely difficult time being admitted to that school.

The SFUSD only applies the diversity index at schools with too many enrollment requests. A high-quality school has approximately 18 applicants for each opening. Ironically, the diversity index increased choices for parents, but it has also resegregated many San Francisco schools — especially in poorly-performing schools that receive very few enrollment requests. Neighborhood children started congregating in schools with few enrollment requests, leading to resegregation. Much of the desegregation achieved from busing between 1982 and 2001 has been dismantled by the SFUSD's diversity index admissions policy. U.S. District Court Judge William Alsup stated in 2005 that the SFUSD admissions system "has not achieved diversity in any meaningful sense. It has allowed, if not fostered, resegregation. The court has pleaded with the parties to fix the diversity index. They have not."

Some Board of Education members have also blamed the new, high level of segregated schools on the current diversity index admissions system. Poorly-performing schools with few admissions requests have no built-in mechanism to ensure diversity of any kind. Stuart Biegel, a UCLA professor appointed to monitor the SFUSD's desegregation efforts, found that in close to 50 of the SFUSD's 113 schools, 60% or more of students in any grade were from a single racial or ethnic group.

San Francisco parents have had enough of the diversity index system, and are increasingly angry. Last year, 9,900 students (18%) failed to receive any of their seven school choices. Upset parents are either fleeing to private schools or moving out of town, leading to substantial lost revenue for the school district.

Complaints from parents; Board of Supervisors resolution #80935, which urges the SFUSD to reconsider the current school assignment system, and resolves that the

Tony Hall (Cont. from p. 5)

Parking: Now that City Hall has successfully punished local drivers and hampered local businesses with exorbitantly excessive parking and meter rates, they are rewarding the bike and motorcycle riders with 300% increases in their parking rates! As the destination of such increased revenues is never really divulged, even the transit first crowd is beginning to question. This is all done under the justification that they are increasing turnover for the merchants! My question is, what are you doing for the merchants if shoppers can only shop for an hour before running back to plug a meter with 12 to 15 more quarters, or can only transport their purchases on a bicycle rack! And seniors and the disabled, you're just out of luck, unless of course our ruling intelligentsia comes up with a loving plan that "cares" for you by providing a municipal shopping service that you'll be mandated to pay for! You can see how ridiculous this is. **The solution: Provide reasonable multi hour parking rates that are not solely revenue based** for all preferred modes of personal transport. In other words, provide transportation and parking facilities with rates that encourage patronage of local businesses rather than forcing shoppers to the suburbs, as is now the case.

Construction: We know that loans are hard to come by, but what about the hundreds of large projects and small remodeling projects that already have their financing in place and are set to go except for the aforementioned bureaucratic red-tape? **Solution: get the permits out!** I know how much it pains our elected intelligentsia to actually have to monitor the work of city employees in charge of such permits.

Developmental impact fees: These fees charged to developers to subsidize civic amenities and affordable housing have actually become the tail wagging the dog as

the sheer cost of them has killed many projects. I would like to remind my left-minded colleagues that if the project cannot go forward, nobody gets anything. **Solution: reduce or eliminate some of the fees** so that at least projects can go forward.

Cutting Payroll Taxes: A step in the right direction for the larger companies but does very little for small businesses. The current proposal on the table allows the mayor to posture that he is somehow actually creating jobs that anybody in business truly knows cannot be measured or verified. Let's be real here. How many small businesses with an annual payroll of \$250,000 or less can actually afford to hire or create a new position from payroll tax savings? Virtually none! Small business would much rather forego any assumed payroll tax savings in favor of a business friendly environment. **Solution: Tax credits for new hires.**

Part of the art of successful governance is having the courage and ability to address very real problems in a very real and fair manner. Unless our elected are able to do that and put aside the short lived, unproductive, feel good type of ideas that only exasperate the underlying problems, our quality of life will not improve. Basically it is up to you and whom you choose to represent you.

PREDICTIONS: Former Mayor Frank Jordan, who during the holidays traveled to India and the Far East representing the economic interests of the City and Bay Area was well received as an effective "Ambassador at Large." His unassuming dedication to honesty and integrity was much appreciated and will lead to many more such assignments.

If interested my Blog is tonyhallsf.wordpress.com or twitter.com/TonyHallSF or [feedback: hall@westsideobserver.com](mailto:hall@westsideobserver.com).

DATE: Thursday March 04

TIME: 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Location Details:
The Mayor's office at 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place

SFUSD and the Board of Education should incorporate a geographic component in school assignments; and a 2008 Civil Grand Jury report which recommends that the diversity index be scrapped, contending that the SFUSD school assignment process is widely seen by parents as being unfair and factoring into San Francisco's lower ratio of public-to-private school enrollments, all contributed to the demise of the diversity index admissions process.

The SFUSD's new admission policies are only part of parents' concerns. San Francisco public schools are facing an expected \$113 million budget shortfall over the next two years, due mainly to a massive reduction in State funding. More than 900 city schoolteachers, administrators and staff are expected to receive layoff notices and many will not be rehired. Four-hundred school district positions, including 100 teachers, may be eliminated. Class sizes will be increasing; almost no summer school programs are being planned; the school year may be shortened; workers furloughed; and educational programs for art, music, libraries, and physical education will be downsized.

A good education is the most important gift we can give to our children. Revising San Francisco's public school admission policies may put the school district back on the right track. Having children attend local schools will encourage the surrounding communities to support the schools through fundraising, donations, and volunteerism, and may slow the flight of families leaving the City or enrolling their children in private schools. San Francisco's public schools need the support of the community now more than ever.

Contact the Board of Education quickly to comment on the three admissions proposals, but be careful what you ask for. We don't need another helping of bad school assignment policies.

George Wooding, President, West of Twin Peaks Central Council

Durst (Cont. from p. 1)

The second thing is, you need to develop an "or else." Work with you, or what? Or Joe Biden sits next to you in the Congressional dining room and cuts your meat every day for a week? Lyndon Johnson plucked at the horsehair holding up the sword of Damocles for his "or else." Walk the line or find yourself whisked back to your home district as a clerk in Park and Rec's lost and found. His idea of compromise was letting you use his pen to sign your vow of allegiance.

Finally, your people have lost all sense of urgency. You got to fire somebody. You know — ax. Can. Dump. Sack. Pink slip. Terminate with extreme prejudice. Discharge. Unassign. 86. Downsize. Furlough. Ease out. Make redundant. Give the boot. Perform a bum's rush. Hand someone their marching orders. Assist in an accelerated career development shift. Impose a synergy related headcount restructuring. Heave a ho.

It doesn't matter who. Are you telling me in more than a year, nobody in the administration has made a mistake bad enough to be let go? Because if they haven't, you have. If you can't come up with an obvious target, pick someone out at random. You really want to put the fear of god into Team Obama, get rid of Michelle. Or one of the kids. That's the best way of saying, "don't anybody want to get too complacent." Anyhow, that's my advice. No thanks necessary, I'm here to help. First one's free.

Will Durst is a San Francisco based political comic who writes sometimes. Of which this would be a glaring example. He is currently headlining a new show: "The Lieutenant Governor from the State of Confusion". We welcome him to the pages of the Westside Observer.

Feedback: durst@westsideobserver.com

Why San Franciscans Must Support Pension Reform

By Jeff Adachi

Next year, San Francisco city government faces a budget deficit of \$522 million. At the same time, the city's retiree pension and health care premium costs have shot up to \$525 million this year, up from \$175 million just five years ago. By 2013, the city will have to pay \$675 million in retiree pension and health care costs—the same amount it costs to operate San Francisco General Hospital for one year.

Upon retirement, San Francisco's city employees receive a guaranteed pension, based on their years of service. For this benefit, most employees contribute 7.5 percent of their paychecks into a retirement fund. Under the city charter, the city is required to pay the difference whenever the pension fund suffers losses. When the financial markets crashed, the city's annual contribution to the fund rose 200% from five years ago.

Yet every year, city officials have negotiated pay raises and benefits that have increased the city's pension costs. How did this happen? As former Mayor Willie Brown recently explained, "We politicians, pushed by our friends in labor, gradually expanded pay and benefits ... while keeping the job protections and layering on incredibly generous retirement packages." Just two years ago, city officials voted to give a 25% wage increase to police officers at a cost of \$64 million and a 19% increase to registered nurses at a cost of \$39 million.

