

Why is the City Giving AT&T a \$4.2 Million Tax Break?

By John Farrell



Naming Rights are a major source of income for Ballparks and Stadiums. What are these naming rights worth? In the case of the 49er's new stadium in Santa Clara, Levi Strauss & Co recently entered into a naming-rights agreement for a 20-year, \$220 million deal with a \$11 million annual payment.

Did you know naming rights are subject to property tax when they are located on government owned property? When I worked in the Assessor's Office years ago,

"The Assessor's Office should appraise AT&T's naming rights at the Ball Park as of transfer date in 2006 and issue escape assessments back to 2006 resulting in \$4.2 million to the City and at least \$525,000 annually."



we were the first in the State of California to value naming rights for 3Com when they were at Candlestick Park from 1995 to 2002.

The Giants Ballpark was completed in 2000, and subsequently appraised at the cost approach in 2003. Naming rights were never valued. In 2000, Pacific Bell paid \$45 million for naming rights over 25 years, which was subsequently transferred to AT&T in 2006. If valued accordingly, AT&T should be paying the City at least \$525,000 annually (based on a 1.1691% tax rate on a \$45 million assessed value). The Assessor's Office can go back 4 years and even longer since AT&T's naming rights agreement is unrecorded. Therefore, AT&T should receive tax bills for approximately \$4.2 million, reflecting 8 years of benefits for the naming rights.

Why is San Francisco giving AT&T a \$4.2 million tax break? AT&T's naming rights are subject to property tax but were never valued by the Assessor's Office. The Assessor's Office should appraise AT&T's naming rights at the Ball Park as of transfer date in 2006 and issue escape assessments back to 2006 resulting in \$4.2 million to the City and at least \$525,000 annually. Everyone should pay their fair share.

John Farrell Broker/Realtor® – Farrell Real Estate, MBA, Former Assistant Assessor-Budget and Special Projects, City and County of San Francisco, 5th Generation San Franciscan, Westside resident

Water Main Fixed But Promises Unresolved

By Keith Burbank



Workers clean up in the early morning hours after the broken water mainspilled into 15th Avenue and Wawona

Residents seem pleased with the road and sewer repairs after February's water main break at 15th Avenue and Wawona Street. But at least two families are upset about property claims the City won't pay.

"Overall, it seems the City has done a good job of fixing the damaged pipe and the related infrastructure, but has done a poor job of keeping the promises made to us about getting compensated (for) the damages to our property," said Tuyen Truong, who with his family is leasing a home on 15th Avenue.

Another resident, who wished to remain anonymous, said the flood caused his sewer to collapse. "Since the flood, the bath, showers and toilets have been draining under our slab. I had an environmental test completed on the ground floor slab and it checked positive (for) coliform bacteria."

He and his family are now living in a rented house because their home is uninhabitable, he said. The City "couldn't care less." He obtained estimates to repair the home, but the City offered to pay only one half the cost. "My little girls lived in a sewer for seven months." He now pays a mortgage and rent.

In response, the SFPUC issued a statement that said some homes had pre-existing problems. The commission is helping residents restore homes to pre-incident conditions.

In support of the City's efforts, resident Avrum Shepard said he is "pretty well satisfied" with the City's response. The mayor set up an office on West Portal Avenue, and Supervisor Yee got involved right away. But, Shepard was not personally affected by the flooding, he said.

The City paid \$1.5 million for the installation of a new eight inch residential water distribution pipe, a new sewer main, additional catch basins, and a "completely demolished and reconstructed" road, said Alison Kastama, regional communications liaison, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC).

Kastama said the the City installed the new eight inch pipe along 15th Avenue from the 2600 block to West Portal Avenue and along the 400 block of Wawona Street. The new pipe replaces an older six inch pipe, Kastama said.

To improve drainage in the area, the intersection of 15th Avenue and Wawona Street has additional catch basins, now totaling six, Kastama said. And the road

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Long Lost Manzanita Brings Newfound Problems

By George Wooding

Westside neighbors are concerned a rare manzanita plant will have a profound impact on neighborhood habitats and uses.

In 2009, a 14-foot wide *Arctostaphylos franciscana* (Franciscan manzanita) — a plant thought to be extinct in the wild for the last 60 years — was discovered in the Presidio during the 2009 Doyle Drive rebuild. It was deemed to be the last wild Franciscan manzanita and immediately labeled a genetically-unique



plant that needed to be saved.

Flash forward to 2013. In just four years, 424 plants genetically identical to the Franciscan manzanita found in the Doyle Drive construction site have been propagated via cuttings, according to Betty Young, director of nurseries for the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, who is coordinating the effort.

On September 5, 2012 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued its proposed designation of 11 areas in San Francisco as critical habitat for the endangered manzanita plant. That proposed designation includes part of Mt. Davidson. Critical habitats are places where endangered plants are either known to have existed in the past, or are places that provide what a plant needs to survive.

By June 28, 2013 the Fish and Wildlife Service designated 318 acres in San Francisco as critical habitat for the plant.

Critical Habitat vs. Eminent Domain

One of the new critical area habitats for the manzanita plant includes the area along Marietta Drive facing O'Shaughnessy

Hollow all the way down along O'Shaughnessy Boulevard, and includes all of the open space known as Reservoir Lands at Glen Park, which has trails currently accessible on Marietta Drive.

The designation of 3.2 acres of private property directly below Marietta Drive as critical habitat has been controversial. The backyards of 22 homes on Marietta Drive are now designated as

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Westside Observer Interview

A Chat With Captain Curtis Lum

Taraval Station Ranks Lowest in Crime in the City

By Keith Burbank

WSO: How did Taraval Station get to be the station with the lowest crime rate in San Francisco? (According to the latest Comstat Report, the crime rate in the Taraval District was 18.21 crimes per 1,000 people for the month ending September 2013. The rate includes property crimes and violent crimes.)

Lum: It's a combination of things. One, we have some pretty good officers out here. And to be an officer at a slower station, you have to look for crime. You don't just walk out the door and see the guy smoking crack or committing a robbery right outside your door. You have to hunt it down. You have to go to areas where you think crime is occurring. So, that's one thing, the officers are good.

The other thing. Geographically, we are big. We're the largest police district in San Francisco. 10.8 square miles. So that's really big. We're also

mostly residential. There are some commercial corridors. But, it's generally residential. Our crime rate is based on the population, the amount of crime per 1,000 people. So because we have a lot of people, your crime rate is low. If we were really dense, and had a very low population, and had same number of crimes, your crime rate would be high. So that's how it works.

WSO: Are you typically the district with the lowest crime rate?

Lum: This is my first station as a



captain. So, when I came here that's one thing that I noticed. So, I don't know how it was before. Because I only started tracking things when I came here.

WSO: How long have you been captain at Taraval Station?

Lum: I've been here for about two years and eight months.

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A Victory for Dialysis Patient Safety

By Patrick Monette-Shaw

The Board of Supervisors nixed the Health Department’s attempt to close the outpatient dialysis center at SF General Hospital (SFGH), replacing it with an outsourced private company that would be required to build it out in a current “shell” in Laguna Honda Hospital’s (LHH) old seismically-questionable, building. It was a really, really bad idea, a small group testified, to outsource dialysis to the private sector. Quite unexpectedly, during a Board of Supervisors hearing on the plan, members of the Board listened and stopped the proposal.



Progress at SF General’s new Hospital and Trauma Center does not include a dialysis center

Dialysis Privatization: Dead on Arrival

The 40-plus citizens who attended the Board of Supervisors Neighborhood Services and Safety Committee hearing on October 17 presented compelling testimony supporting dialysis services at SFGH’s campus, not privatized and outsourced to LHH, echoing many of the concerns first reported in the *Westside Observer’s* October article “Department of Public Health’s Dialysis Crisis.”

The group included family and patient caregivers, SFGH Renal Center staff, dialysis patients themselves, and other patient advocates. No one spoke in support of relocating dialysis services to LHH other than hospital administrators.

During the hearing called by Supervisor David Campos, SFGH’s Chief Operating Officer Roland Pickens asserted that dialysis services were not included in the plans for SFGH’s replacement acute care hospital building now under construction because outpatient dialysis wasn’t considered an “essential” service. The Health Department appears to have forgotten that dialysis is essential to the continued lives of its dialysis patients. Supervisor Campos asked Pickens who had made that decision; Pickens indicated the decision had been made by the Mayor and Health Commission at the time planning for the SFGH rebuild bond measure was being developed.

In response to a direct question from Campos about whether the Request For Proposal (RFP) to move dialysis had been discussed and voted on by the Health Commission, Pickens stated unequivocally “Yes, it was.” Pickens was fibbing. Campos pushed harder, and asked again if the Health Commission had voted on an RFP to privatize dialysis services, and Pickens again claimed that from his recollection, it had been voted on. More fibbing.

But as the *Observer* reported last month, outsourcing dialysis to LHH was only *discussed* in the Health Commission’s subcommittee — the SFGH Joint Conference Committee (JCC) — in the Spring of 2012, with only the barest subcommittee “report back” to the full Health Commission. The full Health Commission did not discuss the “report back” in any depth, and the full Health Commission has not scheduled a distinct agenda item regarding outsourcing SFGH’s dialysis services during the past two years of its meetings, records request indicated. The full Health Commission never debated merits of the RFP and took no vote on whether to approve the dialysis privatizing.

Not All Options Were Studied

When Campos asked Pickens whether the \$5 million it will cost to build out dialysis at LHH could be better spent on renovations of SFGH’s campus to keep dialysis there, Pickens admitted the option hadn’t been considered. When Campos asked whether any options had been considered to stay in the current vicinity, if not on the SFGH campus itself, Pickens claimed the

City’s Real Estate Division had explored leasing space elsewhere, but none met requirements. When asked if Real Estate had prepared a report about other options, Pickens said he would have to go back and look for that.

As the *Observer* reported last month, Director of Public Health Barbara Garcia was asked by the Health Commission to submit a report of all viable options to keep dialysis services at SFGH. According to a records request, it appears Garcia never provided the Health Commission — let alone the Board of Supervisors — with any such report.

When the hearing explored the burdens of increased transportation times for vulnerable dialysis patients who would have to travel further to get to LHH, Campos asked Pickens if the patients had been surveyed about the impact to their care. Pickens answered “No, we did not.” Campos asked “Why would you not talk to the [patients] who are going to be ... the most impacted by moving” dialysis to LHH. Pickens admitted that in hindsight, DPH should have done that, and that it was a mistake that would be rectified. And, Pickens agreed that if a survey reveals that moving dialysis to LHH is not the right move, DPH would “absolutely” reconsider its decision.

Campos commented that it was disrespectful not to consult patients prior to release of the RFP. Pickens apologized to patients that “we have not had a conversation with you.”

Even though Health Commissioners David Sanchez and Edward Chow had indicated in 2012 that transportation would be addressed in the RFP, Pickens admitted that transportation had not been addressed but that the department “can go back and make it a part of the process.”

Campos appeared incredulous that DPH had not performed any analysis of a potential decrease in revenue from other medical services if patients outsourced for dialysis then choose to receive other services — for example, vascular surgery, radiology, etc. — by obtaining those services from other providers, rather than returning to SFGH to obtain other primary and specialty-care services. DPH is fully aware that it will be “competing” in the managed care arena for patients, so why it didn’t perform a cost-benefit analysis of potential unintended consequences of losing additional revenue is rather shocking. In addition to the millions of dollars in lost dialysis revenue that benefits SFGH, DPH would also run the risk of losing additional millions from other medical services, but this appears never to have been studied.

Sadly, given DPH’s many highly-paid bean counters, it’s even more shocking that it didn’t occur to any of DPH’s or SFGH’s administrators and hospital administrators that they should ask the bean counters to run a lost-revenue “what if” scenario to estimate potentially-lost revenues.

RUMINATIONS FROM A FORMER SUPERVISOR By Quentin Kopp



The Oblivious Lead By the Willing

On the November 5th municipal election ballot are four propositions, A, B, C and D. I’m voting against each of them. I’ll explain why.

Proposition A is a charter amendment purporting to prevent any “raiding” of the City employees’ health care trust fund. It’s just the opposite, but so cunningly worded and promoted by the willing Mayor and oblivious Supervisors that one wouldn’t know so at first glance. Proposition A permits and promotes “raiding” of the healthcare trust fund for city employees, active and retired. It adds a so-called “stabilization” provision,

“**(Prop A)** The City Hall “family” can then divert such “savings” for non-health care purposes. It amounts to stealing employees’ health trust fund contributions...”

which allows City Hall to take, not borrow, from the fund to pay the health care costs of existing retired city employees; it, thus, relieves the annual General Fund of the City and County of its customary obligation to pay such health care costs. That, in turn, creates alleged “savings” for the General Fund. The City Hall “family” can then divert such “savings” for non-health care purposes. It amounts to stealing employees’ health trust fund contributions and accumulated earning thereon for non-retiree healthcare purposes. One subsection declares that regardless of any other trust fund provisions, “different limitations” may apply. Unexplained is the meaning of “different limitations.” Our controller, in consonance with a governmental accounting standards board actuary can develop a recommendation for the Mayor, Board of Supervisors and the healthcare trust fund governing board to tap such healthcare trust fund for up to ten percent of “City payroll costs,” if total City retiree healthcare costs exceed ten percent of City payroll costs in the next fiscal year. While proponents claim that could happen only if San Francisco’s financial condition deteriorated, a two-thirds vote by the Board of Supervisors and the majority of the Healthcare Trust Fund board plus the Mayor could make such a finding. The judiciary will not overrule such action. Past and present City employees are omitted from the process. The trust fund board is comprised of the City Controller, City Treasurer and Executive Director of the San Francisco Employees’ Retirement System, plus one active city employee and one retired city employee. City Hall outnumbers the retired and active City employees. **Proposition A constitutes yet another City Hall fake “reform.” Vote against it.**

Propositions B and C demand a “no” vote. If you vote “yes”, you’re voting to raise waterfront height limits to 136 feet, twice the height of the demolished Embarcadero Freeway, a 62% increase in height limit on the waterfront. We spent two decades trying to demolish the Embarcadero Freeway. I have no intention as a citizen to allow

“**(Props B & C)**...the developer labels 134 ultra-luxury condominiums, costing \$5,000,000 each, as “neighborhood housing.” The developer’s gall is an indignity to all San Franciscans.”

another waterfront wall. Propositions B and C create private, not public, recreation and open space; the “parkland” added by the developer is smaller than a tennis court. Spending upward of \$2,000,000 to pass Propositions B and C, the developer labels 134 ultra-luxury condominiums, costing \$5,000,000 each, as “neighborhood housing.” The developer’s gall is an indignity to all San Franciscans. Even the *Chronicle* admits that Propositions B and C “could threaten the City’s sewage systems.” The development for millionaires is close to a sewer line handling 20,000 gallons of raw sewage daily. An earthquake or construction accident could cause an environmental disaster and fiscal consequences for taxpayers. **I say protect our waterfront by voting against Propositions B and C.**

Proposition D is another San Francisco fairytale. It’s a mere declaration of policy with no legal effect. It declares San Francisco “policy” should be one of reducing the cost of prescriptions. Isn’t that wonderful. As a letter to the *San Francisco Examiner* by Frank Norton points out, almost all of us use prescriptive medication. If Proposition D had actual legal effect, it would mean that all residents would be entitled to “reduced-cost medication, ...” Who would pay for that? Property, sales and real estate transfer taxpayers of course. The *San Francisco Examiner* laughably states in its endorsement editorial: “Prop D can help City fight cost of prescriptions.” How? It has no legal effect. It, however, produces “brownie points” for incumbent Supervisors who want to run for other public elective offices.

The *Chronicle* on October 20 endorsed Proposition D after observing: “Non-

“**(Prop D)** Oh yes, our elected officials surely can effectuate prescription price reductions, and I can fly to the Moon.”

binding policy statements don’t belong on the ballot.” It then disregards that truth and talks about calling “for the city’s elected officials to do what they can to bring down the price of prescription drugs.” Oh yes, our elected officials surely can effectuate prescription price reductions, and I can fly to the Moon. Remarkably, I counted ten *paid* supporting arguments in the Voter Information Pamphlet, all paid by something called the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, a Los Angeles-based operation with no local office listed in the San Francisco telephone directory. There are no paid arguments against Proposition D, because it’s a meaningless measure, which clutters the ballot. A “no” vote might sway local politicians to stop wasting our time and money.

I inveighed last month against an Assembly Bill, which granted legal immigrants the privilege of jury service in Superior Court and recommended the Governor veto it. To my surprise (this is a fellow who signed a bill granting illegal immigrants motor vehicle driving privilege) Governor Jerry Brown did exactly that. Hurray!

The “chutzpah” award for 2013 should probably be conferred on the Golden State Warriors, who misrepresented to *The Wall Street Journal* in its October 19 story

Water-Sewer-Power

Water supply will be insufficient in the future unless there are additions. Recently SFPUC staff presented the possibility of adding recycled water to the city's drinking water, directly or indirectly.

“Since 2003 SFPUC has an open checkbook... to pay for whatever it wishes to do. It is almost always fun to spend other people's money.”

How far and fast we have fallen! A decade ago there was a plan to increase the water supply, and assurances were given that no more than ten percent of any water served to city customers would be (lower quality) groundwater. The excellent taste of Hetch Hetchy water (so good it was bottled and sold) would be forever preserved! Later, plans to increase supply were scrapped. Then supply was eroded by commitments to streams and habitat. Assurances that groundwater would make up less than ten percent ceased. Now we're talking about drinking recycled water. All within ten years.

Has this grand waterfall of expectations reduced cost for the ratepayer? Dream on. The cost is up, and as mentioned last column, the next three rate rises on tap are 12-12-10%. Let's hope your raises do so well. (SFPUC is in the final third of its water improvement program, which aims to upgrade the system, and keep water flowing after a major earthquake. The \$4.6 billion endeavor started eleven years ago and is to finish up in 2018.)

Sewer. A \$6.9 billion Sewer System Improvement Program (SSIP) has been launched by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC, the department of city government responsible for water, sewer and public power). The twenty year program is to renew the city's sewers and sewage treatment system. So far about \$30 million has been spent. During the first ten years, phase one, \$2.7 billion is to be spent, on average \$270 million each year. The largest single work will be building new digesters for the main sewage treatment plant, the Southeast Plant on Third Street at a cost of about a billion and a half. But “green infrastructure” projects lead off; these are supposed to reduce the volume entering the plant.

As SFPUC needs no authorization from voters to spend whatever it wishes on the SSIP and other programs, projects even include about \$15 million for early forecasts of rainfall. NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association) is to build special stations funded by your rates.

Power. Electricity (as well as natural gas) is mostly provided by PG&E, though now SFPUC supplies public facilities such as MUNI and City Hall. It has been proposed that SFPUC expand, supplying some private homes and businesses with “100% renewable power,” displacing (the hated) PG&E and establishing a beachhead in the battle (of some progressives) to kick PG&E out of San Francisco. A few years back the war cry and promise was to provide renewable power at or below PG&E's price, “meet or beat.” A couple of years ago, as the plan matured, “meet or beat” became at a “comparable” price. But that hope, too, slipped away. It became apparent that the city could not supply renewable power as cheaply as PG&E supplies power that is only

fractionally renewable. Welcome to reality.

At a meeting in August, only two of the five Commissioners voted to establish a maximum rate at which electricity would be offered to customers of the new power provider the city is establishing, called CleanPowerSF. Three Commissioners declined to set a rate, which means the effort is frozen. Members of the Board of Supervisors, which eleven months earlier had authorized the Commission to set a rate, went ballistic. An aggressive letter demanding answers was sent. In September SFPUC staff logged its responses to the letter.

Usually employees of SFPUC, and its Commission, are all too eager to undertake to better the world in ways presently in fashion. Since 2003 SFPUC has an open checkbook; it alone needs not get permission from voters before spending as it wishes. It increases rates for water and sewer, and potentially for electricity, to pay for whatever it wishes to do. It is almost always fun to spend other people's money. SFPUC's commissioners are not even elected by voters. Why not spend, you might ask? Increasingly SFPUC has come to do more in the way of “community benefits,” street beautification, parks and greenways, and has taken responsibility for expenses like the water system for fire protection and Lake Merced. Why use city general funds when SFPUC can raise rates to pay? One can only imagine what would cause commissioners to put the brakes on something the BOS authorized. One can hardly imagine how surprised and shocked the BOS was when its will was thwarted! No small jolt was that one!

The ending of this story has yet to unfold. The Mayor prefers not to embark upon another potentially costly public crusade. The BOS, though, at least some of them, are quite determined.

Tangentially, it is interesting to note that not only has the value of utility companies in Germany halved over the past five years, but also earlier this year the price for traditional power went negative. Negative means a generator was paid not to provide power. Why? Too much power for the grid to handle; the grid becomes unstable if overloaded. German utilities must buy renewable power, but utilities also need to maintain traditional sources for when the sun fails to shine and the wind fails to blow. It turns out to be hard to shut off some traditional sources. Thus incentives (pay not to provide). Increasingly one source of reliable power is American coal. To Germany, the world leader in encouraging renewables, we export American carbon so Germany may stabilize its troublesome grid. Where are we headed? It's enough to spin one's head.

Steve Lawrence is a Westside resident and SF Public Utility Commission stalwart. Feedback: lawrence@westsideobserver.com

Court to Ethics' St. Croix: Cough Up the Records



John St. Croix

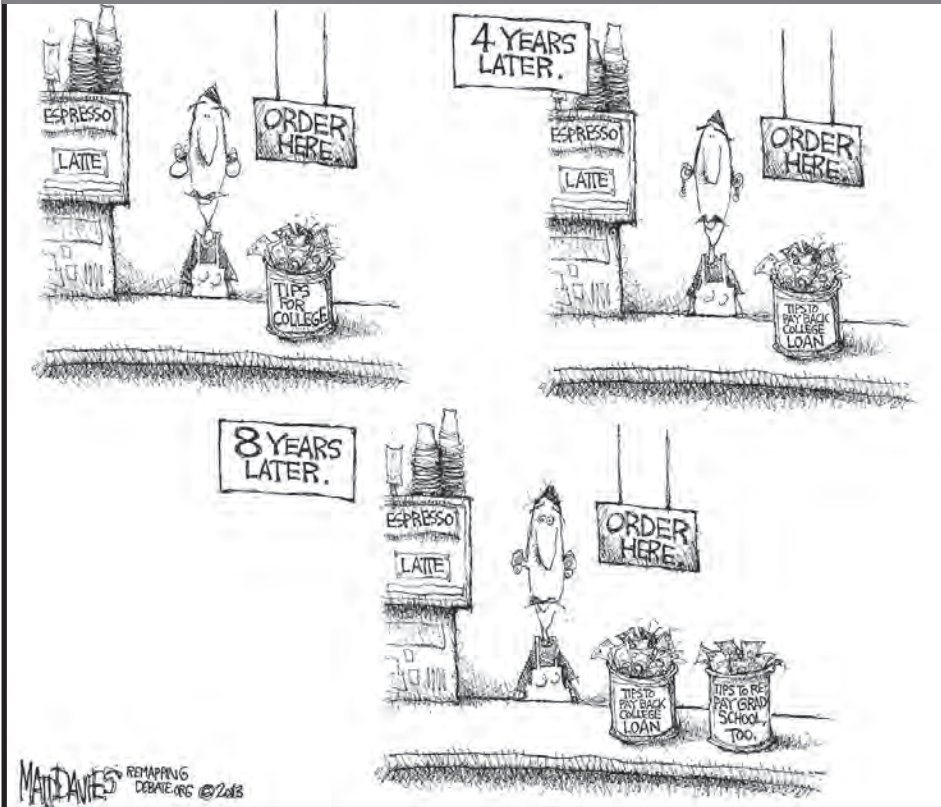
In a stunning defeat for the SF Ethics Department's Director John St. Croix, the longest holdout against the City's 14-year old voter-approved Sunshine Ordinance, Judge Ernest Goldsmith ordered the disclosure of 24 documents withheld from Allen Grossman, a long-time activist for open government, who argued that Sunshine Ordinance Sec. 67.24 requires disclosure of city attorney's advice regarding public-records.

St. Croix held that his communications with the City Attorney are protected from public scrutiny under attorney-client confidentiality privilege provisions “on the advice of the City Attorney's Office.” St. Croix has long held that Ethics is exempt from most open government laws that are routinely observed by other City offices, including the California Public Records Act and the Sunshine Ordinance.

The court ruled that Mr. Grossman, not Ethics, was right on the law, and we acknowledge his heroic stand against an illegal evasion of the public's right to know.

This is the second time Mr. Grossman has prevailed in court against St. Croix; perhaps this latest defeat will serve as his “teachable moment.” We aren't holding our breath.

RUNNING IN PLACE



My 2¢ • Will Durst

RINOs AND AINOs.

Now we bore deep into the bunker that houses triumphant Tea Party headquarters, where they are celebrating a tactical victory over the forces of complacency, and complaining loudly about all the chicken-hearted Republicans In Name Only who bowed to the will of our Socialist President and voted to reopen the government and avoid a global financial meltdown.

“Wussies. Those RINOs don't represent real Americans. You know who they represent: AINOs. Americans In Name Only. Because only people who believe exactly what we believe deserve to be called real Americans. AINOs should be counted as 3/5ths of an American. We and only we are listening to the real heartbeat of this country. Nobody else has the same filter. Which is made out of tinfoil.

“The media keeps asking, ‘how does it feel to lose?’ But we didn't lose. We won. We won by losing. All part of the plan. Because only in losing do real winners hone their skills at winning whereas real losers just feel normal. Winners never quit. And quitters never win. And winning quitters are like quitting winners: just more banana slugs on the Great Salt Flat with a blown head gasket.

“You know who lost? The so-called leaders of this party lost. The ones who flopped faster than a French Soccer Team that had been surgically deboned. Who abandoned the good fight in the name of expediency. Who slept with the enemy and will have their heads shaved and be thrown into the street someday. Because there is no negotiating when you're dealing with the terrorists calling themselves the Democratic Party.

“Oh, don't get us wrong, we are all in favor of compromise. As long as it's the other side doing it. We have no intention of compromising because that would be abandoning our principles. They don't have principles so it's shouldn't be a problem.

“Have we learned our lesson? Yes, we have. We have learned we must fight harder. And never give in. Because repeatedly banging our heads against the wall makes it feel so good when we stop. So we must learn not to stop.

“We do not fight because we think we can win. We do not fight because of ideology. We fight because... we like to fight. As do our constituents. You should see our town hall meetings. They look like a trauma center emergency room on a Saturday night after a pool hall happy hour featuring \$2 shots of Jagermeister.

“Now? We're going to purge this party of poseurs and run with folks interested in representing the real America. You know, people exactly like us. You may accuse us of perfecting the circular firing squad. But the circular firing squad turns out to be very useful in eliminating marginal colleagues equipped with insufficient aim.

“And yes, ‘this is going to happen again!’ It's going to happen every single time purity comes face to face with evil. And the evil shall be primaried. And anybody who shakes hands with John Boehner or has been photographed hugging John McCain is fair game.

“We have even perfected a test to determine whether you are conservative enough to be an actual Republican. We hold you under water for four minutes and if you don't die, you are a RINO. Primitive and messy perhaps, but fits us to a Tea.”

Will Durst's new one-man show “BoomeRaging: From LSD to OMG” in its final extension: through Dec 17 every Tuesday at the Marsh. San Francisco. themarsh.org



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Interview with Captain Lum (Cont. from p. 1)

WSO: And how long have you been with the San Francisco Police Department?