However, politicians aren't the only ones to blame: Most of the benefit expansions were approved by voters.

Take Proposition H, which allowed police and firefighters to receive 90% of their last salary at age 55 with 30 years of service. Voters approved the measure, but had been told there would be little fiscal impact on the city's coffers. According to the ballot statement, "No cash would be required since the city's retirement system currently has a large surplus. While the cost of this proposal would reduce that surplus, the city nonetheless should be not required to pay employer contributions to the



retirement system for at least the next ten years." Within two years of the measure, the city was paying \$175 million into the fund.

Voters also weren't told about the effect of pension spiking. Last year, the city's civil grand jury issued

"With over 40% of the current workforce eligible to retire, the city will eventually run out of money to pay its pension liabilities. Existing employees should also support this effort since most do not engage in pension spiking but must shoulder the burden for those that do. Existing employees have the most to lose, because it is they who will face mass layoffs caused by the city's growing deficit."

a report finding that the SFPD and SFFD systematically promote employees in their last year of service to increase their pensions. The grand jury cited an example of one high ranking police officer who was promoted to a temporary position in his last year, which resulted in a \$25,000 increase in his annual pension upon retirement. This practice has cost the city \$132 million.

San Francisco isn't alone in facing these challenges. All around the nation, cities, counties and states are struggling against escalating retiree pension and health care costs. According to a study released last month by the Pew Center on the States, state governments nationwide

have promised to deliver \$1 trillion more in retirement benefits than they have in their pension funds.

Some states, including New York, Ohio and Massachusetts, have enacted laws to restructure their pension systems. Many California counties, such as Orange County, San Diego and Contra Costa, are taking steps to avoid the fate of Vallejo, which declared bankruptcy after it could not pay its pension costs.

District 7 Supervisor Sean Elsbernd recently introduced a charter amendment that would reduce pension spiking and require public safety employees hired after the measure passes to contribute 1.5% more to their pension plans. Although the measure will have little effect on the city's current pension crisis, it takes an important step by curbing pension costs for future employees. However, city leaders must begin proposing additional common sense solutions to ensure that the city is able to pay its current pension liabilities without bankrupting city services.

Of the city's \$6.7 billion budget, over \$5.5 billion funds enterprise departments like the airport and PUC as well as mandatory spending set-asides. This leaves a little more than \$1 billion to fund city services, including public health and the public defender's office. With over \$525 million going to pensions next year, the city won't have much choice but to lay off hundreds of workers and impose additional furloughs, which reduces city services to residents. Ironically, as more workers are laid off, there are fewer employees who can contribute to their pension funds, which increases the city's pension liability.

Even those city workers close to retirement age should support pension reform. With over 40% of the current workforce eligible to retire, the city will eventually run out of money to pay its pension liabilities. Existing employees should also support this effort since most do not engage in pension spiking but must shoulder the burden for those that do. Existing employees have the most to lose, because it is they who will face mass layoffs caused by the city's growing deficit. And finally, voters must recognize that the more money that is poured into pensions, the bigger the cuts will be to critical services such as police, fire and public health, and to the city's infrastructure, including fixing its parks and potholes.

Jeff Adachi is San Francisco's Public Defender.

Police Blotter (Cont. from p. 7)

On February 23rd at approximately 11:30 PM two masked gunmen entered the 7-11 Store at 2000 Ocean Avenue. While one suspect detained several employees at gunpoint in the rear of the store, the second suspect cleaned out the register. One suspect pistol whipped the employee who did not have the ability to open the safe. The suspects fled in a black Chevy Malibu.

Officers Jennifer Orantes and Rich Ciobotti were among the officers who flooded the area in response to the 911 calls. They spotted a vehicle and suspects matching the description. While following the vehicle, they alerted Ingleside and Taraval units, coordinating the effort to close in on the suspects. The suspects accelerated and managed to elude the responding units. Their speed was their undoing as the officers soon located the vehicle crashed and abandoned at San Jose and Randal.

In their haste to flee the now disabled Malibu, the suspects left behind incriminating evidence linking them to several robberies. With the suspects now on foot, Officers from Taraval and Ingleside began following a trail of clothing as the suspects tried to shed their connection to this violent crime. Information was broadcast City-wide and before long, one of the suspects, minus most of his clothing, showed up at a City Hospital with injuries he claimed came from a fall. Leonard Washington, a 21 year-old resident of Alabama Street on Probation for carrying a concealed firearm was detained. Similarities between this 7-11 robbery and a take-over robbery of a restaurant in the Potrero District quickly came to light. Inspectors Tim Brophy and Jim Garrity of the Citywide Criminal Investigation Unit took over the investigation. They exercised one of the conditions of Mr. Washington's probation, searching his residence. Evidence linking him to additional robberies was located. Mr. Washington was booked on two counts of robbery. The investigation into the extent of this robbery spree continues.

2 More Grow Houses Shut Down

Working from tips provided by concerned neighbors, Officers Scott Biggs, Chris Oshita, Jaimie Hyun and Patrice Scanlan conducted surveillance and investigation on two residences. Over the February 19th and 20th weekend the plainclothes team executed search warrants on two homes suspected of housing dangerous marijuana cultivation operations.

On February 19th at about 0630, the plainclothes officers assisted by officers John Laffey, Rich Austria, Dan Owens, Kris Shinbori, Joshua Fry and Bradon Tadoro executed a Search Warrant at 2691 22nd Avenue. There they discovered a sophisticated grow operation spread throughout the residence with close to 200 mature marijuana plants. The growers had illegally by-passed the

electrical connection and were drawing so much power that the wire housing had melted causing an extreme fire danger. PG&E technicians responded immediately to safely disconnect the wiring by-pass.

On February 20th, at approximately 11:30 A.M., another search warrant was served at 128 Marietta in the City's Miraloma neighborhood. 100 plants were seized from active marijuana cultivation. Officers also located a large quantity of packaged, dried marijuana, psilocybin mushrooms, hashish and materials commonly used to weigh and package illegal drugs for sale. \$85,000 in cash was seized along with a 12 gauge shotgun and boxes of ammunition.

Davor Malalan, a 60 year old resident, was arrested and charged with cultivation of marijuana and possession of illegal substances for sale. Evidence at the site and from the surveillance led our officers to an Oakland address where on Friday, February 26th, Officers arrested Steve Kim, a 35 year old second suspect in the case, who described himself as an advisor. An additional \$12,000 and AR-15 assault rifle with a flash suppressor and an extended magazine, a 16 gauge shotgun, along with a 40 caliber, a 9mm and a 38 caliber handgun were seized from the advisor, who was booked on multiple charges.

Together these investigations resulted in confiscating 300 plants, several pounds of dried marijuana, hashish and hallucinogenic mushrooms as well as 6 firearms and \$97,000 from the City's Western edge. This brings the number of illegal cultivation operations uncovered in Taraval residences in 2010 to 6. Since March of 2009, the Taraval Investigations Unit has investigated 64 residences suspected of housing these dangerous sites. All but 5 have proved to be illegal. Half of the operations were functioning on jerry-built electrical systems which pulled more than twice the normal load into the premise posing tremendous fire risk. Sixty-nine people have been arrested on felony charges, almost 20,000 plants and 34 firearms have been seized along with over \$346,000 in cash.

Suspicious lead to Heroin and Methamphetamine Sales Arrest

On February 28, at approximately 9:30 AM, Officer Thomas Ly stopped on the unit block of Caine to investigate a man acting suspiciously around a vehicle which was registered out of Modesto. The man was able to produce the keys, but also had in his possession 9 bindles of methamphetamine and 19 bindles of heroin, all of which was packaged for sales. Uriel Aviles Mondragon, a 23 year old man who declined to provide an address was booked for Possession of Illegal Substances for Sales.

A Stop for More Beer

Later that day, a citizen noticed a driver having difficulty parking his BMW on the 100 block of Holloway. The driver managed to get the car stopped, stumbled out of the vehicle and into a local store. The citizen, who had called 911, noticed an open Budweiser beer can in the driver's compartment. The citizen watched as the man returned, carrying more beer, and started up the car to leave. Officer Ly arrived to prevent the driver from reentering the roadway. The Budweiser can was open and ¾ full. Officers Rodrigo Labson and Thu Vaing conducted a Driving Under the Influence investigation. The driver, a 64 year old resident of Grafton Avenue, failed Field Sobriety Tests. Blood Alcohol tests later revealed the driver's alcohol level to be .28, almost 4 times the legal limit. The driver admitted he had driven to the store because he had run out of beer while watching Hockey.