Lum: I'm going on my 25th year. I was a San Francisco Deputy Sheriff for four and a half years before that.

WSO: How are drivers without licenses treated when stopped for driving violations?

Lum: If they don't have a license or their license is suspended, generally they are issued a citation. They have to go to court. The car can be towed away or the car can be released to someone. That's basically how we handle it. The same is true for someone who is in the country illegally.

WSO: What changes will the captain make to make ensure another case like Ronald Gehrke does not occur again? (Gehrke was accused of going home while on duty as a Taraval Station beat officer).

Lum: Obviously, we talk to all the officers. We talk to the beat officers. 'Hey, you have to be on your beat. You have to be visible.' The other thing is supervision. Supervisors, the sergeants.

You have to check up on the officers. Go to the same runs. Just be around. Be out and about and do your job. Things like that. Lieutenants the same thing. Talk to the officers. Lieutenants run the day to day operations at the station. So, they (the officers) watch the lieutenants. We're always trying to train or improve and tell the officers the same thing over and over and over again, so it gets into the brain. You don't want to become complacent.

WSO: Why such a harsh punishment for Gehrke?

Lum: I have no knowledge of who does that at all. What happened is basically internal affairs (did) its investigation. And then he was transferred out.

WSO: What are the station's strengths?

Lum: One of the things, and this might go along with why the crime rate is the lowest. We're always trying to see what can we do better. Is this working? Is it not working? So, one of the things that we do is we track all the reports that come through every day. Every time there is an incident report I get a little (note) of what happens. Someone turned in a gun. We had a warrant arrest. We had a recovered vehicle. Stolen vehicle. Theft from a building. Vandalism. A burglary. Something like that. And then some little comments here (in the log). It's an arrest. License plate number. So, at a glance, the officer can see when he comes back from his days off, he looks at three days' worth, and he (can say) 'oh okay, this is what happened in my sector'. Because we do this by sector. This is the one-car sector, two-car...

So, if you're working the one-car (sector), this is your sector. So you are responsible for it. You'll still go all over the place, depending on if someone is not available here, you have to go here (pointing to another sector). But this is your area. So, after three days, if they're off, they can come back and look at this (report or log) and see what happened in their sector.

Now, we also try to keep the same officers in their sector, so they kind of know what's going on. They know the same people. If there are criminals in this district that hang out, they'll know who they are because they always work that sector. So we try to do that.

The other thing is. If you look on this wall, there are maps of August, September and October. So if you look at all these dots, well these are crimes. So they're (the dots) telling you we have crimes in certain areas. Now I like these maps, and I don't like these maps. Because I can't get these dots smaller. When people look at the maps, they say the crime is out of control. (But the dots should be much smaller.) So it's kind of deceiving. But it's a visual for us and the officers for where things are happening. But, right here, we have stolen cars.... This is the six-car area. So this is where we put our license plate reader vehicle to see if we can catch people driving stolen vehicles. Things like that.

So, we use these maps here. I have this here (referring to the log). It's also in the assembly room for the officers to look at. And then we have a big screen TV where they have line up every day. So they're sitting around a big table, and on the wall is a big 55 inch screen TV. And it has wanted posters, it has these maps. You can watch video. And we have watched video of certain crimes that are happening. So, the officer in the report-writing room glances up, and goes, 'hey I know that guy'. And that has happened before. We've gotten hits on like hey this guy is wanted for whatever. And an officer from either our station or another station will identify him because - since we got email, now we email the wanted posters to everyone in the police department. It goes to everyone. 'Do you know this guy? This guy wanted for this or that.' So, that's been very helpful. The other thing that happened within the last six months (is we obtained) a full-time video retrieval officer, because video is now such a big part, all over the place. So, we have an officer, if there is any video around, he'll go

retrieve the video. And then all the officers who take (a) report, they're supposed to look around for video (and) note that in the report. And then also backtrack. Hey, the suspect... if you're the first responding officer, and you go and look at a video because here it is, okay the suspect went this way, so you walk that way, and you start looking around for other video and we try to find more video along the path. The guy came in and the guy exited. So, video has been very helpful. It helped us solve an assault with a deadly weapon case a couple of months ago. Three suspects beat up this one guy pretty bad. The victim fled into a garage where a couple was unloading

their car. And then the suspects chased (the victim) and beat up the couple too. So we arrested those people (the suspects). It took us about two months. We went to different parts of the Bay Area. We were in, I think, Concord and the City of Richmond, trying to track these guys down. And that's just all at the station level. The officers here were doing that. Video played a big part in the last homicide on the LRV (light rail vehicle, referring to the San Francisco State University student who was shot). So, with the video we had a picture of the guy, and then when other information

was developed and you looked at the two pictures, you went okay, 'looks like this is the guy,' and they got him the next day. That was a good (unclear).... So video is a really big thing that we're working on and we're using. And we didn't develop it here. This was at Northern Station. They did a pilot program. And it worked so well that we rolled it out at all the stations.

WSO: What will be the most pressing issues for the district in the coming year?

Lum: Crime-wise, it will probably be burglaries. Auto burglaries. Those seem to be consistent for the last two years that I have been here. It's just never gone away. It kind of goes up and goes down. We catch people and then it goes up. We don't catch anyone, (and) it goes down. Or we catch someone, (and) it goes down. So, there's no consistency. It's not like I catch all the burglars and everything goes down. It's the same. I go, 'what's going on?' So, that'll probably be what's going to be happening in the next year.

WSO: Do you have a plan to deal with that?

Lum: Yes. Well, one is what we've been doing. The other thing is the educational piece. We're always trying to have citizens help us. Because we cannot do this by ourselves. Most of our arrests are not the police officer driving by watching a guy with a mask and holding a bag of money climbing out a window. That just doesn't happen. It's usually a citizen calling, saying, 'Hey, I'm looking at my neighbors. Some guy just came out of his garage. I don't know who he is.' And then we know, okay it's most likely a burglary. And then, the officers are good. Because they know what's happening. They flood the area, set up a perimeter and lock it down. And then, we can find the guy. That's how we get the burglars.

So, the crime prevention/neighborhood watch groups - working with SF Safe. That's a big part of what I do. SF Safe will come out, and they'll help someone set up a neighborhood watch group. And then I'll go and I'll speak too. And then we'll have officers go and talk to them. One of the things that we started this year was if a citizen wanted to learn about crime prevention techniques. Hey, invite two or three of your neighbors. Hopefully you'll get about five. And we, the police officers we'll go to your house and just sit down and tell you about crime prevention techniques. So, it's not SF Safe. But it's kind of neat to have a uniform police officer come and tell you what's going on in your neighborhood and this is how you can make your house safe and you yourself be safe. We started that here this year.

WSO: Are there any crime trends occurring in the district this year? And are they increasing or decreasing?

Lum: Yes, there are certain crime trends. Burglaries. One of the things we have been noticing is residential burglaries on houses that are under construction. So, if you're having your house remodeled and no one's there, someone is going in, and not stealing your lamp or your computer, they're stealing the construction workers' tools. That's not new, but we've noticed that in the past few months.

WSO: Is there is a strategy to deal with that?

Lum: Yes, of course, but I'm not going to tell you. Other than we want people to know about it, so they can protect themselves. If you have a place that's under construction, tell us here so we can note it down, so we can go by there. That's what I want. So the cops can make extra patrols. And if we see suspicious people there or someone at night, 'Hey, why are you here at night?' We know it's under construction. Then we can do something about that. Because the area is so big, and there is so many places under construction. At night we can't tell, it's just closed up. It looks like a regular house. We don't know if it's under construction or not.

This interview took place at Taraval Station, October 21, 2013. The questions and responses were edited for clarity. Keith Burbank is a local journalist.



We're the largest police district in San Francisco. 10.8 square miles. So that's really big.

Dialysis (Cont. from p. 3)

The "Fib" LHH Is Seismically Safe

Pickens also testified that DPH considers the space seismically safe where dialysis would have been placed in LHH, despite the fact that the only seismic remodeling of the old buildings included replacing an unknown number of hollow-clay walls with concrete walls, but no lateral bracing to withstand an earthquake.

"Who decided that LHH was a suitable place for dialysis patients? Voters were told the old buildings would be demolished because they were unsafe," Vivian Imperiale, a 10-plus-year former employee at Laguna Honda Hospital and the first speaker asked. She noted a lawsuit may be waiting to happen if a patient receiving dialysis turns out to be a "sitting duck" injured (or killed) in LHH's old buildings during an earthquake. "Change is not synonymous with improvement, she added."

Following testimony from a staff member of the Dialysis Center that life-safety regulations for fire sprinklers were relaxed in 2012, grandfathering buildings built before January 2008 to operate without them, Campos inquired whether that permitted DPH more flexibility. Mr. Pickens replied that if that proves to be the case, SFGH might pursue it as an option to keep the facility right where it is currently located at SFGH.

In effect, should Mr. Pickens finds that this proves to be the case, the inescapable conclusion is that DPH didn't consider, Barbara Garcia didn't "explore" or report back on this potential option, and the Health Commission may not even have known of this option, given Garcia's tactic.

It was clear by the end of the hearing that the Board of Supervisors wants to keep dialysis services on SFGH's campus. It also appeared clear that Pickens got the message that the Supervisors do not want DPH to come back with a replacement RFP now or anytime soon to move dialysis elsewhere.

Campos noted that the proposal to move dialysis to LHH appeared to conflict with the Health Services Master Plan that the City just adopted, as the increased burden of transportation would impede or prevent access to optimal care. Campos also noted that the RFP appeared to violate Master Plan Recommendation 3.1 meant to increase access to appropriate care for San Francisco's most vulnerable patients.

At the end of the hearing, Supervisor Campos summed up by asking Mr. Pickens "In terms of clarity, does it mean that right now, the dialysis services will stay at the current center until a decision is made otherwise," to which Pickens responded "Yes, we will suspend the [current] RFP process."

For further clarity, Campos then asked "So the process is suspended and you will not be making a decision to privatize [dialysis] services at this point?" to which Pickens replied, "That is correct." Campos then asked if a decision is made in the future to go down the route of privatization, whether there would be a separate and new RFP process, to which Pickens responded, "This is correct, absolutely."

[Editor's Note: On October 22, shortly before the Observer was going to press for this November edition, DPH's Contracts Office responded to a records request, announcing the dialysis outsourcing RFP was suspended as of October 22. Patient advocates, and patients, would feel more comfortable if DPH's announcement had indicated the RFP had been cancelled completely, not just suspended.]

Ms. Imperiale commends Supervisor Campos' and Mar's decision not to outsource and relocate the SFGH dialysis center off campus. "The conduct of both Supervisors during the hearing demonstrated their ability to analyze proposals, ask very relevant questions, truly listen to impassioned testimony, and respect those who came forward to give public comment," Imperiale said. "Their professionalism, concern, and sound judgment were the epitome of what we like to expect from our elected officials."

At that point, a cheer went up in Board Chambers from the small group of 40 thoughtful, committed citizens who had just changed the world of dialysis patients treated at SFGH.

Monette-Shaw is an open-government accountability advocate, a patient advocate, and a member of California's First Amendment Coalition. Feedback: monette-shaw@westsideobserver.com. This article has been edited for length the full article is available at: westsideobserver.com

Hidden Gems of San Francisco

Hidden in Plain Sight: 1906 Earthquake Shacks

On Wednesday, April 18, 1906, at 5:12 am, the ground under San Francisco shook violently for 65 seconds. Earthquake damage was severe, but the ensuing fires were truly catastrophic. Burning for three days, they destroyed over 500 city blocks in the heart of the city. Overcome by shock, panic, and confusion, over half of the city's 400,000 people ended up homeless.

As word traveled around the country about the horrific event and the hundreds of thousands of homeless and helpless people, trains loaded with supplies began heading toward San Francisco. In the first three days, the Presidio issued 3,000 tents, 13,000 ponchos, 58,000 pairs of shoes, 24,000 shirts. Its on-site bakery distributed large quantities of bread. In addition to distributing food and clothing, the Army ran 21 official refugee camps. These camps were organized and maintained in military fashion, and were among the safest and cleanest of the refugee shelters.

The 250,000 left homeless after the earthquake established camps in parks, on military reservations, and amidst the ruins. The army helped organize these camps into small tent towns, where people quickly established the routines of everyday life; children formed playgroups, and dining halls and camp fires became the center of social gatherings. In a remarkable project financed primarily by donations to a relief fund, 5,610 tiny cottages were built to house the homeless. These cottages, now called "earthquake shacks," were placed in rows in parks around the city. Rent

ranged from \$1 to \$2 per month. Although many refugees moved out as the city rebuilt, many were housed more permanently in these small green houses built from redwood and fir by union carpenters. The idea behind these small cottages was to lease them to the homeless refugees, then once the cottages were removed by their tenants, all leased money was returned. By the end of 1906, the city began encouraging people to find vacant lots and remove the shacks from public land. By 1908, these camps were disbanded as the cottages were moved onto the owners' private property, providing the opportunity for many to own their first homes.

Today, no one knows for sure just how many of these shacks still exist. Because the shacks were so small (typically 14 by 18 feet), many people cobbled together three or four shacks to make a home. In 1984, one home was declared a city landmark when the renter discovered that her house was really three shacks cobbled together: 1224 - 24th Ave.

Another group of four earthquake shacks was discovered in the Sunset District a few years ago on Kirkham Street near 47th Avenue. The Western



Neighborhoods Project is working to preserve these shacks and make them available for public viewing. Several shacks are to be found in Bernal Heights and the Excelsior.

Although fun to find, they are easily missed, and some blend in very well to their surroundings. There is an unverified shack on Pearl near Duboce, and in the famous Clarion Alley filled with beautiful murals there are two shacks in the middle of the block. On our *Mission-North Food Tour*, or our *Explore The Mission Tour*, we point out these hidden gems and many others. Join us sometime as we explore San Francisco.

Explore San Francisco, a co-op of guides who explore the City's "hidden gems." Info: www.ExploreSanFrancisco.biz or 415.793.1104



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Water Main (Cont. from p. 1)

was demolished and reconstructed starting with the road base. "Sidewalks and driveways impacted by the water inundation and construction work were also repaired or replaced as needed."

The 16 inch water main that ruptured was not replaced, but was permanently capped at the intersection of 15th and West Portal avenues, and on the other end at the intersection of 16th Avenue and Wawona Street, Kastama said. The SFPUC considered replacing the water main, but decided against it for two reasons.

"Based on our engineers' careful review of geotechnical information, hydraulic and operational requirements, and in consideration of speeding the neighborhood's recovery, the SFPUC has decided to evaluate constructing a new 16 inch transmission main that fulfills similar system needs in a new alignment away from this affected area," a May 28, 2013, letter to residents from the commission reads. Kastama said the "system has sufficient operational flexibility to operate without this section."

"The new main would require two to three years to construct," the letter says. "A very early estimate for design and construction costs to build this pipeline ... is approximately \$3 million," Kastama said. The "pipeline segment will be upgraded to current seismic code and industry standards."

Despite what appears to be due diligence on the part of the SFPUC regarding infrastructure improvements, Truong is not happy with the way the City has or is handling claims for property damage. He said

the City started accepting partial claims, but has now changed its mind. And the City has denied a claim by the company that issued his family's renter's insurance.

"The insurance company is now suing the City for the claim they paid to us, and we are forced into the lawsuit through subrogation - which is creating even more work for us," Truong said.

So far the City has paid 70 claims to residents for flood repairs. And the time for filing is still open, said Gabriel Zitrin with City Attorney Dennis Herrera's office. Zitrin said residents have one year to file claims for either real or personal property. One claim amounted to \$301,000, while many claims were under \$25,000.

Claims of more than \$40,000 typically must be approved by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. But to speed up claims, the City pre-approved \$4 million for claims of more than \$40,000. The \$301,000 claim came out of the \$4 million fund.

Keith Burbank is a local journalist.

Watchdogs & Whistleblowers Dr. Maria Rivero & Dr. Derek Kerr

Detering Whistleblowers

We previously reviewed how the Ethics Commission (Ethics) "dismissed" whistleblowers, their tips, and retaliation complaints. But getting rid of whistleblower claims doesn't stop more from rolling in, so deterrents serve to limit exposures of wrongdoing.

Commissioners are the first line of deterrence. Like a skilled courtier, Positive Resource Center CEO Brett Andrews gained an Ethics seat this June after promising the Board's Rules Committee "to build on Commissioner Liu's legacy." Andrews' adulation of said legacy was based on schmaltz rather than his own observations or Liu's contributions. Though viewed as a phantom by Ethics watchdogs, Andrews portrayed himself as engaged. Upon resigning after just 2 years, a fawning Commissioner Dorothy Liu had showered thanks and praise on her Ethics colleagues. Their polite responses credited her with more virtues than she possessed.

By reframing this flattery as legacy, Andrews offered a "go along to get along" ethos for proximity to power.

When asked by Supervisor Malia Cohen to showcase his aptitude for managing controversies, Andrews shared a trifle: how he led his agency to move downtown despite staff concerns. No mention of the 3-year legal battle with his former Legal Director - and whistleblower - Jane Gelfand (*SF Weekly* May 22, '13). Since Ethics is charged with reviewing whistleblower retaliation claims, Andrews cast a pall over his candidacy by hiding his own whistleblower imbroglio. Yet, Supervisors Norman Yee, London Breed and Cohen

selected Andrews over Hulda Garfalo, a knowledgeable, truth-telling Civil Grand Juror who had investigated both the Ethics Commission and the Whistleblower Program.

To safeguard public service, conflicts of interest must be disclosed and avoided. Accordingly, all Commissioners must provide a Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) to the Ethics Commission. Though installed on 6/18/13, Andrews needed nudging to file his required SEI - 4 months later. In response to our 10/14/13 Sunshine inquiry about his missing SEI, Ethics responded 2 days later: "Commissioner Andrews' Statement of Economic Interests was not posted because he filed yesterday." Watching will tell if Andrews' community service and political savvy yields ethical, independent decision-making.

In February 2012, Paul Renne, husband of former City Attorney Louise Renne, was appointed to Ethics by DA George Gascon. Renne's initial Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) showed millions invested in 63 corporate assets,

income exceeding \$200,000 from law firms - including the one his wife founded - plus a Golden Gateway Commons property that sold for \$2.2 million in October. One year later, Renne's SEI portfolio has bulked up from 11 to 14 pages, with 82 investments valued between \$1 and \$9 million. This world is far removed from 99% of whistleblowers. Despite an occasional populist stance, Renne identifies with the few who *really know*. He ended the contentious 9/23/13 Ethics meeting by dismissing public criticism of Ethics Director John St. Croix as "*all unfounded...because it isn't the way any of us feel who know what you're really doing.*"

Relevant too is Louise Renne's analysis of the 2012 SF Housing Authority (SFHA) whistleblower scandal involving alleged contract-rigging, harassment and retaliation. After protesting mismanagement, SFHA attorney-whistleblowers Tim Larsen, Roger Crawford and Bill Ford were laid off. Two of them sued. In November 2012, Renne's firm was commissioned by

Cont. p. 17

Quentin Kopp (Cont. from p. 3)

about Barclays Center, the new basketball arena in Brooklyn, that the Warriors’ proposed arena is 100 percent *privately financed* by them. After city taxpayers provide the land, the Warriors would finance only the structures and improvements built on taxpayer land. City taxpayers would bestow as much as \$170,000,000 or more to fill the Bay with concrete and create “artificial land” at Piers 30-32 upon which the Warriors would build the arena and allied structures in the Bay. The entire project reportedly would cost about \$1,000,000,000; thus taxpayers confer about 17% of the project cost. Taxpayers should be spending 0%, considering the gift of free land to the Warriors.

Equally interesting in *The Wall Street Journal* article was disclosure that the vaunted Barclays Center’s operating income is less than its debt service. (The article is entitled; “Arena Glitters, but Is It Gold?”) Barclays with approximately 212 events in its first year, including National Basketball Association Brooklyn Nets’ playoff and regular season games and forecasted 2,100,000 spectators, will generate only some \$25,000,000 in revenue for the year, not the \$76,000,000 predicted by the owners. That’s less than the \$29,000,000 in annual debt repayment. Barclays Center isn’t generating a profit from events like the MTV video music awards, Beyoncé and Paul McCartney concerts, and 212 other events (the Warriors boast of 200 events per year at the proposed arena). Bestowing \$170,000,000 or more of San Francisco

taxpayer funds on a Warriors arena constitutes a bad investment.

The United States Supreme Court heard oral arguments last month in a case attempting to overturn Michigan’s Constitutional prohibition against granting racial, national origin, gender or ethnicity preferences in public universities, public jobs or government contracts. The University of Michigan wants to give preferential treatment in admissions on account of race, color, ethnicity and gender, despite voter adoption of a Michigan constitutional amendment modeled on California’s 1996 initiative measure, declaring that Michigan shall not discriminate against or grant preferential treatment to any individual on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education or public contracting. As co-chairman with then-Governor Pete Wilson of the 1996 California Constitutional Initiative, I fearlessly forecast U.S. Supreme Court rejection of University of Michigan efforts to discriminate on account of race or sex. I am reminded of columnist George Will’s observation last September that tens of millions of dollars could be saved in higher education budgets if every college or university abolished every administrative position “whose titles contained the words ‘diversity’, ‘equity’, ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘gender’, ‘inclusion’, ‘identity’, ‘interconnectivity’, ‘cross-cultural’ or ‘multiculturalism.’” That would be nirvana.

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

Manzanita (Cont. from p. 1)

critical habitat for the Franciscan manzanita. The government cannot use critical habitat designations to take over or control property rights.

However, at the September 23 West of Twin Peaks Central Council meeting, it was stated that the Fish and Wildlife Service may use “*eminent domain*” to control the 3.2 acres for possible reforestation. But according to Robert Moler, Assistant Field Supervisor for External Affairs for the Fish and Wildlife Service, “Activities on private lands that don’t require Federal permits or funding are not affected by a critical habitat designation.” In other words, private

318 acres – of City-managed park land to be permanently committed to planting an endangered species that can be readily purchased in nurseries?

citizens will still be able to control 100% of their land regardless of a critical habitat determination.

“Eminent Domain is completely different than a critical habitat designation. Eminent domain is the power of the state to seize private property without the owner’s consent. A critical habitat designation only delineates the best places an organism can survive.”

NAP Clams Up

All of this Mt. Davidson land is controlled by the SF Rec & Parks (RPD). The RPD’s Native Area Plants Department (NAP) will be overseeing the replanting of the Franciscan manzanita throughout this area. Unfortunately, NAP has not met with neighbors to discuss its plans to reestablish the manzanita. Nor has any government agency contacted the neighborhoods about the manzanita. Calls to NAP Director, Lisa Wayne, were not returned.

As with other NAP projects, public access to large areas may become off-limits so that the Francisco manzanita can become reestablished. Neighbors are worried that large sections of Mt. Davidson might be closed to the public for years while the *wild* Franciscan manzanita is getting established. NAP has been completely silent on whether it will designate open space areas as being off-limits, and for how long.

It cost San Francisco \$205,075 to dig up and replant the last remaining wild Franciscan manzanita, including \$100,000 to pay for the “hard removal,” \$79,470 to pay for the “establishment, nurturing and monitoring” of the plant for a decade after its “hard

removal,” and \$25,605 to cover the “reporting requirements” for the decade after the “hard removal.”

The Franciscan manzanita is also a commercially cultivated species of shrub that can be purchased from nurseries for as little as \$15.98 per plant, and have been available for purchase in nurseries for about 50 years. The plants are propagated by taking cuttings and, therefore, are presumed to be almost genetically-similar.

The last *wild* Franciscan manzanita may have been found, but it may be a hybrid of the manzanita plants found in nurseries. Recent taxonomic revisions have established Franciscan manzanita as a separate species, based

primarily on genetic comparisons, including the fact that Franciscan manzanita has 13 pairs of chromosomes, while its closest relative (*A. montana ravenii*) has 26 chromosome pairs.

Manzanita seeds are germinated by fire, but the exact relationship between germination and fire isn’t known. This is why the plant is constantly cloned. The plant also requires full sunlight. How many trees will NAP cut down to provide the Franciscan manzanita with full sunlight?

The Francisco manzanita is listed as an endangered species. The Endangered Species Act listing for the rare bush means anyone who removes or tampers with the plant could face criminal prosecution and fines. The designation also qualifies the plant for federal conservation funds.

Does it make sense for over six percent — 318 acres — of City-managed park land to be permanently committed to planting an endangered species that can be readily purchased in nurseries? How will the Franciscan manzanita be able to survive without fire?

Neighbors need to know what is happening with the 318 acres of San Francisco private and public land that will be used to replant the manzanita, and how the critical habitat determination will impact public open space. RPD outreach to neighborhoods continues to be poor and disingenuous. NAP has stonewalled the public far too long and must be required to meet with Westside neighbors.

George Wooding, Midtown Terrace Homeowners Association

WEST OF TWIN PEAKS CENTRAL COUNCIL By Keith Burbank

The West of Twin Peaks Central Council returned to the Forest Hill Clubhouse, its former home, October 28, after renovations were complete. Finding a quorum existed, the council and visitors heard from Democratic State Senator Mark Leno. Leno is chairing the senate’s budget and fiscal review committee. He said many items have been shifted to the budget committee from the appropriations committee. The appropriations committee is letting nothing out, so any hope of funding is coming through the budget process, he told the council. For example, seniors at the Jewish Home of SF will be able to stay in their homes because the state was able to find funding for the home through the budget process and bipartisan effort.

Leno also said state officials are helping the California Department of Justice **confiscate weapons** from people prohibited from having a weapon, such as convicted felons and the mentally ill. Officials are allowing the state attorney general’s office, which is part of the DOJ, to use money from the Dealer Record of Sale Account, an account based on a fee from the sale of firearms. With each sale, \$19.00 goes into the account, and Leno said there is a surplus. The DOJ has confiscated nearly 4,000 weapons in the last two years. But each day about 15 names are added to the list of persons prohibited from having a weapon, Leno said.

Leno argued that the state’s recent budget deficit is a revenue problem rather than a problem of too much spending. To make his case, the senator cited a projection by the state’s Legislative Analyst’s Office. That projection says the state’s **general fund** would have grown to \$125 billion in 2012, from \$103 billion in 2008, because of inflation and population growth alone. Today, the general fund is \$94 billion, and would be \$88 billion, except residents passed Proposition 30. “That’s a serious loss of revenue,” Leno said.

The senator also argued in support of California’s **vehicle license fee**, which former Governor Gray Davis successfully brought back when he was in office. California had reduced the fee by \$200 per person during the state’s first dot-com boom because California had surplus revenue. Leno said the state bled \$50 billion to give everyone \$200. Now it’s costing **California students** \$4,000 or \$5,000 more each year to go to college. Leno added that the state has cut \$1 billion from California’s **community college system**, \$1 billion from California’s **court system**, \$1 billion from the **University of California** system and other places.

Before the senator left, **Avrum Shepard** asked whether the legislature is ready to close a **tax loophole for commercial property** owners. The loophole has its origins in Proposition 13, which capped tax increases on real property at one percent of the assessed or appraised value. At the time legislators passed **Proposition 13**, they were concerned that tax increases were forcing seniors out of their homes. Through the loophole, commercial property owners can avoid tax increases on their property by selling less than 50 percent of the property, which could be held in the form of stock. Before Proposition 13 passed, 60 percent of California’s property tax revenue came from commercial properties, while 40 percent came from residential properties. Currently that’s reversed, Leno said. We are subsidizing the commercial property owners. “That’s a fact of life,” he said. He also said some **business owners** see closing the loophole as a huge job killer.