Animal Cruelty

On March 1st at 3:30 AM, Officers Joshua Fry, Jennifer Orantes, Rich Cibotti, John Norment and Elseth responded to the 100 block of Kenwood Way on the report of a man with a gun making threats. Once there they met with residents of an apartment who related that a neighbor's dog had been crying as if in pain throughout the night. Out of concern for the animal's welfare, the residents tried to talk to the dog owner. The man told them he had a gun and would use it. The officers responded to the apartment and saw the suspect had written on his doorway that he had a gun he intended to use to keep people away. After clearing out the man's roommates, the officers were able to talk the suspect out of his room and safely detain him. Officer Orantes located an 8 week old puppy in the bathroom that was soaking wet. The suspect explained that he would pour hot water on the dog to "teach him a lesson", and routinely uses water as a form of discipline. Officer Fry located a .45 caliber Ruger in the man's bedroom which he seized as evidence. Jong Soo Kim, the 28 year old resident, was placed under arrest for Threats and Animal Cruelty. The officers also obtained an Emergency Protective Order preventing Kim from returning to the premise. Animal Care and Control took custody of the puppy.

Let's have a safe week!

Captain Denise A. Schmitt, #1731, Taraval Police Station (415) 759-3100, SFPDTaravalStation@sfgov.org

Visit us at Taraval.Org

This is a partial report; for a complete posting of news from the Taraval Police Station, go to:
www.westsideobserver.com/blotter.html



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227 Christopher Dr.	2	2	2 side by side	1570	12/30/09	735,000
90 Woodhaven Ct.	3	2.5	3 side by side	1282	12/16/09	775,000
237 Warren Drive	4	3	2 side by side	2177	11/30/09	1,088,000
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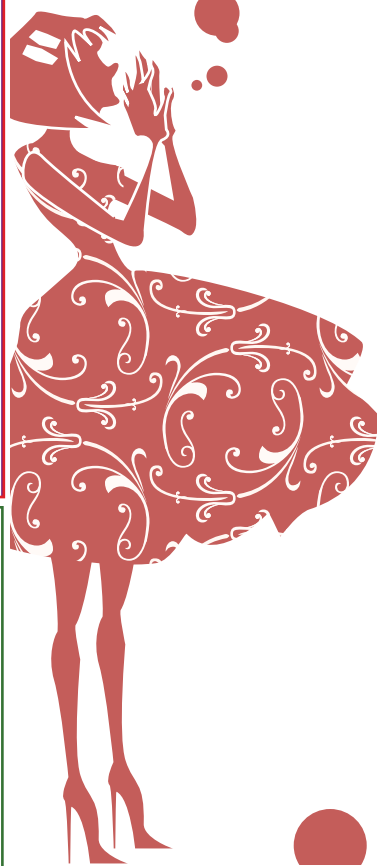


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Dr. Tobar's staff and Victoria Tobar, D.M.D pose for our camera in the doorway at 800 Santiago

Dr. Victoria Tobar: The Art of Personalized, Caring Dentistry

By Mitch Bull

Walking through the front door into the office to meet Dr. Victoria Tobar, D.M.D. I was struck by the sense of serenity and of light. No “muzak” filled the air, and the office was light and airy. Several certificates showing her accomplishments in practicing dentistry line the wall, as well as a framed “Mission Statement,” something I would expect to see in a “corporate lobby” but not something I usually expect to see in the office of a doctor or dentist. “Our office is committed to providing you the highest quality comprehensive dental care in a caring, comfortable and mutually respectful environment. We focus on excellent restorative and cosmetic dentistry with an emphasis on patient education and prevention.”

Victoria Tobar is dedicated to providing a “new style of practicing dentistry,” one that she described as putting the patient first, and taking the time to listen to each patient as an individual and to discuss treatments and answer questions.

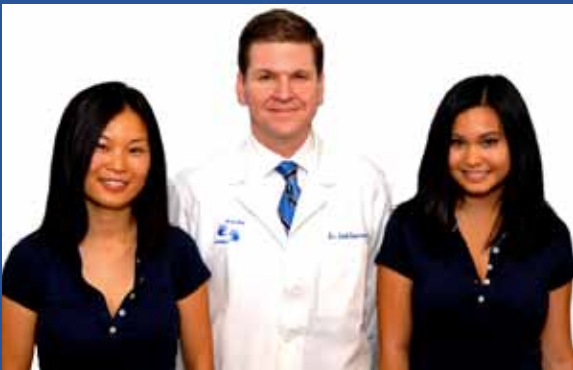
She said that when she graduated from dental school she worked in various practices throughout San Francisco, from the Mission to the Marina and in Chinatown. “One of the things I learned was that as an Associate within a practice you have very little control over the time you can spend with patients. Previously she had limited time with her patients, “then it’s time to move to the next one after the assistant has completed the cleaning and prep work,” said Tobar.

“I wanted to do things different, so I opened my practice in January 2009 and I can set the time I want to spend with each patient. With most of my new patients, I spend at least an hour with each one going over their medical and dental histories,” she explained. “It really gives me the

Cont. p. 13

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Friday, March 5, 2010 • St. Francis Hotel

Business Corner (Cont. from p. 11)

opportunity to get to know each patient on a personal level.” Unlike larger clinics where teams of dental hygienists conduct much of the cleaning, Tobar runs a small office of three people, including a receptionist, located in the Sunset Dental Building. “My assistant does some cleaning and set up, but I personally handle the majority of treatment on each of my patients,” said the Bay Area native.

“Gum disease can cause serious damage to the body, as symptoms are few, like bleeding gums. The problem is that the body is continually fighting the disease and it helps to “use up” your immune system, and can cause serious complications in people with other conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.”

A full-service practice, Dr. Tobar provides a full range of dental treatments and services including porcelain crowns, bridges and veneers, metal-free tooth fillings and replacements, tooth implant services, dentures, root canal treatments, teeth whitening procedures, as well as the preventative cleaning and checkups that most people should do every 4-6 months. The office also uses digital X-ray technology, which results in a 70-90% reduction in the amount of radiation to which the patient is exposed.

“One of the trends is that people are taking better care of their teeth and I am seeing patients well into their 90’s who still have the majority of their teeth,” said the dentist. When I asked about flossing, she smiled and said, “Yes, it’s one of the most important things that you can do. It really helps to prevent cavities between the teeth, as well as periodontal (gum) disease.” Gum disease can cause serious damage to the body, as symptoms are few, like bleeding gums. The problem is that the body is continually fighting the disease and it helps to “use up” your immune system, and can cause serious complications in people with other conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.

A Bay area native, and the first in her family to attend college, Tobar grew up in Daly City and completed her university work at Santa Clara before going to dental school at Tufts University in Boston. She joked that “the day after graduating I was on a flight back to the Bay area,” citing the cold winters and the hot and humid summers. “Boston is a great place, but the winter and summer made me realize how special the Bay area is.”

Tobar and her husband Alex live adjacent to Mt. Davidson and enjoy time with their two year old daughter, Alexa.

For a limited time, she is offering a special to new patients who do not have dental insurance: for a fee of \$99 she will conduct an exam, take x-rays and complete a cleaning.

In an era of “bigger is better” and assembly-line types of clinics, Dr. Tobar and her staff are providing the one-on-one type of personalized service that people describe in the “good old days.” And I almost forgot: free (non-metered) street parking seems to be plentiful in and around the office.

Dr. Victoria Tobar, DMD is located at 800 Santiago Street, Suite A (at the corner of Santiago and 19th Avenue) in the Sunset Dental Building. For further information please call the office at 415-566-2222, or visit the website: www.drviectoriatobar.com. Se habla espanol.

SHARON THE HEALTH

Osteopathy: The Best Kept Secret

By Sharon Caren

I began my Reposturing Bodywork career in 1997 and started working with clients aiding them through many different disease processes. One of my very first clients told me about her Osteopath who treated her ailments through touch. I was fascinated. When I asked how I could get into see him, she mentioned he wasn’t taking new patients.