Denise LaPointe, Twin Peaks Improvement Association, asked Leno about getting repairs done to **Twin Peaks Boulevard**, a scenic drive. “It is in horrid disrepair,” she said. “This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Leno said. Get in touch with his office.

Another resident shared with Leno her frustrations with the California Department of Transportation. And Leno encouraged her to get in touch with his office for help.

The council devoted the second half meeting to the **8 Washington project**. **Tim Colen**, executive director, San Francisco Housing Action Coalition, spoke in favor of the project. Voting yes for Propositions B and C on the November ballot would be a vote in favor of the project. If approved by voters, developers will build 134 luxury condominiums along the Embarcadero, just north of the Ferry Building. The condos will replace some tennis courts and a 23,000 square foot parking lot. Colen said the City could earn \$7 million a year if the condos are built, compared with earning about \$100,000 a year currently. He said for seven years the City and other organizations have been considering the project. “This has been a painstaking process,” he said. But opponents oppose the height of the buildings, which will block some views Coit Tower and Telegraph Hill. Colen said that the proposed height of the tallest building is one-half of the nearest residential building and one quarter of the height of the nearest commercial building. One alternative preserves a parking lot, Colen said. The other pays the City vastly more and beautifies the City. “We shouldn’t be voting on this,” he said.

Louise Renne, a former City attorney, spoke as an opponent of the 8 Washington project. She told attendees that the project moves San Francisco closer to looking like Miami Beach, with high rises lining the waterfront. She also said the project is so bulky that it will not open up the waterfront as proponents claim. The project is the size of a football field, she said. “This is a fight for the future of the Northern Waterfront.” She said this project will set a precedent for three more lots along the Northern Waterfront that have yet to be developed. “There is precedent here.” Renne said there are alternatives such as Van Ness Avenue.

The last order of business was a motion to support a West Portal business in its effort to get a conditional use authorization. **Vin Debut**, which burned in the fire that consumed Squat & Gobble, is seeking an authorization to obtain the same amount of space it had before the fire. And the council voted to write a letter of support to the Planning Department.

West of Twin Peaks Central Council meets to discuss topics of interest to Westside residents on the last Monday each month. Forest Hills Clubhouse, 381 Magellan Ave.



Forest Hills Clubhouse, 381 Magellan Ave. Architect: Bernard Maybeck Constructed: 1919

MONEY MATTERS • By Brandon Miller and Joanne Jordan

Convert your Workplace Savings to a Roth

If you are like many people, the majority of the money you've set aside for retirement is held in your workplace savings plan, such as a 401(k) or 403(b). When the time comes to draw income from this portion of your nest egg, most or all of the distributions from your plan will likely be subject to income tax.

There is a growing appreciation for the idea of "tax diversification" in retirement. That means having access to income sources that are subject to different tax treatment. A good tax-diversification strategy includes a "tax-free" category of assets. A Roth IRA, for example, allows money contributed after tax to grow and receive qualified withdrawals tax-free.

You are now allowed to make a direct rollover of assets in a workplace plan to a Roth IRA, provided you are eligible to move the money in the first place. You can move money from a workplace plan when you separate from service (either retire or leave the employer), or in the event of death



bracket later in life when you need to make withdrawals

- can pay the current tax liability on the converted amount from other available resources without drawing down your retirement savings

- want to reduce your exposure to Required Minimum Distributions later in life. Distributions are required to begin after you reach age 70-1/2 from your workplace plan or traditional IRA. Distributions are never required from Roth IRAs during your lifetime, so you can maximize the tax advantages by keeping money in the account.

- are trying to create more flexibility to

“the cost of converting assets and paying tax on the conversion at your current rate may actually cost you more money in the long run”

or disability. Depending on your retirement plan, you may also be eligible for so-called "in-service distributions," allowing you to roll some of your retirement savings out of a plan and into an IRA before you leave your job. As with any rollover from an employer-sponsored plan, the money must move directly from the current plan to the administrator of the account (IRA or other employer's plan) you are moving it to if you want to avoid unnecessary taxes or penalties.

Pay taxes now or later The big question you should ask yourself before converting money to a Roth IRA is whether the benefit of tax-free income later in life is worth the cost of paying taxes now on the converted amount, which is required. All pre-tax contributions and earnings accumulated in your workplace plan that are converted to a Roth IRA are subject to current tax at your ordinary income tax rate(s).

Note that not all of the money needs to be converted at one time. To limit current tax liability when executing a direct rollover and conversion to a Roth IRA, you can choose to move just a portion out of the 401(k) and into the Roth in a given year. You should be aware that if the conversion drives your total income to certain levels, higher tax rates may apply and make the conversion more costly.

When it makes sense Converting workplace plan dollars to a Roth IRA may be most worthwhile if you:

- expect to be in a similar or higher tax

manage your tax liability in retirement by owning a mix of assets subject to different tax treatment.

Holding off on a Roth conversion While the potential of future tax-free income makes a Roth conversion worth considering, it may not always work to your advantage. Situations where you may want to avoid such a conversion include:

- if you own company stock in your workplace plan. There is the potential to take advantage of special tax treatment of these assets when you take a lump-sum distribution, move employer securities out of the plan and take direct control of the assets (referred to as Net Unrealized Appreciation rules). Work with your tax adviser to be sure you meet requirements.

- if you expect your tax bracket in retirement will be lower than it is today. Then the cost of converting assets and paying tax on the conversion at your current rate may actually cost you more money in the long run.

There are a number of factors that go into a Roth conversion decision. Be sure to explore all of your options with guidance from financial and tax professionals to be sure you are doing what's best for your long-term financial future.

Brandon Miller, CFP and Joanne Jordan, CFP are financial consultants at Jordan Miller & Associates, A Private Wealth Advisory Practice of Ameriprise Financial Inc. helping individuals and families plan and achieve their financial goals.

Senior Smarts By Anise J. Matteson

Veterans Day honors men and women who served in the United States Armed services. In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed November 11 as Armistice Day to remind Americans of the tragedy of war. A law adopted in 1938 made the day a federal holiday. In 1954, Congress changed the name to Veterans Day to honor all United States Veterans.

Health care specific to veterans is outside of my area of expertise, except for an internship at Letterman Army Medical Center, Presidio of San Francisco, in the curriculum for Medical Record Technology.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is an important resource for veterans, their family/caregiver and friends. The San Francisco telephone directory White Pages (US (Federal) Government) listings provide departments and telephone numbers. The Department's website (www.sanfrancisco.va.gov) provides information on services available to veterans and their families for: health care, benefits, crisis line, veteran services, and burials and memorials.

HEALTH CARE AND BENEFITS

San Francisco VA Medical Center: A 104-bed facility and 120-bed Community Living Center. Primary and mental health care is provided at five outpatient clinics. There is a specialized homeless Veterans clinic in downtown San Francisco. The Medical Center is affiliated with UCSF School of Medicine. (sanfrancisco.va.gov)

Aid and Attendance Program: Financial assistance for in-home care, assisted living or nursing home. (canhr.org/factsheets/misc_fs/html/fs_aid_&_attendance.htm)

Respite Care: Can be received as an inpatient, outpatient or a home setting; and is for veterans who need skilled services, case management, and assistance with daily living or instrumental activities of daily living, are isolated, or their caregiver is experiencing burden. (va.gov/Geriatrics/Guide/LongTermCare/Respite_Care.asp)

Local Support Services for Veterans: VA Medical Centers; Outpatient Clinics; Vet Centers; PTSD Program; Suicide Prevention Coordinators; VA Chaplains; Veterans Administration Offices. Connected by: Who You Are; Life Experiences; Video Gallery; Signs & Symptoms (maketheconnection.net/resources?gclid=CImMgfy9LkCFc01Qgodq2oAg)

Chaplain Services: To speak with a chaplain at the San Francisco VA Medical Center, call Customer Service and your call will be transferred to Patient Advocacy where you can speak to one of three Patient Advocates. Chaplain Services is also available to visitors. (sanfrancisco.va.gov/visitors)

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

The SF VA Medical Center offers seven support groups for caregivers:

(Web-Based Support Group) Building Better Care Givers: Workshop: managing fatigue and stress; managing difficult behaviors and feelings; making good decisions and future plans for your loved ones; improving your sleep, diet and stay active.

Starting the Conversation: Housing Options—Finding the Right Fit: Focuses on strategies to enhance resilience and restore balance.

Parkinson's Disease and Caregiver Support Group: Provides education and emotional support to deal with the stress and strain of care giving.

Community Living Center Support Group: Provides caregiver support for family members of Community Living Center residents.

Voluntary Respite Program: Volunteers provide home respite for caregivers of homebound Veterans.



Family 2 Family Program: Co-facilitated by Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) staff and local chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

Caregiver Program for Post 9/11 Veterans: Provides additional support to eligible post-9/11 Veterans who elect to receive care in a home setting from a primary Family Caregiver.

More information: contact SFVAMC Caregiver Support Coordinator.

National Caregiver Support Line: (855)260-3274. Research/referral center for caregivers, Veterans and others seeking caregiver information; provides referrals to local VA Medical Center Support Coordinators and VA/community resources; and provide emotional support. (sanfrancisco.va.gov/services/caregiver/index.asp)

Patient Service Administration: Provides Patient Information for: Before Your Visit; During Your Stay or Care; and After Your Visit. (www.sanfrancisco.va.gov/patients/)

PATIENT TRANSPORTATION

SFVAMC Shuttle Schedule: Local – San Francisco VA Medical Center: Three shuttle routes run Monday through Friday to: Downtown Clinic (3rd & Harrison St.); San Bruno Clinic; UCSF. (sanfrancisco.va.gov/patients/shuttlelocal.asp)

NURSING HOME

Geriatrics & Extended Care – San Francisco VA Medical Center: Offers clinical services for older or functionally dependent Veterans. Geriatric Services and Programs available: Community Living Center; Respite Care; Rehabilitative Care; Hospice and Palliative Care; Geriatric Medicine Clinic; Home-Based Primary Care; Geriatric Teaching Programs; Geriatric Research. (sanfrancisco.va.gov/services/Geriatrics.asp)

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Veterans Benefit Administration: Provides information on pre-discharge; compensation; education & training; vocational rehabilitation & employment; home loans; life insurance; pension... (benefits.va.gov/benefits)

CRISIS LINE

Veterans Crisis Line: (800) 273-8255, press 1. Formerly the National Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline, provides confidential help for Veterans, their families and friends. Responders are available around-the-clock, year-round, for confidential support calls. Website provides: Self-Check Quiz; Confidential Homeless Veterans Chat; Support for Deaf and Hard of Hearing; anonymous online chat service; text-messaging service; Learn to Identify the Warning Signs; Suicide and Crisis Resources. (veteranscrisisline.net)

Anise's report on Veteran services is too long to print in this issue. The complete article is available online.

Anise Matteson is an elder care consultant, retired Registered Health Information Technician, and writer of reference books for seniors. She can be reached at cfaalo@yahoo.com.

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Kevin is a very opinionated realtor, but I say this in a good way. There were many homes that we were willing to bid on in what was a very challenging market, but thankfully **Kevin kept our best interests in mind**. Rather than going for a quick close, he actually talked us out of a few homes to make sure we stayed true to our criteria.

— Aaron L.
Buyer, Noe Valley Victorian, Director, Biotech Firm

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— Peter G.
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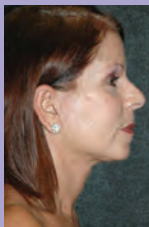
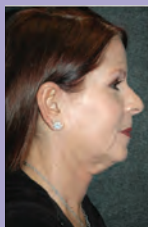
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Anders Zorn - Sweden's Master Painter

Legion of Honor • Nov 9, –Feb 2
(Swedish, 1860–1920) Anders Zorn was one of the world's most famous living artists at the turn of the twentieth century. A hugely successful portrait painter in this country—he depicted captains of industry, members of high society, and three U.S. Presidents.

During the 1880s and 1890s Zorn lived in London and Paris, where he became acquainted with key figures of the Belle Époque, including James McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent, and Auguste Rodin, as well as many of the French Impressionists. Zorn made seven trips to the US, visiting San Francisco during the winter of 1903–1904, where he declared the nightlife “particularly appealing from a male point of view.”

The exhibit includes a hundred paintings, watercolors, etchings, and sculptures.

SAT • STRETCH & SKETCH WORKSHOP

Sat Nov 9 | 2 – 4 pm Adults and Teens are welcome to join us for an all levels yoga session and sketch yoga poses! Feel the poses in your own body and then deepen your yoga practice by learning how to observe, study and sketch yoga poses from a live model. Bring a sketchpad, pencils, etc. Sign-up thriveabilitysf.com/workshops/ Thriveability 300-B West Portal Ave.

SUN • VETERANS DAY PARADE

Sun Nov 10 | 11am The annual Veterans Day Parade begins at 2nd Street at Market and continues via McAllister to City Hall.

WED • BARBARY COAST MADAMS

Wed Nov 13 | Noon Barbary Coast Trail founder Daniel Bacon will speak to the Canadian Women's Club about the “Madams of the Barbary Coast.” Basque Cultural Ctr 1800 Railroad Ave, So San Francisco \$35. Guests & gents welcome; RSVP www.canadianwomensclub.org and or email President@canadianwomensclub.org

THU • DIST COALITION MEETING

Thu Nov 14 | 7 pm –9 pm | Meets 2nd Thu each month. Info: 586.8103 or ssuval@sbcglobal.net Taraval Station, 2345 24th Ave.

WED • NERT TSUNAMI RISK

Wed Nov 13 | 6:30–8:30 pm Learn about the Bay Area's tsunami risks, preparedness and response for a worst case scenario—a possible 15 foot tide. Meet Cindy Pridmore, CA Geological Survey and Kevin Miller, CA Office of Emergency Services. County Fair Bldg, 9th Ave at Lincoln Way, Free.