In 2006, I was explaining to a new client by using the Reposturing technique to restore the body’s natural balance, pain and discomfort goes away. She asked me if I knew Dr. Melvin Friedman, her Osteopath. I called that day and waited 9 months for my first appointment. I found our basic principles are very similar and complimentary. I actually went to Dr. Friedman to learn about Osteopathy never dreaming what a wonderful effect the treatment would have on my life.

Osteopathic Principles focus on the natural motion within the body’s structure and its relationship to function. The knowledge and treatment considers the musculoskeletal system to be an extremely important but often neglected aspect of total health. Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine (DO.s) are fully trained physicians licensed to practice the entire scope of medicine and surgery plus additional education in applied practice as osteopathic manipulation treatment.

History In 1874, Andrew Taylor Still MD, DO discovered the significance of living

conventional western medicine, so you’ll need to find out specifically if they are a member of the Cranial Academy.

Some Commonly Treated Problems Down Syndrome, bedwetting, ADD/ADHD, Autism, anxiety, depression, head trauma, whiplash, arthritis, Fibromyalgia, Scoliosis, postural imbalances, just to name a few...

When I went to see Dr. Friedman in 2006, I didn’t go for a specific issue. I just wanted to learn about what he did. We spent a lot of time together while he gathered information and took notes looking for cause and effect. He focused on trauma I suffered in 1977 due to a car accident and a broken neck. He zeroed in asking many questions I hadn’t thought about in years and did a structural evaluation before starting gentle treatment through touch. If

my body needed an adjustment, he’d do those with more force to get a proper alignment. I felt my body change with a deep sense of relaxation. We worked over time to restore the natural mobility back to my neck that I was told was not possible due to the injury. It’s wonderful being 60 and feeling better than I did at 30 and 40!

About Dr. Melvin Friedman - He graduated from Ohio University of Osteopathic Medicine in 1983. He started out with a Family Practice in Ohio until 1987 when he then moved to California and began his private practice in Osteopathic Manual Medicine in Burlingame. Currently, Dr. Friedman is the President of the Cranial Academy. He’s not only a brilliant



“I felt my body change with a deep sense of relaxation. We worked over time to restore the natural mobility back to my neck that I was told was not possible due to the injury. It’s wonderful being 60 and feeling better than I did at 30 and 40!”

anatomy in health and disease. He proved he could restore health by treating the body with his hands naming his innovative approach Osteopathy. He envisioned a totally new medical system that acknowledges the relationship of the body, mind, emotions and spirit and offers a profound contribution to the practice of medicine.

Why Choose Osteopathy Many people are looking for a more natural approach to wellness without chemical drugs or surgery. Osteopathic physicians offer a variety of non-invasive healing treatments not available from conventional doctors but can prescribe drugs if needed. It’s the best of both worlds. Long before it was fashionable, DO’s advised patients the “best drugs” are contained within the body itself. There are many DO’s practicing

Doctor but a very interesting and wonderful man. If you call today, the wait is over a year to get an appointment. However, he has colleagues in San Francisco and is happy to refer you.

Call his office 650.259.0603 and talk to Amy. She’ll give you names and numbers. Believe me, you won’t be sorry you did!

What I learned – Osteopathy is a much needed practice and along with Reposturing Dynamics there’s a great marriage with the focus of Reposturing doing the muscle work to help facilitate flexibility. Dr. Friedman commented this made his work with me easier. If you’d like more information, please call 650.359.6579 or go to www.sharoncaren.com and caren@westsideobserver.com

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March Calendar

YMCA HEALTH SCREENINGS

First Wed each month | 9:30–11:30 am | Free health screenings at the Stonestown YMCA. Come every month for different screening: cholesterol, glucose, body mass index, blood pressure and bone density. Pre-register 923-3155 or cpmc-chrc@sutterhealth.org. \$10 suggested.

FRIDAY NIGHT JAZZ EVERY FRIDAY

Every Fri | 7-11 pm | Cliff House – 1 Seal Rock .

HAPPY HOUR EVERY TUESDAY

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

FARMERS MARKET'S

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

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

FREE AFTERNOON CONCERTS

Every Mon–Wed–Fri | 1 pm | Knuth Hall, SF State, 1600 Holloway. 415/338-2467.

DROP-OFF USED ELECTRONICS

Sat 6 | 10 am–2 pm | 1351 42nd Ave.

Sat 13 | 10 am–2 pm | 1350 7th Ave.

Sat 20 | 10 am–2 pm | 1920 41st Ave.

Drop-off old electronic and benefit students in SFUSD. Free Samsung recycling events.

AUTHOR CARA BLACK

Wed 3 | 7 pm | The author will read from *Murder in the Palais Royal* at BookShop West Portal. 80 West Portal Ave Info: 564-8080.

AUTHOR LISA SEE

Tue 9 | 7 pm | The author will read from *Shanghai Girls* at BookShop West Portal. 80 West Portal Ave Info: 564-8080.

NAT. WOMEN & GIRLS HIV/AIDS AWARENESS

Wed 10 | 12 pm–4 pm | UCSF will host a health fair about HIV/AIDS with info on safe sex and resources available. 1800 Market St. 4th Fl.

AUTHOR ELAINE BEALE

Thu 11 | 7 pm | The author will read from *Another*

Life Altogether at BookShop West Portal. 80 West Portal Ave Info: 564-8080.

PANCAKE BREAKFAST—ALL YOU CAN EAT

Sat 13 | 9 am–12 pm | Fundraiser benefitting the Sunset Cooperative Nursery School. Holy Trinity Church, 999 Brotherhood Way. Adults \$8 Kids \$4.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS/TWO ON A PARTY

Tue 16 | 8 pm | A wicked and spicy dark humorous work. McKenna Theatre. \$10 Student/Gen \$12 in Adv., Door \$17. SF State 338-2467.

AUTHOR RACHAEL HERRON

Tue 16 | 7 pm | The author will read from *How to Knit a Love Song* at BookShop West Portal. 80 West Portal Ave Info: 564-8080.

TARAVAL POLICE DISTRICT COMMUNITY MTG

Tue 16 | 6 pm | Our monthly Taraval/Community meeting at Taraval Police Station, 2345 24th Ave (3rd Tues of each month).

AUTHOR KELLI STANLEY

Thu 19 | 7 pm | The author will read from *City of Dragons* at BookShop West Portal. 80 West Portal Ave Info: 564-8080.

THE MUSIC STORE PRESENTS MARARA (NY)

Fri 20 | 2–4 pm | The Cheap Bastard Show. Free/ all ages. 66 West Portal Ave Info: 664-2044.

CELEBRATE YEAR OF THE TIGER AT THE ZOO

Sun 21 | 10 am–3 pm | Red Panda Acrobats and the Chung Ngai Dance Troupe perform amazing contortions, traditional lion and folk dancing, as well as Chinese yo-yo tricks. Admission: Free with Zoo Admission. 1 Zoo Rd. 753-7080/sfzoo.org.

WEST OF TWIN PEAKS CENTRAL COUNCIL

Tue 23 | 7:30 pm | A resource for neighborhood organizations. Listen and comment on issues? The 4th Monday each month. 381 Magellan Ave.

SF ZOO SPRING FLING

Wed 31-Sun 4 | 10 am–4 pm | Big Bunny: story time, pet cute and cuddly bunnies at the bunny patch, photos with Big Bunny, puppet show, take-home bunny crafts, music and much more! Free with admission. Sloat & Great Hwy.

Got an event? editorwso@me.com

Now At the Movies • By Don Lee Miller

CRAZY HEART

Bad Blake: Jeff Bridges tours the Southwest, singing, drinking and plucking his guitar in bars. He is interviewed by Jean Craddock: Maggie Gyllenhaal and they become friends. She has a four-year old son, Buddy, whom a drunken Bad misplaces in a huge shopping mall. Jean is so furious that Bad goes to AA. Bad has some success at a stadium with his old pal, Tommy Sweet: Colin Farrell, who has a surprisingly good country western sound. He encourages Bad to write music for him. Bad connects with his old bar owner-buddy Wayne: Robert Duvall. Writer-director Scott Cooper based his tale on Thomas Cobb's novel. Awards winner: Broadcast & Los Angeles Film Critics, Golden Globes, SAG Award: Best Actor, Bridges; Best Song: The Weary Kind; Las Vegas & Phoenix Film Critics, Satellite Award: Best Song. Boston Film Critics: Best Use of Music in a Film. Awards nominee (8): British Academy Film Awards (BAFTA): incl. Best Film. Profanity, sexual situations, drunkenness.