FRI • AUTHOR STEPHEN KINZER

Fri Nov 15 | 11:30 a.m. check-in | Former New York Times Correspondent, Author, *The Brothers Dull*, Duller, Dulles: Cold War Roots of Today's World Crises. Former Sec. of State Foster Dulles and former CIA agent Allen Dulles shaped history, arguably not always to America's benefit. Commonwealth Club, 595 Market St. 2nd Fl. Members free/\$20/\$7 students (ID) Tickets 597-6705/www.commonwealthclub.org

TUE • COMMUNITY SAFETY MEETING

Tue Nov 19 | 7 pm | Meet with Captain Curtis Lum. 3rd Tue of the month. Taraval Community Room, located at 2345 - 24th Ave. 759-3100.

TUE • IS IT DEMENTIA?

Tue Nov 19 | 6:30 pm Mary Hulme operator of a geriatric care management business in SF, will discuss signs of dementia and when to call a doctor at the West Portal Library, 155 Lenox.

TUE • HOW TO USE LINKEDIN

Tue Nov 19 | 6-7:30 pm | The biggest professional network on the Internet — experts will take you step by step and tips for how to connect for your professional development. 5th Floor, Main Library, 100 Larkin. Free. 557-4277

MON • SHARP

Mon Nov 25 | 7 pm | Sunset Heights Assoc. of Responsible People. Last Mon each month - sharpsf.com for details. 1736 9th Ave. @ Moraga.

MON • CENTRAL COUNCIL

Mon Nov 25 | 7:30 pm | West of Twin Peaks Central Council meets to discuss topics of interest to Westside residents. Last Monday each month. Forest Hills Clubhouse, 381 Magellan Ave.

Real Travel By Sergio Nibbi



The Book of What?

When the second mechanic entered the cockpit it became an “oh, oh” moment, and judging by the size of him it must have been pretty cozy in there, but fortunately the usual excuses didn't materialize from the cockpit and before long we pushed back and took the long stroll to the end of the runway. We waited patiently in line

while the flight crew forewarned us of takeoff delays and chop along the way. Our captain, a middle-aged woman, was very much in charge and with the first bump the seat belt sign came on and her school teacher demeanor said it all. As it turned out it was a relatively smooth flight, the continental breakfast aboard was manageable, and the ride to the hotel routine.

the Trump International. Kristen arrived



Chicago has always been one of our favorite destinations, and this trip is doubly nice in that we get to attend a surprise 80th birthday party for my cousin and we have the opportunity to visit with our granddaughter, who's attending her senior year at Marquette University.

After a late lunch and a brief walk around the area we settled for room service while enjoying the river and city views from our 23rd floor panoramic windows of

at noon the following day and the first order of business for the ladies was a quick trip to Nordstrom's, after all, isn't that what grandparents are for?

Aside from the Miracle Mile, Chicago has some of the greatest museums of any major city. Next stop was a visit to the Museum of Contemporary Art, a comfortable walking distance from our hotel. The three floors of exhibits were interspersed

Cont. p. 13

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At the Theater • By Flora Lynn Isaacson & Linda Ayres-Frederick

Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo

An Original Drama About the Iraq War at SF Playhouse

The San Francisco Playhouse has launched the first year of its second decade, now in a new venue, at 450 Post Street, with a Tony-nominated and Pulitzer Prize finalist, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, by Rajiv David and directed by Bill English.

This show is about a tiger (Will Marchetti) that haunts the streets of present day Baghdad seeking the meaning of life. As he witnesses the puzzling absurdities of war, the tiger encounters Americans and Iraqis searching for friendship and redemption.

He lives in the Baghdad zoo. He tells the audience that most of the animals have fled to “freedom” because of the Iraq invasion, only to be shot dead by soldiers. That night US soldiers come to guard the zoo. The tiger, driven by fear and hunger, bites off the hand of Tom (Gabriel Marin), a soldier. Kev (Craig Marker), another soldier shoots the tiger, mortally wounding him.

Kev finds himself haunted by the ghost of the tiger, who wanders about Baghdad. Due to an outburst while searching an Iraqi home, Kev is sent to the hospital. Back in Baghdad with a prosthetic hand, Tom pays a visit to Kev. It is revealed that the gun Kev used to shoot the tiger was taken from the palace of the late Uday Hussein. Tom wants the gun back so he can start a new life in the U.S. by selling the gold plated gun. During the exchange however, the gun falls into the hands of Uday’s former gardener, Masa (Kuros Charney), who is also working as a translator for the soldiers. He is frequently visited by Uday’s ghost (Pomme Koch).

The rest of the show involves the living characters interacting with the dead ones as the war happens around them. Will Marchetti gives an amazing performance as the tiger (worth the price of admission) and is ably assisted by Gabriel Marin and Craig Marker as the two Marines.

Director Bill English chose this play because “it asks the biggest question of our lives—why are we here...we are all part animal, part spirit and our success at being human is defined by how we balance our contradictory nature.” The fantastic set gets imaginative lighting design by Dan Reed.

Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo runs Oct 1-Nov 16. Tue-Thur 7 pm | Fri-Sat 8 pm | plus Sat at 3 pm. and Sun at 2 pm SF Playhouse, 450 Post St. (2nd floor of Kensington Park Hotel). Tickets: 677-9596 orsfplayhouse.org. Flora Lynn Isaacson

I and You.

MTC Presents World Premiere of Lauren Gunderson’s *I and You* — a heartfelt

new play focuses on how the work of Walt Whitman inspires two teenagers. This play involves two ethnically different teens: cranky Caroline (Jessica Lynn Carroll), who is waiting for a liver transplant, and a level-headed basketball star, Anthony (Devion McArthur), who loves John Coltrane. At the beginning of the play, Anthony shows up in Caroline’s bedroom to get her to collaborate on a project to deconstruct a poem, “Leaves of Grass,” by Walt Whitman which is about the interconnectivity of everything. But as the two cram to finish their presentation, they learn not only how to work together, but just how fundamentally they complement each other.

Lauren Gunderson is currently a hot new playwright. Her plays are performed at Theatre Works, San Francisco Playhouse, Shotgun Players, and Crowded Fire. Director Sarah Rasmussen, the Resident Director for Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s Black Swan Lab, brings a fresh touch to the direction. Michael Locher’s colorful attic bedroom set almost becomes a character in the play. Devion McArthur gives a wonderfully sympathetic and supportive performance as he tries to win over Caroline. Jessica Lynn Carroll gives a challenging performance as Caroline, who is difficult every step of the way.

I and You begins its life at Marin Theatre Company and immediately goes on to productions in Maryland and Indiana. With this play, Gunderson writes in the voice of two intelligent kids, members of a savvy generation who have a lot to say about how fast the world around them is moving. She explains their journey of self discovery with a similar journey expressed by one of America’s finest poets over 150 years ago in a beautifully articulated, revealing piece of literature.

I and You runs Oct 10-Nov 3 at Marin Theatre Company, 397 Miller Avenue, Mill Valley. For tickets, call the box office at 415-388-0208 or go online at www.marintheatre.org.

Coming up next at Marin Theatre Company will be Jacob Marley’s *Christmas Carol* by Tom Mula and directed by John Tracy, Nov 21-Dec 15. Flora Lynn Isaacson



Linda Ayres-Frederick



Flora Lynn Isaacson

Now At the Movies • By Don Lee Miller

CAPTAIN PHILLIPS

Captain Phillips: Tom Hanks kisses his loving wife, Andrea: Catherine Keener, goodbye as he flies from Vermont to a Middle East port on the Aden Gulf of Arabia. Within hours of sailing, the unarmed large container ship finds itself under attack by Somali bandits 145 miles off the Somali coast. They only want \$10-million cash for the safe return of Capt. Phillips. Hanks’ understated performance is a perfect fit. The Somali actors are from the Minneapolis enclave. Paul Greengrass directs his taut thrill-a-minute screenplay by Billy Ray, based on Richard Phillips’ account of the 2008 incidents with Stephan Talty. Lots of Oscar talk for this pic. Brief violence. Profanity.

CARRIE

Carrie: Chloë Grace Moretz is a high school senior who has been “protected” by her zealously abusive religious mother, Margaret White: Julianne Moore. Pitiful Carrie doesn’t realize what’s happening when she has her first period in gym class. Mother never warned her. Classmate Sue: Gabriella Wilde offers her prom date, athletic hunk-with-attitude Tommy: Ansel Elgort as Carrie’s date. The real witch-on-wheels here is Chris: Portia Doubleday, who gets what’s coming to her and then some, once Carrie releases her telekinetic powers. These provide lots of work for the assigned special fx guys in this redo of Stephen King’s novel. Carrie is directed by Kimberly Peirce with the screenplay by Lawrence D. Cohen and Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa. Bloody violence. Mature thematic material. Disturbing images. Some sexuality. Profanity.

CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS

Feed the kids well before this one and take in lots of theatre candy. The screen is filled with food and sweet snacks in abundance with the location in SF and the Silicon Valley. This comedy, primarily for the young with Technicolor food everywhere, is directed by Luc Besson from his screenplay (+2). Mature thematic material. Mild violence. Profanity.

DON JUAN

Joseph Gordon-Leavitt is getting Oscar buzz for this film which he has written, directs and stars in. This movie will not be for everyone; our protagonist Jon lives at his computer with one hand on the keyboard and the other below his waist...blissfully pumping. On Sundays, he goes to the confessional booth and confesses how many times a day, in double figures, he has masturbated and how many times a week, also in double figures, he has had sex with willing femmes. With Barbara: Scarlett Johansson (again voted the Sexiest Woman in the World) among his conquests, he can be forgiven a lot. Can one blame the girl for her dissatisfaction with being abandoned in bed for his porn on his computer? Jon discovers solace with Esther: Julianne Moore, an older woman in one of his night classes. He still finds time for family Sunday dinners with his parents, Jon Sr.: Tony Danza and Angela: Glynne Headly. Nudity. Profanity throughout. Constant sexual content.

ESCAPE PLAN

The world’s foremost authority on structural security Ray Breslin: Sylvester Stallone finds himself imprisoned in a master facility he designed. He turns to other inmates Emil: Arnold Schwarzenegger and Hush: 50 Cent, as well as his prison doc Dr. Kyrie: Sam Neill for help in getting out. Warden Hobbes: Jim Caviezel is a dirty sleaze bag and not to be trusted. His business partner Abigail: Amy Ryan and office accountant Lester Clark: Vincent D’Onofrio have differing viewpoints on his release. Swedish director Mikael Håfström helms the Miles Chapman nail-biting story and screenplay with co-credit on the latter with Jason Keller. Violence and Profanity throughout.

FIFTH ESTATE

The real problem with the Wikileaks story is that nobody cares. Such a bruha-hah over leaked war documents, intelligence identities, and what one female government official thought about another doesn’t command top placement on most What to Worry About lists. If the Australian hacker-turned-activist-turned-exile Julian Assange: Benedict Cumberbatch was more empathetic and less flamboyant maybe one could care more. His assistant Daniel Domschiet-Berg: Daniel Brühl is more interesting (although his performance in Rush is even better) than Julian, the founder of Wikileaks. The use of real news footage increases the sense of reality; the supporting cast of American diplomats is impressive: Sarah Shaw: Laura Linney, James Boswell: Stanley Tucci, and Sam Coulsoon: Anthony Mackie. Bill Condon directs. Daniel Domschiet-Berg wrote one source book; David Leigh and Luke Harding wrote another; and Josh Singer adapted them into a screenplay. Some Violence. Profanity.

GRAVITY 3D

Medical engineer Ryan Stone: Sandra Bullock and astronaut Matt Kowalski: George Clooney float around in outer space. Never has there been a more effective use of 3D than here; the awesome trip in space hands down wins the technical awards this year. There is a survival story when an accident leaves them adrift in space, but the visuals are the icing on the cake. It’s even better in IMAX. Ed Harris provides the voice for Mission Control. It is a testament to the acting ability of the two characters that attention is riveted on them. Director Alfonso Cuarón co-wrote the screenplay with his son Jonás Cuarón and Clooney. Disturbing violence. Profanity. Brief drug use.

MACHETE KILLS

The negative Mexican known as Machete: Danny Trejo is a survivor. A hanging, a battle with the drug lord Mendez: Demien Bichir, a babe with a double machine gun bra and below, a pop-up pistol, and the assassin called “El Chameleón”: Cuba Gooding, Jr. and Antonio Banderas all attempt to take Machete’s life. La Chameleón: Lady Gaga and industrialist Voz: Mel Gibson have cameos. Noticable among the supporting players are Killjoy: Alexa Vada (now 25; 4 Spy Kids movies: 2001-11) and Mr. President: Charlie Sheen (Carlos Estevez). Nudity and sexual suggestions. Strong disturbing terror and violence. Profanity.

ROMEO AND JULIET

Romeo: Douglas Booth (6 ft., 1”, 20 when he filmed) will gain many new teen fans with his shirtless scenes. Juliet: Hailee Steinfeld (5 ft., 7”, 15 when she filmed). That they are believable in the parts is a bonus. [Historical footnote: The roles in 1936 were filled by MGM with Leslie Howard (43) and Norma Shearer (35).] Their parents who don’t speak to each other are Lord Capulet: Damien Lewis and Lady Capulet: Natascha McElhone; and Lord Montague: Tomas Arana and Lady Capulet: Laura Morante with Friar Laurence: Paul Giamatti. The filming in Verona is a major plus, with sumptuous decors, fountains, and costumes. Director Carlo Carlei here tackles his first feature film after directing mostly TV movies since 1985, and does



Travel (Cont. from p. 12)

with portable stages and musical instruments for a concert later that evening.

Dinner with a few of the cousins gave us a chance to catch up and reminisce about the old days and relive all those fond memories. A little more walking and a little more shopping and it was time to get ready for my cousin Joe’s 80th surprise party, and surprised he was, especially when he saw us out of the crowd of nearly a hundred. I had called him on his actual birthday just a few days earlier and I had the hardest time not saying “so we’ll see you next Saturday.”