CREATION

Within the confines of a small English village, world-renowned scientist Charles Darwin: Paul Bettany formulates his theories which are in conflict with the religious beliefs of his wife, Emma Darwin: Jennifer Connelly and Rev. Innes: Jeremy Northam, his pastor. Darwin's ally Thomas Huxley: Toby Jones believes historical assumptions will be pierced with the publication of *The Origin of the Species*. Director Jon Amiel and writer John Collee never permit Darwin any piece of mind; he is in turmoil 24/7, even visited by the ghost of his daughter Annie: Martha West, who died at age 10. Adult situations.

THE LAST STATION

Concentrating on the final year of Tolstoy's: Christopher Plummer life, he is torn by what is going to happen to his estate. His wife of 48 years, Sonya: Helen

Mirren believes his copyright royalties should be divided within the family; the opposing view is championed by Vladimir Chertkov: Paul Giamatti, who wants the Tolstoy Movement to inherit the royalties. The arrival of the new secretary, Valentin: James McAvoy, sent by Chertkov, starts the commotion. Daughters Sasha: Anne-Marie Duff and Masha: Kerry Condon have their viewpoints, too. When Valentin and Masha start an affair, his loyalties are torn: Should he respect the wishes of Mrs. Tolstoy? Or, does his vote belong to Chertkov and the Movement? In the end, it's the love story of the Tolstoys. Awards nominee (2): Academy Awards: Best Actress: Mirren; Best Sup. Actor: Plummer. Boring for those not in love.

PERCY JACKSON & THE OLYMPIANS:

THE LIGHTNING THIEF

Percy: Logan Lerman, a high school student, is the son of Sally Jackson: Catherine Keener and the god Poseidon: Kevin McKidd from one of his earthly visits. He has protectors, his best bud Grover: Brandon T. Jackson and his prof, Mr. Brunner/Chiron: Pierce Brosnan, and needs them when Zeus: Sean Bean believes he has stolen his lightning bolt. At a training camp for the demigods (offspring of gods), he meets and is attracted to Annabeth: Alexandra Daddario, daughter of Athena: Melina Kanakaredes and a friend of Luke: Jake Abel. Luke aids Percy, Grover and Annabeth in their quest across the U.S. for the lightning bolt to clear Percy of being the thief. Chris Columbus directs the fantasy adventure Craig Titley's screenplay, which is based on Rick Riordan's novel. Profanity.

SHUTTER ISLAND

Perhaps director Martin Scorsese has gone too far, looking for a new direction, a different story; for years he stayed within the New York City boundaries, although covering many decades, i.e., *The Gangs of New York*, *The Age of Innocence*. The

Creative

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JULIET



WORD FOR WORD: TWO ON A PARTY

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“A unique blend of conviction, refined talent and a bit of damn-the-torpedoes ambition.”—Los Angeles Times.
Works by Bach, Johnston, Fitz Rogers, ter Veldhuis and Peck.
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PRE-CONCERT TALK: 2PM

JULIET
DIRECTED BY MARK JACKSON
A different take on “Wherefore art thou?”—Six women and one man interpret Shakespeare. Jackson, an SF State alum, is among the most acclaimed theatre artists in the Bay Area.
MARCH 11–21, LITTLE THEATRE, FROM \$8 IN ADVANCE
POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION: MARCH 12–21

DEPTH OF SURFACE
Provocative textiles-based art exhibit
THROUGH MARCH 25
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TWO ON A PARTY
WRITTEN BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
DIRECTED BY JOHN FISHER
A Word for Word production from the Z Space Studio
A wickedly spicy and darkly humorous work from one of the greatest American writers.
TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 8PM, MCKENNA THEATRE, FROM \$10 IN ADVANCE
POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION WITH JOHN FISHER, THE CAST AND JOANNE WINTER, WORD FOR WORD ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

UNIVERSITY DANCE THEATER
MONUMENTAL MOVEMENT
A lively exploration of life's urban milieu, seen through dancers' eyes.
MARCH 4–6, 8PM, MCKENNA THEATRE, FROM \$8 IN ADVANCE

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CREATIVEARTS.SFSU.EDU/SFWO

setting for this 1954 mystery thriller is an insane asylum on an island off the coast of Massachusetts where an escaped murderer is sought by the staff. When she disappears, Dr. Cawley: Ben Kingsley involves U.S. marshals, Teddy Daniels (who has emotional problems): Leonardo DiCaprio and passive Chuck Aule: Mark Ruffalo. Who better for a Nazi doctor than Max von Sydow? They become aware of the ominous danger of their sinister assignment as they go deeper and deeper into the claustrophobic, deadly asylum. Violence, horror, nudity, profanity.

A SINGLE MAN

Director Tom Ford bases his screenplay upon a Christopher Isherwood novel about one traumatic day in the life of a gay high school teacher, George: Colin Firth. His best friend and neighbor, Charley: Julianne Moore, comforts him when he is phoned by a relative of his lover of many years, Jim: Matthew Goode, that Jim died instantly when hit by a car and that the service will be “family only”. He tries hard to have a typical day. During the evening, George finds one of his high school students, Kenny: Nicholas Hoult, at his usual bar. They swim together nude in the Malibu surf then adjourn to George's living room. Firth's brilliant performance is garnering much recognition. Nudity, sexual situations. Awards winner: British AFTA, Venice Film Festival, Austin, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara & Vancouver Film Critics: Best Actor: Colin Firth. Awards nominee: Academy Awards: Best Actor: Colin Firth. BAFTA: Rising Star nominee: Nicolas Hoult.

THE WHITE RIBBON

Pre-WWI in a German village, the children start acting very strange, while the adults are in denial that there is anything

out of the ordinary. An elder is thrown from his horse when it runs into a wire stretched between two trees; he spends months in the hospital with broken bones and injuries. A student takes a sythe to an entire vegetable crop, destroying it. A pet bird is found, not in its cage, but on a desk pierced by scissors. These incidents present the youth of pre-Nazi Germany as those who will grow up to become the ruling Nazis of WWII. The supposed innocence of the children is never questioned. Very little background music accompanies the strange happenings. The ensemble work is terrific, with no one to single out except perhaps the narrator. Violence, sexual situations, adult situations. Awards nominee: Academy Awards: Best Foreign Language Film.

THE WOLFMAN

Lawrence Talbot: Benicio Del Toro, originally a Brit left home when his mother died and has become an American actor, touring in England in classics. His brother's fiancé, Gwen Conliffe: Emily Blunt, writes him that his brother has disappeared and invites him back to Blackmoor to join the search. He is reunited with his father, Sir John Talbot: Anthony Hopkins, and learns there is more he left behind than he cares to remember when he is bitten by a werewolf at a gypsy encampment. He learns villagers are being killed by something with incredible strength and a thirst for blood. A Scotland Yard detective, Abberline: Hugo Weaving, has been drawn to the hamlet to investigate. Graphic violence/gore.



WE'RE ALSO ON THE WEB
www.westsideobserver.com

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

A FIRST CLASS FIRST GRADE

Under the guise of a light comedy, Joel Drake Johnson's *The First Grade* that opened on Jan. 28th at the Aurora, develops both a humorous and heart wrenching description of the disconnect in today's family life. Although the audience is kept laughing non-stop by the witticisms of leading lady—first grade teacher Sydney (performed with authority and dry humor by **Julia Brothers**) and the sarcasm of her daughter Angie (**Rebecca Schweitzer**) and husband Nat (**Warren David Keith**), we cringe over the realistic revelations the author offers concerning the inability of family members to connect emotionally.

The dramatic conflict centers around Sydney's pride over her little students learning sophisticated words beyond their age. In this production Sydney praises the audience members as if they are her students. During a meeting with a physical therapist (**Tina Sanchez**), Sydney's questions make the therapist burst out crying. Sydney then returns home to face a depressed daughter who drugs her child with Ritalin and deals with her divorced live-in husband both of whom blame her for their fate. A surprise visit by her therapist brings on the play's dramatic climax.

Tom Ross' expertise as a stage director builds to the dramatic climax with light humor that turns to more grave matters with the therapist's visit. Sets by **Nina Bell**, lights by **Jarrod Fischer** and wardrobe by **Alicia Coombes** bring out the contrast between the cheerful elementary school ambiance and the estranged atmosphere of Sydney's home.

The First Class may come off as a silly sitcom to some, but Johnson's blunt portrait of the disintegration of family life prompts the spectator to reexamine the lack of communication that complicates marital and family life.

Ibsen's John Gabriel Borkman plays at the Aurora April 2-May 9. For info 510-4822 or visit auroratheatre.org. Dr. Annette Lust

ANIMALS OUT OF PAPER—AN ORIGAMI TALE

This West Coast Premiere by **Rajiv Joseph** and directed by **Amy Glazer** at the SF Playhouse couldn't be more beautifully acted and staged. When *Animals Out of Paper* begins with an imaginative set by **Bill English**, we are in the cluttered studio apartment of **Alana Andrews (Lorri Holt)** an Origami artist who has cut herself off from the world. Her marriage is over and her dog has disappeared and she can't get back to folding.

Andy (David Deblinger), a high school math teacher, amateur "folder" and doting fan invades her seclusion with a proposition to take a particularly brilliant student of his, **Suresh (Aly Mawji)**, a calculus genius with an uncanny talent for origami who is grieving the sudden death of his mother. Origami is a metaphor for the feelings of loss that Alana and her new protegee suffer. Paper, as the characters discuss, is irrevocably altered as it is folded. It will never again be what it once was. Folds leave scars, just as losses do.

According to SF Playhouse Artistic Director **Bill English**, "Three souls; an innocent boy, a teacher afraid of life, and an origamist frozen by the scars of too many folds meet at a crossroads and each takes from the other, something that makes it possible for them to move on."

Lorri Holt gives an engaging and multi-layered performance as the protagonist, **Alana**. **David Deblinger's** Andy is an example of the power of positive thinking with the book of blessings he has been carrying around since he was 12, carefully



Fabrik: The Legend of M. Rabinowitz

recording all his blessings. So far, he's counted 7000 blessings.

Aly Mawji is quite convincing as the origami genius and troubled hip hop kid. He got quite an applause with his verbal origami of hip hop rhymes.

At the helm of this production is Director **Amy Glazer** who directs her talented cast to bring Joseph's quirky characters to life with dynamic conviction. Remarkable playwright, **Rajiv Joseph** reminds us that we are all animals made out of paper: our hopes tenuous and our happiness fragile. Up next at SF Playhouse will be *Den of Thieves* by **Stephen Adley Gurgi**, March 10-April 17. Tickets, 415-677-9596 or www.sfplayhouse.org. Flora Lynn Isaacson.

FABRIK: A NORWEGIAN HOLOCAUST TALE

Inspired by Nordic and Yiddish folktales, *Fabrik: The Legend of M. Rabinowitz* uses hand-and-rod puppets, masks and original music to tell the story of **Moritz Rabinowitz**, a Polish Jew who immigrated to Norway at the turn of the century in order to escape Pogroms and persecution.

By the end of World War I, Rabinowitz had risen from poverty to become one of Norway's leading men's clothing manufacturers and began writing articles to combat the post-war rising tide of anti-Semitism at home and nearby Germany. He was one of the Nazi's first targets when they took on Norway in 1940 and he died beaten to death in a concentration camp.

When the story begins, Moritz appears before his yellow and black advertisement on a black stage surrounded by his three puppeteers—**Peter Russo**, **Kirjan Waage** and **Gwendolyn Warnock**. All are attired in black pinstripe suits with black shirts, ties and fedoras. The black on black arrangement brings the essence of a European cabaret in the 1930's. But Moritz, by contrast, is nattily dressed in an ivory suit, tie and hat, evidently of his own design. He introduces himself with a song and dance, advertising his wares and professional wisdom.

Early scenes of Moritz at work or in bed with his wife possess a warm humor. But gradually, beginning with an imaginative dream sequence, in which Moritz swims through an aqueous environment, hunted by a shark-like Hitler, the mood begins to shift. As the holocaust deepens the tableaux become more expressionistic and nightmarish.

Fabrik: the Legend of M. Rabinowitz continues though February 28 at The Jewish Theatre, 470 Florida St., SF. For tickets, call 415-292-1233 or go online at tjt-sf.org.

Coming up next at The Jewish Theatre will be *Andy Warhol: Good for the Jews?* written and performed by **Josh Kornbluth** from April 8-May 11, 2010. Flora Lynn Isaacson

Westside Real Estate Report

Tax Credits, Low Interest Rates Pay Off

By Jed Lane



For Sale: St. Francis Wood \$4, 595,000 8 Bed 9.5 Bath



Sold: West Portal \$930,000/4 Bed 2 Bath



For Sale: Parkside \$999,000/6 Bed 4 Bath



Sold: St. Francis Wood \$1,500,000 2 Bed 2 Bath

January 2010 showed an increase in median price for the area of just over one-half of one percent, but with more than twice as many sales as in January 2009. Generally the market is still favoring first-time buyers because of the extension of the tax credit to first-time buyers. The move-up market is active because sellers can sell and trade equity into a large down payment on larger homes. The trophy homes market is a bit slow. The trophy sales that are happening are either all cash or like the move up buyer, have large down payments. Much of this is due to the loss of value of other investments and a generally conservative investment environment.

Even with tax incentives for resale buyers the volume isn't as high as with the first time buyers and this affects the median price. Americans have not taken advantage of the *Worker, Homeownership, and Business Assistance Act of 2009*, which Congress passed to allow homeowners a tax credit of \$6,500 when they sell one home and buy a different home. While it would seem to be a perfect time, especially for those of us who have been in our homes and have accumulated huge equity growth, to take advantage of California Proposition 60 and 90 along with the tax credit, there hasn't been much of an impact. (Prop 60 allows for the sale of a primary residence and the purchase of a smaller, less expensive property, in the same county, keeping the same property tax base that is on the property that was sold. Prop 90 allows that tax base to be transferred to some, but not all, counties within California).



"San Francisco and especially the Westside have a shortage of homes available. Currently there are sixty-eight homes on the market. With twenty-four sales last month the absorption rate is just 2.8 months which is a clear indication of a seller's market."

Many buyers in the market now find themselves in multiple offer situations. Even with all the talk of housing melt-downs, foreclosure inventory, shadow inventory etc., San Francisco and especially the Westside have a shortage of homes available. Currently there are sixty-eight homes on the market. With twenty-four sales last month the absorption rate is just 2.8 months which is a clear indication of a seller's market. Current activity shows a continuation of market strength with fifty-two Westside homes currently in contract.

As we approach the spring selling season most prognosticators are talking positively about SF as a whole. There are some concerns about rising interest rates and stricter lending guidelines acting as downward pressures. Some cite the greater unknowns in the employment picture both in the private and public sectors. Furloughs and lay-offs, if they continue for a long time, could wreak havoc generally. Our neighborhoods should be able to weather any influx of additional properties without downward pressure on prices as long as demand stays high. An increase in interest rates and tighter lending guidelines would have far greater impact on us.

We are quickly returning to the days of yore when a buyer was limited to between thirty and forty percent of income to service debt and mortgage. If the criteria of those days solidifies and income to debt ratios return as they were along with 20% down payment requirements a family would need to earn \$188,000/year to buy a \$1,000,000 property with a 5.5% loan. They would need to earn \$231,000/year if the interest rate went up 2%. Another way to look at this would be to assume the earlier example of \$188,000/year income, the buyer can buy the \$1,000,000 home at 5.5% interest but if there is an increase in interest to 7.5% with no increase in income, the buyer could only buy an \$800,000 home. As you can see, for us to attract buyers for our homes lower interest rates need to be kept low or we need to have some local lenders that understand the situation (that's another article though).

Jed Lane is a civically engaged Realtor, Westside native and current resident of Miraloma Park. Feedback: jed@westsideobserver.com.



WE'RE ALSO ON THE WEB www.westsideobserver.com

Why Can't We All Agree on Children?

By Carol Kocivar © 2010

Last week, I drove back and forth and back and forth to Sacramento.

I know the route by heart, and so does my car. The first test drive of my NEW car 16 years ago was a trip back and forth and back and forth to Sacramento. The car was filled with school children and soccer bags, headed straight to a two-day tournament.

I was thinking of the kids and their schools and their hopes and their dreams last Sunday as I drove, in that same car, across the bridge over the Sacramento River.

I always veer off the freeway just before we get to the City and take the scenic route so I can watch the dome of the state capitol come into view.

It reminds me of why I come. This is where they make decisions that affect our children.