One of Joe’s granddaughters had prepared a slide show of Joe, his family and friends, and as it happened I, too, had prepared a slide show that was also shown. So many wonderful old photos and great memories.

As always the evening went by too quickly, and before long it was Sunday afternoon and time to head to the theater to see a play that Karen had wanted to see for the longest time, *Book of Mormon*. Yes, we had heard about the subject matter and the language, and yes, we did get our daughter’s permission to bring Kristen along, after all she is twenty-one!

The house was packed and the prices ridiculous (actually, when the show comes to San Francisco early next year, the tickets

are reputed to be around \$750 apiece—we got by cheap). The standing ovation was certainly well deserved and the most amazing part was that they had one more performance that evening. We got tired just watching all the jumping and dancing on stage. The adventure was certainly worth it and the language was no worse than what you would normally hear at a 49ers game.

We so enjoyed our birthday party dinner at the Erie Café that the three of us went back Sunday night for a repeat performance. The special for the evening was a 32- ounce slice of prime rib that we fortunately managed to split. Good food, good wine, and family fun was the mantra for the last four days and how fortunate we are still be able to do this. Fortunate, until we got to the airport to find out that our United flight was delayed by almost four hours, but in return for our patience we were rewarded with the nicest crew and a very smooth flight.

Perhaps all those incantations that we learned from the *Book of Mormon* kicked in and a higher power was looking over our shoulder.....aw, the wonders of travel.

Sergio Nibbi gets around—the world! Feed-back: sergio@westsideobserver.com

SECOND THOUGHTS / By Jack Kaye



What's Taking So Long?

It has been said that the older we get, the faster time seems to go. That is because the relative length diminishes with age - so one year to a one-year-old is equal to his whole life but to a 100 year old, it is just one per cent of its length. Now that I am more than two-thirds of a century old and in my last quarter, I notice how quickly Monday turns into Thursday and January becomes September. And yet I also am noticing how slowly things are happening on a national as well as local level.

Remember that almost 100 years ago, it took 18 months to build the Empire State Building...How could it take months to remodel a bathroom or kitchen and years to do an entire house?

On a national level, we are experiencing one of the slowest job recoveries in history after suffering one of the most rapid job losses in almost a century. The Congress has gone years without finalizing a budget and must rely on continuing resolutions to keep the government running. The government has yet to come up with a new, simple and fair federal income tax for individuals and businesses, even though everyone agrees we need one and even though I have recommended the most obvious solution. We see little progress being made to improve our K-12 education, though we have been waiting for it for decades. Poverty is still with us and growing, and we are still in Afghanistan after all this time, money, and human suffering. We still have military bases in Europe, 60 years after they were installed to temporarily protect against the Soviet Empire which no longer exists.

But I see it most vividly on a local level, here in San Francisco.

Every day I walk around my neighborhood for about two or three hours. I do it to exercise my dog and myself, while able to enjoy my wonderful area. I live in one of the most beautiful neighborhoods in one of the most beautiful cities in one of the most beautiful states in one of the most wonderful countries in the world, with one of the best climates as well.

Walking with my eyes wide open, always noticing my environment, I cannot help but pass the same home improvement projects for what seems like years. There is one project that has lasted 12 years. There are some that have been ongoing for three years and then have stopped before being completed.

When I notice a project being worked on, I am always impressed by how few workers there are and how little work they are doing. I watched a group casually work on a project for a four-month period. It turned out to be a bathroom remodel. It would take a week or two with four guys working eight hours a day, but it took four months with a couple of guys working a few hours for a few days a week, for 13 weeks! There are four projects within a block of my home that have been ongoing for years. (It seems to be an unwritten rule among contractors that if any noisy work needs to be done, it must begin at 7 a.m., including on weekends and holidays, even if it's the only work done that day.)

Remember that almost 100 years ago, it took 18 months to build the Empire State Building, then the tallest building in the world. How could it take months to remodel a bathroom or kitchen and years to do an entire house?

I might have a few of the answers.

Several of the long-term projects might be contractor-owned, taking the pressure off to hurry. Some funders might be having financial difficulties, not being able to raise the additional money needed to continue and finish the job. Other contractors might be having issues with the inspections, which have set back the work and added to the cost.

I believe much of the delay is caused by contractors taking on new assignments during the work. In order to hook the new clients, the contractor must pull workers off the ongoing projects to start the new ones before the clients change their mind. When

staffing falls to a trickle of occasional workers, it seems that the project never quite ends. Some large projects have two workers working a few hours a day as though time did not exist. It's like watching people in slow motion mode, or like watching workers in Italy just before siesta, a la "Under the Tuscan Sun."

In the meantime, many of these ongoing projects require parking spaces normally relied upon by neighbors without garages. (A single garage space can easily cost \$3,000 a year to rent.) Ironically, many of the projects involve adding garages. The Bureau of Building Inspectors authorizes and the Department of Public Works issues "No Parking - Tow-Away Zone" signs for the anticipated duration of the project. If the project ends early and the signs are no longer needed, they are not removed, but languish, keeping drivers from parking in the unused spaces. DPW, with its five inspectors, cannot keep track of all the signs and has better things to do but to remove unneeded signs.

What can be done? I have some ideas.

It all starts with the permit approval process. The process should include an agreement of how long the project should take, and its required staffing. The permit applicant should also be helped to estimate the cost of the project, and be expected to show that the needed funds are available. The contractor should be held accountable to maintain sufficient staff working full days, and to stay on schedule to complete the project.

The "No Parking" signs should be issued with large deposits for the agreed-upon work period. The contractor should be motivated to immediately remove the signs when no longer needed by getting a refund for the unused days, and avoiding a large fine subtracted from the deposit if the signs are not immediately removed. Members of the Department of Parking and Traffic should be authorized to remove expired or otherwise unneeded signs.

I have always been lucky with contractors. Each of mine had staff that did the job well, did it quickly, and were gone. The contractors had several similarities. They were licensed and had a staff of workers who were paid for full time, year round employment. The workers were here legally and spoke English fluently. They knew their job and had not learned it a few hours before. The workers didn't leave to work another job. They knew that they had to finish mine first. I paid most of the bill at the end when the work was done.

Two other lessons I learned: Never pay before the work is done! It is too much of a temptation for the contractor to forget to finish or to take his time doing it. Avoid charming contractors. I found that the more charming the contractor, the worse the work.

In the meantime, if there is a project in your neighborhood that seems to have overstayed its welcome or has gone but left its signs behind, you can call and complain. In San Francisco dial 311 and tell them the problem. They will follow through and get action.

I've got to get back to my kitchen remodel to finish it before my yet unborn grandchildren retire.

Feedback: kaye@westsideobserver.com

Do you have a pinched nerve? We can help.

Dear friend,

It's hard to believe, I know, but it's true. Last year more Americans were killed by prescription drugs than by guns, AIDS, suicides and terrorists combined...But we'll get to that in a minute.

Let me start by explaining the photo in this letter. You know when I meet people in town they usually say, "Oh yeah, I know you, you are Doctor Meakim. You have been on the corner of Beach and Jones for years....." Well, that's me. I'm also the woman hugging her niece at the jersey shore in the picture.

17 years ago something happened that changed my life forever. I was a young woman living in Philadelphia when it happened. I was driving with a friend when she missed a stop sign and rammed into the side of another car. We were all shaken up. The police were called and we all went to the hospital. No one was bleeding, so the doctors took some x-rays of our neck, gave us pain meds and sent us on our way. The next day I woke up with pain everywhere and it just kept getting worse. For years I tried everything that I could find. For an escape from the pain, I went to medical doctors, physical therapists, acupuncturists, I tried special pillows, and anything I thought might help. I spent a lot of time and money. Along the way I had two more car accidents and the pain kept getting worse and worse. I had developed fibromyalgia, neck pain, mid-back pain and low-back pain with tingling and numbness down my right arm and leg. I was scared that something was really wrong with me. This could not be normal. I was only 33 years old and felt like I was 100. That is when someone told me about a chiropractor that they thought could help. As a matter of fact, after the first person told me about him, two more people did that same week. So I made an appointment with the chiropractor. Thank goodness that they took the time to help me! I went to his office where he asked me about my problems, did an exam, and took some x-rays of my head and back. After that he pointed out where my nerves were pinched and adjusted them. The adjustment was so light I barely felt it. I began crying as I felt the pain leave my body for the first time in years. It may sound strange, but I was so happy and grateful for the relief that I still thank him every day! After that, I knew what I had to do. I had to become a chiropractor, and that's how it happened!

I have adjusted many children within the first 15 minutes after birth. They obviously didn't complain of neck pain or back pain; I adjust them to keep them healthy... as with all the hundreds of children I care for in my office.

You see, it's not normal for kids to get ear infections, asthma, allergies or a number of other illnesses we see clear up in our office everyday.

When the nervous system is working correctly your internal resistance and healing powers are enhanced.

A healthy family does NOT rely on medication to make them well. My family does not turn to medication to seek health and we don't have a "medicine chest" in our home. Due to years of advertising saturation from the pharmaceutical companies most Americans do seek health from outside- in and most families have a "medicine chest" filled with an average of 16 different medications.

In an average year, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports over 1.5 million hospitalizations due to medication. Last year the WHO reported 350,000 deaths due to medication people took... and 160,000 were when the drugs were prescribed correctly. More people died last year from medication than at Pearl Harbor and Vietnam. Amazing huh?

If drugs make people well, then those who take the most should be the healthiest, but this simply isn't the case.

Many people are beginning to understand that health comes from within. This is why chiropractic helps so many people. You see, your body can heal itself. Your body doesn't need any help; it just can't have any interference. With chiropractic, we don't add anything to the body or take anything from

it. We find interference in the nervous system and remove it thus enhancing the healing capacities of the body.

We get tremendous results... it really is as simple as that.

For the past eight years, people from San Francisco and the surrounding area have come to see me with their pinched nerve problems.

• Headaches •
• Migraines • Chronic Pain • Neck pain •
• Shoulder/arm pain • Whiplash from car accidents • Backaches • Numbness in limbs •
• Athletic injuries just to name a few.

Here is what some of your neighbors have said:

"I had back pain for 15 plus years and two back operations. Now I play tennis, sit at my computer and enjoy an active pain free life! Thank you Dr. Meakim!" — A. McGrath

"All possible medicines and doctors, you made a miracle taking away my pain!! I am a happy wife and mother again!" — L. Igudesman

"I have had chronic neck, shoulder and arm pain for the last 4 years. After seeing Dr. Meakim I can now twist off caps, button/zip my own pants and there is no longer a need for me to ice my arm in the morning and night! I feel more energetic, and can move my arm and neck pain free!" — C. Brubaker

Now...Find out for yourself and benefit from an AMAZING OFFER- Look, It should not cost you an arm and a leg to correct your health. You are going to write a check to someone for your health expenses, you may as well write a lesser one for chiropractic. Anil know you're smart. You want to get to the cause of the problem, and not just cover it up with drugs. When you are one of the first 20 people to call and schedule a new patient exam (by October 24th) you will receive that entire exam for \$37. That's with a consultation with the doctor, examination and x-rays... the whole ball of wax, and there are no hidden fees. But call right away because we expect to be flooded with calls as this exam costs \$317. Again there are only 20 of these slots so don't miss out. I hope that there's no misunderstanding about the quality of care just because I have a lower exam fee. You'll get great care at a great fee. I just offer that low exam fee to help more people who need care.

My qualifications:

I am a graduate of Palmer College of Chiropractic, I have published articles in leading chiropractic journals and taught chiropractic to chiropractors! I've been helping your neighbors in San Francisco since 2004. I've been entrusted to take care of tiny babies to athletes that you may know.

My assistant is Karen and she is friendly and ready to assist you to set up an evaluation. Our clinic is both friendly and warm and we try our best to make you feel at home. We have wonderful service at an exceptional fee. Our clinic is called San Francisco Family Spinal Care and it is at 505 Beach Street (we are at the corner of Beach and Jones on the edge of North Beach). Our phone number is 415-771-7071. Call today for an appointment. We can help you. Thank you. — Dr. Christina Meakim D.C.

P.S. When accompanied by the first, I am also offering the second family member this same examination for only \$17.

P.P.S. Can you imagine not having to wait at a doctor's office? Well, your time is as valuable as mine. That's why we have a no-wait policy. You will be seen within minutes of your appointment.

P.P.P.S. Of course, all people respond differently to care.



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Is Hardly Strictly Largely Illegal?

By Jonathan Farrell

The three-day extravaganza in Golden Gate Park known as Hardly Strictly Bluegrass this past Oct. 4 through 6th is very much like the summer music festivals in Stern Grove.

Admission was free and the music festival featured such widely celebrated artists as Bonnie Raitt, Boz Scaggs, Los Lobos, Steve Martin, Conor Oberst, Steve Earle, Emmylou Harris, as well as 80 other performers. Some estimates say more than the population of the City turned out in Golden Gate Park for the three-day event.

Hardly Strictly began in 2001 and exists because Warren Hellman wanted to bring his favorite acts to his hometown and share music with the City. Hellman was a private equity investor who founded his own firm. He died in 2011, but Hardly Strictly Bluegrass (HSB) Festival carries on.

Mayor Ed Lee also joined HSBG organizers, the Hellman Family, SF Unified School District middle school students, and celebrity MC Hammer to kick off the festival.

“We are excited to host this magical event in Golden Gate Park for its 13th year,”



This year’s festival featured six stages and more than 350 musicians, with over 750,000 attendees. Even though the event was well attended and is a success, some residents and neighbors near Golden Gate Park have expressed concerns.

“I live right across the street from the Park,” said long-time resident Doug McKirahan. “Each year the crowds get larger.” He noted that while Hardly Strictly Blue Grass is not as rowdy as the Outlands Music Festival, held in summer, the noise can still get loud.