This is where they decide if there is money to pay for small classes so our youngest children can get the individual attention they need.

This is where they decide if children with toothaches can get to go to the dentist or end up in the emergency room.

This is where they decide if there is money for arts and music and dance and drama in our schools—the creativity tools for all children.

This is where they decide if our children can have as many school days as children in other countries.

This is where they decide if children get vision screenings or end up never ever seeing what the teacher writes on the board in the classroom.

For the past several years, this is where they have decided to cut billions and billions of dollars from our schools and from our children's services.

This year...this time...we can't sit on the sidelines.

My trip last week was to the California State PTA legislative conference, where parent volunteers from throughout the state learned about the impact of the budget on education and children's services.

Budget cuts threaten an entire generation of children.

It is time for everyone who cares about the future of our children and the future of California to join together.

Why can't we all agree on children?

Please take a moment to join with the PTA to support the more than 9 million children in California:

Action Steps: Join your PTA:

www.capta.org/sections/membership/join-support.cfm

Join the PTA Campaign to support our more than 9 million children: www.capta.org

Feedback: kocivar@westsideobserver.com



REAL TRAVEL FOR REAL PEOPLE

The Luck of the Irish

By Sergio Nibbi



With names like Liffey and Poddle, Aston Quay, Bachelor's Walk and Halfpenny Bridge, one would expect Dublin to be a virtual fairyland, a paradise overgrown with four leaf clover, multi-colored grass and sunny skies, pubs bursting with song, and young kids singing and dancing to melodies written 100 years ago.

My first impression of Dublin was of a very industrial city, crowded, congested, noisy and under construction. Our first day was spent driving to Waterford, a nearly three hour ride each way through mostly two lane, heavily traveled roads. The favorite pastime is playing chicken going three and four abreast down narrow country roads. The signs on the side of the road constantly remind you of the number of fatalities since the first of the year. For all the good it does, they should have spent the money on better roads. The accident we passed on the way back will undoubtedly add one more tick to the overcrowded billboard.

Waterford is a company town that seems to have outgrown the company. We were fortunate enough to get there just in time for the next guided tour of the factory, which proved to be very interesting. We all marched down the carefully marked lanes looking at the various work stations, while staying out of the way of the blowers, carvers and engravers. After a brief photo session along the way, we were cleverly discharged directly into the company store. Now here is a roomful of temptation that only the holiest can resist. We were not so blessed, so with our order form in one hand, and company pencil in the other, we moved from piece to piece. At least we're in for a grand surprise when the crystal pieces arrive in a couple of months; no one remembered what was bought in the frenzy.

After a quick lunch, again at the company store, we

headed for the town of Waterford, a quaint little town gone amuck with a mixture of the old and the new fighting for position. The new shops are trying to replace the old ones, while the old paved streets give way to concrete and asphalt. They should have left it alone. Our one-hour walk around town stretched our legs for the three hour ride that lay ahead. We did stop along the way, however, to admire an old church built in 1225 that still stands, roof gone, walls going, but being rebuilt by the city locals. Two very helpful young men gave us a tour of the remains, never asking for a coin to help in their rebuilding efforts.

Being that we were staying overnight in Dublin, we felt obligated to do a little pub-crawling, so after a very relaxed dinner aboard ship, we grabbed a taxi for the 15 minute ride back into town. The drivers are so Irish with the great sense of humor that goes with the territory. The six of us, Karen and I,

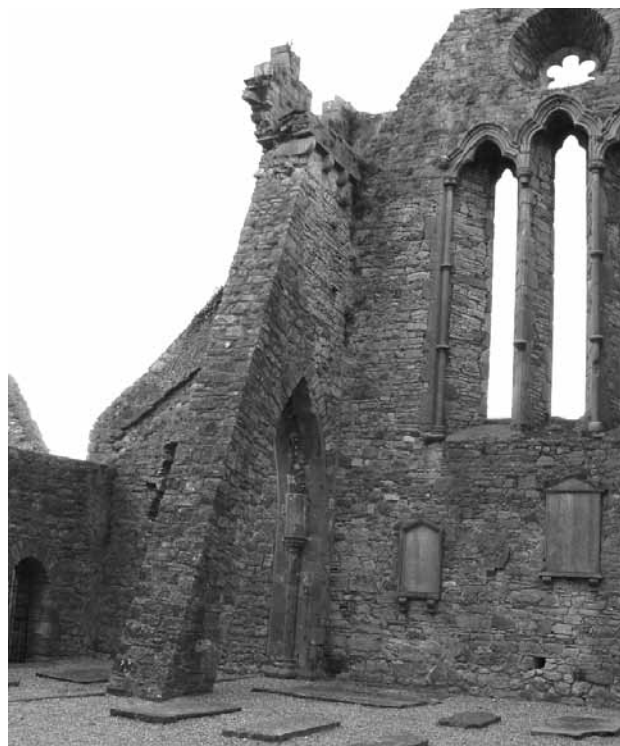


Larry and Kathy and a beautiful couple from southern Italy whom we had met earlier, went from pub to pub, looking for one that would fit our 55 to 75 year old range.

I had read that 50% of the people in Ireland are younger than 30, and by the looks of things, most of them were in the Temple Bar area that night. We did the best we could to keep up, but the Guinness was a bit too bitter

for our taste and the smoke too thick. We did shut down the dancing and singing, however, and eventually found our way back to the ship. We all had a ball and agreed that the Irish are great, generous and fun loving — if only we could find some Miller Lite.

The next day was perfect for strolling through Grafton Street, the main shopping street that starts from Trinity College and ends at St. Stephen's Green. Our first stop was at the college where we took a walking tour of the campus that eventually placed us at the front door of the Library Building where the Book of Kells is displayed. It must have taken a lot of monks a lot of time to not only write that beautifully illuminated manuscript, but also the thousands of others stored in the



Long Room, the longest single library room in the world. Thank God for word processors — no wonder the monks had to invent Champagne and brandy!

The crowds along Grafton St. were staggering, people going every which way, very much in command of their destiny. Our destiny was to try an Irish pub for some great Irish stew, and Dukes was the one recommended by the lady at the flower stand. Delicious food too much smoke.

We toured Stephen's Green, a lovely park in the center of old town, watching the children feeding the ducks while we admired the colorful gardens encircling the weaving paths with two shopping bags full of "things." That day, was our 42nd wedding anniversary and the captain was throwing a party for us that night along with 500 other people. 42 years and still talking, what a wonderful way to celebrate our first visit to Ireland.

Feedback: sergio@westsideobserver.com.

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FROM THE BORDER

WINTER SHOWERS BRING WINTER FLOWERS



By Hilary Gordon/Photos by Blair Randall, 2010

Unbelievable. Last month as I wrote this column in late December, the nurseries were full of Christmas trees. Now as I’m writing in late January, the plum trees are beginning to fly the bright flag of spring. Here by the Bay and the mild Pacific, winter turns on a dime and walks away. Spring flaunts right in with Calla lilies, Hellebores and winter blooming Salvias, Fuchsias and Aloe.

Now our long growing season can unfold slowly over the next five months. Like a twelve course meal, each layer of spring unfolds and reveals itself to amuse the mouth and eyes. Finally in May with flowers trumpeting overhead, weeds blooming madly and hedges bursting out of their boundaries gardeners throw up their hands and cry “enough” just as the rains end and we enter the dry half of our annual cycle.

Aloe. One of my favorite things about our climate is that even in January we get a new generation of bloom arriving in the garden. Some of the fresh January treats are familiar in old San Francisco gardens, such as the tall sexy calla lilies with their lush curves, and the bright tree aloe, whose dramatic red-orange flowers support hummingbirds through this hungry time of year. Last summer we divided an enormous clump of tree aloe (*Aloe arborescens*) by simply sawing off the largest rosettes and sticking them right in the sandy soil on either side of our new stairs leading from the compost area up to the street above the garden. These sturdy foot soldiers of horticulture got busy growing roots, and now they are blooming prolifically up both sides of the staircase and promising to grow into muscular clumps that can help stabilize the steep sandy hillside. (Image: *Aloe arborescens* at GFE.)



Hellebores are among the choicest garden plants to flower in January, because in addition to brightening the garden with their subtle pale pink and green “Christmas roses”, they also keep a neat mound of foliage all year long. Their striking texture enlivens shady spots, and there are several varieties which have low water needs making them a good choice for that toughest of garden locations, dry shade. Bear’s foot Hellebore (*Hellebore foetidus*) and Corsican Hellebore (*Hellebore argutifolius*) can be seen blooming now at the GFE in the shady area to the left of the northernmost 7th avenue gate.

There is a whole group of large, dramatic shrubs from Mexico and Central America beginning to bloom now at the GFE. *Fuchsia paniculata* is a large shrub which loves an understory location with bright shade or part sun. Resistant to the fuchsia mite, *Fuchsia paniculata* is beginning a long bloom period now as large sprays of tiny purple trumpets begin to open at each branch tip. Ours is blooming in the northernmost section of the Seventh Avenue exterior border.



It makes the corner and ends by our neighbor’s house. In the final corner of the border, *Senecio petasitos* is opening its burgundy buds into small bright yellow daisies. Its large, tropical looking, slightly fuzzy leaves are handsome all year long, and it is a trooper, performing in shade and filling dark spaces but when it blooms in January, its brightness and generosity

it makes it everyone’s favorite. The plant in the GFE border was also a cutting from my own specimen in my home garden. I just stuck it in the ground and it grew with no fuss, blooming for the first time this year. (Image: *Senecio petasitos* at GFE.)

Inside the garden past the Seventh Avenue gate, you can find a large Princess Flower another gorgeous winter bloomer, and on the sunny hillside above it you will see an enormous, loose-limbed Salvia with striking bright red flowers held on dark, almost

black, stems. *Salvia gesneriiflora* “Tequila” makes January worth waiting for all by itself. At the other end of the garden, facing Lawton street, stands another large dramatic Salvia which is just starting its bloom. *Salvia karwinskii* is about eight feet tall and maybe half as wide. It’s covered now with large, promising buds which have begun opening and which will reach full bloom in February. The coral flowers are held in dark bracts on blackish stems, giving the whole plant a dramatic look worthy of an entrance or other prominent spot sunny spot in the garden. The plant stays neat all year round, with its grey-green, slightly fuzzy leaves clothing it densely even when it is out of bloom.

Fuschia: For gardeners, the challenge of this time of year is to keep up with winter pruning and weeding between rainstorms so that the faded, battered stems and branches of summer blooming plants are neatly cut back to reveal the fresh winter flowers in a spacious and tidy setting. Weeds are already setting seed and forming new bulblets, so removing them can’t wait either. A nice thick layer of mulch will protect the soil from being compacted by heavy rain while discouraging the return of the weeds. So grab your pruners, a bucket, and a sack of mulch, and run out between the raindrops to give your garden some love. It will love you back, and you don’t have to wait for spring in our climate to see results! (Image: *Fuchsia paniculata* at GFE.)

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

Have a question for Hilary? Meet her in the garden Wednesdays 10-2 and Saturdays 10-4. Feedback: hilary@westsideobserver.com



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By Julie Behn
www.JulieBehn.com

Sudoku-fun!

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

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

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

Answer: The answer appears aside.

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

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BRAIN FUD

Below are incomplete words. Replace the letters in each bracket so that you can complete the word on the left and begin the word on the right. Good luck.

Indivi (_ _ _ _) ity
Din (_ _ _) ve
Can (_ _ _) lar
Bru (_ _ _) ly
L (_ _ _) litude

Answer

Individual - duality
Dinner - nerve
Cancel - cellar
Brutal - tally
Lamp - amplitude

REMEMBER WHEN?



Housing construction in the Parkmerced district. Date Jan. 30, 1943. Newscopy: "Concrete foundations are in and a framework of homes already rising in the midst of scattered debris on the Metropolitan Housing project, Lake Merced. Vast areas of ground are covered by heaped up bathtubs, ready to be moved into completed homes." • Photo courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, SF Public Library

PHYLLIS' FINDINGS

By Phyllis Sherman

I was going to write this column on my hand, instead of on paper, in honor of Sarah Palin, but try as I might I just couldn't get it to fit. Go figure.

But good old Sarah aside, I thought it would have more interest if I just wrote it on my good old Dell Windows 7...so here goes.

Academy Awards nominations are up and running. I watched the BBC British Academy Awards from the London Opera House recently and the winners were probably similar to the American awards. *The Hurt Locker* was terrific and it, and its director Kathryn Bigelow, won best picture and direction awards.

Up in the Air with George Clooney and *The Blind Side* with Sandra Bullock were great films as was *An Education* with Carey Mulligan. *Precious* with Gabourey Sidibe was in limited release because of its abusive content but very worthwhile viewing. *The White Ribbon* will probably win best foreign picture award. It's in black and white and is the German release and though tough to watch, concerning the Holocaust, is also worth viewing. *Avatar* may win best film award, but I think it should win for Cinematography or Film Editing or Special Effects—but it wasn't my cup of tea for Best Picture. Also,

If you get a chance you'd probably enjoy the Live Action Short Films which consist of five short movies, several of which are quite entertaining.

BRING BACK THE SIESTA: It turns out that toddlers are not the only ones who do better after an afternoon nap. New research has found that young adults who slept for 90 minutes after lunch raised their learning power, their memory apparently primed to absorb new facts. Other studies have indicated that sleep helps consolidate memories after cramming, but the new study suggests that sleep can actually restore the ability to learn. The findings which have not yet been published, were presented recently at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in San Diego. "You need to sleep before learning, to prepare your brain, like a dry sponge, to absorb new information," said the lead investigator, Matthew P. Walker, an assistant professor of psychology and neuroscience at the University of California in Berkeley.

The study recruited 39 healthy young adults and divided them into two groups. All 39 were asked to learn 100 names and faces at noon, and then to learn a different set of name and faces at 6 p.m. But 29 of the volunteers who slept for 90 minutes between the two learning sessions improved their scores by 10 percent on average after sleeping; the scores of those who didn't nap actually dropped by 10 percent.

I recently attended an art show at the home of Mark and Helena McMahon to celebrate the official launch of Mark's oil paintings and the launch of his new business, Mark McMahon Artworks. McMahon, from Ireland, is self taught and has



been painting for the past ten years, and works mainly with oil on canvas to create portraits and original works in a range of styles and dimensions. Influenced and inspired by masters such as Monet, Braque and Picasso, McMahon uses vibrant, earthy colors in his modern landscapes and his more abstract, interpretive works alike. McMahon's portraits were also on display, revealing his ability to capture the essence of his subject with a distinctive modern flair. McMahon is currently working with clients on commissioned pieces for residential and commercial settings. A sampling of Mark's work and the best ways to contact him can be found on the web at markcmahonartworks.com. I enjoy art and Mark's paintings are worth a viewing

If the name Bertold Brecht intimidates you or makes you think of Shakespeare or Aristotle, fear no more. An updated version of *Caucasian Chalk Circle* by Bertolt Brecht (in 1944) has been beautifully updated at ACT and is creatively adapted and directed by John Doyle. Doyle produced "Sweeney Todd at ACT in 2007 launching its national tour. Interestingly staged and beautifully acted by a cast of ten, "Caucasian" is a must-see, running through March 14.

Beginning March 25 and running through April 18 at ACT is *Vigil* with Olympia Dukakis and Marco Barricelli. Called "wickedly dark" by Variety magazine

AND don't miss SAN FRANCISCO PLAYHOUSE'S newest hit comedy, *Den of Thieves* beginning March 9th and running until April 17. Written by Stephen Adly Guirgis and directed by Susi Damilano, this show welcomes you to the world of unorganized crime. Cracking a safe to steal \$750,000 in drug money may not be the perfect road to recovery for kleptomaniacs Maggie and Paul. Watch them pull off the perfect crime. Call 415- 677-9596.

ENDJOKES: A guy goes to a psychiatrist and is very upset. He says "I'm very upset. No one likes me. I can't make friends. I feel terrible"....the psychiatrist in his most sympathetic manner, says, "Look you have a poor self -image. That's common among losers."

Mabel and Sadie are elderly ladies who enjoy driving. One day they're out on Main Street and Sadie is driving along and goes through three red lights. Mabel says, "Sadie do you realize you just went through three red lights?" Sadie says, "Oh, am I driving?"

A little girl loves doing cartwheels. Her mother chides her..."You know, the boys like you to do the cartwheels so they can see your panties!"

"I know," she responds. "But I fooled them. I folded them up and put them in my back pack!"

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