“Usually it is on the last day of the blue grass festival when the music gets loud,” said McKirahan. He noted that it was to the point where windows rattle. “I did not mind it as much years before because it initially started out as a one-day event. Now it has been

“...the music gets loud,” said McKirahan. He noted that it was to the point where windows rattle. “I did not mind it as much years before because it initially started out as a one-day event. Now it has been stretched to three.”

said San Francisco Recreation and Parks General Manager Phil Ginsburg. “The festival is held in one of the nation’s most idyllic urban parks, and I know Mr. Hellman will be with us in spirit.”

Over the past three years the Bluegrass Festival has given nearly \$230,000 for recycling containers and turf and irrigation repairs in the meadows, ensuring that Golden Gate Park is beautiful for the festival and park users all year long.

stretched to three.”

McKirahan is not alone in his point of view. There are many among the residents who live near Golden Gate Park that consider these large-scale events as an over-done misuse of a man-made, natural oasis.

The major difference between HSBG and Outlands is not only the type of music, but that the blue grass festival is free. McKirahan believes that the hot-line provided for

Cont. p. 18





My life here

Richard Willets, resident since 2013

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Remember When?



Forest Hill Date 1945 Mar. 3 Newscopy: "Cameraman Eddie Murphy, who took this picture, describes it in the following poetic words: 'A bit of Forest Hill from the grounds of Laguna Honda Home, with Dewey Blvd angling off to the left and the top of Forest Hill Station hiding shyly in the trees at the bottom, lower right.' (Gosh, you'd never think Eddie had such fancy thoughts in him!)" By permission of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

BRAIN FUD

BACK in FORTH

Based on the clue in parentheses, find a four-letter word that can be inserted backwards into the blank to complete a longer word.

Example: di ____ ve (a defeat)

Answer: dissolve ("A defeat" gives you LOSS, which is placed backwards in the blank: di_SSOL_ve.)

- 1. s ____ ing (earth)
- 2. si ____ lk (felt reverent)
- 3. cam ____ e (chauffeur driven car)
- 4. s ____ way (bass; extreme)

- 4. speedway (DEEP - s_PEEDE_way)
- 3. camomile (LIMO - cam_OMIL_e)
- 2. sidewalk (AWED - si_DEWA_lk)
- 1. striding (DIRT - s_TRID_ing)

Answer

OPEN LATE

By Julie Casson

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Sudoku-fun!

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

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

Answer:
The answer appears below.

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

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

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33 Santa Monica Way	St. Francis Wood	4	3	2	2,100,000	2,000,000	105.26
640 Teresita Blvd	Miraloma Park	3	2	2	899,000	975,000	108.45
30 Molimo Dr	Miraloma Park	3	2	1	989,000	1,185,000	119.82
55 Hernandez Ave	Forest Hill Extensio	2	1	2	888,000	950,000	106.98
171 Miraloma Dr	Sherwood Forest	4	5	3	2,295,000	2,400,000	104.58
1411 Plymouth Ave	Westwood Park	2	2	3	889,000	1,080,000	121.48

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It's Wine Time with Susan By Susan Hartman

As I get ready for the upcoming Holiday Season I reminisce about what some of my favorite things are about Thanksgiving Day. It is a time to reflect on family and friends, thankfulness, and traditions. As I look out my window I can see the beautiful fall colors and the changing foliage which are the signs of the seasons changing. I also see Gimpy now, a large Black-Tailed Buck that lives in my meadow that I rescued when he was a small fawn.

Now let's get onto the wine, where it's going to get fun and exciting. There are many views on what should be served with the infamous Turkey Dinner.... So with that being said, let's get right into my wine selection and pairings. I am first going to let you know about my wine selections, and then include some pairing ideas. I will also add another option that could work for you if you only want to serve one wine. You will not be disappointed.

For all you white meat and veggie lovers the following is a wine you will enjoy with your Thanksgiving meal. My white wine selection is a 2011 vintage Chardonnay from Stage Leaps winery, which was established in 1893 in Napa, CA. The price point is \$ 28.00 per bottle and may be higher online. I found it to have a nice balance with a hint of nectarine and I enjoyed the finish even more. There are also pleasantly soft toasted undertones that release just the right balance of oak. I can only imagine how nice this would



ruby red with a black cherry aroma and the finish is very palatable with just the right amount of tannins. Bada Bing Bada Bang.....

You can experiment with this pairing; try Ham accompanied by chestnut-roasted dressing or stuffing. Dark turkey meat and butter glazed green beans, and potatoes mashed or fingerling. You as the host can decide. Also, try a nice butter sauce with fresh chives if time permits. Sweet yams or sweet potato pie works, too! Can you see where I am going with all these possibilities - to make your celebration a hit!

My "Grand Finale" is my selection for only (1) wine that goes well with all Thanksgiving Day foods: Taft Street Winery Rose of Pinot Noir. It placed in the 2013 Sunset International Wine Competition with a Bronze medal, not bad for a Rose wine. As a side note, the price was good at \$ 18.00 dollars - now that is bargain for a winner. As I tasted this wine I noticed these characters: It was crisp, and a flavorful wine that was fermented in a stainless steel vat. Was lively in acidity. With notes of strawberry undertones and a little cherry lingering on your nose. The balance was right for this Rose.

Susan Hartman is a Northern California based writer and wine aficionado.

Whistleblowers (Cont. from p. 6)

the SFHA to conduct an "independent investigation" as part of a 2-year contract for "As Needed Legal Services" for up to \$195,000 yearly. According to the SFHA, as of late May 2013, her firm submitted 6 invoices totaling \$174,560. For this payout, Renne labored like an elephant, and brought forth a mouse. After 6 months and 32 interviews, she issued a 5-part, 112-page "limited, preliminary review" that "did not find evidence" and could "offer no conclusions" about tainted contracts. How much would a full, final review cost? In contrast, an audit by the Board's Budget Analyst cost \$162,000 and found that contracts "were handled so poorly as to

give an appearance of favoritism." Renne also chose to "express no opinion about...unlawful discrimination, harassment and/or retaliation." Just like Ethics investigations, hers found "insufficient evidence of retaliation." Instead, she detected "discourteous and unprofessional conduct" and a single instance of "discriminatory conduct" by former SFHA Director Henry Alvarez. Having been black-balled by Louise Renne, the SFHA whistleblowers bypassed Commissioner Paul Renne et al, and took their retaliation claims directly to Superior Court.

Priorities also serve as deterrents. Initially, Ethics handled complaints on a first-come, first-served basis. Whistleblowers had a chance, even though campaign

Cont. p. 19

Put That Number 2 Pencil Away

By Carol Kocivar

California is transitioning to a new way to test kids.

That number 2 pencil? Gone the way of the telex, the LP and — last gasp — the landline.



It will be replaced by a new computer- based assessment aligned to the state's new Common Core academic standards. ("Aligned" — don't you just love that word?)

This change was not without drama.

The issue: Should California continue to use the STAR test, aligned (there we go again) to the old California standards, or drop STAR testing during the transition to this new system?

Arne Duncan, US Secretary of Education, threatened Sacramento with a loss of federal funds if the STAR test was not continued.

"If California moves forward with a plan that fails to assess all its students, as required by federal law, the Department will be forced to take action, which could include withholding funds from the state," Duncan said.

Despite the threat, the new testing system passed the legislature and was signed by the Governor.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson hailed the change:

"Faced with the choice of preparing California's children for the future or continuing to cling to outdated policies of the past, our state's leaders worked together and made the right choice for our students. These new assessments represent a challenge for our education system—but a lifetime of opportunity for students."

Most of the STAR tests are suspended this year as the state prepares for the new computerized tests in 2014-2015.

The new testing system is what they call "computer adaptive." It can look at the student's answers and modify questions going forward: Make them easier or more difficult depending on a student's response level. This allows a more precise measurement of skills and knowledge.

School districts will field test the new assessments this year. Half of the students will take math and the other half take English-language arts.

The California State PTA supported this new law, AB484, calling it "a sensible step in the transition to a new assessment system that will align future testing with the Common Core State Standards and foster high quality teaching and learning in California's classrooms."

Suspending most STAR tests this year will provide opportunities for more California students to participate in field-tests.

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

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THE REAL ESTATE ANSWER MAN By Kevin Birmingham



Q: I am purchasing a home with cash and was asked to provide proof of funds. I am uncomfortable with showing a bank statement. Is there another way? Allison H.

A: Most often, people will black out their account number from the statement and then send it over. If you are uncomfortable doing this, have your bank manager write a letter confirming funds are available. I am sure you bank has done this for other customers as many people are uncomfortable showing a bank statement.

Q: Is it standard for a Landlord to ask for 1st month & security to secure said apartment before able to see? Lisa R.

A: There is never a reason to pay anyone in advance of viewing the property. There are stories of people wiring money to someone purporting to be an agent, and it was completely bogus. Once you wire money, it is gone.

Q: Do you have to put low flushing toilets in a home to sell in San Francisco? Tony D.

A: You need an inspection and must make any recommended changes – such as installing 1.6 gallon toilets or lower if yours are higher gallon-per-flush. The inspector then records a Certificate.

At the Movies (Cont. from p. 18)

an outstanding job with Julian Fellows’ (Downton Abbey) screenplay, faithful to his Shakespeare source. Some violence. Thematic elements.

RUNNER RUNNER

Princeton student Richie Furst: Justin Timberlake runs the on-line poker games until there’s a major loss, costing him his tuition money, \$18K. He tracks down the sly, shy guy, Ivan Block: Ben Affleck, that he thinks cheated him, finding him on a Caribbean island. Block’s PR front, Rebecca: Gemma Arterton, doesn’t go unnoticed by Richie. His dad, Harry: John Heard, is also involved in the same game in the U.S. Block makes Richie an offer that he can’t refuse to stay on and be his right hand, which he does. The direction by Brad Furman keeps everything moving at a fast pace in the screenplay by Brian Koppelman and David Levein. Action and intense scenes. Profanity. A few sexual situations.

RUSH

Austrian racer Niki Lauda: Daniel Brühl is challenged in every race starting in 1970 by British playboy James Hunt: Chris Hemsworth. High fashion model Suzy Miller: Olivia Wilde sets her wide-brimmed hat for Hunt and lands him, with a ring. Initially, she’s there for every race and provides him with the support he needs. That doesn’t last long, before you can say “Oscar de la Renta” she’s in NYC for fashion shoots, while he tools at the track in Europe, Japan, or Iceland in the Formula Three races leading up to the Formula One speedway at Monte Carlo. This happens every year with Niki or James regularly landing in hospital with multiple injuries. Niki finally marries Marlene, too. Ron Howard directs the true screenplay by Peter Morgan that transpires a decade. While the back-story is involving, the action scenes of the races are first-rate. Sexual content. Nudity. Profanity. Some disturbing images. Brief drug use.

Hardly Strictly Bluegrass (Cont. from p. 13)

resident to complain or voice concerns is really just a venting line. “Officials claim that they are measuring the volume levels and such. But they don’t do anything about it,” he said. “Our complaints and concerns are ignored,” said McKirahan.

And, while he did reiterate HSBG festival does not get as rakish and ruckus as Outlands, the event ends at 7 pm; “people will carry on in conversations and are slow to disperse for hours, long afterwards.” McKirahan made it clear he is not against the festival. The music is wonderful. Yet, McKirahan also said that he and other residents he has talked to are disappointed in local officials, as well as the SF Rec. and Parks Dept. It seems as if they only see the event and others like it (such as the Outlands Festival) as another revenue stream for the City and Rec. and Parks Dept.

One resident who did not want to be quoted did say she was amazed at how orderly the event was despite the extremely large and packed in crowds. Both the San Francisco Chronicle and the Richmond District Police Station noted that no crimes were reported. Richmond Station said in its blotter-report that there were “fewer complaints than previous years, and that according to their estimates “over 80,000 plus” people had attended. Some speculate the reason for the orderliness of the crowds is due to the fact that no alcohol is sold at the festival. Richmond Station thanks everyone involved in making the festival a success and said it is looking forward to next year.

Jonathan Farrell is a San Francisco free lance reporter. Feedback: jonathan@westsideobserver.com

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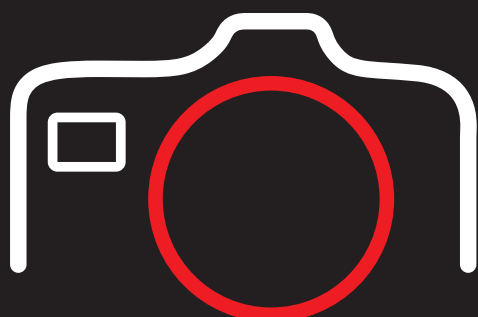
Whistleblowers (Cont. from p. 17)

finances garnered more attention. Over time, Ethics acquired ever-increasing mandates. That's why its resources steadily grew, from an operational budget of \$157,000 with temp staffers in 1994, to \$2.45 million and 18 positions in 2013. But all along, Ethics lamented its "insufficient resources." Under-resourcing was nettlesome between 2003 and 2008 when Ben Rosenfield was the Mayor's Budget Director. (In 2008, Rosenfield was appointed Controller and promptly cut 41% from his Whistleblower Program budget.) Several Commissioners had lobbied for more funds, to no avail. It took a 2004-05 Civil Grand Jury investigation, San Francisco Ethics Commission Budgeting and Staffing Issues, to wrangle an extra \$326,000 from Rosenfield. By then, whistleblower cases were being buried. When whistleblowers arose among their staff, Ethics Directors Ginny Vida, Mabel Ng and St. Croix took it as insubordination. Fortunately, the Society of Professional Journalists gave Freedom of Information awards to Ethics whistleblowers: Joe Lynn in 2003, then Oliver Luby and Kevin de Liban in 2005.

Potential whistleblowers had gotten the message: stay away from Ethics.

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

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